Chapter 3

Jesuits, Iraq and Iraqis all in Their Youth During the Thirties

Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe; to know what he ought to desire; and to know what he ought to do.
St. Thomas Aquinas: Two Precepts of Charity [1273]

The beginnings of the Jesuit endeavor

Baghdad in 1932

To get an idea of Baghdad's geography in 1932 and the intricate maze of streets which the early Jesuits encountered, one has merely to read the wonderful account written on the 25th anniversary of Baghdad College in an article entitled Baghdad In the Year 1932 which was written in Arabic by Zuhair al-Dhafir, Baghdad College '52 -'57 and which appeared in the 1957 Al Iraqi Yearbook on pages 6 and 7 in the Arabic section. It was translated by David Leon. In comparing his time (1957) with the birth of his country (and of Baghdad College in 1932) Zuhair was demonstrating the rapid progress of his country. Part of his essay is reprinted here. A map of the city with a detailed description of 19 sections of the city can found in Appendix D.

Baghdad, after World War I, could be described as having a very poor and inadequate infrastructure. At the time, Baghdad was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, the government then permitted al-Rashid street as it is known today, to be
used only for military purposes. It stretched from Eastern gate
to al-Muadham gate. As for al-Karkh area situated on the other
side of the Tigris River, there were hardly any streets, except
a narrow winding street that started from the old bridge to the
train station at the west end of al-Karkh area. There was also
another street which ran from the train station heading
towards Kadhemiya. The situation remained the same until the
year 1930, when some landlords from al-Orfaliya district at
Eastern gate, began to lease their lands as small lots on which
adjacent houses were built mostly according to eastern style
resembling Baghdad's old houses, with the exception of having
a relatively upright position and straight streets.

In 1932, Baghdad did not have any expansion whatsoever in
its side-streets, except for al-Rashid street. However as for
Ghazi and Shaikh Umar streets, they were constructed after
this period. Also in Baghdad in 1932, large buildings,
universities and theaters did not exist up until the period
before World War II and shortly thereafter. During the years
1932 and 1933, many peasants migrated to the city of Baghdad
when the countryside was hit by agricultural hardships while
on the other hand Baghdad was witnessing expansion in the
housing sector.

Furthermore, a great number of tribal sheikhs whose
special circumstances compelled them to stay in Baghdad for
long durations, decided later to move their domicile from the
countryside to the capital on a permanent basis. . . In 1932,
Baghdad did not have fixed bridges. The bridges were very
narrow, weak and were constructed on small steel pillars.
Often times these bridges would weaken during the flood season
and break apart which would result in obstructing people's
interest and delaying traffic. These bridges had to be raised and
lowered daily to let large sailboats pass up and down the river.
(1957 Al Iraqi Yearbook, Zuhair al-Dhafir '57, pp. 6,7)

The arrival of the founders

After the decision was made by Rome and by the American
provincials to start the school in Baghdad the next step was to find
Jesuits to do the job. The provincials decided to start with one
man from each of four provinces. Their choice of these Jesuits
was quite intricate, seeking men who could be spared from local
apostolates, who knew several languages, who had experience as
educators and who were outgoing and self-sufficient. It is curious
that a minor criterion seemed to favor men whose names sounded
"American" - whatever that could have meant.

The choices finally were: the superior, New England's Fr. Rice
(whose father's French Canadian name Raiche had been changed to
The beginnings of the Jesuit endeavor

Rice) and Chicago's Fr. Madaras who arrived in Baghdad in early March, 1932, and were joined a few months later by New York's Fr. Coffey and California's Fr. Mifsud. The fact that the names of all four men had Arabic meanings had nothing to do with their selection: Rice = president, Madaras = school, Coffey = enough! and Mifsud = corrupter. Later Fr. Mifsud discreetly changed his name to Fr. Miff which had no meaning at all. Within a few years the Iraq Mission was almost entirely made up of members of the New England Province. Until 1960 the Rector of Baghdad College was also the Superior of the Mission.

The first entry of the Baghdad Mission (Missio Iraquensis) which appeared in the New England Province catalog came in the 1933 edition. The catalogs were published in January and so were four months behind the school schedule (September - May). Translated, here are the assignments (which were sometimes rather vaguely expressed in Latin) of the earliest Baghdadi Jesuits during the first four years. The 1933 catalog revealed what the four founders taught and what jobs they had.

Fr. W. Rice Superior French Apos. Prayer
Fr. E. Madaras Minister Fourth year Drama
Fr. E. Coffey Principle Fourth year Sodality
Fr. J. Mifsud Discipline Fifth year Choir

In the following year the 1934 catalog added three names.
Fr. A. Wand Minister History Librarian
Fr. J. Merrick Counselor Science & Mathematics
Fr. J. Scanlon Second year

In the next year the 1935 catalog added only one name.
Fr. F. Sarjeant Fifth year Drama

In the following year the 1936 catalog added seven names including the first Jesuit Scholastics (those not yet ordained) and the first Jesuit Brother (Br.). Frs. Scanlon's and Coffey's names were deleted since they were reassigned to other jobs.
Fr. F. Anderson French Drama
Fr. V. Gookin  
Fr. C. Mahan  
Mr. W. Casey  
Mr. J. Connell  
Br. F. McGuinness  
Br. J. Servaas  

Biol/Chem  
English  
History  
Second year  
Mechanic  
Infirmanian  

Jobs were interchanged: for instance the drama director and the office of "minister" (the domestic administrator) seemed to change often. Apparently they were not very popular assignments. These few men had other jobs which do easily not fit on this list.

One such assignment exam. cand., not mentioned because of lack of space, appears after four names each year, even when there were only four men. It indicates the level of optimism these early Jesuits had, because the expression "exam. cand." assigns a man to examine the credentials of students who present themselves as candidates for entrance into the Society of Jesus. The office was not needed for a long time since the first student to enter the Jesuit Order was Stanley Marrow who graduated in 1947, a full 15 years after the first Jesuits arrived.

Coinciding with Iraq’s independence

The Jesuit enterprise started the same year that Iraq obtained its independence after four centuries of Turkish rule followed by 14 years under the British. Iraq became a monarchy in June of 1921 when Faisal I was made King of Iraq and in 1932 Iraq became a member of the League of Nations. The first 10 years were difficult years for the mission as well as for the country. There were many changes of government during this time; in fact, seven internal insurrections occurred in the period 1937-1941. In her book, The Modern History of Iraq, Phebe Marr refers to this decade as "an era of instability." The Assyrian insurrection
and the subsequent deaths of many Assyrians (numbering somewhere between 230 to 900) in the village of Sum'male near Fiesh Khaboor (Pesh Kabur) and the looting of all 60 neighboring villages in early August of 1933 furnish examples of this instability.

Under the leadership of the 26 year-old Patriarch Mar Sham'un, Assyrians were seeking the same Assyrian autonomy which they enjoyed under Turkish rule. The Iraqi Army's defeat of the "invincible" Assyrians gave the army prestige that it lacked and allowed them to push through a conscription law which later was to affect the fledgling Jesuit school. The brutality and size of the massacre on August 4, 1933 brought worldwide attention and caused the League of Nations to question Iraq's ability at self rule, particularly regarding minorities. (Marr, 1985, p. 158) and (Joseph, 1961, p. 203) This story is related by Fr. Madaras and is found in Appendix D (Madaras, 1936, p. 172-3). It is told in a very detached manner, being careful not to touch upon any political overtones.

Iraq's early problems

After independence, unrest in the schools was not uncommon and the demonstrations were not always clearly political. In his book Iraq Between Two Wars (Simon, 1986, p. 109), Reeva Simon tells of 50 students who went on strike in 1931, "alleging that the problems given to them by their mathematics teacher were much too difficult," and in 1937 and 1938 students left en masse when they felt that the final examination in mathematics was too difficult, demanding and receiving revised exams from the Ministry of Education.

