

FORMATION OF THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY IN POST-WAR IRAQ*

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In the post-World War II period, as turbulent times were sweeping the Middle East, the Iraqi political elite became aware that the liberal and moderate nationalists had begun to come to the fore in Iraqi politics. The victory of the British Labour Party in the parliamentary elections of 1945 was particularly discussed in political circles in Baghdad. Owing to continued protests made by representatives of various shades of opinion, the regent, motivated principally by political expedience, took the unprecedented step and on 27 December 1945 in front of deputies and senators announced measures to liberalise the political order. He called for the formation of political parties, and promised full freedom for their activities and the inauguration of economic and social reforms. The task was entrusted to Tawfīq as-Suwaydī who brought into his cabinet younger personnel whose political outlook was less inflexible than that of the old politicians. This government was naturally short lived.

Key words: Iraq during the war, post-war upsurge, formation of political parties, place and programme of the Independence Party, premature liberalisation, liberalism versus reaction

The unsuccessful attempt of Iraqi patriots (the government of Defence of the Fatherland – Ḥukūmat ad-difā^ʿ al-waṭanī) to thwart British demands in April 1941, and their armed resistance led to new British military occupation of the country. The power returned to the group of Iraqi politicians who unreservedly fulfilled British demands as his political opponents were removed. The effective head of state was Prince ʿAbdalilāh ibn ʿAlī, and from October 1941 until May 1944 the executive power as premier wielded Nūrī as-Saʿīd. In such favourable circumstances for asserting his policy, he indicated his deputies in parliament to push through Iraq joining the Atlantic Charter. Therefore 32 deputies on 12 November 1942 signed the proposal demanding that the speaker would ask the

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government to realise it.¹ The proposal on 11 January 1943 was sent to the government which immediately approved it and the regent issued the respective decree declaring war on the Axis powers with effect from the midnight of 16 to 17 January 1943.²

The constitutional system of Iraq did not work properly in the sense that cabinets exercised control over parliament. Governments could dissolve parliament and then, manipulating the administrative machine to ensure the desired electoral results, pack the chamber with their own supporters. The traditional politicians, the “old guard”, had during the 1930s become very influential and powerful and the relationship between them still counted for a great deal. The regent still lacked the courage and the political skills to provide a consistent guiding hand. Therefore he relied to a great extent on reliable politicians, and above all on Nūrī as-Saʿīd, to manage Iraqi politics. However, despite mutual trust, they remained rivals: Nūrī often registered the regent’s misjudgement, while ʿAbdalilāh tried to cultivate alternatives or a replacement for Nūrī.

As well as inaugurating a certain degree of cautious democratisation, the circumstances of the war had important effects upon the Iraqi economy, which gradually came to be felt in political terms. The presence of the allied armies of occupation meant a sudden influx of a large body of newcomers with substantial purchasing power, while the absence of normal supplies of manufactured goods from abroad gave local firms and industrialists an obvious incentive to expand or initiate production, and thus facilitated capital accumulation on a larger scale than had previously been possible.³

During the war dramatically increased wealth of the landlords and the tribal shaykhs in comparison with the 1930s and their proportion in the chamber of deputies rose as well. Although these changes served to restore the established structure of power in Iraq, they made little allowance for more deep-seated problems. From the arrival and spread of modern schooling the number of educated young men arose. They were essential to the modernisation of the country, but also posed a danger to political stability. Most of them came from humble origins and looked on with disdain to the men of inherited privilege and wealth who held on to the leading positions in society. When their number exceeded the number of jobs regarded suitable for them to fill, they began to

¹ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya*. [The History of Iraqi Cabinets]. Vol. VI., pp. 104 – 105.

² The daily *al-Achbār*, Baghdad, 17 January 1943.

³ SLUGLETT, M. F., SLUGLETT, P. *Iraq since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*, p. 38.

pose a challenge to the existing order.⁴ Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, the British ambassador to Iraq tried to persuade the regent and the prime minister the existence of this threat and urged them to make appropriate reforms.

