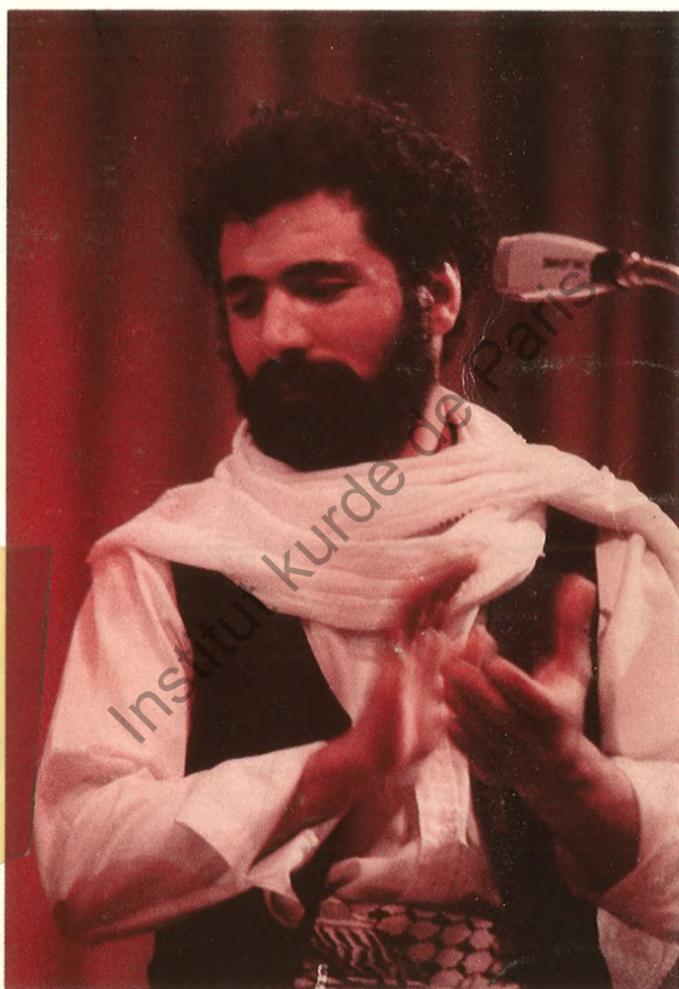


THE KURDISH VOICE SHIVAN PERWER

THE KURDISH VOICE **SHIVAN PERWER**



mahmut baksı

SHIVAN PERWER



Institut kurde de Paris

LIV. ENG. 675
26/06/2017
720 BAK KUR



THE KURDISH VOICE SHIVAN PERWER

By Mahmut Baksı

Institut Kurde de Paris

Translated by Chahin and Bawermend

In AUSTRALIA

1986

HELIN HOUSE

Books by Mahmut Baksi

IN KURDISH

Zaroken Ihsan.....	1978
Keça Kurd Zozan.....	1979
Helin.....	1984

IN TURKISH

Mezra Botan.....	1968
Şadi Alkılıç Davası.....	1969
Vatandaş Hakkı.....	1970
Kürt Sorunu.....	1971
Kürt Tarihi.....	1972
Isveç İsveç dedikleri.....	1976
Kamışlı Katliamı.....	1981
Sıvan'ın Sevdası.....	1984

IN SWEDISH

Den Kurdiska Fragan.....	1974
Sma Slavar.....	1975
Hörru du.....	1976
Ihsans Barn.....	1977
Zozan.....	1978
Hasan Aga.....	1979
Kurdistan.....	1980
Hanna.....	1981
Helin.....	1983

IN DANISH

Ihsans Born.....	1979
Zozan.....	1980
Hasan Aga.....	1981
Helin.....	1986

IN NORWEGIAN

Sma slaver.....	1977
Zozan.....	1980

Books by Mahmut Baksi



In memory of Necla and Neco

My sister Necla Baksi, born in 1959. Killed by Turkish soldiers on the 12 of December, 1980 in Kamishli, Syria together with 14 other Kurdish patriots: men, women and children.

Necmettin Büyükkaya born in 1944. Killed by Turkish guards in January 1983 in the Turkish prison of the city of Diyarbekir in Turkish Kurdistan.

Institut kurde de Paris

Foreword

Kurdish music, Kurdish Culture.

Do not cry my son.
I know that you are suffering.
You ask me why you must be so firmly tied.
You tell me that you cannot bear
these heavy chains anymore.
You wonder why the Kurdish people
must be captives.
And I tell you, my son,
that it is better for you
to go used to the captivity in the cradle.

Those lines were written by the Kurdish poet Hejar in the thirties. Still, we, Kurds are prisoners both inside and outside our own country. Hundreds of Kurdish intellectuals, writers, artists, poets and troubadours have been forced to live in exile outside of our country's borders. Life in exile is also a kind of imprisonment that we have to get used to. Many of our old artists have died in exile with the love of their country and their people in their hearts. And new ones are emerging. One of the new exiles, who is still hoping to be able to return one day, is the Kurdish troubadour Shivan Perwer.

In the mid-seventies, he suddenly appeared in Turkey at a time when the Turkish government believed that the Kurdish culture had been eradicated once for all through its assimilation policy and laws. But here was a young student who sang Kurdish songs in his forbidden language, and dared to defy the laws of the Turkish government.

Unlike so many other Kurdish artists, Shivan Perwer did not let himself be bribed or silenced for money. Neither did he introduce the Kurdish culture as Turkish, nor did he deny his Kurdish identity — as other Kurdish artists had done in order to be accepted by the Turkish state. Instead, he was frank and candid, openly declaring he was a Kurdish troubadour by singing in Kurdish.

He immediately became very popular amongst the Kurdish people. His way of presenting Kurdish music became a model for other young Kurdish musicians. The years after 1975 were a nightmare for the Turkish authorities. Shivan's songs of Kurdistan aroused again in the hearts of the Kurdish people, their longing for a free country, a longing that the Turkish government had failed to crush. His songs kindled a fire. The songs were based on Kurdish poetry, folklore and history. They live in the hearts of all Kurds.

Very soon Shivan's music spread all over Kurdistan. On cassettes and tape recorders it passed from hand to hand, from heart to heart, all the way from the mountains of Ararat to the valleys of the Euphrates and the Tigris rivers. In spite of Shivan's forced exile in 1976 his Kurdish voice continued to irritate the Turkish government, as well as those of Iraq and Iran.

Culture is an effective weapon against oppression. In our second native country — Sweden — we Kurds have had the opportunity to develop our culture. In a few years' time we have been able to publish about thirty books in Kurdish with the support of the Swedish authorities. This is more than has been published during the last 60 years of Turkish domination. Since 1983, Shivan has been living in Sweden with his wife Gulistan, also a singer, and their son Serxebun. Here he continues to produce new songs which will secretly find their way to Kurdistan. Music cannot be stopped, crushed out or

killed by bullets. A people who continues to produce musicians like Shivan will never disappear.

The Kurdish nation feels the need to know the personal particulars, the past and the aspirations of the artists and performers it has produced, nourished, loved and protected as the apple of its eye. This desire, this urge is undoubtedly not without good reasons. The roots of this urge lies in the history of Kurdistan. If the Kurdish nation cannot look for and find the life goals of the giants of the Kurdish art and literature such as Ehmede Xani and the like, it is because of the deficiencies in our historical records. Because, those preceding us felt no need to leave written records behind, though the impact of a people and the respect it commands are measured by its past accomplishments.

What is not written down, published and passed on from generation to generation for study cannot perform its historic function, cannot prove itself. As in our day, we can grope in the dark for the lost masterpieces without much success.