Further instability followed the sudden fatal heart attack of King Faisal I on September 7, 1933 in Geneva which left the throne to his 21 year-old son Ghazi who made clear his dislike of the British. On April 4, 1939, King Ghazi was killed in a mysterious car accident. The official version of his death has always been suspected by Iraqis as a British concoction. The successor to Ghazi was his infant son Faisal II, so a regent, Abdul-Ilah was chosen who was both brother of Ghazi's wife, Queen 'Aliyah, and also Ghazi's cousin. (Marr, 1985, p. 78)

Even though their first decade was an interesting one and political intrigue seemed to surround them on every side, the early Jesuits remained informed but detached, keeping their mission of education of Iraqi youth their sole preoccupation.
The locations of Baghdad College

During the 37 years following 1932 the Jesuit mission and the country itself grew together from infancy to maturity. In these 37 years Iraq's population expanded from 3.5 million to 8.5 million while the Jesuit population grew from 4 to 61. Iraq's secondary school (including intermediate) enrollment grew from 2,076 Iraqi students in three schools to 270,000 in 840 schools, while the enrollment in the Jesuit schools increased from 120 students in rented houses to 1,100 students in nine buildings at Baghdad College.

Along the Tigris River

During its first two years the school used two rented houses in the center of Baghdad on a side street (Muraba St.) near the river. The early days were described by Ramzi Y. Hermiz in excerpts from the letters of Fr. Edward F. Madaras, S.J.

The school was located in rental property at 11/45 Muraba Street on the left bank (east side) of the Tigris (Rasafa). The school was made up of two houses "... which were not gems of the builder's craft...". The classroom "... floors were of rough uneven brick... the rooms too small, the light not so good, windows and doors were ill fitting... and when a dust storm came up, the atmosphere was not pleasant...". For
The locations of Baghdad College

athletic fields, there were two internal court yards; 25' by 40'. . . 375 boys had applied; 120 were accepted, becoming 107 at the end of the first year. Ages ran from 13 to 20, with around 15 years an average age. There were 4 grades in first classes: 5th & 6th Elementary, first and second Intermediate. Besides the four Jesuits, there were five other teachers: Father Sheiko (a Chaldean Priest), Mr. George Abbosh, Mr. Razzouk Isa, Mr. Salim Hilantu, Mr. Walter Weirs. There were classes six days a week, Monday through Saturday. The school day was from 8:00 am to 4:10 pm winter time and 7:00 am to 1:00 pm summer. Within a few months, the Library (with all books arriving as donations) became the best of its kind in Baghdad. "... the boys were surprised to learn that they could actually take home to read whatever book they wanted, free of charge...". To many students, it was the first time they saw "... real black boards, history maps, hygiene charts, projectors, movie machines, and ... individual arm-chair seats. In the eyes of their Jesuit Teachers, the boys "... have completely won our hearts. They study hard, they are respectful, obedient, and well disciplined, as well as definitely religious. (Ramzi Hermiz, Reunion VII Yearbook, 1990, p. 4)

In the amazingly short space of a few years Baghdad College had substantially realized the primary purpose which had been proposed in 1931 - to provide secondary education for Christian boys. From the outset, however, its doors were open to Iraqi non-Christians. The first advertisement to appear in an Arabic newspaper described Baghdad College as "An Iraqi School for Iraqi Boys." This policy and spirit were faithfully maintained, as was also a high standard of academic excellence.

One of the first advertisements in English concerning Baghdad College was carried in the Iraq Times September 10, 1932 on the front page explaining the intentions and methods of the school.

BAGHDAD COLLEGE High School Department
A Select Secondary School for Boys conducted by
The American Jesuits Standard Academic Courses
SUPERVISED STUDY, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, REGISTERED INFRAMARIN
Courses Offered in 1932-33: Fifth and Sixth Preparatory
First and Second Intermediate (High School).
For terms, apply to THE PRINCIPAL, Gelani St. 13/203
Hours: 10 a.m. to noon and 4 to 6 p.m.

The earliest notice presents a long explanation of the origin of
the school and is found in Appendix D along with one of the early report cards. Later advertisements were carried in the *Iraq Times*. On September 13, 1937 it told of the preparation for the Government Exams which reflected a later change in the curriculum and one such is found in the appendix. Similar advertisements were carried in Arabic papers.

1935 B.C. game of badminton

**Real estate dispute**

Some of the Christian families were anxious to help the Jesuits find suitable property for the school. In October 1932, Fr. Rice visited one of these families who owned property that they were eager to sell. He inquired about the price and size of the property but considered it too near traffic since there were plans for a highway adjoining the property and also it was too expensive (© $5 per square meter). It seems, however, that he was more polite than he was clear in refusing the offer and gave a different impression to the family. The family claimed that he promised to buy the property and kept pressing the issue until the following June.

The Apostolic Delegate insisted that Fr. Rice end the now public dispute with the family so Fr. Rice called for a trial, being careful to keep it within the Christian community. This trial was held on June 9, 1933 at the Carmelite monastery with three Carmelites presiding and a local Monsignor representing the Apostolic Delegate present. The verdict was that Fr. Rice had not promised anything and owed nothing to the family. This left him free to concentrate his energies to continue the search which eventually led to the purchase of the Sulaikh property.

**Baghdad College moves to Sulaikh**

In 1934 the school and Jesuit residence were moved out to Sulaikh, four miles north of the center of the city. This Sulaikh
site consisted of 25 acres with a 200 foot frontage on the east bank of the Tigris. It extended back some 3,000 feet towards the desert, widening out to 600 feet and had been purchased as a permanent site for the school. A very large house in the neighborhood, sufficient to accommodate both students and faculty, was rented. Planning for the new school buildings began soon afterwards.

The very earliest students of Baghdad College will remember "the house on the river", the building Baghdad College rented in Sulaikh and used for a time as both school and residence for the Jesuits. Made of mud brick it enclosed a courtyard. It had two stories, all of which opened out onto the courtyard with a gallery around the second floor. The rooms were large enough to serve as classrooms. There was no central heating so we used portable kerosene stoves. The courtyard provided recreation space, even a reduced-size basketball court. It was there many basketball stars performed. And Fr. Frank Anderson who one day was challenged to sink a basket from center court, did so and when challenged again turned around to sink one at the other end! He never tried it again! (Fr. Hussey)

The new property

The map of the property gives an idea of the early and late Baghdad College buildings as they appeared on the scene. The Jesuits occupied this 25 acre property (circumscribed by a wall shown in bold print) in Sulaikh from 1934 to 1969. Nine major buildings and some minor buildings were constructed. Other buildings already existed and were used at certain times. The property extended from the Tigris (west) to the desert (east). It had been an orchard of olive, orange, apricot and date trees, many of which had to be cleared for the buildings and the playing fields, leaving a few olive groves and about 200 date trees. In the east was the sadda, a 15 foot-high-dike, topped by a two-lane road, surrounding the city to prevent spring flooding from the Tigris overflow which was swollen by the melting snow in the North. Baghdad College was the terminal point for one of Baghdad's ("Amana") bus lines. In 1953 the Jesuits unsuccessfully attempted to enlarge their property about 11 acres by purchasing neighboring plots, shown within dashed lines.

