

IRAQ: OPPOSITION TO THE POLICY OF THE ROYAL COURT AND THE REACTION OF KING GHĀZĪ (1934 – 1935)*

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The first government of Jamīl al-Midfa^{ʿī}, formed on purely personal rather than partisan lines, suffered from the divergent interests of two competing factions. When the Prime Minister failed to reconcile the rivals he tendered his resignation. However, King Ghāzī invited him to form a new government that lasted until 25 August 1934. ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, Chief of the Royal dīwān, seized the opportunity to succeed him as Prime Minister on 27 August. He soon announced his policy, which was a modest programme of reform. When he obtained the king's approval to dissolve the parliament, he rigged the elections so that in the new parliament the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* (Ḥizb al-ikhā al-waṭanī) held only twelve seats. Also excluded were some of the most prominent *Shīʿī* tribal chieftains of the mid-Euphrates region, laying the foundation for a dangerous tactical alliance with the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*. Moreover, King Ghāzī was the product of a system that exacerbated *Shīʿī* resentment of the *Sunnī*-dominated state.

Key words: the king tries to find a firm ground; the *Sunnī-Shīʿī* frictions: strengthening the army or building a dam; the disgruntled *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*, tribal uprising in the middle Euphrates; the role of the British embassy, the end of non-partisan governments.

Settlement of the dispute in the first government of Jamīl al-Midfa^{ʿī}

King Ghāzī was satisfied with the policy of the first government of Jamīl al-Midfa^{ʿī} (9 November 1933 – 19 February 1934), because it consisted of men with close ties to the Royal court, but the necessary harmony between the members of this government was missing, despite the fact that it consisted of outstanding men. However, hardly had the new cabinet begun to work than the faction of Nūrī as-

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Sa^ʿīd and Rustum Ḥaydar quarrelled with the faction of Nājī Shawkat and Naṣrat al-Fārisī.¹ They differed even in their views on the government's overall policy and the worst disagreement emerged between Rustum Ḥaydar, the minister of the economy and communications and Nājī Shawkat, the minister of the interior, who suspected each other of intriguing. The next bone of contention was the issue of the Gharrāf dam project on the Tigris River near Kūt.² Rustum Ḥaydar, the minister of the economy and communications, demanded the speeding up of its construction, while Naṣrat al-Fārisī, the minister of finance, wanted to give priority to equipping the army with new weapons. The project, which had already been approved by the cabinet, was later opposed by the Nājī Shawkat – Naṣrat al-Fārisī faction on the grounds of lack of resources, and they suggested postponement of the whole project. Rustum Ḥaydar's enthusiasm for the work was shared by Ṣāliḥ Jabr, the minister of education,³ but these two men, who belonged to the *Shiʿī* Community, were accused of supporting the project because they were *Shiʿī*, since the beneficiaries of the project would be the members of that community.⁴

Rustum Ḥaydar, supported by Ṣāliḥ Jabr, threatened to resign. Later on a quarrel arose between Rustum Ḥaydar and Nūrī as-Sa^ʿīd.⁵ It turned out that the Prime Minister, who had formed the cabinet for the first time, as a man who was used to acting pragmatically, did not have the courage to form a government with a consistent policy. The disagreements that came out between the ministers and their lack of interest in cooperating with one another caused Jamīl al-Midfāʿī on 13 February 1934 to submit his resignation to the king. Now the king proved that he was able to settle the disagreements between the ministers. Initially the king hesitated to accept the resignation and decided to do something to calm the situation and reconcile the ministers, but his endeavour failed because the roots of the disputes – as shown – lay in personal animosities. So, on 19 February 1934 he accepted the resignation.⁶

¹ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], Vol. 4, pp. 6–8.

² AḤMAD, Ibrāhīm Khalīl, ḤUMAJDĪ, Jaʿfar ʿAbbās. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq al-muʿāṣir* [Contemporary History of Iraq], p. 81.

³ Al-QAJSI, Sāmī ʿAbdalḥāfiz. *Yāsīn al-Hāshimī wa dawruhu fī as-siyāsa al-ʿirāqīya bayna ʿāmay 1922 – 1936* [Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and his Role in Iraqi Politics in the Years 1922 – 1936]. Vol. 2. Baghdad: Maṭbaʿat al-ʿānī, 1975, p. 166.

⁴ KHADDURI, Majid. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 46.

