

new state was not yet, properly speaking, in being. It was all yet still what may be termed the Mandatory Period. The Jews occupied only a relatively small part of the total area of the country. They enjoyed religious, and some degree of political, autonomy, under the High Priest. But they were in no sense independent. They were under Persian rule, and the country was part of the Persian empire, the High Priest being responsible to a Persian satrap who in turn had to answer to his sovereign.

Even when a Jew held a position of local authority as had happened in the case of Nehemiah it was in an unmistakably subordinate capacity. We have not sufficient materials to enable us to determine

the constitutional position of the country in any detail. But it would appear that its status was roughly comparable with that of the American Colonies before the War of Independence. There was a considerable degree of local autonomy. There was generally speaking no interference with religion. There was presumably no objection to organizing local military forces for strictly local purposes. It was possible to develop an active cultural life and an efficient educational system. But the authority of an alien ruler was paramount, his representatives could always impose a veto on plans and

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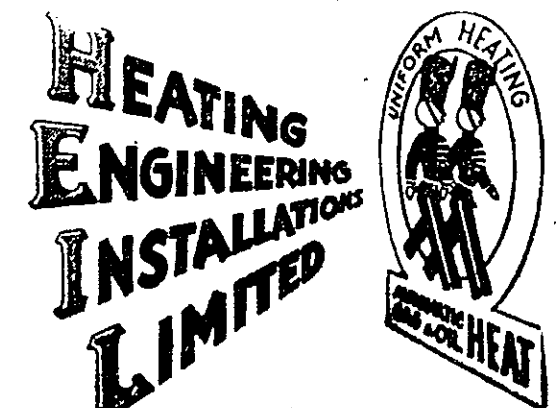
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destruction, there was no control of or voice in foreign policy, and there was heavy taxation for the support of the distant imperial government. After the invasion of Alexander the Great, Macedon took the place of Persia, and the High Priest eventually hastened to do homage to the new world-ruler; many legends clustered around this episode, but they are unanimous in making it clear that there was no talk, thought, or possibility of independence. When the Macedonian Empire broke up, on Alexander's death very shortly afterwards, rule over Palestine was disputed between the Ptolemaic

At length, in 168 B.C.E. the religious persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes drove the more devoted ele-

ment among the Jews to revolt under the Hasmoneans. This was not at the beginning of a movement for independence any more than the American Revolution of the eighteenth century was to be at its early stages. It was originally, like all such movements, "reformist," struggling against abuses (this time in the religious field) while not repudiating political allegiance. After the rebels secured some initial successes, Antiochus' general Lysias decided that it was best to come to terms with them, restored the temple of worship, and permitted the

occupation of Jerusalem and the reconstruction of the Temple: it is this rather than the renewal of political independence that is in fact commemorated in the Chanukah festival which Jews still observe. Nevertheless, the successes against the persecutor had engendered a movement for political independence as well, which was fostered by the

