

Communism in Iraq Between Theory and Practice for The Period 1922-1945

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Abstract

The early precursors of the formation of the features of the presence of the communists in Iraq go back to the first decade of the twentieth century, i.e., 1922. In this year, the first cell of the Iraqi communists was founded by a group of Iraqi youths who found in the ideas of the communists what they liked, led by Hussein Al-Rahhal, who was a law student. The youths who joined this circle assumed the responsibility of spreading the principles and ideas of communism, thus beginning the journey of striving to attain the ultimate goal of communism, which was embodied in creating a society that believed in all its propositions, as a prelude to establishing a proletarian state. However, their endeavors collided with the nature of Iraqi society and its prevailing circumstances, which caused their efforts to halt at the stage of struggle without transcending it to reach their desired objective. The attempts of Iraqi communists to apply the principles of their thought on the ground remained confined to spreading those principles among segments of society, combating all those who stood in the way of the dissemination of their ideology, and striving to prepare the working classes in preparation for leading the stage of revolutionary struggle, without going beyond it.

Keywords: Iraqi Communist Party; Hussein Al-Rahhal; Yusuf Salman (Fahd); theory; application.

1. Introduction

Communism is considered one of the intellectual currents that succeeded in recording a strong presence on Iraq's intellectual landscape, as well as in the history of contemporary Iraq. This presence was embodied through the positions adopted by its adherents, particularly their intellectual and political stances, which contrasted with what prevailed in Iraq at the time. These positions—especially the intellectual ones—constituted an attractive factor that enabled communist thought to establish a popular base, most of whose members were workers and peasants, who represent the core foundation for the establishment of a communist state.

The proponents of communism attempted to lay the roots of their ideology by taking advantage of the poor economic and social conditions in Iraq, which later became contributing factors to the consolidation of the foundations of their ideology. The reason behind choosing this research topic is to highlight the path of communism in Iraq from the beginning of its emergence until the 1940s, which is the period that this research aims to focus on, in addition to the efforts made by its proponents to put their ideas and principles into practice in preparation to reaching their ultimate goal, and the level of progress they made to get to their desired goal.

The research is structured around three main sections. The first section addresses the beginnings of the actual entry of communist thought into Iraq at the hands of Hussein Al-Rahhal and his group, tracing its transformation into an organized movement that succeeded in securing a position on Iraq's intellectual and political scene, and clarifying some of its stances toward the events that Iraq witnessed during the period covered by the study. The second section is devoted to highlighting the most important principles and ideas introduced by communism in the political and economic spheres, and subsequently in the social sphere. The third and final section focuses on the core objective of the research, clarifying the most significant attempts made by communists to apply their ideological

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principles on Iraqi soil, and the stages through which these attempts passed in pursuit of achieving their goal.

This research relies on a variety of sources, including dissertations, theses, books, and published studies. Among these are a doctoral dissertation by Mu'ayyad Shakir Al-Taie entitled *The Iraqi Communist Party 1935–1949: A Historical Study*; another entitled *The موقف of the Iraqi Communist Party toward Arab and International Issues 1945–1963* by Badi' Naif; a master's thesis entitled *The Iraqi Communist Party and Its Role in the Iraqi National Movement 1949–1958*; a work by Hanna Batau entitled *The Communist Party*; another by Zaki Khairi and Su'ad Khairi entitled *Studies in the History of the Iraqi Communist Party*; a work by Salah Kharsan entitled *Pages from the History of the Communist Movement in Iraq*; a study entitled *Hussein Al-Rahhal and His Intellectual and Political Activity in Iraq (1901–1971)* by Qais Idris and Ibtisam Hammoud; and another entitled *Hussein Al-Rahhal: Pioneer of Socialist Thought in Iraq* by Amer Hassan Fayadh.

2. Research Method

This paper utilizes a historical–analytical method that substantiates the evolution of communism as it occurred in Iraq from 1922–1945 in terms of theory and practice. The basis is mainly qualitative analysis of the historical sources (party documents, newspapers, memoirs, dissertations, specialized studies presented in the reference list of the article). The research opens with an analysis of primary sources — contemporary newspapers and party statements in order to follow the development of early communist cells and the intellectual discourse accompanying their establishment. These documents are examined in their social and political context to elucidate the ways in which communist concepts initially permeated and subsequently evolved and resisted in Iraqi society. The article also adopts a comparative analytical framework by analysing the conceptual bases of Marxism–Leninism and applying a comparative framework of obstacles in the practical implementation by Iraqi communists of this ideology, particularly with regard to the links between intellectual struggle, labour action and political activism. Care is taken with those shifts in regard to domestic developments and international trends, particularly the effect of Soviet policies. It also incorporates contextual analysis of the ideological discourse with the law of the land such as feudalism, colonialism, and class stratification. Combining descriptive historical narration with analytical interpretation, the research assesses the successes (or lack thereof) of the application of communist theory in Iraq while also elucidating the structural and cultural limitations that held back its evolution from ideological movement to embodied political form.

