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Jewish National Communist Movement in Iraq

A Case of Anti-Zionist League in 1946

Akira USUKI

I. Introduction: A New Trend in Research on the Jews of Iraq

In this paper, I focus on the political ideology and movement of ‘Uṣbat Muqāfaḥat al-Ṣahyūniyya (The anti-Zionist League, or The League Struggling against Zionism, hereafter, AZL), a Jewish leftist political group in Iraq active only for half a year in 1945 and 1946. The AZL can be considered as a very important political party against the backdrop of the emerging Arab-Israeli conflict immediately after World War II however short-lived it was, since the members of the AZL considered themselves as Iraqi national communists who were anit-British, anit-colonial and democratic in post-war Iraqi political movements.

First of all, I would lay emphasis on the simple, but often ignored fact that there had existed Arabic-speaking Jewish communities in the Arab world in 1945, especially in Iraq. [Hourani 1947] It was reported that the Jewish community in Iraq had been “closely associated with the country since time memorial and not less interested in the common well-being and development of Iraq than their Muslim fellow-citizens”. [Landshut 1950 p.45] The Jews of Iraq were one of the best representatives of the Arabic-speaking and assimilated Jews in the modern Arab world after World War II. An American reporter witnessed that “the leaders of the local Jewish community, while doing nothing to encourage the anti-Zionist movement here, have done nothing to oppose it. They add in fact, that while the proposed Anti-Zionist League is probably Communistic and certainly an extreme Leftist group, it has served a very useful purpose in obtaining statements from prominent local politicians which are favorable and reassuring to the Jews of Baghdad”. Prominent Iraqi political leaders such as Prime Minister etc. believed that “the Arabs and Jews of Iraq had lived for many years in peace together and that they would, of course, continue to do so; that there was no feeling of animosity against Iraqi Jews among Iraqi Arabs; that the Jews of Iraq were sterling citizens of this great country, etc.” [see Appendix “The Anti-Zionist League in the Eyes of the United States of America” below]

There are a lot of research works on the Jews of Iraq in general from historical, social,

political and economic viewpoints. I myself surveyed research trends on the Jews of Iraq during a very crucial period from Farhud (anti-Jewish riots in 1941) to the ‘exodus’ or emigration of the Iraqi Jews in 1950-51. [Usuki 1994] But few researchers have paid a special attention to the AZL itself except a small group of Arab, especially Iraqi or Palestinian, leftist intellectuals such as ‘Abd al-Latīf al-Rāfī, ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Şāfī, ‘Abd al-Qādir Yāsīn, and Abbas Shiblak as mentioned later. The AZL has been neglected even in Israeli academia, and old-styled Arab researchers’ works in Arabic on the AZL have been almost disregarded as political-oriented or even partisan works except in the Arab world. Of course there is an exception to my description. For example, there emerged in Israel a pioneering, but traditional-styled trend in study among Iraqi-born Jewish researchers like Nissim Kazzaz and Yosef Meir who analyzed the AZL or Jewish communists in relation to Zionists and their underground activities in Iraq. [Kazzaz 1991] [Meir 1993] Itzhak Bar-Moshe, a former Iraqi-origin Israeli diplomat, published his memoir both in Arabic and Hebrew [Bar-Moshe 1975 1977] where he describes the AZL as a personal experience. This general neglect is the starting point of my discussion in this paper.

It is well known that, in the Arab world during the 1950s and 1960s, Marxist or Socialist ideas had extraordinarily influenced upon their Arab intellectuals in their academic and works. Recently new trends of study however have emerged among Western or even Middle Eastern academics on Arab nationalism against the background of rethinking nationalism and nation-state in general, well represented by catch-words like Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined communities’ or Eric Hobsbawm’s ‘invention of traditions’. Concerning Arab nationalism, one of their main concerns is to reconstruct the national or nationalist history from below or peripheries. [Jankowski et al 1997]. We can observe the same trend of reconstructing the past in Israeli studies, that is, “post-Zionism debates” in which ‘new historians’ and ‘critical sociologists’ participate. [Silberstein 2000]

