

Iraq Promises Leniency to U.S. Spy Suspect

By William Tuohy
Los Angeles Times

BAGHDAD, Iraq, Jan. 31—

The Iraqi government declared today it will show leniency toward the American engineer who has been under unspecified arrest, and said he might be released within a few days.

"This will show that the government of Iraq is in a position to give pardon, and acts from a position of strength," said Information Minister Abdullah Salloum Samerral.

Samerral said the engineer—Paul Bail of the Iraq Petroleum Company—was arrested about a month ago "while engaged in action which belongs to the nature of espionage."

Investigating Case

The Iraqi government, the spokesman said, has been investigating Bail's case since his arrest and "the nature of his responsibility in this matter."

"The government will take a lenient attitude toward this person," said the spokesman. In a wide-ranging 90-minute news conference the Information Minister also made the following points:

- The Iraqi army and government plan no retaliation for the alleged Israeli air attack on its army positions in Jordan Thursday. Israel denied such an attack took place.]

- The execution Monday of 14 spies, including nine Jews, did not reflect anti-Semitism.
- Iraqi Jewry's elderly

Grand Rabbi Sason Khadouri Jews but also members of the Moslem and Christian faiths. As for worldwide opinion, the spokesman said, "the question of espionage networks is purely a domestic issue."

"The reason they were sent to death was because they were spies, not because they were Moslems, Christians or Jews," Minister Samerral read a statement attributed to Grand Rabbi Khadouri which the Jewish leader will read over television.

"I hereby declare the Jews of Iraq, as well as Moslems and Christians, enjoy absolute freedom to exercise all their religious rights and carry on their business with complete freedom," said the statement.

Another statement declared: "I support and believe the revolutionary court is a just court, and that its hearings were legal."

Government Case

The news conference was held to present the official government justification for the hangings, which brought on worldwide criticism.

The Information Minister said "the trials were properly conducted," and the evidence showed the defendants had spied "on behalf of Israel." Testimony at the trial was "broadcast to public opinion, except those parts bearing on national security," he said.

"Iraq had every legitimate right to bring to trial members of these espionage networks," he said. He said the defendants not only were

"leftist cabinet." Steelhelmeted riot police patrolled streets during the strike.

Syria's ruling Baath Party claimed Thursday that a prominent Iraqi army officer was assassinated in Baghdad last week. It hinted that the rival Baath faction now ruling in Iraq was behind the alleged slaying.

In a statement broadcast over Damascus Radio, the Syrian Baath Pan-Arab command said Iraqi Col. Abulkarim Mustafah Nassrat was stabbed to death at his home by "agents of a tyrannical gang whose reality is becoming more clear to the Iraqis."

Baghdad Radio had reported Nassrat's death as due to a "long illness."

Nassrat's tanks played a major role in the coup that toppled the pro-Communist regime of the late Iraqi dictator Abdul Karim Kassam in 1963.

Months later, Nassrat had a falling out with the coup leaders and was jailed and tortured.

Syrian newspapers Thursday carried a statement by Iraqi students in Damascus, charging their home government with "ultra-rightist and counter-revolutionary" policies.

They called for the overthrow of the present Iraqi regime of President Ahmad Hassan Al-Bakr.

On Wednesday, the Syrian Foreign Ministry claimed Iraqi intelligence officers shot a Syrian diplomat in Baghdad. It demanded an urgent inquiry. Premier Levi Eshkol of Is-

rael promised to spare no effort to ease the plight of Jews living in Iraq and other Arab lands. He made the pledge to a delegation of Jewish immigrants from Arab nations.

Israeli officials Thursday night said they would seek U.N.-supervised evacuation of Jews from Iraq.

Rep. William F. Ryan (D-Ill., N.Y.) introduced a bill in Congress to give special immigrant status to Iraqi Jews who wish to come to the United States. Sen. Joseph D. Tydings (D-Md.) proposed in a letter to Secretary of State Rogers that the United States offer asylum to the Iraqi Jews.

Rail Crash Kills 35 in S. Korea

CHONAN, Korea, Jan. 31 (UPI)—The Blue Dragon express train smashed into another passenger train waiting for a green signal in a blinding snowstorm today. One coach of the halted train sailed into the air, split in two and fell on other cars.

Police said rescue crews digging through the wreckage and snowdrifts on the railroad right of way had recovered 35 bodies. Hospitals said 102 persons were injured.

The engineer of the Seoul bound express train failed to see the signal because it was covered with snow and he failed to put on the brakes, police said.