The political life in post-war Iraq on the surface appeared stable. The traditional politicians, supported by the landlord-shaykhs, the new urban wealthy, and the upper reaches of the army, seemed firmly entrenched in power. However, beneath the surface, new social groups, motivated by different ideas and aspirations, emerged to challenge establishment values and policy. The young intellectuals adopted forms of an urban “Westernisation” and discussed certain ideas and ideologies to threaten the prevailing system of clientelism. “They were torn between the claims of more or less traditional interest groups and the public nature of Western state models such as democracy represented by the imperialist powers of Britain and France on the one side and the fascist-authoritarian state on the other side.”⁵ In country and city alike, poverty was widespread, yet new oil wealth was creating visible pockets of modernity and presenting Iraqis with prospects for a better future. Although the bulk of the population remained traditional in outlook and social practice, a new generation, reared on Western ideas of nationalism, secularism, and modernity, pursued the search for a new national identity on a new ideological basis.⁶

Upon Prime Minister Nūrī as-Sa‘īd’s resignation the reins of government were taken over by Ḥamdī al-Pāchachī.⁷ The year 1945 raised hopes both among working people and patriotic bourgeoisie that after the end of the war fundamental changes of situation will occur. There was a lot of talking about the restoration of democracy and improving living conditions, but the new government in this respect did not lift a finger.⁸ The ruling circles refused to allow any changes. Martial law remained valid and the situation of working people especially those working during the war for the allied armies, worsened drastically. The contradictions appeared sharply in the area of internal policy, but still more clearly in the area of foreign policy.

Anti-British feelings over persecutions, arrests and executions rose steadily and there reigned general dissatisfaction in Iraqi society. These feelings were stirred by the Palestine question. Antipathy towards the British could be found

⁴ ELLIOT, M. ‘Independent Iraq’. *The Monarchy and British Influence, 1941 – 1958*, p. 17.

⁵ WEIN, P. *Iraqi Arab Nationalism. Authoritarian, totalitarian, and pro-fascist inclinations, 1932 – 1941*, p. 115.

⁶ MARR, P. *The Modern History of Iraq*, p. 95.

⁷ This government was in office from 3.6.1944 to 30.1.1946. In AL-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ‘Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-‘irāqīya*. Vol. VI., p. 204.

⁸ AL-‘AKKĀM, ‘Abdalmīr Hādī. *Tārīkh Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-‘irāqī 1946 – 1958*. [History of the Iraqi Independence Party], p. 11.

at every level of Iraqi society, but there was also a strong pro-British sentiment, especially among the older generation of political leaders. The British were allied with the “old guard” of Iraqi politicians, who personified reaction and corruption. The eruption of revolutionary movements in other Middle Eastern states caused strong repercussions inside Iraq disclosing the fragility of the existing regime and its vulnerability to outside pressures. As these pressures intensified, Iraq was plunged into a series of foreign policy crises, some due to its alliance with Britain, others of the leaders’ own making. All weakened and further isolated the regime from large numbers of its own people.⁹

The war had shattered traditional relations in villages, where the majority of peasants depended on landlords. Before the war the landlords could force the peasants to work on their land and fugitive peasants be brought back by force. During the war the British command depended on a free work force, so the peasants could not be afterwards forced to return.¹⁰ Nevertheless, the landlords retained remarkable influence in society, as they dominated the countryside and the peasants constituted more than 55 per cent of the population. In such unfavourable conditions more and more people sympathised with the underground *Communist Party of Iraq* which had a solid organisational structure and ideologically worked through illegally published and distributed magazines “ash-Sharāra” (the Sparkle) and “al-Qā’ida” (the Base).¹¹

When the war came to an end, political consciousness was aroused and there was an almost universal demand for democratic freedoms promised during the war. The British in general sympathised with the reformers who demanded, among other things, social justice, educational programmes, and agricultural development. Unless such requests were met, the intelligentsia might swing to the left and the communist faction would be buttressed. If the situation deteriorated, the British would find themselves aligned with the corrupt ruling class. They thus faced a dilemma: on the one hand the British favoured reforms; on the other they wished to retain the friendship of those ruling Iraq.