⁵ As-SUWAJDI, Tawfīq. *Mudhakkirātī. Niṣf qarn min tārīkh al-ʿIrāq wa al-qaḍīya al-ʿarabīya* [My Memoirs. Half-Century of Iraqi History and the Arab Question], p. 255.

⁶ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], Vol. 4, pp. 14–16.

After the resignation of Jamāl al-Midfāʿī's first government, the British wanted King Ghāzī to entrust Nūr as-Saʿīd or Yāsīn al-Hāshimī with forming a new government.⁷ However, the king refused to entrust them with this task arguing that each of them sought ministerial posts for his supporters. He therefore decided to convince Jamāl al-Midfāʿī to draw up a new patriotic cabinet of men who were ready to cooperate with the current parliament. As far as the ministers whose disagreements caused the resignation of the previous government were concerned, the king decided not to draw on the party of any of them and to dispense with their services. So in the second government of Jamāl al-Midfāʿī only Jamāl Bābān remained, as minister of justice.⁸ The government, which was mainly recruited from the least influential public figures, proved to be too weak to command respect or to initiate any constructive work.

During the visit to southern Iraq in April 1934, the king, during discussions with local notables and journalists, learned about the protests and demands of the population of Baṣra concerning building and economic issues.⁹ Based on the findings of this trip on 21 April 1934 the king drew the attention of the ministers to the questions of custom duties imposed by the Indian government on Iraqi dates, which increased from 7 to 30 per cent. In view of the fact that at a time when Iraq provided the biggest benefits to Indian exports, the increase in customs duties prevented the expansion of exports of Iraqi dates to India. He also drew the attention of the government to trade relations with Spain, which increased customs duties on Iraqi goods and, in particular, on dates. The king asked the government to deal with these issues and take measures to protect domestic resources and to increase economic activity, whether by ensuring that Spain and India reduced their customs duties or by retaliatory measures. In the field of education, he asked the government to pay attention to the development of Arab schools, because the level of the existing schools was lagging behind the schools with foreign tuition. He demanded also material support or providing grants to Baṣra for improving the infrastructure (roads, bridges) and also healthcare.

During his visit to northern Iraq in June 1934, King Ghāzī met with the notables and other important men of the city of Moṣul who had submitted their demands. He instantly charged the chief of Royal dīwān with recording and submitting them to the

⁷ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq as-siyāsī al-ḥadīth* [The Modern Political History of Iraq], Vol. III, p. 106.

⁸ FO 371/17869, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to FO, 1 March 1934.

⁹ Daily *al-Istiqlāl*, 23 April 1934. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 83.

government for information and, where possible, to be put them into effect.¹⁰ After returning to Baghdad, the king asked the government to examine the possibility of extending the railway line to Moşul and its connection with the Mediterranean Sea, to cancel bridge tolls, to establish an Agrarian bank and to intensify geological exploration for extending the number of artesian wells. He also asked for more action to conclude trade agreements with neighbouring states. Thanks to the king's intercession, the Ministry of the Interior allocated a sum of 1200 *dīnārs* to the Moşul municipal authorities for paving the roads and the Ministry of Economy and communications took care of drilling artesian wells. In the case of the railway connection to Moşul, the government found that it could not decide on it until the issue of the railways was settled between Iraq and Britain. The ministry of finance became actively engaged in the issue of establishing the Agrarian bank in Moşul and allocated credit of 18 thousand *dīnārs* within the programme of aid to urban municipalities.

Opposition to the policy of the Royal court

Despite the positive results that emerged from the king's visit to the south and north, his support for Jamīl al-Midfa^cī, whom he appointed as prime minister for a second term, led to the disaffection of the opposition represented by Nūrī as-Sa^cīd and his followers, the British Embassy and the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* headed by Yāsīn al-Hāshimī. They criticised the fact that this second cabinet created on 21 February, consisted of former ministers,¹¹ who were not considered to be outstanding personalities and did not have the necessary political weight, unlike other politicians not included in the cabinet, with the exception of Nājī as-Suwajdī (finance), who was considered the mastermind of the government. He joined the cabinet only on the insistence of the designated Prime Minister Jamīl al-Midfa^cī, ^cAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī and the king.¹² Therefore, from the outset the overall impression prevailed that the government was weak and would not succeed.

¹⁰ Daily *al-Istiqlāl*, 23 April 1934. Quoted in FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja^cfar. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsat al-^cIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 85.

