

P.R.
Monthly

P. 117 - Kurdistan & Iraq

Vol. 1. Nos.

4-5

Africa Latin America Asia

REVOLUTION



Africa : 4 shillings

Europe : 6F, 9 shillings

America : \$ 1.25

30 DEC. 1963

THE WAR OF LIBERATION OF IRAQI KURDISTAN

by

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For nearly two years and especially after the fall of Kassem on February 8, 1963, the international press has been writing about a harsh war being fought in Iraki Kurdistan between the Kurdish people and the Baghdad government. If the European reader is more or less well informed about these events, it seems, on the other hand, that the Kurdish national question is on the whole unknown to the broad masses of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Although far from having reached its greatest dimensions, this very complex question is already, however, of great importance, because it concerns the future of an oppressed nation, its relations with neighbouring nations, the future of the Middle East and of peace in that region. Before discussing present events, it is therefore necessary to situate the Kurdish problem in its geographic and historical context, although the length of this article only permits a rapid survey.

Who Are the Kurds ?

The Kurdish people are one of the most numerous of western Asia and perhaps the most ancient. The *Anabasis*, the Greek classic of Xenophon, written in 401 B.C., speaks of the Kurdish people under the name of "Kardu," and locates them in the same country as today, mainly in the valley of the upper Tigris and Zeb rivers. The Kurds had been in this

area well before then. After Xenophon, nearly 11 centuries passed before the Moslem Arabs arrived in Syria and Irak, and it was 15 centuries before the first Turks arrived in the country that was to become Turkey. Despite all the invasions of Kurdistan and western Asia, the Kurds maintained intact their language and their national characteristics, thanks to their fierce attachment to their independence and to the mountainous nature of their country.¹

The Kurds are a people of Indo-European origin and speak an independent language of the Aryan or Iranian family, related to Persian. Ethnically and linguistically, the relations between Kurds, Persians and Afghans are comparable to those that exist between Italians, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Catalans and Portuguese, or between Russians and Poles. The Kurds are considered the descendants and heirs of the ancient Medes of remote antiquity. Formerly of the Zoroastrian religion, they were converted to Islam after the Moslem conquest, but it is obvious that religious considerations are completely alien to the Kurdish national movement.

The Kurdish people constitute one

¹ See *Encyclopédie de l'Islam* and *Encyclopedia Britannica*, articles "Kurdes" and "Kurdistan."



single nation, in the scientific sense of the word, having one country, one language, their own historical development, internal economic relations, their own culture and national consciousness.

The Country of the Kurds

But, as is already known, it is a nation that has been outrageously oppressed and, like Poland before the First World War, politically divided. Kurdistan, which means "the country of the Kurds," is a vast country with an expanse of some 500,000 square kilometers, a country that is united and geographically continuous, but divided by political frontiers, mainly between Turkey, Iran and Irak. Turkish Kurdistan covers the eastern provinces of that State, Iranian Kurdistan extends over the entire western edge of the Iranian plateau and stretches from the Soviet frontier in the north to the oil region not far from the Persian Gulf, in the south; and Iraki Kurdistan covers the northern and northeastern provinces of that States, with the oil regions of Kirkuk, Ain-Zalah (near Mosul) and Khanakin. There are three Kurdish enclaves in northern Syria, adjacent to the Turkish-Syrian border and Turkish Kurdistan, that is, the region of Northern Jazira, Arab-Pinar and Kurd-Dagh. In the Soviet Union, there are also Kurdish communities, but dispersed in the Soviet Socialist Republics of Armenia, Azerbaidzhan and Georgia. Kurdistan is a moun-

tainous country, rich in mineral resources, with green valleys and internal plains that are cultivated. The Kurdish mountains were very wooded during antiquity, but today there are only a few forests. The climate is severe, very cold in winter, with heavy snow, and fairly hot and dry in summer, except in the mountains. Water is abundant in Kurdistan. The Tigris and the Euphrates are Kurdish rivers in their upper reaches. The same is true of the Diyala (Sirwan) and the Karun. The Big Zeb, Little Zeb and the Bohtan are typically Kurdish rivers. Lake Van, six times larger than Lake Geneva, is found in Turkish Kurdistan. Oaks, walnut trees, poplars, mulberry trees and birches are the most commonly found trees in the Kurdish countryside.

The Kurdish People

Naturally, there is a dispute about the number of the Kurdish people. Those who oppress the Kurds—that is, the Turkish, Persian and Arab ruling classes, as well as "interested" British circles—want at any cost to minimize the importance of the question and put forward figures well below the truth: three to six millions. The most enthusiastic Kurds estimate around 17 million. Cautious observers in Europe put forward a total figure of 10 million. We believe that their number cannot be less than 12 million. The evidence in this respect cannot be reproduced here because

of lack of space. Of this figure of 12 million, there are six million in Turkish Kurdistan, 4.5 million in Iranian Kurdistan and two million

in Iraki Kurdistan. If the number of Kurds in Syria and the U.S.S.R. were added, one has the following table:

<i>Country</i>	<i>Total area in km²</i>	<i>Area of Kurdistan</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Kurdish population</i>	<i>Per cent of pop.</i>
Turkey	760,000	220,000	26,000,000	6,000,000	23 %
Iran	1,600,000	180,000	21,000,000	4,500,000	21 %
Irak	440,000	80,000	6,500,000	2,000,000	30 %
Syria	170,000	20,000	5,000,000	400,000	8 %
U.S.S.R.	—	—	—	150,000	—
Kurdistan		500,000 km ²		13,000,000	

Physically, the Kurds are people of greater than average height, thin, and of great endurance. Rarely have an oppressed people been more slandered by their oppressors and by imperialism than the Kurdish people. Rather than speak of a people, the oppressors of the Kurds prefer to use the term "Kurdish tribes" when they do not purely and simply deny the existence of a distinct Kurdish nationality. They call the Kurdish national liberation movement a "movement of banditry." They claim that the Kurds are an agglomeration of "tribes without national consciousness," "semi-nomad" and "warlike," that Kurdistan is a "poor" country and that it could not be economically self-sufficient. The truth is quite different. Economically, exploited Kurdistan plays the role of a milchcow for the States that divide it up. Ninety

per cent of Iraki oil, a large part of Iranian oil and the little oil exploited so far in Turkey flow from Kurdish regions. The other mineral resources of Kurdistan are still generally untouched. Kurdistan supplies Irak, Iran and Turkey with its wood, tobacco, cereals and fruits, water and herds of livestock. The Jazira region is the breadbasket of Syria. The Kurds are a sedentary people, 75 per cent of whose number are peasants, who very often are also herdsmen, and 25 per cent urban dwellers. There are scores of Kurdish cities of 10 to 150 thousand inhabitants, such as, in Turkey, Diyarbekir, Van, Bitlis, Siirt, Mardin, Maden, Ourfa, Malatya, Erzerum, Erzinjan, Bayezid; in Iran, Khoy, Oshnu, Mahabad, Sakkiz, Sa-nendaj, Kirmanshah, Kasre-Shirin, Khurran-Abad; in Irak, Surlaimaini, Erbil, Kirkuk, Koy-Sandjak, Dehok,



Zakho, Akra, Rowanduz, Amdiya : in Syria, Kamishli, Amuda. All these cities are centres of trading and handicrafts, with an old Kurdish bourgeoisie. The Kurds are not only one of the oldest peoples of the world, they have made a large contribution to the civilization of western Asia. And at present they are in no way inferior to the neighbouring peoples.

Medieval Kurdistan

In the Middle Ages, Kurdistan was composed of a large number of independent Kurdish principalities of a feudal structure, as were the majority of European nations at that time. The father of Kurdish historians, Prince Cheref Khan of Bitlis, wrote in 1596 the first work, in two volumes, on Kurdish history, entitled *Cheref-na-*

meh, or Annals of the Kurdish Nation [Published for the first time in St. Petersburg, in the original version, by Zernof, in 1860, then translated and published in French, also in St. Petersburg, by Charmoy, in 1875, with notes.]. Another basic text for the study of ancient Kurdistan is entitled *Evliya Tchelebi Siyahet namesi*, written by the Turkish traveller and geographer of the 17th century, Evliya Tchelebi, published in Constantinople in six volumes.