The events of the immediate post-war years were to be of paramount importance in consolidating opposition to Britain and the monarchy. Under the cabinets of Ḥamdī al-Pāchachī and Tawfiq as-Suwaydī between 1944 – 1946, when Nūrī as-Sa’īd had fallen temporarily out of favour as the regent and had

⁹ Al-JA’FARĪ, Muḥammad Ḥamdī. Inqilāb al-waṣīy fī al-‘Irāq. [The Regent’s coup in Iraq], pp. 44 – 45.

¹⁰ PALONCY, E. Irāk [Iraq], p. 20.

¹¹ BATATU, H. The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq. A Study of Iraq’s Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba’thists and Free Officers, p. 501; LAQUEUR, W. Z. Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East, pp. 183 – 189.

become tired of being dictated to and was attempting to assert his independence,¹² a total of sixteen labour unions, twelve of which were controlled by the communists, were licensed. The largest unions were formed in the country's most important industrial undertakings, Baṣra port, and the Iraqi railways,¹³ which were both under British management. Major strikes for higher wages took place on the railways and the port.¹⁴

The government of Ḥamdī al-Pāchachī, which had become entirely unfitted for the changed conditions of the time, made no move which showed any inclination towards progress or granting democratic freedoms. The victory of the British Labour Party in the general elections of 1945 was particularly discussed in political circles in Baghdad and the press as favouring the liberal and democratic forces in Iraq. The regent during his visit to Britain in July 1945 stated that he would discuss changes to bring the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 1930 into accord with post-war conditions.¹⁵ But the government of Ḥamdī al-Pāchachī paid no attention to the new spirit, and the security regulations, censorship, and martial law continued.¹⁶ However, the calls for change became louder and the Iraqi newspapers multiplied these voices.

Although Iraq, like the rest of the Middle East, experienced a post-war wave of resurgent nationalism, she did not have such violent anti-British manifestations as those in Egypt. This calm could be attributed partly to the less sophisticated character of Iraqi political circles, as contrasted to the Egyptian, and partly to the nearness of the Soviet Union. To this we may add that, in contrast to Egyptian King Fārūq, long resentful at the personal humiliations inflicted by the British, Iraq's regent, °Abdalilāh ibn °Alī, owed much to Britain and as a Hashimite favoured British-Arab understanding.¹⁷

Demands of the opposition for political changes were ignored and the regime relied on the police to suppress disturbances and also on electoral frauds to secure a docile parliament. There were traditional politicians, who were aware the necessity of implementing political and social reforms, but nothing happened, except some platonic endeavours that were met with no response. The post-war period began with one such attempt, worth recounting because it

¹² BATATU, H. *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, pp. 348 – 350.

¹³ OGANESJAN, N. O. *Nacional'no-osvoboditel'noe dviženie v Irake, 1917 – 1958*, s. 311.

¹⁴ SLUGLETT, M. F., SLUGLETT, P. *Iraq since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*, p. 39.

¹⁵ KIRK, G. *The Middle East 1945 – 1950*, p. 149.

¹⁶ KHADDURI, M. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 253.

¹⁷ LENCZOWSKI, G. *The Middle East in World Affairs*, p. 250.

illustrates so well the problems confronting the regime and the inadequacy of its methods in dealing with them.”¹⁸

The Regent, Prince ʿAbdalilāh, owing to continued protests made by the representatives of various social groupings, showed increasing interest in domestic politics.¹⁹ He both recognised the need for change and wished to profit from it personally. Realising how unpopular he had become for his cooperation with the British during the war and for his suppression of the Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī movement. He now strived to gain some public support by introducing a new political direction which would remove the most flagrant causes for social discontent. In a meeting of deputies and senators in parliament on 27 December 1945 without consulting the prime minister, he made a speech in which he called for a new modified treaty with Britain, for the formation of political parties, promised full freedom for their activities and the inauguration of economic and social reforms.²⁰ He also pleaded for a new electoral law, for measures to improve social security and unemployment, some redistribution of wealth and a political “open door” for the younger, educated generation.²¹ Obviously the international situation inspired the regent to deliver such a speech in agreement with democratic propaganda on which the allies concentrated in their struggle against fascist and nazi dictatorships.²²