One of the new trends in rewriting histories is also to pay more attentions to workers and working class. This field of study has been neglected for a long time, based upon the conviction that it was appropriate or even counterproductive to apply class analysis to the modern Middle East. As a framework for identity and action in the Middle East, class was traditionally seen as very much subordinate to religion, ethnicity, tribal affiliation, village solidarity, regional origin, and so forth. [Lockman 1994 p.xii]

Such a certain “Middle Eastern exceptionalism” named by Lockman could be applicable to historical and social studies of Jewish leftist or communist movement not only in Iraq but also in other Arab countries generally before the establishment of Israel. Concerning Egypt, there are excellent works conducted by Beinín and Lockman [Beinín & Lockman 1987] and others. Especially it is noted that Beinín conducted a comparative study of Marxist or Communist politics in Israel and Egypt [Beinín 1990] and the Jews of Egypt [Beinín 1998].

Egyptian Jews played a prominent role in Communist movement in the 1940s. Among famous Egyptian Jewish communists are Henri Curiel (1914-78), who founded the Egyptian

Movement for National Liberation (HAMETU) in 1943 and Hillel Schwartz, founder of *Iskra* in 1942. The two groups and People's Liberation led by Marcel Israel formed the Democratic Movement for National Liberation (HADETU) together in 1947. [Beinin 1998 pp.143-145] Fruitful works on this topic have been produced by Egyptian scholars such as Rif'at al-Sa'īd or Ra'ūf 'Abbās Hāmīd (Cairo University) and others in Arabic.

II. An Old-New Direction in Study on the AZL

On the contrary, a question has to be posed as follows: why is there a scant amount of works on Iraqi Jewish communists although they played an important role during the late 1940s? Perhaps because Egyptian and Iraqi governments took different measures toward the Jews and also because the Jews had different legal or political status concerning nationalities or citizenship in both of the states: the Iraqi Jews had Iraqi nationalities that were however deprived of in 1950 by the government, but most of the Egyptian Jews were foreign nationals with no Egyptian nationalities except a few so-called 'Arabized Jews (musta'aravim)' among whom there were few educated intellectuals.

Looking at the AZL, the reasons of a shortage of research conducted by Jewish or Israeli scholars on Iraqi Jewish communists in particular are perhaps explained as follows: firstly the AZL itself was short lived as an authorized political party for only three months and half from March to June, 1946; secondly the AZL was said to be subordinate to the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) under the leadership of Yūsuf Salmān Yūsuf (Fahd) who was executed by hanging in 1948; thirdly most of its members left Iraq for Israel and have kept silent about their own past in Iraq since their immigration to Israel; fourthly the Cold War between the US and the Soviet Unions on the one hand and Arab-Israeli conflict on the other blurred boundaries between real and false images of Jewish Communists in the fogs of anti-Communist political propaganda such as 'Jewish conspiracy theory'.

On the other hand, it is worthwhile to point out that Palestinian leftist intellectuals have been interested in the AZL as a good historical example for seeking class and national solidarity among the Arab and Jewish workers and intellectuals against British imperialism and its local Arab reactionary regimes. Also the AZL rendered great ideological service to justification of the PLO's political goal to build a 'non-sectarian democratic Palestinian state, in which Muslims, Christians and Jews are expected to coexist equally and peacefully in the future.

One of the first Palestinian Arab leftist intellectuals who gave an attention to the AZL was 'Abd al-Qādir Yāsīn, former editor of "*al-Tali'a (Vanguard)*", Cairo-based leftist Arabic magazine. His article was "The anti-Zionist League" that appeared in an Arabic journal, "*Shū'un Filasṭīniyya (Palestinian Affairs)*" published by PLO Research Center in Beirut. [Yasin 1972] He heavily relied upon articles in leftist or Communist-affiliated newspapers and journals published in Cairo such as *Iskra(light)*, *al-Rāya(flag)* or an organ of *al-Fajr*

al-Jadīd (New Dawn) that was founded in 1946 by Aḥmad Sādiq Sa‘d, a former Jewish communist converted to Muslim later. These underground newspapers covered what were going on in Palestine and other Arab countries including Iraq. Yāsīn threw a fresh light on a contemporary class solidarity movement beyond state borders in the Arab world.