¹¹ Members of the government were: Jamīl al-Midfa^cī, prime minister and acting minister of the interior; Nājī as-Suwajdī, finance; Jamāl Bābān, justice; Rashīd al-Khawja, defence; Jalāl Bābān, education; ^cAbbās Mahdī, economy and communications; ^cAbdallāh ad-Damlūjī, foreign affairs. In AL-HASANĪ, as-Sayyid ^cAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-^cirāqīya*. Vol. 4, p. 18.

¹² As-SUWAJDĪ, Tawfīq. *Mudhakkirātī. Nişf qarn min tārīkh al-^cIrāq wa al-qaḍīya al-^carabīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], p. 255.

When dealing with day-to-day tasks, it managed adequately, but would retreat when it encountered serious opposition in Parliament. Many believed that it would not cope with the problems as long as Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and Nūrī as-Saʿīd remained outside the executive, in view of the fact that they represented the power centres in political life of the country. British representatives were of the same opinion.¹³

With the opposition gaining power, the second cabinet of Jamīl al-Midfaʿī in fact resorted to the routine, and corruption became the most distinctive feature of this period and because of the constant turnover of civil servants, its situation deteriorated significantly. The number of officials who abused their positions increased, proving that the government was weak and failed to enforce its power and to manage its duties,¹⁴ and at the same time the prime minister on whom the king personally relied, was prone to luxury and negligence, which caused the complete failure of the whole government. Promotion of personal contacts occurred, nobody cared how the civil servants performed their duties and no one was punished.¹⁵ Among the leading politicians of the country, when they felt that the guiding hand of the late King Fayṣal had disappeared, animosity increased, because everyone wanted to attain power, in particular for personal ambition.¹⁶

The criticism was directed at the government and thus at the policy of the Royal court (al-Balāṭ al-malakī) with the king at its head, who was blamed for failing to keep a sufficient watch on the government's activities and, by relying on the board of members of his Royal dīwān, for installing incompetent governments. Some political forces in Iraq concluded that it was impossible to prevent the situation in Iraq from further worsening if the king did not properly perform his constitutional obligations. As for the British, although outwardly their relations with the king remained good and the meetings with him continued, messages sent to London suggest something else. They stated that "the advisers of the king are encouraging him not to care about the general issues, but to deal with his own matters. Therefore, he did not demonstrate the initiative to skilfully and wisely address the political situation as did his father. The solution of the state issues was passed on to the ministers, but they spent most of the time in mutual disputes, and although they were

¹³ FO 371/17869, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to FO, 1 March 1934.

¹⁴ KHADDURI, Majid. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 46.

¹⁵ AL-ḤUṢRĪ, Sāṭiʿ, Abū Khaldūn. *Mudhakkirātī fī al-ʿIrāq* [My Memoirs in Iraq], Vol. II (1927 – 1941), p. 58.

¹⁶ ṢĀLIḤ, Zakī. *Muqaddima fī dirāsāt al-ʿIrāq al-muʿāṣir* [Introduction to Study of the Contemporary Iraq], p. 98.

well paid, they did not care about the country's affairs".¹⁷ However, in this period, the British did not support the idea of putting direct pressure on the king, so as not to raise doubts, because the people in Iraq opposed any interference in their affairs.

Therefore, the British favoured the indirect way of shaping the behaviour of Ghāzī. The British initially wanted to deal with the staff (officials) of the Royal court by changing the chief of the Royal dīwān and his personal secretary (°Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī). They therefore supported the proposal of Nūrī as-Sa°īd aimed of replacing him with Ja°far al-°Askarī, who from this position would be able to directly influence the king. Since the commencement of the first government of Jamīl al-Midfā°ī, Nūrī as-Sa°īd had considered himself to be more capable for this function. He realized that the path to this goal – i.e. to form a government of his followers – was only through the removal of the chief of the Royal dīwān, °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, so that he would not be able to influence the king. Therefore he sought to obtain support from the British ambassador in order to secure the appointment of Ja°far al-°Askarī as the king's advisor. However, when in December 1933 he submitted this proposal to the ambassador, he justified it saying that he was dissatisfied with °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī at the head of Royal dīwān because he believed that his intrigue in the palace could cause the fall of the government of Jamīl al-Midfā°ī and the advent of the government of Yāsīn al-Hāshimī. This would not only cause the withdrawal of Ja°far al-°Askarī from his function in London, but his removal from any other function. He therefore proposed the appointment of Ja°far al-°Askarī as a mentor to help the king to reach the desired level, from which he could manage state affairs and avoid the intrigues that were being hatched in the palace. However, the ambassador knew very well that Nūrī as-Sa°īd by removing °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī from the king's entourage and by assigning him to another high function, was pursuing the aim of forming a government of his followers, which would enjoy the support of the king.¹⁸