If in the *Cheref-nameh* the author pays particular attention to the military history of Kurdistan, the genealogy and the military exploits of the "princes," kings, great chiefs and intrepid knights of Kurdistan, the work of Evliya Tchelebi, on the other hand, describes at length and with precision the conditions of each principality: the personality of the ruling prince, the size of his armed forces, his citadels, his vassals, the climate of the region, its agricultural products, the occupations of the population, the capital of the principality, its institutions, economy, handicraft industries, its various markets, schools, palaces, public baths, etc., giving a vivid and marvellous picture of Kurdistan. It should be noted that this Turkish geographer of the 17th century said that Kurdistan stretched from the north of Aleppo and from Malatya to Hamadan, in Iran, and from the country of Aran (Erivan, in Soviet Armenia) to the Persian Gulf, giving it the same ethnic limits as today.

This Kurdistan, independent, but divided into small States (some forty of them), withdrawn upon itself, had the misfortune, before the modern national idea unified it politically, of finding itself between two powerful neighbours: in the east, imperial Iran, and in the west, an Ottoman Empire that was still being formed on the shores of the Bosphorus. From time to time, the Shahs of Iran made devastating incursions into the Kurdish country. Besides political problems, sharp religious considerations at the time opposed the Kurdish dynasties, who were Sunni Moslems, from the Shiite Shahs of Iran. But the Ottoman Turks were Sunnis, as were the majority of Kurds. In the 16th century, Sultan Selim I, swearing to "eradicate the Shiites and bring the Shah to his knees," proposed an alliance with the Kurdish princes. The majority of them hastily accepted it. There was an historic battle at Tchaldiran (in Turkish Kurdistan) in 1514, between Turkish and Kurdish allies and Shah Ismail. He was badly beaten and his capital, Tabriz, devastated. To reward the Kurdish princes, Selim I recognized by imperial *firman*s the independence of their principalities and gave them his protection against Iran. The Sultan recognized the hereditary rights of the Kurdish dynasties and the *lio*, the Kurdish customs and traditions that remained intact in Kurdistan. On the other hand, the Kurdish princes swore their allegiance to the Sultan and promised military aid whenever the empire

went to war. Thus, the majority of the small Kurdish States became Ottoman protectorates. The shahs of Iran did likewise with a number of principalities of eastern Kurdistan.

A Clash of Allegiances

This situation made of Kurdistan a field of battle between sultans and shahs and, depending on their allegiances, the Kurdish princes, took part in these wars in both camps. The country was ruined and the population impoverished. Kurds took part in all the wars of the Ottoman Empire, from Vienna to Yemen. In 1639, a Turkish-Persian treaty fixed the frontier between the two empires, nearly that to be found today. It was then that began the division of Kurdistan between Persia and Ottoman Turkey.

Both sultans and shahs violated their agreements with the Kurdish States and sought to reduce them, one after the other, to mere provinces. The principalities defended themselves, but in isolation, the Kurdish aristocracy could never succeed in presenting a united front to the invader. They fell one after the other, the last, in Ottoman Kurdistan, in 1847, and in Iranian Kurdistan, under Riza Shah, in the 20th century. With the disappearance of the principalities, classical Kurdish literature, which flourished in the princely courts, declined. And the Kurdish people lost their independence.

The frequent wars in the Kurdish country between shahs and sultans, the growing intervention of Turkey and Iran in Kurdish affairs, the progressive reduction of Kurdish principalities into provinces, the heavy contributions that the Kurdish people had to make to the foreign wars of these two empires, in men and goods, in short, the substitution of Turkish-Persian domination for independence and poverty for the prosperity of the past, all favoured the modern Kurdish national idea. Something that might surprise many foreign observers, the Kurdish national idea, aimed at rejecting the domination of neighbouring States, reconquering liberty, is much older among the Kurds than the Turks, the Persians and the Arabs. It dates precisely from the 16th century. As evidence of that, the epic work of the great Kurdish poet of the 17th century, Ehmede Khanî (1650-1706). In his nationalist epic *Mem û Zîne*, the poet describes the misfortunes of the Kurdish people, laments their lost independence and dreams of a Kurdish State, before proposing ways of overthrowing the domination of neighbouring States and unifying Kurdistan.

Beginnings of the Kurdish Movement

In 1908, when the Ottoman Empire was granted a theoretically democratic constitution, the Kurdish movement began organizing on modern bases,

creating political parties and revolutionary committees, as was done elsewhere by the Arab movement within the same empire.

After the First World War, a Kurdish delegation, headed by General Cherif Pasha, former Ambassador of Turkey to Sweden, presented the Kurdish national claims to the peace conference in Paris. The Treaty of Sèvres in 1920, between the Allied Powers and defeated Turkey, recognized in its Section 3, entitled "Kurdistan," articles 62, 63 and 64, the autonomy of Ottoman Kurdistan, leaving the way clear for its complete independence if the League of Nations should ascertain that this was the desire of the Kurdish people. These international measures only concerned Ottoman Kurdistan (today Turkish, Iraqi and Syrian), with the exclusion of Iranian Kurdistan, because it was a question of dismembering the Ottoman Empire on the principle of nationality and Iran did not take part in the war. This was the first time that the rights of the Kurdish people to autonomy and independence were recognized internationally.

But the Treaty of Sèvres was never applied, nor even ratified. The coming to power of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk left everything in doubt.

The Arrival of the British

British troops occupied Arab Iraq in 1917, and only after the armistice of Mudros in 1918, southern Kurdistan, or the ancient Ottoman *vilayet* of Mosul. According to the Treaty of Sèvres, article 64, this territory was to be part of the State of Kurdistan. For strategic and economic (oil) reasons, Britain wanted to annex Arab Iraq, a State which it sought to create under its mandate, with an Arab king, Feisal I. But the republican Turkey of Mustafa Kemal claimed the same territory. This was the dispute that the Conference of Lausanne in 1922-23, to which the Kurds, the main party concerned, were not invited, was not able to settle. The Treaty of Lausanne of July 1923 between Turkey and the Allies superseded the Treaty of Sèvres, but the new treaty completely ignored the existence of a Kurdistan and a Kurdish question. The Kurds were shamefuly betrayed and abandoned by the great powers. The only problem remaining was that of the *vilayet* of Mosul (southern Kurdistan, which was to be Iraqi). The Council of the League of Nations was presented with this problem.

In the meantime, the Kurds of this territory had twice risen in revolt

Iraki soldiers taken prisoner by the Kurds are marched off to a prisoner-of-war camp in Kurdish mountain territory.





against the British troops, the first time in 1919, in the Sulaimani region, and the second in 1920, in the Barzan region. To calm them and strengthen its international position in regards to Turkish claims for the *vilayet*, the British Government, acting as the mandatory power in Irak, in a joint declaration with the Baghdad government, dated December 24, 1922 and officially communicated to the League of Nations, recognized in these terms the right of autonomy within Irak of southern Kurdistan:

"The Government of His Britannic Majesty and the Government of Irak recognize the rights of the Kurds living within the frontiers of Irak, to establish a Kurdish Government within these frontiers. They hope that the different Kurdish groups will arrive as soon as possible at an arrangement among them on the form they desire for this government and the limits within which they would like it to extend. They will send responsible delegates to discuss their economic and political relations with the Government of His Britannic Majesty and the Iraki Government."

On September 30, 1924, the Council of the League of Nations sent a commission, headed by the former Hungarian Prime Minister, Count Teleki, to the *vilayet* of Mosul to enquire into the desires of the population. In its quite objective report to the Council, the commission of enquiry noted that the feeling of the population of the contested territory was "Kurdish" and not Turkish or

Iraki, and that:

"If a conclusion must be drawn from the argument of ethnic isolation, it would lead to calling for the creation of an independent Kurdish State. The Kurds make up five-eighths of the population. If such a solution were envisaged, one should add to the preceding figure the Yezidis, Kurds of Zoroastrian religion and Turks, whose assimilation by the Kurdish element would be easy. In such an evaluation, the Kurds would then make up seven-eighths of the populations."

In giving justice to the Kurds with an obvious concern for objectivity, the Teleki report had the misfortune to displease the two antagonists, the Turks and the British. In the absence of Kurdish representatives, Britain and Turkey arranged to send a second commission of enquiry, headed by General Laidoner, to southern Kurdistan, whose report superceded that of the first commission.