3. Result

After the Bolsheviks ⁽²⁾ assumed power in Russia and declared the establishment of the Soviet Union, they sought to disseminate the principles of their communist ideology throughout the world. The Arab homeland had its share of this endeavor, as the Comintern ⁽²⁾ undertook the task of spreading communist principles, taking advantage of the deteriorating political, economic, and social conditions prevailing in Arab countries. The policy it adopted in pursuit of this objective succeeded in achieving positive results, as a number of Arab countries recorded a clear entry of communism, embodied in the establishment of organizations that adhered to communist thought [1].

The Iraqi intellectual scene witnessed a relatively late entry of communist ideas, facilitated mainly through print and audio media, while the Comintern itself played a negligible role in this regard. This delay may be attributed to the length and depth of Ottoman rule in Iraq (1534–1918), which left behind a state of comprehensive underdevelopment that dominated the country for many years. The features of the formation of a communist presence in Iraq began to take shape in the first decade of the twentieth century, specifically in 1922, at the hands of the law student Hussein Al-Rahhal ⁽³⁾, regarded as the pioneer of Marxist thought in Iraq. Al-Rahhal established a cell that included a number of educated youths influenced by communist ideas [2].

The cell commenced its activities in 1922 in a small room located within the Haidar Khana Mosque, which they called “the Hermitage.” One source notes that the room in which they met contained two pictures, one of Karl Marx and the other of Vladimir Lenin, with a symbol of danger and death (a skull and crossed bones) placed between them. Al-Rahhal named the cell “My Group,” and when he was once asked about its objective, he replied, “Our concern is to study new ideas” [3]. In addition to Al-Rahhal, the cell included a number of intellectuals, among them Mahmoud Ahmad Al-Sayyid ⁽⁴⁾ and 'Awni Bakr ⁽⁵⁾, as well as others. Despite its recent establishment, Al-Rahhal's cell succeeded in attracting a considerable number of intellectuals and nationalist poets. It paid particular attention to studying the country's general conditions, especially its social conditions and the deterioration they suffered, and began proposing solutions to address them [4].

Al-Rahhal issued a newspaper known as *Al-Sahifa* on 28 December 1924, which served as a means for disseminating the principles of communist thought. He served as its editor-in-chief, and the

newspaper employed its articles to address the country's problems, particularly economic, social, and intellectual issues. It adopted an approach previously unfamiliar in Iraqi journalism, characterized by presenting topics marked by boldness and indifference toward the reactions of opposing forces [5].

Al-Rahhal's cell was consistent in preparing detailed reports on the general conditions of the country, writing them in Russian and sending them to the Soviet embassy in Persia. This practice continued until 1923, when the embassy instructed the cell to cease its oppositional activities, dissolve itself, and subsequently join the ranks of the Iraqi National Party ⁽⁶⁾. The members complied only with the first part of the embassy's instructions by dissolving their communist cell, while refraining from joining the National Party. This decision was likely due to the incompatibility between the party's objectives and the cell's primary goal of adopting and believing in communist thought. It is noteworthy that throughout its years of activity, Al-Rahhal's cell attempted to distance itself from direct political activity, limiting itself to intellectual and cultural pursuits, and did not attempt to construct an organizational structure for itself [6].

On 27 April 1926, the Iraqi Council of Ministers issued a decision following the resolution adopted at the Cairo Conference on 17 January of the same year, which called for combating communist tendencies in Arab countries. In response to this decision, Al-Rahhal, together with Yusuf Zayn al—who also held communist inclinations—agreed to establish an organization known as the Solidarity Club. The club appeared on the intellectual scene in April 1926. Its program, characterized by ambiguity, attracted Iraqi youth, particularly school students, and this ambiguity made it a focal point of attention for the British presence in Iraq [7].

