

IRAQ AT WAR

The New Face of



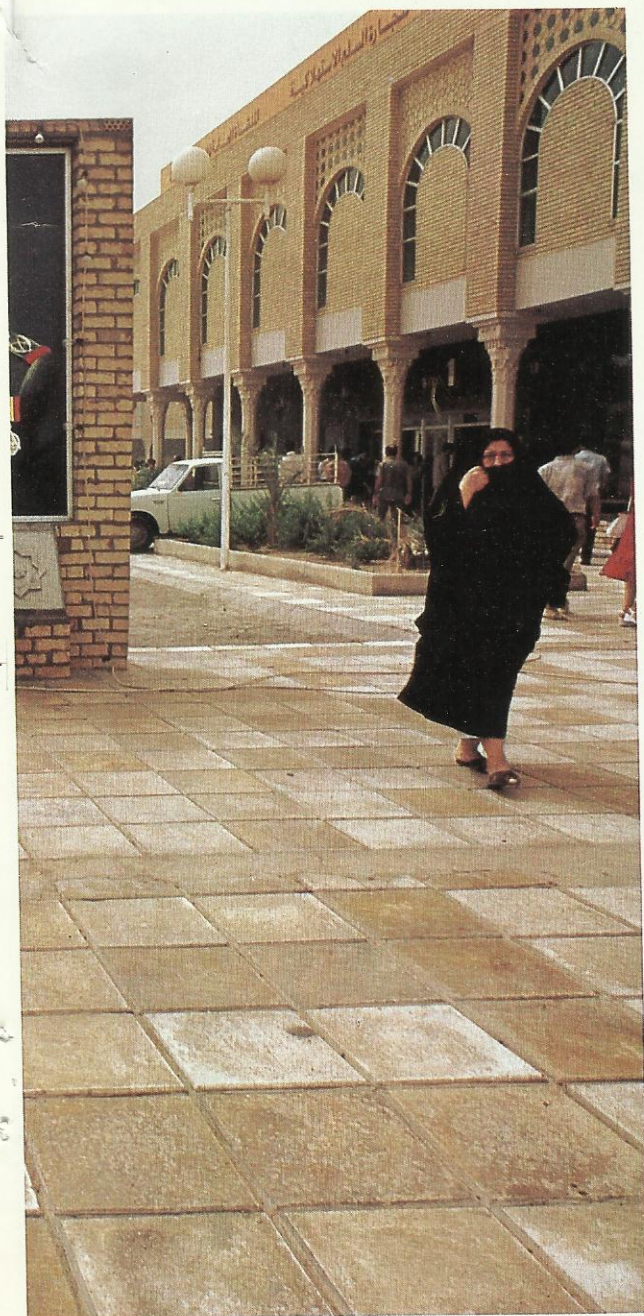
Displaying a high profile, President of Iraq Saddam Hussein maintains a heroic image with a profusion of larger-than-life posters, such as this one in front of a new shopping complex in Baghdad, the country's capital. Flush with construction

Baghdad

By WILLIAM S. ELLIS

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SENIOR WRITER

Photographs by STEVE McCURRY



financed by oil riches, the city exudes a sense of prosperity that masks the grim reality of war with Iran.

THE FRONT LINE of the fighting is less than a day's drive away, yet there is a heavy sense of well-being in this city of myth and legend. The breath of war—that grim rale of agony—wafts here as something spent, like a sea wind too long upon the land.

Now in its fifth year, the conflict between Iran and Iraq has often been in the shadows of world events, although few, if any, such two-combatant struggles have been so costly. Iran's dead may number 500,000; Iraq's perhaps 70,000. The war is costing the latter country close to one billion dollars a month.

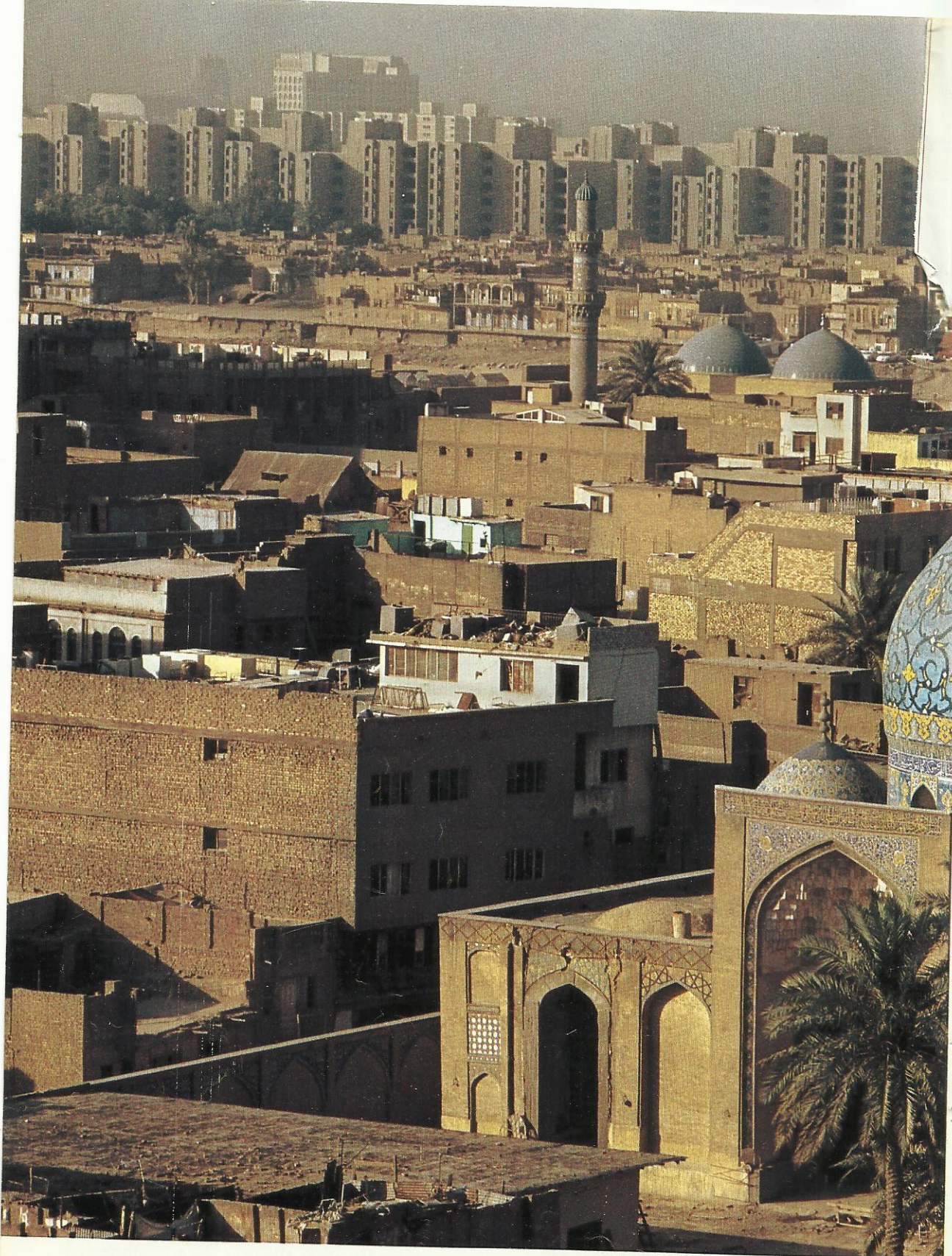
Among other things it is a war of sacred law versus secular, a nasty kidney-blow fight in which child conscripts and outrageous tactics, such as the use of poison gas, have been employed.

For all of that. . . .

Turn back to the summer past when Baghdad, the Iraqi capital, was frequently lashed by winds and desert sands. At such times it was possible to walk the streets and, blinded by the mustardy haze, let the mind's eye search out the trails of history and legend. But when the air cleared to exorcise the ghosts of Sindbad and Ali Baba, there was this to be seen: Baghdad rising on the shoulders of the great River Tigris with a brazen presence of peace and prosperity.

As recently as 15 years ago Baghdad was patched with shantytowns. The sanitation facilities were antiquated, most of the roads unpaved. There was not a single first-class hotel in the city. Drained of its passions, Baghdad had only its name with which to evoke the sweetness of Arabian nights.

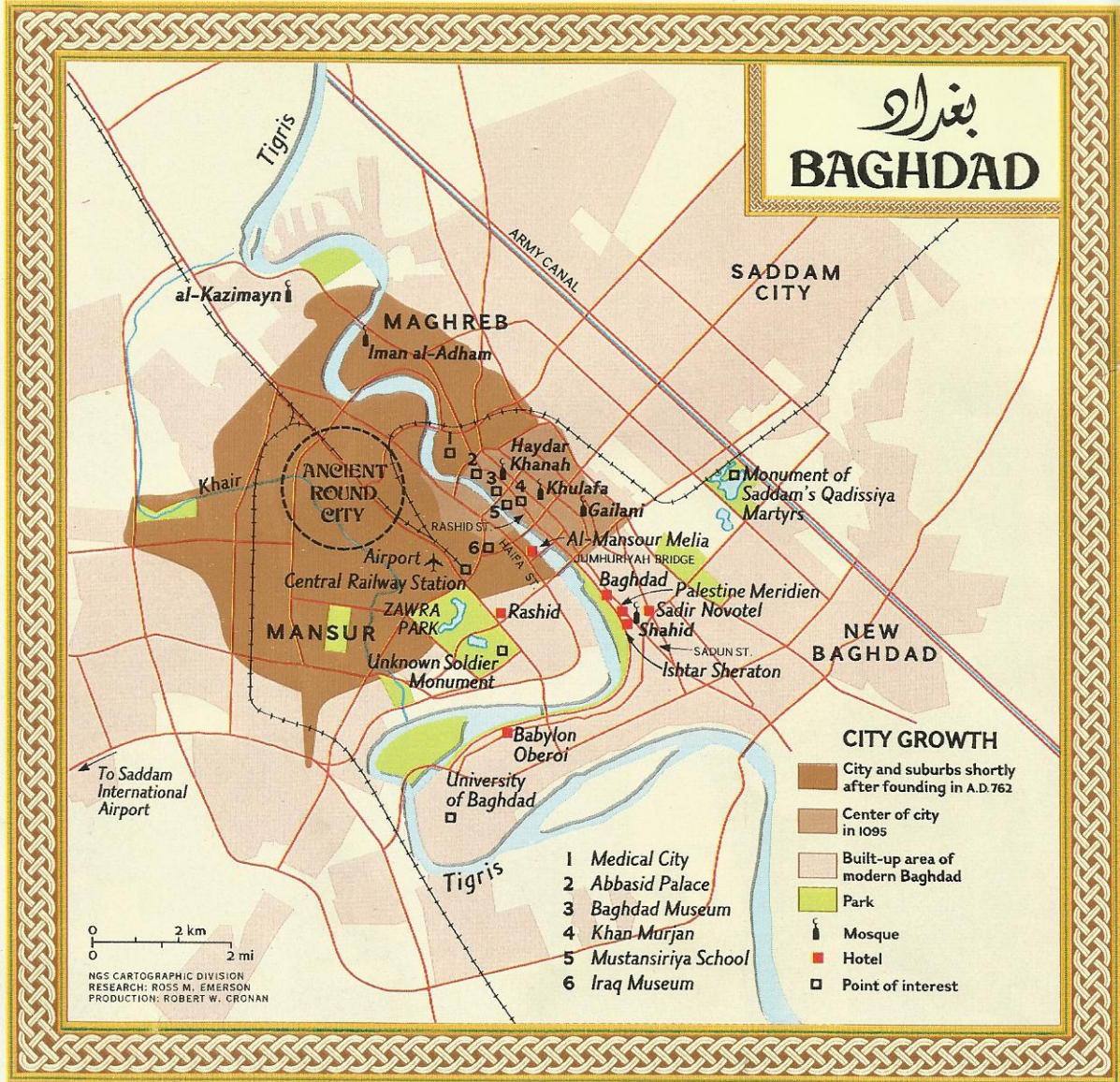
Elsewhere in Iraq, oil was being drawn from in-ground reserves of an estimated 100 billion barrels. When the decision was made to rehabilitate Baghdad, costs were of minor concern. By 1980, the year the war started, exports of oil had reached 3.2 million barrels a day, earning 25 billion dollars in that year



