

## IRAQ: THE AMBITIONS OF KING GHĀZĪ AND THE POLICY OF YĀSĪN AL-HĀSHIMĪ (1935 – 1936)\*

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Tribal grievances in Iraq had mostly been triggered by glaring injustice connected with the land and irrigation rights of particular tribes. However, some of the issues related to the grievances of the *Shi'a* as a whole.<sup>1</sup> The shaykhs also drew up a petition asking the king to dismiss the Prime Minister ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī and to dissolve parliament. When this produced no result, direct action followed. In January 1935 unrest erupted in the mid-Euphrates region. It was at this point that Hikmat Sulaymān, an opponent of the prime minister and a leading member of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*, urged his old friend General Bakr Ṣidqī (commanding officer of the southern region) to refuse to suppress the tribal unrest. Faced by this and by dissent within his cabinet, ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī resigned. His successor Jamīl al-Midfāʿī was then confronted by a growing tribal rebellion in the Dīwānīya region, led by two powerful tribal shaykhs, ʿAbdalwāḥid al-Ḥājj Sikkar and Shaʿlān al-ʿAṭīya, who had been in close touch with Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, leader of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*. When Ṭāḥā al-Hāshimī, the chief of staff of the Iraqi army and brother of Yāsīn, refused to crush the revolt, Jamīl al-Midfāʿī's suspicions of a plot were confirmed and he too resigned. Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, portrayed as the only man who could save the situation (because he had largely instigated it), was then asked by the king to form a government in March 1935, having effectively carried out a *coup d'état* against his rivals.

**Key words:** King Ghāzī's ambitions and Yāsīn al-Hāshimī's policy; silent struggle between Yāsīn and Ghāzī; support from the British Embassy and Nūrī as-Saʿīd to the measures of Yāsīn; the Royal court and the opposition to the policy of Yāsīn; the measures of Yāsīn on the isolation of the king from the people and the Royal Court; Yāsīn's plans aiming to proclaim a republic.

Though the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* (Ḥizb al-ikhā al-waṭanī) formed the dominant group in the cabinet, it was reminiscent of the coalition cabinet of

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<sup>1</sup> Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets]. Vol. IV.

1933. As in that fateful year, cabinet members were drawn almost exclusively from among the strongest and most experienced men of the inner circle of Arab *Sunnī* nationalists that the late King Fayṣal had originally brought to power. The cabinet's policies epitomized the outlook of this group. It was headed by Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, an Ottoman-educated army officer who had fought with the Turks in World War I, although he had been an early adherent of Arab nationalism and member of *al-ʿAhd*.<sup>2</sup> Unlike Nūrī as-Saʿīd, however, the new prime minister had not been a supporter of Fayṣal and the British. A strong yet realistic politician, he had earlier led opposition to the treaty and the British connection, but had also participated in cabinets during the 1920s. Yāsīn al-Hāshimī's leadership of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*, his organization of the opposition coalition of 1930, and his role in helping to mobilize the 1931 strike had brought him to the first rank of politicians.<sup>3</sup>

The appointment of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī as Prime Minister on 17 March 1935 as a result of tribal riots led to the assumption that future governments would not be changed on the command of the king, but on the command of the tribes. The cabinet included respected personalities,<sup>4</sup> but there was no representative of the left-wing group under Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman, and the omission of Ḥikmat Sulaymān, to his keen resentment, was to have serious consequences.<sup>5</sup> At the same time expectations arose that the future development of Iraq would be linked to Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, who had acquired more power than any prime minister before him. Those who were watching Iraqi policy feared that Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, encouraged by the fact that the king was still inexperienced, would try to gain supreme power in the country, to bring about a change in the constitution and to establish a dictatorship. Simultaneously the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* imposed its will on the king and, on the other hand, British interference in the internal affairs of the country significantly lessened.<sup>6</sup> There

<sup>2</sup> Al-ʿAhd (the Covenant) a secret association of Arab officers in the Ottoman army founded in 1914. In ANTONIUS, G. *The Arab Awakening. The Story of the Arab National Movement*, p. 119.

<sup>3</sup> MARR, Ph. *The Modern History of Iraq*, p. 65.

<sup>4</sup> They were: Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī, interior; Raʿūf al-Baḥrānī, finance; Muḥammad Zakī al-Baṣrī, justice; Nūrī as-Saʿīd, foreign affairs; Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī, defence; Muḥammad Riḍā ash-Shabībī, education; Muḥammad Amīn Zakī, economy and communications. In Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq as-siyāsī al-ḥadīth* [The Modern Political History of Iraq], Vol. III, p. 120.

<sup>5</sup> LONGRIGG, S. H. *Iraq, 1900 to 1950. A Political, Social, and Economic History*, p. 241.

<sup>6</sup> 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'athists and Free Officers*, p. 202.

emerge parallels with the practices of Mustafa Kemal in Turkey, of Reza Shah in Iran and also the experience of Adolph Hitler in Germany.