The regent’s speech reflected a realisation of this political consciousness and the rise of a “new force” in politics which, as subsequent events demonstrated, could be destructive if not permitted to play its role through constitutional channels. For many, the regent’s speech came as a distinct encouragement. The immediate reactions to the regent’s speech were favourable, but the problem for the regime was how to implement this policy. The elder politicians and the reactionaries viewed it with grave suspicion. The government of Ḥamdī al-Pāchachī, which represented the vested interests of the elder politicians, failed to honour the regent’s promises in spite of criticism in parliament. Knowing that he no longer had the support of the regent and was no longer able to control his

¹⁸ MARR, P. *The Modern History of Iraq*, p. 96.

¹⁹ NĀṢIRĪ, Ṭāriq. ʿAbdalilāh al-waṣīy ʿalā ʿarsh al-ʿIrāq, 1939 – 1958. Ḥayātuhu wa dawruhu as-siyāsī. [ʿAbdalilāh the Iraqi Regent. His Life and Political Role]. Vol. II., p. 350.

²⁰ The daily *Sawt al-Ahālī*, 28 December 1945.

²¹ AL-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya*. Vol. VI., pp. 313 – 316.

²² AL-KUBBA, Muḥammad Maḥdī. *Mudhakkirātī fī ṣamīm al-aḥdāt*, 1918 – 1958. [My Memoirs from the centre of events], pp. 110 – 111.

cabinet, the prime minister tendered his resignation on 29 January 1946.²³ The regent's new ideas were surprising as he more often than his predecessors used the right given to the ruler, to dissolve the chamber of deputies and he had ordered changes in the constitution to be made to increase the legal capacity of the monarch. He undertook that step in harmony with British policy, which supported liberal regimes in several countries of its sphere of influence.²⁴

After the government's resignation the political crisis lasted more than three weeks. The resistance of the extreme right was hard to overcome as the traditional politicians wanted a strong government that could check the unwelcome liberal trends. It became clear that the representatives of "iron fist" policy are unsuitable for pursuing a progressive policy. The crisis was resolved by inviting Tawfīq as-Suwaydī, an elder statesman, to form a new government on 23 February 1946.²⁵ The new government was composed of men sympathetic to liberalism who were determined to carry out the policy of reforms promised in the regent's speech.²⁶ The main burden was laid on the ministry of the interior which was entrusted to Sa'd Šāliḥ, known for his honesty and genuine patriotism.²⁷ It was formed to fulfil the regent's promises by granting certain democratic freedoms in order to win the confidence of the new generation and liberal elements.²⁸ In light of previous constant state restrictions on the institutions and procedures of democracy, the extent of promised political liberalism was questionable. Needless to say that what pertained during the coming years "was by no means a shining example of Jeffersonian democracy".²⁹

On 5 March 1946 Tawfīq as-Suwaydī presented the program of his government in parliament. He promised transition from unnatural conditions in Iraq caused by war to normal peaceful life: abolition of war regulations and restrictions, closing down of concentration camps, releasing of the imprisoned,

²³ The official daily *al-Waqā'ir al-irāqīya*, 31 January 1946; Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid 'Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-irāqīya*. Vol. VI., p. 317.

²⁴ Al-'AQQĀD, Šalāḥ. *Al-Mashriq al-'arabī al-mu'āšir*. [The Contemporary Arab East], p. 223.

²⁵ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid 'Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-irāqīya*. [The History of Iraqi Cabinets]. Vol. VII., p. 7.

²⁶ The official daily *al-Waqā'ir al-irāqīya*, 25 february 1946.

²⁷ ŠĀLIḤ, Zakī. *Al-'Irāq al-mu'āšir*. [Contemporary Iraq], p. 122.

²⁸ KHADDURI, M. *Independent Iraq, 1932 – 1958*, p. 255.

