



HIS HOLINESS THE PATRIARCH'S HISTORIC VISIT TO IRAQ

All the Assyrians are acquainted to some extent, depending on the time in which they were born and their proximity to the events either in distance or actual relationship thereto, which led to the act of denationalization and expulsion from Iraq of His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII Catholicos Patriarch of the East some thirty seven years ago.

This is not the place to go into the tragic history of the Assyrian people during the First and Second World wars, or during the intervening years, and the value of these services to the Allied cause in general and the British in particular, but rather to point out the fact that the fate of the Assyrian nation was decided upon without its consent or knowledge in a conference held in Tiflis, Russia, in 1914 between the representatives of the four great Allied powers, Great Britain, the United States, Russia and France, and at which it was decided that the small Assyrian nation, then living in the mountains of Kurdistan, Turkey and around Lake Urmi, must be drawn into the conflict. The American representative on the occasion was the Reverend Dr. William A. Shedd who combined the profession of the Presbyterian Mission in Urmi with that of the American Vice Consul.

The far reaching value of the services rendered by the Assyrians to the Allied cause in general and the British in particular (who were later to occupy the theatre of the conflict where the Assyrians were located and therefore, make the fullest use possible of them) and the manner in which the Assyrians were betrayed, by the Allies in general and the British in particular, has already been recorded by various historians.

But it is hoped that a more complete narrative of these tragic events which are correlated, especially from the beginning of the 19th century (the events leading to what has been referred to as the massacre of Bederkhanbeg) which showed very clearly the pattern of the British Foreign Office policy regarding the Assyrians and hence, the successive tragedies and untold suffering caused to this first Christian Church and nation as the result of that policy, will be recorded fully by an Assyrian possessing a true and unbiased knowledge of these events.

It may be said that the Assyrians are not only victims of that policy and that the existing bitter conflict in the Middle East is of the same source and origin. How true!

But this did not help the unfortunate Assyrians. To the contrary it has made it more difficult of the local governments

created after the First World War, and now independent, to give any serious attention or study the Assyrian question in its proper historical context!

This was the situation until the present Iraqi Government decided to study seriously the Assyrian question leading to the denationalization and deportation of His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII Catholicos Patriarch of the East without a trial.

DEPORTATION FROM IRAQ

We are not going into the tragic events known as the "Semel massacre" nor its far reaching political aspects, but just to say that it was at this time that on a very hot day in July, in Baghdad, where His Holiness was at the time under house arrest, that the British acting Ambassador, (the Ambassador himself, Sir Francis Humphreys, being at the time fishing in Norway) Mr. George Ogilvie Forbs, (later knighted and appointed counsellor to the British Embassy in Berlin, during the Hitlerite Regime) called His Holiness to the Embassy and informed him that "His Britannic Majesty's Government had decided to take him to the Island of Cyprus, until the existing situation had quieted down. About two or three days later a written order from the Minister Of Interior was brought to the Patriarch by a policeman denationalizing him, and the actual act of deportation was carried out by the Air Marshal, Burnette, in a British military plane. Thus the "existing situation" which was supposed to take no more than two or three months was to last thirty-seven years!

THE FINAL BLOW

During the last thirty-seven years of his exile, His Holiness has appealed many times to the British Foreign Office, either directly, or through His Grace the Archbishop of Canterbury, who had presented himself a champion of the Assyrian cause, to either visit his spiritual flock in Iraq or be permitted to meet with

his bishops (who were then all in Iraq) in order to discuss the sad state of the Church of the East, but all without avail. Since a meeting in Iraq was dearly impossible, the Patriarch requested that a meeting with his bishops be permitted in some other country considered most favourable from the British point of view, and the names of Island of Cyprus or England were especially mentioned, but this also was not acceptable to the British Foreign Office.

It is well known that all during the period of the royalist regime in Iraq, the British influence was predominant, and the Iraqi Government was not more than a "Rubber stamp Government;" nevertheless, according to the instructions of the Foreign Office, given to His Holiness through the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Patriarch appealed also directly to the Iraqi Government, but alas! There was not even an acknowledgement of these communications.