The Kurdish writers, intellectuals, scientists must understand and be conscious of this bitter reality. If not, the future generation will find themselves in the same dilemma as we are in and will fail to appreciate the past. Such a state of affairs would be a weakness, a depressing helplessness for them. We must leave behind a heritage for the generations to come.

This is why I wrote this book about Shivan Perwer and my experience connected with Kurdish music and songs on some of journeys in the past seven years.

Most people, living in their own country with their own governments might not understand that songs and a singer can mean so much to a people as Shivan's songs and his person has meant to the Kurdish people during the last ten years. He was the first singer who broke the

chains that the Turkish government had put on our tongues. Now he has followers, the chains are broken, he is not the only one who sings in Kurdish anymore in open. Now the Turkish government cannot stop our songs anymore, cannot find all the cassettes that bring our music from village to village, house to house, ear to ear in Kurdistan. What I also want to say with this book is that Shivan and his brothers and sisters — the Kurdish musicians — are the result of our Kurdish culture, Kurdish nature, Kurdish history and tragedy. They are the children of the ancient city of Urfa and Mount Ararat, of Mem and Zin, our great and old lovestory, of our old poet Ehmedi Xani. Their heritage is lake Van and volcanos, that have been active for thousands of years. They have been nourished by poems, songs, history and art and filled with love for our country. They are the children of our culture and Shivan Perwer is one of them.

The oppressors who have pinned down Kurdistan in bondage, who want to suffocate and crush the Kurdish people in their coils have done all they could. They have laid siege to the Kurdish language, culture and heart with coils made of chains, tanks and bayonets. But all their efforts will come to naught. A people who have their Shivans do not die, are not exhausted so easily.

This book was first written in Turkish to make Turkish intellectuals understand our cause and how the Turkish society stole our culture and songs and converted them and presented them as Turkish both to the Turkish people and abroad.

The English translation was realized thanks to the work of two Kurdish teachers, translators and academicians in Sidney Australia: Chahin Baker and Bawer-mend.

Due to our tragedy Kurds have been forced to live in exile all over the world. Still we keep in contact with each other. Our goal is the same: a free and democratic Kurdistan.

Stockholm in February 1986

Mahmut Baksi

Institut kurde de Paris

Institut kurde de Paris

COUSIN

One day, in 1979, I was on a bus departing from the Kurdish terminal in Teheran for the Kurdish city of Mahabad. The bus was overflowing with passengers, dressed in their warm, colourful clothes. The travellers appeared to be throwing down the gauntlet to the history of Iran. The only language of communication was Kurdish. The Kurdish language was experiencing one of its lucky moments. The passengers were exchanging conversation and laughing at anecdotes they had heard about the Shah and the Ayatollah. The driver was constantly issuing instructions as to how they should conduct themselves. Under no circumstances, would the weapons be handed over to the so called Pasdaran (Revolutionary Guards), that is, Ayatollah Khomeini's gangs of terror. If necessary, the passengers would use their weapons to protect themselves against the booty-seekers. The political atmosphere was very tense. Khomeini was viewing the Kurdish national movement with anxiety. Therefore, there was always the possibility that the bus would be stopped. But, the Kurdish people were no longer afraid. Thousands of Peshmergas (Kurdish freedom fighters) were on the alert in the mountains, cities, towns and villages. They had become a nightmare for the Pasdaran and the Ayatollahs. Mindful of this, the Khomeini camp did not harrass Kurdish travellers moving throughout Iran. The history of Iran was undergoing internal convulsions. The convulsions were cataclysmic enough to overcome and eliminate the most powerful individual, government and clans.

When the driver learned I was from the part of Kurdistan under Turkish occupation, he looked at me and asked:

— Brother, open up your bag and let's see your weapons.

I was troubled by the driver's words. Perhaps the poor man thinks I am a smuggler, I thought.

— What weapons brother, I said. I have no weapons. You have got whatever there is. Unlike you, we have not as yet downed the colonialist Turkish armed forces to have weapons.

The driver was looking at me and laughing:

— Aren't you from Kurdistan of Turkey?

— Yes, I am from there, said I.

— Then, how come you don't have weapons?

— Why should I have?

— Oh, what I mean is this, don't you have Dr. Shivan's cassettes?

I understood the driver well, if somewhat belatedly. At that moment, Shivan's voice rose. The voice was spreading as it hit seats and windows in waves. It meant that the enemies efforts for hundreds of years to divide us via walls of tanks and armoured vehicles had proved useless in silencing us, in keeping our songs apart.

My eyes dwelled on one of the cousins that came to life in Shivan's song. I was really shaken up and lost myself in the beauty of her pitch-black eyes...

MY BELOVED COUSIN*

Rumours are being spread about a love story;
a rose has fallen in love with a nightingale.
They say the nightingale doesn't care much.
There is no time for love, my beloved cousin,
we are oppressed, we live in shame.

How could a Kurd ever be happy
when Kurdistan, the mother of us all,
is crying, screaming in chains?

You are very dear to my heart, oh, beloved one
but my country I wouldn't exchange for a thousand
hearts;
for freedom I will sacrifice body and soul.

The Kurds of Iran and Iraq, for whatever reason, call Shivan Perwer, Dr. Shivan. To them anyone who specializes in a field so much deserves a doctorate. I can't blame them either. Especially with music such as Kurdish music which is exploited and threatened with oblivion due to despotic restrictions and bans, of course, needs an expert like Shivan, needs a doctor.

Institut kurde de Paris

* It is customary for the Kurds to marry their cousins (father's side.)
If a girl's hand is asked for by more than one the cousin has priority.

MY BELOVED GAZELLE

The bus was moving along as fast as it could towards the towering Kurdish mountains... The lofty peaks seemed to be touching the stars. Ferhad and Sheryn* were gazing at one another with the occasional wink signifying an endless love. Neither Ferhad's relentless efforts nor Sheryn's fiery love could put a dent into these majestic mountains. Witnesses to a glorious culture and a proud history are these mountains. In the twilight, they appeared to be embracing each other these wayward looking mountains.

Before daybreak we stopped on the edge of Lake Urmia. With the daybreak Lake Urmia was looking at us through its sleepy bedroom eyes, it appeared to me. The aroma and color and long wavelets of the lake engulfed me with expectation. Some passengers were asleep, some were walking towards the lake. As I approached the lake my heart beats increased. My heart was like a fleeting bird anxious to get out of its cage.

I put my hands into the tepid water of Urmia. My eyes were filled with tears out of joy. I tossed into the water all my troubles, all my worries.... I was reluctant to take my hands out of the water, to disconnect myself from the lake. Who knows what events this lake has witnessed? For thousands of years, it has been the subject of poems, of songs, of ballads.

* Ferhad and Sheryn are the hero and heroin of a Kurdish love epic. Separated by an insurmountable mountain, Ferhad tries to dig through the mountain. Like most Kurdish love epics this one, too, ends in tragedy.

As if awakened from a dream, I suddenly turned around. Right in front of me, there were a few people with their back to the beautiful water surrounded by greenery and their faces towards Kerbala** and Mecca. They were engaged in the moving up-and-down ritual of early morning prayers. They were more interested in discharging their religious obligations than enjoying the beauty of the lake teeming with life. Some were Shiite Moslems, followers of Khomeini, and some were Sunni Moslems.

I faced the lake again. Suddenly, a sound roared from the bus. It was the sound of Shivan's Gazelle. The less pious Kurds on the bus were more interested in the natural beauty surrounding them than facing Mecca for prayers.