The Laidoner Report

The Laidoner report recommended attaching the contested territory to Irak, in conformity with the British position, but in regards to the Kurdish problem, it noted:

"The wishes of the Kurds, that officials of their race be appointed to the administration of their country, will have to be taken into account, as well as the use of the Kurdish language as the official lan-

guage of justice and instruction in the schools."

These international measures, in principle, govern the status of the Kurdish people within the Iraki State, because the Council of the League of Nations decided on December 16, 1925 to ratify the recommendations of the above-mentioned commission.

Despite everything, the Kurds, who were thus attached to Irak without being consulted, were granted an internal and cultural autonomy within the limits of "their country" and within the Iraki frontiers. These measures, having the value of an international guarantee on behalf of the Kurds, were added to the solemn Anglo-Iraki Declaration of December 1922, which we have already mentioned, and were followed by other similar Iraki declarations.

From this, it is clear that the creation of the Iraki State, by the union of the three former Ottoman *vilayets* (provinces) of Bassorah, Baghdad and Mosul (Iraki Kurdistan), had as a condition the recognition of autonomy for the Kurdish people. The demands for autonomy by the present Kurdish Revolution are thus nothing new, and in so far as the Iraki Government refuses to recognize this autonomy, it violates the international recommendations and the very bases of the creation of the Iraki State. In addition, after the disappointment of the Kurds at the non-creation of an independent Kurdistan in conformity with the Treaty of Sèvres, and in view of the juridical

machinations that surrounded the ruling on the Mosul affair, when the Kurds, the main interested parties, were not consulted and their wishes were ignored, the achievement of Kurdish autonomy remains the minimum demand of the Kurdish people for them to agree to continue to co-exist with the Arabs within the same State. In this second half of the 20th century, when colonized and oppressed peoples are acceding to complete national independence, the desire of the Kurdish people in Irak to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination following a policy of co-existence with the Arabs in the same State, on the basis of autonomy, constitutes a very moderate and reasonable demand which is in the common interests of both Arabs and Kurds.

Betrayed Promises

But an even more exacerbating element in the patched-together ruling on the Mosul affair, was that Britain, as the mandatory power, and the reactionary and feudal government of the Iraki monarchy were charged by the League of Nations with the application of the clauses upholding the rights of the Kurdish people. One might as well ask a wolf to take care of a flock of sheep. None of the promises concerning autonomy were kept, and the international measures for ensuring Kurdish rights were purely and simply ignored. The Kurdish regions were absorbed into the very centralized Iraki

administrative system in the same way as the other regions. Kurdish was not the official language of Kurdistan, and the civil servants, the systems of justice and education, everything was Iraqi and not Kurdish. The only concession was that Kurdish was taught in the primary schools of one region alone out of the four provinces of Kurdistan. As to the name "Kurdistan," it was banished from official usage and became "Northern Irak," and since Irak is considered as an Arab State and country, this portion of the Kurdish country, which is really an integral part of Kurdistan and the Kurdish nation, was taken by British imperialist circles and their Iraqi proteges for an integral part of the Arab fatherland. This imperialist and unscientific conception was endorsed by the most chauvinistic nationalists in the Arab world, especially the Baathists.

A History of Revolt

We have seen how the Kurds revolted twice against British occupation; they rose up again in 1923 (in the Sulaimani region), in 1930 (in Sulaimani), in 1933 (Barzan region), and in 1943 and 1945 (Barzan region). During the course of the uprising in 1923, as they had in 1919, the Kurds formed an autonomous government under the presidency of Sheik Mahmud Berezendji of Sulaimani, refusing to submit to direct administration from Baghdad. In each

case, as the Iraqi Army was weak, the British Army, under General Fraser, undertook to destroy the forces of the Kurdish Government and to re-establish direct administration from Baghdad. The rebellions in 1933, 1943 and 1945 were crushed, above all as the result of the systematic intervention of the British Royal Air Force.

The 1930 revolt broke out because the Anglo-Iraqi treaty of the same year did not contain a single measure concerning the existence of the Kurdish people within the Iraqi frontiers. This is how Captain Philip Mumford, former British Army officer in Irak, described the event at a conference of the Royal Asian Society (R.A.S., vol. XX, January 1933, London):

"This protest became a revolt when the Iraqi Army fired on a crowd of Kurds... Sheik Mahmud asked for a limited form of autonomy... protesting against direct control of the Baghdad government. It was hoped that the Arab government would be able to deal with the situation on its own. It was quickly obvious that this was not so. The Royal Air Force had to take over the biggest part of the operations... and even then, Sheik Mahmud only surrendered eight months later."

It must be emphasized that although Kurdistan, from the 18th century until the First World War, was only divided into two portions, between Ottoman Turkey and Persia, the judgment of the Mosul affair and

the line drawn by the Syrian-Turkish border tore it into four parts, as we have seen above.

While the people in Iraki Kurdistan were rising up in the revolts that we have just mentioned, Turkish Kurdistan was undergoing the most terrible national suppression. The Turkish Government sought nothing less than the assimilation and dispersal of several millions of Kurds living in their ancestral homeland. Several major rebellions shook this northern portion of the Kurdish country in 1925, 1927-31 and 1937-38; all of them were drowned in blood. Not only did the Turkish Government refuse all the rights of the Kurdish people, but it even refused to recognize their existence as a people, referring to them as "Turkish mountain-dwellers" or "inhabitants of the East." The people of Turkish Kurdistan failed militarily in their rebellions but they preserved their ethnic existence and refused assimilation².

The situation of the Kurds in Iran was hardly better; their existence was recognized, but all their rights were denied and as in Syria and Turkey, all Kurdish schools were banned. National revolts took place there too, in 1918-24 (Shakar region), in 1930-33 (Luristan province) and in 1945-46 in the Mahabad region, where

the Kurds created an autonomous republic, known as the Mahabad Republic, which was crushed by the Iranian Army with the aid of a foreign power³.

In Syria the Kurds were, and are, deprived of all national rights even in the cultural domain. Space is lacking for a longer analysis of the question of the Kurdish people in Turkey, Iran and in Syria.

Only the small Kurdish communities in the Soviet Union enjoy full national, economic and social rights with their own schools and their own administration. Scientific studies on the Kurds are very advanced in the U.S.S.R., especially in the fields of philology, literature and history⁴.

Despite political repression, the people of Iraki Kurdistan have been able to develop an important cultural movement with the publication of literary journals and works in the Kurdish language. The Kurds in Syria also experienced a limited cultural development which has been forbidden since the end of the Second World War.

³ For references to the Mahabad Republic, see articles by P. Rondot in *Terre d'Islam*, issues of the second quarter of 1947 and May, 1948, Paris; also Archie Roosevelt in *The Middle East Journal*, July, 1947, Washington.

⁴ For further information about Kurdish studies interested readers can contact the U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences and the Oriental Institute at Leningrad.

² See *Les Kurdes et le Droit* by L. Rambout. Ed. du Cerf, Paris, 1947; *Les Kurdes*, B. Nikitine. Paris, 1956; *Kurds and Kurdistan*, Arshak Safrashtian, Harvill, London, 1948.



The Revolution in Iraki Kurdistan

The second portion of this article will examine the revolution now in process in Iraki Kurdistan.

A question that can be asked right away is why does the revolution solely concern Iraki Kurdistan, to the exclusion of the other parts of the Kurdish country? The reply is simple: despite the fact that the Kurds make up a single nation, and that their national question will only be finally resolved by an act of self-determination—which could be exercised through a democratic union on the basis of absolute equality between Kurdistan and the neighbouring coun-

tries—the question is evolving in an autonomous fashion within each of the States that Kurdistan is divided amongst. This autonomous evolution is explained by the different political and regional differences prevalent in each of those States and in each region of Kurdistan. A look at the past reveals that the Kurdish national revolts did not occur at the same time in Turkey, in Irak and in Irak. But it is obvious that the entire Kurdish people are following very closely the bitter struggle of the Iraki Kurds for national liberation. This having been said, let us express our wishes that the Kurdish national question elsewhere be settled peace-

fully and democratically, in the spirit of our century, in friendship with all the neighbouring countries, and without the blood-baths that Irak is experiencing today as a result of the dictatorial, anti-democratic, fascist and aggressive policy of its governments.