About two years ago this seemingly endless, tragic situation was worsened by the exportation of the suspended metropolitan of the Church of the East in India, Mr. Mansour Darmo, and the seizure of all the Churches and Church properties in Iraq, and which was handed over to Darmo and his small following led by a handful of unprincipled Assyrian members of the other Churches under the leadership of one Yosip Khoshaba, a member of the Presbyterian Church and ardent hater of the Holy Church of the East.

The readers of the Light From The East already acquainted with the details of this story, especially the part which certain supposedly, Christian Churches, played in this inhuman and tragic plot against the Holy Church of the East, from the answer which was given by the "Church of the East Committee on Iraqi Situation" to the deliberate false reports circulated widely by the Secretariat of the World Council of Churches, and it is not therefore necessary to repeat these facts.



His Holiness being received at Beirut Airport by the Honourable Shahib Shahab, representing the President of Lebanon.

AN ACT OF PROVIDENCE

Thus, the tragedy which had befallen this Church and Nation at the outbreak of the First World War, seemed now to be complete, and its enemies made no secret of their jubilation, completely forgetting the oft-repeated maxim "Man proposes, but God disposes."

This was indeed an act of God! The situation seemed so hopeless, that the only and wisest course was considered to be to do nothing about it except through prayer to entrust it into the hands of the Almighty.

The day before last Christmas a young Assyrian, Ammanuel Scopila who had just arrived from Iraq, presented to His Holiness a letter from His Grace Mar yosip Khannishoo, Metropolitan of Rustaqa and

Patriarchal Representative in Iraq, informing His Holiness that on a visit to His Excellency, Ahmad Hassan Al-Baker, President of the Republic of Iraq, for Eeed Al-Rammadan (the Moslem feast), His Excellency had opened the subject of the Church in Iraq. The Metropolitan had assured the President that His Holiness had always in all his epistles exhorted the Assyrians to be loyal to any country that they are living in.

The President suggested such an individual letter from His Holiness to the Assyrians of Iraq, and the Metropolitan promised to convey the message to the Patriarch without delay.

Accordingly, His Holiness was more than happy to send such a message to the Assyrian community in Iraq along with a

special message to His Excellency the President.

The Patriarch's message was published throughout Iraq by all the media of communication; press, radio and television. This was followed by a most warm and friendly message from His Excellency, the Minister of Interior, Saleh Mehdi Ammash, brought over by special messengers, namely, Messrs Ammanuel Scopila and Richard M. Kelaita, inviting His Holiness to visit Iraq. The following paragraph we quote from His Excellency's said message dated March 8, 1970, to His Holiness: "Your exalted letter which you sent to your followers and which was profitable for Iraq and the neighbouring countries revealed clearly many questions that were not clear and opened a profitable source.... We shall be happy and rejoice when we see you in Iraq and that you may guide our Iraqi Children on the right path." His Holiness was happy to accept this most gracious

invitation and, thus, on Monday April 20, 1970, accompanied by his chaplain Rev. Fr. Qashisha David H. David, Ammanuel, Richard and Sam David, the Patriarch left San Francisco for New York and was bidden God-speed by a large number of Assyrians including the members of the Patriarchal family.

Next day, April 21, His Holiness accompanied by the above party in addition to the Rev. Qashisha Gulyad Y. Isaac, priest of the Flint Michigan Parish, left New York for Beirut, via Amsterdam.

In New York His Holiness was also greeted and seen off at the Kennedy Airport by the Assyrians and members of the Yonkers parish, headed by the Rev. Qashisha Isaac Rehana.

Wednesday, April 22, His Holiness arrived in Beirut, Lebanon, at 6 p. m. and where he was received by the Honourable



His Holiness inspecting a Guard of Honour at Beirut Airport



At Beirut — Love and Loyalty

Shahib Shahab representing the President of Lebanon, His Grace Mar Yosip Khnanishoo Metropolitan of Rustaqa and Patriarchal Representative in Iraq who led a delgation of Assyrians from Iraq which had come to receive His Holiness and accompany him to Baghdad, These were Shamasha Gewargis Benyamin, Ashur N. Kelaita, Gewargis Chicks, Albert Dadishau, Adam Oshana, Tiddy Yacob, along with Mar Narsai, bishop of Beirut and Lebanon, and more than five thousand Assyrians of Beirut led by their bishop and priests. His Holiness was also honoured by the prelates of several Christian Churches, Maronites, Greek Orthodox, Armenians, Chaldean, Syrian Orthodox (Jacobites) etcetra.