In 1938 the administration/classroom building was occupied and the faculty/boarders residence was finished in 1939. In 1941 a brick wall of some 1500 feet was completed around the property. The south wall was of mud but the eastern, northern and western walls were impressive brick structures nine feet
high. It was customary to surround property with a substantial wall on the premise that an absent wall signified the owner was indifferent to what happened to his property and the produce it contained. The 1938 administration/classroom building together with a 1940 classroom annex contained 14 classrooms 20 by 24 feet, two classrooms 12 by 20 feet, a lecture room 20 by 24 feet, a laboratory 24 by 52 feet (used for physics, chemistry, and biology), a library 24 by 52 feet (with some 10,000 volumes), rest rooms, a book store, and the principal’s office. The residence, contained 40 rooms, housed 15 faculty members and 48 boarders in separate wings, with dining facilities for the full complement of faculty and boarders, numbering 90 in all. Two rented dwellings a five minute walk away furnished living quarters for six additional members of the staff and for 21 boarders.

The property purchased in 1932 (looking north) reached from the Tigris to the desert and was surrounded by charming neighbors: 13 are listed.

As fate would have it, in the same year (1936) that ground was broken for the erection of the first building, the enrollment fell from 132 to 86 students because of complications arising from the Military Conscription Law. This law provided that students attending schools where no Iraq Government School Certificate was required would not be exempt from conscription. Therefore the necessary certificate was required of each student entering
Baghdad College, and once this was settled the enrollment climbed again. In 1938 the new classroom and administration building was occupied, and the extra space thus gained in the rented building was used to accommodate some 23 boarders as a newly opened boarding department.

By 1939 there were two main buildings: the administration and classroom building, and a residence for faculty and boarders. When it was realized that the old building along the Tigris River which housed the boarders and the 10 Jesuits would not be fit to live in the following year because it was falling apart and it was too distant from the school, the new building was started. It was a race between the final dissolution of the old building and the opening of the new.

They did not expect the house to hold together until July 1 when they had to get out anyway, and it seemed as if they would be living in tents for the following year. The annual threat of flood was at hand - the river being up to the danger point. As the brick kilns are in the desert - where the waters go when the dike breaks - a flood would have held up our building. But the danger dissipated and the building was finished in time. Fr. Sarjeant explained to Fr. Murphy in Boston some of his problems. "You may ask how we are going to move out of our old house on July 1 when our new one will not be ready until a couple of months later. Well we must for the contract expires July 1 - and when you must do things, you find a way. We shall move the belongings of the Fathers down to the school building where they will stay until they can be moved into the new one." (letter #232 5/15/39 from Fr. Sarjeant to Fr. George Murphy Archives #510).

The earliest students had their own view of what effect the "Fatheria" (as the Jesuit Fathers were called) had in their lives and how they first perceived them. One of the earliest students recalls how the transfer from downtown Baghdad to this magnificent new Sulaikh property with its plentiful space effected the sports programs. Even before the buildings were built there was room for endless youthful exuberance, among the students as well as among the Jesuits who often behaved like students.

I joined Baghdad College from the very first day of its birth in the two adjoining houses in Baghdad in 1932. I registered with Fr. Coffey and started in the sixth grade. Fr. Madaras was our home room teacher. Our activities that year were limited to volleyball, basketball and handball. During the first two
years at Baghdad College athletic events were limited to games we were able to play in the courtyards of the school. Various tournaments were arranged between the classes which competed against one another. Handball was the most favorite game and I can well remember the teams I captained in basketball and volley ball. The College was later moved to Sulaikh to a large mansion owned by the Gailani Family. The place was huge, surrounded by gardens where students used to sneak out during the break for a puff of a cigarette only to be caught by one of the Fathers who was on duty strolling in the yard. New grounds were made available to us about half a mile away which eventually became the site for the new Campus of Baghdad College. On these grounds we were able to play soccer, and two new games the Fathers introduced to us namely, American football and baseball.

Everyone was enthused to see the Fathers join in playing football and baseball. These games became so popular that later other schools came to watch us and then played baseball with us on our fields. I remember very well that I had taken part in all these games and captained a soccer team of my class. The Fathers used to referee the games. Father Sarjeant was our referee whenever I requested him. We also had running contests, sack races, potato and spoon races, three legged races and other ingenious games.

The Jesuit Fathers also introduced a new type of School life that we were not used to before in the primary Latin School (run by the Carmelite Fathers). Discipline was the paramount rule of the day and left an everlasting effect on our lives. Obedience and respect were the two other features that I feel were instilled into us and which have been in the background of everything I do, and which in turn I have passed to our children. (George Rahim '37)

The Jesuits found themselves in the company of interesting neighbors, one of whom was Hikmat Sulayman a minister of many governments and survivor of numerous coups, he got along well with the Jesuits and would send his two sons to the school. Other neighbors seemed to pick on the new kid on the block, and wanted the Jesuits to donate a section of their newly bought land to the city for use as a police station. One of these was Rashid (Rasheed) Ali who would lead the revolt against the government nine years later. Fr. Rice relates in his diary (11/2/34): "Serkis Abdeni and Rasheed Ali want me to give a corner of our land for a police station. They want the corner right in front, a most beautiful and valuable piece. I have decided to contribute to the police station.
If I did not I would be losing the favor of our neighbors. They could make things difficult, and at the same time they have influence to make things easy". The police station was later located along the road to the desert.

A quiet library scene

Another early problem at the new property concerned transportation since roads out of the city were just being constructed. For that reason a complete bus service for the students was necessary and the Jesuits bought the necessary parts and constructed the buses as they needed them.

The Villa in the North

An experiment with a villa house was inevitable due to the 120 degree heat of the Baghdad summer which was not peculiar to Sulaikh, but felt in all of central and southern Iraq. It occurred to the Jesuits that they would recuperate from the year's work and their future work would proceed more smoothly if they retreated for the summer. They inquired about a villa house in the cooler northern part of Iraq. One possible location was in the village of Inishk which they could have the use of for nothing. Fr. Madaras led the Jesuit group and described the adventure.

It is an ideal spot. Near a waterfall and two or three mountain streams that afford several swimming holes, it commands a view of the valley for miles around. There they unpacked, lived in a tent, and with our carpenter and some hired help, began the construction of the qupranas, that is, shelters which are wide open on four sides and have a roof of leafy boughs supported by rough beams cut in the neighborhood. They are safe because there is practically no rain here in the summer in these mountains. They constructed
four of them; one a large open one with only one corner closed in, to be used as a dining room and a recreation room, located right beside a copious mountain stream; one rather large, which we lived in for privacy and formed into cubicles and a small chapel with two rough altars in it; one a kitchen and storeroom; and one an out-house.

We were told when we were at Inishk that we would need night guards. In our ignorance of the country we thought they might just be trying to create jobs there, but we hired two with rifles, each one receiving 25 cents a night. Besides we had two large dogs. The fact that some thieves had entered the town on the night of July 3, cut a hole in the wall of the village chief's house while the family slept on the mud roof, and walked off with about $400 worth of money, jewelry and provisions made us feel that we might need the guards. On Tuesday night, July 19, we had an armed attack.

The moon rose that night at midnight. We retired as usual at ten and at eleven-forty we were rudely awakened by shouts and rifle shots just outside the quprana. I could see the flash of the rifles through the leafy walls of my room. No one stirred in the house till the firing ended; then we got up to investigate. The two guards pursued the robbers up the hill and fired again. In a few minutes about ten villagers came up with rifles. Some had circled the village on the far side, had seen the robbers in the moonlight on the slope of the opposite hill and they fired a few shots at them as they made off towards Araden. Do not get alarmed over this - as there is no reason for alarm. We shall take all the precautions necessary. And the Lord has sent a special detail of Guardian Angels to watch over us - as is evident from many happenings around this school.

