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Report to the German Democratic Republic on Discussions with Saddam Hussein

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Summary:

In this report, the Soviet Union informs the East German government that during their talks with the Iraqi delegation, led by Saddam Hussein, the Soviets stated that the Arab states must first end the policy of separate deals in order to resolve many Middle East problems. The Soviet Union addressed the need to stop imperialistic and anti-Arab policies in the Middle East.

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Confidential

REPORT

In addition to published material, we would like to confidentially inform the leadership of the German Democratic Republic of the contents of the discussions with the Assistant Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council of Iraq, Saddam Hussein, that took place during his visit to Moscow on 11-12 December [1978].

During the discussions with Hussein, who had asked for an audience in Moscow in order to exchange opinions with Soviet leaders on the situation in the Middle East, we maintained the agreed-upon line of the socialist community, adopted during the Moscow Conference of the Political Consultation Committee of the member countries of the Warsaw Treaty.

On our part, we affirmed the Soviet Union's unvarying and principled course in Middle Eastern affairs, which takes into consideration the rightful interests of all parties involved in the conflict. It was emphasized that the situation in the Middle East is such that, in order to turn the matter toward a fair settlement through the collective efforts of all interested parties, one must first bring an end to the policy of separate deals. This would unblock the way to an all-encompassing resolution to the problem of peace settlement on the basis of a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Arab territories occupied in 1967 and the guarantee of the legal rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including their right to self-determination and the establishment of their own state.

The Iraqis were told directly that rapprochement between Iraq and Syria would be of particular importance in the currently evolving situation in the Middle East. We gave a high mark for the decisiveness demonstrated by the leaders of both countries in opening a new chapter in Syrian-Iraqi relations and undertaking joint action in the struggle against imperialist schemes in the Middle East. It is our deep conviction that it is precisely Iraq and the other progressive countries, along with the Palestine Liberation Organization, that must undertake the role of leaders in joining the forces of the entire Arab world in the struggle against the anti-Arab policy of separate agreements -- their unity is the central driving force in this struggle.

In this regard, we noted the serious importance of the decisions by the leaders of Arab countries and states at the Baghdad conference, which rejected the capitalist deal of Camp David. We view these decisions as an important achievement by the patriotic forces of the Arab world and a sound foundation for the further development of the struggle for a fair settlement in the Middle East.

In addition, we expressed the view that the imperialist forces led by the USA and their protégés in the Middle East will further continue to undertake efforts to split the Arabs and draw in other Arab countries into its separate backstage machinations. Right now, the main object of their pressure is Jordan. Thus, it is essential that everything possible is done to strengthen its position on the platform of the Baghdad conference decisions. It is important to continue work with such countries as Saudi Arabia, using certain positive opportunities presented by their positions on the settlement of the Middle East question.

The talks with S. Hussein demonstrated that Iraq's positions are showing signs of a more flexible approach to a Middle East settlement. Particularly noteworthy is that the Iraqis have on this occasion expressed the vital and immediate importance of achieving the withdrawal of Israeli forces from all Arab territories occupied in 1967, though they did decline to include such a statement in the joint communiqué. To our direct question, whether Iraq is continuing to favor the liquidation of Israel as a

country, S. Hussein replied that at the present time, Iraq believes it is most important to liberate the captured Arab lands and restore the legal rights of the Arab people of Palestine. The Iraqi leadership emphasized its intent to work toward further improvement of relations with Syria and use the basis of the decisions of the Baghdad conference to work toward a closer union of all forces of the Arab world that reject the capitalist policies in Middle Eastern affairs.

On our part, it was emphasized that the just struggle against the consequences of Israeli aggression, Iraq and other Arab countries can always count on the constant support of the Soviet Union and the countries of the socialist community.

During the talks with S. Hussein, the Soviet leaders also affirmed Soviet Union's readiness for a multi-faceted development of Soviet-Iraqi relations on the firm basis of the Agreement on Friendship and Cooperation. We emphasized that the effort toward mutual understanding on essential political questions is the very foundation on which we must build cooperation between both countries.

In addition, we openly expressed our concern over the repressions carried out in Iraq against communists and over the breaking of the serious and constructive cooperation that had been achieved between the IKP [Communist Party of Iraq] and the PASV [Ba'ath Party] within the parameters of the progressive national-patriotic front. We pointed out that such steps are not in the interests of Iraq itself and serve only to help the imperialist and reactionary enemies of the Arabs.

In response, S. Hussein tried to maintain that Iraq is not persecuting communists as such, but, in general, all persons who, irrespective of party affiliation, are carrying out political work in the army, which is prohibited by law. In the end, he promised that he will try to hold talks with the leadership of the IKP on this question.

Overall, we give a positive evaluation to the results of S. Hussein's visit to Moscow. The talks with him helped Iraq take on more realistic positions in the questions of Middle Eastern settlement and in the activization of its efforts against the policy of separate agreements.