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1. On Sunday, November 23 [1952], Baghdad was the scene of a revolt which for a moment threatened to endanger the lives of the Americans and Europeans. Demonstrations led by students had already occurred the day before but they had been rather orderly. On Sunday well organized radical elements took over and mobs armed with sticks, stones and guns marched through the streets. There was much destruction such as that of the US Information Service building and the office of the British-run Iraq Times. Police, before they disappeared completely, were attacked and murdered. For a few hours, Baghdad, the capital of Iraq and a city of more than half a million inhabitants waited trembling for further developments. But in the later afternoon the army moved in. Soldiers, tanks and even cavalry along with the chief of the Army. General Muriddin Mahmud accepted the invitation of the Regent to form a new cabinet. On Monday there were still noisy demonstrations; mobs carrying the dead and waving banners with anti-western inscriptions, but the danger had passed. Martial law was declared and curfew announced from sunset to sunrise. The revolt was over. Nevertheless, what happened did shock the western world for a moment as a bloody warning that the Middle East was fermenting, partly because of its own problem, partly because of Communist efforts inspired from behind the Iron Curtain; the not so cold Cold War. The following is an effort to formulate reasons for the unrest. A story which with some changes could be applied to other Arab countries.

#### The First Impression

2. The first impression of Baghdad and of Iraq in general is quite disappointing for anyone who expects either the glamour of the time of the Abbasid Khalifs or the efficiency of a modern city. Cairo, Ankara and Beirut are in part western and in their streamlined appearance are even quite impressive. Baghdad is still, to a large extent the neglected orient, with some not always too successful efforts to modernization. It is filthy and it smells.

3. Outside the main streets and the residential quarters with their modern architecture, people live in poverty in mudhouses, roasting in summer with daily maxima up to 120 degrees and trying to keep warm in winter when the thermometer may drop below freezing point by piling scrub against the walls. Principles of modern hygiene are sadly ignored. Dust covers the food and drinks openly shown on the sidewalks or in the stores while part of the water intended for drinking has been used before for other purposes. Mortality is high--even up to 80 per cent for babies--and diseases, especially of the eye and skin, are everywhere in evidence.

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4. Miserable looking beggars make life unpleasant for the shoppers. The main hotels are fairly comfortable but the food is poor from a western point of view, and claims made in advertisements of being luxurious, unique and superlative are, to say it mildly, without foundation. The visitor is greatly annoyed by the bureaucratic red tape and the lack of efficiency. For instance, it took seven weeks to get a trunk from Basrah to Baghdad--a distance of 12 hours with several trains running daily; and 26 officials had to sign the papers before the trunk was released by the railroad and custom authorities.

5. Strangely enough, most of all this is soon forgotten or perhaps taken for granted. The shift from a primitive oriental world, which through centuries of foreign rule and neglect has lost its glitter, into a modern civilization is too difficult a change to be a success in such a short time. In fact one experiences a picture of both elements highly tinted by the Iraqi himself who has remained friendly, hospitable and courteous. He opens his house to you and shares the little there is. He tries to express himself in English (few foreigners master Arabic) with often funny results. The newspaper boy who says goodbye when he greets you in the morning; the waiter who answers your "thank you" for a service rendered by saying "Thank yourself" and the roomboy who introduces himself by saying "I am your chambermaid" are only a few examples of a constant source of pleasure.

6. The red tape and the hours spent in offices waiting for a signature are softened by numerous cups of coffee or small glasses of tea, although even my patience was a little on edge when, after sitting somewhere waiting for an hour and a half, I was told "If you are in a terrible hurry, why don't you come back later". All that is Iraq: the evil and the good, but the latter prevails.

#### The Iraq that Was

7. On the alluvial lowland of the Euphrates and Tigris rivers, so called Mesopotamia, is supposed to have been the location of the Garden of Eden. The place has certainly all the attributes for that--fertile soil and a warm temperature which will grow almost anything provided water is available; in this case, either by natural floods of the rivers or what is better, by planned irrigation. It is in this area that one finds evidence of earliest culture based on control of the river waters. Even now one looks with amazement at the evidence. There was the storage dam some 30 miles in length which made a huge reservoir between the Euphrates and the Tigris, serving at the same time as a waterbarrier against invasion from the north. There was the gigantic Nahravan Canal, 180 miles long, 400 feet wide and 17 feet deep which existed for over 3,000 years and provided water for the land east of the Tigris.

8. In this region the great empires of the part grew up--Sumeria, Babylonia and Assyria; a sequence of human progress interrupted by

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periods of stagnation and decay. It was later in Baghdad that early Islamic culture reached its peak when the Abbasid Khalifs made that city the center of art and knowledge. But that empire also collapsed, destroyed by the Mongols in the thirteenth century. Two hundred years later the Turks came and stayed till the end of the first World War. When the Turks left there were few remnants of ancient prosperity--silted irrigation canals and mounds of rubble where once cities prospered. The population was sparse and most of them miserably poor. Only in a few spots where nature took care of itself were conditions better. In the south, for instance, around Basra, the incoming tides of the Persian Gulf force the waters of the Shatel Arab, confluent of the Euphrates and Tigris, to overflow their banks and so irrigate the world's largest concentration of date palms. In the north along the foot of the mountains separating Iraq from Iran and Turkey, the winter rains are sufficient to permit the cultivation of wheat and barley on the level land and the raising of grapes, peaches, apricots and nuts on the valley slopes. That is the home of the Kurds, who often fought the Arabs to the south in bloody quarrels. But, otherwise, the land was either steppe or desert where wandering Bedouin tribes wander with their herds of camel, sheep and goats in search for food and where only a few oasis with their palms and citrus trees break the monotony of the plain.