²⁹ DAWISHA, Adeed. *Iraq. A Political History from Independence to Occupation*, p. 124.

cancelling of press censorship and giving permission to form political parties.³⁰ The cabinet started with fair hopes: although, surprisingly, no budget for 1946 – 1947 was submitted, the state finances were still treated as giving no cause for immediate alarm. The foreign policy was not fully in line with the ideas of the regent, who wanted closer cooperation with Turkey. Tawfiq as-Suwaydī proposed to revise the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of 1930, and to follow a strong pan-Arab policy with a view to strengthening the Arab league rather than to pursue an alliance with Turkey at the expense of Arab solidarity.³¹ Although – at the regent’s suggestion – the cabinet approved the treaty with Turkey, it made a reservation that it should not contravene the Arab League Pact.³² The new electoral law long under preparation was passed, substantially improving and liberalising the existing procedures. It did not, however, introduce direct one-stage election, as preferred by the opposition.³³ Then, on 20 April 1946 Sa^cd Šālīh, the Minister of Interior gave permission for licensing five new political parties. The only party that was not permitted, was the *Party for the liberation of Fatherland* (Ḥizb at-taḥarrur al-waṭanī), under the leadership of Muḥammad ash-Shabībī, as it was only a cover name for the *Iraqi Communist Party*.³⁴

In pre-war Iraq there were two oppositional political currents: 1. regional (quṭrī), relative to the state, and 2. national, or pan-Arab (qawmī). The regional current based on popular ideas of democracy and socialism, has since the 1930s been represented by the *Association of kinsfolk or countrymen* (Jamā^cat al-ahālī), established by educated young men. They tried to add to patriotism understood as a mere political independence, its social dimension, to care sufficiently for the interests of the “countrymen” (al-ahālī), and their social and economic situation. However, gradually to personal differences appeared in the leftist camp. One group, led by ^cAbdalfattāḥ Ibrāhīm stressed socialism, while the other group around Kamil al-Chādirchī emphasised democracy. The second current, the rightists, was made up of the pan-Arabs and members of the *al-Muthannā* club.³⁵ Its task was to join together national elements, to spread

³⁰ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ^cAbdarrazzāq. Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-^cirāqīya. Vol. VII., pp. 10 – 11.

³¹ As-SUWAJDĪ, Tawfiq. Mudhakkirātī. Niṣf qarn min tārīkh al-^cIrāq wa al-qaḍīya al-^carabīya. [My Memoires. A Half Century from the History of Iraq and the Arab Question], p. 438.

³² The Pact of the Arab League, 22 March 1945. In HUREWITZ, J. C. *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East. A Documentary Record*. Vol. II., pp. 245 – 248.

³³ Al-^cAQQĀD, Šalāḥ. Al-Mashriq al-^carabī al-mu^cāṣir, p. 232.

³⁴ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sajjid ^cAbdarrazzāq. Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-^cirāqīja. Vol. VII., p. 25.

³⁵ Named after al-Muthannā ibn Ḥāritha ash-Shaybānī, one of the leading commanders during the Muslim conquest of southern Iraq in the seventh century A. D.

national pride, advocate the notion of a one Arab nation, to promote Arab culture in society, primarily among intelligentsia and students. Chairman of the club was Dr. Šā'ib Shawkat and his deputy was Muḥammad Mahdī Kubba. The club was closed after the suppression of the Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī movement in 1941 and many of its members were put in jail. There existed a disagreement between the leftists and the rightists as well over the question whether the Ahālī group should be transformed into a political party: while the leftists wanted it to be transformed into a formal political opposition to the government – in compliance with the law –, the rightists preferred to retain their personal contacts with government officials and army officers.³⁶

The new parties, formed mainly on the basis of domestic issues, were: 1. The *Patriotic Democratic Party* (al-Ḥizb al-waṭanī ad-dīmuqrāṭī), left of centre, was a direct outgrowth of the previous Ahālī group with its progressive traditions of the 1930s. It was headed by Kamil al-Chādirchī; 2. The *Patriotic Union Party* (Ḥizb al-ittihād al-waṭanī) farther to the left, represented the radical bourgeoisie. Its founder and chairman, ʿAbdalfattāḥ Ibrāhīm, was influenced by Marxist ideas and advocated radical social reform, but hesitated applying revolutionary methods of political struggle.³⁷ 3. The *People's Party* (Ḥizb ash-shaʿb) had been the most leftist of all the permitted parties, supported and even infiltrated by the communists. The party leader, ʿAzīz Sharīf, was a lawyer and a prominent member of the Iraqi Partisans of Peace movement. 4. The *Liberal Party* (Ḥizb al-aḥrār) founded in 1939 was now revived with a modest reform programme made attractive by an anti-British colouring.³⁸ It was a numerous centre party, founded and led by Tawfīq as-Suwaydī.