A guard of honour also presented arms and was inspected by His Holiness.

During his short stay in Beirut the Patriarch accompanied by his bishops, paid his respects to the President of Lebanon

and was as usual received most warmly by His Excellency Charles al-Helu.

From the airport His Holiness went to Bristol Hotel where he has stayed before and from there to the Church of Mar Gewargis where he was greeted with thunderous applause by thousands of Assyrians and whom he addressed.

On Friday, April 24, 1970, His Holiness preceded by police motor cycles and accompanied by an endless line of cars left the hotel for the airport where he was greeted by the Iraqi Ambassador and conveyed to the charter plane especially sent by His Excellency the President of Iraq to take His Holiness and his party to Baghdad. This was a most gracious act on the part of the President and was deeply appreciated by the Patriarch and will never be forgotten by the Church of the East and the Assyrians of Iraq and, indeed, throughout the world.

It should here be mentioned that the Iraqi Government had undertaken all the expenses of His Holiness' Apostolic visit.

ARRIVAL IN BAGHDAD

The same day, at 3-30 p. m. His Holiness', plane landed at the Baghdad airport which is located some 10 miles outside the city. Here His Holiness was received by thousands of overjoyed Assyrians who drowned the sound of planes and rent the air with hurrahs for the President of the Republic who had made this visit possible and for His Holiness, intermingled with prayers of long life for both of them.

A choir of some on hundred boys and girls, in special uniforms sang centuries old

Aramaic Church hymns specially written for reception of the Patriarch, and several new songs composed for the occasion and in the Aramaic or Assyrian vernacular. Their hosennas were however mingled with tears of joy at the sight of their beloved Patriarch; and such tears ran down the cheeks not only of these children but also that of the prelates, the clergy and indeed the strongest men. It was an expression of unprecedented joy and the release of a tension which had been building up for thirty seven years.

His Holiness was also greeted on his landing by the Acting Minister of Interior, the Chief of the Police, the prelates of all the different Christian Churches, and an estimated number of 150,000 Assyrians and members of other Christian commun-



The Patriarch with the representative of the President of Lebanon and His Lordship Mar Narsai, Bishop of Lebanon.



His Holiness being led to the Car at the Beirut Airport.

ities and Moslems of Baghdad, and outlying areas. All the way from the airport to Baghdad thousands of persons lined both sides of the road, and His Holiness' car, in which the Acting Minister of Interior was also riding, was practically mobbed by the joyous crowd, who mingled tears with laughter.

This prompted the Acting Minister of Interior to turn to His Holiness and say: "They are so happy!" Two incidents will always stand out in the minds of every Assyrian and bespeak of the spontaneity of this unprecedented reception given in a Moslem country to a head of a Christian Church. This first was a group of Arab Moslems in route to Baghdad playing on various musical instruments and who were

asked by the Chief of Police: "Now, I appreciate the fact that the Assyrians are happy on account of their Patriarch's visit but what are you doing here?" They answered, "we are here to share in the joy of our Assyrian brothers!" The second incident of this human bond of brotherhood was seen where Moslem families all along the route came out of their homes with jugs of ice cold water to give to the thousands of fatigued and thirsty Assyrians, men, women and children who had lined the highway hours before His Holiness' arrival and had walked several miles in very hot weather!

Finally, His Holiness' car followed by more than one thousand cars arrived at the Church of Mar Zaya, where already His Beatitude, Mar Paulos Shekhau, the

Chaldean Uniate Patriarch along with other Church dignitaries were waiting to receive His Holiness.

Thousands of people packed the great Church yard and all the adjacent streets. After listening to the various speeches and the choir's joyous songs, His Holiness spoke on a microphone to the enormous crowd, and when he mentioned the fact that he was visiting them after an exile of 37 years, the moan that came from them was like the rolling wave of the ocean, and many hid their faces in their hands to hide their anguish!