A British report described the club as having a socio-political character, comprising a group of lawyers and recently graduated students, whose objective was to oppose traditional rulers and strive for Iraq's complete independence by relying on educated Iraqi youth. The report identified Al-Rahhal as one of its most prominent members. Al-Rahhal's popularity and influence over his associates, who were known for their socialist inclinations, contributed to an increase in the number of individuals joining the organization, which raised the concerns of the British authorities in Iraq. They linked the establishment and expansion of the club under Al-Rahhal's socialist leadership to the idea of founding a socialist party in Iraq [8].

The Solidarity Club played a notable role in certain political events witnessed by the country during the years of its activity, including the role of its leader, Al-Rahhal, in organizing and leading the demonstration supporting the Palestinian cause and condemning the visit of the Zionist leader Alfred Mond ⁽⁷⁾ to Iraq in February 1928. The club continued to operate on the intellectual scene through the dissemination of socialist thought and efforts to attract supporters and sympathizers until 15 February 1928, when the Ministry of Interior issued a decision to close it on the grounds that it was concerned with matters contrary to the approved program and detrimental to public security in the country.

The idea of communism came to occupy a larger space and spread to a number of Iraqi cities, especially those in the southern part of Iraq, owing to the presence of facilitating factors for the expansion and spread of communism. One of these factors was the emergence and intensification of the phenomenon of feudalism. The communist activist Butrus Vasili ⁽⁸⁾ succeeded in attracting a large number of young people and establishing the first cell of communism in Basra in 1927 and another one in Nasiriyah in 1928. This led to a large number of followers and the rise of the star of communism along with the emergence of the global economic crisis (1929-1933) [3].

The effects of the global economic crisis on the economies of a number of countries around the world, including Iraq, were marked by a notable decline in the Iraqi market. The presence of communism took advantage of the deteriorating economic conditions that a number of social groups had to endure during the crisis and the ratification of the Treaty of 1930 that maintained the British mandate in its previous form to disseminate their ideological principles to a number of social groups. This was a preliminary step to building a supporting and sympathetic mass for the idea of communism, and the efforts of the communists were focused on the central and southern regions of Iraq [9].

By the late 1920s, the number of members of the three communist cells had reached approximately sixty individuals, who operated individually and quietly with the aim of expanding their activities. The Nasiriyah cell was the most active among them, serving as a center for holding members' meetings and issuing leaflets directed at workers and peasants. Communist activity continued to advance, as it linked its operations in Baghdad, Basra, and Nasiriyah, extending its work among workers and transforming organizational circles into mass organizations [10].

The communications that took place among members of the communist circles in 1934 resulted in the announcement of the formation of a committee known as the Committee for Combating Colonialism and Exploitation on 31 March of the same year, with 'Asim Falih ⁽⁹⁾ elected as its secretary. The committee worked to link the socialist circles to it and served as a façade for the establishment of the Iraqi Communist Party. On 31 March, the committee issued a statement announcing the objectives

of the party's political program and its internal regulations. The statement clearly targeted the working classes of society—namely workers, peasants, and students—seeking to make them its mass base [11].

In the summer of 1935, the Committee for Combating Colonialism and Exploitation held a meeting that culminated in the proclamation of the establishment of the Iraqi Communist Party, marking the beginning of a new phase in the history of the communist presence in Iraq, characterized by organizational dominance. The party issued a clandestine newspaper known as *Sawt Al-Sha'b* (The Voice of the People), whose front pages bore the hammer and sickle, along with Karl Marx's slogan "Workers of the world, unite!" and the Iraqi Communist Party's slogan "Workers of Iraq, unite!" [12].

The party's membership included Yusuf Salman ⁽¹⁰⁾, 'Asim Falih, and others. The Central Committee of the party adopted an aggressive policy toward the Iraqi government. Among the most prominent political events witnessed by the Iraqi Communist Party during its early years was the Bakr Sidqi ⁽¹¹⁾ coup of 29 October 1936, which brought an end to the government of Yasin Al-Hashimi and ushered in a new government. The party's position toward this event was one of support and endorsement, expressed through organizing demonstrations that included workers alongside communist adherents [13].

The party's oppositional stances toward the monarchical regime led to its exposure to a series of arrests targeting its members throughout the years of its activity. This pressure compelled the party in 1938 to suspend its activities, particularly after the government issued the appendix to the Baghdad Penal Code No. 51 of 1938, which stipulated the arrest of anyone promoting socialist, Bolshevik, or anarchist ideas. However, the suspension of the Communist Party did not last long, as Yusuf Salman, known as Fahd, reactivated it. He worked to rebuild the party, consolidate its unity, and entrench its revolutionary traditions on Marxist–Leninist foundations and proletarian internationalism [4].

