

A. KUWAIT. — Election of Constituent Assembly. - First Cabinet. - Withdrawal of British and U.A.R. Forces. - Establishment of Arab Economic Development Fund. - Relations with Iraq.

The first elections to be held in Kuwait took place on Dec. 30, 1961, when a Constituent Assembly was elected to draw up a Constitution, the 20 seats being contested by 74 candidates. The electoral law was prepared by the Joint Council, which had been formed by the co-option of 10 leading merchants to the Supreme Council, hitherto composed entirely of members of the ruling Sabah family. The vote was confined to literate males who were over 21 and born in Kuwait, and candidates were required to be over 30; as about half the population are non-Kuwaitis, and soldiers and police were not allowed to vote, the electorate numbered about 40,000 out of a total population of some 321,000. The Constituent Assembly was officially opened on January 20, 1962.

A provisional Constitution came into force on Jan. 7, 1962, pending the introduction of a permanent Constitution drawn up by the Assembly. The Ruler, who became Head of State, was declared head of the executive and legislative branches of the Government, presiding over the Council of Ministers and with power to appoint and dismiss its members and to ratify legislation. The Assembly, consisting of the Ministers as well as elected members, was given the right to legislate and watch over Government activities in addition to drawing up the Constitution. Freedom of speech, the press, religion, and association, and the independence of the judiciary, were guaranteed.

The Ruler, Sheikh Sir Abdullah es-Salem es-Sabah, formed his first Cabinet on Jan. 17, 1962. All its 14 members were drawn from the ruling family except the Ministers of Justice, Social Affairs and Labour, and Public Health, who were members of the Assembly. It was announced on Jan. 28 that a Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be set up and a diplomatic corps formed to represent Kuwait in the principal foreign countries.

Other recent political and economic developments in Kuwait are summarized below under cross-headings.

Withdrawal of British and U.A.R. Forces. The last British troops were withdrawn from Kuwait on Oct. 19, 1961. In a telegram to the Ruler published on the previous day, however, President Nasser stated that he would withdraw the U.A.R. contingent from the Arab League Force in Kuwait, as he had information that "attempts were to take place to make the U.A.R. force, or some of its members, appear to you as if they were interfering in the internal affairs of Kuwait. . . . Some officers and U.A.R. troops were to be provoked, which could have resulted in undesirable complications." He had therefore decided to withdraw them to frustrate "imperialists capable of forgery and fabrications in order to disunite the Arab people." According to unofficial sources, the decision was believed to arise from friction between Egyptian troops on the one hand and Syrians and Jordanians on the other caused by the Syrian coup of Sept. 28, 1961.

The Arab Economic Development Fund. Sheikh Jaber el-Ahmed el-Jaber es-Sabah (Minister of Finance and National Economy) announced on Jan. 6, 1962, the Kuwaiti Government's decision to establish a fund for Arab economic development, with an initial capital of £50,000,000, earmarked from Kuwait's current investments abroad. The fund, which in some aspects would function like the World Bank, would issue short, intermediate, and long-term loans at low rates of interest to finance Arab countries' development programmes. Most loans would be to Governments, but the fund might also finance individual projects. Sheikh Jaber, who had toured the Arab countries during the previous autumn to study their economic needs, became chairman of the board for the administration of the fund. The first loans granted were one of £7,000,000, repayable in 15 years at 4 per cent interest, to the Sudan for railway development on March 26, and one of £7,500,000 to Jordan for economic development projects on April 3.

Establishment of Petrochemical Industry. It was announced on June 7, 1961, that an agreement for the establishment of a petrochemical industry in Kuwait had been signed between the Milan firm Orenzio de Nora, which would import plant and machinery from Italy, the Kuwaiti National Petroleum Company, and the Kuwaiti National Industries Company. Under the agreement a new company, the Kuwaiti Petrochemical Company, was formed with a capital of £16,000,000, the Kuwait Government and Orenzio de Nora each holding 40 per cent of the shares.