(The Jesuit Mission Magazine Nov. '38 XII #10)
Post-Turkish education in Iraq

The people of Iraq, called by someone, "a new world infinitely old", are descendants from many races, professing varied religious beliefs. Traditional education was within the given religious communities, the famous Kuttab schools for the Sunni, and the religious universities of Najaf and Karbala for the Shiites. A 12th century philosopher, Al-Namari proposed five goals of education: "learning pleases God and leads to eternal life; learning is a companion in loneliness; learning awakens man's intelligence; learning brings the esteem of others and finally learning leads to wealth."

The Ottomans opened the first modern official secondary schools in 1870 and by the turn of the century there were only about a dozen with less than 2,000 (mostly Turkish) students. Educational development would pick up so that in 1913, in addition to the 83 government schools, there were some 20 private schools with about 5,000 students, the majority of these students (some 3,000) were in the "Israelite Alliance" schools. While the Ottomans held sway, the language for advancement of course was Turkish. With the advent of nationalist sentiment the young Turks placed more insistence on Turkish; the Arabs reciprocated in kind and demanded instruction in Arabic.

Coping with this fact the young government found religious minorities to be an intricate problem when Iraq attempted to build up an educational system satisfactory to all classes. The government schools, since 1920, have been open by law to all students regardless of religion. A difficulty in building up a State educational system was the language to be used. Previous to 1920, all teaching was done in Turkish, a language alien to all students except to the children of Turkish officials and to some areas where Turks lived in larger numbers. After the Turkish occupation of Iraq terminated, the official teaching language changed to Arabic. With this change, and in a country that was largely illiterate, the Ministry of Education had to build the foundations and the superstructure of an educational system simultaneously, and in 12 years (1920-1932) under British supervision. They were astonishingly successful. These difficulties experienced by the government to build up a state system of education, were multiplied for foreigners such as the Baghdad Jesuits who contemplated opening a secondary school, to be followed by a university in later years. On the other hand in 1931, Baghdad was not a very promising place for outsiders undertaking a project meant to develop into a permanent establishment.

By one of history's cruel ironies, the Arabs, who had nurtured
the Muslim faith with which the Ottoman Turks were able to conquer all of southeast Europe, were themselves to be engulfed by the Turks as their conquerors. The dark era through which Iraq passed from the middle of the 16th century up to the First World War was the era of the Ottoman Turkish rule. The Turkish language, foreign to Iraqis, was the medium used in the schools. This, as well as other discriminating factors, kept almost all Iraqis away from the schools.

A new secondary school program for Iraq

When the British took charge, they established another foreign system of schools along the lines of the British program, and so Iraq's secondary science curriculum was modeled after the "O" level course in England. The secondary school program was first published in 1926 and provided for a four-year course. In 1932 the secondary course was lengthened to five years. Finally in 1943 another revision resulted in two parallel curricula of scientific and literary subjects. The scientific track had a very extensive science program provided in both the intermediate as well as the secondary levels. In fact 16 of the 32 hours per week in the secondary grades #10 and #11 were taken up with science or mathematics.

Here are some data on Iraqi schools which demonstrate the growth between 1920 and 1967. The number of schools increased greatly but the increase in the number of students was enormous; it is also true that the ratio of girls to boys grew from 1 to 11 in 1930 and from 1 to 3 in 1968.

Enrollment in Iraq's Secondary Schools

<table>
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<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>135,961</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964-65</td>
<td>216,626</td>
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Number of Schools in Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>Secondary Schools</th>
<th>Primary Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920-21</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>735</td>
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Secondary (including Intermediate) School Enrollment in Iraq

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>1,906</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>215,144</td>
<td>70,577</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another element that has affected education in Iraq has been the migration to the urban centers. At the end of the 19th century about 70% of the Iraqis were rural peasants; today many have settled in cities. The Iraq Ministry of Planning (1968, p. 35)
states that in 1965 more than 50% of the population lived in urban areas which explains why the urban schools were overcrowded.

In 1927 an important event took place in Kirkuk: oil gushed from an experimental well. This discovery changed many things in Iraq but especially the demands of education. The country now had the means to throw off the chains of poverty and come into the modern industrial 20th century. Besides oil which received the most attention, copper, and other industries were developing in Iraq. These economic opportunities have spurred the modernization of education while the political upheavals and changes of government very often have hindered progress. With each successive government new ministers of education were appointed so that continuity in the efforts to improve education was lacking.

The college preparatory program imposed by the British in the early 1920s laid a foundation for Iraqi secondary education so that further revisions could be made. The changes in Iraqi life caused by the discovery of oil, emancipation of women, and the migration to the towns all affected education and the demands put on it. The success of program revisions like the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which was created in 1946 to promote better understanding throughout the world) project depended, in part, on these factors.

Public education in Iraq since 1920 was almost entirely financed by the government. The following data from an agency of the League of Arab States, the New York based Arab Information Center gives an idea of the growing importance held by education during successive decades.

Only 2% of the national budget was allotted for education in 1920; this grew to 25% in 1965. By 1966 Iraq was rated seventh of all the countries of the world for percentage of national budget spent on education.

(Arab Information Center, 1966, p. 32)

Students of primary, secondary, and vocational schools pay no tuition nor do the students of the institutions of higher learning. Students in some of the professional institutes and colleges sign contracts to serve the government for a certain number of years in return for their free tuition, boarding, books, and medical care.

The conscription law

A major crisis arose for the Jesuits with the publication of the National Defense Law, or Law #9, in 1934 which decreed the conscription of Iraqi youth into the military. Fr. Madaras was
first to comment on this, and then returns to this gnawing problem four times in his famous periodical

We have no reason to suspect that our enrollment next year [1936] will fall off any, at least as regards the first year classes. Concerning the upper classes, there seem to be some misgivings, and that for two reasons. In the first place, Iraq recently passed a universal conscription law which is soon to go into effect; and although students are supposed to be exempt, we have heard that there is some kind of feeling among them that it would be wise to join the military college and get into the army as officers. In the second place (and this concerns only our own students) our graduation certificate has not yet received Government approval, which means that our graduates must submit to an examination to get into Government Medical and Law Schools. In addition, a Government recognized certificate seems to be regarded here as a \textit{sine qua non} for a successful career. But this subject has ramifications around which a whole book could be written. So we desist. (Madaras, 1936 p. 290)

\textit{Baghdad College homemade bus system}

In his Master's degree dissertation at Princeton University Charles Bashara outlines the details of the problem bothering the Jesuits and refers to some of the issues in the new law under Chapter 7, such as articles 27, 29 and 36. These stipulated that private and foreign schools must employ the teachers whom the Ministry of Education appoints for history, geography, civics, and the Arabic language; also these schools would pay the salaries of these teachers and the principals and teachers of private and
foreign schools will not be appointed without the approval of the Ministry of Education. Finally Iraqi students were forbidden to attend foreign primary schools. The crisis lasted for five years and returned to haunt the Jesuits again in the proposed new Education Law of 1939. Observations from Charles Bashara in his dissertation and Fr. Madaras in his *Al Baghdadi* are arranged here in chronological order until the problem finally disappeared in June of 1940.