The attempt by Nūrī as-Sa°īd to secure for Ja°far al-°Askarī appointment to a function close to the king, confirmed to the British the importance of the position held by °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī in the Royal dīwān. Ja°far al-°Askarī returned to Baghdad in February 1934 and,¹⁹ according to the proposal of Nūrī as-Sa°īd, he submitted to the king a written request in which he asked for himself the position of chief of the Royal dīwān with the rank of minister, or to take over a high government function with a close link to the king, so that he could provide him with his advice and experience. However, his application remained unanswered on

¹⁷ FO 371/18949, "Review of events in Iraq for year 1934. Directory of operations and intelligence". Baghdad to FO, 7 February 1935.

¹⁸ FO 371/16903, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to FO, 28 December 1933.

¹⁹ ŞAFWAT, Najda Fathī (ed.). *Mudhakkirāt Ja°far al-°Askarī* [Memoirs of Ja°far al-°Askarī], p. 182.

the king's desk for the entire duration of the second government of Jamīl al-Midfāʿī, despite the fact that the king had read it several times. There had already been a noticeable deterioration in the administration, which was indeed due to the relaxation of government control in the post-mandate period, but for which the cabinet of Jamīl al-Midfāʿī was mainly held responsible.²⁰

In the second half of August 1934, as a result of the deterioration of the internal situation, the king indirectly asked Jamīl al-Midfāʿī to resign.²¹ He hinted to him that there were certain complaints about the current government which the Prime Minister correctly understood and on 25 August 1934 he handed the king his resignation.²² Two days later the king charged the chief of his office, ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, with forming a new government, and the latter complied on the same day.²³ When ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, who had been the first advisor to the king in matters of the executive, on 27 August became Prime Minister, it became clear that this was a cabinet of the Royal court for which king Ghāzī had strived so long. The opposition led by Nūrī as-Saʿīd, the British Embassy and the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* had realised that this government was only a continuation of the previous one.²⁴ Therefore the opposition attempted to return the constitutional powers of the Crown to the constitutional sphere, i.e. that the king had to reign, but not rule, and used several means for this purpose.

ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī tried to form a government aiming at weakening the opposition, so he agreed to the entry of Nūrī as-Saʿīd into the government as minister of foreign affairs.²⁵ King Ghāzī wanted to entrust the ministry of foreign affairs to Nūrī as-Saʿīd as well, because of the dispute with Iran concerning the question of their common borders.²⁶

However, Nūrī as-Saʿīd immediately attempted to take advantage of his new position to appoint Jaʿfar al-ʿAskarī to the position of chief of the Royal dīwān, as the only possibility of influencing the king. On 5 September 1934 Nūrī as-Saʿīd, believing that now when the office of chief of the Royal dīwān – after ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī had become prime minister – was vacant and that there would

²⁰ KHADDURI, Majid. *Independent Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics from 1932 to 1958*, p. 47.

²¹ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq as-siyāsī al-ḥadīth* [The Modern Political History of Iraq], p. 106.

²² AḤMAD, Ibrāhīm Khalīl, ḤUMAJDĪ, Jaʿfar ʿAbbās. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq al-muʿāshir* [Contemporary History of Iraq], p. 82.

²³ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], Vol. 4, pp. 27–28.

²⁴ GAURY, Gerald de. *Three Kings in Baghdad, 1921 – 1958*, p. 97.

²⁵ 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. 20.

²⁶ FO 371/18945, Francis Humphrys to FO, 25 February 1935.

be no objection to appointing somebody to that post,²⁷ through the British Ambassador asked Ja[°]far al-[°]Askari (minister plenipotentiary of Iraq in London) to return to Iraq and take over this position at the court, which would allow him to exercise political oversight of the young king.