Within a week the tribal rebellion was over, at least that part of it led by the allies of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī. It was followed by the spectacular entry of the two chief rebel shaykhs into Baghdad, accompanied by large armed retinues determined to present a petition to the king and to remind Yāsīn al-Hāshimī of their power. As Charles Tripp states, “this curious month of the tribal ‘invasion’ of Baghdad in April 1935 can be seen as a tribal swansong, reproducing as theatre that which has once been a real threat: the depredation of the city by rural tribesmen. It convinced many in Baghdad that this was a manifestation of the ‘old Iraq’ which needed to be eliminated by the march of progress. For the *Sunnī* ruling élites it also presented an opportunity to portray the *Shīʿī* tribesmen, clerics and shaykhs as obstacles to the needs of a modern state.”<sup>7</sup>

The British Embassy assessed the situation by encouraging Yāsīn al-Hāshimī to make substantial changes to the constitution, because the king had neither experience nor personality nor influence, so that there would be little opposition if he were transferred abroad. The Embassy realized that Yāsīn al-Hāshimī in fulfilling his plans could profit from the fact that his brother was chief of the general staff and the police too were under his influence. The prime minister could easily send Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī abroad, as his influence in the country was insignificant, so the only problem could be Nūrī as-Saʿīd. As far as Britain’s relationship with Iraq was concerned, the ambassador was sure that Yāsīn al-Hāshimī had no intention of changing this relationship.<sup>8</sup>

According to Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, the country’s policy should be guided by the principle that the king reigned but did not rule. It was sufficient for him to achieve what he longed for – to play the role of the true ruler of the state, without the need to make changes to the constitution regarding the position of the king. The objective of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī was to make his relationship with the king like the relationship of Mussolini with King Victor Emmanuel III in Italy, i.e. that King Ghāzī would remain merely the symbol of the monarchy.<sup>9</sup> From the outset he tried to dispell the fears of the king and dynasty about the spread of rumours that he wanted to become a dictator. Therefore, in the government programme he stated that he would first try to make the

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<sup>7</sup> TRIPP, Ch. *A History of Iraq*, p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> SHĪR MUḤAMMAD, Suʿād Raʿūf. *Nūrī as-Saʿīd wa dawruhu fī siyāsa al-ʿirāqīya, 1932 – 1945* [Nūrī as-Saʿīd and his role in Iraqi Politics], p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> AL-QAJSI, Sāmī ʿAbdalḥāfiz. *Yāsīn al-Hāshimī wa dawruhu fī as-siyāsa al-ʿirāqīya bayna ʿamay 1922 – 1936* [Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and his Role in Iraqi Politics in the Years 1922 – 1936], Vol. I, p. 7.

government work in accord with the constitution.<sup>10</sup> In his first speech as Prime Minister, Yāsīn al-Hāshimī made some remarks upon the current situation and pointed to the loss of confidence which was not new, but had deeper roots. Among the main causes he included the fact that many representatives of the state and civil servants were not fulfilling their obligations in accordance with the laws and regulations. He stressed that they should be the guarantors for spreading of justice, law and order among the people.<sup>11</sup> In a sympathetic gesture towards the king he ordered the cancelling of the sums of money that the royal Treasury had borrowed from the central Treasury and tried to raise the king's allowance, given the fact that he bore the military rank of Field Marshal.<sup>12</sup>

Despite all the above-mentioned steps, King Ghāzī continued to fear that Yāsīn al-Hāshimī was going to become a dictator, especially when some newspapers were suggesting that possibility.<sup>13</sup> For his part the prime minister in fact adopted some measures implying that he was striving for that objective. The coming to power of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* coincided with the adjournment of parliament; but the party leaders, who had bitterly complained of the previous 'Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī elections, made up their minds in favour of dissolution. "A Royal will (irāda) was issued on 9 April 1935, dissolving the chamber of deputies on the grounds that the present situation between the legislature and the executive demands such co-operation as to enable the latter to carry out important reforms."<sup>14</sup> Such co-operation between the legislature and the executive, had virtually led to the domination of the legislature by the executive. The next step was the dissolution of all political parties, in order to merge them into one organisation, stop the opposition press and monitor the activities of the *Ahālī group* (Association of the countrymen), and those with left-wing leanings and their removal from state institutions.<sup>15</sup> In addition, he

<sup>10</sup> AL-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid 'Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq as-siyāsī al-ḥadīth* [The Modern Political History of Iraq], Vol. III, p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in AL-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid 'Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], Vol. IV, pp. 82–83.

<sup>12</sup> FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 98.

<sup>13</sup> The Daily *al-Istiqlāl*, 10 June 1935. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939*, p. 99.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted in KHADDURI, Majid. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 58.

<sup>15</sup> ḤADĪD, Muḥammad. *Mudakkirātī. Aṣ-Ṣirāʿ min ajli ad-dīmuqrāṭīya fī al-ʿIrāq* [My Memories. The Struggle for Democracy in Iraq], p. 113; WIEN, P. *Iraqi Arab*

began to push the king aside from the real centre of power by attempting to reduce his activities in areas that could increase his esteem and popularity both as king and supreme commander of the armed forces in several ways.