Islam's jewels, turquoise-tiled domes and minarets of mosques like the 19th-century Haydar Khanah, foreground, adorn the left bank of the



Tigris. Islam thrives in Iraq, with 55 percent of the population following the Shiite branch of Islam. About 40 percent are Sunni Muslims.



CITY OF CALIPHS, Baghdad was founded in A.D. 762 by Abu Jafar al-Mansur, who commanded 100,000 workmen to build a round city. It shortly outgrew its walls and by the tenth century was among the world's largest metropolises, rife with riches and knowledge. But a Mongol invasion in 1258 presaged decline and centuries of destruction. Today's Iraq was created by the British after World War I from a remnant of the Ottoman Empire. The country holds oil reserves of some 100 billion barrels. Although the Iraq-Iran war has halted exports through Syria and the Persian Gulf, construction of proposed pipelines through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Turkey (right) should help assure the flow of oil abroad.



alone. Some of the world's best architects and engineers were invited to Baghdad and commissioned to design and build a capital city worthy of a nation aspiring to leadership of the Arab world.

"The major development started in 1979, and by 1981 Baghdad was one huge construction site," said Husham al-Madfai, deputy mayor of the city. "We were working against a deadline. We wanted things to be ready for the meeting of the nonaligned nations scheduled to be held here in 1982. But the meeting was switched to another country because of the war."

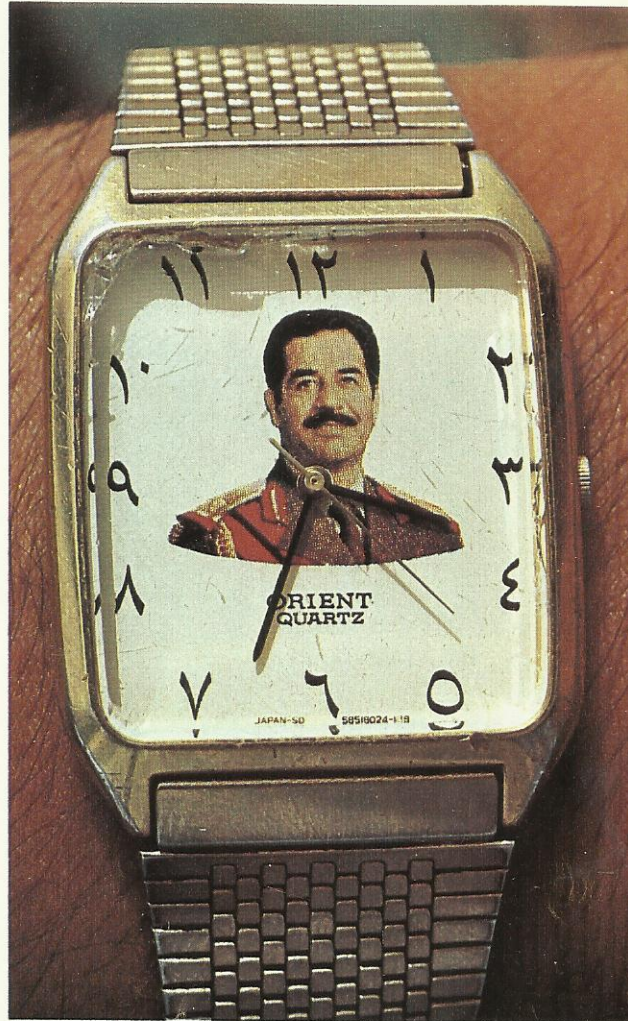
Although jilted, Baghdad still wore its wedding gown. And so the round walled city founded more than 1,200 years ago by the Abbasid Caliph Abu Jafar al-Mansur is today a wartime anomaly, a gathering of luxury hotels and block after block of modern apartment complexes. Hundreds of miles of new sewer and water lines have been laid in the ground, while above, a network of superhighways traces around and through the city. There is a new airport. There are new government buildings. Twelve bridges now cross the Tigris along its course through the center of Baghdad.

Monuments of grand scale, rich and cryptically symbolic, have been erected in Baghdad, along with many lesser works depicting some of the fanciful tales from Baghdad lore. On Sadun Street, for example, a traffic circle carries as its centerpiece a huge bronze with a scene from "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves" as its theme. For good or ill, depending on the artist, the street art is plentiful, and none more so than the omnipresent portrait of Saddam Hussein, President of Iraq. Mustached and toothy, he beams from billboards, from the walls, from storefronts, even, alas, from the faces of wristwatches.

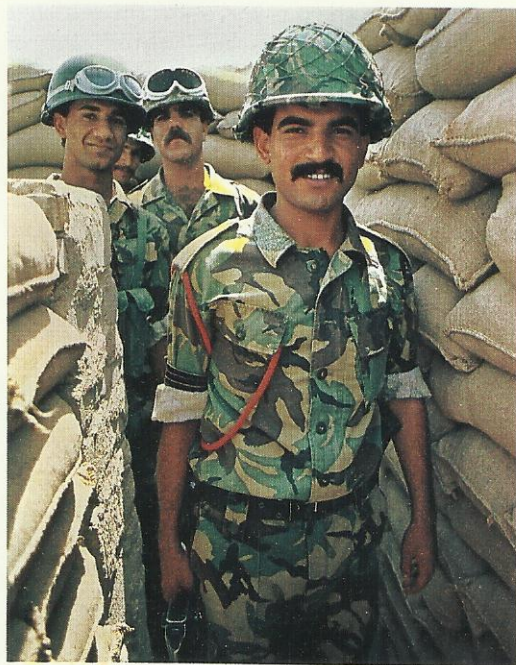
You see few posters on the streets exhorting the citizenry to greater wartime efforts. Iraqis in Baghdad are reluctant to speak of the war. They seem to have shut it out of their minds and certainly out of their city. Outside observers are taken to the front in a bus, there to walk through a trench, eat with the troops, and be briefed on the terrible fate awaiting Iranian forces massed on the border should they decide to launch an offensive. It is all programmed and carefully timed, not unlike a pit stop at Daytona.

And when the bus leaves for the return to Baghdad, the war is left behind, barred from the city by a wall of insouciance.

THE NEW FACE of Baghdad has gone largely unnoticed by the outside world because access to Iraq by foreign journalists is tightly controlled. And most who come are here to cover the war. Also, unlike Cairo, this is not a city with a



As time goes by, Saddam Hussein's rule by personality seems to grow, enlarged by the conflict with Iran. His nightly TV appearances often feature visits to the front. President since 1979 and leader of the ruling Arab Baath Socialist Party, Saddam pushes a mix of socialism and Arab nationalism.



Fifteen minutes at the front

I SWELTERED in the heat of Baghdad; it must have been at least 110°F on that summer day last year. I was squeezed into a bus with 60 other journalists. We just sat. And sat.

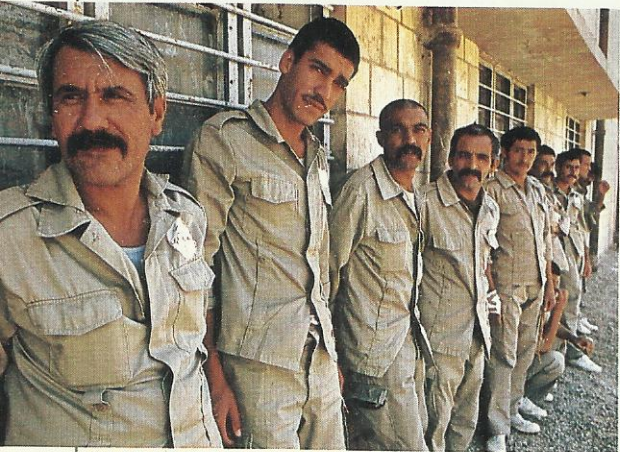
Finally, after three hours of waiting, we left for Basra on the southern front. The spokesman from the Ministry of Information had said we would travel to the best places for picture coverage and could photograph everything. But not quite yet. We weren't allowed to photograph anything from the bus. "No pictures. No pictures," they kept saying.

Eight hours later we arrived at Basra. Although we could walk around town, pictures were forbidden. The next day we drove by gun emplacements and barbed wire to the trenches, where things were quiet. I raised my camera to photograph a soldier standing in a trench, and he said, "No pictures." I turned and saw a TV crew filming another group, so I photographed it. Dressed in crisp new uniforms (**top left**), the soldiers stood around doing nothing, laughing at the foreign photographers. After shooting a few frames, we were told to leave. I had spent a day and a half in a hot, dusty bus to cover 15 minutes of a non-event. We couldn't photograph any guns or tanks—just one trench.

Earlier I had visited Zawra Park in Baghdad (**left, middle**), where the government exhibits captured Iranian tanks, U. S.-made and sold to Iran when the shah was in power.

The government also arranged a tour of a POW camp at Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad. It's a showplace, obviously. We went to the kitchen to watch meal preparation. The prisoners played football for us. These fellows (**left**) tell you how great they are treated and how evil Ayatollah Khomeini is. It seems a practiced routine.

—STEVE McCURRY



character that invites attention, or embraces visitors with warmth. In truth, Baghdad is a city with great age but little soul.

It may be that too much of its historic fabric has been shredded by all the new construction. Ihsan Fethi, a professor of architecture at the University of Baghdad, is working to save what is left.

