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**Report on the negotiations of Hungarian Deputy
Foreign Minister Róbert Garai in Iraq between 11
and 13 December 1984**

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Summary:

This report on the negotiations between the Hungarian deputy foreign minister and top Iraqi politicians in Baghdad in 1984 shows Iraqi tensions with Iran and concern about USSR military aid to Iran.

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R E P O R T

on Iraqi consultations

I conducted consultative discussions in Baghdad between 11 and 13 December 1984. My negotiating partner was deputy minister Taha Yassim Al Ali. The negotiations were attended by competent senior officials of the Iraqi ministry of foreign affairs and H. Ali Al-Anbari, head of the department of the ministry of commerce. I was received for a longer negotiation by first deputy Prime Minister and minister of foreign affairs Tariq Aziz, member of the Iraqi Revolutionary Commanding Council. The meeting was also attended by Zoltán Pereszlényi, our ambassador to Iraq.

Tariq Aziz stressed the following: Iraq and Hungary are connected by close and friendly ties in various areas of party, state, trade union and other types of cooperation. President Saddam Hussein greatly appreciates the achievements of Hungary and is proud of his friendship with Comrade János Kádár. He regards Comrade Kádár as an outstanding leader of high reputation.

They think it is important to conduct open and honest negotiations with friendly nations of the world. They devote a lot of attention to negotiations between the two foreign ministries. They especially appreciate the fact that the negotiations will take place at a proper time at the initiation of the Hungarian side.

The Iraqi negotiating partners including T. Aziz, have also emphasized the following:

In the present situation Iraq is mostly concerned with the war with Iran. The issue of the war requires a lot of time and energy. The great efforts on the part of Iraq are not only justified by the fact that the war is fought with a neighboring country but also by the fact that the conflict has an impact on the whole region. At the same time, the ongoing war may have unforeseeable consequences and become the source of real dangers. Therefore, the Iraqi side devotes special attention to providing information on the developments both in international organizations and in the course of negotiations with friendly states. A clear understanding of the situation may play a fundamental role in the future developments of the war. Everybody should see that the war between Iraq and Iran is not a war between two isolated countries. If it were,

the conflict would long have been resolved , for one participant in it, Iraq has no territorial claims over the other and would be ready to accept a peaceful solution.

Iran was a true capitalist country, part of the capitalist world with a huge territory, lots of resources and a large population. At the same time it suffered from several different “diseases”: The leaders of the country, personally the shah openly aspired to win hegemony in the region while doing nothing in order to eliminate the backwardness of the country. There is no developed industry and infrastructure in Iran. Even the huge revenues deriving from the production of 6 million barrels of oil per day were not enough to develop the country properly, for the leaders spent most of the incomes on armament rather than on development. In the meantime it turned out that they were mistaken to believe that they can maintain modern armed forces with up-to-date technology when 80 percent of the population is illiterate. Problems were continuously accumulating on the ground of severe backwardness, and internal tension was increasing.

Therefore “we socialists” – said Tariq Aziz – evaluated it from the beginning that has occurred in Iran in 1979 was not a revolution but an “explosion” that resulted in the coming to power of even more reactionary forces than the Shah’s regime had been, headed by Khomeini.

[...]

He [Khomeini] insists that life lost in a fight with the enemy shortens earthly sufferings and brings with it the happiness of heavens. At the same time a shorter life allows for fewer mistakes and thus heavenly existence can be even more happy and forgivable.)

Tariq Aziz referred to Khomeini’s speech delivered on 11 December in which he proclaimed a war not only in the region but against the whole world. He disregards international norms and depreciates the achievements and the role of other nations. For example he states that in Asia there are only two powers, Iran and Japan, and since Japan is not a military power, the door is open for Iran to assume a leading role in the region. They also want to bring their internal problems out to the frontline across the borders.

Thus Khomeini is ill, surrounded by similarly ill people. Iraq believes that the world should not cultivate any relationship with them. For the moment the assault is launched at Iraq, and Iraq is ready to stop it. But if Iraq falls, order will be upset in the whole region.

Anyway, Iran is simply incapable of organizing its international relations on a healthy basis. Its views in the guise of religion derive from a dark age whose essence is opposition to anything that is foreign. This is the reason why Iran is anti-Soviet and anti-American at the same time. However, in the present situation it badly needs foreign relations, for it has to sell its oil for money and arms.

When I remarked that foreign minister Velayati represented a position in certain international issues that was quite close to Hungarian views at his last visit to Budapest Tariq Aziz made the following comment: he personally feels sorry for Velayati for he is in an impossible situation. He has to represent an outdated age in a way that the everyday interests of his country should also be enforced. Therefore he speaks very differently from what the official position of the Iranian leaders is when he is abroad. As a result his words lack any real value, because they do not reflect the position of the regime. He called upon Velayati at the General Assembly of UN to

publish the speech he had just delivered in Iranian newspapers, and if he could do that, his words could be given much more credit.

According to Tariq Aziz Iraq is not sensitive at all as to who maintains a relationship with Iran. Its only intention is to call the attention of collaborators to Iran's "illness." Control over this sick power is in the interest of the East and West alike. In Iraq they know it well that the essence of the turn in Iran was evaluated in many different ways all over the world. He conducted private discussions on this issue with comrade Ponomarev in the Soviet Union, with minister Malmierca in Cuba and with other politicians.

