

# TOWARDS THE FUTURE

ANATOLY REPIN

"Iraq" is the Arabic for "bank," "riverside." It is associated with two "vital arteries"—the rivers Tigris and Euphrates, whose banks have been settled since times immemorial. "Rafidain" (two rivers) is one of the most popular words in Iraq. The country's biggest state bank is called "Rafidain." The Order of Rafidain is one of the highest government awards.

Today's Iraq is continuing the important political and socio-economic reforms carried out over the last few years. Nationalization of the country's main asset, oil, the establishment of the National Progressive Front, the progress made in the peaceful solution of the Kurd problem—all this provides the basis for the further progressive development of the country.

Iraqi-Soviet relations, sealed by the Treaty on Friendship and Co-operation signed five years ago, are broadening. A CPSU delegation took part in celebrating the 30th anniversary of the ruling Arab Socialist Renaissance (Baath) Party recently. This writer was one of a group of journalists also invited to attend the celebrations.

## Oil-Soaked Land

Iraq's oil resources are estimated at more than 5,300 million tons, and gas resources, at more than 660,000 million cubic metres.

Thousands of years before man learned to extract them, oil and gas found their way out to the earth's surface. Near the road leading from Kirkuk to the oil fields there is a small hollow where an eternal flame—eternal in the literal sense of the word—is burning. Specialists believe that it has been burning there for no less than 100 centuries. The ancients worshipped this fire and held it sacred. In the times of the Babylonian kingdom, officials collected a special tax from fire worshippers who visited this place.

"So you see, oil and gas started bringing profit to the state quite a long time ago," our guide laughed.

Oil well No. 1. It was from this well that the first Iraqi oil gushed forth on October 14, 1927, marking the beginning of commercial oil extraction. A sign attached to a meshed fence says that the well functioned till June 1940. Now it is a sort of

outdoor museum piece... What a wealth of valuable raw material Western concerns have pumped out of this and dozens of other wells! The Iraq Petroleum Company, for instance, extracted an estimated 800 million tons of Iraqi oil, netting thousands of millions of dollars. Iraq itself got only a fraction of this sum. But that is now a thing of the past. The IPC has been nationalized for five years now. The last of the foreign companies that operated in Iraq was taken over by the state in December 1975.

Iraq is developing its own oil industry. According to the secretariat of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), Iraq extracted 113 million tons of the "black gold" in 1976. It occupies fourth place in the Middle East after Saudi Arabia, Iran and Kuwait.

Iraq is well aware that oil resources are not inexhaustible. To increase oil extraction at a reasonable rate, taking into account the world market situation, to make rational use of the oil export earnings—these tasks are always in the focus of the Baghdad government's attention. Last year the export of liquid fuel brought Iraq about seven thousand million dollars.

Minister of Information Tareq Aziz, member of the regional leadership of the Baath Party, told us that the profit from oil sales is spent chiefly on speeding the country's economic and social development, raising the Iraqi people's material and cultural standards.

## A Canal Near Baghdad

The main emphasis in industrial development is placed on the promotion of the state sector. Its factories already account for more than 70 per cent of the Republic's total industrial output. There is a marked trend towards diversified production so as to lessen the dependence on oil extraction as the only source of income. In restructuring its national economy and in working for its more harmonious development Iraq has the co-operation of the Soviet Union.

More than a hundred industrial, power, irrigation and other projects have been or are being built in Iraq with the assistance of the Soviet Union. One of the biggest engineering projects of the new Iraq is a 37-km canal built near the capital,

connecting the Tharthar Lake with the Euphrates.

We drove along the motor road that runs beside the canal. I had seen construction on this project when it started, literally from scratch, in the spring of 1972. I had also been here in 1975, when work was in full swing, when explosions rent the air and huge quarry excavators worked around the clock biting into the hard rock. Now I found the place unusually quiet—the construction work had been completed last year, and the lake water started flowing along the canal to the Euphrates.