The Revolution of July 14, 1958 which brought General Kassem to power, with the popular support of both Arabs and Kurds, made its debut under the best democratic auspices. The monarchy was abolished and Irak became a Republic. For a while democratic liberties were restored to the people. A provisional constitution recognized (in Article 3) the bi-national character of the republic in the form of an Arab-Kurdish association which allowed equal national rights to the two principal nationalities whilst respecting the rights of minorities. General Mustafa Barzani, hero of the Kurdish people and President of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (D.P.K.) was able to return to Irak after spending 11 years in exile with 500 of his men, as a refugee in the Soviet Union. For the first time, the D.P.K.-Irak was given permission to engage in legal political activity.

Kurdish political newspapers, in particular *Khebat*, the official organ of the D.P.K., and *Kurdistan*, another Party paper, as well as *Azadi*, came out of hiding, and these papers became prominent dailies, lighting the way to liberation for the Kurdish masses in unity with the Arabs. Near-

ly every day printers in the towns in Sulaimani, Erbil and Kirkuk put out a new book written in Kurdish on the most diverse subjects.

Kassem's Betrayal

Alas! this state of things was not to last for very long, since Kassem had chosen the way of personal and arbitrary dictatorial tyranny, betraying the hopes that had been nourished by the principles of the Revolution of July 14th. The Arab-Kurdish association remained a dead letter; not alone were the concrete applications lacking, but also the juridical texts specifying its form. This form, as is well known, can only be autonomy of Kurdistan within the framework of a democratic Irak.

After having strangled democratic liberties in Arab Irak, the Kassem regime took it into its head in early 1960, to strike out against the Kurdish democratic movement, which was growing in strength and maturity. In the Spring of 1961, *Al Thawra*, the dictator's official newspaper, published a series of articles demanding purely and simply the assimilation of the Kurdish people and, height of irony, stating that if this assimilation "had not been conducted with desired efficiency in the past, it was because British imperialism had supported the Kurds." Thus Kassem reversed the role played by the British in Irak, forgetting that it was the latter who had forced this fraction of the Kurd people under the rule of the puppet-

king Feisal I, who was not even an Iraki, and by virtue of their arms and soldiers had subjected Kurdistan to the direct control of the Baghdad government of Nuri Said and other agents of imperialism.

Kassem knew very well that there could be no question of "assimilating" a people whose national solidarity, against all odds, had only been further cemented by 30 centuries of history. The call to assimilate was nothing but a provocation with the purpose of providing a pretext for an attack on Kurdistan. The Kurdish papers were closed down, one after the other; democrats were imprisoned and numerous officials of the D.P.K. were arrested on the pretence that they had "incited racial hatred amongst the Iraki people," and other untruths. Kurdish feudal lords, who were known to have been British agents, became the friends and allies of the regime. General Barzani, no longer safe in Baghdad, went back to his native region of Barzan where he waited patiently for the situation to develop and begged Kassem to return to reason. The notes addressed to the Prime Minister by the D.P.K. shortly before the outbreak of the Kurdistan war were extremely moderate and filled with the desire to safeguard the rights of the Kurdish people within Irakian unity and democracy.

But Kassem attacked Kurdistan on September 9, 1961. It was a semi-colonial type of war, trying especially to terrorize the Kurdish people by

systematic attacks by air and his army's heavy artillery. By doing this he thought he would soon bring the Kurds to their knees. On September 23, 1961 he even announced the simultaneous beginning of "the imperialist rebellion," its "end," and the "death" of General Barzani. He did not know that, by attacking the Kurdish people, he was condemning to death his own regime.

General Barzani, President of the D.P.K. and Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary Army of Kurdistan (R.A.K.—*Leshkiri Shurishguiri Kurdistan*), only had 700 old rifles at his disposal at the outbreak of the attack. But thanks to the military competence of the Kurdish chief and his universally loved and respected personality, thanks to the revolutionary organization of the movement and the extreme political awareness of the Kurdish masses, both brought about with great promptness by the D.P.K., in the advance guard of the Kurdish people, and thanks to the courage, the sacrifices and the solidarity of these people, what had begun as a mere unorganized resistance movement without any outside aid, changed into a war of liberation in the fullest sense of the term, starting from the New-Roj in the Spring of 1962⁵.

⁵ The *New-Roj* refers to the Kurdish "New Day." This is the oldest and most popular national holiday in Kurdistan and takes place on the first day of Spring each year.



A representative of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (centre) poses with local inhabitants outside an Iraqi Army fort captured and destroyed by the Kurdish Army in Sangsar, North Kurdistan.

The Aims of the Revolution

The aims of this revolutionary movement, as has been explained in many documents, were the following: 1) To put an end to the personal dictatorship of General Kassem; 2) to re-establish democracy and the parliamentary system in Irak; 3) to obtain the autonomy of Iraki Kurdistan within the framework of the Iraki Republic.

That the Kurdish Revolution asks for, not secession and national independence of Kurdistan—although the right to self-determination of the Kurdish people is clear— but to the contrary, autonomy within the Iraki framework, is explained by the interests that Kurds and Arabs have in common, by their historical friendship, and by the desire of the Kurdish leaders to contribute to the reinforcement of the democratic front

in Arab Irak, in the Arab world and in the Middle East. By its moderation the Kurdish national liberation movement proves its political maturity, particularly refusing to fall into the excesses of nationalism, the decrepit weapon of its enemies. But autonomy remains the minimum demand of the movement and the right to self-determination must remain inviolate: no generation has the right to alienate or mortgage the future of the nation. But the democratic friends of the Kurdish people throughout the world, beginning with their neighbours, should know and already have proof that the Kurdish liberation movement will only exercise this right in the future with discernment, taking into account the close ties that exist between the peoples of the region and the necessity of strengthening the forces of progress and peace against those of reaction.

Not only is the Kurdish Revolution democratic in its political aims, concerning all of Irak and the future status of Kurdistan, but also in its social content. The D.P.K. is, above all, a party of the working and peasant masses, the lower middle classes and Kurdish intellectuals; a national democratic assembly has put agrarian reform and industrialization of autonomous Kurdistan at the top of their programme.

After 17 months of war, the Kurdish Revolutionary Army had spread its control throughout the greater part of Iraki Kurdistan, with the ex-

ception of the big towns and some lines of communication. The number of troops had risen to 20,000 disciplined and trained soldiers, equipped with rifles and light automatic weapons taken from the Iraki Army. The vast liberated territory was administered by a politico-military framework, organized from village up to regional level, which dealt with military, administrative and logistical problems, provisions, communications, etc.⁶. The Iraki expeditionary forces, with some 30,000 men were at first aided by irregular formations of Kurdish feudal lords; these traitors were cut to pieces and the Iraki Army then found itself immobilized in and around the big cities. In some places the soldiers refused to continue the fratricidal battle, and in others, in the mountainous regions, they found they were completely encircled by units of Revolutionary troops.

Opposition to Kassem

The unjust war unleashed by Kassem and his military defeats gave rise

⁶ The Iraki Government had imposed an economic blockade, the Turkish and Iranian frontiers were closed leaving warring Iraki Kurdistan completely besieged and without access to the sea. In this respect, Algeria was in a far easier position during the war, since the Algerians benefitted from Moroccan, Tunisian and Arab assistance in general and also had access to the sea.

to two principal currents of opposition in Arab Irak. The first, and by far the largest, was the democratic current, supported by the mass of the people.

Even the ambiguity of the Kassem regime—adopting a foreign policy which appeared to some people as quite progressive, and a catastrophic, anti-democratic domestic policy which was semi-colonialist regarding the Kurdish people—created some dissension in the heart of democratic Arab opinion, rendering its own position rather ambiguous towards the Kurdish Revolution. But after some hesitation and shuffling, and in the face of the tenacity of the Kurdish people, which made their cause clearer to the Arabs, the democratic current finished by taking the following positions concerning the three aims of the Kurdish Revolution:

1. They were of course, from the beginning, completely in agreement with the Kurdish point of view, which is also their own, in favour of a democratic Irak provided with a normal parliamentary system.
2. The entire democratic forces of Arab Irak were for the immediate recognition of the rights of the Kurdish people, but with further precision and clarity, the Arab extreme left, resolutely adopted the Kurdish point of view concerning the recognition of Kurdish autonomy within the cadre of the Iraki Republic⁷.

3. The Arab democratic forces were divided on the precise point of putting an end to the Kassem regime, which was the primary and immediate objective of the Kurdish Revolution.

