Chapter 10

Expulsion and Dispersion

Every sincere person ought to be more ready to give a favorable interpretation to an other's obscure position than to condemn it.

from: The Presupposition of St. Ignatius Loyola in his Spiritual Exercises

Preliminaries

On November 25, 1968, the 28 Jesuits working at Al-Hikma University were expelled from Baghdad after being given only five days to get out of the country. In spite of threats, hundreds of students came to the airport to bid farewell to the Fathers in a tearful departure. Nine months later the other 33 American Jesuits were expelled from Baghdad College. Both schools were "Iraqized". This was a new word for the Jesuits and indicated that the Iraqi Government took control of the schools without compensation and without claiming ownership. The Jesuits' property of 193 [168 + 25] acres with 14 major buildings including the contents of two libraries and seven very modern laboratories were taken over by the new Baath Socialist Government whose ideology prohibits private education.

Still, Muslim professors from Baghdad University pleaded, although in vain, with Iraq's new President "You cannot treat the Jesuits this way: they have brought many innovations to Iraqi education, and have enriched Iraq by their presence." The closing of these two celebrated landmarks ended the 37-year Jesuit Mission in Iraq, an effort of 61 Jesuits, 14 lay volunteers, 70 Iraqi educators and many American benefactors.

Two things happened in the previous year that led to the expulsion
of the Jesuits: the 1967 June War between the Arab states and Israel and the coup d'etat that brought the Baath Socialist Party into power in July, 1968. The Arab states were aware of American aid to Israel during the war which included air cover as well as very advanced technology and so they justifiably placed much of the blame for their humiliation on the American Government who provided so much of the modern weaponry and technical training. Many vituperative statements against the United States were made by the media in Iraq as in other Arab states.

The American Embassy personnel, perhaps a little jittery recalling the '58 coup in which four Americans died, gathered together most American residents, probably about 800, and left Baghdad for Teheran in a convoy of cars and trucks about 3:00 a.m. on June 9th, while the war was still going on. Six days later, as if to put the best face on the American exodus, the Iraqi Government issued a decree ordering all Americans expelled. It is interesting to speculate on the direction the Government of Iraq might have taken if the Americans had not fled.

The Jesuits continued to operate their two schools but many of the ambitious plans mentioned earlier had to be abandoned and for the following year the Jesuits kept a low profile. The number of applicants for Baghdad College, however, increased rather than decreased, indicating that the people saw no incongruity in these American Jesuits continuing to run schools in Iraq.

About this time a concern over spies arose due in part to an elaborate plot which resulted in Israel receiving an Iraqi MiG-21, thereby embarrassing Iraq in the eyes of Russia. A more telling reason for this concern, however, were the activities of Kol Israel, "The Voice of Israel", a daily radio broadcast beamed to Iraq in Arabic and heard by many Iraqis.

Each night Iraqis would hear their government ridiculed. Scattered among the news items were many taunts directed at Iraqi Government officials indicating an elaborate spy operation in Iraq. "We know your helicopters are along the Army canal." "We won't bomb you until you get a decent air raid warning system." This referred to Iraq's calamitous attempts at blackouts which were abandoned because they had caused considerable damage. "You should be careful about elevator capacities" referred to an attempt by the army to mount an anti-aircraft gun on top of a 20-story building at the University of Baghdad. As soon as it was placed on the elevator, the gun and the elevator plunged into the basement.

Once Kol Israel broadcast the answers to the government secondary school exams the night before the exams were to be
administered. How, reasoned the Iraqis, are the Israelis getting this information? The Iraqi Jews could see no humor in the Kol Israel's mischievous broadcasts because they became the victims of an extensive spy hunt and almost all Jewish students were denied access to the government-run University. Al-Hikma, however, admitted qualified Jewish students as long as they were Iraqi citizens, since all citizens, Muslim, Christian, or Jew, by law were entitled to education, public or private.

The two 1968 July Revolutions and the events that followed them

After a relatively peaceful school year in 1967-68, things had begun to look better in the Summer of 1968 when the second decisive event took place. On July 17 a coup d'état succeeded, bringing to power a regime considered to be moderate. Nasir Al Hani became the Foreign Minister of this new regime. He was a good friend of Fr. Richard McCarthy who had previously invited him to give the principal address at the Holy Cross Convocation in Worcester, MA. on March 20, 1967 when Fr. McCarthy received an honorary Doctorate. (Nasir was assassinated in Baghdad on November 11, 1968.)

But this new government was ousted when it was only a few weeks old on July 30 by another revolution which brought the Baath Party to power. The Baath were part of the 17 July coup, but seized control once the coup succeeded. They had been in power in 1963 for nine months, only to be overthrown in a bloody coup. The Baath Party was opposed to private education in any form - including Muslim private education. Article 45 of the Constitution of the Baath Party concerns the Party's policy on education stated: "Teaching is one of the exclusive functions of the state. Therefore, all foreign and private educational institutions are abolished."

From the outset the Iraqi Government promised to "neutralize Israeli aggression and rid Iraq of spies". So the pace of the spy-hunt picked up. Meanwhile, the Teachers' Union, a small organization of secondary school teachers, attacked Al-Hikma on TV and in the press, requesting the government to get rid of vestiges of imperialism like Coca Cola, miniskirts, the Beatles and Al-Hikma, but not necessarily in that order.

It did not take the government long to act. On September 19th a special committee representing the government came to the Al-Hikma property and announced to the Dean Fr. Joseph Ryan and to the Superior of the Jesuit Mission, Fr. John Donohue, that Al-Hikma had been "Iraqized". At the time, Al-Hikma's President Fr. McCarthy was attending an international conference of Catholic Universities at Kinshasa in Africa.
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The text of the September, 1968 decree which the committee presented follows, translated from the original Arabic.

1. In view of the fact that those in charge of the Administration of Al-Hikma University are aiming at things which are not consonant with the patriotic and national interests, and since necessity enjoins the Iraqization of this institution and giving it a sound educational orientation, the Council of the Command of the Revolution has decreed that the responsible quarters take the steps necessary for Iraqizing it and placing it under the supervision of the Government directly in all respects.

2. Doctor Sa'ad Abdul Baqi Er-Rawi is appointed Acting President of the aforementioned University.

(signed) The Council of the Command of the Revolution

No names were signed but this council ostensibly had the supreme power in the country. It consisted of five military men: Ahmed Hasan Al-Bakr (President of the Republic and Prime Minister), Salih Mahdi Ammass (Minister of the Interior), Hardan Al-Tikriti (Minister of Defense), Sadoon Al-Ghaidan (Commander of the Republican Guard), and another general who was the Commander of the Baghdad Garrison.

During their visit this special committee indicated that the government would administer the school, and no compensation would be given since it would still belong to the Iraq-American Educational Association (the name of the Jesuits' legal association). The only reason given for this action was that Al-Hikma had "deviated from the aims of the revolution," but no one would explain how Al-Hikma "deviated". Safes and filing cabinets were all sealed and guards were placed. The Jesuits, they said, could stay and teach if they wished, but the government would appoint a new Iraqi president and a new Dean for Al-Hikma.

The newly appointed Acting President of Al-Hikma, Dr. Saad Abdul Baqi Er-Rawi, reflecting the Baathi credo, spoke in an interview published in the weekly Alif-Ba (#15 October 2, 1968, pp. 3-4). Although inside the front cover of this issue was a photo of the Jesuit residence with a cartoon of an armed Uncle Sam in an academic robe pulling strings of a turbaned Arab holding a diploma, the words of the designated president, Dr. Sa'ad indicated the very opposite viewpoint. Here is a section of his remarks in translation.