It turned out very quickly that this would not be an easy matter. At a time when Nūrī as-Sa[°]īd and the British Embassy were engaged in the appointment of Ja[°]far al-[°]Askari as chief of the Royal dīwān, the king and several influential Baghdad personalities tried to appoint Rustum Ḥaydar to that post. However, the next development proved to Nūrī as-Sa[°]īd and the British that Prime Minister [°]Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī was determined to retain that position for himself: he wanted to secure for himself the possibility of a return if the government fell. He managed to convince the king to send Rustum Ḥaydar abroad; therefore the king on 13 November 1934 approached the British Ambassador to obtain the agreement of the British government with the appointment of Rustum Ḥaydar to London instead of Ja[°]far al-[°]Askari. Then it suddenly dawned on the British that the attempt to appoint Ja[°]far al-[°]Askari met with the greatest resistance from the prime minister, as it was known that Nūrī as-Sa[°]īd was trying to appoint Ja[°]far al-[°]Askari as the chief of Royal dīwān to be an equal partner to the premier. Therefore, they abandoned the nomination of Ja[°]far al-[°]Askari and so [°]Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī managed to concentrate in his hands the premiership and the leadership of the Royal dīwān as well. He walked every day to the Royal court where he spent approximately two hours, then went on to the seat of the government where he also spent about two hours. The remaining working time he spent at the Ministry of the Interior as acting minister of the interior.²⁸ The position of chief of the Royal dīwān remained vacant until 26 November 1934, when the king allowed it – after the tribes began to rebel and the political situation deteriorated – as an attempt to calm down some parts of the opposition, to be occupied by Rustum Ḥaydar.

At the time when [°]Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī could eliminate the dangers of having a rival in the Royal dīwān, he had to face another problem. In a struggle with the opposition, the prime minister tried to strengthen his own position by persuading the king to dissolve the parliament and to call new elections, because he wanted to pack the new Chamber of deputies with his followers. The leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* did not expect the king to agree with the dissolution of the parliament, when he did not allow its dissolution in 1933, thereby ousting them from power, and therefore his present consent provoked their indignation. They had to look for another way to force the king to withdraw his confidence in the

²⁷ FO 371/17869, Record of a telephone conversation between Francis Humphrys and Ja[°]far al-[°]Askari, on 5 September 1934.

²⁸ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid [°]Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-[°]irāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], Vol. 4, p. 31.

government.²⁹ They came to believe that the relationship of the king with °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī was strong enough not to be shaken by their criticism of the government. The Royal will (irāda) on the dissolution of the parliament was released on 4 September 1934, arguing that the government had adopted plans to ensure further development and that they needed to be confirmed by the people. The Prime Minister was in a hurry and the elections took place as early as 15 September 1934.³⁰

To the deterioration of the security situation in the country, the king responded by adopting a number of important measures, such as the separating the Bureau of the prime minister from the Royal dīwān and on 26 November he appointed Rustum Ḥaydar as chief of Royal dīwān. In this way he wanted to gain the favour of some opposition groups, because Rustum Ḥaydar was the candidate of the British for this post,³¹ and to free the hand of the government to devote itself fully to the solution of the crisis situation. The king took also a bold step by a statement, issued on 28 October 1934, in which he addressed the people in his capacity as the highest representative of the state declaring that: "the door is open for you to appear in front of His Majesty and to present to him your protests and requests any day of the week except Friday, provided that you obtain in advance a date from the protocol department of the Royal Court".³² The king also decided to make the official visits to the ministries, to hospitals and factories and ordered the deputy chief of protocol to prepare the programme for this purpose.³³ When the programme was ready these visits started and newspapers began to report how the king listened to detailed explanations from the appropriate officials, asked them questions and raises their spirits in their activities.³⁴

The government of °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī was from the beginning the object of a campaign of criticism: leaflets with spiteful antigovernment contents were secretly spread at large and the opposition pointed out that the government was unable to improve the difficult situation in the country and questioned the

²⁹ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid °Abdarrazzāq. *Al-asrār al-khaṭiyya fī ḥarakat as-sana 1941 at-taḥarrurīya* [Secrets of the Liberation Movement of 1941], p. 13.

³⁰ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid °Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-°Irāq as-siyāsī al-ḥadīth* [The Modern Political History of Iraq], p. 112.

³¹ FO 371/17869, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to FO, 26 November 1934.

³² Daily *al-Istiqlāl*, 28 November 1934. In FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja°far. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-°Irāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 93.