So Iran is ill, and people – regardless of their political affiliation and conviction – should fight against Iran purely on humanitarian grounds. This was the case with Nazism too. Hitler was a sick man. He felt entitled to rule the whole world and advocated the superiority of the German nation. And he was not alone in this. Millions and millions of "ill" people followed him who viewed ordinary crimes as honorable acts. At that time Germany was much more developed both economically and socially than Iran is now. Iran has totally alienated itself from the rest of the world.

Tariq Aziz and the other Iraqi negotiating partners emphasized that maintaining relations with Iran increases the dangers of the Iranian policy. Even today Iran is already a hindrance to a rapprochement between the East and the West, and the war in the Gulf may easily lead to the Third World War. Therefore much more care should be devoted to the analysis of the Iranian "phenomenon" and the relationship with Iran should not be evaluated purely on the basis of bilateral relations. They pointed out that Iran can continue with the war only if it can raise more money and buy more arms and other goods. The war makes economic growth impossible, and as a result tensions increase and Iran is pressed to continue the war. All this might lead to an internal explosion in Iran. If that happens, international tension will also increase significantly, for neither the Soviet Union nor the USA can just sit back and do nothing.

According to Tariq Aziz there is no good solution for the Iranian "phenomenon" – what is going on in Iran today can only be changed either through a socialist revolution or a liberal takeover of power.

The Iraqi partners also said that they did their best to explain the situation and clearly expressed their views to leaders of the Soviet Union too. Otherwise they maintain very good relations with the Soviet Union and the Soviets support their fight among other things by the supply of arms. Iraq deems it necessary to maintain good relations with other socialist countries as well and never fails to acknowledge their interests. They are quite satisfied with the development of their international relations. As the most recent development in their foreign policy, they mentioned the fact that Iraq had renewed diplomatic relations with the United States after clarifying their respective positions openly and precisely. In their view it is important to recognize that the attitude of Iran is more dangerous than the fight between the Arab countries and the Zionist state, for it is possible to predict the potential developments of the latter. But who can talk sensibly with Khomeini or exert an influence him? There is hardly any force in the world now that could bring Iran under control. Iraq is now fighting Iran with the force of arms, and others should do at least as much as not to provide food supplies for them. Tariq Aziz also said that on his part he has a hard time understanding how Hungary can work together with Iran and how Hungary can plan its relations with Iran in advance for the next ten years. At the same time the

Iraqi partners stressed: they believe the Hungarian leaders view the Iraqi position in the right way, as is reflected by well-developed relations between the two countries. However, they wanted to know whether any concrete measure were taken besides diplomatic efforts in the issues raised by Iraq at the last visit of the Arab League in July 1984, such as tightening up economic relations, refrainment from supplying arms and buying Iranian oil.

T. Aziz underlined that Europe had a key role in the peaceful resolution of the war between Iraq and Iran. This role is related to Europe's historical role in defending civilization. It is primarily a moral obligation not only in the case of the Iraqi-Iranian war but in many other regions of international crises. Europe is morally obliged to take a position in the issue of the war and handle the problem in accordance with its real significance. Iraq feels responsible for world peace and security and has therefore accepted every initiative and resolution for peace. Thus, European countries, regardless of their social system, have to put pressure on Iran politically, economically and in any other possible way. Iraq fully understands and appreciates European interests, but pressure can be put on Iran without violating these interests. Potential economic losses can be compensated for in the long run. The potential dangers of escalating the conflict and its international impact must be taken into consideration. They are convinced that their Hungarian friends can understand and appreciate the Iraqi position.

As for the situation of the Palestine Liberation Front the Iraqi partners said the convening of the conference in Amman was necessary purely in the interest of ensuring the operation of Palestinian institutions. The idea was to convene all members of the Council but as a result of external intervention it became impossible. Arafat had no choice but to convene the conference in Amman with a partial but majority participation. Several Palestinian organizations that did not attend the conference have so far refrained from making hostile statements, so there is still a possibility for dialog. When the groups under total Syrian influence are considered, the situation is different and the distance between positions is greater. Citing Palestinian views they said that besides Israel's aggression in Lebanon Syria's action in Tripoli also played a determinant role in the political liquidation of the PLO. Iraq's view is that the Palestinian organization should not be broken into parts and there is no need for an alternative PLO. Apparently that is what Syria intends to achieve.

As for the Gulf Cooperation Council they said that they view it as one of the aspirations of Arab countries for unity. The activities of the organization are aimed at planning a common future for Arab countries. Iraq has its own views and opinion about the organization but they do not wish to express them at this point. Military coordination is also part of these aspirations for unity, aimed at preventing intervention in their domestic affairs and defending their respective countries jointly from the danger that Iran means in the region. This is much better than requesting foreign intervention. In the case of member states of the Gulf Council it has to be considered that historical and traditional reasons may make the establishment of relations with socialist countries difficult, but steady efforts will surely bring success. Iraq supports the efforts of socialist countries in this matter.

As far as bilateral relations are concerned, my Iraqi partners used praising words. T. Aziz stressed that they are ready to develop cooperation with the People's Republic of Hungary on the basis of friendship and confidence and are willing to sign an agreement even for the duration of ten years. [...]

Budapest, 22 December 1984