

DOCUMENT

Memorandum on the Hungarian-Iraqi relations (July, 1981)

HSWP Central Committee
Department for Foreign Affairs

Memorandum

on the Hungarian-Iraqi relations

Diplomatic relations were established with the Republic of Iraq on August 30, 1958. Following the takeover by the Baath Party in 1968, our relations rapidly developed, currently Iraq being one of our most important partners in the developing world.

The difference in opinions concerning certain foreign policy issues (e.g. the methods of settlement of the crisis in the Middle East, the Afghanistan issue, the implementation of security in the Persian Gulf, the issue of Eritrea, etc.) have not caused problems in our relations yet. However, our disapproving views on the Baath Party's policy concerning IKP [the Communist Party of Iraq], our support to IKP, certain articles published in the Hungarian press, TV-programs, the student clashes in 1979, etc. resulted in the negative conduct of the authorities in Iraq, and from time to time, have troubled our political relations. All the problems have been solved calmly, without any break or regression .

In the previous years, mutual high level visits have taken place on a regular basis. Saddam Hussein, the current President of the Revolutionary Commanding Council of Iraq, paid a visit

Copyright 1999-2009 Cold War History Research Center Budapest. All rights reserved.
If cited, quoted, translated, or reproduced, acknowledgement of any document's origin must be made as follows:
„Cold War History Research Center Budapest, <http://www.coldwar.hu>, document obtained by Béla Révész from Magyar Országos Levéltár (MOL) [Hungarian National Archives] Budapest: MOL, 288.f. 32/1981/60. ő. e.; translated by Levente Gajdócsi; with the support of the Cold War International History Project, Washington D.C.“

to our country in May 1975. In October 1977, Comrade György Lázár paid a visit to Iraq, then Taha Ma'aruf, Vice President visited Budapest. There have been exchanges of messages between the highest rank leaders of the two countries. Our party and government delegation participated in the celebrations of the Baathist Revolution in Iraq in 1978 and 1980.

At the HSWP's initiative, direct party links were established with the Baath Party. An agreement on cooperation was signed in Budapest in 1973 and two-year working plans regulated the development of relations. In spite of fostering it by the Baath Party, we did not renew the working plan that expired at the end of 1979, but during talks between the representatives of the HSWP and the Baath Party in July 1980 a verbal agreement was reached on the methods of maintaining the party relations. IKP does not object the close cooperation between HSWP and Baath Party. There is a close cooperation between the HSWP and IKP. Recently, the Baath Party seems to recognize this tacitly.

The trade unions, the cooperative movements and the women's associations have their own relations, too. Comrade Aladár Földvári participated on the 6th Congress of the Iraqi General Union of Trade Unions in 1980; we hosted the (Baathist) Chairman of the Iraqi National Students Union, the Chairmen of the Union of General Cooperatives and Iraqi Farmers' Union. An agreement on the cooperation between the women's unions valid for 3 years was signed in January 1981 and in March, the Chairwoman of the General Women's Union paid a visit to Hungary. Out of the mass organizations, only youth organizations lag behind of the general trend.

Since the Iraq-Iran war, the Iraqi party has devoted much attention to the Hungarian relations. In October 1980, Naem Hamid Haddad, the President of the National Assembly, member of the FPT [Revolutionary Commanding Council] member of the National and Regional Directorate of the Baath Party, General Secretary of the Progressive and National Front, Deputy Prime Minister, acting as a personal representative of Saddam Hussein visited our country and conveyed his president's written message to Comrade Pál Losonczi. Then in November, the message by Taha Jassin Ramadan to Comrade György Lázár was delivered by

the Iraqi Foreign Ministry's chief of protocol. In February 1981, the Minister of Industry and Minerals, the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the General Director of the Iraqi TV and Radio was hosted. The cultural working plan and the agreement on the cooperation of Radio, TV and sports were signed. The talks aimed at the confirmation of the agreement on a consular convention – signed in 1978 -- proved to be unsuccessful with the consular delegation visiting Budapest.