³³ SINDERSON, H. C. *Ten Thousand and One Nights*, p. 166.

³⁴ Daily *al-Istiqlāl*, 12 January 1935. In FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja°far. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-°Irāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 93.

capabilities of the prime minister.³⁵ After publication of the results of the elections the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* were horrified to find that their members would become a minority in the middle of the government's followers, because the elections were marked by extensive government interventions. In December 1934, the voice of the opposition became even stronger and was not confined to the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*, but included former politicians and some of the tribal chieftains and notables and intellectuals too. At the forefront of the campaign, was the *Ahālī group* (Association of the countrymen),³⁶ whose members were not satisfied by the government's argument about the necessity to dissolve the parliament, therefore intensified the critical anti-governmental campaign.³⁷ The *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* and the *Ahālī group* turned out to be the most active opposition. The *Ahālī group* focused its criticism on the misconceptions of King Ġāzī and the intentions of part of the intelligentsia that the way out of the bad situation was the cultivation of the pan-Arab idea, which relied essentially on military preparation.³⁸ On the contrary, the *Ahālī group* was primarily interested in internal reform of the country's situation and the promotion of leftist solutions.³⁹ It criticised the fact that the king did not care about state affairs, and therefore on 8 September 1934, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the king's accession to the throne, it distributed leaflets in which it also criticised the government's policy responsible for the poor conditions in the country. The government subsequently arrested several suspects, such as ʿAbdalqādir Ismāʿīl (editor of the newspaper al-Ahālī) and three others. They were sentenced to one year in prison and for another year they had to be under police supervision as a punishment for participating in the distribution of leaflets.⁴⁰

The leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* arrived to the conclusion that the incitement of tribes on the upper Euphrates to revolt against the government would be the best means of making the king nervous and causing him to install a

³⁵ YĀMULKĪ, ʿAzīz. *Kašf al-qināʿ an baʿd al-waqāʿ ʿal-irāqīya* [Uncovering the Veil of Some Iraqi Events]. Vol I, p. 27.

³⁶ BASHKIN, O. *The Other Iraq. Pluralism and Culture in Hashemite Iraq*, pp. 61–62; DAWISHA, Adeed. *Iraq. A Political History from independence to Occupation*, pp. 64–65.

³⁷ AL-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Al-asrār al-khaṭīya fī ḥarakat as-sana 1941 at-taharrurīya* [Secrets of the Liberation Movement of 1941], p. 13.

³⁸ 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. 297.

³⁹ WIEN, P. *Iraqi Arab Nationalism, Authoritarian, totalitarian, and pro-fascist inclinations, 1932 – 1941*, p. 10.

⁴⁰ FO 371/17871, from Ogilvie Forbes (Baghdad) to John Simon (FO), 10 October 1934.

government which would be chaired by either Yāsīn al-Hāshimī or Rashīd ʿAlī al-Kaylānī. They therefore got in touch with the chieftains of the tribes who were committed to them. The meetings were held in the houses of Ḥikmat Sulaymān and Rashīd ʿAlī al-Kaylānī,⁴¹ where both of them expressed their discontent with the removal of some of the outstanding representatives of the tribes from the parliament.⁴² The leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* had seen in that their opportunity to accomplish the plan to incite the tribes to revolt, by spreading rumours that the parliament whose composition influenced the prime minister was illegal and did not represent the tribes.⁴³ The attitude of the tribes hardened after the session of the new parliament on 29 December 1934. A number of religious dignitaries expressed their sympathies with them and convened a conference at Najaf on 11 January 1935, which was attended by the chieftains of the tribes. The participants drew up a memorandum in which they explained their situation and on 14 January 1935 personally presented it to the king. When nothing happened, at the end of January 1935, the discontent of the tribes turned into armed revolt, to which the government responded by preparing measures for armed confrontation.⁴⁴

As regards the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party*, after elections its critical anti-governmental campaign was focused on the parliament in which the party found itself in a minority position (it obtained 12 seats out of 88), and on the fact that ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī from the parliamentary majority managed to form a party named *The Party of Patriotic Unity* (Ḥizb al-waḥda al-waṭaniya), which supported him.⁴⁵ The *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* launched a fierce campaign in the parliament, protesting against the dissolution of the previous parliament and the illegitimate election and accused the government of infringing the Constitution and the principle of impartiality. This campaign was launched in Parliament on 4 January 1935 after the speech from the throne and was led by Yāsīn al-Hāshimī and Ḥikmat Sulaymān, and then it was transferred to the Senate (majlis al-aʿjān), where it was led by Rashīd ʿAlī al-Kaylānī.⁴⁶ Outside the Parliament, a group of Baghdad advocates

⁴¹ As-SUWAJDĪ, Tawfīq. *Mudhakkirātī. Niṣf qarn min tārīkh al-ʿIrāq wa al-qaḍīya al-ʿarabīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], p. 260.