Fethi began his campaign 15 years ago to preserve some of the old traditional houses of Baghdad. He was raised in such a dwelling, and he remembers it as a cool and pleasant private world.

"Each house was built around a courtyard," Fethi said. "It was inward-looking, sealed off from the street on the ground floor except for a single door. It was cool and shaded, with pipes on the roof to trap the breezes and circulate them all the way down to the cellar. Now the houses look outward, have big windows, and therefore heat. The privacy is gone, so they build high fences. That's twisted logic, in my opinion."

It was the custom to sleep on the roof of the house on summer nights and to retreat to the cellar for the afternoon nap. "Even in a humble house the cellar was rather elaborate," Fethi said as we walked through Bab al-Shaykh, an old district of the city he had gotten designated as a preservation area. "As you can see, the houses are works of art." Almost all had overhanging balconies and oriel windows with closely woven screens of carved wood (*mashrabiyyah*) to allow viewing out on to the street but not in.

Now there were craftsmen from India restoring the houses—replacing the rotted timbers, painting over old, good stains of family life.

What cannot be brought back is the covenant of the neighborhood. That is gone forever. The neighborhood coffeehouse, where the men gathered to smoke and play dominoes and dared to host seditious thoughts—that is gone. They go now to the community swimming pool. Wash once unfurled to the wind is now toasted dry in machines, and there is talk in Baghdad of static cling.

"The change in life-styles is of great concern to us," said Deputy Mayor al-Madfai. "There are social problems involved, but the fact is that the people need more and better housing, more paved streets, better water supplies, and so on. There is the danger that

Baghdad will lose its character, but we are taking measures to combat that. That is why we have preservation areas and why we insist that our history, our heritage, be reflected in much of the architecture."

So it is that one of the new hotels has an exterior resemblance to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

IT IS STILL POSSIBLE to find vestiges of the Baghdad that was the richest city in all the world, the Baghdad with Mongols at the gates and caliphs in their harems. The old suq is still there, spilling out of a labyrinth of arcades and narrow streets. A great din arises from the place in the market where coppersmiths beat out designs on the metal, and in another section there are bins filled to overflowing with spices and herbs. There is frankincense, and kohl with which to darken the eyelids. And there is saffron, bright orange and pungent.

Elsewhere in the suq there is an old man who has for sale a pocketwatch with the word "Constantinople" on the face, a legacy from the Ottoman occupation of Baghdad. He winds it with a key, and the tick is soft but strong, like rain falling on a lake.

"How much?" I ask.

"Many dinars," he replies.

"How many?"

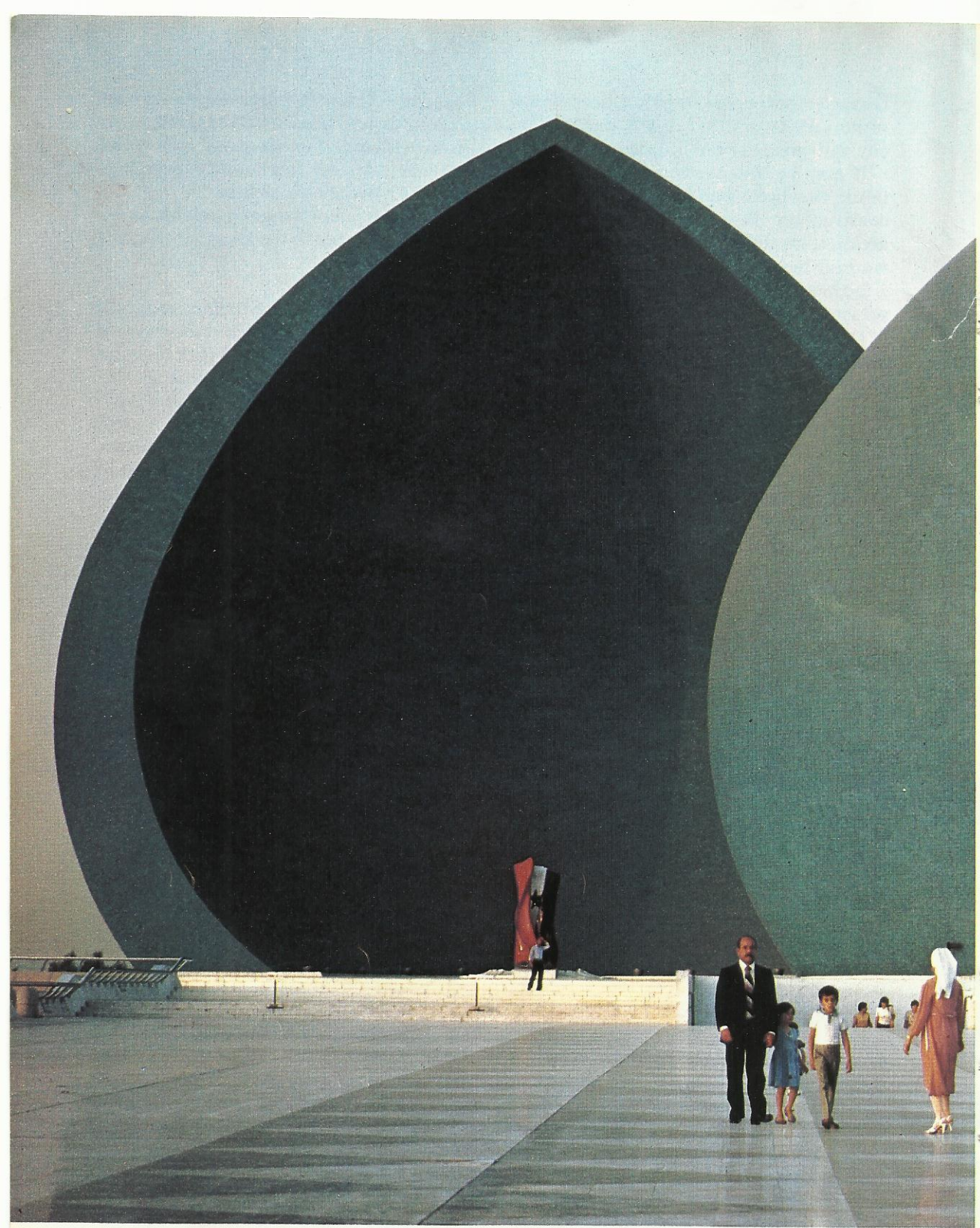
"One hundred twenty-five [\$400]."

"That's a lot of dinars."

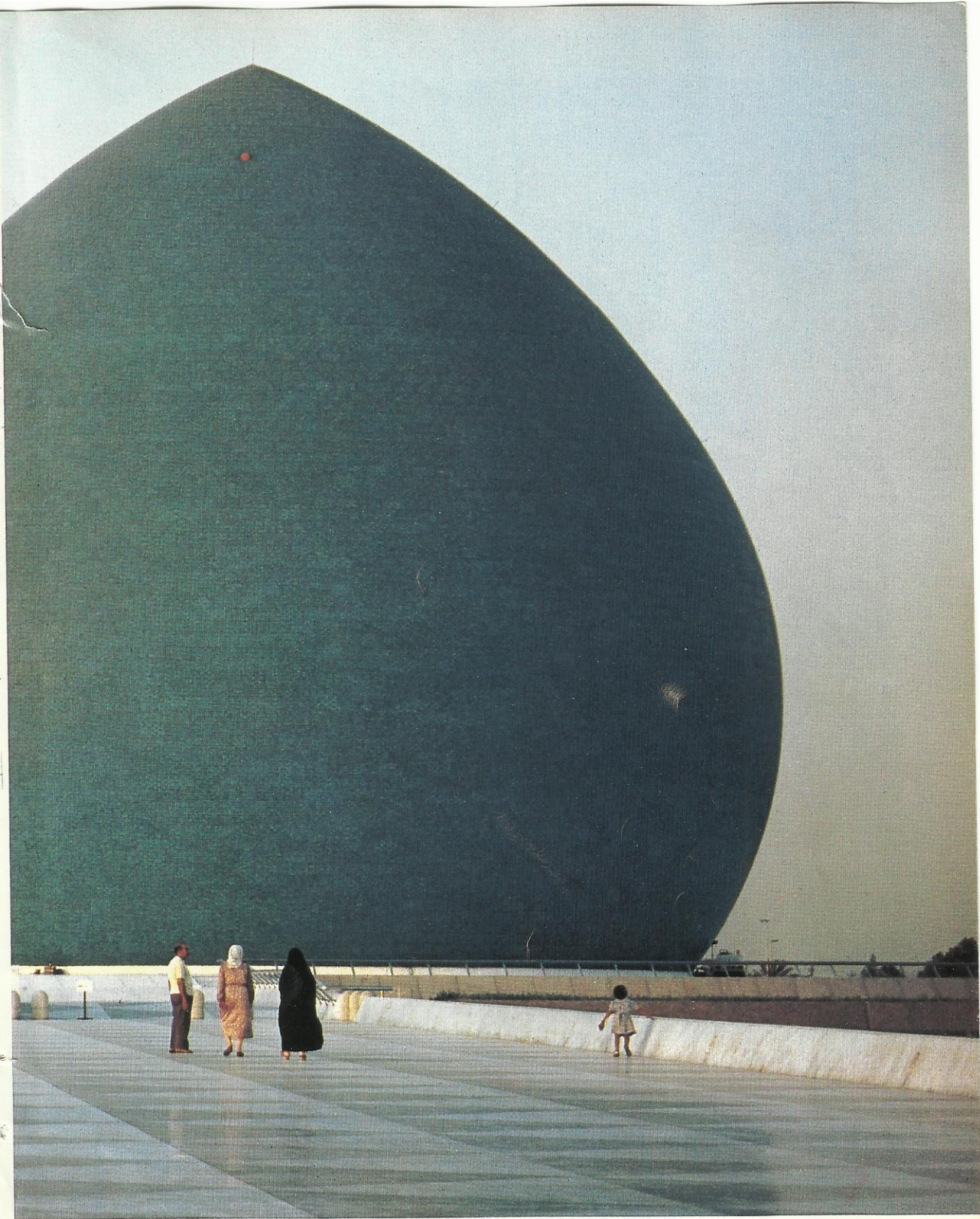
"I told you."

The suq will survive the severe modernization of Baghdad, as will the 13th-century Mustansiriya School, a seat of learning of wide renown during the time of Abbasid rule. Erected in the same era and still standing is the Abbasid Palace. The Khan Murjan, a building of architectural distinction and significance, was built a century later. Designed for use as an inn and a place where traveling merchants could stable their horses, the Khan Murjan has a central hall more than 45 feet high (page 108). There are crenellated arches of brick, and perforated windows through which sunlight filters.