A younger Palestinian researcher published a landmark book on the Jews of Iraq in English, *The Lure of Zion*. Abbas Shiblak emphasized the AZL’s contribution to political debates on Zionism in the 1940s. He criticized severely totalitarian Arab regimes, saying, “In fact, it could well be argued that the totalitarian attitudes of the regimes themselves still largely under colonial influence, were actually serving the Zionist cause by harassing and persecuting the democratic forces. Indeed, many Zionist historians reported a revival of Zionist activities among the Iraqi Jews immediately after the dissolution of the AZL and the arrest of its activities”. [Shiblak 1986 p.64]

Among Iraqi researchers writing about the AZL are ‘Abd al-Latīf al-Rāwī, who edited a source book on the AZL, that was published first in Baghdad, 1977, then reprinted in Damascus, 1986 [al-Rāwī 1986] and ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣāfī, who wrote a small booklet on the AZL on a special emphasis on Fahd, secretary-general of the Iraqi Communist Party, which was published in Baghdad, then reprinted in Jerusalem. [al-Ṣāfī 1977] The former contains al-Rāwī’s studies on “The Iraqi Leftists and the Palestine Question”, “The AZL” and also some of the AZL’s political pamphlets and leaflets including “Zionism is Enemy for Arabs and Jews (al-Ṣahyūniyya ‘Aduw al-‘Arab wa Yahūd)”, “The AZL is straggling against Zionism (al-‘Uṣba fī Kīfāhī-ha dīdda al-Ṣahyūniyya)” as well as its political statements and petitions to the government. The latter of the pamphlets and leaflets, written by al-Ṣāfī, is a fifty-nine pages booklet on Iraqi Communists’ struggle against Zionism, in which Chapter Five contributes to the AZL. [al-Ṣāfī pp.33-38].

A book written by Fadil al-Burak on a comparative study of Jewish and Iranian schools in Baghdad is of use to know who the members of the AZL were although the book didn’t intend to describe political movements in Iraq. [al-Burak 1984] The most useful and important information given by the book is a list of 245 Jewish communists in Iraq in the 1940s. The list supplies us with information enough for us to know some of the AZL member’s names, his or her birthplace, birth year, occupation, and the date of becoming a member, even if the list is not sufficient to go into detail.

Above-mentioned studies conducted in Arabic are not considered as new or innovative but as old-fashioned leftist style or even over-politicized by the criterion of present academic research. But if we put these trends in currently flourishing post-colonial or subaltern studies, it might be possible to find out new attempts to reconstruct or reconstitute a history of the Jews of Iraq from Arab Jews’ point of view. The term of ‘Arab Jews’ came up as a controversial issue in heated dispute in Israeli media and academia since Yehouda Shenhav, a Iraqi-origin sociologist of Tel Aviv University published his provocative book “*the Arab-Jews: Nationalism, Religion and Ethnicity*” in Hebrew in 2003. [Shenhav 2003]

III. The Formation of the AZL and the Iraqi Communist Party

First of all, I briefly look at a historical process of the emergence of the AZL in the following. Since World War Two came to end, there appeared anti-British and democratic political movements in Iraq. Among them young intellectual Jews also petitioned the Iraqi Minister of Interior that they should establish the anti-Zionist League on September 12, 1945 and the petition was accepted on March 16, 1946. The Tawfiq al-Suwaydi government permitted the AZL for some time owing to the visit of the Anglo-American Committee for Inquiry on Palestine to Iraq. The government intended that the AZL should appear on behalf of the Jews of Iraq before the Committee [Laqueur p.185]. The government rejected the National Liberation Party (Ḥizb al-Taḥarrur al-Waṭani) that was regarded as the Iraqi Communist Party's organ, but permitted other five parties, such as Independent Party (Ḥizb al-Istiqlāl), National Democratic Party (al-Ḥizb al-Waṭani al-Dimuqrati), Liberal Party (Ḥizb al-Ahrar), People's Party (Ḥizb al-Sha'b), and National Union Party (Ḥizb al-Ittihād al-Waṭanī).