Yusuf Salman began his activities from the capital, Baghdad, focusing on regrouping and unifying the scattered cells in central and southern Iraq and linking them to the Central Committee in Baghdad. He also issued a new newspaper in December 1940, continuing the mission of previous publications in disseminating the principles and propositions of communist thought. In September 1939, the Second World War erupted and continued until 1945, and the party declared its position by urging the Iraqi people to adopt neutrality and refrain from intervention [9].

When the government of 1941 was formed under the leadership of Rashid 'Ali Al-Kaylani ⁽¹²⁾, Fahd, the leader of the party, sent him a letter calling for reliance on popular support and granting the people their constitutional rights. He also expressed the party's disapproval of the provocative acts directed against members of the Jewish community, asserting that they were the work of the British occupation forces. The year 1941 witnessed a shift in the Iraqi Communist Party's stance toward the Second World War, as Germany's attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 and the latter's entry into the war alongside Britain led to a change in the party's position [11].

In its meeting held in May 1942, the party's Central Committee issued a report in which it regarded the British army in the war as a force fighting Nazism and supporting the global democratic front, calling upon the Iraqi people to support and assist the British army. This shift in the party's position toward the Second World War and toward Britain indicates that it functioned primarily as an instrument serving the Soviet Union and its interests, and that its loyalty to the Soviets exceeded its national loyalty and affiliation.

In March 1944, under Fahd's leadership, the Iraqi Communist Party held its first conference, following the convening of the Arab communist parties' conference in 1943 to issue their national charter. The easing of governmental restrictions during that period encouraged the party to hold this conference, which resulted in the issuance of the Communist Party's charter bearing the slogans "A Free Homeland" and "A Happy People" [14]. The charter called for Iraqi sovereignty and emphasized the necessity of addressing the country's problems in all fields, with particular emphasis on social issues.

One year after its first conference, the party held its second conference in March 1945, during which it approved its internal regulations, recognized its program, and committed itself to adherence to its internal system. The party's supportive positions toward the Palestinian cause contributed to strengthening its standing among the masses and granting it an opportunity to secure representation in the parliamentary council [15]. However, its vacillating stance—particularly after the Soviet Union announced in late 1948 its vote in favor of the United Nations resolution on the partition of Palestine issued in November 1947, which stipulated the division of Palestine between Arabs and Jews and the establishment of two states—exposed the party to division and confusion. A number of prominent party members withdrew after finding the Soviet position to be in contradiction with the principles of communism [16].

The Iraqi Communist Party continued its activities until 1949, when the Iraqi government issued a decision to execute its prominent leaders, foremost among them Fahd, following their arrest in 1947. The decision was carried out in the same year, and the execution of the party's leaders was met with condemnation and denunciation by the Iraqi Communist Party and communist parties across the Arab world and internationally [17].

Section Two: Principles of Iraqi Communist Thought

Before delving into the principles introduced by Iraqi communist thought, it is necessary to clarify the concept of communism. Communism is defined as a theoretical intellectual doctrine based on economic, social, and political practice, established by Karl Marx (13*) and Friedrich Engels (14*) and later developed by their successors. Communist thought is founded on the idea of atheism, as it views matter as the basis of everything and interprets history through class struggle—the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie (capitalists and workers). This struggle ultimately ends with the dictatorship of the working class and the dominance of the economic factor [18].

Communist thought also holds that historical materialism explains events through economic causes and represents the most accurate interpretation of the development of systems and societies. The reason for this development lies in the changes that occur in the economic condition, which is characterized by instability and constant transformation. Civilization and culture are viewed as products of economic development [19].

Communism adopted a dictatorial system of governance that monopolizes all means of production and undertakes the distribution of labor and wages among workers. It views morality as relative and as a reflection of the means of production. The Iraqi Communist Party adopted Leninist communism, attributed to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (15*), who developed the communist ideas formulated by Marx and Engels to correspond with the nature of development occurring in human society. It subsequently adopted these ideas as a fundamental reference and point of departure for its revolutionary struggle to achieve its desired goal, namely the establishment of the proletarian state (the workers' state).