PROCESSION TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE

His Holiness, accompanied by the prelates and the members of his party,

making his way with great difficulty through the pressing crowd who wanted to kiss his hand or just to touch him, proceeded to the Presidential Palace where he was received most graciously by His Excellency Ahmad Hassan Al-Baker, President of the Iraqi Republic, amid a flash of television and newspaper cameras. The reception by the President as well as the arrival of His Holiness in Baghdad and the first service of Qurbanna Qaddisha in the Church of Mar Zaya were televised several times in Baghdad and broadcast throughout Iraq and the countries beyond its confines. An Armenian Bank teller remarked to Qasha Gulyad Y. Isaac saying, "The visit of your Patriarch is not only in Iraq the major topic of the moment but is being spoken of throughout the Middle East!"



With the Greek Orthodox Bishop



Arrival in Baghdad by Charter Plane specially sent by His Excellency Ahmed Hassan Al - Baker the President of the Republic of Iraq.

While His Holiness was with the President a message was handed to His Excellency to the effect that thousands of Assyrians were on their way to the Palace anxious to express their gratitude to the President and the Iraqi Government for inviting His Holiness to visit his people

The permission was promptly granted, and thousands of Assyrians men, women and children alike, as a mighty river poured into and covered the spacious front of the Presidential Palace. The President accompanied by His Holiness appeared together on the high balcony of the Palace and thousands of Assyrians below broke out into deafening cheers that could be heard a mile away, uttering slogans of gratitude to the President and the Iraqi Government and expression of welcome and loyalty to His Holiness.

After nearly quarter of an hour of this spontaneous demonstration of gratitude,

love and affection demonstrated by these thousands of Assyrians, the President and His Holiness withdrew, while many more thousands of Assyrians still continued to pour into the grounds of the Palace to add their cheers to those of the withdrawing thousands. All those who saw this spectacle were greatly moved, and the Syrian Orthodox (Jacobite) Bishop, Mar Severious Zakkai expressing his feelings to His Holiness remarked, "Clearly, God is with this Church."

STAY IN BAGHDAD

From the Presidential Palace His Holiness and his party proceeded to the Government residence known as the Green Palace, where the Government's guests of honour stay. This is a large building containing several rooms, with a pleasant garden and surrounded by high walls.

During the one month stay in this house, His Holiness received thousands of Assyrians. It was not uncommon to



His Holiness being received by the Representative of the President of Iraq.



With the Honourable Minister of Interior, Iraq.

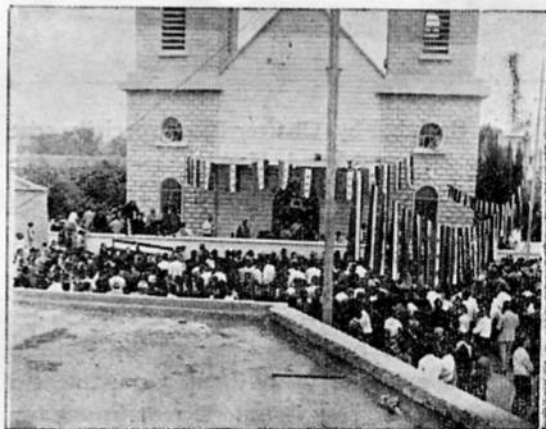
Churches. This was the case also with the Moslems and Hindus during His Holiness' historic visit to the Church in India.

During this period His Holiness was visited by and paid his respects to several high Government officials; visited the Moslem religious leaders of Shiah and Sunni, who received the Patriarch most graciously, and also granted interviews to several representatives of the press.

On May, 14, at 7-30 p. m. a dinner sponsored by His Holiness reception committee was given at his residence and which was attended by several distinguished guests representing both the Government and Churches, among them their Excellencies, Brigadier Mahmood Ali, representing the President, General Saadun Ghaidan,

receive any thing between three and five thousand persons a day. Among these were also Christians from other Churches and perhaps one hundred and fifty Moslems who came to ask for His Holiness' blessing or brought their sick people that he may pray over them. Several of these came into the Church during Qurbanna Qaddisha (the Holy Offering / Communion).

It is here appropriate to explain that Moslems in the Middle East and other parts of Asia, have throughout the centuries taken their sick people or otherwise prayed in Churches of the Holy Church of the East, or sought the blessing or prayers of the prelates of the Church as in this instance, which they would not normally do in the case with other Christian



A view of the gathering in front of Mar Zaya Cathedral, Baghdad.