As outlined in a letter to the Jesuits in December, 1935, the Ministry of Education exempted from military service only those students enrolled in Government-run intermediate and secondary schools or those in schools recognized as valid by the government. Here lay the crux of the Jesuit dilemma, for the authorities at Baghdad College were being told, in effect, that the school was not recognized by the government. The major argument offered by the Iraqi officials was that the Jesuit school had been admitting students who did not have certificates acknowledging that they had passed the government primary school examinations. . . . The threat that the government would not recognize diplomas from the largely foreign institutions which had neglected the primary school certificate requirement effectively, barred graduates from these schools from public employment or admittance into higher government schools to train for civilian or military professions. (Bashara, 1985, p.141)

Just now we are concerned with quite another matter. The Government is summoning our students for military conscription. We are not lawyers, but as far as we understand the conscription law, it states that students attending schools that are recognized by Government as possessing intermediate or secondary status are exempt from conscription. Now [1935], our five-year course embraces both intermediate and secondary grades, that being the terminology used for the first three and the last two years of the course respectively. The whole matter seems to hinge on the meaning of the word recognized. Before we ever sailed from America to open Baghdad College, we received the written and explicit permission of the Government for that step, duly signed and approved. (Madaras, 1936 p. 317)
Truce

The difficulties which our boys have been experiencing with the conscription laws during the past two months [1936] are over - temporarily. A truce has been called by the Government for the present year, during which we have time to swing into line, whatever that may involve, or the matter has been composed in some other way. One of the demands of the Government is that we accept no boys into our school who have not passed the Government primary school examinations. That would mean that the boys from Catholic schools who should fail in these examinations would be excluded from the school. What that would lead to is not difficult to see. Meanwhile we are endeavoring to convince the Government that it ought not to impose any extra burden on non-government schools, but treat them on a basis of equality with their own. Whether we shall be successful in that or not is problematical, but we shall work hard, pray fervently and hope for the best. We ask you to help us with your own prayers. The life of the school may depend on the outcome. Who can say? (Madaras, 1936 p. 342)

Militarization

We thought we had written the last word in the matter of military conscription when we told you about the truce in our previous issue. But you never know what is going to happen next here. It seems that we misunderstood the Government, or they changed their mind, or something. At all events we were informed that those boys who were of military age would have to take the Government primary examinations at the end of the present school year [1936]. Accordingly, Fr. Sarjeant excused those boys from the regular classes to give them a chance to prepare themselves for the impending examinations.

That had been going on for a couple of weeks, when word was again received that the new Director General of Education, who had taken office only a short time before, inclined towards our opinion that the law should not be retroactive and that those boys who were already in high school when the law was passed should not be obliged to take Government primary examinations. That means simply that the matter is up in the air again, and there is no telling when a definite decision may be expected. (Madaras, 1936 p. 369)

A letter to the Jesuits from the Ministry of Education was dated 12 December, 1935:

According to the inquiry of principals of some of the schools
mentioned in our past decision dated, November 23, 1935, asking for a delay in which they might put themselves within the law, we shall ask the Directorate General of Conscription to postpone the call of students to the colors from these schools which pretend to be secondary, till the end of September, 1936 on the condition that the principal will guarantee the following: first to send all the students who have no primary certificate to take the primary examinations in June, 1936; second to send away any student who does not take this exam or who does not pass it; third to accept no one in the future who has not passed the primary exam and fourth to announce this in school catalogues. Directors of education must notify us of the names of all who are included in this temporary postponement when the faculties of the schools sent letters showing their approval of these conditions." The Jesuits chose not to reply to the letter, neither accepting nor refusing its terms. Instead, 17 Baghdad College students of military age took the primary school examination and passed it in June and September, 1936. By March, 1937, the crisis seemed to have passed. (Bashara, 1985, p. 147)

Al-Jamali reminded the Americans that the new law was not aimed in retaliation against them and praised their service to Iraq. He was determined, however, to preserve the "national culture". . . . The secondary schools, including Baghdad College, were only affected in the matter of faculty appointments in civic and Arabic studies. Nouri el-Said was satisfied with the outcome of the meeting and considered the issue settled. . . . And so ended the affair of the Education Law. The Iraqis had asserted their prerogative as guardians of national culture. . . . Before the issue was resolved, the Jesuits had held graduating exercises at Baghdad College on 23 June, 1940, at 6 in the evening: "They were a great success. The Delegate presided. The Director General of Education (ex-Minister, father of one of our boarders, the first civil official to assist at one of our ceremonies) spoke - and highly of the Fathers. The Director General of Public Instruction was present. All the bishops, most of the clergy, and 600 people saw our fifth graduation - 20 boys making the alumni total now 70.

Given the presence of both lay and clerical prominent Iraqis, including Sami Shawkat and Fadhil Al-Jamali, as well as representatives of other religious orders and members of all the major Christian sects, it looked as if the conduct of Jesuit relations had been a success. Baghdad College was there to
stay, until circumstances, in time, determined otherwise.
(Bashara, 1985, p. 169-174)

From 1935 to 1940 the Jesuits confronted this serious
problem for their educational mission. If they had not been so
persistent and not received substantial concessions they would
have had serious interference from the government in the running
of their school. This would have greatly effected their enrollment,
teaching staff and freedom of operation. Here is one final letter
expressing the concern which was relayed by the rector Fr.
Sarjeant to Fr. George Murphy, the Jesuit Province treasurer in
Boston.

On 5/23/39 there appeared in the papers a notice that a new
educational law might be passed. It will put Iraq in the class
with Turkey and Persia. It forbids foreigners to run primary
schools - thus killing nearly all the Catholic schools of the
country especially the Carmelites of Baghdad who send us the
larger part of the best trained of our boys. All private schools
must submit to the Minister of education their annual budget
one month before school opens. Without his permission they
may not appoint mudirs (Prefects of Studies) nor teachers;
nor change texts (which must be the same as the
government); nor deviate from the government school holidays
(therefore it would seem forbidden to have Sunday as the
holiday and Christmas week would be out etc.) nor program,
nor receive help from abroad. But the prize provision is the
next. The government will send you all teachers of Arabic
language, of all history and geography and civics and sociology;
you will pay them the salary named by the government. That
could swell our teaching payroll from about $1,700 to
$7,200 per year; they will be responsible only to the
Ministry; and they must teach in Arabic. What would that
mean with regard to discipline? If your teachers came late or
failed to turn in their marks or correct themes what could you
do about it? (Letter #268 7/15/39 Sarjeant to G. Murphy)

The government curriculum of the thirties

Public examinations for students of all schools were held at the
end of the six primary years, then after the three intermediate
years, and finally after the two secondary years. Their function
was to find if a student was ready to pass on to higher education.
Government certificates issued on the basis of passing grades in
these examinations are the only passport from one school level to
the next. A passing mark is 50% in the individual subject and
60% for the general average. One who fails three subjects or the general average must wait until the following June to take the exam again. Those failing one or two subjects may move ahead after passing a "conditional exam" in the summer. Results of the public examinations of the government secondary schools (including Intermediate) shows a dramatic decrease and is shown here by academic year and percent passed:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930-31</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-41</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952-53</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954-55</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956-57</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The important place of mathematics in the program was evident from the large proportion of class time spent on mathematics. Two of the seven subjects in the final terminal exams were mathematics. The exams covered the following subjects: Arabic and Religion (Islam), English, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and then Algebra-Trigonometry and Geometry-Analysis.

1940 Baghdad College graduation ceremonies

Higher education in Baghdad was behind most other countries due
to long Turkish rule and the following table indicates an enormous increase in the number of college graduates in Iraq during the 30 years intervening between 1921 and 1951. The number increased from 15 in 1921 to 1,091 in 1951. (The source for this table is the Iraq Ministry of Planning in the Report on Education in Iraq for 1957-1958. Baghdad: Republic Government Press, 1959, pp. 16, 26)

College Graduates, 1920-1958

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>College</th>
<th>21</th>
<th>31</th>
<th>41</th>
<th>51</th>
<th>52</th>
<th>53</th>
<th>54</th>
<th>55</th>
<th>56</th>
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<tr>
<td>Law</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>158</td>
<td>180</td>
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<td>55</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>82</td>
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<tr>
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<td>77</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>192</td>
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<td>Arts &amp; Sciences</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>148</td>
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<td>Medical</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>78</td>
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<td>45</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>44</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nonacademic Institutions</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>1,091</td>
<td>1,053</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>899</td>
<td>9871</td>
<td>1,143</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>1,127</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Baghdad College curriculum of the thirties

The Baghdad College program followed completely the government syllabus. There were three intermediate years with a terminal degree followed by two more years of secondary studies. The Baghdad College program was quite different from the American system, but it never was the plan of the Jesuits to impose any program foreign to that of Iraq especially an American program. In fact even a cursory study of the curricula of the other New England Province schools shows few points of comparison with the Baghdad College curriculum.