The petition of the AZL was said to be signed by eight members according to al-Rāwī and al-Ṣāfī. All of the undersigned at the petition came from Baghdad and at the same time they are Communists. But all the members of the AZL are neither Communists nor Jews. Among the members existed Muslims and Christians too. The AZL was a political association in which young intellectual groups such as progressive nationalists (democratic and communists) joined in order to set up a political party. [al-Rāwī 1986 p.23]

As for the AZL's relations to the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), Yūsuf Salmān (Fahd), secretary of the ICP, was said to agree to and support an idea about the formation of the AZL by young Jews as a very positive step to the ICP's further struggle against Zionism. The AZL was intended to be independent of the ICP to all appearances, because it had its own platform and by law. It is therefore considered neither as a branch of the ICP nor as one of ordinary democratic political parties. [ibid.]

On the other hand, another source said, the central committee of the ICP authorized Yahūdā Siddīq [Yehuda Tzadik] to organize the AZL. It is well-known that Siddiq was hanged with Fahd. Yūsuf Harūn Zilkha was appointed chairman of the executive committee of the AZL, which means that Zilkha is regarded as the head (ra'īs) of the AZL. Siddiq became head of the inspection committee whose function was to inspect the decision-making process of the AZL executive committee and to follow up the execution of the decisions. [Yāsīn 1972 p.160]

Walter Laqueur however severely commented the AZL's relation to the ICP in his classic work on nationalism and communism in the Middle East, saying that, from the Communist point of view, anti-Zionist activity was not just a cover but a very urgent matter because of the strength of Zionist influence among Iraqi Jews. On the other hand, the party wanted to exploit this legal framework (that is, the AZL) of Communist propaganda in general. [Laqueur 1958 p.185]

It seems strange that Zilkha, the AZL head, didn't sign the petition. The reason why he was installed as chairman of the AZL is not clear. According to the list of the Jewish Communists made by al-Burāk, Zilkha was born in al-Sank, Baghdad in 1921 and worked as a railway clerk. It is unknown when he joined the ICP. At the age of twenty-five, he took up the top position of the AZL. [Burak 1984 Appendix II, no.238] Zilkha published a booklet by his own name in 1946. The title of the booklet was *Zionism: Enemy against Arabs and Jews (al-Ṣahyūniyya: 'aduwat al-'Arab wa al-Yahūd)*. The booklet was published by al-Hikma Publishing Company that was run by the ICP. It is not inconceivable that it was not Zilkha but Fahd who really wrote this booklet, judging from the high-level of what was written in the booklet. [al-Rāwī 1986 p36] Unfortunately I have no information on Zilkha's personal records. Bttatu gave information on the Zilkha family in his famous book. [Batatu p.311] or [Encyclopedia Judaica Vol.6, pp.1022-1023]

Other prominent members of the AZL and also the signers of the petition are Marur Salih Qattan, Ibrahim Najī Shumayl, Ya'qub Mu'ir al-Misri. Qattan, accountant of the AZL, was born in Baghdad, 1913, and a manager of a newspaper "Sha'b (People)". He also published a booklet, whose title was "Our League ('Uṣbatna)". al-Misri was former secretary of the AZL, born in Baghdad, 1920, and al-Rāwī had an interview with al-Misri in the beginning of the 1970s.[al-Rāwī pp.228-236] Shumayl was born in Baghdad, 1912 and was a pharmacist. His wife secretly made contact with Fahd during his exile and Fahd was arrested at Shumayl's house in January 18, 1947.[al-Burāk, op.cit]

The number of the AZL members was unknown, but hundreds peoples joined it as its members within a few week. AZL published a daily newspaper "*al-'Uṣba (The League)*". It is said that six thousand copies were circulated daily among the Jews [Kazzaz 1991 p253]. If this figure were correct, it would be no exaggeration that the AZL had a good influence upon the Jews of Iraq, whose population was 117,000 souls in 1947. [Batatu 1978 p.40] Shiblak estimates that "the participation of the Jewish intelligentsia in the nationalist movement of the Arab East during the post-war period did not conform to this view (that is, the majority of the Iraqi Jews lacked interest in politics, but look to Jerusalem as a religious center). On the contrary, the integration of at least some Jews in the Iraqi struggle for democratic rights and national independence signaled an end to traditional Jewish abstention from Iraqi political life. [Shiblak p.64]