Minister of Interior, Mohamed Mahmoud, Minister of Industry, Saleh Ummar Ali, Minister of Education, Hamid al-Ani, Staff Brigadier, Abed Mohammed Saleh, General Chief of Police, Mohder al-Amin Chief of Intelligence Services.

CHURCH COUNCIL

Despite all these endless engagements, which would start at 8-30 a. m. in the morning and end at 11 or 12 midnight, His Holiness gave several hours to the discussion of the most important affairs



Reception at Mar Zaya Cathedral - standing to the right of His Holiness is Mar Paulos Shekhau the Chaldean Uniate Patriarch.



His Holiness with the Chaldean Uniate Patriarch and some of the Prelates.



With the Syrian Orthodox Bishop.



With the Syrian Catholic Bishop.

of the Church with the prelates who for the first time in 37 years were able to meet with His Holiness in one body. These were: His Grace Mar Yosip Khnannishoo Metropolitan of Rustaqa (Kursya Elamaya) and Patriarchal Representative in Iraq, their Eminences, Mar Pilipos Yaukhanan, Bishop of Diana and Kirkuk, Mar Yaukhanan Auraham, Bishop of Hassitcha and Syria, Mar Khananya Dinkha, Bishop of Tehran and Iran, Mar Narsai Elias (DeBaz), Bishop of Beirut and Lebanon, Mar Andrio Yaualaha, Bishop of Barwar and Amadia, and Mar Yosip Sargis, Bishop of Jelu Rehkan. The last one, however, due to sickness was unable to attend the Synodical meetings held under the Presidency of His Holiness. All pertinent matters relative to Church of the East in general were discussed, and several new rules and regulations affecting the administration of the Holy Church in the changed circumstances were promulgated, and these will soon be published and sent to all the prelates and other administrative authorities of the Church. Special attention was given to the Church in Iraq, where the membership of the Church is greater than in any other country in the world, and a central committee was created to assist the Metropolitan in the conduct of the financial affairs of that diocese. It was also decided that a clergy training school be established in the city of Baghdad.

LITURGICAL SERVICES CONDUCTED AND PLACES VISITED / VISIT TO KIRKUK

During the stay of His Holiness in Iraq he conducted the following services of the Qurbana Qaddisha. It should be pointed out that these were conducted on Fridays for the reason that the Moslem Countries observe Friday as the rest day and, therefore, on this day only could all the Assyrians avail themselves of partaking in this Holy occasion. However, Qurbana was also celebrated each Sunday by one of the prelates of the Church of the East in Baghdad.

On Friday, May 1, the Patriarch celebrated Qurbana in the Church of Mar Zaya, Baghdad, and communicated about 10,000

persons. His Holiness also preached his historic sermon regarding the case of the late suspended metropolitan Mansour Darmo and his misguided followers.

On Sunday, May 3. His Holiness celebrated Qurbana in Mar Qardakh in the Gelani district, and communicated about 7,000 persons.

On Friday, May 8, His Holiness celebrated Qurbana in the Church of Mar Gewargis, Daura and communicated some 8,000 persons.

On Sunday night an outdoor meeting attended by several thousand Assyrians was also held at the Assyrian Club in honour of His Holiness and at which he spoke at considerable length on the history of the Church and its affairs. His Holiness also awarded three persons with an appropriate cross.

On Saturday May 16, His Holiness left Baghdad for Kirkuk, the site of the famous oil refineries where several thousand Assyrians have for years lived and worked. His Holiness was accompanied by five prelates of the Church and some forty cars carrying more than two hundred Assyrians from Baghdad, was met some ten miles outside the city limits by the Governor of Kirkuk and other officials along with the Bishops of the Chaldean Church, the Jacobite priest, other clergy, and thousands of joyous Assyrians whose jubilation equalled that of the Baghdad Assyrians already mentioned.

On Sunday, May 17, being the Feast of Pentecost, His Holiness celebrated Qurbana in the Church of Mar Gewargis, Kirkuk, and communicated about 6,000 persons, Thousands more came for the Patriarchs' blessing at his residence and had their pictures taken with him, just as in Baghdad, single or in family groups.