Please know that Iraqization is not nationalization, because nationalization means the transfer of ownership from the private sector to the public sector. But Iraqization is a purely
administrative measure which has for its aim the placing of the institution under direct Iraqi administration and supervision. This means that Al-Hikma University will remain the property of the Iraq - American Association, and so the ownership of it will not be transferred to the Iraqi Government as the result of Iraqization.

I would like it to be understood that the intention was not to direct any accusation, especially against the religious men working in the University. The whole matter is confined to the fact of their being foreigners. Because of this they are unable to understand the stage at which our nation is living, nor can they comprehend our national problems and our struggle with imperialism and Zionism, nor are they favorable to our strivings and aspirations. Instruction is one of the most important factors which form the personality of the individual. Hence to leave it in their hands was something undesirable. (from the N. E. Province archives, file #510)

He went on to claim that more poor students would be able to attend this "rich man's school" which charged ID 120 ($420) annual tuition. He insisted that Al-Hikma as well as the state University had been deficient in the matter of national studies but that this would be remedied.

Of course the Fathers formally protested the decree as well as the reasons given for the "Iraqization" of Al-Hikma. But they decided to try to cooperate with the new Acting President and to open the scholastic year according to schedule.

After the war of the previous year, Fr. John Donchue, anticipating problems of survival, had requested a Jesuit visitor from the Curia in Rome to help search for reasonable options in order to keep the Jesuit Mission open. One plan, for instance, was to exchange the men in the Baghdad Mission for men in another mission run by a nationality not considered hostile to Iraq. Another was to bring as many Arab Jesuits to the Baghdad Mission as possible from Lebanon, Egypt and Syria. As it turned out, the Baath Government was determined to "Iraqize" all private schools, no matter who was running them. And the government did the same to the other private schools in Iraq including Muslim private schools whether they were owned by foreigners or Iraqis just as the Syrian Baath had done in Syria.

The Jesuit Community conducted frequent meetings trying to work out the best way to live with the Baath Regime and also to determine how best to handle the harassment by hooligans sent to the campus by the National Student Union. This harassment lasted from the time of the "Iraqization" to the time of the Jesuit
departure later on. For instance, on one occasion 15 bus loads of students were brought to the campus to hold an anti-American demonstration. In the face of Jesuit objections the new Iraqi Dean re-admitted 15 students who had been dismissed the previous year for disciplinary reasons. They formed a cadre which would intimidate the other students into joining rowdy behavior meant to disrupt classes on the campus. One member of the Baath Party came to the school and attempted to get his friend registered - at gun point. During this time the atmosphere was very tense, but the Jesuits, lay faculty and students, did not suffer bodily harm, just indignities.

Fr. Crowley recounts an incident indicating how well the Al-Hikma students behaved in this stressful situation.

One day many Baghdad youth invaded the Al-Hikma campus, disrupting classes and shouting anti-Israeli and anti-American slogans. The Jewish students were especially apprehensive and most managed to escape over the back wall. A group of Al-Hikma Muslim students made themselves responsible for the remaining Jewish women. They escorted them all into the women's lounge and posted themselves guards at the doors, assuring the women that they would allow no demonstrator to bother them. "They'll have to fight us before they reach you." Fortunately the demonstrators by-passed the lounge, but the incident speaks volumes about the courage and loyalty of the Al-Hikma students. (Fr. Charles G. Crowley)

On October 10 a new "President-Delegate" of Al-Hikma had been named, Dr. Fadhil Husain Al Ansari, with a Ph.D. from Indiana University who taught history at Baghdad University. Dr. Khalil Hammash, Ph.D., from the University of Chicago was named Secretary-General of Al-Hikma. These appointments were announced over Baghdad Radio and published in the newspapers but nothing was officially communicated to the Jesuits. The Jesuits had many conversations with the new President and the Secretary-General. Two things were at the top of their agenda: the case of the student expelled for disciplinary reasons who was using every means to gain re-admission and the project of the new Al-Hikma statutes which were being prepared for the approval of the Council of Ministers. The Jesuits were excluded from any discussions in preparing these statutes.

On October 24, 1968 Fr. McCarthy addressed a letter to the members of the Revolutionary Council to assure them that the Jesuit intentions had always focused on the best interests of Iraq
and to challenge the government's takeover of the university. Here follows Fr. McCarthy's English translation from his original letter in Arabic.

To: The Esteemed Council of the Commands of the Revolution
Subject: The Situation in Al-Hikma University
Greetings and salutations: I am sending this memorandum to you in my own name and in the name of all the Jesuit Fathers working in Al-Hikma University, of whom I have the honor to be the ecclesiastical and spiritual Superior. I am doing this, because we do not wish that you should be unaware of our present situation, which is the consequence of the events related to Al-Hikma University that have transpired during the past month and a half.

1. On last Sept. 12th, the esteemed Council of the Command of the Revolution issued a Decree Iraqicizing Al-Hikma University and appointing Dr. Saad Abd al-Baqi al-Rawi as the Acting President of Al-Hikma University. This Decree took us by surprise, since it was issued without any previous knowledge on our part, and without its being preceded by any discussions between us and the authorities. Moreover, this Decree grieved us, since it ordered the Iraqization of Al-Hikma University "because those in charge of the administration of Al-Hikma University are aiming at things not consonant with the national and patriotic interests", and because "necessity requires the Iraqization of this institution and giving it a sound educational orientation". These words contain an aspersion on our personal integrity, our professional competence, and the sincerity of our intentions.

2. On Sept. 12th a Committee composed of Dr. Saad Abd al-Baqi al-Rawi and others came to Al-Hikma University to carry out the Administrative Order, DG 1950, of Sept. 12, 1968. We took advantage of the opportunity to ask for certain necessary clarifications. They informed us orally that the Decree would not affect our legal Association, and that the Government was desirous that the Fathers remain in the University and that the school year be begun as usual.

3. On the same day we indicated several points, of which the following are the most important:
   a) We protested first of all against the Decree's being a complete surprise, without any previous warning or discussions - a fact which surprised us then, and which continues to amaze us. We also protested against the charge asserting that we were aiming at things not consonant with the national and patriotic interests. If such were the case, logic
would require of the Government that it should not allow the Fathers to remain in the University, but that it should expel them from the country. On the other hand, if the Government was desirous that the Fathers remain in the University, this desire would indicate that the Government did not really believe that the Fathers were aiming at things not consonant with the interests of the nation. In this case, the charge would be meaningless, and it ought to have been annulled according to the dictates of truth and respect.

b) We explained that the Fathers had always wished to work for the good of Iraq, and that they would never cease desiring that, so long as it remained possible. And we called attention to the fact that we did not come to Iraq as individuals, but as a religious group subject to our Superiors here and in Rome. Therefore, our attitude towards the Decree Iraqiizing our University would be formed in accordance with the wishes of our Superiors. And their wishes would depend on their knowledge of the conditions defining our university work, and the legal expression of these conditions, and the guarantees which would be given by the Government of Iraq. In the meantime, we would be prepared to continue the university work asked of us.

c) We requested an appointment with the President of the Republic of Iraq, and an interview with the Minister of the Interior. Our regret has increased, since we have thus far been unable to obtain the appointment or the interview, and it seems to us that the hope of doing so is very slender indeed.