Iraqi communists regarded Marxism–Leninism as the theory upon which science and life had converged in correctness, and as the sole means capable of liberating Iraqi society—and other societies of the world—from colonialism, exploitation, and enslavement, thereby creating a society free from pain and suffering. The working class, as the revolutionary class, was entrusted with the task of liberating all the oppressed of the world and leading the stage of revolutionary struggle against enemies who stood as obstacles to the establishment of the workers' state and the realization of Marxism [18] [20].

However, the Iraqi communist adoption of this thought was characterized by rigidity and imitation devoid of insight and sound vision, as no effort was made to develop it in a manner consistent with the nature of Iraqi society. Iraqi communists relied on struggle in both its forms, following the path of orthodox communist thought, whether to achieve their ideological goals or their political ambitions.

Communism, as an economic and social doctrine, recognizes public ownership, believes in the communization of wealth, abolishes inheritance, and fiercely opposes private ownership. It was therefore natural that capitalist thought would be the first ideology against which it declared struggle [15]. Iraqi communists considered the capitalist system to represent the highest degree of enslavement and domination, identifying it as the primary cause of class stratification within society and the exploitation of the wealthy class at the expense of other social groups.

They stressed the need to establish a parliamentary system on the basis of democratic foundations that are capable of providing comprehensive protection for all classes of society, especially the overwhelming majority of workers and peasants against the manifestations of the capitalist system [11].

Communist thought considered the working class the main element for building the state that they desired. In this context, the Iraqi communists strove to mobilize and prepare this social element to achieve their desired goal and then prepare it to lead the struggle against the bourgeois class. Some of the most notable slogans raised by the Iraqi communists were: "A Free Homeland," "A Happy People," and "Workers of the World, Unite."

They also declared their acceptance of democracy on condition that this does not conflict with the secrecy of their work and their continued pursuit of the principle of proletarian international brotherhood on the basis of the right of all peoples, advanced and underdeveloped, to enjoy their independence and sovereignty over their wealth in order to achieve national progress [5].

Iraqi communists further explained the purpose of their thought, which did not only seek the liberation of the working class from exploitation and slavery, but also the liberation of the peasants, craftsmen, and intellectuals, among others. Communists further explained the basic principles of their ideology in the political, economic, and social spheres of life. In the political sphere, the communists called upon the people to unite their efforts and engage in the struggle for the achievement of complete

independence and sovereignty. They also advocated for the establishment of a government that serves the interests of the people, as well as the establishment of democracy, in which the parliament, administration councils, and cities are elected by the people, in addition to the enforcement of the constitutional provisions related to democratic rights [1] [14].

In the economic sphere, the communists advocated for the establishment of a democratic economy, in which the means of production are owned by the people, as well as the establishment of democratic institutions in the economic sphere, in which the people elect the administration council in the cities, in addition to the enforcement of the constitutional provisions related to democratic rights [1] [14]. Communists further advocated for the repeal of the economic laws inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution.

In the social sphere, the communists advocated for equality in the grant of the Kurds' national rights, without compromising the rights of the rest of the components of society, in addition to the absolute rejection of racial discrimination, as they believed it to be an irrational belief [3]. Communists also discussed the military sphere, in which they emphasized the need to direct efforts towards the health, cultural, and scientific development of the soldier, in addition to the elimination of the "fifth column" in order to build an army dedicated to the achievement of national independence and the service of national interests [3].

In the economic field, communists considered struggle to be the main solution to address the issues of rationing and monopolization. The communists demanded the progress of the national economy through the development and support of national industries, investing in natural resources, and improving the purchasing power of citizens by reducing the price to a level corresponding to income. The communists also demanded the identification of the reasons for the low level of agricultural production and working to address it, in addition to providing markets and transportation for national products [12].

The communists also demanded the liberation of the people from the grip of foreign monopoly companies and the establishment of a tax system suitable for low-income earners. The communists also demanded reducing indirect taxes to ease the burden on society. The communists ended their economic principles by demanding that government loans be provided to workers and peasants.

In the social field, their principles focused on the need to apply social justice and eliminate class differences, to grant workers the right to live with dignity, and to protect them since they constitute the second-largest segment of society. They demanded that Amended Law No. 72 be applied to ensure social security in cases of unemployment and old age [21].

The peasants, being the largest segment of society, were given particular attention in their proposals. They demanded that land expropriation be stopped, that land allocations to influential feudal landlords be abolished, that land be redistributed in small plots without any compensation in cash, and that societies be formed to protect their rights and obtain loans from the government [22].