⁴² ABŪ ṬABĪKH, Muḥsin. *Al-mabādiʾ wa ar-riḍāl* [The Principles and the Men], p. 26 29.

⁴³ Daily *The Times*, 18 March 1935. In FARAJ, Luṭfī Jaʿfar. *Al-malik Ġāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-ʿIrāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Ġāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 91.

⁴⁴ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], Vol. 4, pp. 49 and 59.

⁴⁵ Al-ḤASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq as-siyāsī al-ḥadīth* [The Modern Political History of Iraq], p. 113.

⁴⁶ JAMĪL, Ḥusayn. *Al-ḥayāt an-niyābiya fī al-ʿIrāq, 1925 – 1946* [The Parliamentary Life in Iraq], p. 145.

and some politicians opposed to the Prime Minister supported the opinion of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* and attempted to unite efforts against the government's proceedings.⁴⁷ Also the *Ahālī group* released on 21 January 1935 the newspaper "al-Mabda" (Principle), in which, in addition to the criticism of the policy of ministers, the texts of telegrams sent to the king in protest against the government were published.⁴⁸

In February 1935, in addition to the armed revolt of the tribes and the harsh anti-governmental criticism, °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī had to cope with the government's failure to deal with the overall political situation. He felt that solidarity and the ability to face the political situation, especially when he needed to use force against the tribes, was draining away within the government. Therefore, he informed the king of his wish to resign, but the king hesitated to accept it and tried to convince the prime minister to remain in office but making some changes in the cabinet. In the event that he failed to convince the prime minister to stay on, the king intended to secure a coalition government of outstanding personalities, not implicated in party politics. When the British Ambassador heard the news, he urged the king to retain Nūrī as-Sa'īd at the Ministry of foreign affairs, as it was necessary to manage the issue of a border dispute with Iran.⁴⁹ Afterwards the king met with the prime minister: he asked him to give up the thought of resignation and suggested to him to strengthen the government by changing some ministers, but found that °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī in the first place insisted on the use of force against the tribes to restore order and only then would he be prepared to make changes in the cabinet,⁵⁰ which the king refused. Then the prime minister felt it would be more sensible to resign from his office and on 23 February 1935 tendered his resignation.

Owing to the need to calm the situation in the rebellious tribes, King Ġāzī became convinced that the responsibility for forming the government should be handed over to Yāsīn al-Hāshimī.⁵¹ On this issue he consulted with °Alī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī and Jamīl al-Midfā'ī, who agreed with the idea, but warned the king against the entry of Rashīd °Alī al-Kaylānī into the proposed government and, in particular, not as minister of the Interior, because it would cause problems that no one would like. They said they were convinced that he was the direct cause

⁴⁷ Al-HASANĪ, as-Sayyid °Abdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-°irāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], Vol. 4, p. 57.

⁴⁸ Al-CHĀDIRCHĪ, Kāmil. *Mudhakkirāt Kāmil al-Chādirchī wa tārīkh al-Ḥizb al-waṭanī ad-dīmuqrāṭī* [Memoirs of Kāmil al-Chādirchī and History of the Patriotic Democratic Party], p. 34.

⁴⁹ FO 371/18945, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to FO, 25 February 1935.

⁵⁰ FO 371/18945, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to John Simon (FO), 6 March 1935.