One of the earliest Baghdad College students wrote about the curriculum and the complicated life he had committed himself to.

The curriculum was a full time one. Homework and quizzes were the order of the day. Penmanship, reading and elocution were daily requirements of Father Madaras. Having started in the sixth elementary class at Baghdad College and having progressed without previously having to take any Government exams, we were told that if we wished to go on for college studies we had to take three baccalaureate exams: the sixth
year elementary, the intermediate and the secondary exams. Since all the subjects for these exams were taught in Arabic in the Government schools, we had to prepare all the subjects we learned in English (algebra, trigonometry, history, geography, chemistry, physics, botany, zoology and social science), using the Arabic books in our free time.

So, at the end of my fourth year at Baghdad College I took the sixth year elementary exam and passed the intermediate exam at the end of that same summer. Then I took the final baccalaureate exam in June 1937. That September I was admitted to the Royal College of Medicine from which I graduated. (George Rahim '37)
Experiences and influence of Jesuits in this decade

Al Baghdadi

The early days of the mission were delightfully recorded in the pages of the periodical *Al Baghdadi*, which provided indispensable background material for understanding the Mission of Iraq. In its early days *Al Baghdadi* had to admonish its readers that Iraq was not in Persia, India or Africa, but was a country in its own right. The journal chronicles the progress of the school through the years from early suspicion by Muslim Mullahs to the position of esteem and affection it later enjoyed. The first 17 editions (1932-1936) were published in book form by The Jesuit Mission Press in 1936 in New York. The spirit of the newsletters is caught very nicely in the introduction.

In the first place it assumed that just as God loves a cheerful giver, so, too, He loves a cheerful missionary, and it treated the Baghdad venture, not as a lark, to be sure, but as a joyful adventure for the King of Kings. The Fathers were knights setting out on a jousting match to defend the honor of their Liege Lord, and although they felt that they were going to get many a hard knock and be unhorsed more than once, they looked forward to the contest with a glint in their eye, a smile on their lips, and a song in their hearts. They knew that when you go out to do battle for Christ, you do not go alone. And with Him they were ready for all things. If these young Americans appeared to be a bit debonair on the surface, deep down inside they were deadly serious about what they were doing. They did not, however, allow that seriousness to interfere with their sense of humor. And in this attention to the lighter side of things *Al Baghdadi* differed in a marked respect from its contemporaries.

A touch of humor makes the whole world kin, they say. *Al Baghdadi* contained more than just a touch, and it was not long before those who began to write back told us, among other things, that they felt that they knew the Fathers personally, even though they had never met them. Word was passed along from friend to friend that *Al Baghdadi* was free and well worth it, and it was not slow in growing.

(Madaras, 1936, pp. 1-2)

The periodical was meant mostly to encourage financial and spiritual contributions from American benefactors and also to keep fellow Jesuits informed about the progress of the mission, as did the 17th century Jesuits in Canada. Baghdad College alumni
Experiences of the Jesuits in this decade rarely saw the magazine, as Ramzi Y. Hermiz points out.

Most former students of Baghdad College and Al-Hikma University are familiar with their own school publications of *Al-Iraqi* and/or *Al-Hikma*. But probably, not so many from either school are familiar with, or maybe even heard of, *Al Baghdadi*, nor as a result are aware of the key role that publication played in developing the support of the 'new school' needed from around the world. In the words of its own 'creator' (Father Madaras) the *Al-Baghdadi* was: "A spasmodic journal, published by the American Jesuits in Baghdad, appearing when mood and weather permit, its purpose being to keep our friends and the world in general informed as to what we are doing, how we are faring, and thus to sustain interest in the project entrusted to us by His Holiness, Pius XI." The *Al Baghdadi* was written in the format of diary/letter, and was 'born' almost as soon as the ship carrying Fathers Rice and Madaras left New York on Feb. 9, 1932, on the way East. The diary/letter called *Al-Baghdadi* kept increasing in popularity after each new mailing, with general readers, seminaries, libraries, schools, and institutions in the U.S. and in Europe, such that by the 10th 'issue' the mailing list had reached 2000 locations. (Reunion VII Yearbook, 1990, p. 8)

All of the articles in the early years of his *Al Baghdadi* newsletter were written by Fr. Madaras. Here follows a few examples of Fr. Madaras' wit and love for detail as he describes life in the thirties and the many unexpected things that caused the Jesuits' hair to gray as well as some pleasant surprises; humor, the lay-out of a typical Baghdad house, telephones, clocks, snakes, floods, Baghdad boils, trains, the praise of the local Imam, finding two dependable and capable workers who stayed with the Jesuits for many years and dust storms. Dust storms, by the way were a new experience for the Jesuits, all of whom were used to seeing snow in the winter, but now had to settle for a brown substitute - a dust storm.

All Jesuits had their own descriptions of such adventures, but Fr. Madaras preferred the student version below written as an English assignment to his own account giving a more scientific description of a dust storm. He supplied the intricate statistical details that he found so interesting, enthusiastic even in the presence of glassy-eyed stares from his numbed hearers. Some people who took an interest in Catholic enterprises, however, did not comprehend the humor that came with these homey descriptions of life among the Jesuits. A passage follows about a
rather humorless Boston lady visiting the Jesuit Mission Office who was not sure that humor was the proper way to God.

**Missionaries and humor**

A woman came to us one day with a letter she had received from some missionary who, of course, was begging for funds. In the course of his letter he happened to mention that he was "as busy as a one-eyed cat in a bird store". That touch of humor made the good woman suspicious; no *bona fide* missionary, she felt, would talk like that, and she concluded that he must be a fraud. She had come to us apparently to have her suspicions confirmed. Well, we looked his name up in the Catholic Directory and we found him to be perfectly genuine. As we remember it, the woman was almost sorry.

Now, that woman's attitude illustrates a popular misconception; the impression has somehow got abroad that missionaries have no sense of humor, or at least that they ought to have little. Well, if missionaries weren't humorists, they wouldn't hold out on the missions very long, as our fellow Jesuit, Richard Welfle, down in India remarked in a recent issue of *Catholic Missions*. As a consequence of the popular idea that the missionary is a gaunt individual with long beard and solemn, hollow eyes containing a far-away look, a man who speaks in sad, sepulchral tones and never writes back home except to tell of hardships and the wonders he could do with five dollars, most of your missionaries who write for the magazines are a bit chary about saying anything that is not redolent of piety and edification, anything that departs from the "trek across the veldt" or the "steaming jungle" tradition. (Madaras, 1936, p. 157)
The First Jesuit residence

We have commissioned our staff artist to draw a plan of our domicile. He has prepared a rough sketch, not exactly according to scale, but it will serve to give you an idea of the place where we work and play and dream our dreams. To the extreme left you have the ground floor. The rooms are disposed around the open court, only two of them being suitable for living purposes. Windows open either on the court, or on the back or front: there are none on either side, since the neighbors' houses are there. The open air court mounts right up to the sky as far as you care to go. The second floor has seven rooms: we have numbered six of them to help you count. The two rooms on the roof are for the purpose of storing bedding during the day.