The communist social proposals included education. They demanded that education be developed and that it become a right to all members of society belonging to both sexes without any discrimination based on ethnicity or social class. They advocated true equality between men and women, supported women's participation in the labor market, fought against old traditions, and supported the development of social and sports activities through the establishment of scientific associations and sports clubs [1].

Section Three: Attempts by Communists to Apply the Principles of Communism

The stage of struggle represents the first phase in the application of communist principles, which is carried out with the aim of reaching its ultimate goal, i.e., to establish the proletarian state (workers' state). Iraqi communists failed to move beyond the stage of struggle, which lasted for several decades, unlike their counterparts in Russia and China, who managed to attain the supreme goal of communism. This can be explained by the fact that Iraq did not constitute fertile ground for establishing a communist state, given that it lacked one of the most important prerequisites for its realization, i.e., complete belief in the ideas and principles of communism. This prerequisite could only be achieved in a country whose majority of the population believe in a heavenly religion, i.e., Islam, which remains impossible to attain [17].

The Iraqi communists initiated their struggle by working to develop the essential foundation for the establishment of their desired state. This foundation was the working and peasant classes. The communists achieved this through spreading the ideas of their ideology among these two classes and working to attract them to the ideology. The communists also took advantage of the widespread issues of poverty and feudalism that existed in Iraq. The struggle of communism in Iraq witnessed two main phases. The first phase was referred to as the phase of intellectual struggle [15].

The phase of intellectual struggle emerged in the early years following the establishment of the first communist organization in Iraq. The Iraqi communists initiated their intellectual struggle by choosing

to support the idea of women's liberation and the liberation of Iraqi society from outdated traditions. The communists supported this idea of liberation on the basis of scientific principles. The support of this idea allowed the Iraqi communists to stand against other groups that they considered to be obstacles to the expansion and development of their ideology in Iraq [6].

Communists sought to frame women's liberation as a social issue intrinsically linked to the liberation of society at large. They then proceeded to publish writings condemning the restrictions imposed on women and calling for their emancipation, particularly from the veil. Among these writings was an article entitled "*Al-Shu'ur Al-Milli aw Al-Iqtisad Al-Milli*" (National Consciousness or National Economy), in which they argued that the economic structure of Iraqi society exerted a decisive influence on its superstructure. The article stated:

"The status of women is subject to this general law. The conditions of the Arab family are remnants of feudal eras, and the harem and the veil bear the imprint of the feudal system. The aristocracy was able to establish the harem and retain a number of women within it through the exploitation of peasant labor. The harem and the veil were not previously known, and both will disappear together when the classes of the people establish their authority."

Hussein Al-Rahhal, the pioneer of communism, played a significant role in issuing calls for reforming Iraq's social conditions, particularly in the fields of education and the liberation of women buried beneath the veil, which he and his associates regarded as a product of outdated customs and traditions [11].

They further elaborated on their views about the reasons behind the stagnation and lack of progress of Eastern societies compared to their Western counterparts, which, according to them, was because of Eastern society's adherence to obsolete and outdated traditions, which were in conflict with progress and development. One of these obsolete traditions, according to them, was the veil, which they characterized as an indicator of backwardness and regression. They also criticized society for diminishing the status of women by characterizing them as intellectually inferior to men, which, according to them, if true, could only be because of societal practices that confined women to their lives, which were characterized by ignorance and backwardness [23].

The communists' statements, which were characterized by their negative views about Iraqi society, elicited strong reactions from conservative elements, which, through their writings, sought to warn society about the danger of being drawn to what they characterized as deviant and misguided ideas, which were presented in the guise of women's liberation and progress, yet were characterized by dangerous objectives. These negative views by the communists on Iraqi society led to a division of public opinion in Iraqi society, with people either supporting or opposing both sides. Some criticized advocates of veiling, urging them to abandon what they considered outdated calls incompatible with the spirit of global progress, and to focus instead on combating issues more harmful to society while leaving Iraqi women to contend with a backward social environment. Others, however, rejected communist calls outright, accusing their proponents of deviating from religion and disregarding its teachings and values [24].

Iraqi communists raised a slogan that revealed the authoritarian nature of their ideological outlook, stating:

We label as corrupters all those whose ideas have developed in a form different from the way our ideas have developed; as morally backward those who do not possess our morals; and as unbelievers those who do not believe in our beliefs, paying no regard to those who adhere to other doctrines [1].