d) We called the Committee’s attention to the fact that the Jesuit Fathers came to Iraq in 1932, not on their own initiative, and not to found a foreign institution independent of the will of the people and the control of the Government, but simply because they had been sent by the Pope in answer to the repeated request made to the Vatican by the Iraqi Catholic Patriarch and Bishops. The fact that the Fathers were of American nationality had no special meaning other than that the need was for Fathers who knew English, and that some of the Fathers of the New England Province of the Society of Jesus were able at the time to undertake the educational work requested. And what admits no doubt whatever is that the Fathers, from the day of their coming to Iraq to this very day, have never meddled in political party or sectarian matters. Moreover they have always been supporters of just Arab causes, and in particular, they have defended, and continue to defend, the Arabs’ position and rights regarding the question of Palestine. As for Al-Hikma University, we set about founding
it only after we had obtained the approval of the Ministry of Education, expressly stated in the official letter, No. 15020, dated May 5th, 1955.

e) It was inevitable that we should mention the lying statements and ugly slanders which have appeared in some of the local newspapers during the past year, and which contained disgraceful attacks and disgusting insults directed against Al-Hikma University - its Administration, Faculty, and student body. And we seize this occasion to deny completely what had been said and written against us. At the same time we place on record our astonishment at the fact that such false statements and baseless accusations were published in newspapers subject to the Government’s supervision and censorship.

f) With reference to the Government’s natural desire to supervise university instruction, we reminded the Committee that we had always acknowledged it in word and deed. You must be aware that we agreed to the principle of supervision more than a year ago in our meetings with representatives of the Supreme Council for Universities and in the letters which we addressed to that Council.

We put into effect in our University a number of suggestions given to us by the Council, and we have always been ready to cooperate with the Council and with responsible authorities. Hence we were surprised that the Decree Iraqizing our University was issued without our being informed ahead of time, and without previous consultations about the matter.

g) We explained in detail the case of two students who were dismissed from our University seven months ago because of their numerous grave violations of the University, not for scholastic reasons, and not for political reasons, but solely for disciplinary reasons having to do with their unbecoming conduct, which we set forth in detail to the representatives of the Supreme Council for Universities, and to Inspectors from the Ministry of Education, and to the two Iraqi Presidents, past and present, of the University.

We declared that we could not consent to the return of the two students to the University, because their presence in the University would stand in the way of teaching, learning, order and peace, and create an atmosphere opposed to the best interests of the University and its Faculty and its male and female students. This has been confirmed by what the two students did after their dismissal, and especially by the conduct of one of them during the past five weeks. We have repeatedly urged the authorities to help these two students to continue their studies in another College, for their own good
and for the good of Al-Hikma University.
4. Since the issuing of the Decree Iraqiizing Al-Hikma University two events have taken place, each of them very important.
a) On the ninth of this month (October) one of the two students dismissed last year for disciplinary reasons came to our University. He entered the Office of the Registrar of our University, accompanied by two persons representing the National Union of Iraqi Students. The dismissed student asked the Registrar to register him as a student in Al-Hikma University. The Registrar answered him, saying (and what he said was true) that he did not have the power to admit and register students, but that this power belonged to the Presidency of the University. Thereupon one of the previously mentioned two representatives took out a revolver, cocked it, and brought it close to the Registrar’s face and threatened that he would shoot him if he did not register the dismissed student. The Registrar continued to refuse. This event was witnessed by the Registrar, and his Assistant, and one of the Jesuit Fathers, who was standing near the armed representative. The revolver was seen by other persons, a few minutes later, in the office of the Secretary. This threat to a member of the University’s Administration in his own Office by a representative of the National Union of Iraqi Students is an exceedingly grave matter in our opinion.

We took the matter up with the Professor who was then the Acting President of Al-Hikma University, and we asked him to take the necessary measures to prevent those threatening and armed persons from entering the University campus. Otherwise, we could not be responsible for the safety of our students, and our professors, and the members of our Administration. We also informed the Directors of the Security and the Police in Zafarania about the event and the grave threat. We are very much surprised that, judging from appearances, those measures were not taken. The three persons mentioned have returned to the University a number of times, and the dismissed student has continued to come to the University almost daily.
b) The second event is that which took place on Saturday, Oct. 19th. On Friday the 18th, the newspaper The Voice of the Peasant published an announcement about a celebration to be held by the National Union of Iraqi Students, in the building of the University of Al-Hikma, on the occasion of the passage of one month (actually it was 38 days) since the Iraqization of Al-Hikma University. No one had previously informed the
Acting President of Al-Hikma University about the holding of this celebration. Had it not been for our learning by chance of the previously mentioned announcement, we would have known nothing about the celebration.

On Saturday, Oct. 19th, at least 15 buses came to Al-Hikma University, some of them Baghdad University buses, and some of them double-decker public buses. In the buses were persons, some of whom were university students, and some secondary school students. Among this throng, and also actively participating in the celebration, were the three students who had played their parts in the event of the revolver, previously mentioned. It has also been said that a number of those taking part in the celebration, from outside our University, were armed. It was clear that a large number of the students of Al-Hikma University had no desire to participate in a celebration run in their University by outsiders who had not consulted them about the affair.

We believe that these points may have escaped the notice of the Member of your Council who addressed the gathering and of the Minister of Youth, who was also present. We were happy to have these two persons present, since we feel that their presence was an important factor in assuring that the progress of the celebration would not be marked by violent, and even bloody, incidents. As for the demands presented by the representative of the Student Union in his speech, and printed in the issue of The Revolution for October 22, I single out for special mention the second, which reads: "The restoration of our comrades who were dismissed for political reasons to their scholastic benches". Was this, I wonder, the real reason for holding the celebration? In any case, I repeat once more, with the utmost insistence and emphasis: There is no student who has been dismissed from Al-Hikma University for political reasons; whoever claims such a thing, claims what is completely and absolutely contrary to the truth. With all respect and frankness, we submit to you our opinion that it is very strange that those responsible for the celebration did not consult the academic authorities to whom the matter was of concern.

5. There is another matter which gives rise to astonishment and concern. The dismissed student, referred to above, has come back to the University several times during the past week, and he has bragged to some of our students that the Council of the Command of the Revolution will issue a decree ordering his re-admission to our University. We can only regret intensely the conduct of this student and his use of the
name of the respected Council of the Command of the Revolution to exert pressure on the authorities in our University, in order to obtain something which he in no way deserves.

On Wednesday, Oct. 23rd, this student showed one of our students a paper, claiming that it was a copy of a draft decree which the Council of the Command of the Revolution was intending to pass.

The Fathers have explained to the Acting President of Al-Hikma University that the returning of this student to Al-Hikma University would render their position very difficult, and that, consequently, they could not see how they would be able to continue their work in Al-Hikma University.

6. In view of all that has happened in and concerning Al-Hikma University since the issuing of the Decree Iraqiizing our University, and inasmuch as we have been unable to contact the highest authorities, we have been forced to reconsider our position and attitude. We were, and still are, desirous of continuing our work in Al-Hikma University, a work with no other goal than that of serving Iraq and its sons.

But the events mentioned, and our present circumstances, have led us to doubt that the Government of Iraq firmly wishes that the Jesuit Fathers remain in Al-Hikma University. We have not noted, on the part of the Government, any positive sign indicating such a wish, but all the signs have, up to now, been negative. The difficulties which we are experiencing disturb us profoundly. And in the light of the events mentioned, we do not believe that the Administration of the University, so long as the present state of things continues, will be able to maintain order and to keep up the scholastic level which must exist in any university worthy of the name.

In conclusion, I assure you that the Fathers wish this noble country nothing but good. If I have spoken to you frankly, it was because of my belief that you would welcome the honest expression of the views of men of religion and learning who have consecrated their lives to carrying on the lofty mission of education. We respect you, as we respect all sincere citizens. And we respect ourselves and our profession - and this is the right and duty of every man.