The fifth licensed party was the *Iraqi Independence Party* (Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-ʿirāqī) which advocated a strong Arab nationalist policy and moderate social reform. It resumed the activities of the pan-Arab *Muthannā club* which were aimed at furthering culture and learning among young people. The club during the years 1935 – 1941 worked for the protection of cultural heritage, for uniting people and for the rejection of damaging ideas. After the second British occupation the club was closed, its members were dispersed, however its nucleus remained preserved and became the foundation of a new party. Those men on 12 March 1946 sent an application for the registering of a political party named *Independence Party* (Ḥizb al-istiqlāl)³⁹ to which they enclosed the

³⁶ Al-ʿAKKĀM, ʿAbdāmīr Hādī. Tārīkh Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-ʿirāqī 1946 – 1958, pp. 13 – 14.

³⁷ Al-ʿAQQĀD, Šalāḥ. Al-Mashriq al-ʿarabī al-muʿāšir, p. 229.

³⁸ LONGRIGG, S. H. Iraq 1900 to 1950. A Political, Social and Economic History, p. 325.

³⁹ They were: Muḥammad Mahdī Kubba, Dāwud as-Saʿdī, Khalīl Kanna, Ismāʿīl

proposed programme of the Party. Among signatories of the application were also two lawyers, Muḥammad Šiddīq Shanshal and Muḥammad Fā'iq as-Sāmarrā'ī, but the minister let their names be left out for fear that it might cause displeasure of the regent and the British and lead to a rejection of approval. They both joined the party after its licensing. Many of its members were either former members of the pan-Arab *Muthannā club* or sympathisers with the Rashīd °Alī al-Kaylānī movement. Brought to date by accretions of students and malcontent intelligentsia. The leader of the party was Muḥammad Maḥdī Kubba from a well-known *shī'ī* family and the secretary general was a *sunni* Muslim Fā'iq as-Sāmarrā'ī.

When on 2 April 1946 the *Independence Party* obtained the license the organisational committee convened the first congress of the party to 19 April to elect the leading functionaries and approve the programme. Muḥammad Maḥdī Kubba was elected chairman. His deputy became Ibrāhīm ar-Rāwī and secretary general a *sunni* Muslim Fā'iq as-Sāmarrā'ī. Accountant was Ismā'īl Ġānim and treasurer °Abdarrahmān al-Khuḍayr. In the leadership were also Dāwud as-Sa°dī, Khalīl Kanna and °Abdarrazzāq az-Zāhir. The *Iraqi Independence Party* (Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-°irāqī) was markedly a right wing party with a solid organisational structure. The party from the beginning sharply promoted Arab nationalist policy. Many of its members were either former members of the *Muthannā club* or sympathisers of Rashīd °Alī al-Kaylānī from the anti-British bourgeois camp whom joined students and dissatisfied intelligentsia. Within one year of its foundation, the number of registered members of the party reached 5 450.⁴⁰

The party based its foreign policy on unfriendliness towards Turkey and to Great Britain but “neutrality” towards the Soviet Union. In the Palestine question it supported the *mufīī* Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḥusajnī against Hashemite aspirations.⁴¹ In the domestic policy the party demanded the strengthening of normal constitutional life and granting the right of the people in improving parliamentary electoral law so that it would rightly represent the aspirations of the people. It also demanded the also strengthening independence of the judicial system, to take heed of the army, improvement of its armament and stiffening its national consciousness.⁴²

The analysis of the economic programme shows, that the party demanded agrarian reform. Though it did not fix the limit of land holding, it wanted the

Ġānim, Fāḍil °Abbās Mu°alla, °Alī al-Qazwīnī, °Abdalmuḥsin ad-Dūrī, Razzūq Šammās and °Abdarrazzāq az-Zāhir. In *Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sajjid °Abdarrazzāq. Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-°irāqīja*. Vol. VII., p. 25.