Whilst Kamel Tchadertchi, President of the National Democratic Party, clearly took a position against the regime, the Iraki extreme left seemed to have a desire, not to put an end to the Kassem regime, but rather to “orient it democratically” towards a better understanding of democracy and the rights of the Kurdish people. The Kurdish Revolution was of the opinion that an unbalanced and cynical dictator, such as Kassem was, was incapable of making amends, restoring democracy, and above all, of reaching agreement with the Kurds over the autonomous status of Kurdistan. Kassem was vain, and having proclaimed that the Kurdish Revolution was “an imperialist rebellion” and that it had been “liquidated,” he would have completely lost face.

The secondary current of Arab opposition, much narrower than the first, was what is generally called, nationalist. Their ideas concerning the future government of Irak are notoriously anti-democratic, and implacably hostile to Arab democratic

⁷ See the Report of the Central Committee of the Iraki Communist Party, March 1962.

opinion whose positions we have noted. This so-called nationalist wing declared themselves to be favourable to Kurdish rights, without any other details, but they were characterized in particular by their bitter opposition to the Kassem regime.

Now, it was the element farthest to the right of the nationalists—the mystical, fascist and extremist nationalists of the Baath Party, composed of Army officers made bitter and revengeful by their defeats in Kurdistan, who reaped the fruits of those very same Kurdish victories. They brought to an end a regime already mortally wounded by a long-protracted, hopeless war and took over power for the benefit of a sordid military putsch. This explains why that day was a day of terror and not a day of liberation.

For a while the Baathists collaborated with more moderate pro-Nasserist “Unionist” nationalist elements. According to information from reliable sources, President Nasser immediately reproached the Baathists for the blood of thousands of Arab democrats of all tendencies, that they shed on the soil of Arab Irak, on February 8 and the days that followed.

It is indeed the Arabs’ privilege to entrust their government to the party or parties of their choice. In regard to Irak, the Kurds would raise no objection should the government of Irak be in the hands of the so-called Arab Nationalist parties, if the following four precise conditions were

fulfilled: 1) that such was truly the desire of the majority of Irakis and the Arab Irakis; 2) that these parties governed Irak democratically and not by terror; 3) that the Kurds, who represent 30 per cent of the population of the Republic, were associated in the Iraki Government; 4) that they recognized the autonomy of Kurdistan within the framework of the Republic. But none of these conditions have been fulfilled by the Baathists.

The Kurds and Pan-Arab Unity

It would also be completely false, in speaking of a democratic current and a nationalist current in Arab Irak, to suppose that the former is “less patriotic” in questions concerning the Arab aspirations to unity or union than the latter. On the contrary, we are convinced that a democratic group such as that of Mr. Tchadertchi, an eminent Arab patriot, is capable of bringing far more positive elements to the realization of these aspirations than a fascist group like the Baathists. In spite of the so-called “socialism” of the Baathists, and in spite of their demagogic “vocation” for Pan-Arab unity, we do not believe that this party is capable of realizing these legitimate aspirations. The reasons for this are simple: 1) an Arab Union built on a basis of terror and not of democracy would be immoral, against the interests of the Arabs themselves, and

would damage the good reputation of the Arab nation and its democratic, liberal traditions in the eyes of foreign countries; 2) such a unity would not be viable because the Arab people themselves would rise up against it; 3) the State of Irak itself would not be able to participate in any Arab Union until the Kurdish national problem had been settled democratically, by the recognition of the autonomy of Kurdistan, within the framework of Irak or the Union.

When Colonel Taher Yahia, now promoted General and Chief-of-Staff of the Iraki Army, entered into contact with the Kurdish Revolution during the winter at the end of 1962, soliciting its support or at least its friendly neutrality for the day when he and his friends were going to attempt a coup d'Etat against Kassem, he did so in the name of the "Free Officers" of Irak, and not in the name of the Baathists. Mr. Ibrahim Ahmed, General Secretary of the D.P.K., consulted the president of the party and his colleagues in the Political Bureau and the Central Committee and then replied in writing to the colonel in question on April 2, 1962. In this letter the D. P. K. emphasized the democratic aims of the Kurdish Revolution and the necessity of governing Irak democratically; it also demanded that the Free Officers should recognize the autonomy of Kurdistan within the framework of the Republic as soon as Kassem was overthrown. Taher Yahia evaded a written committment, contenting himself

with verbal promises to include Kurdish ministers, acceptable to General Barzani, in the Iraki Government.

As soon as the coup d'Etat was over, General Barzani and his lieutenants lost all confidence in the regime; with the Baathists holding all the principal posts of command it proceeded systematically to massacre or arrest en masse democratic Arabs of all tendencies. But Radio Baghdad, without announcing the expected recognition of Kurdish autonomy, immediately hailed "the glorious Kurdish Revolution," and proffered a myriad of vague promises. Of the six Kurds previously chosen by the Political Bureau of the D.P.K. and approved by General Barzani to be ministers in the new government, only two were retained by the Baathists, though they were indeed representative. Messrs. Baba Ali⁸, and General Fuad Araf⁹.

Baghdad Stalls

The Kurdish Commander-in-Chief did not want to take the responsibil-

⁸ Baba Ali, son of Sheik Mahmud Berezendji (died in 1956) who had been President of the autonomous government of Southern Kurdistan in 1919 and 1923, when it was overthrown each time by British troops.

⁹ General Fuad Aref is of course, no relation to Colonel Abdul Salem Aref, who was promoted to "Marshal" and Chief-of-State after the putsch.

ity for war against the new regime and tried by every means to find a peaceful settlement to the conflict; he ordered an immediate cease-fire. General Taher Yahia, headed a governmental delegation to General Barzani's central headquarters as a gesture of appeasement. He made many profuse apologies to the Kurdish chief, stating that the regime's delay in recognizing Kurdish autonomy was due to the fact that the Free Officers were not in power alone, since the group that brought about the coup d'Etat had been widened and that things no longer depended only on him; however, the Kurdish problem would be solved peacefully, by negotiations. The economic blockade of Kurdistan was lifted, but only for two weeks, and some of the Kurdish political prisoners were released. The Kurdish forces set free the Iraqi prisoners that were still held, about 600 soldiers, keeping only 50 war criminals¹⁰.

On the other hand, on the day of the putsch, Arab popular demonstrations carried slogans supporting Kassem. This was doubtlessly an error. Now it was impossible for the Kurdish Revolution to come to the aid of its overthrown enemy. This popular

¹⁰ During the war against Kassem, the Kurdish forces took several thousand prisoners that they mostly released immediately after disarming them, sending them back to their homes with the promise that they would never come back to fight against Kurdistan.

Arab resistance, as we know, only lasted for a day or two before being liquidated in a Hitlerite manner by the police and the so-called "National Guard," the S. S. men wearing the green arm-band of the regime. It would have been a complete waste of time for the Kurdish Revolution to come to the rescue of the Arab democrats in distress. It should also be mentioned that the lifting of the economic blockade on Kurdistan presented important strategic economic advantages in the case of renewed hostilities. Finally, it was very important that the Kurdish Revolution, by its observation of the truce, should give to the Arab world and other countries proof of its good will, moderation, and above all make clear its national demands.

However, we know that General Barzani, faced with the procrastinations of the new regime and the blood that was being shed in Baghdad and other Arab cities, was on the point of taking up hostilities again as from March 1, announcing his decision to the foreign journalists who rushed to his headquarters. It was only the hasty arrival of the Iraqi governmental delegation at the headquarters, which we have mentioned above, heralded by a telegramme, that dissuaded him. The telegramme was dated March 1; Taher Yahia and the ministers arrived on March 4, at Kani-Maran (The Source of Serpents), at the foot of the snow-peaked mountains of Zagros, the place chosen by the Kurdish Commander-in-Chief.



The Kurds have captured—and released—thousands of captured Iraqi soldiers. Only war criminals are held indefinitely, pending judgment for their crimes against the Kurdish people.

“Full Democracy”

In its most critical hours, General Barzani, made no mystery of the intentions and democratic aims of the Kurdish Revolution. In a series of interviews given to a correspondent of the French daily newspaper *Le Monde*, who was his guest at the

time when he received the Iraqi delegation at Kani-Maran, he stressed particularly:

“General Barzani would like, above all,” wrote the correspondent, “to re-establish full democracy” in the country.