The gates of the water intake are raised by a mere 15 cm. Out of the 85,000 million cubic metres of the reservoir of the lake, the water rushes into the narrow opening.

"There's no need yet to open the gates wider," Hassan Roukabi, an engineer, shouted into my ear above the roar of the water. "If we open them wide, the water will run down the canal into the Euphrates at a rate of 1,100 cubic metres a second."

We climbed up to the water intake platform. It commanded a view of an enormous blue expanse of water spreading as far as the eye could see. I noticed a beach to my right. Ever since the motor road reached the lake, it has become a favourite week-end spot for Baghdad residents in summer. Bluish-green barley fields could be seen here and there. But generally, the landscape here is a monotonous yellowish-brown, with practically no vegetation.

"The lake water is rather salty and is now fit only for watering the barley—the lake used to be stagnant, you see," Hassan Al-Raouf, an engineer, explained. "It formed after a small canal was built from Tigris above Baghdad to the Tharthar Depression. By drawing off the floodwaters, the lake saved Baghdad from inundation for a time, but did not remove this danger completely. By the seventies, the depression was already full to overflowing, and if another flood like that of 1948 had occurred, the safety of the capital could hardly have been guaranteed any longer. It was therefore decided to direct the water from Tharthar to the Euphrates with all speed. Another important task was to improve water supply to the irrigation systems of the valley of the Euphrates which carries less water than the Tigris."

"But what about the saltiness of the water? Doesn't this endanger the Euphrates?"

"On the whole, no. The salt content of the Tharthar water is not so high, and makes it unsuitable only for irrigation in the canal zone proper. But this, too, is a temporary phenomenon—now that there is a normal flow of water in the lake the salt content will be reduced to a

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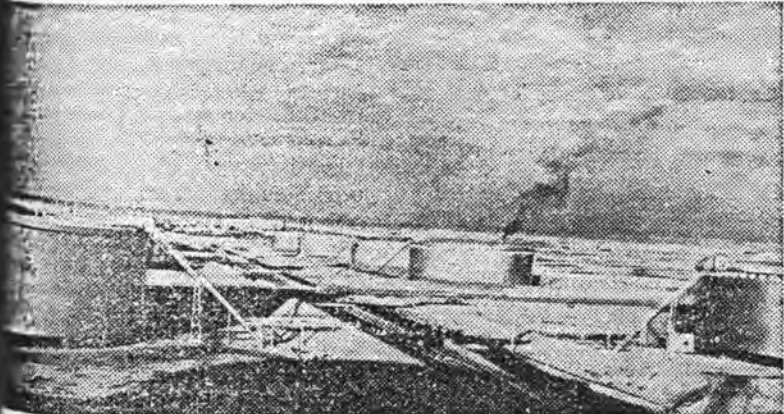
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 an Al-Raouf smiled, "this will  
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 channel have already been dug.  
 ew specialists are arriving at the  
 ed section of the project.  
 atoly Zolotukhin, the chief Soviet  
 ert, will soon be returning home  
 Tashkent. He has spent five years  
 dding the Tharthar-Euphrates



At the nationalized oil field of Kirkuk.  
 TASS photo

and sharing his vast engineer-  
 experience with his Iraqi  
 nds. The government of Iraq has  
 arded him the Order of Rafidain.  
 n these five years, besides the  
 al, we have helped the Iraqis to  
 up a large construction organiza-  
 . Anatoly Zolotukhin said. "It  
 equipped with the latest machi-  
 y and employs a big army of  
 ed workers, foremen and engine-  
 . It is now equal to new and still  
 er tasks."