The Khan Murjan now functions as a restaurant, and, as restaurants go in Baghdad, one of some merit. For nearly 200 years the building was in disrepair, with water standing waist-high in the hall (flooding of the Tigris and heavy seepage from the high



Expressing monumental grief and pride, this 150-foot-high tiled dome, split in half, commemorates Iraqi soldiers killed in the war with Iran. Known as the Monument of Saddam's Qadisiya Martyrs, it also honors the memory of an A.D. 637 battle when Arabs defeated the Persians, thereby conquering land that lies in present-day Iraq. The modern war, begun in September 1980



when Iraq invaded Iran, pits ideologies and territorial claims of secularist Iraq against Iran's religious-fundamentalist government. It has claimed the lives of an estimated 70,000 Iraqis and 500,000 Iranians and wreaked havoc with the economies of both countries. Despite funding from other Arab nations, the war drains nearly one billion dollars a month from Iraq's treasury.



New York on the Tigris, Baghdad and its building boom have attracted top-rate architects from Europe and the United States, who have reshaped the skyline. New construction includes (right, clockwise) the Haifa Street Housing Project, a community of nearly 2,000 high-priced units; the 312-room Ishtar Sheraton Hotel, one of five luxury hotels built in the past five years; and Housing Project Number 10, one of several new developments that will provide low-rent living space.

Baghdad's development plan honors the past and allows for renewal of some of the city's centuries-old homes. With government backing, two preservation zones have been identified and several hundred houses restored to their former splendor.

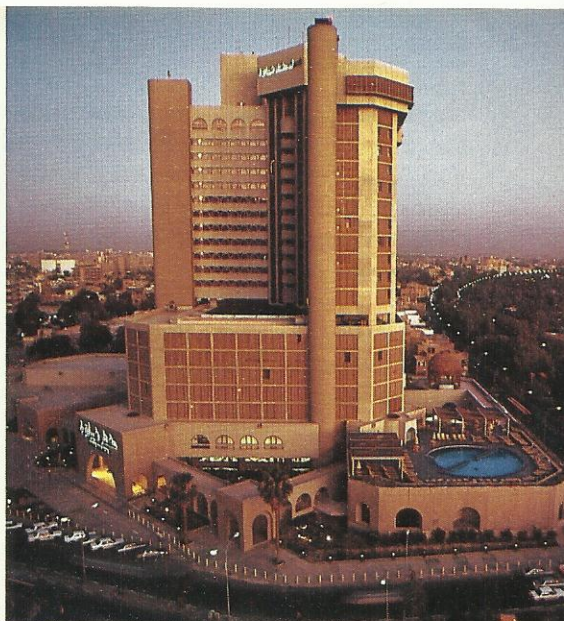
Electrical engineer Ghadah Mahuk (left, at right) discusses plans with a colleague in front of a project on Abu Nuwas Street. Iraqi women, among the most progressive in the Arab world, constitute 25 percent of the country's work force and are guaranteed equality under Baath Party doctrine.

groundwater table plagued Baghdad before the construction of canals and other control devices), but now the floor is dry and covered with handsome carpets.

It gets on toward midnight before Suad Abdallah appears on the stage of the Khan Murjan, and when she does, the somber mien of the Iraqis at dinner takes fire. She is a singer—no, more than that; she is an entertainer whose empathy with the audience is

so immediate and complete as to set emotions stampeding like gazelles on the plain.

As she sings, men leave their tables and come onto the stage to shower money over her head. Children bring her flowers, and the great soaring hall of the Khan Murjan is as it might have been 600 years ago, when travelers from Damascus and Persia and other parts of the world sat here and rejoiced in the jeweled delights of old Baghdad.



THERE ARE OTHER reminders—subtle, to be sure—that this is, after all, Baghdad and not Milwaukee. It is not unusual for workers to uncover ancient and valuable artifacts while excavating for one of the many new buildings.

“We find almost everything, everywhere,” said Muayad Said Damerji, president of the State Organization of Antiquities. “In Baghdad and throughout Iraq

there are now about 10,000 archaeological sites. The digs here have been going on for more than a century, and they will continue, no doubt, for many centuries to come.”

Even as I was speaking with Dr. Damerji, there was news of a find on the outskirts of Baghdad, on the banks of the Tigris. It was a three-foot bronze statue of Hercules leaning on a stick draped with the skin of a lion. On the legs of the figure were writings in Greek

and Aramaic, revealing new information on the kings of that period, the second century B.C. The find also drew attention to the claim by some Iraqi archaeologists that Hercules is but another name for Nergal, a god worshipped in ancient Iraq.

Well, of course, this land of the two rivers (the other is the Euphrates) has more to offer to the diagramming of civilization than mere speculation on the true identity of Hercules. Iraq—ancient Mesopotamia—is where much of it began, including, in one interpretation of the Bible, the Garden of Eden. The first writing came from here, and so did the first code of law. Sumerians, Akkadians, Babylonians, Assyrians—all built their civilizations in this land.

Nowhere is this all chronicled so well as in the Iraq Museum, in Baghdad.

"With 28 galleries, it is the largest museum in the Middle East," Bahija Khalil Ismail, the director (page 102), said. "Our exhibits cover a time span from 100,000 years ago well into the Islamic period." Dr. Ismail, an expert on cuneiform writing, is the first woman to hold the position of director of the museum.

A pebble from a 10,000-year-old stratum rests in a glass case. It has 12 deep scratches on it. An ancient calendar? Quite possibly. And seals used by the Sumerians 5,000 years ago to legalize documents are there, along with a relief from the ninth century B.C. showing, for the first time as far as is known, the ritual of two persons shaking hands.

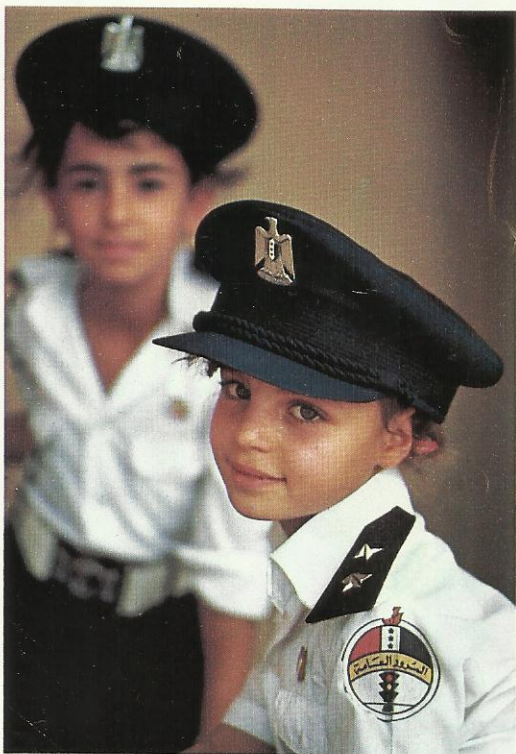
Some of the objects in the Iraq Museum are reproductions, and that is a matter of concern to many here. The originals were removed by conquering powers and foreign archaeologists in accordance with then prevailing laws. The Ishtar Gate is in East Berlin, and the shaft of black basalt inscribed with Hammurapi's code of law is in the Louvre, having first been taken to Iran as war booty in the 12th century B.C. Other pieces are in the British Museum and in the University of Pennsylvania museum.

"Our treasures were delivered to Europe, but we are trying to bring them back," Dr. Damerji, the antiquities chief, told me. "The French have returned certain fragments of the Code of Hammurapi—about 59 paragraphs—but they continue to keep the main shaft. The British Museum has a large

Assyrian slab, and while hundreds of clay tablets with cuneiform writings have come back from the United States, other pieces remain there. The British Museum has sent nothing. It is a long, very long process."

And what would Hammurapi have said about such dubious conduct? Not one for coddling wrongdoers, the sixth king of the First Dynasty of Babylon (he reigned 1792-1750 B.C.) issued a stern code of laws, not the earliest legislation to come out of Mesopotamia but certainly the most famous. His code covered a wide range of evils, including theft. This, for example: "If a fire has broken out in a man's house and a man who has gone to extinguish it has coveted an article of the owner of the house and takes the article of the owner of the house, that man shall be cast into that fire."

So it is written, in cuneiform script, on the



Children of the party, youngsters belonging to the Vanguard (right), a group founded by the Baath Party, listen as a girl recites patriotic verse. The camouflage pattern on their fatigues depicts silhouettes of the Arab world. Young girls in uniform (above) participate in a traffic-safety program.

nine-and-a-half-foot-high piece of stone now on display in the Louvre. It is represented in the Iraq Museum by a copy.

This pillage of a nation's legacy could only add to the zeal of Arab nationalism that began to flare with the coming to power in Egypt of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Iraq shook off the last remnants of foreign control on the morning of July 14, 1958, when the British-installed Hashemite regime in the person of young King Faysal II (cousin of Jordan's present King Hussein) was overthrown.

Blood was thick in the streets of Baghdad that day. Other revolutions followed; today the country is firmly controlled by the Arab Baath Socialist Party and its leader, Saddam Hussein. At the top of the Baath Party hierarchy in Iraq is the Revolutionary Command Council, a nine-member group with Hussein as chairman. There is also a

National Assembly of 250 elected delegates.

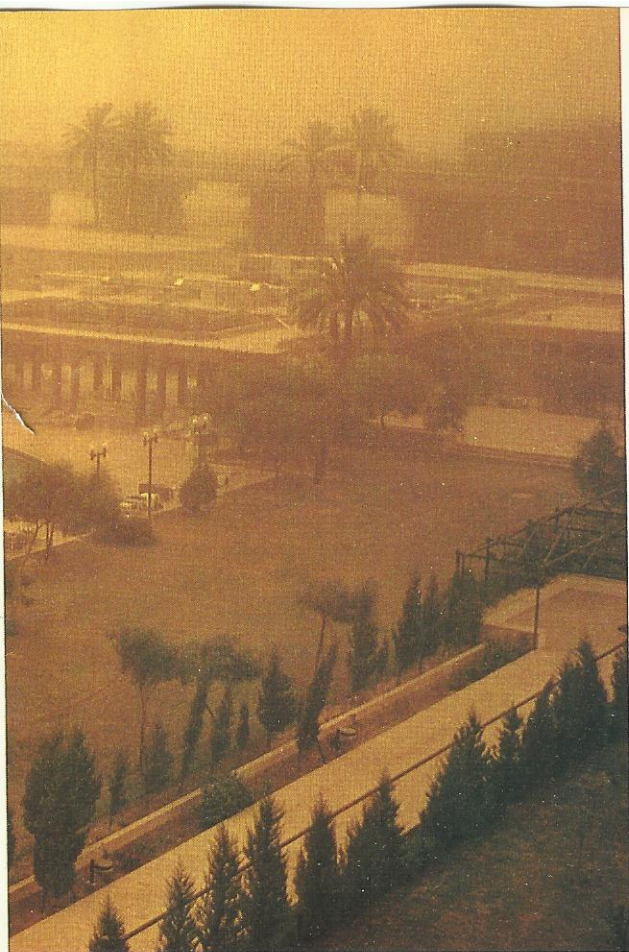
Nationalization of the oil industry in the 1970s was the culminating thrust of socialism in Iraq, but today emphasis has shifted to what is called the mixed-sector economy, or participation by both government and private investment.