⁴⁰ Al-°AKKĀM, °Abdāmīr Hādī. *Tārīkh Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-°irāqī 1946 – 1958*, p. 29.

⁴¹ Al-°AKKĀM, °Abdāmīr Hādī. *Tārīkh Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-°irāqī 1946 – 1958*, p. 33.

⁴² Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid °Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-°irāqīya*. Vol. VII., p. 27.

land to be justly divided among peasants who cultivated it within farming cooperatives with equal acreage for every family. The programme recommended great industrial projects to be state mainly undertaking in cases when private investment is insufficient.⁴³ This indicates that the party did not consider the nationalisation of existing projects, only the participation of the state in new projects.

The party's official press organ was *Liwā' al-istiqlāl* (The banner of independence),⁴⁴ which first appeared on 4 August 1946. On the front page under the name of the newspaper was mentioned Khalīl Kanna as of the editor in chief and Qāsim Ḥamūdī as the responsible director. The newspaper was closed by virtue of decree No. 19 of 1954 disbanding political parties.⁴⁵ Most of the articles in the *Banner of Independence* were written by Muḥammad Ṣiddīq Shanshal, Muḥammad Fā'iq as-Sāmarrā'ī, and Muḥammad Mahdī Kubba. Besides the official newspaper the party during the first year issued different pamphlets and leaflets, however, in limited numbers.⁴⁶

The year 1946 was a stormy one in Iraq. Despite the flowering of new political parties, the liberalisation programme of the government of Tawfīq as-Suwaydī was short-lived. During its short span in office the government was able to introduce several important changes: martial law was ended, the restrictions imposed on the press and public meetings during the war were removed and the remaining internment camp was closed.⁴⁷ The spring of 1946 was marked with struggle to abolish the notorious Anglo-Iraqi treaty which represented the most serious obstacle to the democratisation of society, where foreign policy problems were mixed with domestic troubles. The political parties – permitted and initially even encouraged by the regime – aided by the spread of press and radio and by an expanded educational system, managed to activate the new socioeconomic groups, especially the educated middle class and the working class. But the presence of these groups in vulnerable sectors of the economy and society brought about a possible danger because their influence was

⁴³ Al-KUBBA, Muḥammad Mahdī. *Mudhakkirātī fī ṣamīm al-aḥdāt*, 1918 – 1958, pp. 176 – 180. Al-°AKKĀM, °Abdalamīr Hādī. *Tārīkh Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-°irāqī 1946 – 1958*, p. 40 – 43.

⁴⁴ Al-°AKKĀM, °Abdalamīr Hādī. *Tārīkh Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-°irāqī 1946 – 1958*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid °Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-°irāqīya*. [The History of Iraqi Cabinets]. Vol. IX., p. 150.

⁴⁶ Al-°AKKĀM, °Abdalamīr Hādī. *Tārīkh Ḥizb al-istiqlāl al-°irāqī 1946 – 1958*, p. 31.

⁴⁷ At-TIKRĪTĪ, Salmān. *Al-waṣīy °Abdalilāh ibn °Alī yabḥath °an °arsh*, 1939 – 1953. [The Regent °Abdalilāh ibn °Alī seeks a throne], pp. 97 – 98.

increasingly evident in demonstrations, strikes and disturbances which further weakened the regime.⁴⁸

The demand for the abolition of the unequal Anglo-Iraqi treaty was aimed not only at the considerable weakening of the position of the British, but also at the Iraqi extreme right, which could proceed with an antipopular policy first of all thanks to the support of the British imperialists. The British armed forces, mainly the units of the RAF at the air bases of al-Ḥabbānīya and ash-Shu'ayba, were a permanent threat for patriotic forces and support for the reactionary forces. In the struggle for the abolition of the treaty the leftist forces, mainly the communists, were most active. They used their influence to press this demand through the licensed political parties and the trade unionist movement. But the Iraqi reaction was well aware that the abolition of the treaty would jeopardise the position of the supporters of the monarchy.