XEZALE (MY GAZELLE)

From the Kurdish folk songs, sung all over Kurdistan / writer anonymous

Is there anyone amongst you, dear villagers
who knows why my beloved gazelle is so sad?
My heart, full of love, is longing for her,
melting in loneliness so unhappy to be alone.
To the poets and serenaders I will take my suffering,
lovely gazelle,
so they may turn my sorrow into songs and poems
devoted to you.
Villagers, neighbours and friends; I implore you,
come to my aid!
Surely you are aware of my unhappiness and that
of my gazelle!

Don't you remember the times when her shy and
tender
face

used to be so reddened by the kisses of our love?
Why does she remain distant now, why won't she be
mine?!

O my beautiful gazelle, please do not go for water
today

for I know the aga's man is their waiting for you;
he will take your lovely girdle, please do not go!

O dear villagers, neighbours and friends!

It is snowing on the mountains again

And the nightingale is singing so sadly.

They remind me of the same time last year when she
used to be mine;

I can't believe she has a husband now who claims
her love!

How hard I try to make her come back;
all in vain, a stranger I have become in her eyes.

Heart breaking is the life of a stranger, my dear gazelle
but don't blame yourself; it is not our fault.

Damn poverty which forces people to leave their homes
to live lonely far from beloved ones;

blind is the man who is forced to live in a foreign land.

You always will be a beloved gazelle in my poor heart;
daughter of the Kurds, your dark eyes I will never
forget.

* Kerbala is in Iraq; it is holier to the Shiite Moslems than to the
Sunni Moslems.

A TASTE OF FREEDOM

We started moving with the sunrise. My eyes were looking for the Peshmergas (Kurdish freedom fighters). These Peshmergas who have been a nightmare to the colonialist governments ruling Kurdistan, those Peshmergas who have conquered fear and stand tall like giants in their mountains stuck to their guns willingly facing death for freedom are the valiant Kurds my eyes were searching for. With that anticipation I fell asleep.

After how long I don't know, I snapped out of my sleep at the instigation of the driver. The sun was in the middle of the sky. The bus was moving fast on a greenish plain.

The driver turned his head towards me and winked. — Welcome to free Kurdistan, brother. Why don't you look through the window.

I turned my head. There, armed, awesome Peshmergas taking a stroll right in front of my eyes. All road junctions were under their control. They waved at us. Everything seems like a dream to me. I shake myself. The reality and the dream are intertwined in my brain. How is this possible? In all my life, I had never been wrapped up in reality so much.

A few kilometres from Mahabad (the capital of the Kurdish Republic in 1946) the Peshmergas stopped the bus. They were collecting information from the driver, who passed on all he knew. He was saying that soldiers were slowly being shifted from Teheran towards Kurdistan, Khomeini's army had started preparations for war. Exchange of information continued without interruption.

To me it all meant, that the Kurdish people were no longer fighting as individuals but as a nation now. This development raised my hope.

Before long we entered the city of Mahabad. The historic city embraced me warmly. The main roads and arteries were overflowing with military vehicles. Everyone was armed with fingers on the triggers, waiting. At the entrance, various weapons were freely bought and sold. The secret of freedom and of leading a free life was seen at the hot barrels of guns fired for trials.

Shivan's voice comes loud and clear all day through a gigantic speaker on top of the door to the Kurdistan Congress, shaking up the whole city. And Shivan's magical mesmerising, moving music fills with hope, the marketplace for guns, the residence of Qazi Mohammed, President of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad in 1946, who was hanged by the Shah in the Çarçira Square (Four candles square) that has seen many a gallows.



SENSE OF BELONGING

I then crossed mountains, plains and rivers to arrive in Iraqi Kurdistan. Peshmergas were everywhere! Thousands of them were on the move. The borders imposed by the colonialists did not exist anymore. Peshmergas recognized no artificial borders. They were the hope, the future of this place, of this land. Only what they said counted here in these mountains. The colonialists' forces, soldiers and gendarmes had departed out of fright. All that they left behind, watchposts, shelters, narrow passages, weapons were in the hands of the Peshmergas. In short, Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan had, in fact, united. Everyday, thousands of mules carried food, clothing and equipment for the Peshmergas.

The Peshmergas pitched a huge tent for me to relax in. I shall cherish this tent, this memory as long as I live. I sat at the entrance to the tent and looked around at the mountains, valleys and the sky. A rather large area had been liberated. Everyday, hundreds of young and old, men and women were applying to the Headquarters to become Peshmergas. The freedom fever was everywhere. Discipline mixed with passion reigned.

And one night.

In the middle of a night when the moonlight fearlessly enveloped the mountains, when millions of stars played, loved and were on the look out for the enemy, I got out of my tent. I moved down the hill to recall my childhood, to re-live the memories of my youth, and to caress my beloved mountains. On the left, my eyes met the eyes of 15 year old Diler sitting with his gun resting on his knees. A sound was coming out of Diler's tape

recorder. This song, this voice, this high pitch belonged to Shivan.

— Diler, at this time of night and in this place where the enemy can attack any time, is this sound not dangerous? I asked.

Diler stood up and said,

— On the contrary. The enemy will not and cannot come to where there is this sound. This voice, this pitch is their nightmare. Not just here, but throughout Kurdistan, in the mountains, the valleys and the plains, this voice continues to echo. This voice means resistance, weapon, conviction and passion.

Diler was right. Hadn't the butcher, the executioner Saddam Hussein in Bagdad said: "This voice must be eliminated"? Butcher Saddam Hussein is in conflict with nature, history and reality. His job is impossible, his future bleak. Any mortal who falls foul of nature is finished for good. Aren't Saddams, Evrens, Khomeinis and oppressors powerless against the voice that echoes in inaccessible Kurdish mountains, the voice that blossoms in the bosom of Harran plain (where Shivan was born and raised), the voice that excites and unites the passion of 20 million Kurds?

The days and weeks I spent with the Peshmergas in Iraqi Kurdistan are unforgettable memories. The wish had for years taken roots, blossomed and grown big in me. Only those who have been forced out of their homeland and separated from their people can really appreciate the feeling. The oppressors separated many Kurdish patriots like myself from their beloved people and their land before they matured, before they enjoyed their culture. The oppressors made us long for fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. But all they did came to naught. There I was in Kurdistan... There among my people. There I was taking in everything I had missed for years: vitamins for my soul, affection, respect,

a sense of belonging out in the open, free from any fear of the enemy.

These mountains are full of feelings, affection and passion.

These mountains would much rather be moved than give away secrets. They are as protective as mothers are of their young and as combatants as Peshmergas. Those stars, the sky, the birds flying above, the fresh running water all belong to us. It was so in the past, it is so today and it shall be so tomorrow! The contrary has never been the case. History is the witness. Temporary separations, forced resettlements in exile are not the way. We were born here, grew up here and matured here. Whether we are here or in exile, no one can take away our feelings, our attachment, our love and affection, our sense of belonging.



WHO ARE WE?

I was on the way back to Iranian Kurdistan. There was still plenty to do. Making up for years of longing in a few weeks or months is not easy. I was surrounded by Peshmergas with their fingers on the trigger. We were on the move as if we had thrown the gauntlet at the flying bird or howling wolf. Somewhere close to the border, I left my horse with the Peshmergas and got on the bus. Through the rear window I saw Peshmerga Bekir galloping his horse to bid the final farewell. He was quite a sight with his rifle on his shoulder and pistol at his waist. The setting sun was like the flames out of the barrel of Bekir's gun. Bekir was like the crest of a high mountain: inaccessible.