The intellectual struggle of Iraqi communists extended to other issues, including the concentration of capital in the hands of a limited number of private companies. They criticized this phenomenon, asserting that it produced negative consequences, such as generating economic crises through excessive production that exceeded actual demand. They also criticized the persistent adherence to customs, traditions, ideas, and systems despite societal development, emphasizing that everything on the surface of the earth is in constant evolution. They argued that traditions and customs constituted the principal obstacle to societal progress, reducing individuals to a state resembling servitude.

They issued an appeal to society declaring:

"We strive to demolish the harmful old and build the beneficial new, and we do not incline toward compromise, for we are in need of a radical social transformation to advance our condition."

They further attributed societal deterioration to the spread of moral decay, which religious figures had allegedly failed to contain, asserting that the influence of religious authorities had become limited. They justified this decline by stating:

"Outdated traditions and standards are remnants of what our ancestors practiced in their bygone era. They no longer correspond to the life of this age. They were once firm and strong when we were

isolated from the world, but now, after grasping the meaning of modern life and seeking proximity to it, a profound clash between our old moral institutions and our present life is inevitable, leading to a transformation of our moral standards” [25].

The communists subsequently launched a media campaign directed against the feudal landlords, whom they described using various derogatory terms. They emphasized that these landlords permitted for others what they denied themselves, as they prevented their own women from engaging in activities that they allowed for the women of peasants. They characterized them as monopolizers of chastity and honor, in addition to their monopoly over wealth [25].

The intellectual campaigns of the communists were not confined to conservatives and feudal landlords, but extended to encompass the religious sphere, which communists regarded as one of the primary obstacles preventing the realization of a communist presence in Iraq. Consequently, they entered into confrontation and conflict with Islam in an attempt to apply the principles of communism. Through print media, they leveled accusations against Islam, beginning with describing it as a religion of superstition based on illogical and irrational fantasies that hindered the spread and deepening of communism [18].

Hussein Al-Rahhal published several articles attacking Islam, among them one stating: “The era in which people believed in the divine orientation of natural phenomena has passed.” In another article, he asserted: “It is not religion that drives social life; rather, social life is what drives religion.” Al-Rahhal and his associates further denied the validity of Islamic religion in an article that stated: “Islamic law was formulated for a society that existed more than a thousand years ago.” They added that when economic or social necessities require change, such change will inevitably occur, with or without religious law.

They also issued a statement declaring that they recognized only human conditions and human responses. The communists did not stop at this point; they further announced their adoption of the issue of liberating women from the constraints of religion, as they described it. They called upon women to remove the veil and free themselves from outdated restrictions that had bound them for a long time, asserting that the validity of Islam had ended and that it bore no relevance to the issue at hand [3] [6].

The aggressive media campaign initiated by adherents of communist thought against Islam naturally provoked a reaction from religious circles. Clerics employed their sermons to demand that government authorities take deterrent measures against adherents of atheistic thought, whom they accused of seeking to spread immorality and vice through their calls. The religious current in Najaf also adopted a position toward communism, describing it in various negative terms. Through their writings, they criticized Marx’s theory asserting that “the triangle of religion, the state, and capitalism constituted a cooperative circle throughout history,” arguing instead that these elements had historically been contradictory.

Religious scholars urged Muslims worldwide to refrain from being drawn into communist ideology, which they viewed as seeking to disrupt the international order, and called for unity and solidarity to confront what they described as a godless ideology incompatible with all religions and moral values. The religious–communist conflict continued to intensify and deepen over time [26]. One source notes that the final years of the 1940s witnessed the conversion of a number of clerics to communist ideology and the establishment of a distinct current composed of religious figures.

Communists adopted a similar stance toward nationalism, viewing it as an obstacle to achieving their objectives. They justified their opposition by citing fundamental differences between communist and nationalist principles. They described nationalism as an inferior stage that societies must transcend in order to reach internationalism. They further asserted that communism and nationalism were incompatible, as nationalism conflicted with the stage of communist internationalism, and regarded nationalism as a principal instrument of external domination and subjugation [27].

The communists then moved to the second phase of their struggle—the revolutionary struggle—which they initiated by preparing and mobilizing the working class. This was achieved through sharpening workers’ awareness to confront those who exploited them from among the aristocratic class. Communists encouraged the establishment of labor associations and criticized society for its acceptance of social injustice and its detrimental impact on oppressed groups, particularly workers and peasants. They viewed society as divided into two classes: an upper class composed of capitalists and feudal landlords who enjoyed luxurious lives through the exploitation of the lower class, namely workers and peasants, who endured harsh living conditions and poor circumstances [28][29].