**Winning the Kurds**

We traveled to Erbil, the adminis-  
 trative centre of the Northern (Kur-  
 d) Autonomous Region, by heli-  
 copter. Before he landed the craft,  
 the pilot described a few circles over  
 the city so that we could take a bet-  
 ter look at it. The centre is en-  
 circled by a medieval fortress wall  
 within which spreads a town of  
 straight streets, flat-roofed one-  
 story houses and tiny yards enclos-  
 ed with Oriental clay fences. From  
 above we could see what these  
 places were intended to conceal from  
 the invaders' eyes: clothes-lines, open-  
 air kitchens, goats and hens. There  
 were barefoot children all over the  
 place.  
 At the Erbil city stadium we  
 witnessed a demonstration held to

wheat, a worker adjusting the  
 mechanisms of an oil derrick....

The aftermath of the long war in  
 Iraqi Kurdistan is still felt, however.  
 The trial of a group of saboteurs  
 who committed a number of sub-  
 versive acts in Sulaimaniya and  
 made attempts on the lives of the  
 governor and of the director of the  
 local public education administration  
 was held in April. Earlier there had  
 been attacks on police stations, and  
 several people, including foreign  
 specialists, had been kidnapped. In  
 this situation the presence of troops  
 in the north of the country is under-  
 standable. On our way from Erbil to  
 the resort of Salah el Din we passed  
 army lorries and saw military  
 posts stationed on hilltops and at the  
 crossroads. Some of the Western  
 correspondents in our group photo-  
 graphed the military almost non-  
 stop.

But we saw other things too—new  
 houses, schools and medical centres  
 being built in the villages, roads  
 being repaired and a new tourist  
 centre going up in Salah el Din. In  
 1977 more than 100 million Iraqi  
 dinars were allocated for the con-  
 struction of various projects as part  
 of the programme of the economic

development of the Kurdish Auto-  
 nomous Region.

For the ordinary Kurd autonomy  
 means the plot of land allotted to  
 him under the agrarian reform, an  
 uninterrupted supply of drinking  
 water, native-language instruction at  
 school for his children, and medical  
 care. When we were in Iraq, the  
 executive council (the government)  
 of the region decided to step up  
 anti-unemployment measures and  
 ruled that all business correspon-  
 dence in the local organs of power  
 be conducted in the Kurdish lan-  
 guage.

"We regard the peaceful and  
 democratic solution of the Kurdish  
 problem as a victory over the con-  
 spiracy of imperialist forces against  
 Iraq," Ali Hussein, a leader of the  
 Baath Party organization in the  
 Kurdish Autonomous Region, told  
 us. "From the very beginning the  
 Kurdish national movement joined  
 hands with the Arab liberation  
 movement in anti-imperialist strug-  
 gle. In the last few years, however,  
 the forces of imperialism interfered  
 in Kurdish affairs. By various  
 means, covert and overt, they man-  
 aged to split the Kurds. Some were  
 drawn into separatism, into armed  
 confrontation against the Iraqi  
 Republic. The imperialists' aim is to  
 split and weaken the country, to  
 divert it from the struggle against  
 the imperialist monopolies."

As recently as April, Moustafa  
 Barzani, the leader of an abortive  
 uprising in the north of Iraq, now  
 living in America, told a Reuter  
 correspondent in Washington that  
 U.S. intelligence service had backed  
 the separatist movement and sup-  
 plied firearms and artillery to the  
 rebels.

The consolidation of Iraq's pro-  
 gressive forces is largely conducive  
 to positive changes in that country.  
 In 1973, the National Progressive  
 Front was formed on the basis of an  
 agreement reached between the  
 Arab Socialist Renaissance Party  
 and the Iraqi Communist Party. This  
 unity imparts steadiness and stabil-  
 ity to the government's policy.

"The activities of the Front are  
 of a constructive character," Rahim  
 Adjina, member of the NPF Secre-  
 tariat and member of the Central  
 Committee of the Iraqi Communist  
 Party, told us. "The ruling Baath  
 Party and other patriotic forces  
 have joined it to carry out pro-  
 gressive reforms together. On the  
 basis of the Front agreement, we  
 now have two of our representatives  
 in the government. The Front's pro-  
 gramme covers the stage of national  
 democratic revolution. Its fulfilment  
 will enable the country to proceed  
 further along the road of socialist  
 orientation."