Yes, we love this country and its people, and we appreciate what we have encountered here of kindness, friendship, and hospitality, which we shall never forget. We ask God Most High to bless our dear Iraq and its dear sons with the best of His favors and blessings in this world and the next. He is the One Who hears and answers.

Please accept my sincere thanks and genuine respect.
November 25, 1968 dismissal of Al-Hikma Jesuits

On Saturday the expelled student mentioned previously started attending classes again. So on the following Monday, October 28 the Jesuits after careful planning and intense discussion, decided to stop teaching and administering until the Iraqi Government and Al-Hikma's Acting President could give them some assurance that order would be restored sufficiently so that the academic year could continue. They went "on strike" in their own school. The Jesuit statement follows.

Notice To: The Faculty of Al-Hikma University
The Students of Al-Hikma University and their parents
Those working in the Administration

From this day (Monday, October 28, 1968), and until further notice, the Jesuit Fathers are discontinuing their administrative and teaching work in Al-Hikma University, until they can consult the highest authorities and arrive at a just solution of certain problems which are obstructing the normal university life consonant with the best interests of Al-Hikma University and the safety of its students.

(signed) The Jesuit Fathers of Al-Hikma University.

Their notice was posted around the school and was later torn down by members of the Student Union. The Jesuits resumed their work in the University after they had been assured that the problem student would cause no more trouble because he had been officially transferred to a government institution of higher learning.

On October 30 the security police of the government came to the school with the names of "nine" Jesuits (actually eight since Fr. Kelly's name had two versions) who were to be expelled from the country. They were Frs. R. McCarthy, Kelly Frederick William, Frederick William Kelly, Banks, Cote, MacWade, McLeod, J. Larkin and Nash. No reason was given for the selection of these men.

This action was protested vigorously. The safety and well-being of the students was a serious Jesuit concern. On November 1, Fr. Joseph L. Ryan, S.J., the Academic Vice-President presented the following letter to Dr. Fadhil Husain al-Ansari, President Delegate of Al-Hikma University:
Dear Dr. Fadhil:

A member of the preparatory committee of the Student Union came to the Al-Hikma campus on 9 October, 1968, and in the office of the university registrar pulled out a gun, held it up to the head of the registrar and threatened to shoot him if he did not register a student who had previously been dismissed for academic reasons. The mere carrying of arms has been forbidden by the civil authorities under severe penalties. We wish to insist as strongly as possible that neither of these two men should come to the campus of Al-Hikma University again. We realize that you want the University to operate as smoothly as possible. Therefore, you must share our deep concern over the recent letter from the Residence Bureau notifying you that nine Fathers are to terminate their residence in Iraq. How can a professor, and especially a Dean, operate efficiently if he expects that he may be sent out of the country in two weeks' time? If you expect our cooperation, then you must be ready to assure the psychological well-being of the faculty. It should, of course, be clear to you that if these Fathers were to leave, we could not continue our cooperation as a group. Therefore, this matter should be investigated and cleared up as soon as possible. We should like some clarification about the reasons for the action of the Residence Bureau or at least an assurance that the residence of these nine Fathers is definitely restored and no longer in doubt.

We feel that unless these requests are met we cannot be sure of the safety of the students on campus. Since parents send their sons and daughters here because of their confidence in us we feel that we must tell them when the campus is not safe and allow the parents to act accordingly. We insist on this point because we have the responsibility in this matter which we cannot pass off to any one else.

We feel that it is your responsibility, as president, to call to the attention of higher authorities the state of affairs which has existed on the campus recently and to outline strongly and courteously the conditions which are necessary for the proper operation of the University.

We are confident that higher authorities who are responsible for the Student Union will not accept that members of the Union be allowed to bring shame on the Union by threatening to shoot a member of the University staff who is carrying out his duties in his own office.

We are confident that higher authorities responsible for higher education are gravely concerned for the good order and
discipline in their institutions, and for the respect and dignity of the faculty and staff.
In view of all this, we feel that our attitude is a reasonable one and that we can expect the full cooperation of all responsible persons. In frankness, we should add that if the necessary conditions cannot be provided, then we must reserve the right to take whatever action we deem appropriate. It would be a shame to have the school year further interrupted because of non-academic problems which could easily be prevented.

Sincerely yours,
(Rev.) Joseph L. Ryan, S.J.

The next few weeks were spent in furious activity. Fr. Donohue requested and received a hearing on November 20 with the President of the country, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, and presented a request that the order be rescinded for lack of charges. At the meeting Fr. Donohue together with Fr. McCarthy pointed out that President Bakr had earlier stated that he wanted the Jesuits to stay and work in the university. They insisted that the Jesuits had no other desire than to serve this country as they had done for 36 years, but their protestations of the innocence and of the innocent intentions of the Jesuits were to no avail. They left a written statement of their position with President Bakr.

Mr. President, I would like to assure Your Excellency that we, the Jesuit Fathers, desire most sincerely to serve this beloved country in the future as we have tried to do ever since we came to Iraq 36 years ago. We shall always be ready to cooperate with the authorities in carrying out the educational mission entrusted to us by our Superiors in the Vatican in response to what had been requested by the Iraqi Christian hierarchy and approved of by the chief Muslim authorities.

(signed)  Rev. John J. Donohue, S.J.,
Superior of the Jesuits in Iraq
Rev. Richard J. McCarthy, S.J.,
President of Al-Hikma University

The President replied that his hands were tied because the whole matter was the affair of the Minister of Interior General 'Ammash who was responsible for the security of the country. General 'Ammash had given the expulsion order but was now out of the country. Some of the educators at the Government University tried to intervene, but to no avail. All possible efforts were made to get the order of expulsion rescinded but these were in vain since no one was able to obtain an appointment with the Minister of the
Interior. After much discussion and deliberation, and after weighing all the possible consequences, the Jesuit Community presented the following memorandum to Dr. Fadhil Husain al-Ansari, President Delegate of Al-Hikma University, on the morning of November 21. It once again stated that the Jesuits would not work in an environment that they considered dangerous for their students and so disruptive that learning was impossible.

MEMORANDUM: To: Dr. Fadhil Hussein Al-Ansari
President-Delegate of Al-Hikma University
11/21/68
Dear Doctor Fadhil:
The day-to-day operation of Al-Hikma University has depended on the Jesuit staff. They have worked very hard and very conscientiously at their jobs, in spite of the mounting difficulties they have encountered during the past two months. Now, however, the order commanding the expulsion of eight Jesuit Fathers from Iraq, among them two Deans, renders it practically impossible for the Jesuit Fathers to assure the efficient functioning of Al-Hikma University. Therefore, we are compelled, with much regret, to suspend our academic work in Al-Hikma University until some reasonable and acceptable solution can be found, not only to this problem, but also to the other major unresolved problems.
We have tried unsuccessfully to find a solution. But the real responsibility for finding a solution rests primarily and \textit{ex officio} on you, as the President of Al-Hikma University. If you can find a solution, we shall be happy to discuss with you the conditions under which we shall be able to resume our work in the University.
We think that by this time you understand our position. We are a group dedicated to educational work, and we have no political ties. The expulsion of eight Jesuit Fathers for undisclosed reasons places all of us Jesuits in jeopardy and immediately creates an intolerable climate of doubt, suspicion, and anxiety, which makes it psychologically impossible to do efficient and fruitful academic work. We know that no serious charges can be proved against the eight Jesuit Fathers who have been ordered to leave Iraq. Hence we have no assurance that the remaining Fathers will not be expelled next week, or next month. This uncertainty and this fear of arbitrary and unjust expulsion are major and insurmountable deterrents to worthwhile educational work.
We have consistently expressed by word, and proven by action, our sincere desire to cooperate with the responsible
authorities and to render service to this country and its young men and women. Yesterday the President of the Republic of Iraq told Fathers Donohue and McCarthy that he desired and welcomed our cooperation. On our part we can do no more. We respectfully submit that it is now up to you, as President of Al-Hikma University, and to the higher quarters concerned, to take those measures which will make it possible for us to cooperate with you in the noble work of higher education.