There are few political parties in the world so strictly disciplined as the Baath Party in Iraq, and few operate under such a heavy veil of secrecy. Dissent, even whispered, is not heard here. Nor is much laughter heard.

WHENEVER I was able to escape the government's tether on foreign journalists, I would walk for hours in Baghdad, falling in step at times with craggy-faced Kurds and some of the hundreds of thousands of Egyptians working at







menial jobs vacated by Iraqis called to military service. I would cross the Tigris on the Jumhuriyah Bridge, where the river is more than halfway along its 1,200-mile journey from Kurdistan to its meeting with the Euphrates before both enter the Persian Gulf as the Shatt al Arab.

The need to restore the important role once played by the river in the life of the city has been stressed by city officials and others responsible for the rebuilding of Baghdad. Meanwhile, the Tigris flows on, not boisterous as it once was but, rather, calm and silvery, a blessing to this desert land.

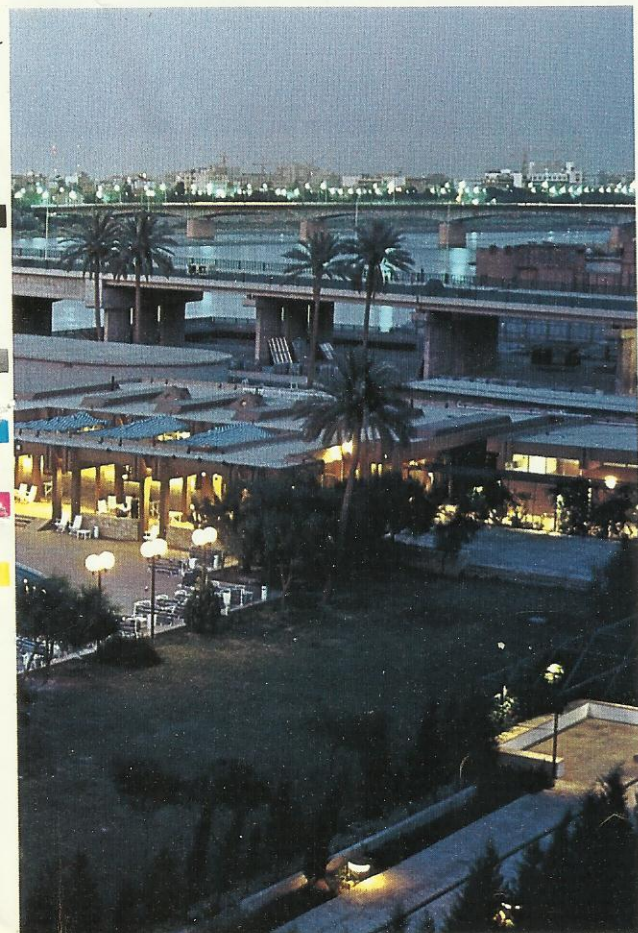
TAHRIR SQUARE stands at the end of the bridge on the left bank of the river. It is the heart of Baghdad, from which radiate some of the main streets of the city. There is Rashid Street, with arcaded sidewalks, and Sadun Street, wide and baking under the 120-degree heat of the noon-day sun. Vendors of ice water do a brisk business on Sadun Street.

Red double-deck buses made in Britain sway down the streets. Life in Baghdad is too rigid to call down the chaos found in other large cities of the Middle East; here, all the passengers ride *inside* the buses.

Saddam Hussein's picture hangs in the window of a bookshop. This time he is shown wearing a kaffiyeh, the Arab head cloth, and he holds a cigar. There are few publications in English for sale in the shop, other than a student's crib book for Thomas Hardy's classic *Jude the Obscure* and a manual for increasing farm production with the use of fertilizers. There are no foreign publications such as news magazines.

I met a man during my walks, an English-speaking guide at the Baghdad Museum, who told me that once there were mellow streets in Baghdad, streets where old women could be found sitting by large pots of beans boiling in water, selling the right to dip bread in the tasty liquid. There were

Blotting out the sun, frequent summer dust storms shroud the pool of the Al-Mansour Melia Hotel (top), leaving a heavy coating before moving on. At the close of a clear day (left), the Tigris is revealed with two of its 12 city bridges.



A limited selection leaves shelves nearly bare (right) in a new mall, some imports curtailed by the war. Small-scale trade rocks on Rashid Street, where a vendor hawks a rug portrait of Elvis (below). During Baghdad's heyday 1,200 years ago, trade was the city's wealth, and ships laden with spices, pearls, and ivory crowded the wharves.



barbers, he recalled, who set up shop on the sidewalks, not only to cut hair, but to treat boils as well. And there were times of celebration on the streets, when, for example, banners were strung and music played to mark the circumcision of a young boy.

Occupying Ottoman forces showed little concern for the welfare of Baghdad, he said, and the British who moved in after defeating the Turks in World War I were equally errant. When they left in 1932 after installing a monarchy, Baghdad was a shambles.

Once I heard the skirl of a bagpipe band performing at a ceremony in Baghdad, and that, along with the double-deck buses, is about all the debris of British stewardship still afloat in this city of nearly four million.

There are discos in the new hotels, and there are other nightclubs where stripteasers

perform. Liquor is legally available. There are gambling casinos. The vices are not practiced flagrantly here, but they do taunt the fundamentalist sensibilities of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in Iran. Probably even more sinful in his eyes are the rights accorded women in Iraq.

Women in Baghdad dress fashionably. They attend universities and hold some of the highest offices in the land. There are women engineers here, and women pilots, doctors, architects, and lawyers. Overall, nationally, women now account for 25 percent of the work force. It is official doctrine of the Baath Party that women have full equality with men. On the other side is Iran, where, it is reported, lipstick is removed from women by a swipe of cotton in which a razor blade is imbedded.

بلوزات + قمصان
KNITWEAR + SHIRTS



"Long ago, in the history of the Islamic world, women worked as traders, and they participated in battles," said Iftikar Ahmed Ayoob. "So what Khomeini is doing today is against Islamic law. He is using Islam as a curtain to hide his illegal and barbarous treatment of women."

Mrs. Ayoob is deputy director of the General Federation of Iraqi Women, an organization of considerable influence.

"When the present government decided to eliminate illiteracy, 1.4 million women went to the centers to learn to read and write," Mrs. Ayoob said. "Now we have programs to get them jobs. Many go into factories. Others go on to higher education and the professions. We now have 16 women, including myself, in the National Assembly."

The war accounts in part for the many

women in the work force, but the acceptance of equality between the sexes has other strong reflections in the social aspects of life.

"There was a time when the Iraqi male was very spoiled," Mrs. Ayoob said with a trace of a smile. "For example, his manliness would not allow him to pick up and hold his baby. And then President Saddam Hussein was shown holding a baby, and it was no longer a shameful thing for the male to do."

The issue of women's rights, as much as anything, is a true measure of the distance between the ideologies of the two warring nations. Saddam Hussein allows no compromise with the secularism of Iraq, and Khomeini allows none with his interpretation of koranic law. I was in Baghdad during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan and found only scant adherence to the practice of



fasting from sunup to sundown. Even the Shiite Muslims in Iraq—the majority of the population—appear unmoved by the ayatollah's call for brotherhood.

THE OTTOMAN TURKS were here for 400 years. There were others before and after. Now the Persians want to come in and turn us back 1,500 years." Khalil Khoury, a poet living in Baghdad, is talking to me. When a young woman wearing pedal pushers walks past, he says, "She would be shot in Iran for wearing that."

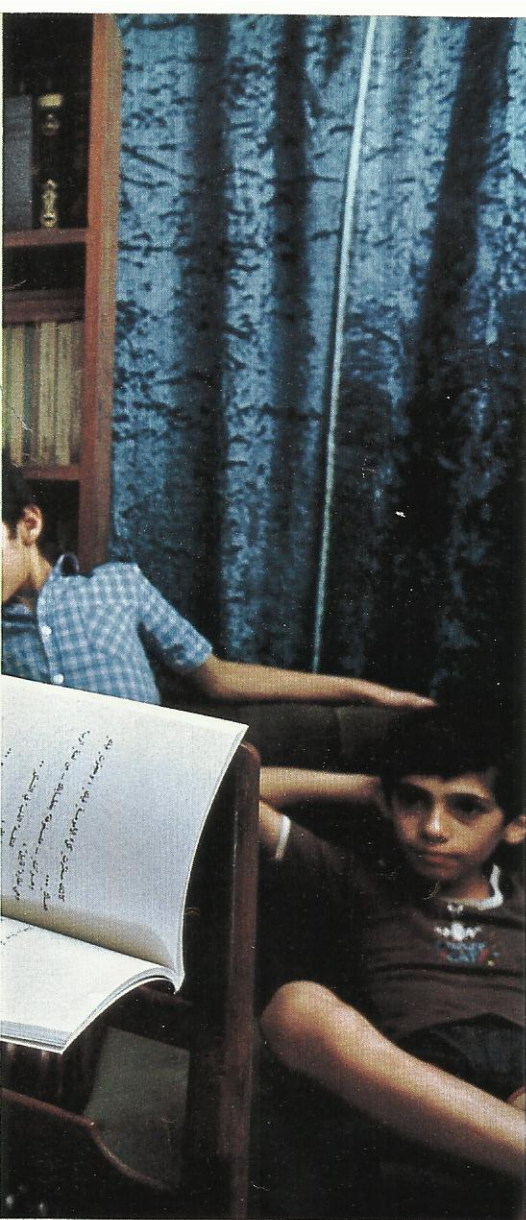
Born in Damascus, Khoury has lived in Baghdad for the past 15 years. Well known for his seven books of poetry, he also works as an interpreter of French for President

Hussein. He is a dedicated socialist and a man sharply aware of the greatness that was ancient Mesopotamia.

"You can feel thousands of years of civilization in Baghdad," he told me. "It is, for me, a city full of the spirits of the past. You will discover stories about the Deluge—you know, Noah—in ancient accounts here, before the Bible. The same about Paradise, the Garden of Eden."