“Autonomy of Kurdistan,” he said, “will not be sufficient to bring back

peace and harmony to Irak. We must put an end to the era of pronunciamientos, military coups d'Etats that follow each other without doing anything to resolve the serious problems that undermine the country. I have never been an enemy of the Arabs, and I have no political ambitions for myself. That is why I allow myself to say to the Iraki leaders; 'if you seek the good of the people, you should proclaim a general amnesty, authorize the activity of all parties without exception, organize free elections and form a government representing all tendencies and all national and religious minorities'. And General Barzani concluded: "For lack of true democracy, Irak, which is a mosaic of peoples, will wallow in anarchy, and the present Baghdad leaders will be sooner or later eliminated by the same violence that they used to seize power¹¹."

Nasser's Approval

Very soon after the putsch, Baghdad stated that they could not recognize Kurdish autonomy without the approval of the principal leaders of the Arab world, in particular President Nasser. Mr. Jalal Talabani, member of the Political Bureau of the D.P.K., who had been charged by General Barzani with the task of conducting the conversations with Baghdad undertook a trip to Cairo and Algiers in February, 1963. In the

presence of an Iraki governmental delegation he obtained the "approval" desired by the Baathists. Recognizing the fact of Kurdish nationality "just as there is a Nile in Egypt," and the legitimacy of the Kurdish demands so long as they were directed towards autonomy within the Iraki framework, President Nasser recommended that the two parties concerned should on no account resort to force to solve the problem and stated that he entirely agreed in advance with any arrangement that could be reached by negotiation between them both. Mr. Ahmed Ben Bella, Prime Minister of Algeria, was of a similar opinion, comparing the Kurdish Revolution to the Algerian Revolution,

¹¹ Reported by Eric Rouleau on March 4, this statement was published in an article in the newspaper *Le Monde*, Paris, April 16, under the title *Le chasseur, le berger et le loup*, (The hunter, the shepherd and the wolf). It was the fifth and last of a series of articles on the Revolution, entitled *Le Kurdistan irakien à dos de mulet* (Iraki Kurdistan on Muleback). The first four installments appeared in the same paper on April 10, 11, 13 and 14. It was a very interesting series, but in the fourth installment, *Les politiciens des cavernes*, (The politicians of the caves), the author unfortunately reported some erroneous rumours about the so-called "divergencies" between the president of the D.P.K. and its Political Bureau. Everything that was published in the world press concerning this is completely without foundation, due perhaps to the incompetence of the Kurdish interpreters, since the good faith of the journalists is unquestionable.

and emphasizing the futility of any attempt to "resolve the Kurdish problem by force¹²."

On March 9, Radio Baghdad issued a communique announcing that "The National Committee of the Iraqi Revolution recognizes the national rights of the Kurdish people on the basis of decentralization¹³." The word "autonomy" did not come into the proclamation. On March 11, Mr. Salah al-Saadi, Secretary General of the Iraqi Baathists and Vice-President of the Baghdad Government, stated at Damascus that "The Kurdish provinces will have their own administration in all fields except foreign affairs, defence and finances, which will remain in the control of the central government." Proving their flexibility, the Kurdish Revolution even accepted the term "decentralization," on the understanding that this had the same content as autonomy.

A Kurdish conference was held during the same month at Koy-Sand-

¹² This was reported to us personally by our friend and compatriot, Colonel Talabani.

¹³ A few days previous, on March 6, Mr. Taleb H. Chebib, Baathist Foreign Minister in Baghdad, declared to the correspondent of *Le Monde*, "There is no question of us according autonomy to the Kurds. It is already enough that we are negotiating with an outlaw. If General Barzani, doesn't show willingness to compromise, it will not take us long to crush the rebellion, once and for all. (*Le Monde*, April 16).

jak, to establish the main lines of Iraqi Kurdistan claims. Presided over by General Barzani, it included 165 delegates representing the Central Committee of the D.P.K., the chief leaders of the Kurdish Army, representatives from towns and villages, youth and women's organizations, teachers and students, as well as, it should be noted, representatives of the Turkish and Christian minorities in Kurdistan. The resolutions taken at the conference were unanimous, the minority representatives solidly supporting their Kurdish compatriots¹⁴. A delegation of 14 members, including seven councillors, presided over by Colonel Talabani and representing all tendencies and categories of the population of Iraqi Kurdistan was chosen to go to Baghdad to conduct official negotiations with the government.

There were no real negotiations in spite of the official meetings; the Baghdad Government only wanted to gain time, not to seriously commit themselves.

¹⁴ The Christian Assyrio-Chaldeans of Kurdistan participated actively in the Kurdish Revolution. A young Chaldean, Marguerite George, became a battalion chief in the Kurdish Army, operating under the command of Assaad Khoshevi who commanded the military zone in the north of Kurdistan. The central military zone has been placed under the command of Mr. Omer Mustafa, member of the Political Bureau of the D.P.K., detached to the General Headquarters of General Barzani. The southern zone is commanded by Colonel Talabani.



General Barzani inspecting a unit of the tough guerrilla fighters who make up the forces of the Revolutionary Army of Kurdistan.



Baathist Plots

Immediately after the Iraqi coup d'Etat, the Baathists hastened to Cairo to propose to President Nasser the creation of a single military command for the Arab countries and plans for a union which would provide for the automatic use of united Arab forces in any "liberated" Arab country against foreign aggression, which is quite legitimate, but also against any armed movement within the country (like the Kurdistan Revolution) which is not at all. Nasser did not want to commit himself in the latter direction. Indeed the Baathists were much less interested, in the Arab Union than they were in consolidating their internal position, using the prestige of the head of the U.A.R. as a cover. After the overthrow of the Syrian regime on March 8, the talks in Cairo became tripartite and more decisive. On April 17, the creation was announced of a federal Arab State, under the name of the United Arab Republic, grouping Egypt, Syria and Iraq which was to come into operation after a referendum to take place five months after that date.

The Kurdo-Iraqi negotiations dragged on in Baghdad. On April 8, ~~two~~ ^{some} days before the Cairo communique announcing the creation of the Arab Federation, Colonel Talabani presented a note on behalf of the Kurdish delegation to the members of the Cairo conference, itemizing

the attitude of the Kurdish Revolution to the Pan-Arab projects. The note asked, first of all, for the inclusion of Kurdish Revolutionary representatives amongst the Iraqi delegation to Cairo and emphasized that the Kurdish people would never be opposed to union between the Arab States, before putting forward the following points:

- 1) If Iraq were to remain completely independent, the Kurdish people would ask only that their national autonomous rights be respected on the basis of a decentralization, as had been agreed upon.

- 2) If Iraq were to join an Arab Federation, it would be necessary to accord a wide autonomy to Iraqi Kurdistan, in the classical meaning of the term.

- 3) If Iraq were to be fused into a United Arab Republic, it would necessitate the creation of a Kurdistan territory distinct from Iraqi territory; this territory would also be attached to the central government of the U.A.R. (on the same footing as Arab Iraq or Syria), and in a way that would fully preserve the personality of the Kurdish people.

The Kurdish people are thus not seeking to separate themselves from the Arabs even in the case of Arab Federation or of a closer Union, under the conditions already stated. This having been said, it must not be supposed that the Kurds consider their country as an "Arab country"; they are willing to unite the destiny of southern (Iraqi) Kurdistan to that

of the Arab countries by an act of self-determination, by a union freely agreed upon; but the Arabs, or some of them, are asked to rid themselves of the idea they have inherited from British imperialism of considering Iraki Kurdistan as an Arab country and an integral part of the Arab fatherland. Even if it be united in a United Arab Republic, Kurdistan is and will remain a Kurdish country, and it will never be an Arab country.

During this time the climate deteriorated in Baghdad the negotiations were on the point of rupture. The economic blockade of Kurdistan had already been re-established. To the 3,000 political prisoners who had not been liberated after the putsch, many of them members of the D.P.K., others were added. The Kurdish negotiators were under surveillance and lost their immunity. And even more serious, Baghdad was concentrating troops in the principal Kurdish towns in the plains, particularly at Kirkuk¹⁵.

On April 24, while the Iraki Government kept silent, the Kurdish delegation in Baghdad published the text of a memorandum which had been submitted that same day to that

government, presenting the Kurdistan demands.