⁵¹ FO 371/18945, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to FO, 28 February 1935.

of the resignation of their governments.⁵² The king did not wish to make room for the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* to take control of the executive power, knowing that it would threaten his prerogatives, and therefore he considered that he would indirectly hint to Yāsīn al-Hāshimī to offer ministerial positions to both the previous prime ministers. He also kept in mind the proposal of the British Ambassador that Nūrī as-Saʿīd should continue as Minister of Foreign Affairs, because his presence would lessen the possibility that the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* would seize all the power for themselves. Relying on this idea, he offered the position of Prime minister to Yāsīn al-Hāshimī, on condition that he would form a coalition or patriotic government in which Nūrī as-Saʿīd took over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,⁵³ that he did not appoint any of those who participated in the uprising of the tribes, and would not require dissolution of the parliament. However, Yāsīn al-Hāshimī refused the mandate to form the government as he saw that he was unable to meet these conditions because the *Party of Patriotic Unity* that had a majority in the Chamber would not cooperate with him unless he gave a ministerial post to ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, and then his own colleagues would refuse to participate.⁵⁴

The king did not show any willingness to change the given conditions, and offered the office of prime minister to Jamīl al-Midfāʿī, who accepted it on 4 March 1935. Taking into consideration that the leaders of the *Patriotic Brotherhood Party* were convinced that Jamīl al-Midfāʿī was only a tool in the hands of ʿAlī Jawdat al-Ayyūbī, the tribal uprising continued and spread to the Diyālā area.⁵⁵ Within a few days of forming the government, the position of the tribes was complicated by the fact that it created a popular movement that almost turned into revolution,⁵⁶ supported by the sympathies of several religious dignitaries.⁵⁷ The government met on 12 March 1935 and decided on the pacification of the rebellious tribes and sent the decision to the Royal dīwān for approval by the king. However, the approval did not come because several religious officials (ʿulamāʾ) sent the king telegrams in which they asked not to use violence and to resolve the problems by way of reform. Many Baghdad lawyers also turned to the king and asked him to resolve the matter peacefully and without bloodshed. The press also condemned the government's

⁵² Al-HASANĪ, as-Sayyid ʿAbdarrazzāq. *Tārīkh al-wizārāt al-ʿirāqīya* [The History of Iraqi Cabinets], Vol 4, p. 63.

⁵³ FO 371/18945, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to FO, 28 February 1935.

⁵⁴ FO 371/18945, Francis Humphrys (Baghdad) to John Simon (FO), 6 March 1935.

⁵⁵ SHABĪB, Maḥmūd. *Asrār ʿirāqīya fī wathāʾiq inklīzīya wa ʿarabīya wa almānīya, 1918 – 1941* [Iraqi Secrets in English, Arab and German Documents], p. 65.

⁵⁶ FO 371/20010, Archibald Clark Kerr (Baghdad) to Anthony Eden (FO), "Iraq Annual Report, 1935", p. 23.

⁵⁷ Al-QAṢṢĀB, ʿAbdalʿazīz. *Min dhikrayātī* [From my Memoirs], p. 302.

decision to use force, arguing that it would harm the country and leave a painful legacy.⁵⁸ Neither did the Chief of the general staff, Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī make any endeavour to use force against the tribes, convinced as he was that the movement would not be easy to suppress.⁵⁹

The king obtained reports that some ministers did not want to use force. He became convinced when the Minister of the Interior °Abdal°azīz al-Qaṣṣāb visited him and informed him that the prime minister wanted to use the air force against the insurgents. He pointed out to the king that the Feast of Immolation (°Īd al-aḍḥā) was approaching and that an attack on the tribes during holidays would cause enormous damage and negative reactions from all the inhabitants, therefore asking him to reject this decision. The king felt that most ministers wished to unburden themselves of the responsibility of being a member of the government, and so he decided to ask the prime minister to resign. He invited him and after made it obvious to him that he did not wish to deal with the situation by force, politely asking him to resign. Jamīl al-Midfa°ī understood that because of the intention to use force he had lost the support of the king and on 15 March 1935 he tendered his resignation. It was now clear to the king that he needed to appoint a strong government that had the confidence of the chieftains of the tribes, so he was forced to entrust Yāsīn al-Hāshimī with the premiership without conditions.

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⁵⁸ Daily *al-Mabda'*, 11 March 1935. In FARAJ, Luṭfī Ja°far. *Al-malik Gāzī wa dawruhu fī siyāsāt al-°Irāq fī al-majālayni ad-dākhilī wa al-khārijī, 1933 – 1939* [King Gāzī and his Role in Iraqi Internal and External Policies], p. 96.

⁵⁹ AL-HĀSHIMĪ, Ṭāhā. *Mudhakkirāt Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī, 1919 – 1943* [Memoirs of Ṭāhā al-Hāshimī], p. 306.

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