Before the government proceeded to hold new elections, the leading ministers of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* decided to dissolve their own party and then the ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī's *Party of Patriotic Unity* (Ḥizb al-waḥda al-waṭanīya).<sup>16</sup> Such a decision was obviously inspired by the decline of the party system, but mainly by Yāsīn al-Hāshimī's desire to have a free hand in the conduct of public affairs. Since the whole party system was tottering, the dissolution of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* aroused little criticism.<sup>17</sup>

It has been mentioned that King Ghāzī was interested in the Iraqi army, which he wanted to expand and to provide the troops with modern armament, with the result that the officers entered into warm relations: they took him for a man who intended to fulfil the expectations of the military. Now when Yāsīn al-Hāshimī wanted to take over that responsibility from the king, he showed great interest in increasing the size of the army to four regular divisions and improving its equipment.<sup>18</sup> To this end he carried out a reorganisation of the ministry of defence, where new departments were created on new foundations in order to put into practice the principle of decentralisation. He ordered the setting up of a factory for manufacturing rifles and bayonets for equipping the police and army units. In the ministry of defence new specialists were engaged with a view to developing the air force to provide for the security of the country. Military workshops were built, which were to ensure the maintenance of weapons in a state ready for action.<sup>19</sup> He also supported the purchase of weapons, so the ministry of defence was able to buy weapons for 70 thousand *dīnārs*, including over 20,000 rifles and about 20 million cartridges (pieces of ammunition) from Czechoslovakia,<sup>20</sup> and it also bought 11 second-hand

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*Nationalism, Authoritarian, Totalitarian, and Pro-fascist Inclinations, 1932 – 1941*, p. 10.

<sup>16</sup> MARR, Ph. *The Modern History of Iraq*, p. 67.

<sup>17</sup> BUṬṬĪ, Rūfāʿīl. Al-Hāshimī and his Great Experiment. In the Daily *al-Bilād* (Baghdad), 2 May 1935. Quoted in KHADDURI, Majid. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 58.

<sup>18</sup> AL-QAYSI, Sāmī ʿAbdalḥāfīz. *Yāsīn al-Hāshimī wa dawruhu fī as-siyāsa al-ʿirāqīya bajna ʿamay 1922 – 1936* [Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and his Role in Iraqi Politics in the Years 1922 – 1936], Vol. II, p. 242.

<sup>19</sup> The Daily *al-Bilād*, 3 July 1935. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsat al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 100.

<sup>20</sup> AḤMAD, Ibrāhīm Khalīl, ḤUMAJDĪ, Jaʿfar ʿAbbās. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq al-muʿāṣir* [The Contemporary History of Iraq], p. 86.

cannons from Belgium. In the same way as King Ghāzī, he devoted particular attention to the air force and in July 1935, he approached the ministers of justice, finance, transport and public works with a request to submit proposals to secure stable financial resources to increase the number of aircraft in the air force. Then he wrote to all ministries and urged all their employees to support the *Association of Iraqi Aviation* (Jamʿīyat aṭ-ṭayarān al-ʿiraqīya), which sought to strengthen the air force.<sup>21</sup> He also devoted attention to the navy.

Yāsīn al-Hāshimī appeared as a rival of the king also in the supervision of the youth movement, which promoted the military spirit among the youth. This became obvious when he took over control of the paramilitary Iraqi Youth Movement named *al-Futūwa* and under his leadership attempted to make of it an association, in order to promote the discipline of the movement and disseminate its principles among the members through training and lectures, which were very popular.<sup>22</sup> He persuaded several colleagues from the army who had passed through military establishments in Istanbul, or who had fought in the First World War to engage in this activity. Membership of the Iraqi *Futūwa* movement including the wearing of uniforms and the organization of summer camps was very popular among young boys.<sup>23</sup> The prime minister had been carefully watching the implementation of the *Futūwa* movement programme and ordered the ministry of defence to provide students with enough instructors from among the army officers and to supply them with everything needed to carry out the training tasks. He urged the relevant staff at the ministry of education when setting up the curricula not to forget their responsibility for the new generation, which should learn the history of national heroes.<sup>24</sup> The prime minister wanted to extend the scope of the *Futūwa* movement to the peasant youth too.

In the sphere of national education Yāsīn al-Hāshimī began with the defence of Arab interests.<sup>25</sup> He played an important role in the promotion of the anti-British Palestinian uprising, which broke out in 1936. He sent the insurgents

<sup>21</sup> The Daily *al-Bilād*, 29 July 1935. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 100.

<sup>22</sup> BASHKIN, O. *The Other Iraq. Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, p. 232; WIEN, P. *Iraqi Arab Nationalism, Authoritarian, Totalitarian, and Pro-Fascist Inclinations, 1932 – 1941*, p. 75.