As a radical leftist party, the AZL defined Zionism as an exploitative colonialist movement in Palestine and insisted that Zionists utilized the Jewish consciousness of discriminations against them in order to mobilize them for Zionist political goals on the pretext of giving relief to Jews under oppression (ẓulum). The main issue of the AZL's platform (manāhij) is to fight against Zionists in Iraq so as to separate Jews from Zionists.

The platform said firstly that with permission of the Ministry of Interior the head office was located in Baghdad and local branches in other cities. Secondly, the objectives of the AZL was to expose Zionists' activities among Jews and to terminate Zionists' influence and

propaganda through direct measures of 1) publishing newspapers and pamphlets, 2) holding meetings, festivals and lectures for films, 3) cooperating with local or foreign organizations that share common political goals, 4) participating in international conferences for anti-Zionism in order to explain the Palestine Question, 5) exposing Zionist spies to the Jewish public, 6) struggling against economic influences of Zionists destroying new Arab industries.

The AZL cooperated with nationalists to fight Zionists through indirect measures in order to finish the confessional arrogances (al-na'arat al-tā'ifiyya) that split the unity of Iraqi people, and to create an atmosphere of affection and mutual understanding among all Iraqi people, and to deal with the Jewish question as a social problem and interpret it accurately from a scientific socialist point of view. [al-Rāwī 1986, pp107-108]

The AZL organized twenty-two weekly public meetings during its three months political activities. In some of the meetings in Baghdad five thousand citizens participated. In Basra were held two weekly meetings where a few thousand of Basra inhabitants joined. The weekly meetings contributed to promotion of the understanding of the Palestine question from a scientific point of view among several thousand hundred people and also the necessity to abolish of colonial principle to utilize religious, racial and national minorities (al-aqalliyāt al-dīniyya wa-l-'unsūriyya wa-l-qawmiyya). [Idem. P,145-145]

IV. The AZL's Political Ideology

The AZL published political pamphlets and statements during its short activities. As mentioned earlier, al-Rāwī's book is a most comprehensive source book. The most interesting of the statements was the petition for the formation of the AZL that was submitted to the Ministry of Interior in September 1945 ('arīda ṭalab ta'asīs 'Uṣbat al-Mukāfata al-Ṣahyūniyya). [al-Rāwī pp.103-105] It was the petition that epitomized their ideas on the current situations and political goals.

A group of young Jews declared in the petition that Zionism was a danger for Jews as it is a danger for Arabs and their national unity (al-Ṣahyūniyya khatar 'alā al-Yahūd mithlama hiya khatar 'alā al-'Arab wa waḥdat-hum al-qawmiyya). They took up their struggle against Zionism openly and in public because they were Arabs and Jews at the same time. They continues,

“The Jewish problem is deep-rooted in the social system and those who observe it superficially could not understand that it was not a product of religious deference, racial discrimination, lack of harmony in customs and morals and etc. The Jews have fallen a sacrifice to a parasitic class that want to maintain their privileges by turning people's fury toward the Jews. We firmly believe as a result of study and examination that the Jewish problem cannot be resolved except by resolving the Jewish problem of a country where Jews are living and we are sure that reactionaries and colonialists help Zionism playing a role in

confusing Jews and Zionists.”(p.103)

As for the Palestine Question, they claimed, “Since the Palestine cause is completely the cause of Arab countries, we cannot help but stand by Palestinian Arabs. From our scientific realist view, that is, cooperation between Arabs and Jews, a popular nationalist Arab party supports us. In Palestine itself such a party shows strong enmity toward Zionism and advocates cooperation between Arabs and Jewish mass in order to solve the Palestine Question on the basis of a ban on Jewish immigrations, the stop of sale of Arab lands to Zionists, and the establishment of completely independent Arab democratic state where all citizens’ rights should be guaranteed regardless of Arabs and Jews”.