Among the places of historical interest which the Patriarch visited were Babylon with its great history, the historic cities of

Tikret and Samara, and finally the city of Baquba; the site of the tragic Assyrians Refugel Camps, where some nearly 80,000 Assyrians and Armenians lived in tents from 1918 to 1920, and nearly 9,000 of them were buried there.



His Holiness leading Ministers and Church leaders to a banquet given in his honour.



With the Armenian Catholic Bishop.

This visit was more of a pilgrimage to the site where His Holiness had fifty years ago, then at the age of 12 years, been consecrated to the exalted office of the Catholicos Patriarch of the East. This fact was noted with interest by the Iraqi officials and the press and His Excellency, the Vice President, Saleh Mehdi Amash urged the Patriarch to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of his consecration on the same site where the Government would have pitched tents for all the Assyrians and also joined in celebrating the occasion.

His Holiness was deeply moved by this gracious offer of His Excellency but had sadly to decline it because of the fact that preparation for the celebration of the occasion in the city of Chicago had been going on for nearly a year.



His Holiness and the Prelates of the Church at a Tea party at the Assyrian Club, Baghdad.

PRESS AND OTHER NEWS MEDIA REACTION

His Holiness' visit to Iraq was widely and favourably commented on thro-



In conversation with the Minister of Interior

ughout the countries of the Middle East. It was considered nonpolitical and a redress of a great injustice perpetrated upon His Holiness thirty-seven years ago, and thereby on the Church of the East and the Assyrian people and whose good name had been unjustly besmirched. The following



The girls' choir at Kirkuk.

comments are typical of the publicity given to this historic visit of his Holiness. The Baghdad Observer English language daily paper, under the title: "Grateful to Baker



The Patriarch dining with the Ministers.

and the Government for their hospitality during his stay in Iraq, says, His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII Catholicos Patriarch of the Church of the East, is leaving at 10 o'clock tomorrow morning for Beirut by special plane concluding, four weeks visit to his homeland, Iraq, as guest of the Iraqi Revolutionary Govern-

ment. It will be recalled that the revolutionary Government has restored to the Patriarch his Iraqi citizenship which was withdrawn from him in 1933 under the exterminated imperialistic-monarchic regime."



Talking to Bishops and Baghdad dignitaries.

The feeling of the Assyrians in general is well expressed by a letter from Aprim K. Auraham, published in the Baghdad Observer of May 10, 1970, which states, "when His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun was exiled 37 years ago he took into exile with him a part of the heart and the soul of every Assyrian. Therefore the gratitude of the Assyrian community to the revolutionary Government for restoring to His Holiness his Iraqi nationality has no limits - because the Assyrians have not



An official of the Baghdad Museum explaining to His Holiness the history of Acad and Sumer. On the extreme left is seen Shamasha Geevarghees Benjamin, who taught syriac at the Seminary of the church at Trichur during the days of the late H. G. Mar Themotheus.

known real happiness for 37 long years. On his return to his homeland His Holiness brought back with him the part of the heart and the soul of every Assyrian which he had taken away with him into exile. Thus, in restoring to His Holiness his Iraqi nationality, the revolutionary Government has also restored to the Assyrians their happiness." This was evident when tears of joy stood on the eyes and rolled down their cheeks at the sight of their beloved Patriarch. Also evident was their gratitude to the revolutionary Government when at the Presidential Palace the big crowd burst into uproarious cheers at the sight of their leader, President Ahmad Hassan al-Baker standing on the balcony beside



In the Green Palace, the residence of His Holiness during his stay in Iraq - with Mr. R. M. de-Kelaita Vice - President of the central committee of the Church of the East in Iraq. Mr. Kelaita is the son of a first cousin of the late H. G. Mar Themotheus.



In the Green Palace - with a group of young Assyrians. His Lordship Mar Narsai, Bishop of Beirut and Lebanon and Mr R. M. de-Kelaita are also seen in the picture.

His Holiness the Patriarch and waving smilingly to the cheering crowd. It was a historic occasion and a historic day for the Assyrians.