<sup>23</sup> LONGRIGG, S. H. *Iraq, 1900 to 1950. A Political, Social, and Economic History*, p. 272.

<sup>24</sup> SIMON, R. S. *Iraq between the Two World Wars; the Creation and Implementation of a Nationalist Ideology*, p. 88.

<sup>25</sup> KHADDURI, M. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 64.

money, weapons and ammunition and issued secret instructions to some provincial governors (*mutaṣarrıfs*) in the Euphrates area to facilitate with the help of the tribes the collection of weapons, equipment and ammunition to support the Palestinian insurgents, appealing to Arab honour.<sup>26</sup> The prime minister also supported the Syrians in their struggle against the French mandate and ordered Iraqi embassies in the European states to lend the Syrians a helping hand. Yāsīn al-Hāshimī was in permanent contact with the leading representatives of the Syrian patriotic forces, who appreciated his support.<sup>27</sup> To improve inter-Arab relations, the prime minister called for the removal of custom barriers and other restrictions between Arab countries. He invited several well-known Egyptian and Syrian nationalists to visit Iraq and supported the exchange of visits between Iraqi, Egyptian and Syrian students.<sup>28</sup> Some representatives of the pan-Arab circles in Iraq wanted Yāsīn al-Hāshimī to become their leader.<sup>29</sup> King Ghāzī of course was not pleased that the prime minister was meddling in his activities,<sup>30</sup> and therefore, during the course of the year 1935, in order to draw attention to himself and refusing to be overshadowed by the prime minister, he several times had stepped into the government's business, and used direct contact with the state authorities.

In early February 1936 Yāsīn al-Hāshimī adopted some measures to limit the king's possibilities to interfere in the activities of the government and to remove the group of officers around him. These measures angered the king who complained about restriction of his freedom. He thought about changing the cabinet, but he changed his mind when he realized that the government had gained support and influence among the inhabitants, so it would be difficult to jeopardise its position. The chief of the Royal dīwān, Rustum Ḥaydar, advised him not to take the risk of toppling the government. In any event, because of these measures relations between the king and the prime minister were tense to the extent that the prime minister began to worry that the king would refuse all

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<sup>26</sup> AL-QAYSĪ, Sāmī °Abdalḥāfız. *Yāsīn al-Hāshimī wa dawruhu fī as-siyāsa al-°irāqīya bajna °āmay 1922 – 1936*. Vol. II, p. 272.

<sup>27</sup> The Daily *al-Istiqlāl*, 10 June 1935. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja°far. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsat al-°Irāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and his Role in Iraqi Politics in the Years 1922 – 1936], p. 101.

<sup>28</sup> KHADDURI, M. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 64.

<sup>29</sup> AL-°UMARĪ, Chajrī Amīn. *Yūnis as-Sab°āwī, sīrat siyāsī °iṣāmī* [Yūnis as-Sab°āwī, Biography of a Distinguished Politician], p. 63.

<sup>30</sup> KHADDURI, M. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 66.

his suggestions. Therefore, he turned to the British ambassador, asking for his mediation for obtaining the king's approval to some of his recommendations.<sup>31</sup>

Yāsīn al-Hāshimī feared that King Ghāzī could one day withdraw his confidence in the government, and therefore he sought to ensure the support of the British Embassy and of Nūrī as-Saʿīd, the Minister of Foreign Affairs in order to avert this situation. Nūrī as-Saʿīd was – after the death of King Fayṣal – from the beginning dissatisfied at Ghāzī's ascension to the Iraqi throne, and tried to arrange a constitutional change which would allow Fayṣal's younger brother, the *emir* Zayd, to come to the throne.<sup>32</sup> His distaste for the young king increased further when he saw that the king neglected him and preferred his rivals ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī and Jamīl al-Midfāʿī and for some time even refused to join the government. During a fly-past on 7 January 1935 Ṣabāḥ ibn Nūrī as-Saʿīd a skilful pilot had been performing a dangerous flight for the benefit of his friend King Ghāzī. A misjudgement of height and control had brought him crashing down in front of the king with a broken leg and injured hand.<sup>33</sup> This accident increased even more Nūrī's anger towards the king, whom he blamed for the injury to his only son.<sup>34</sup> Therefore, he began to criticize the king saying that his policies were of little use because he could not bring the tribes to obedience. At the same time he appreciated the policy adopted by King Fayṣal towards the tribes. His criticism grew even sharper in December 1935 when the government was about to impose compulsory military service. Nūrī as-Saʿīd expressed his regret about the king's role in politics and urged the prime minister to take measures which would guide him.<sup>35</sup>

The assumption that the king would withdraw his confidence in the government escalated during the first half of May 1936 because of the increased activity of the adversaries of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī's and their effort to persuade the king to do so. The bad relations between the king and the government were accompanied by the growing number of the government's opponents. The government proceeded ruthlessly against the rebellious tribes using military units and the police, with the result of major loss of life and assets, and left painful traces on the population. Indignation and anger became widespread

<sup>31</sup> FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> AL-ʿUMARĪ, Khayrī Amīn. *Al-khilāf bayna al-balāṭ al-malakī wa Nūrī as-Saʿīd* [Disagreement between the Royal Court and Nūrī as-Saʿīd], p. 42.