Before long, we entered the town of Sardasht, the town was rather lively, crowded and tense. Thousands of Peshmergas had filled the main roads, arteries and junctions. Hundreds of military vehicles were lined up, ready to fire. Anti-aircraft guns on flat roof-tops, heavy guns in the mountains.

I asked the Peshmerga next to me:

— What's happening here today? What's the occasion?
— Its a show of strength against Khomeini, you know, the Ayatollah is constantly issuing threats. He wants us to surrender our weapons and become slaves again. If not he will reportedly send the Army. Let him, we're not afraid. You can see the people.

Yes, I was looking at the Kurdish people. Everyone aged from 7 to 70 was armed. They had taken an oath not to let the enemy set foot on that land, on those roads, on those lovely people...

The Convocation began with the song "Who are we?" Shivan was crying out the history of Kurdistan through the immortal poem by Cigerxwin:

WHO AM I? *

* Cigerxwin: Kine Em.
Translation: Chahin Baker.

Who am I, you ask?
The Kurd of Kurdistan,
a lively volcano,
fire and dynamite
in the face of enemy.
When furious,
I shake the mountains;
the sparks of my anger
are death to my foes.
Who am I?

I am in the east,
forts and castles
towns and hamlets,
rocks and boulders,
What irony, what a shameful day!
A slave I am now for blood suckers
Yet I saved the Middle East
from the Romans and the crusaders.
Who am I?

Ask the Near East,
Ask the Middle East,
villages and towns,
plains and deserts.
They were once all mine
when by war and knowledge
I defeated rivals
to become crowned over an empire
stretching to the borders of India.
Who am I?

I am the proud Kurd,
the enemies' enemy,
the friend of peace-loving ones.
I am of noble race,
not wild as they claim.
My mighty ancestors
were free people.
Like them I want to be free
and that is why I fight
for the enemy won't leave in peace
and I don't want to be
forever oppressed.
Who am I?

I shall free my land
from the tyrants;
from the corrupt Shah,
the Turkish juntas
so we may live free
like other nations,
so my gardens and meadows
are mine again;
So I can join the struggle
for the good of mankind.
Who am I?

It was I who defeated
Richard the Lionheart
My own blood I shed
to defend these regions.
A thorn I was in my enemies' side;
in my shadow lived the Turk and the Persian;
many a king held my horse's head.
Yes I am the warrior,
I am Saladin,
the King of Egypt, Syria and Palestine.
Who am I?

I am Ardashir, ⁽¹⁾
I am Noshi Rawan. ⁽¹⁾
In the ancient days
rivals feared my wrath;
even mighty caesars
regretted my animosity.
I knew no fright;
in love with adventure;

from India to Greece
they paid me tribute.
Who am I?

Yes, I am the Kurd,
the Kurd of Kurdistan
who is poor and oppressed today.
My castles and forts
are now demolished;
my name and my fame
swindled by my assailants,
those who set germs into my body
to paralyze my existence
making a nameless soul of me;
a nation with no friends.
Who am I?

I am the one who despite it all
remains the unyielding Kurd;
still formidable to the enemy.
The smell of dynamite is again in my nostrils
and in my heart the strong desire to erupt.
I am the fighting valiant of the mountains
who is not in love with death
but for the sake of life and freedom
he sacrifices himself
so that the land of his ancestors,
the invincible Medes,
his beloved Kurdistan, may become unchained.
Who am I?

One of my ancestors was the Blacksmith Kawa
who slayed Dahak, the notorious tyrant
to break off chains from Kurdish shoulders
and save many heads from the sword and death.
The day his vicious reign ended
was called NEWROZ, the New Day. (2)
When Newroz comes winter departs
taking with it the dark harsh times
to make place for light and warmth.
This is the time, as Zoroaster says,
the evil spirit Ahriman is defeated
at the hand of Ormazd, the god of wisdom and light.
Who am I?

I am the maker of Newroz;
again I shall become my own master,

the ruler of my land
so I may enjoy the fruits of my orchards,
relish the sacred wines of my vineyards
and put an end to a dark era
by seeking salvation in knowledge and science;
I shall make another new day
and breathe the pure air of liberty.
Who am I?

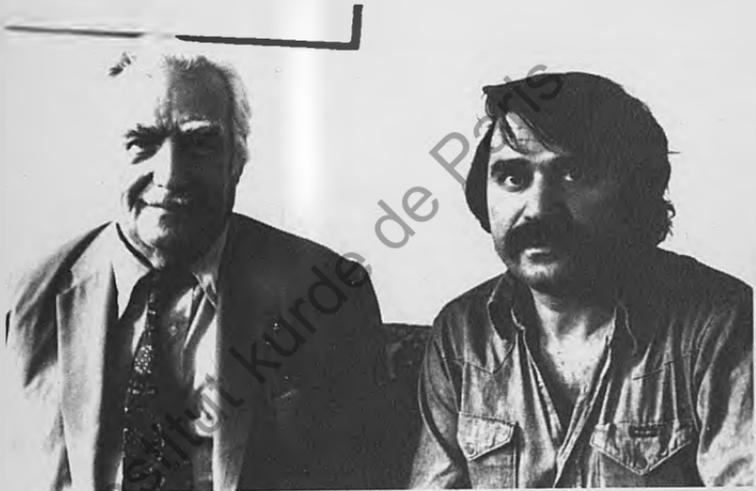
I am Kordokh, the good old Khaldew;
I am Mitani; Nayri and Sobar; ⁽³⁾
the son of Lo Lo; Kardok and Kodi;
I am the Mede, the Gosh, Hori and Gudi;
I am the Kurmanc, Kelhor; Lor and Gor; ⁽⁴⁾
yes, I have always been and remain the Kurd.
Despite centuries of suppression
in a country by force divided.
Who am I?

I am the son of Lor, Kelhor and the Kurmanc
who have lost crown and reign
to become powerless,
betrayed in the name of religion
to carry rosaries in their hands
duped by the rulers,
deprived of might and wealth,
fighting each other, divided and torn
while my oppressed Kurdistan,
my wretched Kurdistan
remains possessed.
Who am I?

The son of the Kurdish nation
awaken from deep sleep,
marching forward,
proud as a lion
wanting the whole world to know;
I shall struggle
and continue the path to freedom;
I shall learn from great men,
like Marx and Lenin.
I make a vow to my ancestors,
to Salar, Shergo and Deysem,
that this nation of mine
will remain vigorous, unyielding, stronger than death.
Let it be known;
I announce with no fear:
Liberty is my goal;

I shall advance in this path.
Who am I?

I am not blood thirsty;
no, I adore peace.
Noble were my ancestors,
sincere are my leaders.
We don't ask for war but demand equality
but our enemies are the ones
who betray and lie.
Friendship I seek and offer my hands
to all friendly nations.
Long live Kurdistan;
death to the oppressor!



Cigerxwin and Mahmut Baksi, Stockholm 1979

Yes, "Who are we?"

Like all other people, the Kurdish people is also a product of history, an inheritor of history. For thousands of years it has left its mark on these mountains, on these lands. The great poet Cigerxwin with this poem has slapped the face of those who want to annihilate the Kurdish language. A people, a culture, a language that can produce such a poem has every right to be proud. The great history of Kurdistan is re-created in Cigerxwin's lines.

On the other hand, such a powerful, unrivalled poem finds its true worth in an artist like Shivan. Cigerxwin has supplied the ammunition, Shivan fired it. Resist it if you can. It is an effective, exuberant weapon. It is a mountain that cannot be crossed. It is a bullet aimed at the colonialists. A song that is immortalized by Shivan's voice and tembour.



