

Kuwait—History and the Present Time: a seminar to commemorate the 40th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Poland held at Szkoła Główna Handlowa (Main Business School) in Warsaw on the 16th May, 2003

The seminar to commemorate the 40th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Poland was prepared jointly by the Embassy of Kuwait in Warsaw and the Internet portal, Arabia.pl. The seminar was opened by Professor Marek Rocki, the Vice-Chancellor of the Main Business School. It was followed by a speech by Ambassador Jan Natkański, Director of the Department of Africa and the Middle East at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who stressed the necessity of expanding economic relations between the two countries and also recalled the establishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and Kuwait on the 17th May, 1963. Then, a speech by His Excellency the Ambassador of Kuwait to Poland, Mr Jamal Mohammad Issa al-Ghunaim, followed.

The program was divided into two parts: the first one concerned the history of Kuwait and her relations with Poland, while the second one focused on the present time.

In turn, Professor Janusz Danecki, the Head of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Warsaw University delivered a paper on the role of Kuwait in the Arab World. He explained that Kuwait provided aid to certain Arab states after the 1967 and 1973 wars, and stressed that she initiated the increase of crude oil prices by 70 percent in the aftermath of the Ramadan War.

Professor Jerzy Zdanowski of the Institute of International Relations at the Main Business School reviewed the history of diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Poland, and emphasized that in August 1990, Poland was the first country to acknowledge the existence of the State of Kuwait even though the country was under Iraqi occupation. He also reported that the diplomatic relations facilitated exchange of specialists between the two countries.

Finally, Professor Barbara Michalak-Pikulska, Head of the Department of Arabic Studies at the Jagiellonian University surveyed the Kuwaiti writers' attitudes versus the Iraqi aggression on Kuwait of 1990. She reported about vast prose works written then, particularly by Laylā 'Uṭmān. These works preserved the history of the events, and contain valuable data on reactions and responses of the Kuwaiti society to the occupation, among all the

feelings, the disintegration of society, condition of the civilians, as well as the role of the Kuwaiti Resistance and the destruction of the state by the invaders.

The second part comprised of speeches on contemporary Kuwait, among all by Professor Andrzej Kapiszewski, Head of the Department of Near and Far East at the Jagiellonian University, who reviewed in his dazzling paper the job opportunities in Kuwait. He stressed that the main workforce in Kuwait is comprised of foreigners, particularly the Indians (300.000), Egyptians (275.000), Bangladeshi and Sri Lankans (165.000), Pakistanis (100.000), as well as the Syrians, Iranians, Filipinos, Jordanians and 'bidoons', because of the lower employment costs. Professor Kapiszewski also described the recent changes in job market of Kuwait and its influences on other Arab states' economies.

Furthermore, Dr Beata Jagiełło of the International Security Department at the Main Business School delivered a speech on Kuwait and the Persian Gulf in the European Union's politics, which was unfortunately interrupted.

The former Polish Commercial Counsellor to Kuwait, Dr Zygmunt Janiec delivered a paper on the specificity of trade with Kuwait, which contained many useful hints for the Polish exporters willing to make business in Kuwait.

Finally, Ms Elżbieta Kubska of the Department of Near and Far East at the Jagiellonian University reported on the Poles in Kuwait.

Jan Bury