<sup>33</sup> BIRDWOOD, Lord Ch. *Nuri as-Said. A Study in Arab Leadership*, p. 158.

<sup>34</sup> GAURY, G. de. *Three Kings in Baghdad, 1921 – 1958*, p. 103.

<sup>35</sup> SHĪR MUḤAMMAD, Suʿād Raʿūf. *Nūrī as-Saʿīd wa dawruhu fī siyāsa al-ʿirāqīya, 1932 – 1945* [Nūrī as-Saʿīd and his role in Iraqi Politics], p. 28.



among the population and people expected the king would protect them from the repressive policy of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī.<sup>36</sup>

The news of the wedding of Princess ʿIzzat aroused sadness in Iraq as it harmed the reputation (clean sheet) of the Arabs and Muslims.<sup>37</sup> The king was staggered to hear the news because it meant a great stain on his honour and on the dignity of the Royal house.<sup>38</sup> In matters of honour, the king was very susceptible, and he had become furious previously, when in April 1934 his uncle, the *emir* Zayd, married a divorced Turkish lady, and whom because of this marriage he refused to appoint as the Iraqi minister plenipotentiary in Cairo. Now the situation was much worse and the events connected with it affected both the king's physical and mental health, so that he fell seriously ill.<sup>39</sup>

The king's adversaries took advantage of this family affair and its negative impact on his health and saw a good opportunity for putting a stop to Ghāzī's meddling in the work of executive power, either by removing him from the throne, or by imposing harsh conditions on his way of life. Nūrī as-Saʿīd became very active as the harshest of the king's opponents who tried to take advantage of this situation. In his opinion, the reputation of King Ghāzī suffered considerably and it would be very difficult for him to save what remained.<sup>40</sup> The country would no longer acknowledge his reign. He proposed the king's removal from the throne and the creation of a **Regency council** until his son reached majority, adding that Yāsīn al-Hāshimī should be one of its members.<sup>41</sup> The British Embassy saw this situation as an opportunity to remove the young officers from the king's entourage and create an opportunity for Rustum Ḥaydar to perform its role at the royal court. Therefore it refused the proposals of Nūrī as-Saʿīd and Yāsīn al-Hāshimī to send Rustum Ḥaydar to Rome with the task of arranging with the pope the annulment of the marriage of princess ʿIzzat, because "it feared that they were planning his removal from the palace, which

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<sup>36</sup> TRIPP, Ch. *A History of Iraq*, p. 83.

<sup>37</sup> AL-HASANĪ, as-Sajjīd ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraq], Vol. IV, pp. 202–203.

<sup>38</sup> AZ-ZUBAYDĪ, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa murāfiqūhu* [King Ghāzī and his Companions], p. 132.

<sup>39</sup> FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1932 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 113.

<sup>40</sup> SHĪR MUḤAMMAD, Suʿād Raʿūf. *Nūrī as-Saʿīd wa dawruhu fī siyāsa al-ʿirāqīya, 1932 – 1945* [Nūrī as-Saʿīd and his role in Iraqi Politics], p. 29.

<sup>41</sup> AL-HĀSHIMĪ, Ṭāhā. *Mudhakkirāt Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī, 1919 – 1943* [Memoirs of Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī], p. 181; AZ-ZUBAYDĪ, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa murāfiqūhu* [King Ghāzī and his Companions], p. 136.

would thwart British plans.<sup>42</sup> The Embassy took the view that Yāsīn al-Hāshimī was utilizing the situation for his own ambition to make of the king a mere symbol.

At the same time Yāsīn al-Hāshimī issued the “Royal Family Law No. 75/1936”, by which he attempted to take over some royal jurisdiction, in addition to the penalty imposed on princesses ‘Izzat,<sup>43</sup> when, according to the law, he ordered the creation of a special board set up, consisting of the presidents of the Upper and Lower Houses and the ministers of the interior and justice and the chief of the Royal dīwān, to supervise the issues of the marriage of the princes and princesses, of matters of morality relating to the royal family, of the distribution of certain amounts in the state budget for members of the Royal family.

The prime minister began to control the special Royal treasury and the way of spending money from it in an effort to make the king aware of his dependence on him. On 24 June 1936 he asked the ministry of finance to monitor the amounts paid by the Royal Treasury in the form of the king’s financial allowance to certain persons and employees, arguing that their revenues should be taxed.