The second instance of this feeling is expressed in a letter dated June 5, 1970 from His Eminence Mar Pelipos Yaukhanan, addressed to His Holiness, in which he says, "Truly your Holiness' discourse, the services which you performed and your sermons full of good counsel, will never be forgotten. But above all that your Holiness' visit filled Iraq with peace and tranquillity."

WESTERN PRESS AND WORLD COUNCIL ARE SILENT

Though this Apostolic Visit as we have seen, received the greatest publicity



Leaving the residence of His Lordship Mar Sarges Bishop of Baghdad — H. G. Mar Yosip Khnanisoo His Lordship Mar Sarges and Mr. R. M. de-Kelaita are seen with His Holiness.



With the Governor of Kirkuk.

in the Middle East and, though, as is well known the Iraqi Government released information for world press (presumably via Reuter British newsmedia since that is the only major international network in Baghdad) yet, not a word has been written about it in the Western Press.



With the Kurdish Minister

In view of the indisputable facts, which have been presented in this article, it is hoped and prayed that the World Church Council even though not in consideration



Departure from Baghdad

His Holiness Mar Shimun waving to the cheering crowds of Assyrians who jammed the balcony of the Baghdad International Airport to bid the Patriarch farewell — Sayed Sadoun Ghaidan R C C member and Minister of Interior is also seen in the picture.

of the injustice committed in flagrant violation of all ethical and legal standards against the Church of the East, but rather in respect and consideration of the member Churches of the World Council and the public in general, who had been misled by their previous reports, will now issue another statement stating the true facts without bias or rancour.



His Holiness being received by the Governor of Babel

Kurdish leaders both in Baghdad and Kirkuk came to pay their respects and this His Holiness appreciated very much.

In all his speeches and sermons the Patriarch expressed his joy at the peace which had just been concluded between the Iraqi Government and the Kurds and prayed for the future prosperity of that historic land and the Middle East in general.



Visiting Babel

His Holiness also noted and commented upon the appreciation of history of the present Iraqi Government which has revived, the long dead names of districts of Nineviah, Babylon and Ambar, which date back to the days of the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires.



At the Baghdad Museum with R. M. de-Kelaita and Immanuel Scopila.

RECEPTION BY THE PRESIDENT AND DEPARTURE FROM BAGHDAD

Much to the disappointment of the Assyrians who had been urging His Holiness to prolong his stay in Iraq and to visit all the various sections of the community, including the Assyrians in the Northern Area, but like all visits of this type it had, though sadly, to be terminated.

It should be mentioned here the Mustafa Barzani, the Kurdish leader had also extended through Kurdish Ministers in Baghdad a warm invitation to the Patriarch to visit Kurdistan, and several prominent



With the Boys' choir at Kirkuk - The Metropolitan and the Bishops are also seen in the picture.

It should also be mentioned that His Excellency the President had suggested that the Patriarch make his permanent residence in Baghdad and had also told him that he was free to go wherever wanted in Iraq. This gracious act was deeply appreciated by His Holiness.

Thus, the Patriarch, who had already been received twice by the President accompanied by the prelates paid his third and last visit to His Excellency.



Being received by an Arab chief at Baquba where about 50 years ago, His Holiness was consecrated the Catholicos Patriarch of the church of the East.

Friday, May 22, His Holiness left the Green Palace accompanied by the Acting Minister of Interior, the prelates of the Church and an endless line of cars. He arrived at the airport at 10 a. m. where thousands of Assyrians had already come hours in advance to wish him God-speed.

Soon after this the following officials of state came to see His Holiness off: Their Excellencies, Chief of the Party, Sadam Tikrity, General Saadun Ghaidan, Minister of Interior, Brigd. Hamid Al-Annie, Salih Omar Ali, Minister of Education, Mohammed Mahoud, Minister of Industry, Saleh Zekki, State Minister.

At 11 a. m. His Holiness was escorted by their Excellencies along with about two hundred representatives and Assyrian

dignitaries to the awaiting charter plane (among thunderous cheers and claps of thousands of Assyrians, who were now assured of the fact that their beloved Patriarch could visit them regularly) which he and his party including His Grace Mar Yosip Khnannisoo, boarded for Beirut, where they arrived at 1 p. m. and His Holiness was met by the Iraqi Ambassador to Lebanon, and also later seen off by His Excellency to his plane departing for Europe.