The Kurdish Plan

The Kurdish plan provided for a central Iraki Government for the entirety of Irak, and a "national apparatus" to govern the autonomous territory of Kurdistan, within the framework of Irak. This apparatus was to include a freely elected Kurdish legislative assembly and an executive council appointed by the assembly and answerable to it. The central government would be responsible for the following matters: Chief-of-State, foreign affairs, national defence, finance, oil industry, customs, ports and international airports, postal, telegraph and telephone services, citizenship, organization of the national budget, supervision of central radio and television stations, and atomic energy. This list is definitive. The Kurdish authorities will be responsible for the following affairs within the boundaries of Kurdistan: law, the judiciary, internal affairs, schools and education, public health, agriculture, tobacco, townships, labour, social affairs, economic development, pasturage, and all matters not specifically entrusted to the central government. Kurdistan's part in the central government and administration would be proportionate to the size of population compared to the population of entire Irak.

¹⁵ On April 15th, the Soviet trade union newspaper *Trud*, commented on rumours, according to which, the Iraki Government was preparing to launch an attack against the Kurdish insurgents. (A.F.P., *Le Monde*, April 16, Paris).

Kurdish national revenues would be provided by: 1) local resources, taxes and levies payable to Kurdistan; 2) a share proportionate to the population of Kurdistan in relation to the total number of inhabitants of Iraq from the oil revenues, customs, airports, ports, exchanges and national banks, postal, telegraph and telephone services, railways, but only after deducting, in the same proportion, the expenses of the central government for matters remaining under its jurisdiction; 3) Kurdistan's share, in the same proportion, of foreign loans and aid; 4) Domestic and non-military loans and assistance that Kurdistan will receive; 5) the revenues from tobacco, forests and summer resorts; 6) Kurdistan would participate in the same proportion as mentioned above in Iraqi projects, enterprises and services of mutual interest.

Kurdistan would be composed of the provinces of Sulaimani, Erbil and Kirkuk and the districts and communes with Kurdish majorities in the provinces of Mosul and Diyala. The vice president of the Iraqi Republic and the assistant chief of staff of the Iraqi Army would be Kurds with full rights. The Constitution establishing the national entity of Kurdistan would guarantee ethnic and religious minorities, such as the Turks, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Armenians, their cultural, social and economic rights, their democratic and religious liberties, as well as their representation, in proportion to their number, in the legis-

lative assembly and executive council of Kurdistan. The Iraqi Army would maintain its present name, but Kurdish conscripts would be kept in their own divisions. This part of the Army, should the Iraqi Army change its name (becoming Arab), would be given the name of *Failak* of Kurdistan). Kurdish conscripts would do their military service in Kurdistan. The central government would have the right to send additional troops to Kurdistan only in case of foreign aggression or a certain threat of aggression; in normal times any additional movement of troops to Kurdistan could only be made with the approval of the legislative assembly and the executive council of Kurdistan. The Iraqi Army could carry out repressive operations in Kurdistan only after approval by the legislative assembly or at the request of the executive council of Kurdistan. If the Iraqi flag were changed (becoming Arab), a Kurdish symbol must be added to it. If Iraqi nationality changed (becoming Arab), the word "Kurdistan" must be added to the passports and identity cards of all persons of Kurdish origin or from Kurdistan. Any legal measures to limit the national, economic, cultural, social and democratic rights of the Kurdish people would be null and void. One of the ministers of the present Kurdish government would be charged with forming a provisional executive council of Kurdistan to carry out provisionally the functions of the council.

The April 24th memorandum states, moreover, that these demands are presented as a "basis for discussion" with the Iraki Government. They can therefore be modified by mutual agreement.

No Reply

The Baathist government has never replied to these proposals. The Iraki Baathists, after eliminating from the government pro-Nasserist, Unionist elements, received in Baghdad during the first week of June a delegation of the Baathist government of Syria, including the cynical "theoretician" of the party, Michel Aflak. Without consulting the other Arab countries or even informing Nasser, who is, however, the president of the new Arab Federation, the Syro-Iraki Baathists drew up their plan of aggression against Kurdistan, in particular planning the contribution of the Syrian Air Force.

On June 10th, the Baathist government sent an ultimatum to General Barzani, demanding that he surrender with his troops within 24 hours. As would be expected, the Kurdish Commander-in-Chief rejected the ultimatum, and the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Kurdish People, authorized to speak in the name of General Barzani and to aid the cause of the Revolution abroad, issued a communique on June 10th, which was carried by the news agencies. The communique placed the entire responsibility for the resump-

tion of the war on the Baath party. Indeed, the aggression had begun three days before the announcement of the ultimatum. A campaign, bringing into action some 60,000 heavily armed Iraki soldiers, with the participation of the Iraki and Syrian air forces, and enjoying undisguised military support by the British Government, could not be improvised within a few days. Five of the seven Kurdish negotiators were still in Baghdad as "guests" of the government on the eve of the ultimatum, still hoping to continue the "negotiations" for a peaceful settlement of the problem. They were treacherously arrested. Colonel Talabani, chairman of the delegation, was in Beirut, on his way back from Cairo where he had gone to make a report on the situation to President Nasser and to explain the Kurdish point of view to him. Instead of continuing to Baghdad, he went to Europe to make contact with Kurdish organizations and outstanding figures abroad, to alert world public opinion and international organizations. General Fuad Aref and Mr. Baba Ali, the two Kurdish cabinet ministers, presented their resignations on the day of the aggression and were arrested by their former "colleagues." Armed aggression, a war of extermination against the civilian population, this was the answer of the Baathists to the desire of the Kurdish people to coexist with the Arab people within the same State, with respect for their rights and their own personality.



Heavily armed Kurdish soldiers stand guard outside the temporary headquarters of General Mustafa Barzani.

Reasons for the Aggression

The reasons for the aggression were numerous:

1. In the Baath "doctrine," Iraqi Kurdistan is considered an "Arab land" and the Kurds marked for "assimilation," which explains the hostility of this party to the effective recognition of the rights of the Kurdish people and the autonomy of Kurdistan.

2. British military assistance to the Baathists. Baghdad had concluded an agreement with the British Government for the purchase of arms particularly of use in mountain warfare, including 250 Hawker Hunter planes, which are now being delivered. The

total amount of the agreement is for 25 million pounds sterling.

3. The attitude of the Irak Petroleum Company (a non-Iraqi company), encouraging the Baathist plots against the Kurdish national liberation movement, in order to hold on to its oil fields.

4. The Baathist coup d'Etat of March 8th in Syria had provoked a dangerous complex of superiority among the Baathists of Baghdad. They believed themselves, like Don Quixote, capable of anything and permitted to do anything.

5. Since President Nasser refused to give his benediction to a war of extermination against a people who wanted to coexist in all friendship with the Arabs, the Baath hoped to

further its aim of domination over the Arab world by isolating the President of the U.A.R.¹⁶. The dispute between the President of the U.A.R. and the Baath party is not a concern of the Kurds, but it seems certain to us that it is not by attacking a friendly people that the Baath can win the confidence of the Arab masses. Moreover, Mr. Nasser could not support the crimes of the Baathists without betraying the high principles of the Afro-Asian peoples, among whom he is a leading figure.

6. The complete political isolation of the Baath party in Irak. By attacking the Kurds, this party hoped to be able to draw behind it, through ethnic chauvinism and racial hatred, a part of Arab opinion in Irak and abroad, and thus create a certain "popularity." But the contrary took place. The overwhelming majority of the Arabs of Irak is hostile to the Baathists and condemns their dirty war in Kurdistan.

The Military Situation

At the time of writing this article. 23 days after the beginning of the new aggression, the military situation

¹⁶ Colonel Talabani tells me that it was the Baathist government of Irak that proposed that he make his second trip to Cairo, carrying "a written document" to President Nasser on behalf of Kurdish rights, which would have been used by the Baathists as evidence of Nasser's "treason" to the Arab cause.

was as follows: the Iraki attack had been repulsed and broken everywhere. Fighting was continuing to rage across a broad front, stretching from the Syrian borders to the frontiers of Iran. Iraki units were encircled at Ranya, Rowanduz, Shaqlawa, Akra, Amadiya. All communications had been cut between Baghdad and the province of Sulaimani, where the Iraki Army was surrounded. The losses within the ranks of the aggressors were high. Baghdad wanting to throw its reserves into the battle, the Arab conscripts of the classes of 1939, 1940 and 1941 called into the service, were fleeing. Not wanting to be sent to Kurdistan, they were hiding from the authorities. The government had to postpone this unpopular decision. Hundreds of Iraki soldiers and officers were deserting the Iraki Army and placing themselves under the orders of General Barzani within the ranks of the Kurdish Army. But, as during the Kassem regime and with even greater savagery, Iraki and Syrian planes continued to bomb Kurdish civilians, killing women, children and old people. In the city and the plains of Kirkuk, 200,000 Kurdish civilians were being moved en masse in order to denationalize this oil region¹⁷.