For some time the king had followed the prime minister’s directives, but in early July 1936 he showed efforts to restore the previous state of affairs. He began by refusing oversight by the government over the Royal court and tried to get back some persons who had been driven out of the Palace. The king’s efforts were considered by Yāsīn al-Hāshimī as dangerous indications that the king wanted to renew his powers. The prime minister complained to the British ambassador that the king’s efforts dated from the time when he found out that his measures had lost the support of some politicians.<sup>44</sup> His criticism was directed at Nūrī as-Sa‘īd and Ja‘far al-‘Askarī who were apparently intriguing against him and had renewed their contacts with King Ghāzī. The prime minister could not understand Nūrī as-Sa‘īd who in front of the king was

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<sup>42</sup> FO 371/20017, Bateman (Baghdad) to FO, 23 June 1936. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja‘far. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-‘Irāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], pp. 113–114.

<sup>43</sup> ANĪS, Muḥammad. Ḥādīth al-amīra ‘Izzat wa atharuhā fī inqilāb Bakr Ṣidqī [The Event of Princess ‘Izzat and its effect on the coup d’état of Bakr Ṣidqī]. In *Majallat al-mu‘arrikh al-‘arabī*, (Cairo), 1975, No. 1, p. 160.

<sup>44</sup> FO 371/20017, Bateman (Baghdad) to Anthony Eden (FO), 2 July 1936. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja‘far. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-‘Irāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 120.

criticizing his actions and his measures to curb the king's freedom of movement and action and in other place was arguing that the government had no right to control the Royal court and that he was afraid that the prime minister was turning into a dictator.<sup>45</sup> The prime minister feared that the activities of the opposition, which was hatching intrigues, could aggravate the relationship between him and the king, and cause the fall of the government.

It is obvious that the rifts that emerged in the government helped the king to resume partially his political activity. On 28 July he asked the government for a reappraisal of the organisation of the state protocol established by the cabinet and on 9 August the king voiced his objection to the separation of the department of antiquities from the management of education. The king also attempted to deepen the rift between Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and Rashīd ʿĀlī al-Kaylānī on the one hand, and Nūrī as-Saʿīd and Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī on the other.<sup>46</sup> He disclosed to the prime minister that Nūrī and Jaʿfar were intriguing against him, and therefore urged him to remove the minister of defence. Yāsīn al-Hāshimī had really attempted to weaken the alliance of these two ministers by the proposed appointment of Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī as the ambassador of Iraq in Britain, but met with the firm resistance of Nūrī as-Saʿīd.<sup>47</sup>

The increased intensity of the opposition's activity against the government of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī in the coming months provided the king with a further incentive to restore his former position. The opposition against the government intensified in August 1936 both because of the use of violence against the rebellious tribes, and also because of its conclusion of a railway agreement with Britain. The renewal of the publication of the newspaper *Ṣawt al-Ahalī* (The Voice of the Countrymen) under the supervision of Hikmat Sulaymān and Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman played an important role in strengthening the criticism of the government's policy,<sup>48</sup> which prompted the government to carry out a raid on the publishing house on 12 August 1936 and ban its publication. It was obvious to the opposition that the king would not bear for long the restriction of his

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<sup>45</sup> GOMBÁR, E., PECHA, L. *Dějiny Iráku* [The History of Iraq], p 426; FO 371/20017, Bateman (Baghdad) to Anthony Eden (FO), 2 July 1936.

<sup>46</sup> MUḤAMMAD, ʿAlā Džāsīm. *Džāʿfar al-ʿAskarī wa dawruhu as-sijāsī wa al-ʿaskarī fī tārīḥ al-ʿIrāq ḥattā ʿām 1936* [Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī and his Political and Military Role in Iraqi History until 1936], p. 186.

<sup>47</sup> AL-HĀSHIMĪ, Ṭāhā. *Mudhakkirāt Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī, 1919 – 1943* [Memoirs of Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī], p. 150.

<sup>48</sup> ʿABDADDARRĀJĪ, ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman wa dawruhu fī al-ḥaraka al-waṭanīya, fī al-ʿIrāq, 1908 – 1945* [Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman and his Role in the Patriotic Movement in Iraq], p. 413; FO 371/20013, Bateman (Baghdad) to Anthony Eden (FO), 27 August 1936.

personal freedom and was waiting for the first suitable opportunity to get rid of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the opposition immediately after the closing of the editorial office, concentrated on winning the king's cooperation, and addressed to him a protest against the government's procedure. The protest was brought to the palace by Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman and Hikmat Sulaymān, who gave the king an account of the grim picture of the country in all spheres because of the government's despotic policy and asked him in his capacity as guardian of the constitution to put an end to this catastrophe.<sup>50</sup>

The king did not encourage these men to continue in the opposition, but advised them to proceed wisely and patiently. He appealed to their patriotism to keep calm in the hope that an opportune time would come to take the necessary measures.<sup>51</sup> Reports from the British embassy to Foreign Office confirm that King Ghāzī was not inclined to agree with the civilian opposition and did not promise them more than "we shall do what is necessary".<sup>52</sup> The opposition politicians did not take into consideration the military inclination of the king and the high esteem he enjoyed among the officers, which allowed him to rely solely on the army after he got rid of the government of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī. This situation led to the conviction of the army commanders that everything was the result of poor management and the politicians' pursuit of government functions. They became convinced that civilian politicians were not able to rule and were the source of all evil.<sup>53</sup> The king therefore focused on meetings with some ambitious officers and showed his dissatisfaction with the current situation and urged them to take action against the government.<sup>54</sup> He asked them to be guardians of the throne and faithful to the sovereign.