In this text the most interesting fact is that the AZL made a model of ‘a very populist nationalist Arab party (ḥizb ‘Arabī waṭanī wasī’u sha‘bī)’ in Palestine. As I will show later, the mentioned party is the National Liberation Party (NLP) in Haifa.

As I indicated earlier, Zilkha, the head of the AZL, wrote a booklet whose title is Zionism: The Enemy of Arabs and Jews. I explain a little what this booklet is. The booklet is comprised of three chapters. After introduction, the first chapter is “A Brief History of Zionism and the Solution of the Jewish Problem”, Chapter 2 “Danger for the Arab Countries”, and Chapter 3 “Effective Measures for Struggling against Zionism and the Solution for the Palestine Question”. Here I focus upon the Palestine Question.

Zilkha gave a special attention to the National Liberation League (‘Uṣbat al-Taḥarrur al-Waṭanī, NLL) in Palestine as a good model for their struggle against Zionists. [al-Rāwī p.73] He explained that “we see today for example how a great popular party (ḥizb sha‘bī) in Palestine understand the Jewish question scientifically: This is the NLL that is struggling against those who want to turn Arab national movement (al-ḥaraka al-‘arabiyya al-waṭaniyya) to racial inclination and the NLL is defending Jewish laborers rights as well as Arab laborers rights. The party wants to resolve the Palestine question realistically on the basis of stopping the Jewish immigrations, and the establishment of independent democratic state without any colonialist intervention” [al-Rāwī p.73]

The NLL was established in Haifa by young Palestinian Arab Communist intellectuals, such as Emil Habibi (1922-97), Emil Tuma (1919-85), Tawfiq Tubi (1922-) and others after the division of the Palestine Communist Party in 1943 followed by the dissolution of the third Communist International (Comintern). Most of the members of the NLL joined the Israeli Communist Party (Maki and later Rakah) after the establishment of the State of Israel. I cannot go into detail on this topic, but it is necessary to emphasize here that Haifa is one of the most important centers for Arab communists in Palestine. In other words, it can be said that the NLL and the AZL were contemporary phenomena by Arab national communists in Iraq and Palestine in the Arab world. [Budeiri pp.212-242]

V. Concluding Remarks: the AZL as an ‘Arab’ National Communist Movement

The AZL emphasized keeping their Arabness and Jewishness at the same time. Zilkha explained his reasons as follows: “Jews have no common histories; for example, a history of Arab Jews is neither that of Russian Jews nor English Jews. A history of German Jews is neither that of Turkish Jews nor American Jews. English Jews is a part of English nation as well as Arab Jews are a part of Arab nation (al-yahūd al-Inkilīz mathalan hum juz’ min al-umma al-Inkilizīyya, kamā inna al-yahūda al-‘arab hum juz’ min al-umma al-‘arabiyya). Jews have no common lands as they have no common language. For example, German Jews speak German and English Jews speak English. Arab Jews speak Arabic as well.

Historically speaking, the Iraqi authorities and chauvinistic Iraqi nationalists like Istiqlal members defeated the AZL’s reasoning of the Arabness of Iraqi Jews. It is also emphasized here that the AZL’s leaders were sentenced in prison at the Baghdad trial court on September 15, 1946. Surprisingly the Judge Khalil Amin al-Mufti said in his decision that the meaning of an expression “mukafaḥat al-ṣahyūniyya” is not the struggle against Zionism (al-kifāḥ didda al-Ṣahyūniyya), because the word “Kāfih” is mukafaḥa or kifah (defending) by meaning. Therefore the meaning of the word “mukafaḥat al-ṣahyūniyya” is ‘defending Zionism’. If this League were intended to struggle against Zionism, it would have been named ‘Uṣbat al-Mukafaḥat didda al-Ṣahyūniyya (The League Struggling against Zionism). [al-Rafi p.170]

This rhetorical trick is only to deceive Iraqi people into believing Jews must be Zionists and Communists at the same time. We should evaluate the AZL’s political role as a national communist movement in broader context of the contemporary history of the Middle East in particular and eastern parts of the Mediterranean World in general after the collapse of the former Soviet Union.