Open House

Notice the unique fashion in which our artist has depicted the canvas tarpaulin which keeps the sun out of the court, thus helping to keep the inside temperature down about twenty degrees below that of the street. (Madaras, 1936, p. 58)

Telephones

January 26th [1936] was a historical day in the life of the school. It was then that the first call came in on our newly installed telephone, for which we had been waiting patiently many months. We mean the telephone, not the call. In case you should wish to call us up, our number is Shamal 62. Don't forget this number, for you will have a difficult time finding us in the phone book. Although instructions had been given to list us under "Jesuit Residence", we found after a long search that we had been placed under "William", that being Fr. Rice's first name. The operators here are men, and their occasional use of seemingly affectionate language may possibly be explained on the score of oriental exuberance. (Madaras, 1936 p. 17)
The Muslims of Adhamyah

Shortly after we moved to Sulaikh we heard that the Imam of Adhimyah, a nearby village, addressed his congregation in the great mosque and expressed his pleasure that Baghdad College had settled in the neighborhood. As we had been uncertain how our Muslim neighbors would take to a Christian school in their midst, this news was reassuring. Later Fr. Coffey paid the Imam a visit and was cordially received and entertained. The Imam in his turn called to see the school and appeared impressed by what he saw, not least by the chapel, concerning which he asked many questions. (Madaras, 1936, p. 299)

Youssef and Zieya

Two buses require two chauffeurs, and we have two that were sent to us from Heaven. Youssef and Zieya are their names, which is the local version of Joseph and Isaiah. They are brothers, somewhere in their late thirties, both with years of experience in town and desert driving, good-natured, reliable, honest, hard working. Besides driving the buses, they both serve table, wash dishes, run the boys' canteen, and do anything else they are told to do. Youssef always has a merry twinkle in his eye. He can read and write Arabic, Chaldean, and English, and that is enough to establish him in his position as Zieya's boss. He does practically all the buying, for he is a demon at driving a bargain, and seems to know all the shopkeepers and traffic policemen in the city.

He has learned to serve Mass, too, which he does each morning to the apparent envy of our other Catholic workmen,
all of whom attend Mass each day. Zieya is the imperturbable, wearing for the most part a grave and dignified look whose authenticity we have always suspected. This grand manner he affects particularly when he is serving table, and we are sure that the head-waiter of the Waldorf Astoria could not give him any pointers on this score. Zieya and Youssef swear that they will never leave us. For our part, we shall never let them go. (Madaras, 1936, p. 248)

The haunted clock

We told you last time that we had heard our house was haunted. Local legend reported the particular room responsible as being that occupied by Fr. Merrick. We do not lightly lend credence to such statements, but one day when the chime clock was brought up from downstairs and hung outside Fr. Merrick's room, it began striking 13 for each hour. Our attitude towards the number 13 has always been one of total disregard, but when things like that begin to happen, who can be complete master of his feelings, especially when you wake up at four in the morning to hear the dismal strokes struck out with slow deliberation?

Fr. Madaras was frankly incredulous as to the facts and hinted that the Fathers who claimed to have heard the fateful number were either dreaming or simply could not count. But then it was learned that the doubting Father had himself repaired the clock only the day before. He took the clock down and restored a missing part. The clock's conduct has been exemplary ever since. (Madaras, 1936, p. 257)

Snakes of Eden

We are happy to report that we have found hundreds of snakes, but not in the house; they are decent enough to confine themselves to the gardens of our new property. We have quite a sizable collection now, and whenever one of the workmen happens to kill another (snake), he brings it to us full of pride, although a bit puzzled concerning our desire to keep dead snakes. One specimen was brought in a few days ago that measured 54 inches. It was coal black and Toby calmly informed us that you die in 30 seconds after being bitten by it.

We have heard similar dreaded predictions with regard to the scorpions that go scurrying around the house at certain seasons of the year, but we have yet to hear of anyone dying from a bite. Still, we're not taking any unnecessary chances. Further research into the antecedents of the 54 inch snake reveals that its name is the European whip snake. In fact, of
the 25 species of snake found in Iraq, only six are poisonous. (Madaras, 1936, p. 258)

The Angry Tigris

The Tigris, referred to above, refuses to allow itself to be dismissed with such passing mention. This year, on February 19 to be exact, it threw something of a scare into us and won for the boys an unexpected holiday. Within the space of a few days it had risen something like 15 feet, and on the morning of the 19th we found it within a couple of feet of the top of the dike which rises some eight feet above the level of our own front yard. We saw that if it should begin coming over the dike, our house would be standing in eight feet of water. Our concern therefore was easy to understand. (Madaras, 1936, p. 260)

![One of the seven bridges across the Tigris on a calm day](image)

Dust storms (student version)

This is the story about dust storm. If you see in our country a thing you do not see it only in a little part of world that it is the dust storm. Every three weeks or 1 month or 2 days you see all the sky is covered by the dust storm, and the sky all change from the blue to the yellow. The wind becomes high. The mother at home shuts the windows. Sometimes the strong wind with the storm breaks the glasses of the windows. When it is storm too bad we cannot breath well and we cannot open our eyes because the dust enters in our eyes and they become sick.

And when the dust comes you will see that all the things and rooms are covered with the dust. After if you will go away in the street you cant see a man or cars about 4 yards. And many of cars they make accident. You could not see anybody passing on the street every one went to his house and hide himself into the room. And this dust very bad for the man whom are sick in the bed. If we close the door and the window we must open the
light like the night. After the storm they shine the sun.

My parents was sweeping the house with a brooms and when they finished they cleaned the glasses and the cups and the jar and the water filter till they finished. Then they cleaned the carpets and they swap the room till they finished all the house. The little boys and the girls come out of their room and wash their faces and hand and some of them swam in the bath room in order to get clean. After that the dust came another time. Always the dust comes in place of coming rain. Comes dust. It is not good for the flowers and other things. Not only for the flowers but for the persons also. My friend, if they came in your country like this? (Madaras, 1936, p. 151)

Dust storms (Fr. Madaras version)

On the evening of March 30, 1935 occurred Iraq's worst dust storm in its history, 100 people dying because of it. Baghdad lost one of its pontoon bridges and traffic came to a halt. It started during the Saturday morning classes and lasted most of the day. Shutting the windows did not help much but classes were finished. The atmosphere was an orange hue and the velocity of the wind reached 70 mph.

When the Fathers came up to dinner after the evening Litanies, they were all such a wild-looking sight that it was difficult to preserve a becoming gravity during the saying of grace. Meanwhile the lights were going on and off, and about 10 o'clock that night stopped altogether. We had no electricity for the next 20 hours.

Next morning the house, inside and out, was a sad sight. In our courtyard, which contains something like 2500 square feet, we swept up 415 pounds of dust. Fr. Merrick figured it out to three decimals and found it amounted to 2,328,945 tons per square mile. In Fr. Rice's room the fall was at the rate of 524 tons per square mile. Last summer's dust storm in America gave Chicago 75 tons per square mile, so Chicagoans at least will be able to appreciate how much dust we really had.

The dust that fell on each square mile of Baghdad would make a column one foot square and nearly two miles high. Send that to Collier's for us (they might not take our word) and let us have the five dollars they give you for this piece of information. And the next time mother complains about the difficulties of keeping the house clean, just ask her jocosely how she would like to live in Baghdad.