- (1) History of Medes.
- (2) Newroz is the Kurdish National Day celebrated each year on March 21 (Newroz literary means new day in Kurdish).
- (3) Medic Kings and Kurdish Princes.
- (4) Subgroups on the Kurdish nation.

OH KURDISTAN, MY KURDISTAN!

We were on the move towards Mahabad. Suddenly, a huge castle came into my view. I had the jeep stopped and asked the driver:

— An ancient, historic building, isn't it?

The driver laughed and pulled the jeep to the side of the road.

— No, it is not that old. Perhaps it is twenty years old, said he.

— How come?

— Yes, no more than twenty years old, though its architecture is the ancient Persian architecture. But, it is one of the many forts built for the Shahenshah's (i.e. King of Kings) forces occupying Kurdistan.

I looked at the building more closely. It is not just a building, it is an imposing castle made up of a variety of huge stones. It resembled a fort built in the Middle Ages. It stands to reason, if it was built by the Shah, it has to reflect the Shah's despotism. Is it easy to be a Shah whose absolute power knows no limitation? Furthermore, he wasn't content to be a mere Shah, he was the Shah of Shahs, King of Kings! Naturally, every fort, every prison, every torture chamber has got to be a monument to the King of Kings' reign and reputation.

I asked the Peshmerga (Kurdish Freedom Fighters) next to me:

— So, who is in there now?

— Who else but us, of course! Said the Peshmerga and added, If you like let's have a look inside, it is under our control.

I was so delighted I could fly out of joy. Look at the turn of events! I wondered how many Kurdish patriots

this building, this fort had swallowed, had crushed and cut to pieces? I wondered how many times the Shahen-shah enjoyed his drink here when the Kurdish patriots were being tortured?

We entered the garden, full of flowers and greenery. The cannons and other heavy military equipment were lined up. I could see Peshmergas on the roof, in the garden and further away. And suddenly a voice rose out of the castle:

Oh Kurdistan! My Kurdistan!

KURDISTAN *

Kurdistan, my Kurdistan;
Humbled; by others possessed;
Garden of my roses Kurdistan;
Of our grieving the painful cause.

In your loftiness my Kurdistan
Nestle hamlets, towns embraced by you;
And to die is the reward
for worshippers of this land of mine.

Rivers crossing meadows, spilling
Onto fields like painted silver lines
Between hilly vineyards
And endowing with beauty my Kurdistan.

Paupers are we, walking on your soil,
Pitylessly plundered by foes
Of nature's richness and bounty,
Haunted by seemingly endless poverty.

Your luckless people robbed
Of many splendoured golds
While the tower-shrines of Kohrash and Ardashir
Are defiled by ever-watching stranger's probing eyes.

O, mother of the Tigris and Euphrates!
Shameless with no honour is the Kurd who betrays
you;
My heart bleeding with other Kurdish hearts,
Yet still alive for you my Kurdistan.

* By Cigerxwin.

Right from the center of the Shah's castle Gulistan's (Shivan's wife) voice was soaring. This voice, this music, this anticipation reverberated from the walls and spread towards Iraqi Kurdistan. Take note of history!... Only a few months before in this fort, even the first letter of Kurdistan was forbidden. Now the fort had become Kurdistan.

I thought of Gulistan... as one of our typical Kurdish girls! Petit, upright, dependable, with a strong physique and a pleasant smile... smart enough to make a fool of the devil himself... fearless in the face of misfortune and death... strong in mind and purpose... oppressed because of their gender, yet when they become mothers of strong men they uphold the tradition of favoritism towards their own male offsprings! Gulistan is typical of one of them. She is hardened by the historic determination, dedication and valor of the Kurdish girls. She is a tigress too big for her cage, poised to attack the enemy. She is the heiress to the Euphrates, to Mt Ararat.

I felt jealous of Gulistan, frankly. Her voice knows no borders! All the way from Europe this voice had managed to cross fields of mines, barbed wires dividing Kurdistan and the towering Kurdish mountains to reach here. In a way, this pointed to Gulistan's artistic talent, and fighting spirit. The outdated traditions and thoughts were giving way to the new, to the artistic beauty and to freedom of expression. As a nation, as a people we were in the midst of a national liberation struggle.

Gulistan's soaring voice took my mind back to Iraqi Kurdistan for a moment. There, every night before sitting down to the evening meal, this song would be played without exception. To me, the song was like the cannon fired to inform the fasting Moslems that it is the time to break their fasts in the month of Ramadan. First, the cannon was fired then food would be served.

I pondered about the past for a while.... and I encountered with that other celebrated Kurdish female vocalist of a generation before, Meryemxan (Or Miriam Khan). That unforgettable voice of my childhood and my youth. My generation opened their eyes to Meryemxan's music, they grew up with her music and started new families with her songs.

Yes Meryemxan! You were a spark of freedom that could not be extinguished. You were the nightmare of colonialists. You were the honor and the voice of the Kurdish mothers.

One of Meryemxan's most cherished songs involved garlic, yes garlic! And when she sang that song, she would make garlic sweeter than baklava, halva and sugar. This is incredible, such artistic accomplishment. She turned onion, garlic into honey for twenty million Kurds, darling Meryemxan.

What a pity, in spite of such creative talent she possessed, so much talent that endeared garlic to millions and thereby rescued garlic from infamy, she failed to get married. Because the pious religious leaders and the landlords under the influence of the foreign oppressors looked down on her and dubbed her not an artist but a sinner, a no-good gypsy from no where. In their views, the gypsies were nothing and never amounted to anything.

Yes, she had been looked down on merely because she was an artist, this darling, this sweetheart. For centuries, our enemies have done everything they could think of to alienate us from our culture especially the most powerful weapon in our arsenal, that is, our music and folklore.

Those Kurds who sought expression through creative art, music, and literature were belittled, frowned upon and scorned by the oppressors. But, this ugly game has been buried in the pages of history by the artistic

talents and voices of Shivan and Gulistan. The artistic talent has developed and established itself as a powerful weapon for which there is no defence. It has found its true worth and respect. Those who made Meryemxan suffer, those who ruined her, those who tried to stifle expression of her love have long perished within the army of derelict no-gooders. But Meryemxan is alive and well in the hearts of and minds and songs of the Kurdish people.

What a pity for years we have failed to appreciate our women. The oppression of our women has been twofold: once by the enemy and once by ourselves. Furthermore, they have been unfairly treated by nature, bad customs and religion even though up until now no nation that has failed to enlist and honor the contribution of its women has been able to liberate itself. History cannot forgive such unfair, such unjust treatment.

But, times are changing. Along with our national values our women, too are finding their rightful place in our society. If we have not disappeared into oblivion until now, is it not because our mothers insistence on teaching and endearing our language to their children?

Just as the lyrics of songs reveal, Kurdistan is truly beautiful and a wonderful place to live. Yet like everything that is beautiful its burden is heavy, the price of its love is heartache and sacrifice. She is not a darling that is easily reached. Those who are not prepared to die for it should forget, not only freeing Kurdistan but also ever finding true love. For the price of true love is suffering, torture, imprisonment, self-sacrifice and death. That which comes by so readily, so easily, so effortless is not true love, true passion. At the very best, it can only be puppy love, infatuation which is something we need not concern ourselves with.



GULISTAN



Kurdish women in İraqi Kurdistan

DE LORI, LORI.

A year had gone by since my return from Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan. I was endeavoring to write what I had seen and experienced there and to draw the attention of the Swedish people to the question of Kurdistan. Furthermore, I had returned from my beloved country after replenishing the loss and attrition in my feelings and knowledge of my native tongue and culture due to having lived for nine years in a foreign land. Kurdistan was no longer a distant land to me. My short but productive journey had given me much comfort, made me feel good. The pessimism within me had given way to optimism. I could stand upright and walk tall in the streets of Stockholm because, once again, we were rising up, resisting oppression and acquiring influence and prestige in the history of the Middle East.