Very sincerely yours,
The Jesuit Fathers of Al-Hikma University

This memorandum produced an immediate reaction. On the campus neither the faculty nor the students went to class, out of solidarity with the Fathers. It was, after all unusual for the Jesuit Fathers to go on strike in their own school, but they had no other option. On the other hand the Minister of the Interior (previously unavailable) was contacted by phone within a quarter of an hour. Dr. Fadhil explained the situation to him. It was reported that the Minister became angry and forthwith ordered the expulsion of all the Al-Hikma Jesuits from Iraq. Within a half-hour the Director of the Residence Department came in person to the University. Those not already under order of expulsion were informed that they too would have to leave the country by November 25. The Papal Nuncio and the Belgian Ambassador, representing the U.S. interests, tried to make representations, but their efforts were unavailing.

A list of the names of the Al-Hikma Jesuits was sent to the Jesuit Community with orders for all Jesuits to leave the country. It is curious that the lay volunteers were never mentioned then or after. The Baghdad College Jesuits, 15 miles away, were not mentioned in the expulsion order except for Fr. MacDonnell who taught in both schools. When Fr. Donohue pointed this out to the government officials he was allowed to stay and teach at Baghdad College for the coming year. Fr. Donohue found his own name on the dismissal list but insisted that it be taken off since he was the Superior of the Jesuits in Iraq. Dr. Fadhil removed his name and he remained in Iraq.

A hurried inventory was made by the Jesuits of their equipment, furniture, books and other belongings in all five University buildings. This was signed by the newly appointed Iraqi President of Al-Hikma University, Dr. Fadhil Husain Al Ansari, in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio, to make clear that the property, books, equipment and furnishings were being taken from the Jesuits against their will. No recompense of any kind
was ever given for the buildings which they built, the equipment which they bought or whatever personal belongings which they could not take with them and had to leave behind.

The day of departure was November 25th. There were 23 Jesuit leaving that day and 5 had already departed. The Al-Hikma students had been warned by the Student Union that any student who went to the airport to see the Fathers off would be physically harmed. In spite of this threat about one third of the student body did come and some were physically harmed afterwards. The scene in the air terminal from 5:00 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. was like a wake, in spite of the large number of people there. One of the students gave a speech to the Fathers expressing the gratitude of the student body and their sorrow at the turn of events. Lufthansa held up a plane for 20 minutes to give the students and teachers time to bid each of the Fathers farewell.

Thus the 28 Jesuits, 2 other religious and 6 foreign lay volunteers left Al-Hikma and Iraq.

In January 1969, Fr. Donohue wrote from Baghdad to the "Al-Hikma Jesuit exiles".

No matter what happens, we will all have the consolations of having tried our utmost to cooperate with a difficult situation in order to continue our service here. On the Wednesday after you left, Dr. Fadhil sent me a letter thanking the Jesuits for the outstanding educational work they had done for the sons and daughters of the Iraqi people. That was very gratifying to know. Christmas was pleasant enough. People visited us as usual and everywhere I visited the conversation was on Al-Hikma. None of the Christians can put it out of their minds. Of course, many hope that somehow you could all come back. But I think there is very little foundation for their hopes. I think that the Jesuit Al-Hikma they knew is now consigned to its own Camelot. By the way, the ending of Camelot is hauntingly appropriate:

Each evening from December to December
Before you drift to sleep upon your cot
Think back on all the tales that you remember of Camelot.
Ask every person if he's heard the story
and tell it strong and clear, if he has not,
That once there was a fleeting wisp of glory, called Camelot.

There are many people here telling the Al-Hikma story "strong and clear". It seems that many regard me as the remnant of Al-Hikma and when I was down there after your departure, working on the inventory, many would come running up to talk and to inform me that I was a symbol of what had been. At first
The dismissal of the Al-Hikma Jesuits 11/25/68 251

they were hoping that all the Jesuits were standing on the border of Lebanon, waiting for a signal to return. Now they take a more realistic view. (Fr. Donohue)

'68-'69 school year at Baghdad College

The Jesuits at Baghdad College were subjected to attacks in the press similar to those of Al-Hikma, with about the same absence of subtlety. As is evident in the following quotation, the accusations reflect an understandable frustration with the American Government's uneven policies toward the Arab countries and in lieu of American politicians the American Jesuits were singled out. They were after all the only Americans left in Iraq and they were very visible. A few years previously there were almost a thousand Americans.

Translation from THAWRA 12/21/68

Al-Hikma University and its sister institution, Baghdad College continued to be institutions of cultural imperialistic radiation that reflected imperialistic notions. They also continued to be spying networks working for the C.I.A. and Israel. Now that the Revolution has accomplished much through revolutionary constructiveness and alert destructiveness, Baghdad College still stands in the way of the immortal revolution as a stumbling block and an imperialistic foothold in which minds that try to thwart the course of this revolution and call for the return of imperialism have made
nests for themselves. It is your duty to carry the shovels of destruction to shatter the foothold of cultural imperialism represented by Baghdad College.

The Jesuit Fathers’ involvement in politics ranged from minimal to non-existent as is illustrated in the story of Fr. Guay’s introduction to Nouri es Said at a party in the early days of Baghdad College. Nouri es Said, of course served as Iraqi Prime Minister in many governments over many years. "And what do you do for a living?" asked Fr. Guay. "I work for the government" replied Nouri es Said. In January of 1969 Fr. Belcher had a similar encounter.

I was the Minister of Baghdad College. I had to bring the widow and children of one of our cooks who died of tuberculosis to the hospital for precautionary x-rays. As I was sitting in the Doctor’s office, three men came in, two of whom I recognized. One was a Palestinian psychologist and the other a Baghdad College graduate who was a prominent neurologist. The third man I failed to recognize but this third man was the center of attention. He looked at me and asked the doctor who I was. The doctor identified me as a Jesuit from Baghdad College. The man asked if I were American and I said I was. He then told me that all teachers at Baghdad College would be Iraqis next year because all Jesuits would be traveling like the Jesuits from Al-Hikma. At this the three went out to another room and then I asked the Doctor who the man was. I was told that this was Salah Mehdi Ammash, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior who expelled the Jesuits from Al-Hikma University. From then on I knew our time was short lived. (Fr. Belcher)

**September 30, 1969**

The 28 Jesuits were expelled from Al-Hikma on November 25, 1968. It was not until August 24, 1969, nine months later, that the 33 Jesuits of Baghdad College were dismissed. The Minister of Education sent his gratitude to the Baghdad College Jesuits saying, "Baghdad College has rendered outstanding service to the youth of Iraq for forty years." As in the case of Al-Hikma, very little publicity was given. Some thought that the two schools were closed at different times to minimize adverse publicity for the regime.

An article appeared shortly after the dismissal in the *Jesuit Mission Magazine*, written by the editor, Winter 1969, pp. 7-8. This is an abbreviated version of the original article.
Baghdad Diary -- Last Entries

In late August 1969 the Iraq Government summarily took possession of Baghdad College giving the Jesuits no explanation. The 33 Fathers were ordered to leave Iraq within three days. This followed, by nine months, the expropriation of Al-Hikma University and the expulsion of the 28 Jesuits there. The following are excerpts from the record of the final days of the Baghdad Mission.