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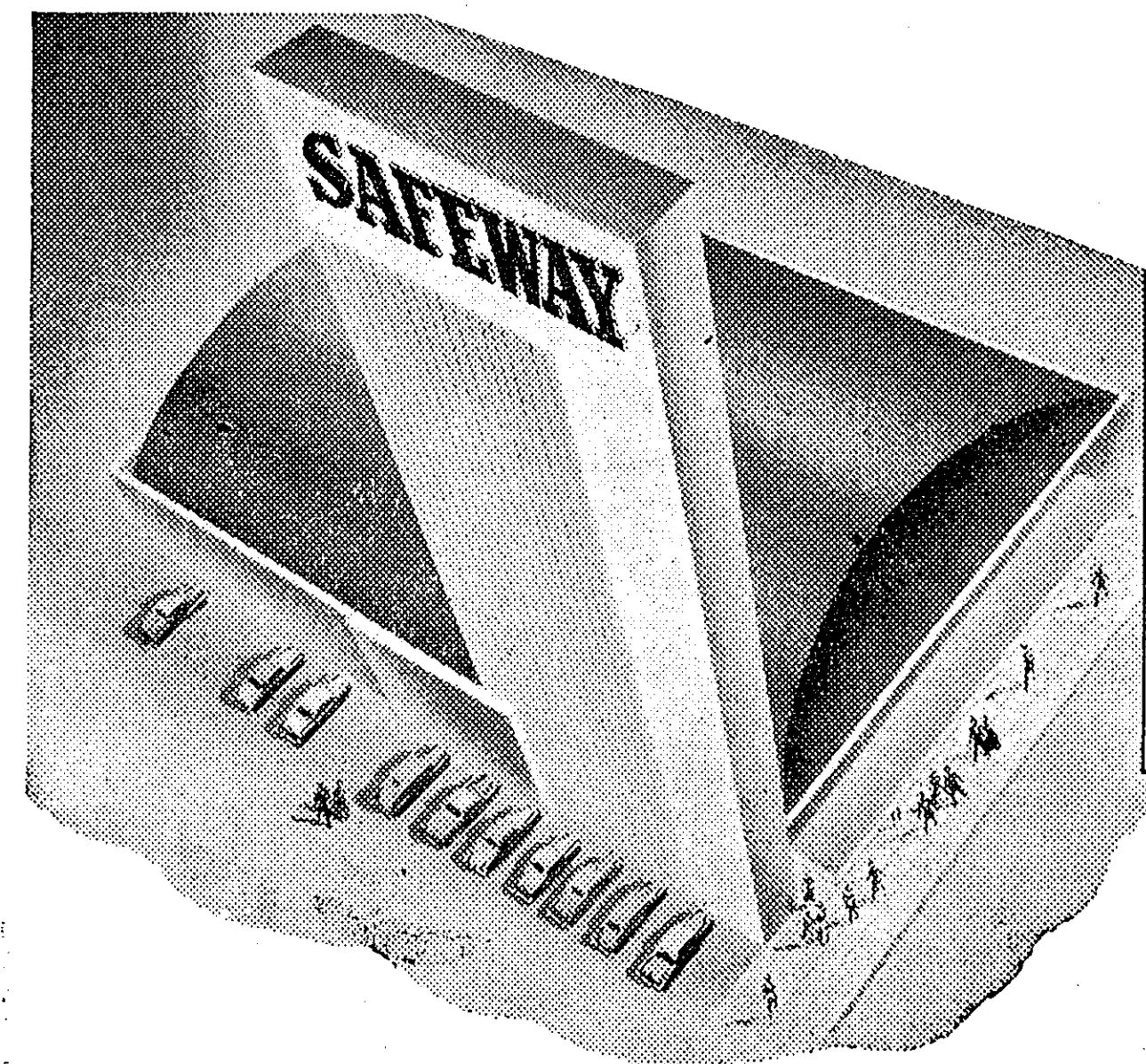
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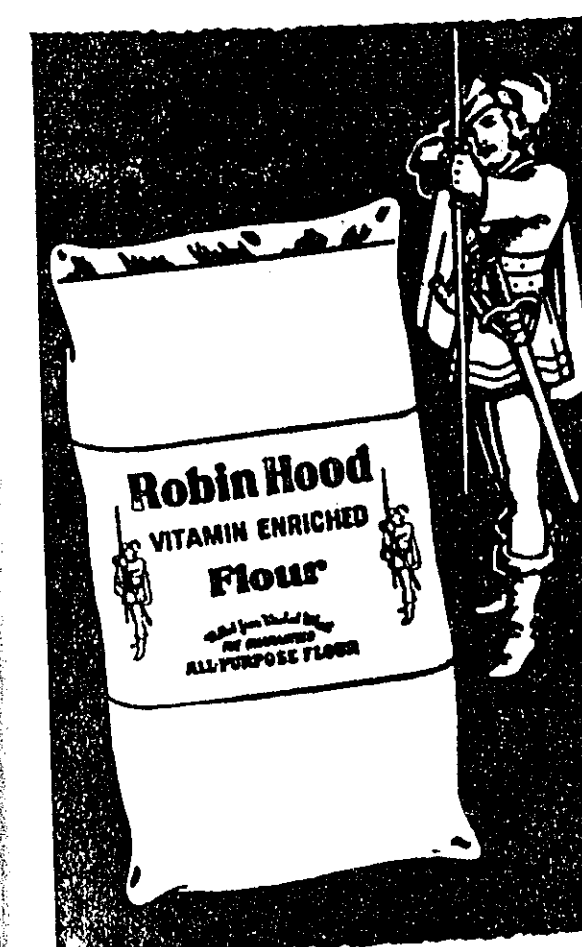
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obvious tokens of disintegration in the Seleucid empire and by the military (and as was later to become apparent, political) genius of the Hasmonean brothers.

In 142/1 B.C.E. Simon, the last survivor of this remarkable group, found himself strong (and his enemies weak) enough to withdraw the titular allegiance that had hitherto been paid to the successive Syrian rulers and to procure the withdrawal of the Greek garrison from the Acra, the fortress which dominated Jerusalem. In the autumn of the following year, a popular assembly in the Court of the Temple confirmed him in the offices of High Priest, Prince, and military leader, henceforth to be hereditary in house. He now began to strike his own coins—the first ever issued by a Jewish state, and considered in that age an attribute of independence.

It is from this time, then, that we may consider that the autonomous Jewish state, brutally destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E., was at last truly reconstituted, after four centuries of travail; and it is this, the Hasmonean state, that may properly be termed the "Second Jewish Commonwealth."

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This happy phrase, which has now entered into general currency, is due to the redoubtable Professor Solomon Zeitlin. To the best of my knowledge, however, he nowhere defined the application of the term exactly. As a result, it is now some-

times very loosely applied, in general parlance, in a fashion which is wholly indefensible. So far as I can judge, it is best and most accurately applied, as I have said, to the period of Hasmonean hegemony, from 142 B.C.E. onwards. Loosely,

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