Iraq is our biggest trade partner among the developing countries. The exchange of goods has been dynamically improving since 1972; private contracts for investment goods and special products worth of 400 Million \$ are valid for cash payment, occasionally with 10-30% advance ratio starting in 1974. The exchange of goods was 239 Million \$ in 1980, that lags behind the peak level of 291 Million \$ in 1979. Our country has met its contractual obligations even in times of war.

The composition and price level of our export is favorable. Machine products form 50 % in recent years. New ways of cooperation have been established: Chemokomplex-OKGT has been doing commission oil-well drills, a bus assembly plant has been operating in Iraq since 1974. Currently, approximately 350 workers are working on these tasks in total.

Practically speaking, we only buy oil. The Iraqi party urges the receipt of other raw materials and industrial products.

There are extensive financial relations between the two countries, too. Iraq has large deposits at MNB [Hungarian National Bank] for years. As of March 11, 1981, the deposit was 350 Million \$. (Before the war, the Iraqi deposit was around 500 Million \$, it is our interest to halt the decline.)

A joint committee was set up to enhance the cooperation between the two countries in 1973. This committee did not work in the last two years, because the Iraqi party always diverges from our proposals to hold a meeting. Agreements on Veterinary hygiene and Fishery were

signed in 1977. The agricultural products form 15-20% in our export. In the last decade, over 500 Iraqi specialist received training in Hungarian agricultural institutions.

Cooperation in water conservancy matters started with the creation of a Joint Committee based on the Agreement on Technical- Scientific Cooperation in 1971.

Our cooperation on the field of technical-scientific issues are governed by the two-year working plans based on the agreement signed in 1971. Within the framework of the agreement, 35-40 specialist work in Iraq and more than 100 Iraqi specialist receive a secondary-level agricultural training yearly.

The Agreement on Healthcare was signed in 1977.

The Agreement on Cultural issues was signed in 1959 and working plans have governed our cultural ties since 1960. The working plan for the years of 1981-83 was signed in Budapest on March 2, 1981. The educational relations are especially important. So far, more than 60 Iraqi citizens received degrees at a university or a college in our country and currently 55 scholarship-holders study at a higher educational institute. We have been receiving candidates to a scientific degree since 1975. So far 12 Iraqi have received higher scientific degrees and currently 56 persons receive such training (out of which 23 paying full cost). The new cultural working plan estimates that we provide training at a higher educational training for 10 Iraqi citizens at our cost on a yearly basis, for additional 14 persons at the Iraqi party's cost. Out of candidates, 8 persons can start their studies at Hungarian cost, 10 persons can start their studies at Iraqi cost yearly.

In the last period many exchange of exhibitions and art ensembles could take place. The musical cooperation has started as well, currently 16 Hungarian musicians and music teachers work in Iraq.

The agreement on cooperation between MTA [Hungarian Academy of Sciences] and the Iraqi Scientific Research Foundation signed in 1979 forms the basis of the scientific cooperation. There is only little advance on the area.

The Agreement on Information was signed in October 1961, however, the signing of a working plan has not taken place since 1973. The agreement on cooperation between MTI [Hungarian News Agency] and the Iraqi press agency functions well. Following years of negotiation, the agreement on cooperation between the radio and TV companies was signed in March 1981. The relations between the journalist associations stagnate. The visit of the Iraqi Minister of Information and Cultural Affairs has been postponed for years.

An agreement on cooperation in the field of sports was signed in 1975 but the execution of the agreement has not taken place. Considering realistic opportunities for cooperation, a Protocol on a 2-year cooperation was signed in March 1981.

An agreement on Tourism was signed in 1970, governing the cooperation between tourism bodies. 20 thousand Iraqi visit our country yearly. The development of tourism and the expanding number of students and specialists justified the signing of an agreement on legal assistance in 1977.

At Comrade György Lázár's invitation, Taka Jassin Ramadan First Deputy Prime Minister paid an official visit to Hungary between March 18 and 20, 1981.

József Vince, Vice President of OVH [cc. National Office for Water Conservancy Matters] and Ottó Herkner, Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade visited Iraq.

Karim Mahmoud Hussein, Iraqi Minister of Youth and Sport Affairs was hosted in April 1981.

Budapest, July 1981.