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Appendix: The Anti-Zionist League in the Eyes of the United States of America

THE FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Baghdad, October 4, 1945

SECRET

No. 916

SUBJECT: Anti-Zionist League Formed in Baghdad.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State, Washington, D.C.

Sir:

With reference to the Legation’s despatch no. 896 of September 12, 1945, I have the honor to report that a group of local Jews, most of whom are said to be between the ages of 18 and 25, have recently been attempting to form an anti-Zionist League in Baghdad. As a number of references to this organization have appeared in the vernacular press, two outstanding leaders of Baghdad Jewry, Messrs. Daoud Salman and Shalom Darwish, Secretary General to the

Jewish Community, were interviewed on the subject. According to these gentlemen the leaders of the local Jewish community, while doing nothing to encourage the anti-Zionist movement here, have done nothing to oppose it. They add in fact, that while the proposed Anti-Zionist League is probably Communistic and certainly an extreme Leftist group, it has served a very useful purpose in obtaining statements from prominent local politicians which are favorable and reassuring to the Jews of Baghdad. In this connection, I have noted recent statements in the press from such men as Prime Minister Hamdi Pachachi; Mawloud Pasha Mukhlus, Senator and ex-President of the Chamber of Deputies; Ridha Al-Shabibi, ex-Minister of Education and former President of the Senate; Sa'ad Salih, a leading member of the Chamber of Deputies; and Sayid Abdul Mahdi, one of the most influential Shias of Iraq, a former Minister of Education and a Deputy - to the effect that the Arabs and Jews of Iraq had lived for many years in peace together and that they would, of course, continue to do so; that there was no feeling of animosity against Iraqi Jews among Iraqi Arabs; that the Jews of Iraq were sterling citizens of this great country, etc.

Messrs. Salman and Darwish state that the organizers and leaders of the anti-Zionist movement here, which now has about fifty members, are Masrour Qattan, a staff writer on the extremely pro-Soviet daily Al Sha'ab, and Brahim Naji, a minor employee of a local drug store. Qattan's father, they say, is a fairly well known lawyer and landowner, while Naji "has no social standing." They add that the leaders of the League have requested the right to organize legally as a "Society" but they do not believe this right will be granted as the Government fears it would be used to cloak communist activities.

Daoud Salam states that the British Embassy has unofficially inquired as to what local Jews thought of the Anti-Zionist League, and that the Jews replied that they had nothing for or against the idea since the Baghdad Jewish community is a non-political body. Salman adds that the Jews took advantage of this opportunity to emphasize to the British that no real harm could befall Jews in Iraq without British approval.

In this connection Salam points out that there were two established and several rumored assaults on Jewish women by Moslem hoodlums last month. In each case the assault consisted simply of the throwing of acid on the womens dresses with no serious injury to the persons of the women attacked. Salam claims, however, that the husband of one of the women concerned reported the case to the police who refused to take action. Other Jews have told me that they are in constant fear of the outbreak of similar unorganized hoodlum activities.

With reference to the anti-Semitic letter in the Iraqi magazine Alam of-Ghad (World of Tomorrow), reported in despatch no. 896 of September 12, 1945, Salman says local Jews decided against risking the publicity inherent in their contemplated protest to Prime Minister Pachachi. The Jews, however, let their displeasure be known both to the editor of the offending publication and to the letter's author, Director General of Foreign Affairs, Fadhil Jamali. It is a fact that the magazine apologized for the story, and stated that it was written by one Fadhil Ahmed, who the Jews assert is a purely fictitious character. The magazine also published a.

letter signed F.A., said by the Jews to be likewise written by Fadhil Jamali, which stresses that the letter to which local Jews objected had evidently been misinterpreted as the Jews of Iraq were held in high esteem.

Respectfully yours,
William D. Moreland, Jr.
Charge d'Affaires ad interim
File No. 840.1
RBM/hd