Already hundreds of Arabs were fighting at the sides of the Kurds within the Revolutionary Army of

¹⁷ See the London *Daily Telegraph* of June 19th.

Kurdistan. Launched treacherously by Arab fascists, this war is not only Kurdistan's war, but also the war of a democratic Irak, the war of the Arab people themselves for national and social justice against dictatorship and tyranny.

With tanks and heavy artillery at their disposal, which the Kurds do not have, the Baathists can kill thousands of women and children. But they will surely lose the war. The British press has even expressed the opinion that "the young men now governing in Baghdad have launched upon an adventure." This adventure will undoubtedly cost the Baathists their party and their regime, not only in Irak, but also in Syria, since the Syrian Baath was willing to join with that of Irak in the responsibility for the conflict. Just as Kassem condemned his regime by attacking the Kurdish people so the Baathists are condemning themselves to dishonour and, as will be seen, to overthrowal.

Ben Bella's Mistake

It is infinitely regrettable that President Ben Bella of Algeria and Marshal Sallal of Yemen yielded to the fallacious arguments of the Baathists of Damascus and Baghdad and issued official communiques against the just combat of the Kurdish people for their liberty, dignity and national existence. By giving way to Mr. Bitar,

the Baathist Prime Minister of Damascus, Mr. Ben Bella not only contradicts himself, but enters upon a false path. The Algerian people, for whom the Kurdish people have only admiration and friendship, have no interest in seeing their government turned against the national liberation movement of Kurdistan, linked to the cause of democracy in Irak.

Abroad public opinion throughout the world condemns the aggression, in the West as well as in the socialist countries and the countries of the Third World. The Western press has not ceased to support the Kurdish cause, since the day that Kassem unleashed his aggression in September 1961. Today, from extreme right to extreme left, the press is unanimous in supporting the same cause, in France, Switzerland, Germany, Italy, Spain, Austria, Scandinavia, Ireland, Iceland and other European countries¹⁸. Eminent men, such as Lord Russell in Britain, members of parliaments, senators, condemn the Baathist aggression. In the socialist countries, public opinion and government have already taken positions in favour of the Kurdish demands and against the aggression. On May 6th, *Pravda* made such a statement. On June 14th, in an official statement of the Tass news agency, the Soviet Government vigorously condemned the

¹⁸ For example, see the excellent editorial of M. René Payot, an eminent Swiss journalist, in the *Journal de Genève* of June 13th.

Hitlerite methods employed by the Baathists in their dirty war against the civilian population, and also clearly supported the autonomy of Kurdistan.

British Arms and Iraki Oil

Contrary to Western public opinion, Western governments seem in general to have adopted a wait-and-see attitude. We hope that the Western press will oblige these governments to take a positive attitude, condemning the aggression and supporting Kurdish demands as the socialist governments have done. Only the British Government, directly or indirectly, supports the Baathists, supplying them with arms. We are certain that this is a bad bargain for London, because the Baathists will not remain in power. Kurdish forces have already destroyed the I.P.C. oil installations at Jambur, 32 kilometres south of Kirkuk, and this is only a beginning. The Kurdish people cannot permit Baghdad to use Kurdish natural resources to buy arms from the British to put into the hands of Baathist adventurers to destroy Kurdish cities and villages and massacre the unarmed population. If I.P.C. cares for its installations in Irak and wants oil to continue to flow through its pipelines, it would do well to stop paying for this dirty war by halting the payment of royalties to the Baathist government of Irak¹⁹. And if the British Government continues to arm

the troops of the criminal politicians of Baghdad, it may cost them on the day of the Kurdish victory, which is sure, the British part of the shares of I.P.C. Our people appeal to the British people, to their solid democratic traditions, to oblige their government to cease immediately the shipment of arms to Irak.

During the first phase of the war, under Kassem, the Turkish and Iranian governments maintained a strict attitude of neutrality. Today, in the second phase of the war, Turkey has militarily closed her frontier with Iraki Kurdistan. That is her right, but it is regrettable that the government of Ankara thought fit to arrest 12 Kurdish citizens for "activity on behalf of the Kurdish cause." As we have said, this war was imposed upon the people of Iraki Kurdistan and it will remain in Iraki Kurdistan. The Kurdish people have not forgotten their long period of common history with the fraternal Persian people and the valliant Turkish people. General Barzani expresses the wish that the Iranian and Turkish governments will continue to observe the same attitude of neutrality and non-intervention as before. As for the Kurdish problem in Turkey and Iran, no one should forget the wish of all Kurds that it be solved progressively, with wisdom and in peace and friendship and unity with the Turks and Persians.

¹⁹ At present the Baghdad government receives almost 100 million pounds sterling yearly in oil royalties.

An Appeal to the World

To halt this terrible war, to save the lives of thousands of innocent women, children and old people, to end the shedding of blood of Arabs and Kurds, and to do justice to a people who also are worthy of enjoying freedom in this century of national liberation of oppressed peoples, our Kurdish people appeal to all the peoples of the world for active solidarity. Our Kurdish people, whose national liberation movement intends to remain neutral in international affairs, committed solely to peace and democracy, against colonialism and national oppression, our people call on all democratic governments, and in particular those of the Afro-Asian countries and the small democratic countries of Europe, to bring the conflict officially before the United Nations. This war outrageously violates the principles of the United Nations Charter, the convention for the prevention and repression of the crime of genocide, the right of peoples to self-determination, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and shakes the bases of peace in the Middle East, threatening world peace. Moreover, it violates the specific international guarantees given on behalf of the Kurdish people by the League of Nations at the time of the difficult

settlement of the Mosul affair and the admission of Irak to the League of Nations, illegally ignored and violated by the mandatory power, Britain, as well as by the government of Irak. The United Nations today are morally and juridically bound by these guarantees inherited from the defunct League of Nations. It also should not be forgotten that this conflict has already been internationalized by the Syrian military intervention on the side of the government of Irak, an intervention devoid of any juridical basis. All these points were recently brought up in a communique on June 28th of the Committee for the Defense of the Rights of the Kurdish People, expressing the views of the high command of the Kurdish Revolution.

Vigourously supported by the Kurdish people, led, organized, educated and to a large extent constituted by the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, commanded and directed by General Barzani, chief and beloved hero of the Kurdish people and president of their vanguard party, the Revolutionary Army of Kurdistan, which is also supported by the Arab democrats of Irak and abroad, will surely crush the Syro-Iraki aggressive military forces of the Baathists and make Kurdistan the tomb of the fascists, adventurers and criminals. But the outside world, and especially the United Nations, have no right to sit idly as spectators of the conflict, watching men's blood being split.

Postscript

After finishing this article, we learned that the Mongolian People's Republic is bringing the Kurdish problem and the crime of genocide committed by the Baathist government of Iraq against the unarmed population of Kurdistan, before the U.N. Security Council at the next session of the U.N. General Assembly. Warmly thanking the government of Mongolia, a fraternal Asian country,

as well as the other socialist countries and especially the Soviet Union, for defending their legitimate rights, the Kurdish people at the same time call on all member States of the United Nations, and in particular the Western governments, to join with the socialist countries in condemning this crime of genocide and to do justice to an oppressed people who have made enough sacrifices in order to enjoy liberty.

Ismet Cheriff VANLY

NEHRU'S NON-ALIGNMENT

NEW DELHI - After the signing of a pact with the United States and Britain for "joint training exercises" with the Indian Air Force and an agreement for the installation of U.S. radar along the Chinese border, the latest evidence of the Nehru government's abandonment of a policy of non-alignment is a deal, permitting the Voice of America to make propaganda broadcasts from India. The U.S. will be allowed to beam its propaganda to South East Asia from the new \$2 million radio transmitter being built for the All India Radio under a U.S. "aid" agreement.

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