Following renewed declarations by General Kassem (Prime Minister of Iraq) of his Government's intention to "liberate" Kuwait, the British Ministry of Defence announced on Dec. 26, 1961, that it had taken "small-scale precautionary measures . . . because tension had been stirred up in the Middle East during the Christmas season." On the following day it was reported that the aircraft carrier *Centaur* had sailed from Mombasa (Kenya) for an undisclosed destination in the Middle East, accompanied by the frigates *Plymouth* and *Loch Alvie* and

three fleet auxiliaries, and that 200 officers and men of the Army and R.A.F., including 170 of R.A.F. Transport Command, had left Britain for the Middle East. The Iraqi Foreign Minister, Dr. Jawad, protested against these measures on Dec. 28 to the Security Council, alleging that they had "created a state of high tension endangering peace and security in the region and threatening the freedom and security of Iraq." Reports in the British Press on Dec. 27 said that the British precautionary measures had been due to intelligence reports of a movement of Iraqi tanks across the desert towards Kuwait, but on the following day it was reported that no further developments suggesting an imminent threat to Kuwait had occurred.

The Foreign Minister of Kuwait, Dr. Sabah es-Salem es-Sabah, protested to the Security Council on Dec. 29 against Iraqi threats, press and radio campaigns, and concentration of military forces; he declared that Kuwait would take all measures to preserve its rights and the security of its people, and asked the Council to "take such measures as would restore the peace and the feeling of security in the area." The Iraqi delegation at the United Nations described the cable from "the so-called Foreign Minister of Kuwait" as "distortions and fabrications," and expressed "the strongest reservations" at the circulation of a message from "an individual with no recognized status at the United Nations."

Kuwait lodged a strong protest with the Arab League on Dec. 31, 1961, against the Iraqi Government's "continued pressure, military concentrations, and continued threats to Kuwait." Kuwait had previously complained to the League on Dec. 17 that Iraq had frozen the money of Kuwaiti nationals in Iraqi banks and had seized 10 Kuwaiti ships in Basra harbour. Dr. Sabah again protested to the Security Council on March 19, 1962, against "provocative declarations" by General Kassem, who, he said, had stated that Kuwait "has become a ripe fruit and we shall gather it at the proper time."

Dr. Jawad had announced in December last that Iraq would reconsider her relations with any State which established diplomatic relations with "the Kuwait Sheikdom," and reaffirmed this position on Jan. 31, 1962. In accordance with this policy, Iraq broke off diplomatic relations on Jan. 18 with Jordan, on March 17 with Japan, on March 18 with Persia, on May 10 with Lebanon, on June 2 with the United States, and on Aug. 8 with Tunisia, because these countries had established diplomatic relations with Kuwait. Iraq's relations with Britain were not affected, as the exchange of Ambassadors between Britain and Kuwait had taken place before Dr. Jawad gave his warning. (Times - Daily Telegraph - Guardian - New York Times) (Prev. rep. Kuwait, 18355 A.)

B. MEXICO. — Agrarian Reform. - Large-scale Land Redistribution to Small Farmers.

One of the biggest agrarian reform programmes ever undertaken in Mexico, involving the eventual redistribution of land to some 2,000,000 small farmers, was announced on July 20 by the Mexican Department of Agrarian Affairs. The land to be redistributed is known as *ejidal* land, consisting of two types of *ejidos*: communal farmland property that the member tills as an individual parcel, or land which he cultivates as a member of a co-operative. About 53 per cent of all farmland in Mexico is *ejidal*, comprising an estimated 25,000,000 acres or more; as a first step in its redistribution, a nation-wide survey of such land will be carried out by the Government, the cost of which will be met from the \$60,000,000 U.S. agricultural loan announced by President Kennedy during his recent visit to Mexico [see 18923 A].

In the collective *ejidos* (the largest part of the *ejidal* system) there is neither parcelling of nor title to land; in the non-collectives there is considerable parcelling, but less than 15 per cent of the cultivators have title to the land they till. The Agrarian Affairs Department pointed out that the parcelling of *ejidal* land, and the awarding of titles thereto, would constitute the essential difference between Mexico's co-operative land programme and those of other countries, e.g. the Soviet Union. While pointing out that *ejidal* land was "the property of those who work it" and not of the State, it was emphasized that it could not be sold, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise transferred by its new owners under the redistribution programme.

The collective *ejidos* were instituted during the presidency of General Lázaro Cardenas (1934-1940), the participants being given certificates of "agrarian rights" entitling them to a share in the production. The lands are mostly situated in the States of Coahuila, Durango, Sonora, and Yucatán. (New York Times) (Prev. rep. 18923 A; 16808 B.)