The representatives of the civil opposition evaluated the king's compassion with their complaints so that he was well aware of the bad situation in the country and wanted to contribute to its improvement.<sup>55</sup> This encouraged them to continue their dealings with either personal meetings with the king, or through the Chief of the Protocol at the Royal Court. Nājī al-Aṣīl supported the

<sup>49</sup> AL-HASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Al-asrār al-khaṭīya fī ḥarakat as-sana 1941 at-taḥarrurīya* [Secrets of the Liberation Movement of 1941], (3 ed.), p. 18.

<sup>50</sup> ʿABDADDARRĀJĪ, ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman wa dawruhu fī al-ḥaraka al-waṭaniya, fī al-ʿIrāq* [Jaʿfar Abū at-Timman and his Role in the Patriotic Movement in Iraq], 1908 – 1945, p. 418.

<sup>51</sup> YAZBAK, Jūsuf Ibrāhīm. *Al-muḥarrirūn* [The Liberators], pp. 63–64.

<sup>52</sup> FO 371/20013, Bateman (Baghdad) to Anthony Eden (FO), 27 August 1936.

<sup>53</sup> AL-HĀSHIMĪ, Ṭāhā. *Mudhakkirāt Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī, 1919 – 1943* [Memoirs of Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī], p. 438.

<sup>54</sup> As-SUWAJDĪ, Tawfīq. *Mudhakkirātī. Niṣf qarn min tārikh al-ʿIrāq wa al-qaḍīya al-ʿarabiya* [My Memoirs. Half Century of Iraqi History and the Arab Question], p. 272.

<sup>55</sup> YAZBAK, Jūsuf Ibrāhīm. *Al-muḥarrirūn* [The Liberators], pp. 63–64.

opposition and explained to the king the activities of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī in a way that provoked his doubts and fears.<sup>56</sup> In the sphere of relations between the king and prime minister, the opposition focused on informing the king about the inspection visits of the prime minister to the Iraqi provinces. The first inspection visit took the prime minister to the south of Iraq in the period from 16 to 21 August 1936.<sup>57</sup> Shortly after, he made a second visit to southern Iraq which lasted until 7 September 1936. The opposition explained to the king that these visits were for propaganda purposes and their aim was to undermine the king's popularity and position. During the second visit to the south, the prime minister gave a speech in Baṣra, in which he expressed the hope that he would remain as the head of the state for another ten years, so that he could do his utmost to achieve the objectives necessary for the development of the country.<sup>58</sup> These words again raised the spectre that the prime minister wanted to rule as a dictator and gave his enemies the opportunity to accuse him of seeking to usurp the king's position.<sup>59</sup>

The King was eager to keep up his popularity among the people, so he began to devote himself to social and charitable events, so his name appeared in September 1936 at the forefront of lists of charitable contributions. He paid increased attention also to religious issues and the newspapers sought to make his activities visible.<sup>60</sup> When the king learned that Yāsīn al-Hāshimī intended to visit northern Iraq, he too decided to make a trip to the north, so that when the prime minister overtook him, it triggered the king's protest and caused his indignation. The ambassador did not convince the king of the sincere intentions of the prime minister, especially since during the trip rumours circulated that he was determined to overthrow the monarchy and to proclaim the republic and

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<sup>56</sup> AL-MUFTĪ, Hāzim. *Al-ʿIrāq bayna ʿahdayni. Yāsīn al-Hāshimī wa Bakr Ṣidqī* [Iraq between Two Eras. Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and Bakr Ṣidqī], p. 76.

<sup>57</sup> The Daily *al-Istiqlāl*, 28 August 1935. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 124.

<sup>58</sup> The Daily *al-Bilād*, 6 September 1935. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 124.

<sup>59</sup> ṢĀLIḤ, Zakī. *Muqaddima fī dirāsāt al-ʿIrāq al-muʿāṣir* [Introduction to Study of the Contemporary Iraq], p. 102.

<sup>60</sup> FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 125.

that he is now preparing public opinion for that.<sup>61</sup> Therefore, in response to the journey of the prime minister, he himself on 19 October 1936 took on a trip to the sacred places in Karbalā', an-Najaf, al-Ḥilla and al-Kūfa, where he walking freely among people, handed out gifts and alms, and everywhere met a warm reception.