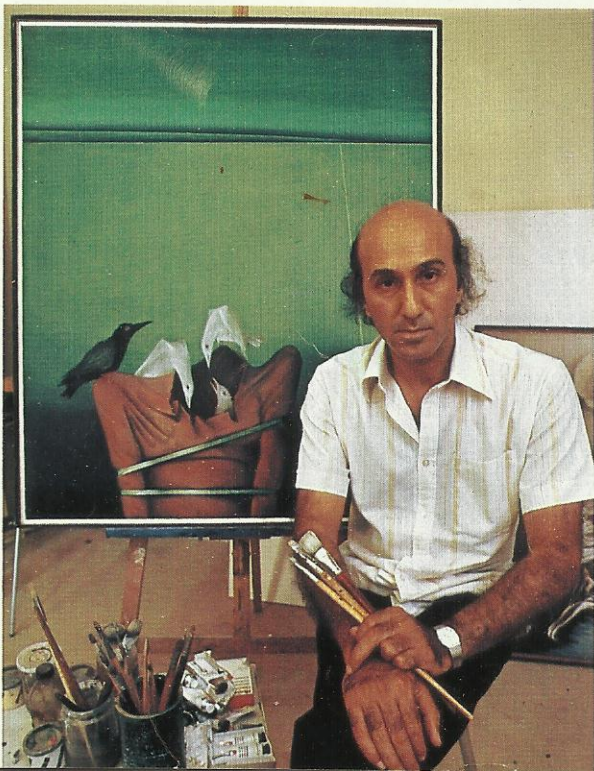
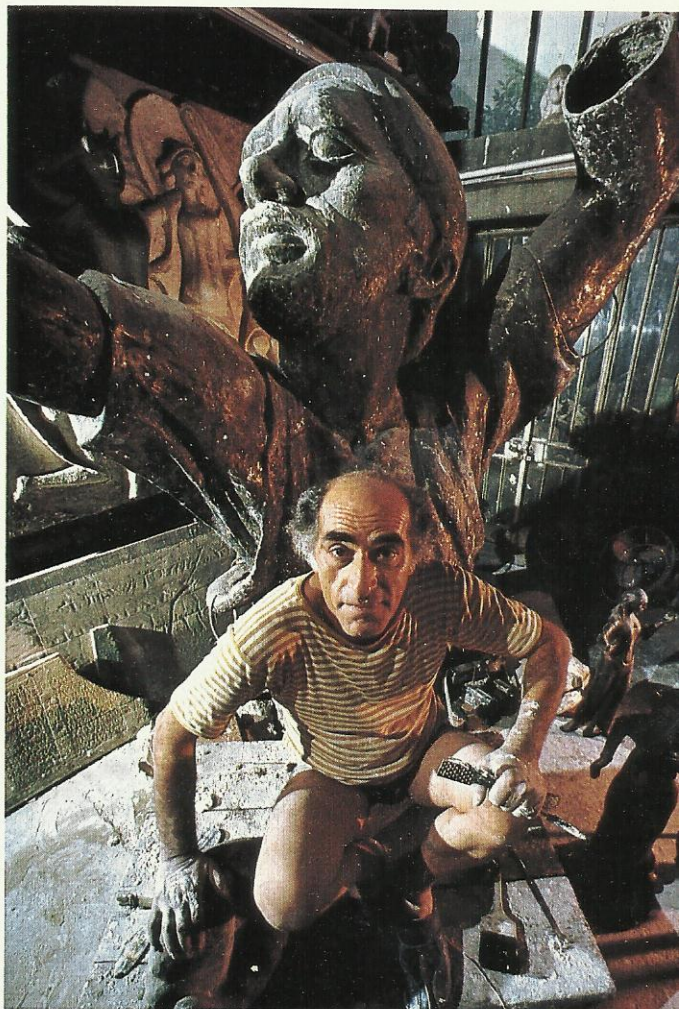
Khoury, like many of the people of Baghdad, clings to the past as if to set a standard for the future. Meanwhile the new face of the city becomes more finely drawn.

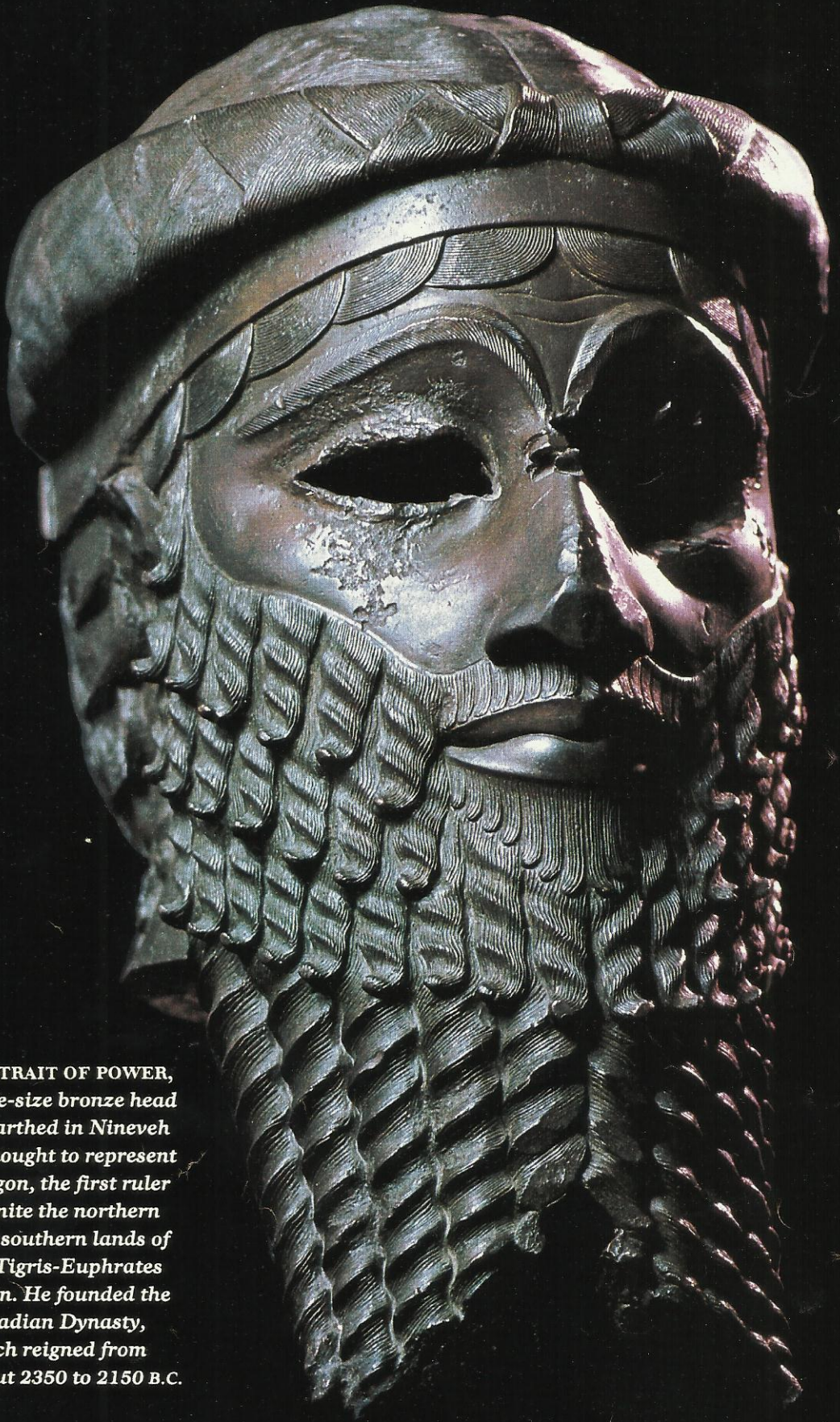
There is in Baghdad a street called Haifa, and it is the site of one of the largest urban housing construction projects in the world.



The creative voice speaks in the words of Baghdadians like poet Khalil Khoury, here reciting in his home to members of his family (above). Besides seven volumes of poetry, he has written five plays. Bringing myth to life, internationally known sculptor Mohammed Ghani (above right) works on a bronze of Sindbad the Sailor, to be anchored in the Tigris when completed. "I paint the sufferings of the human spirit," explains Ala Hussein Bashir of his portrayal of a tormented man (right). Though some Iraqi artists depict contemporary—and often sensitive—political subjects, many rely on the past for ideas and themes.

The New Face of Baghdad

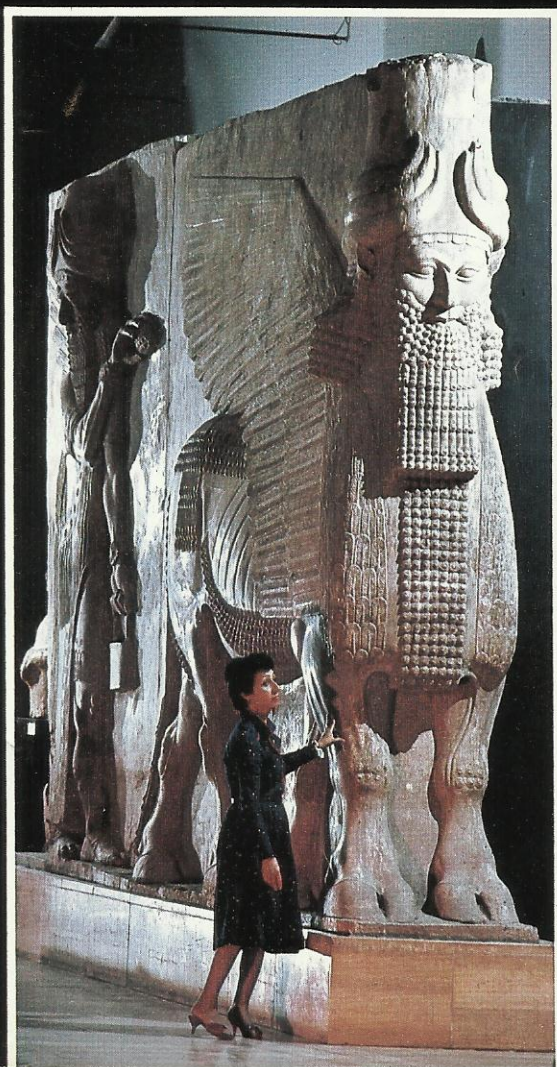
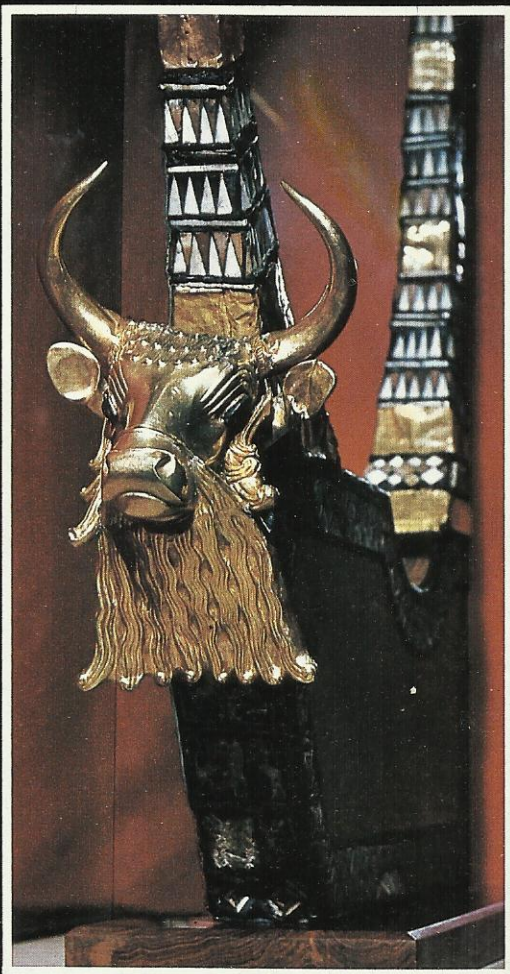




PORTRAIT OF POWER,
a life-size bronze head
unearthed in Nineveh
is thought to represent
Sargon, the first ruler
to unite the northern
and southern lands of
the Tigris-Euphrates
basin. He founded the
Akkadian Dynasty,
which reigned from
about 2350 to 2150 B.C.