August 18--Fr. Yusuf Seferta, S.J., the Iraqi Principal of the school, was formally summoned to the Intelligence Bureau for questioning by an assistant officer. The atmosphere was quite cordial. The basic question was: "Why can't Iraqi teachers be substituted for the American Jesuit Fathers?" Before the questioning began the interviewer told Fr. Seferta, "Baghdad College is an excellent school; but the government intends to Iraqiize it."

August 24--Seven security officers and police officers came to the Jesuit residence to inform the Rector, Fr. Carty, that they had been sent by order of the Minister of the Interior to seal the school buildings and to take the keys. When Fr. Carty asked for an official paper or documents, they refused and merely reiterated that they were an official committee sent to close the school. After the departure of the officers, we immediately notified the Papal Nuncio, the Chaldean Patriarch and the Belgian Ambassador (who represented U.S. interests) about what had happened. The next day all three went separately to the Ministry of Interior, but in vain.
August 25--An officer from the Residence Department came with an order from the Director General of Nationality which stated that all the American Jesuits were to leave the country within three days. The following day both the Belgian Ambassador and the Papal Nuncio visited the Foreign Office to protest against this sudden forced exodus.

August 27--The extension request was approved, which means the American Fathers can remain in Iraq until about the 7th of September. The Chaldean Patriarch, visited the Assistant Minister of Interior (the Minister is in the North) to ask for an explanation of the closure of the school and the expulsion of the American Jesuits. When His Beatitude asked about the status of the two Iraqi Jesuits, Fr. Seferta, Principal of the School and Fr. Burby, Assistant Principal, the Assistant Minister expressed surprise. He was not aware of any Iraqi Jesuits. When the Patriarch inquired about the disposition of the Fathers' property and the possibility of turning it over to another all Iraqi Christian Association, the Acting Minister said this would not be possible. There has been absolutely no mention of any of this in the news media.

August 30--Fr. Seferta had an appointment with the Minister of Education. The Minister, who seemed quite embarrassed, knew nothing about the closing of the school and the forced exodus of the American Fathers. Fr. Seferta submitted two requests: that he and Fr. Burby be allowed to remain as Principal and Assistant Principal of Baghdad College and that they be allowed to keep the piece of land on which is located the Fathers' residence, the church and the cemetery.

August 31--One of the local newspapers carried an article announcing that a committee would be formed to replace the foreign administration of Baghdad College. In every other aspect the school would remain the same.

September 1--During the first week of September most of the American Jesuits left Iraq while two Jesuits of the Near East Vice Province arrived to help out. The school is still sealed.

September 3--His Beatitude, the Chaldean Patriarch, and Fr. Yusuf Seferta had a meeting with the Minister of Education. The Minister mentioned he had visited both the President of the Republic and the Director General of Security to complain about the seizure of Baghdad College. He added that he was doing everything possible to help us, but because of the American policy of supporting Israel that this was not so easy. When the Patriarch brought up the possibility of some of the older
The dismissal of the Baghdad College Jesuits

Fathers remaining in the country, the Minister seemed quite enthusiastic.

We have learned from reliable sources that a group of Iraqi educators well-disposed toward the Jesuit Fathers and aware of the high level of education given at Baghdad College are requesting that it be made a "model" school under the supervision of the College of Education. They are also making efforts to have Fr. Powers and Fr. Carty remain on for some time to assist in the transition.

September 4--A letter sent from the Ministry of Interior to the Mutasarrafiya (governor's office) states: 1) that the Fathers' legal association had been dissolved; 2) that the property would be disposed of by the government, and 3) that a committee had been formed to take over the school.

The Papal Nuncio arranged with the Acting Minister of Interior that: 1) Fr. Powers and Fr. Carty would be given an extension of residence; 2) it is very probable the Jesuit residence, the church and the cemetery would be left in the hands of the Fathers; 3) the possibility of the Iraqi Jesuits, participating in the school administration would have to be discussed further. Later in the morning an officer from the Residence Department came to get the passports of Fathers Powers and Carty.

September 9--An official committee appointed by the Minister of Education came to open the school. The committee is composed of five professional educators. The head of the committee, Dr. Suad [el-Bustani], Director of the Educational Research Center, explained that their work is merely to supervise the running of the school - and that they want the school to continue as it was in the past. Fr. Seferta will continue as the Principal and Fr. Burby as his assistant. To replace the American Jesuit Fathers, Dr. Suad plans to bring teachers from Baghdad University to teach the sciences and mathematics in English. She is most anxious that the Christian students continue to receive religious instruction.

Fr. Powers and Fr. Carty have received an extension of residence to the end of this month. It seems doubtful that they will be allowed to remain beyond this date, but in the Orient one never knows.

September 29--Situation still unclear. Fr. Powers and Fr. Carty leave tomorrow. We have decided that Fathers Seferta and Burby will not continue in the school administration.

The diary ends as did the work of 143 American Jesuits.
Reasons for the dismissal

No explanation was ever given by the Iraqi Government for the expulsion of the Jesuits. They were simply told they had to be out of the country in five days. We can only surmise, then, what the real causes for dismissals were. One cause could be a popular nationalistic spirit, or an anti-American spirit. There certainly were nationalistic enthusiasm as well as signs of justified resentment toward American pro-Israel policy, but there were also signs of friendship toward the few Americans still living in Iraq. In fact, Americans, as Americans, seemed liked in the Arab world.

Finally another reason suggested was an anti-Christian sentiment; but there was no evidence that the expulsion was directed against Christians and there was no reason to believe that the government had any quarrel with the Jesuits either as Jesuits or as Christians. Religious preference was not a high priority for the Iraqi Government at that time. Whatever the rationale for the dismissal it was carried out with no physical harm to the Jesuits, indeed they were treated with respect and courtesy at several different levels of government.

Perhaps the best explanation for the dismissal can be found in the Baath ideology which is opposed to private and especially foreign-run schools. In Syria, for example, the Syrian Baath Government took over all Catholic schools in 1967. In fact, after the Jesuits left Iraq, other Iraqi private schools, Muslim as well as Christian, were taken over by the Iraqi Baath Government. Some members of the Baath Party were more serious than others about implementing this policy of opposition to private education.

These members used two small but vocal groups to influence government officials who were reluctant to dismiss the Jesuits, but who felt themselves in too precarious a state to withstand concerted opposition. These two groups were the National Student Union and the Teachers' Union, mentioned earlier.

In any case it is safe to say that the actions of the National Student Union and the Teachers' Union, coupled with a small but powerful clique within the party itself go a long way to explain the seizure of the Jesuit institutions and the expulsion of the Jesuits. If most educated Iraqis had their say, Al-Hikma and Baghdad College would have gone on under the direction of the Jesuits.

Waial Hindo had his own theory on the Iraqization of Baghdad College and Al-Hikma.

The revolutionary command council that issued the order of
Iraqization of Baghdad College and Al-Hikma was run by young men just graduated or about to graduate from College. Their ages ranged between 24 to 29 years old, and it is these young men who were the driving force of the revolution. They were mostly members of the Iraqi Student Union, labor unions, teachers' union, and other minor unions. These young people lacked the political maturity and the experience to govern. Compounded to these difficulties of inexperience, the openly anti-Arab policies of the United States in the Middle East, after 1967, were factors in the Iraqization of Al-Hikma, and the expulsion of the Jesuits.
(Waiel Hindo, B.C. '68, A.H. '64)

In a January 3, 1969 letter from Boston, Fr. McCarthy commented on possible reasons for the dismissal of the Al-Hikma Jesuits, not being certain at the time of writing that Baghdad College would also be closed. From that perspective while Al-Hikma was in its last academic year ('68-'69) and without any Jesuits teaching there, his words are rather poignant.