In October 1936, Yāsīn al-Hāshimī found that the position of the government was threatened. The President of the Chamber of Deputies, Muḥammad Zakī inclined towards the opposition and began to complain about the methods of governance. He had meetings with Ḥikmat Sulaymān and his colleagues and began to meet with the king, whom he informed that the government's policy was not successful, that the army units made only insignificant progress in training and arming and that he would no longer remain as the head of the assembly.<sup>62</sup> Therefore, the prime minister expected to face stiff opposition from parliament at the opening session on 1 November 1936. It was at the time when the king increased his activity and stated that the time was ripe to make the necessary changes in the government and indicated the need to remove Nūrī as-Sa'īd and Ja'far al-Askarī from the government and their replacement by Jamīl al-Midfai and Muḥammad Zakī.<sup>63</sup>

In order to face the situation Yāsīn al-Hāshimī tried to maintain the cohesion of the government. He told the British ambassador that he could not do without Nūrī as-Sa'īd, but not because he needed him, but because his resignation would create the impression that the Iraqi government did not recognise what he had arranged concerning the Palestinian question, which would leave a bad impression among the Palestinians and in other Arab countries. The ambassador agreed with the prime minister's opinion, but whereas the prime minister tried to maintain the cohesion of the government and argued for keeping Nūrī in the cabinet, Nūrī himself was no longer interested in remaining in his government.<sup>64</sup> The prime minister wanted to discuss the present situation and what was to be done in the cabinet session, so that he could face the attacks in Parliament but discovered that Nūrī would not help him because he was busy organizing his

<sup>61</sup> AL-CHĀDIRCHĪ, Kāmil. *Mudhakkirāt Kāmil al-Chādirchī wa tārīkh al-Hizb al-waṭanī ad-dīmuqrāṭī*, [Memoirs of Kāmil al-Chādirchī and History of the Patriotic Democratic Party], p. 40.

<sup>62</sup> AL-HĀSHIMĪ, Ṭāhā. *Mudhakkirāt Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī, 1919 – 1943* [Memoirs of Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī], p. 149.

<sup>63</sup> FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja'far. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 125.

<sup>64</sup> SHĪR MUḤAMMAD, Su'ād Ra'ūf. *Nūrī as-Sa'īd wa dawruhu fī siyāsa al-ʿirāqīya, 1932 – 1945* [Nūrī as-Sa'īd and his role in Iraqi Politics], p. 30.

son's marriage. Nūrī as-Saʿīd told the ambassador that he was no longer interested in working with the prime minister but on the contrary he intended to point out to him some of his mistakes in domestic politics that had to be put right. The ambassador wanted to dissuade Nūrī from that intention and informed him of the prime minister's concerns about the present situation, but Nūrī persisted in his opinion.

The standpoint of Nūrī as-Saʿīd seems to have heartened the king so that through him he sent the prime minister a message saying there was need for changes in the government.<sup>65</sup> Nūrī conveyed to the prime minister the king's wish and the latter concluded that it was necessary to achieve a settlement between the government and the opposition before the situation exploded. He tried but failed and the opposition – especially Hikmat Sulaymān – remained unyielding.<sup>66</sup> At that time the situation of the tribes in the Euphrates basin raised the concerns of the prime minister. He received reports that these tribes, even though for the moment they were not rebelling, were nevertheless still dissatisfied and their attitude continued to cause concern. Indeed, some tribes in mid-October 1936 rose up against the government, which subsequently had to take military measures.

These events forced Yāsīn al-Hāshimī to consider seriously whether it would not be better to put an end to the problems by proclaiming a republic, relying on his brother, the chief of the general staff, and the feudal chieftains. In October 1936 his brother was outside Iraq and the prime minister began preparing the proclamation of a republic immediately after his return to Iraq. On 27 October 1936 he asked shaykh ʿAlī Sulaymān, chieftain of the Dulaym tribe, and shaykh Ḥasan Suhayl, chieftain of the Banū Tamīm tribe, to prepare their tribes for the siege of Baghdad and to support him in the proclamation of a republic.<sup>67</sup> He also sent a group of chieftains of Kurdish tribes into their home areas in the north asking them to be prepared, when they received a signal, to prepare their tribes to support his party in the proclamation of a republic. He informed them that the action would start immediately after the return of his brother and promised them various administrative functions such as provincial governor (*mutaṣarrif*) of as-Sulajmānīja and district president (*qā'immaqām*) of Khānakīn, etc. These chieftains gathered in the district of “Qaḍā Kafīr” to discuss the way of

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<sup>65</sup> LONGRIGG, S. H. *Iraq, 1900 to 1950. A Political, Social and Economic History*, p. 247.

<sup>66</sup> KHADDURI, Majid. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 66.

<sup>67</sup> FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ghāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ghāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 127.

supporting the prime minister when on 29 October 1936 General Bakr Ṣidqī surprised the country with a military *coup d'état*.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Al-KHAṬṬĀB, Rajā° Ḥusayn. *Ta°sīs al-jaysh al-°irāqī wa taṭawwur dawrihi as-siyāsī, 1921 – 1941* [The Establishment of the Iraqi Army and the Development of its Political Role], p. 163.



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