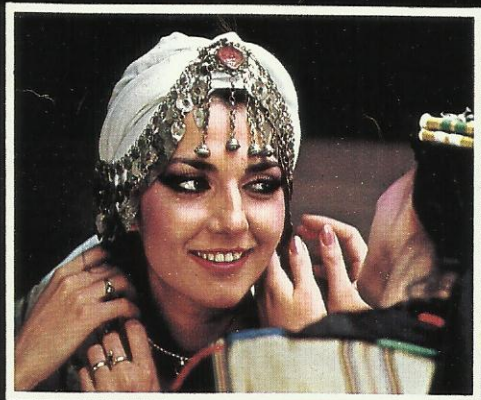
Treasures from Iraq's past

THE "AWE OF THE GRANDIOSE," in British sculptor Henry Moore's admiring phrase, radiates from artifacts of Mesopotamian empires that dominated the land known today as Iraq. A human-headed winged bull with five legs (below) guarded the gate to the palace of Sargon II at Khorsabad. Behind it, a bearded genie carries a ritual cup and purifier. The palace, encircled by 26-foot-thick walls, covered 25 acres. An ivory head, called the "Mona Lisa of Nimrud" (below right), was found preserved in sludge at the bottom of a well in the palace of Ashurnasirpal II. A lyre (right), unearthed in the Royal Tombs of Ur, boasts a head of gold and dates from about 2500 B.C.



ALL PHOTOGRAPHED AT IRAQ MUSEUM; NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHER J. BAYLOR ROBERTS (TOP)

THE PRESENCE OF THE PAST is evoked by a gown based on Assyrian designs and created by the Iraqi Fashion House for a government-sponsored exhibition.



FIT FOR A QUEEN, 4,500-year-old jewelry from the Royal Tombs of Ur (left, top) is the pride of Iraq Museum director Bahija Khalil Ismail. Such treasures also influence modern jewelry (left) seen at a Baghdad fashion show.

Plans call for nearly 2,000 housing units on Haifa Street, along with schools, nurseries, shopping centers, clinics, parks, and entertainment centers. Contractors from many nations are participating in the work.

"The development is now nearing completion," Deputy Mayor al-Madfai said, "and we hope that immediately after the war we can continue to build projects similar to Haifa Street throughout the city."

With the financial drain of the war (Iraq, it is believed, nearly exhausted its reserves of more than 30 billion dollars in the first two years of fighting) much of the development slowed. However, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have injected massive doses of aid. And Iraqi oil exports, once down to 600,000 barrels a day, now flow by pipeline and truck through Turkey at the rate of a million barrels a day. The outlook for new developments in Baghdad seems promising.

Already completed is Saddam City, a sprawling development in the northern reaches of Baghdad. A million people live there on a site where once stood a muddy camp for squatters. President Hussein ordered the shantytown razed and a new city built in its place.

Many, if not most, of the residents of Saddam City are from rural Iraq, and they brought with them the life-styles of the village. There are goats in the yards, and there are women swathed in black, and men hunkered down on the sidewalks. The houses are small and adobe colored, and the smells coming from them are of leafy vegetables aboil. And there are marigolds growing along the property lines where neighbors meet for their summits of gossip.

IT IS MORNING in Saddam City, and I have boarded a bus there, not knowing where it is going or what route it will take to get there. I am eating from a bag of pistachio nuts, but most of the shells are sealed tight, the meats locked up like jewels in a vault. Sensing my frustration, my seat companion, a man who resembles Pancho Villa, looks around and then leans close to whisper. "Iran has better nuts," he says.

The bus goes to the center of the city over roads knotted in interchanges of two and three levels, high-speed roads of many lanes, one of the best systems of urban roads

to be found in the Middle East and most of Europe. Indeed, a motorist here might imagine himself in Germany but for such highway signs as "Babylon, 100 kilometers." Sometime after the war ends, a subway, now in the advanced stages of planning, will be opened.

Later that day I came to a place called Thulatha Market, one of the five Western-style shopping centers in Baghdad. Thulatha means Tuesday in Arabic, and in ancient Baghdad the market held on that day was the busiest of all. Opened in 1983, or, in the words of the market director, "during the era of our struggling leader, His Excellency Saddam Hussein," the state-run Thulatha Market of today is housed in five large and modern buildings.

"We get a minimum of 30,000 shoppers here each day," the director, Adel Abud Abbas, said. "We sell food, clothes, appliances, everything. We provide for the young and for the old one."

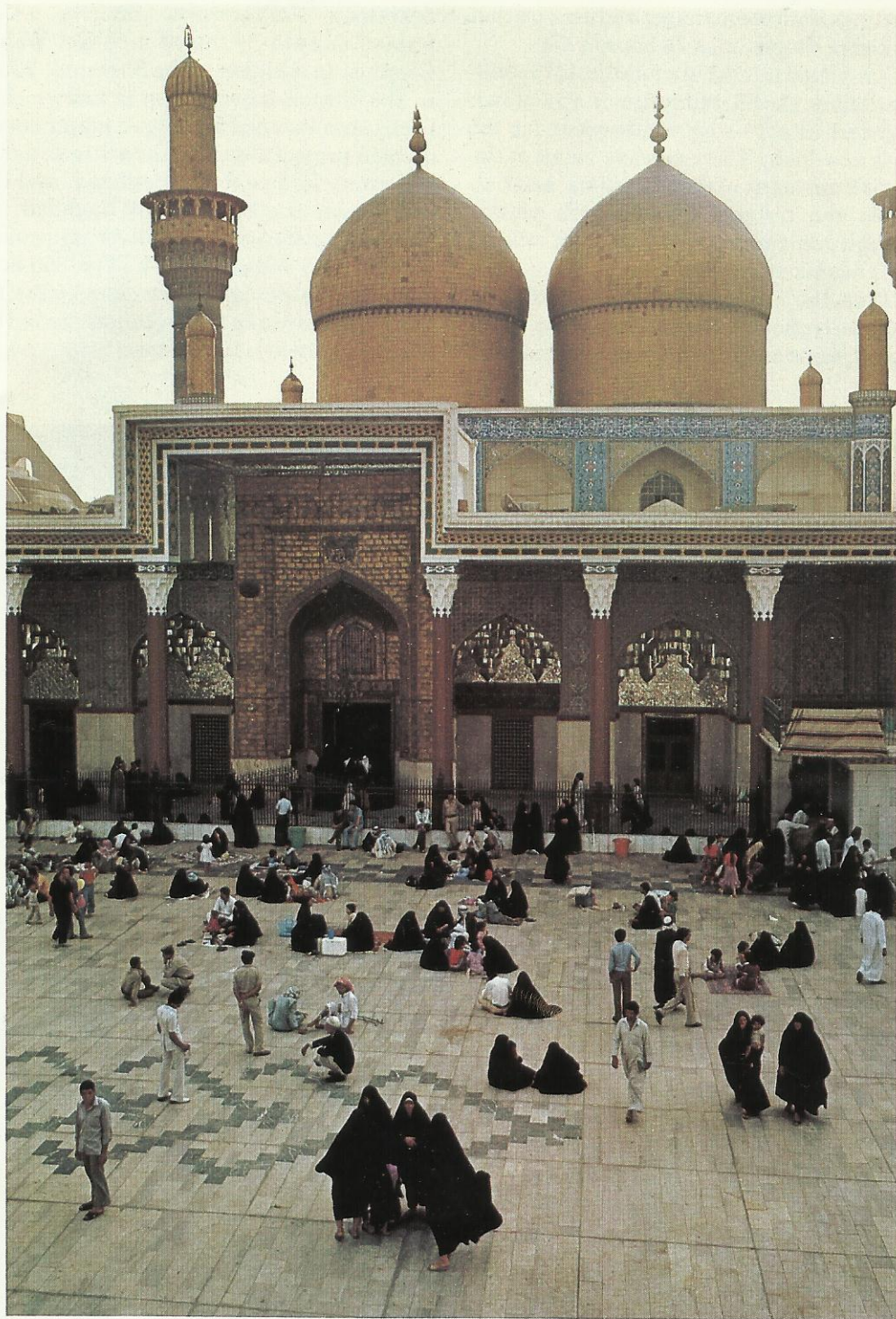
On that day there was a big run on seven-piece cookware sets from Korea. In the food section a Danish-made item called chicken sausage was selling well. Sporting goods was pushing, of all things, the discus. There were some indications of wartime shortages, but most shelves were well stocked.

There are no typewriters for sale in the Thulatha Market. Special permission is required for an Iraqi to purchase one, for a typewriter might be used to produce revolutionary tracts. Saddam Hussein used one himself for that purpose.

There is heavy security in the market. Customers must submit to a search before entering. Additional controls are in force elsewhere in the city to prevent trouble by Iranian terrorists. As a precaution against car bombs, taxicabs and private automobiles are not allowed to approach the entranceways of government buildings or major hotels. At the new Ishtar Sheraton (page 91), arriving guests and their luggage are left on the street, no closer than 50 yards from the reception desk.

But like almost everything else in Baghdad, there is no feeling of wartime urgency in the security measures. Even the printed instructions in the rooms of the Sheraton, advising guests where to proceed in case of an air raid, come as an afterthought to





Passing from the realm of the sacred to the world of the profane, a girl and her grandmother emerge from al-Kazimayn Mosque, one of the most important shrines in the Islamic world (left). Gold-capped domes rise above the courtyard (above). Completed in 1534, the present mosque was built at the site of the tombs of Musa al-Kazim and his grandson, Muhammad al-Jawad, two of twelve imams believed, according to Shiite tenets, to be descendants of the Prophet.

greetings from the manager and a notice that the coffee shop is open 24 hours a day.