THE FOCAL POINT OF THE VISIT

However, though the total impact of His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII Catholicos Patriarch's visit to Iraq cannot be underestimated, from many points of view, yet without the following facts its effect would have been transitory. These facts are: The restoration of His Holiness' citizenship, which was a noble and greatly appreciated gesture on the part of the Iraqi Government. The restoration of all the Churches to the Holy Church of the East, and above all, the official recognition of His Holiness, by the Iraqi Government as the Supreme Head of the Church of the East including the Church in Iraq.

With one single stroke, the present Iraqi Government swept away a terrible injustice perpetrated against His Holiness, the Church and the Assyrian people, so long ago, and thereby restored to them their freedom



Laying wreath on the unknown soldiers' Tomb.

and their dignity; a fact which has been appreciated by the Church of the East and Assyrians universally.

Here is the text of the decree issued on May 21, 1970, and signed by the President and all the Ministers of State, translated from the Arabic original:

"No. 286 Presidential Decree

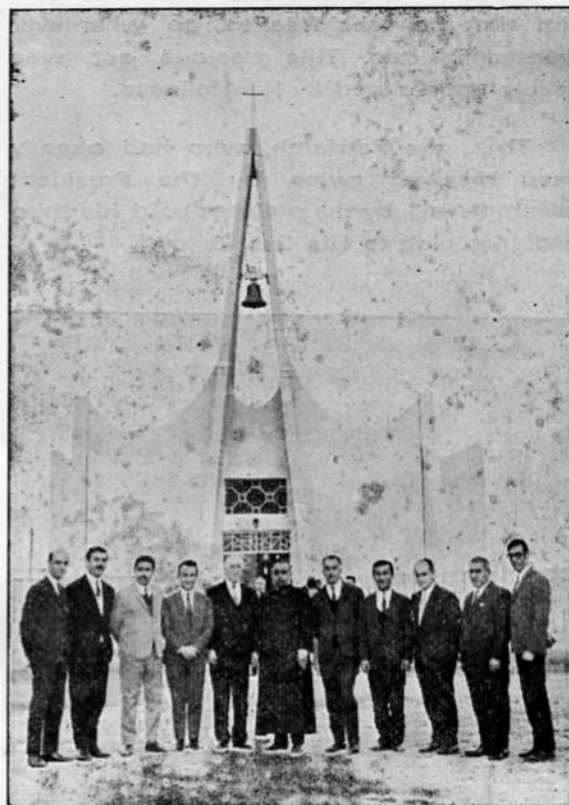
In accordance with the request of the Minister of Religion, we hereby decree as follows, namely that we appoint Mar Eshai Shimun Patriarch of the Church of the East (Nestorian) supreme head of the Assyrian people in the Republic of Iraq. We are also instructing the Minister of Interior and Religion to carry through this decree.

Issued in Baghdad on the day of Revea Al-Awal, 1390 Hijria, which corresponds with 21, May 1970 of the birth (Christian Era.)

Signed: Ahmad Hassan Al-Baker President of the Republic and sealed with presidential seal."

This report of the Apostolic visit of His Holiness the Patriarch in Iraq is taken from "The Light From The East" which concludes this most historical article with prayer that the new and solid foundation which has thus been laid for the Church of the East and the Assyrian community in Iraq, may by God's Grace, last for centuries and generations, and that under the wise leadership of His Holiness Mar Eshai Shimun XXIII the Church of the East universally, may once again attain the zenith which it had reached

in past centuries both in the spiritual and cultural field to the glory of His Holy Name.



The First Fruit of His Holiness Historic Visit to Iraq.

"The church of Virgin Mary built solely by popular workdrive, jointly carried out in close co-operation by the Christian and Muslim inhabitants of the District. The building of a Church by popular workdrive is the first experiment of its kind undertaken in modern Iraq"

The Baghdad observer 24 - 5 - 1970



"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God that in due time, He may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you. Be Sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour - Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. After you have suffered a little while, the God of all Grace, who has called you to His eternal Glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. To Him be the dominion for ever and ever - Amen"

I Peter 5: 6-11