(Madaras, 1936, p. 262)
Baghdad boil

Our early readers are not unacquainted with the Baghdad boil, for we told about the one which Father Madaras had on his left hand about two years ago. Since then we have garnered further information about it which may not be uninteresting to our medical-minded readers. Our latest informant is none other than Dr. Kennedy, of the Royal College of Medicine of Iraq. What lends the matter added interest now is the fact that Fr. Coffey has taken it on the chin (by it we mean the boil) and Fr. Wand on the back of the right hand. It will soon be a year now that they blossomed out with the said adomment, and then they may hope to be relieved of their affliction.
(Madaras, 1936, p. 267)

Train ride

We had second-class tickets, but because of our failure to make reservations in time (the reason behind that is another story in its own right), we had to take our places in the third-class coach. The conductor graciously cleared the benches of Arabs in order that we might each have a seat to ourselves, but we had to sit upright all night, all except Mr. Casey, who followed the example of some of the natives and climbed up into the luggage rack, where he slept peacefully until morning. (Madaras, 1936, p. 295)

Cassocks

Clerical collar and a black suit was the customary garb of American priests but cassocks (at least their predecessor the "dishdash") were invented in Baghdad so these were preferred by the Jesuits. Due to Fr. Madaras' facility at striking a bargain the Jesuit cassock was made of khaki colored cloth which cost 25 cents a yard and the finished cassock cost a mere $1.75. This color was preferable to the black cassocks most priests wore because they were cooler in the summer and also the accumulation of Baghdad dust, not to mention classroom chalk, was not apparent on them.

After the people got used to seeing the Baghdad Jesuits wearing them Syrian priests adopted this style. It was odd that it was called a "Jesuit cassock" since St. Ignatius did not want Jesuits to have a distinctive garb. All Jesuits changed from winter black to summer khaki on the same day in March and back again on a fixed day in November. The students would watch the Jesuit residence for the first man out to see if spring had come or if winter had started.

Like the early Jesuit explorers, the Baghdad Jesuits were inveterate writers and related many details of their ordinary day.
Experiences of the Jesuits in this decade

Some writers were more graphic and interesting than others, but officials such as superiors and treasurers were frequent correspondents. There were always unexpected events which upset schedules such as the death of a king. Here is a letter from the superior Fr. Francis Sarjeant to Fr. George Murphy, the Jesuit Province treasurer in Boston. It is followed by a letter in which Fr. Hussey describes his arrival in Baghdad in August of 1938 and records some of his first impressions.

The King [Ghazi] was killed in an automobile accident [early on Tuesday, 4/4/39]. The news was not released until about eight or nine on Tuesday morning after our boys had begun classes. A telephone call from a friend in the city advised us to get the boys home while the going was good. We went down town in the small car to see that everything was all right. On the way we were stopped once ourselves by wailing groups trotting towards the royal palace. But we got through all right. We returned and sent the boys down on the buses. As we are four miles north of the city and there is only one good road leading through the middle of the city to the section at the south where many of our boys live, at times when there is any possibility of trouble in the city, we are obliged to rush them through when we can, lest they be cut off and stranded at the school. (Letter #211 4/19/39 Fr. Sarjeant to Fr. Murphy)

Arrival

When I arrived in Baghdad Fr. Miff met us at the Nairn bus station and bustled us through customs to an Arabana. Though taxis were available, the horse and carriage gave us a leisurely view of a city that was to become so much a part of our lives. Fr. Miff was born and raised in Malta before migrating to California where he eventually entered the Jesuits. He was a gracious, hard-working priest, genial and friendly to all and yet a strict and well organized teacher. His native Malta must have had much influence from the Muslim northern Africa.

Greeting us on our arrival at Sulaiikh (northern quarter of Baghdad) was the Superior of the Baghdad Mission, Fr. William Rice, an elderly corpulent, gentle person. He had a difficult task. He had been lifted from being rector of our Jesuit Novitiate in the glorious green of the Berkshires in Massachusetts, to be dropped into the sandy, dry, largely barren plains of Iraq. (Fr. Hussey)
A special Sulaikh family

The Jesuits found their neighbors to be wonderful people and frequently became acquainted with them through their children who would wander onto the property to use the fields and courts. Fr. LaBran has fond memories of one such family, and his comments are introduced by an admiring son.

During the war between Egypt and the West over the Suez Canal in 1956, the rough winds of political change started to move all over the Arab world. In Baghdad, there were demonstrations and rumors that the army would move against the government. In light of this situation, one of the visitors to our home asked my father if he had any weapons at home or if he carried a weapon on his person. To my amazement my father put his hand in his pocket, took out a rosary and replied: "Yes, I do carry a weapon, the most effective weapon in the world." I wondered if our Moslem friend understood what he meant.

On 14 July, 1958, the day of the revolution, my father and another General were brought to the Minister of defense for detention, to be later removed to prison. They were put in an army truck escorted by army officers who were at one time under their command, but had later joined the opposite camp. The mob in the streets leading to the ministry of defense attacked the truck. But then, one of the escorting officers opened fire over the heads of the mob and dispersed it. My father recounted this episode to four Jesuits who were visiting our home after his release. One of the Jesuits asked him how he had felt about this close call, being attacked by an angry mob. My father's answer was, "Father, I knew nothing would happen to me that day because I had not finished my Novena of the nine First Fridays. I had just finished the eighth Friday the week before, so I had the feeling my time had not yet come." (Waieel Hindo, B.C. '60. A.H. '64)

"The play's the thing..."
Ephraim Hindo and his wife Laila Hindo I met very early in my years at Baghdad. They were both very beautiful people from very devout Syrian Catholic families. I realized very quickly that these were very special people. When I met Ephraim he was in the service of the Iraqi government, eventually promoted to the rank of General, thereby becoming the highest ranking Christian in the Iraqi army. His brother Joseph was the Syrian Archbishop of Baghdad. The Hindo family was very renowned. I used to talk to Ephraim a lot and we became very close friends right from the very beginning. The thing that impressed me about him was that he would quote Scripture, the Old Testament and the New Testament, in a very powerful way, nothing ostentatious but I thought a very human way of communicating to me what life meant to him.

Laila would be at Mass at our chapel every morning and Ephraim would come as often as he could when he wasn't off on maneuvers. Those were the days when people had to fast from midnight before they received the Eucharist and one day Ephraim came about 5:00 p.m. after fasting all day knowing he'd be returning to Baghdad and could receive at our college. The whole family received the Eucharist very reverently and very profoundly.

The Hindo house was like Grand Central Station for all of Sulaiikh; everyone went in and out of there all the time. The boys attended Baghdad College and Walid and I became very friendly. My support of Walid is, I think, the main reason why I became so close to the whole family. In July of 1958, it was announced early one morning over the radio that there had been a revolution. King Faisal, who had visited my own classroom just two months previously, had been assassinated. General Hindo was out on maneuvers and was captured by three of his own officers who asked him, "Are you with us, or against us?" Ephraim raised his arms up under the three guns and proclaimed, "I took my oath to the King and I cannot go against him." They brought him into Baghdad where he was imprisoned.

Over the radio they gave a list of who had been killed in the uprising. The Hindo family was relieved to hear that Ephraim was alive but being detained. To prove this to the family and to all Christians, the oldest son Walid was allowed to go down to the prison to see his father. He would bring food to him and return with Ephraim's clothing so Laila could wash them. Ephraim became an inspiration to everyone because while imprisoned, he prayed fervently, holding the rosary and
crucifix in his hands. His wife Laila was very heroic and endured the fact that the people who had flooded her home now stayed away.

Eventually he was released from the jail and came back to the college where he prostrated himself before Our Lady. The family later gave a beautiful crown for Our Lady in gratitude to God for sparing his life. General Ephraim Hindo was a great man of God who never gave up faith, hope or love.

General Hindo was offered to be ambassador of Iraqi government for the Vatican. To this offer he said all that I want is my wife and family and the Church. Ephraim Hindo chose the road less traveled by the way of the Cross and for him and for us all who admired and loved him this has made all the difference. Each year since 1958 I have been giving the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius to students of The College of the Holy Cross four times each year. Each time I use this man as an example of what life is really about. (Fr. LaBran)