Communists began planting Marxist circles among workers and peasants in the cities of Nasiriyah and Basra, subsequently issuing leaflets and statements on national and international occasions to guide the activities of their supporters and direct their struggle. One such leaflet stated:

“The unemployed fill the streets, and their women and children possess nothing to stave off hunger. Has the government thought of aiding them in this bitter cold? Nothing indicates that it has. The

government is merely a gang against the people. O workers, the people have rights that can only be obtained through force—these are the lessons of history. No one can feel the misery of the worker except the worker himself, and no one can know the pangs of hunger except the hungry. Why do we blame those who consume the fruits of our labor, when it is we who encouraged them to steal it?"

These leaflets spread rapidly among workers and peasants with the aim of mobilizing them for revolution and struggle [10] [16][30].

Adherents of communist thought played a significant role in organizing and leading uprisings, demonstrations, and labor and peasant strikes throughout the period covered by the study. Among these was the peasant uprising of 1935, in which communists played a major role in inciting, directing, and leading the movement. They raised the slogan "To the revolution, to arms, to struggle," calling upon the people to support their peasant brethren. They issued a statement declaring:

"This nation has risen like a lion, and thunderous chants resound from the depths: Long live the revolution! Down with colonialism and exploitation."

The uprising ended after the authorities succeeded in arresting its leaders and imprisoning them. Communists also played a role in the strikes that swept the country in 1931 during the economic crisis [11][31].

In 1935, Iraqi communists adopted explicit revolutionary struggle directed against the ruling class, which they accused of disregarding the interests of the toiling classes and monopolizing wealth. This approach was reflected in their mobilization of these classes and incitement to revolt against the ruling regime. Sources indicate that communists played a role in preparing for the Market of Al-Shuyukh movement that erupted in February 1935. This stance was preceded by a similar position regarding the uprising of the Al-Rumaytha tribes, which erupted on 7 February of the same year [28][32].

During 1936–1937, Iraqi communists also played a role in numerous labor strikes, including those of port workers in Basra and oil workers in Kirkuk, as they worked to organize and prepare them for struggle [22][33]. The Iraqi Communist Party continued to mobilize the toiling classes, urging them to revolt against their adversaries and organizing and leading numerous strikes and demonstrations, yet without attaining its ultimate objective[34][35][36][37][38].

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

Iraqi communists did not succeed in reaching the highest stage of communism, namely the establishment of the proletarian state, as was achieved by the communists of Russia and China. Iraq did not constitute fertile ground for realizing communist aspirations, as it lacked the essential prerequisites required for establishing the desired communist state.

The proponents of communism exploited the country's poor conditions—characterized by the prevalence of injustice, poverty, and feudalism—and employed them as facilitating factors for advocating and disseminating their ideology among segments of society, particularly the toiling classes. To a certain extent, they succeeded in this endeavor, as they managed to gain the support of a number of these groups.

Iraqi communists began their struggle by preparing and mobilizing the working class to lead the stage of revolutionary struggle. This preparatory phase was summarized in the dissemination of communist cells among workers, where these cells worked to promote communist ideology by exploiting the poor conditions suffered by workers, particularly their economic circumstances. These cells succeeded in performing their assigned role, as they were able to attract a number of workers and subsequently prepare them to enter the stage of revolutionary struggle.

Iraqi society was not a suitable environment for accepting, spreading, and nurturing communism through the stages required for the establishment of its desired state. These stages necessitated, first and foremost, complete belief in all the ideas and principles of communism, followed by the preparation and mobilization of the toiling classes to lead the stage of revolutionary struggle, which represented the decisive phase preceding the establishment of the proletarian state.

The attempts of Iraqi communists to apply communist principles were confined to two main stages. The first was the stage of intellectual struggle, which aimed at disseminating communist principles, creating a mass base that believed in them, and preparing the toiling classes. This was followed by the stage of revolutionary struggle, which was characterized by the organization of demonstrations, strikes, and uprisings.

The positions and decisions of Iraqi communists changed in accordance with the interests of the Russian Communist Party, without due consideration for the interests of Iraqi society. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the Iraqi Communist Party lacked genuine independence and true national affiliation.

5. References

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