Completed in 1982 at a total cost of 80 million dollars, the Sheraton rises in downtown Baghdad as a 21-story centerpiece for the city's new look. There are fine views of the Tigris from many of the 312 rooms, and balconies and terraces banked with plants. Though contemporary in design, it still reflects Islamic influence.

Of all the foreign firms participating in the resurrection of Baghdad from its pit of neglect, none has been more active than The

Architects Collaborative Inc., a group formed in 1946 by famed architect Walter Gropius. In addition to the Sheraton, TAC, as the Boston-based group is known, has been commissioned to design a major development project along Khulafa Street, a central artery in downtown Baghdad, and the spectacular new University of Baghdad.

It is estimated that the university project will cost 1.5 billion dollars. The 860-acre campus is bordered on three sides by the Tigris. There are to be 273 buildings erected on it. Among them is the university mosque, a



striking dome-like structure resting on three points. When completed, it will stand not only as a house for the faithful, but also as a symbol of the architectural boldness now rampant in the city.

Peter W. Morton, a partner in TAC, has visited Baghdad many times to oversee his firm's projects in the city. "The Iraqis had the vision to bring in the best architectural brains in the world," he told me. "At the same time, they set very high standards."

Architects must adhere to certain traditions when designing a building for

Baghdad. "The *farash* system, for example, must be maintained," Morton said. "In the Middle East there is always a guy who serves coffee in the offices. He is the *farash*. He is a very old and very important tradition in Baghdad, and so we must include a place for him in the plans—a place where he can cook as well as sit and wait for the buzzer."

DESPITE the equalizing effect of Baathist Socialism on the social and economic life of Iraq, there remains in Baghdad a neighborhood of elite status. It is called Mansur. There are villas there, and, truthfully, Volvo station wagons in the streets. It is said that there are families in Baghdad who continue to have substantial financial holdings, but wealth is a relative thing in a city where the police patrol in Mercedes and where a cup of coffee and an order of toast in a hotel coffee shop costs \$12. Still, in Mansur, the *sense* of wealth is present.

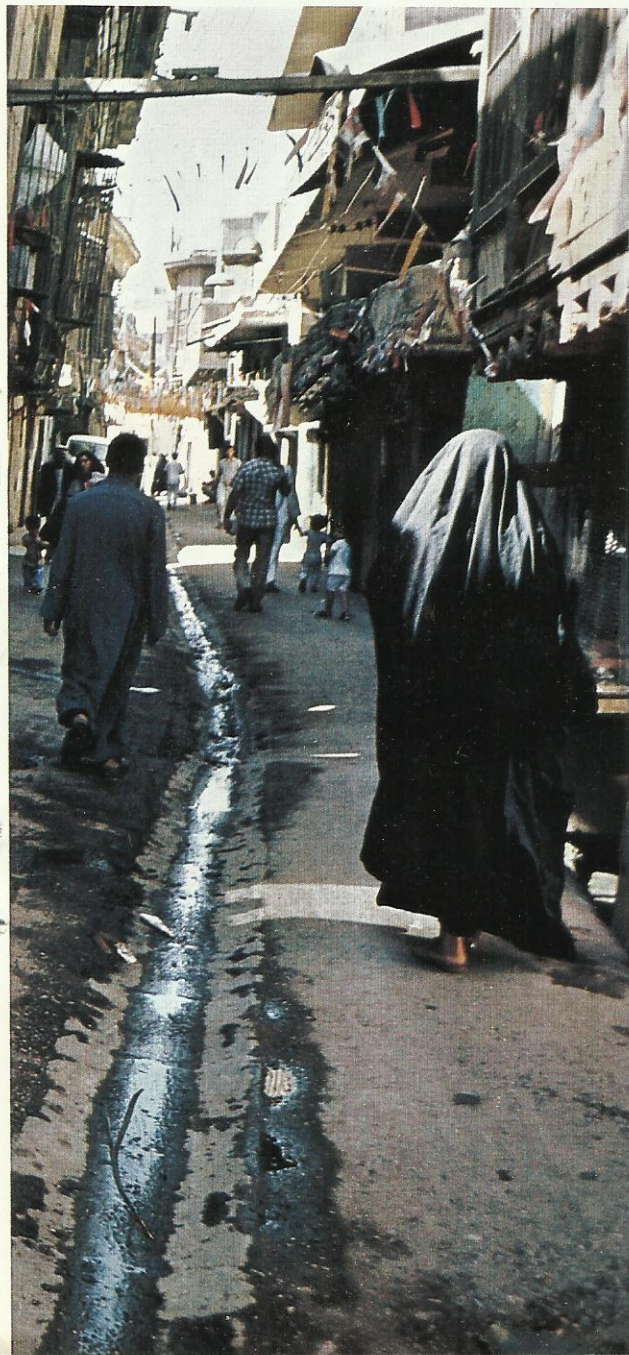
Mohammed Ghani (page 99) lives in Mansur, but his wealth is in talent. He is a sculptor, being responsible for much of the best of the street art in Baghdad.

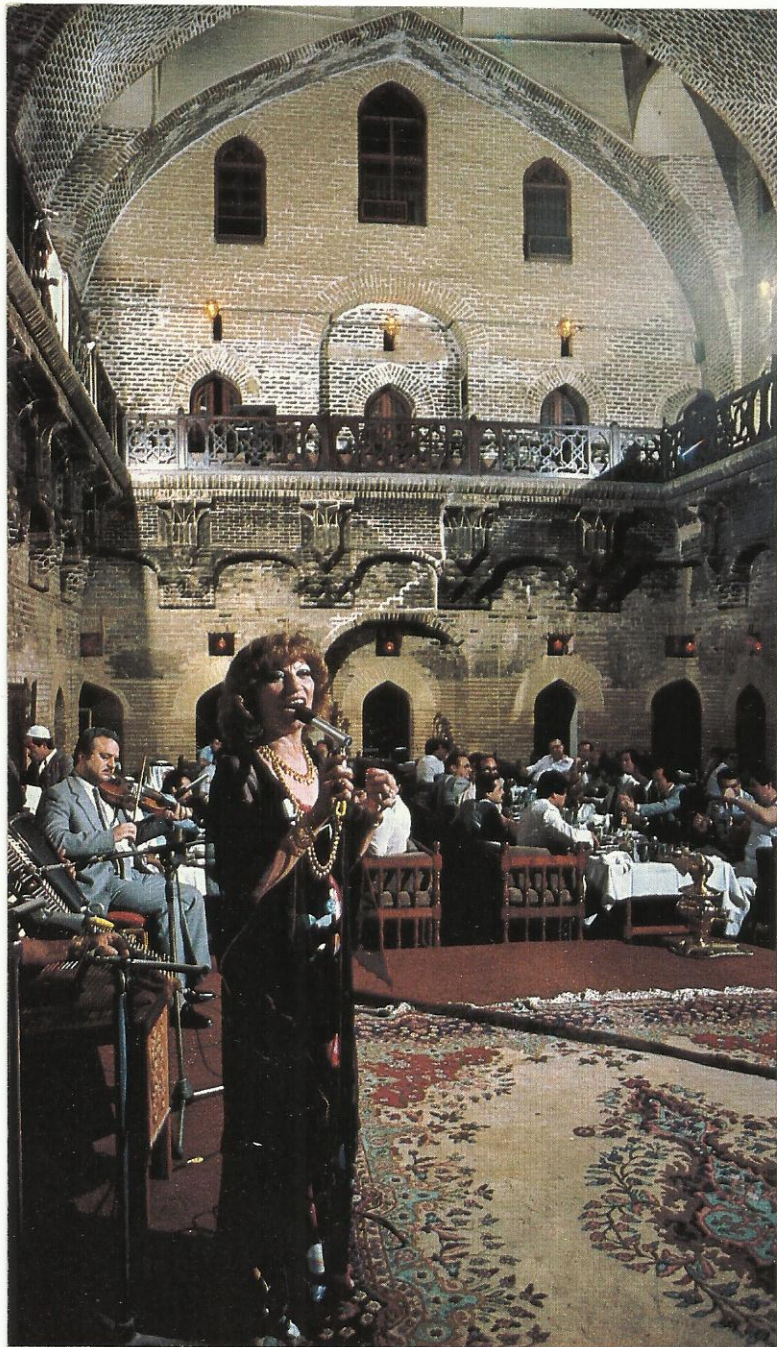
"I am a Baghdadian, and I feel the glory," Ghani said. He is a warm, short man with thick tufts of hair on the sides of his head. "My goal is to give honor with my work to this city that gave so much to the world."

Most of Ghani's works have themes taken from the mythology of Mesopotamia. One large bronze, for example, depicts the genie emerging from Aladdin's lamp. Another is of Sindbad on a raft; it is to be anchored in the Tigris. Others draw from tales of life in Sumer and Babylon and Ur, such as the one where an eagle takes a man on its back to visit the gods. "There is nothing in reference to flight older than this bit of Sumerian mythology," Ghani said.

Iraqis have a curious appreciation of sculpture. Probably it is related to their ancestors. For the Assyrians to have produced such magnificent (and massive) sculpture

In the shadows of antiquity, women in long black abayas walk in one of the older sections of the city. Streets in this quarter—lined with shops not much wider than a man's reach—were built narrow to shade pedestrians from the sun.





Songs of passion, songs of pain, are poured out by Suad Abdallah (above) at the Khan Murjan, a 600-year-old inn converted into a restaurant. In a room upstairs (above right) men enjoy tobacco and thimblefuls of thick, bitter coffee. For years a recluse, Baghdad is emerging from behind its veils to make a bid as a power broker for the Arab world. But a stalemated war, debilitating in terms of lives and dollars, stalls its momentum.



without passing on their flame of talent seems unlikely. For the genius of the Sumerians and Babylonians to have died with the last of their kings seems equally unlikely. The legacy has been weakened by time until what remains today is not so much creativity as it is appreciation.

That must be it.

THE MOST PROMINENT monument in Baghdad today is the Unknown Soldier Monument, which



especially honors those who have fallen in the present conflict with Iran. It is heavily symbolic, meant to communicate the presence of the ziggurat of Ur and the spiral minaret at Samarra. There is an iron dome weighing 550 tons, and that represents the shield of the dying soldier. Rising above that to a height of some 100 feet is a flagpole, and at night the sculptured Iraqi flag is lighted in four colors (white, black, green, and red).

"It's something, isn't it?" an official of the government information office asked as

we entered the coolness of the marble crypt.

It *is* something. An outsider can only marvel at the busyness of the monument—at, indeed, the energy of all Baghdad. After a decade of self-imposed isolation, the city has now revealed itself as a focal point, a potential center of the drive for Arab unity.

Much, of course, depends on the outcome of the struggle with Iran. Until that is settled, the new face of Baghdad will appear as a clip-on—like a mask on the skull and bones of war. □