The full story of the events leading to our final expulsion is very involved and complicated. Why did it all happen? The principal factors involved were:

a) The Baath Party is in control of Iraq and its Government. One of the declared tenets of this Party is that education, on all levels, must be entirely in the hands of the State. Therefore, the Baath Party in Iraq can be expected to get rid of private educational institutions systematically (as the Syrian wing of the Party has done in Syria).

b) Certain members of the revived Student Union in Iraq were very antagonistic to the presence of the Jesuit Fathers, and that for a variety of motives.

c) There was a good deal of anti-American feeling as a result of the humiliating military defeat of the Arabs in June, 1967, and the support given to Israel by many American quarters. This feeling was exploited by those hostile to our presence for different reasons. There was also the fact that Al-Hikma had, and has, a relatively large number of Jewish students, all of them Iraqi citizens.

d) Certain students who had been expelled or dropped from Al-Hikma for scholastic or disciplinary reasons were naturally disgruntled and were able to exercise a certain pressure on some members of the Government through the Student Union and through slanderous articles published in some Baghdad newspapers and magazines. Such articles could not be
answered publicly, and they undoubtedly helped to create a false impression of Al-Hikma in the minds of many. There were doubtless other factors, personal and political. We shall probably never really know the whole story. As against those factors, it is worth mentioning that many Iraqis, in all walks of life, held us, and continue to hold us in high regard. The Iraqization of Al-Hikma University was not a "popular" measure in the best educated and academic circles.
(Fr. Richard McCarthy)

The Baghdad Jesuit diaspora: where did they go?

What do 60 men do after being shut out of their apostolate after many years of experience and specialized training, leaving the apostolate behind them. The Baghdad Jesuits held meetings after their dismissal trying to answer this question. They felt that they had worked well as a team; also that they had developed certain skills, corporate and individual, which might be needed in some part of the Arab world. None of the places suggested, however, proved feasible.

A meeting held December 17, 1968 was one of a series trying to discover how best to use these skills. Some are listed here and indicate imaginative and inventive alternatives to abandoning their favorite apostolate - working in the Arab world. The ideas included attempts to return to Baghdad to work at Baghdad College or in the Chaldean seminary or with other religious orders; to work in some other Arab country; to start a research institute in Beirut connected with the Jesuit St. Joseph University; to do Newman Club and chaplain work at the American University of Beirut; to teach at A.U.B.; to become involved in Lebanon's secondary education; to help in schools of other Middle Eastern religious orders; to teach in the Jesuit College de la Sainte Famille in Cairo with 1200 students; to work in the student center in Cairo; to teach in the American University of Cairo; to work in Fr. Sullivan's Teachers' program in Saudi Arabia; to move on to other countries such as Indonesia.

Many of the Baghdad Jesuits did some of the above but most were then absorbed into the works of the New England Province. Fifteen remained in the Middle East; five in Egypt, ten in Lebanon, and one in Indonesia. Four were doing scholarly work at St. Joseph's University in Beirut at CEMAM, the Center for the Study of the Modern Arab World. CEMAM has already published a bibliography Arab Culture and Society in Change. Fr. Ryan, former Dean of Al-Hikma worked at CEMAM in Beirut. Later he conducted lecture tours in which he spoke on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Jerusalem and the role of the U.S. in the Middle East.
Some went to work in Egypt, one of whom was Fr. Carty.

After leaving Iraq in April, 1970, I joined the Jesuit community at the Holy Family Secondary School in Cairo, Egypt. There, using experience acquired at Baghdad College, I helped set up a new language lab and a new English program and taught English there. Then in July 1978 I was appointed to the Jesuit Residence in Alexandria, Egypt, where, in addition to administrative duties (Superior, Minister, Treasurer), I directed the University Students Library. In 1985, I was sent to the Jesuit Residence in Minia, Egypt, a small town 240 km south of Cairo to teach English to adults. I also assisted in the formation of the young Jesuits in the novitiate and am now coordinating the English teaching program at the Jesuit secondary school in Cairo. (Fr. Carty)

Perhaps this narrative of the last few years of the mission in Iraq might offer some idea of what was lost and the events that led up to the dismissal of the Jesuits. The greatest loss, of course, was not in terms of property, but in terms of human relations and opportunities for Jesuits to work with Iraqis, Oriental Christians and Muslims. The real reasons are hidden in the mystery of Divine Providence: why such a work that was so promising be suddenly struck down. In any case, this "fleeting wisp of glory" did exist for 37 years and who can predict what significance it might have for any future service to the Baghdad community by Jesuits and their colleagues and what it could mean for better dialogue between Muslims and Christians in the future?

Jesuit - lay volunteer reunion

In August of 1974 to commemorate five years after the sudden expulsion of the Jesuits and their colleagues from Baghdad a reunion was held at Fairfield University with 23 Jesuits and 37 lay volunteers present. Since their expulsion all had done many interesting and exciting things, but the topic that no one could forget was their experience in Baghdad.

Fr. Merrick at the picnic
The Jesuit cemetery, residence and B.C. today

Today, the buildings at Al-Hikma are used by the Iraqi Government as a technical institute, part of the University of Baghdad. The equipment and the library were given to the University of Baghdad. Baghdad College was originally intended to be made a local neighborhood school, but a committee from the University of Baghdad was formed and it convinced the government to keep the school running as a model college preparatory school. The University of Baghdad thus would supply the teachers so that the standards of the school would be maintained. Baghdad College is still operating under this arrangement. After the American Jesuits left in 1969, two Iraqi Jesuits stayed in the residence and taught religion at Baghdad College. They chose to leave the following year, 1970.

Five Jesuits were buried in the Jesuit cemetery and their average age when they died was less than a youthful 45. We still remember them as young men, especially the oldest
chronologically, Fr. Madaras, who enlivened every gathering with his wit and youthful joy of life. The men were, according to date of birth, entrance into the Society of Jesus, death and age at the time of death:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Birth</th>
<th>Entrance</th>
<th>Death</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Francis Cronin</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1/30/53</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roger O'Callaghan</td>
<td>1912</td>
<td>1929</td>
<td>3/5/54</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thomas Manning</td>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>6/21/60</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Owens</td>
<td>1924</td>
<td>1941</td>
<td>5/19/67</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward Madaras</td>
<td>1897</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>10/2/67</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The five Jesuit gravestones near the chapel at Baghdad College

One of the major Baghdad College buildings was named to honor Fr. Cronin who was a well loved teacher. In January of 1953 he developed a rash which puzzled the Baghdad doctor so he was brought to the British air base at Habbaniyah where he was found to have leukemia. He died on January 30, 1953 at the air base and was buried behind the Baghdad College church in Sulaikh, the first Jesuit to die on the mission.

Fr. O'Callahan was a scholar of Sacred Scripture and was visiting the archeological sites of Iraq when he was killed in an automobile accident. Fr. Fennell remembers him.

During the winter of 1954, the Fathers had a visitor, a Jesuit scholar of the New York Province. Fr. O'Callaghan was reputed to know a dozen languages, most of the common European tongues, and a few languages known only to students of ancient peoples. In spite of his brilliance and reputation, he never could learn how to play well the simple card game of "pitch", a popular game during the Fathers' evening recreation.