On the other hand, Turkey was in turmoil. Its government and economy were near bankrupt and its institutions were close to a grinding halt. Internal strife and Kurdish national democratic struggle were in full swing. The Kurdish people in the midst of major changes were getting ready for tomorrows. Kurdish language and literature were no longer as passive and silent as they had been in the past. Instead of listening to the colonial oppressor's programs on Ankara radio, the Kurds were listening to their own troubadours and being informed on national matters. Shivan had with his tenbour smashed Ankara's ages old assimilationist policy of denying Kurdish music. Kurdish patriotism had reached new dimensions never before seen and experienced; the forbidden Kurdish language had smashed its coffin. The political cataclysm in Iran had shaken

Mt Ararat, the Black sea and the Egean. The Shah had left, the Iranian armed forces had disintegrated. The agreements between Teheran and Ankara reached during the Shah's reign had been scrapped. Iraq had penetrated deep into Iran. Both sides were bombarding each other's plants and factories, oil facilities and population centres mercilessly. Reconstruction would take years. Furthermore, both in Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan thousands Peshmergas (Kurdish freedom fighters) were taking advantage of the situation and waging a war of their own for freedom.

In spite of all these, the day I had been thinking about and expecting for so many years would not arrive. Nevertheless, the news, the reports from Turkish Kurdistan were not too bad. The looming of Peshmergas on the horizon starting from Mt Ararat all the way along artificial boundaries dividing Kurdistan must have given the colonialist oppressors in Ankara quite a fright. It should have been the time for what has been developing, shaping up and simmering for fifty years to explode and change the political map of the Middle East and put an end to the colonial status of the Kurdish people.

But, history doesn't move along with individual wishes, thoughts and desires. It has its own rules to obey and unfold accordingly...

The September 12, 1980, coup changed everything. Within a few weeks, the Turkish Army overpowered everything that appeared as a danger to itself on the horizon. The repressive army renowned for its brutality attacked Kurdistan. It filled the prisons with tens of thousands of Turkish revolutionaries and Kurdish patriots, intellectuals and artists. As results of savage torture, it crippled many and sent some to their deaths. The Kurdish wars in Iran and Iraq did not adversely affect the Turkish army, on the contrary, they helped

it pull itself together. Furthermore, the gang of Turkish generals benefited tremendously from the Iran-Iraq war by selling weapons and most everything else to both sides. The generals more closely controlled the borders and tried to keep us apart from our Peshmergas and our people.

In such a milieu, Shivan and I met in Germany. We spent many days in silence and disappointment. Events were moving fast. Internal forts were crumbling and whatever hope there was was dashing out and vanishing.

The troubadour, artist, poet writer of oppressed colonial peoples and countries are always troubled. The matter is far worse if the country such as Kurdistan is divided into four parts...

Shivan and I were going through this stark reality. We were well aware that it wasn't all that easy. Our valiant brothers, sisters and children who had been listening to our music and reading our materials and learned to resist and fight the oppressors with conviction for some years were now in prisons struggling to remain alive. They were very close to death. Of course standing by them, not abandoning them was the responsibility of every Kurdish patriot and intellectual.

We never lost sight of this fact. As soon as the Turkish Junta came to power, we intensified our activities. As much as we could, we showed the generals that their infortunate victims in prisons are not alone, have not been forsaken. First of all we moved towards Strasbourg, to the European Council. The door to such important organizations had for years been shut to the Kurdish people. It was time to knock and open them. We had in our possession a considerable body of evidence such as photographs, letters on torture, threats etc. We wanted to show them to the European parliamentarians.

It was May. Everywhere was lush green. Shivan was driving the car, as if we were swimming through an ocean of grass decorated with colorful flowers. The warmth of May had embraced all of Europe. Everyday tens of thousands people were marching for peace. But the situation in Turkey and Turkish Kurdistan was very bad. It affected us adversely, too. We were physically in Europe, but our minds and hearts were miles away, in Kurdistan. We were not in the mood to enjoy and appreciate the rich and beautiful nature in Europe.

Some time on the way, I picked up one of Shivan's cassette tapes at random and placed it in the player. There it was! A totally unexpected song which I had not listened to for a long time added to my sadness.

LULLABY *

Hush and sleep my little child,
Orphan, but still free.
Fathers perish as yours did, but freedom lives
In our people who rose again
Roaring like avenging panthers and lions
In mountains with rifles, ready to die
so future will be free.

And free Kurds yell to hated soldiers,
With blood they write there yelling on boulders:
Out of our land, you have no right
In our own willed free Kurdistan!

Hush my little child and I will tell you of the foe's
misdeeds,
How with their flying machines, with their iron
monsters,
Brought death, pain, fire; strong with bullets, bombs
and hate
They crushed hamlets and huts where moments before
Thousands of little ones started but never lived their
lives;
Hunger gnawed bodies who toiled in vain only
To roam barefoot amongst snow covered ruined vine-

yards
and lamenting lost grain and herd.

Crawling with agony some, many with broken limbs,
Others still with blood oozing from face and head,
Surrender unknown, defeat ignored;
In darkness they strove for mountains' peaks.

For years, my child, we paid a high price,
and the enemy sensing victory at hand,
Found itself terrified facing their own arms
Handled by should be dead ones again.

My own jewels I will send on to the mountains
So that a Kurdish fighter, 'a Peshmarga', can, for
your father's sake,
have a gun, an avenging gun,
To tell the enemy that vengeance is our aim.

* By Cigerxwîn.

The lyrics are the great Kurdish poet Cigerxwîn's *
(Cigerxwîn means bleeding heart). An eighty-year-old
library is the master. He is a living, seeing, hearing,
feeling, writing library. The lyrics through Shivan's voice
and talent gives me a different meaning, a different
feeling.

Every significant stage in history brings forth its own
art, literature and philosophy. The prisons filled up
after the September 12 coup are now pregnant with the
creations by Kurdish writers and artists. While it is true
that the military dictatorship suppressed and destroyed
a great deal, it can do nothing to confident expecta-
tions and heroic resistance? In the face of Shivan's ar-
tistic expression of his people's sufferings, the Junta,
the gang of generals in Turkey is powerless!

* Cigerxwîn died in Stockholm on October 22, 1984.

WHERE IS MY KURDISTAN?

A telephone call in the late hours of the night drowned me in sorrows. My brain became numb, my blood froze. My tears poured and turned into a lake... Then, this lake became rough, stormy and full of fury waves. From since I can recall, I have always feared the late night calls. This fear is a mark that exiles have created in me. This mark, this brand is indelible, it cannot be erased, removed, covered, hidden.

Bad news travel fast they say. It has wings they say. Though in this day and age there is no longer any need for wings to travel fast. Those who have no wings, no arms and no legs, too, can move to where they want and when they want. The telephone is a bird with no wings, I suppose. In our days nothing travels so sure and so fast. There I was in Stockholm at the receiving end of a telephone call from the Kurdish city of Diyarbakir. And the sad news hit me with no mercy: My sister, Necla, along with 14 friends had been massacred on 12 December by the Turkish commandes and in a foreign country, Syria. This massacre was one of the latest crimes, genocides perpetrated against the Kurdish people by the fascist, colonialist Turkish Army.