9. Towns were small, seats of the Turkish officials. Jewish merchants controlled most of the business in the bazaars. Roads were mere tracks and it was not before the end of the first World War that a railroad--the famous Berlin-Baghdad line--connected Iraq with the rest of the world.

10. Schools could only be found in the larger cities; the overwhelming majority of the people were illiterate. A few of the upperclass, the leaders of the later independence, studied abroad preferably in Istanbul or Paris. Disease checked any increase of population. It was a stagnant economy while not so far away western Europe rose to its peak of industrial power. Baghdad, once a city of two million inhabitants, had dropped to a mere forty thousand. As one writer puts it--"Baghdad was the remotest as well as under the shabbiest of the wilaiyats (Provincial capitals) of the Turkish state.

#### Iraq at Present

11. Look at Iraq now, thirty years later, and see the change. The area under cultivation has increased six fold; thanks to large barrages, new irrigation canals and ditches and thousands of pumps along the river banks which supply water to the adjacent lowland. The chief factors favor irrigation--one is the fact that in a lowland rivers bound by their natural levees flow above the surface of the land, which of course facilitates irrigation and the other that the Euphrates and Tigris in turn differ in elevation and that the flow of water between

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them is easily accomplished. At present, twenty five per cent of the potential cultivable area is under crops but that percentage will increase when new schemes are finished. At the same time swamps are being drained and rice replaced by wheat and barley, which uses less water. Salt encrusted soils are washed and put back in production. Eventually every drop of available water will be used.

12. In the experimental stations studies are made for better seeds and better livestock methods to combat disease are improved. While this is going on land reform is badly needed. Most of the agricultural land is in the hands of sheikhs and of the owners of the pumps. The tenant receives not much more than one fourth of the value of the crop he produces; the rest goes to the owners, to the state or is used for upkeep. He is accordingly in debt (interest up to 30%) and is unable to repay it, which makes him even more dependent. As one author puts it "The bulk of the land has come into the hands of a class from whom no leadership in agricultural methods can be expected and which is tyrannous, callous and oppressive". This harsh statement is rather too general because there are many owners much interested in the plight of their tenants but often it is true. With an average income of about \$85 a year, spent on simple clothing, low grade tobacco, sugar and tea, the farmer lives not far above the subsistence level and often below it. Crop yields are low; much too low for crops under irrigation.

13. To make all these changes and improvements a great deal of capital is needed but--and here comes the all-important point--the money is available, thanks to the profits received from the oil; fifty per cent of the net income of the oil companies. The oil resources of Iraq are immense; the reserves at the Kirkuk oilfield amounting reportedly to 1,000 million tons and those of the less well explored fields near Basra offering perhaps equal promise. Iraq's economy is indeed floating in oil and if radical elements do not force nationalization of the fields which would unavoidably lead to a sharp decrease (remember what happened in Mexico) the immediate future is assured.

14. The Iraq government wisely earmarked most of that money for economic improvement and created the Development Board where Iraqi and foreign experts plan for the future backed by a capital of six billion dollars for the next five years. There will be more dams and barrages and more irrigation canals; more land under crop and better production methods. There is, however, one point to be considered. The greater part of the money is used for a better future. It will eventually solve poverty and make Iraq a prosperous densely populated nation. But there is also the danger that the patient waiting for these benefits will die before that prosperity is reached. In other words, would it not be better to use a larger percentage for immediate relief such as better housing, medical help and improved education? The people are impatient; they want to see results and surprisingly the Development Board is not popular.

15. There are other things to be considered when looking at Iraq at present. Isolation is a thing of the past. Roads connect it with its neighbors and their quality is improving even if at present traveling by car over most of the roads is a slow and not too pleasant process. A trunk railroad line leads to Turkey and beyond that to Europe. The airfields of Basra and Baghdad, stops on the lines from Europe to the rest of Asia and Australia, are among the busiest in the world. Industries are developing in the chief cities and the Baghdad skyline shows the smoking chimneys of factories using local raw materials. Schools, some of them with quite modern buildings, are increasing rapidly in number although in many rural districts the children cannot afford to go to school. The many colleges in Baghdad will eventually be united into a single university. Foreign experts have been called to help in many fields--agriculture, fishing, engineering, medical service and in education. Baghdad is crowded with them and not all of them have been put to work because of lack of facilities. Interesting is that Point Four is not popular at all in spite of the good work done by the specialist who came under that program. Many Iraqi regard this as a gesture of charity versus a backward nation and are most sensitive about that. They would prefer to pay for the men they need and not receive it as a gift.

16. Meanwhile young Iraqi are sent abroad to be trained and in the near future no foreign help will be necessary. Everywhere are signs of progress. Baghdad is growing rapidly and is again a large city spreading out on both sides of the Tigris. Most of the 12,000 cars of Iraq seem to spend their existence driving up and down Rashid street--the main thoroughfare, and because all of them toot their horns, Baghdad may be the world's noisiest city.

17. Of course, in their eagerness to go ahead, mistakes are made. Buildings arise, which are of no immediate use. For instance Baghdad has now a beautiful railroad station but the railroads bypass it at a distance. An impressive gate with ancient Assyrian ornaments meant to be the entrance to a museum leads to a mudfield; the museum was not built. On the other side the College of Arts and Sciences is housed in a building which in the United States would be regarded unsuitable for any kind of office, while in contrast streamlined grammar schools are found in many villages and small towns. But that is typical for the growing pains of a young nation because not all changes can be made overnight and a great deal already has been accomplished.

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