The government of Tawfīq as-Suwaydī, which was formed to grant certain democratic freedoms in order to win the confidence of the new generation and liberal elements, was opposed by the leading elder politicians, who strictly refused the “liberalisation manoeuvre”. Various leaders arose – heads of little groups of supporters – but although political parties were in 1946 permitted to operate again, the Iraqis as a whole were unable to participate in their country's political life.⁴⁹ The elder politicians reacted violently to the new popular force. The regent himself had to recognise that he had acted too hastily and he eventually forced the cabinet to resign. This was achieved by a political ploy: the senate did not approve a temporary budget for two months.⁵⁰ It was thus that the government, though it was energetically trying to carry out its reform programme, was forced to resign on 30 May 1946.

To rescue the situation, the regent on 1 June 1946 chose mayor of Baghdad, Arshad al-ʿUmarī, who in the senate led the ploy against Tawfīq as-Suwaydī. Arshad, professedly a neutral, was known as an authoritative personality and therefore – on the head of a caretaker government – was charged with the task of conducting the general election that was constitutionally due within the following year, and ensure victory of the traditional forces.⁵¹ Although he tried to establish peace and order, the period of his reign was characterised with growing political and social tension because in his effort to pacify the opposition he soon embarked on the outworn repressive policy of “iron hand” with such enthusiasm that he succeeded in alienating virtually all sectors of opinion. In doing so, he caused the regent and others to doubt his ability to

⁴⁸ MARR, P. *The Modern History of Iraq*, pp. 95 – 96.

⁴⁹ HOLLINGWORTH, C. *The Arabs & the West*, p. 66.

⁵⁰ AS-SUWAYDĪ, Tawfīq. *Mudhakkirātī. Nişf qarn min tārīkh al-ʿIrāq wa al-qaḍīya al-ʿarabīya*, pp. 440 – 443.

⁵¹ KIRK, G. *The Middle East 1945 – 1950*, p. 150.

contain the developing social unrest.⁵² On 28 June 1946 due to the latest developments in Palestine, the *Anti Zionist League* (al-Jamā'ca al-mu'ādiya li-ṣ-ṣahyūnīya) organised in Baghdad a peaceful protest demonstration. Although the demonstration was ostensibly directed against the oppressive rule in Palestine, the communists, who were denied permission to organise a formal party, used this society to promote their activities.⁵³ More than three thousand workers and students marched through the city demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Iraq and the demonstration ended in disturbances. The government being violently attacked in the opposition press responded first by warning and then by suspending the offending newspapers.⁵⁴

The growth of the national liberation movement in the Arab countries caused grave concern both of the British government and the Arab reaction. It came into the open at the sessions of the leaders of the Arab League in Inshāṣ (Egypt – May 1946) and in Blūdān (Syria – July 1946), where the monarchs and presidents agreed *inter alia* the common procedure against the communists.⁵⁵ As a result of Arshad al-'Umarī's, energetic reaction to the left-wing agitation, there could no longer be any claim to impartiality. When the regent returned from another visit to Britain he was dissatisfied and decided for change. So the premier tendered on 16 November 1946 his resignation and on British recommendation the regent called upon the most experienced Iraqi politician, Nūrī as-Sa'īd, to form the new cabinet with instructions to hold new elections.⁵⁶ The period of political thaw was over and the regent's policy returned repressive. The British supported the Iraqi monarchy, the regent upheld the authoritarian policies of his ministers against liberal tendencies; and the cumulative result came full circle to the British.

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⁵² TRIPP, Ch. *A History of Iraq*, p. 117.

⁵³ KHALĪL, 'Ādil Ġafarī. *Aḥzāb al-mu'āraḍa al-'alanīya fī al-'Irāq, 1946 – 1954*. [The Legal opposition parties in Iraq], p. 110.

⁵⁴ KHADDURI, Majid. *Independent Iraq, 1932 – 1958*, p. 256.

⁵⁵ *Noveishaya istoriya arabskikh stran, 1917 – 1966*. [A Modern History of the Arab Countries], p. 174.

⁵⁶ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid 'Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-'irāqīya*. Vol. VII., p. 130.

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