

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

Iraq proposes renewed U.S. ties

At an EIR seminar, spokesman Salah Mukhtar said that if the U.S. shifts gears, 'we are ready.'

For nearly 14 years, the United States has not had diplomatic relations with Iraq, the Middle East oil-producing country with the most uncompromising commitment to internal development on the basis of a full-fledged industrialization program. On Feb. 1, an audience of 125 Texas and Middle Eastern businessmen attending a seminar in Houston, Texas sponsored by the *Executive Intelligence Review* heard an official Iraqi spokesman detail for the first time how bilateral relations may be resumed—and the potentially enormous benefits that would accrue.

In a speech entitled "Iraq in the Next Two Decades," Iraqi United Nations press counselor Salah Mukhtar explained that under the direction of the ruling Baath Party the Iraqi nation is committed foremost to the development of its agricultural and industrial potentials.

To achieve these potentials, Mukhtar noted, Iraq needs industrial technology. This need could be the basis of a mutually advantageous relationship between Iraq and the United States, since the United States "is one of the most advanced countries in the world. The American and Iraqi people need each other," Mukhtar proclaimed. "We are ready to deal with Americans."

But, Mukhtar insisted, this desire on Iraq's part is contingent upon a rethinking by the United States of its priorities in the Middle

East. "We in Iraq don't think of commerce as directing politics," he noted. "We believe commerce follows politics."

Specifically, the Iraqi spokesman indicated, the U.S. must re-evaluate its historically unbalanced attitude favoring Israel's policies in the Middle East. This attitude has induced an embedded anti-Arab bias in the American population, Mukhtar claimed, which must be reversed before amicable relations can be developed. "We are not asking the United States to take a stand against Israel," he said, "but its support for Israel should not be instituted against the interests and rights of Arabs."

Should the United States hold firm in its past attitude, Mukhtar stressed, Iraq would be prepared to abstain from diplomatic relations "indefinitely."

But if, on the contrary, American citizens exert enough pressure to bring about a change in Middle East policy, then the Middle East could rapidly become the prime export market for U.S. industry and manufactures, and Iraq could become an especially important trading partner, since it "will be the last country to exhaust its oil resources."

Because public addresses by Iraqi officials in the U.S. have been rare in the past few years, the Mukhtar presentation was regarded with special interest in Houston. His comments were featured in a

Feb. 2 piece in the *Houston Chronicle*, the city's most influential daily. The piece, which appeared prominently on the paper's international page, was entitled "Iraq Prepared for Diplomacy with the U.S."

The *EIR* seminar, whose overall theme was "The Middle East: A Trillion-Dollar Peace," also caught the attention of top politicians in Texas. Governor William Clements, an influential figure in the Republican Party nationally, sent a message to the meeting expressing his regrets that he could not attend and wishing the participants success in their deliberations.

On the podium, Mukhtar was joined by Dr. Jamil Diab, honorary consul-general of the Kingdom of Jordan for the West Coast of the United States, and Robert Dreyfuss, Middle East editor of *EIR*.

In his presentation, Dr. Diab reviewed Jordan's strategic position as a component of a regional axis of nations also including Iraq and Saudi Arabia that is committed to stabilizing the Middle East region through development. He then outlined a series of recommendations for expediting U.S. business dealings in the Arab world.

Dreyfuss's presentation detailed the strategic issues now facing the Middle East region, and analyzed the policy fight in the new Reagan administration. He reserved particular criticism for Secretary of State Alexander Haig, which catalyzed a lively discussion in the question-and-answer period.

Dreyfuss also stressed to his audience that "America owes a debt of gratitude to Iraq" for its role in helping bring about the collapse and imminent disintegration of the mullahs' dictatorship in control of Iran.