Hence, I went to Syria. My purpose was to shed light on the event, to expose the crimes of the fascist-colonialist Turkish Junta. At the time Syria was boiling. Thousands of Kurdish and Turkish revolutionaries were retreating through barbed wires and fields of mines along the frontiers. The Junta had caught them off guard with no emergency plans and programs. The generals had started a human hunt; a hunt which was

timeless, barbaric and merciless. Our people were hunted down like savage beasts and thrown into ditches. The Turkish Army is conceived and established on the principle of ruthlessly suppressing their own people and sitting on top of them. This latest calling sprang from its ugly heritage and dark past.

Damascus turned out to be a refresher course in real life for me. The things I had long forgotten, the things I had become estranged to were one by one coming to life in my mind. Familiar faces, discussions prompting me to recall the past placed me in my proper orbit and assured my looking and evaluating events more realistically.

And one night towards the early hours of the morning we got out of the house where I was a guest and hopped into a taxi. The friend next to me knew some Arabic. He, too, had come from the Turkish Kurdistan but could be considered a local by then. He was a valiant young man who had learned the ins and outs very well. We arrived at the city center and heard the sounds of firearms. Damascus was in flames in the early hours of the morning. Before long, helicopters joined the fight. It was a genuine war as if Israel was bombarding the city. Bullets were flying everywhere. Escape was difficult; we could be blown up any moment. Yet, the driver kept driving in a calm and collected manner without being influenced and excited.

— The Ekhwans, that is, the Moslem brotherhood again, he said. As you know they are not on good terms with the government. Pity! A lot of blood is being spilled. Who knows how many were killed tonight, how many homes were burned and destroyed. The commandos are merciless. With no concern for the young, the old and the children they turned the cannons towards homes. Who is guilty and who is innocent? No one really knows.

What the driver said was not strange to me. But I was just becoming aware of how serious and how bloody it really was. This was a civil war, a civil war that was not known to the rest of the world.

The house where I was staying was far from the city center. We got out of the war zone. The sound of fire-arms was on the wane. The driver reached a cassette tape, before long Shivan took his place in the taxi with his song "Where is my Kurdistan, where are my vineyards and orchards?"

I became rather confused. Before I could ask the driver if he was a Kurd, he turned around and said: — I am an Arab, but I like this voice very much. When I realized you are Kurds, I played this cassette. Music has no language. It is universal. Just as we fall in love with a beauty regardless of her ethnic origins, the same goes for music. Beauty is not indigenous to any locality, beauty transcends.

And Shivan continued with his song:

WHERE IS MY KURDISTAN? *

Where are my orchards;
where are my gardens?
The enemy has taken everything;
alas, they have taken my Kurdistan.
Great were our ancestors,
they gave us pride and fame
but we lost what we inherited;
alas, where is my Kurdistan?
Our valleys we lost, our plains, our forts
to become strangers in our own land.
My eyes I will give for you
my life I will devote to you
my beautiful Kurdistan.
No rights we have today;
at the hands of tyrants we suffer;

robbed of might and wealth;
deprived of education.
My heart bleeds for you;
day and night you are in my mind
my beautiful Kurdistan.

• By Cigerxwîn

After the song I asked the driver:
— Is this music not forbidden here?

The driver replied with a sensitivity peculiar to the
Middle Eastern people:

— No power can effectively forbid beauty. Beauty not
only transcends legal restrictions, it can penetrate even
stainless steel.

Institut kurde de Paris

OH MY DARLING!

What affected me and made me sentimental most in Damascus was the presence of old friends there. Some of them had grayed, some had bellies as big as Mt Ararat. Constant, incessant discussions of ideological differences. On the other hand there was this development of the Kurdish culture, Kurdish language in full swing. Shivan was virtually in every tea house, coffee shop, and home.

As a Kurdish patriot, it is difficult not to be moved by all these. In spite of all oppression, massacres, forced assimilation and attempts at genocides, here we are, we survive! We make our presence felt in the Middle Eastern culture, music and everyday life in the centre of what may appear to be hopeless. Despite all the obstacles, our culture continues to develop, mature and strengthen. The colonialist oppressors have failed to annihilate our culture, our heritage, no matter how hard they have been trying for years. Because our culture is a product of thousands of years. It has been internalized, it can not be so easily removed. No power can erase, rub off, annihilate the culture and heritage of a vibrant, lively and vital people. This is not a case of easy come, easy go. The Kurdish people did not develop this rich culture to so easily let go of it.

From Damascus I flew to the Kurdish town of Kamishli where the massacre had taken place. It is across from the Kurdish town of Nusaybin in Turkish Kurdistan. It is a sizeable town full of smoke and dust and devoid of any greenery. It is a place where one witnesses massacres every day... a play ground for the Turkish secret police, MIT (National Intelligence Agency of Turkey).

I easily mixed with people there. I had the feeling of owning every house. Knock and enter and the host would do the rest. Whatever they had they would share without any hesitation whatsoever. Hospitality was in its golden age there. If you asked for one, you would receive two.

The youth proudly wearing their T-shirts with Shivan's portraits in the streets stood out in my view. They made no secret of the fact that he was their own troubadour. At homes young girls, brides, mothers and grandmothers were embroidering Shivan's portraits on everything from handkerchiefs to rugs. I was pleased. We had started taken pride in our own national values. This was a terrific development, great feeling, boundless joy.

Pity, for a long while we have remained indifferent to our own treasures. We have neglected to a large extent our national values and have failed to give due support and recognition to those artists, poets and writers who create the treasures that are our very own. We have even neglected masters like Ehmedê Xanî, Melayê Ciziri and Feqiyê Teyra who are the giants of the Kurdish literature. How are we going to let the people, the whole world to know about our national treasures? Where are the portraits of Meryemxan, Kawis Axa and Hasan Cizrewi (artists) where are the statements of their ideals?

We boast to number at around twenty million, yet we still have no institution for an annual award for literature. Why shouldn't we have an annual Ehmedê Xanî award? Where are our parties, unions, associations, other organizations and our elders who should know better?

Nevertheless, what I saw, what I experienced and what I heard in Kamishli in Syrian Kurdistan made me feel at ease. People were well ahead of their political organizations. Sooner or later our people will put everyone in their rightful place, will recognize their true worth and give them due recognition.

With all these thoughts and feelings we went to the place where the massacre had taken place. We stopped in front of a house that had been burned and ruined. The house was very close to the Turkish barracks. Up until a few months ago this place in shambles was home to many, but not any more. The ideals, the achievements of the dead were already becoming legends among the people.

I went to the back of the house. I wanted to have a photographic evidence of this barbarism. Children next door were sitting there listening to music. In defiance to the Turkish soldiers in their nearby barracks, the children had turned the volume as high as it would go it seemed. And Shivan was shouting, "Oh my Darling".

It was already becoming a legendary classic. Such blood-curdling pitch to make anyone stop and freeze it was. The Kurdish children growing developing, maturing with Shivan's to become invincible were playing in the streets. To prevent the massacre of any more "Darlings" by the colonialist oppressors, they were looking forward to the future with confident hope and pride.

Now if you like let's altogether read the lyric of Shivan's "Darling".

CANÉ CANÉ – DARLING

How happy this dance is making me,
o my darling, come and join me. ♣
Nature and man are smiling;
it is the dance of liberty.
Girls and women, boys and men,
even the old ones, have all joined hands,
together joining this joyful dance.
What a lovely dance this is my friend;
it fills my heart with merriness
when the enemy is mad with fury
for it's the dance of liberty.

Institut kurde de Paris

WHO IS SHIVAN PERWER?

To be honest, at first, I had not realized that Shivan was such a widely popular, widely loved artist. He left a good impression on me when we first met, but...