On the evening of March 5, 1954, while returning with some scientists from a day of exploration of some ancient diggings,
he was sitting on the front passenger side of the car. In the
dark, they ran into a truck, parked in the road with no
headlights on. The truck's tailboard smashed the windshield
and hit Fr. O'Callaghan's brow. Death must have been
instantaneous. Fr. Fennell and another Father had to identify
the body at the morgue the next morning. Fr. O'Callaghan was
the second Jesuit to be buried in the cemetery behind our
church in Sulaikh. (Fr. Fennell)

Rev. Thomas Manning, S.J. The Manning funeral 6/22/60

The youngest to die there was Fr. Manning who died of
hepatitis. He was one of the most popular members of the Jesuit
community and his death was particularly difficult for the
Jesuits, partly because it came so quickly. Fr. Owens died of
cancer after a prolonged illness during which he gave considerable
edification and encouragement to both students and his fellow
Jesuits. The Jesuit last to die was one of the co-founders, Fr.
Madaras about which much has already been written. He showed
himself a genius with many talents and a heroic figure in the
community, larger than life.

The church, the Jesuit graveyard, the Jesuit residence and the former boarding school were entrusted to the Chaldean Patriarch. For a while the Patriarch used the old boarding school as an orphanage. The sequence of events leading to this is as follows. After the Baghdad College Jesuits were ordered to leave the country, Fr. Powers and Fr. Carty were allowed to stay for a few weeks to take care of details. The disposition of the property was followed carefully by the Belgian Ambassador who was taking care of American interests. His information was sent to the New England Jesuit Provincial in Boston by way of the U.S. Embassy in Brussels.

Different rumors are being circulated about future operation of the school, to the effect that the school may be run by the Ministry of Education or by the Iraqi Jesuit Fathers. However, the newspaper Al-Nur in its issue of September 4, carried a statement by an official of the Ministry of the Interior who declared that a committee has been formed to run the school and that students should call within a week for new instructions. The Ministry spokesman added that the college will maintain the same academic standards. The Belgian Embassy believes the Iraqi government will take possession of the school property. The Belgian Embassy is keeping in touch with the Apostolic Delegate Msgr. Perrin and Father Carty on this matter and will keep us informed of developments.

"Mr. Taha al-Qaissy, Director General of Cultural Affairs at the Ministry of Education, declared to Al-Nur yesterday that a committee shall be formed to administer Baghdad college in place of the present foreign administration. Mr. Al-Qaissy confirmed that studies shall continue in the said Collège as before and at the same standards and system and all that will be changed is the foreign administration. (USINT comment: Baghdad College is a high school run by American Jesuit Fathers.) Al-Nur, August 31, 1969" (Letter to Fr. Guindon from John Eisenhower of the U.S. Embassy in Brussels)

The Iraqi Government had sealed the buildings and originally had intended to take over all the buildings and all the property. Fr. Carty pointed out that part of the property had a cemetery, a church and a religious house. Eventually this question was confronted and again the Belgian Ambassador reported the latest news to his embassy which was then sent to the Jesuit superior in Boston.

Brussels A-698 of December 3, 1969 reported the likelihood that the church, cemetery and residence properties of Baghdad College would be turned over to the Latin Catholic Community
in Iraq. This would have put these properties at the disposal of the Arab Jesuit Fathers who continue to teach religion in the College. Indeed, according to information received by the Belgian Embassy, a definite decision has been taken by the Minister of the Interior, General Ammash, to transfer these properties to the Latin Catholic Episcopate. The registration procedure was following its normal course and the Papal Pro-Nuncio, who is also Bishop of the Latin Church, had received an official request for documents needed for the registration.

It therefore came as a surprise to both the Belgian Embassy and the Papal Pro-Nuncio when the semi--official newspaper *Al-Jumhuriye* in its issue of January 12 published a decision of the Revolutionary Command Council giving the church, cemetery and residence to the Roman Catholic Chaldean Patriarchate. A translation of the *Al-Jumhuriye* announcement is enclosed. It will be noted that the boarding house of the college, which had not been a part of the earlier decision of the Minister of the Interior, is donated to the Chaldean Daughters of Mary. (Letter to Fr. Guindon from John Eisenhower of the U. S. Embassy in Brussels)

The New England Provincial, Fr. Guindon, decided that the Jesuits should not be communicating with the Chaldean Patriarch through the Belgian Ambassador. He then consulted with officials in Rome and requested them to communicate to the Chaldean Patriarch the Jesuits' gratitude for his willingness to care for this property of the Jesuits and of the Latin Christian Community. This message was received, its meaning was understood and both were acknowledged by the Chaldean Patriarch.

As far as any recompense for the property little effort was made lest the Christian Community be harmed in retaliation. Fr. McCarthy did ask the Gulbenkian foundation for their opinion on the matter, however, and received the following reply.

Fundacao Calouste Gulbenkian
Servico do Medio Oriente Lisboa ME.E/AG/1 #9278

Dear Reverend McCarthy,

I thank you for your letter of December 10th [1968]

[written from Rome]

Regarding Al-Hikma, you may have to arm your soul in patience and resist for the time being any temptation to make your grievances the object of public debate and/or wishing to make official representation. It seems to me that it is in any case too early to indulge in too pessimistic speculations regarding the future of Al-Hikma and I feel that only time may solve your problem. This is admittedly a big set-back in a
lifetime but there have been precedents in the Jesuits' history which have invariably been overcome with patience and perseverance in the course of time. I have no doubt that one day again the importance of the service you were rendering in Iraq to higher education will be recognized and recent events will only remain as a bad memory.

It is with this fervent hope that I send best wishes for Christmas and a happier New Year from Mrs. Gulbenkian and myself.

Yours sincerely,
Robert Gulbenkian

Memories of happier times

In my first year in 1961 at B.C., I was on the second bus going home. When the bus went around the circle in front of the Administration building and parked to pick up the students, I noticed a lot of wet mud on the side of the bus. I very casually walked to the bus and sort of practiced my newly acquired English writing skills and wrote my full name on the side of the bus. Actually I etched it in the wet mud. I then went up and took my designated seat on the bus (not by the window by the way, but by the aisle since I was in my first year). The bus was about to move, when Fr. Thomas Kelley was doing his customary head count; then suddenly said Ghassan Jamil come with me!?! We both de-bused. He asked me if that was my inscription on the side of the bus. I thought he was admiring my skills and said "yes." At that point he waived Ama, the driver to proceed. He further instructed me to go to room (2D) detention room and write Ghasson Jamil 2000 times in a legible way. When my work was checked and approved then I went home by public Amana bus. It was very late in the evening when I got home, having learned my lesson very well.

Thirty-two years later in December 1993, I stood in front of the Administration building where the bus made the turn and remembered that incident. This was in my most recent trip back to Baghdad. I made a point of going to Baghdad College with my friend and colleague Sami Tobchi. It was a very moving experience to spend a couple of hours on campus. Many things have changed and aged a lot, but certain things are still probably as the Jesuits left them. There still are many palm tree skins laying on the ground used as benches. The beautiful wood railings in the Rice memorial building are intact, although needing a layer of varnish. Even the hefty hardware of the doors seemed to be operable. We spent some time in
Father Gerry's biology lab. Except for pipe smoke and classical music, not much has changed. The brick paved yards and walkways have been redone with asphalt and the wooden handball courts are gone. I could have easily spent an entire day just walking around but unfortunately my stay was very short. Sami and I ended our trip with a prayer by the Graves of the five Jesuits buried near the church. God rest their souls. (Ghassan Jamil Hami, B.C. '66)

5,000 color postcards of this picture arrived for sale in the B.C. bookstore two months after the Jesuits were expelled.