Our first encounter took place in Frankfurt in 1976. He had arrived from Turkish Kurdistan three months beforehand. Friends introduced us to one another. But, I wasn't impressed with the first look, I tried to get rid of him. He was but a handful with a pitch black beard and height of a dwarf. I thought to myself, "What would he amount to even if he were pure talent?" He wasn't even as big as his Tenbour (Kurdish musical instrument). He could easily be stored in his Tenbour, in fact. But something about him attracted my attention: The twinkle in his cunning eyes with diminutive looks, peculiar to short people especially, that revealed him to be a live wire. Full of energy, he could not stand still for a moment. Always on the move, always on the go in a hurry, ebullient. The type who rolls as he walks, who speaks with his hands and puts sudden pauses in his conversations and smiles at what he says before the listeners do...

This is the kind of impression Shivan left on me after our first meeting.

Then, in the evening there was a function. Friends insisted that I hear Shivan. I could not refuse. I had already listened to many people without really wanting to and had been bored to death on many occasions. I had become accustomed to this kind of suffering. This night, too, will surely pass, I was telling myself.

And suddenly, Shivan appeared on the stage.

All was quiet. One could hear a pin drop. Shivan started playing, the strings yielded such sounds! Rounds of applause, screams, requests... Shivan loomed bigger and bigger, too big for the stage... I could no longer believe my eyes. How can a person grow so big? This person on the stage has nothing to do with Shivan I saw only a few minutes ago, I thought. One moment, he is a soaring eagle, the next moment he is a Peshmerga (Kurdish freedom fighter), such sensitivity next to such fighting spirit, such passion next to such determined resistance, defiance in his words and his voice! One moment you lose yourself within the tender love and affection of your sweetheart, the next moment you are out there fighting the oppressors. It was the first time I had seen such a performer who could change the mood of the audience so quickly. But who is Shivan Perwer?

Let's all hear it from Shivan himself, if you like:

— I was born in December, 1955. I am the second eldest of the seven children in a Kurdish family. My birthplace, Sori Village, lies between the Kurdish towns of Siverek and Viransehir. Sori is situated on top of a hill in the region known as Black Goat. The village is typical of all villages in the Kurdish province of Urfa. With no greenery but plenty of dust, it turns to a bowl of fire under the blazing summer sun. The stones are red hot throughout summer. Of all green things, a single mulberry tree has defied the wrath of nature. For years this gigantic tree has struggled on its own. It stands tall and straight and defiant.

Sori Village belongs to a landlord. The mores, injustices and exploitations perpetrated by the landlord are in conformity with the wrath of nature. As though the landlord and nature have colluded to oppress the peasants. Both of them are tough, angry and merciless.

My childhood passed in abject poverty. My father worked for the landlord. Not only my father, but all peasants worked for the landlord of Sori for their bread — just enough to sustain them. One year after I was born, my father was compelled to move to another village apparently due to troubles with the locals. We were not originally from the area. Our origin is traced to Village Kefirze, in the County of Midyat, Province of Mardin — next door to Urfa. We were oppressed and looked down on by the locals because we did not originate from around Siverek. All the burdens of the Kurdish nation throughout history had fallen upon us it seemed. Despite our efforts we could not settle in one place. Father used to change places frequently. But, the changes would not yield favourable results. Village was village and the landlord was the landlord. There was no basic change. I can honestly say until the age of seven, we lived virtually like nomads. Father's defiant and sensitive constitution conflicted with the oppression by the landlords. All these conflicts and movements were pushing us towards being hungry and destitute. Father would prefer death, hunger and suffering to begging the landlords. According to him, everyone should die with dignity. What was a life without dignity good for. Yet, my mother was the opposite of father. Maternal instincts would overwhelm her. She was a very soft-hearted, very sensitive typical Kurdish mother who gave all her love, affection and life to her children. Just like a kangaroo cares for her young in her pouch, mother nourished, protected and reared us in her bosom for years. Her lullabies stories and ballads still vividly echo and take shape in my mind..... Mother's influence is still alive and well in music.

I was six. That year, a primary school opened in Qaruk Village. Qaruk was very close to the village of Gulistan's (Mrs. Perwer) father. Father took me to the Mulla (Islamic priest) in Gulistan's village, Vanguk.

I was to become a Mulla, a Mulla donned with that headgear and overcoat who speaks Arabic.

One of my uncles liked school very much. The things he said about the school influenced, indeed, enveloped me. Through the sixth sense, I was feeling that the school was a good and productive place. Even at those ages, my ability to comprehend stories, legends and explanations was surprising. Many treated me as an adult. The maturity with which I was thinking, discussing and asking questions was well in advance of my age. Unless I am mistaken, this maturity was the product of social-economic conditions surrounding my family. My struggle with life started at my birth. In particular, the things Father said about the landlords made me dislike them intensely. Father would frequently swear at the landlords, call them in Kurdish "Qiriken Beratan" — Vultures. In fact, Father's reference to the landlords in our region was very apt. Each one of them was a vulture. Wherever, there was pillage, these vultures would gather there. Further more, Father hated the gendarmes, too. (Gendarmes in Turkey are concripts charged with maintaining law and order in the countryside and are notorious for their excesses — Tr). He would call them "Cruel Jeune Turks". He knew only too well the cruelties inflicted on our people by the Jeune Turks. Therefore, he would frequently tell us about Kurdish national struggles against the Turks. His eyes would be filled with tears when he mentioned names like Sheikh Said, Dersim, Agri. On the other hand Father really liked new knowledge. But, he thought real knowledge, science was what the Mullas and Sheikhs were saying. He thought of them as erudites.

What they said was beyond dispute. That is, he would worship unscientific things as if they were. Because, there were such people in our family tree, too. On the other hand, Gulistan's family was passing the days

wrapped in such mystic beliefs. They were keeping the tradition alive. Although we were related to Gulistan's family, father had not approved of this way of exploiting people and set out to make a living through hard work. He had decided to live with the dignity of a Kurdish peasant.

The things my uncle was telling me about the school were more rational than the things my father was telling me about religious institution. In the end, my uncle's sayings carried a heavier weight and I started school. I turned seven, but father would not let me go to school at all. He would frequently ask, "What will you be by going to Jeune Turks' school?"

He held that the Jeune Turks' culture and philosophy of life were based on devilish principles. It was wrong to go to the schools of those who oppressed us, who wanted to assimilate us, and who had forbidden our language. But I insisted. I cried day and night and became a brat. Father was getting very angry and unhappy. One day, he could stand it no more, he grabbed me by the neck and took me close to the flames and said: "You either go to the Mulla or you will go to the devil and burn." To his way of thinking the devil was none other than the Jeune Turks, of course. Mother came to the rescue. Angered by her interference he began beating her. Mother embraced me and was trying to protect herself from father's clenched fists. Once I jumped from Mother's bosom and confronted father: "Don't hit my mother, throw me to the fire!" and I threw myself into the flames. Father saved me from burning in the nick of time. Following this event, father calmed down. He, too, couldn't hold back his tears. "You are doing this to me when you are so young. What will you do when you grow up? God knows."

The Kurdish determination had caught up with me once. I would not go to the Mulla, because I just didn't

like the Mulla, the Mosque, Arabic.

That year I started school in Qaruk village where my aunt (mother's sister) was. Father had severed his connections with me and had put me on his black list. Occasionally, Mother would send me some eggs which I would give to my school teacher. In exchange for the eggs, he would buy books, notebooks and pencils. I had no money. My income and assets were the eggs Mother would send me. Nevertheless, despite my poverty, I topped my class. All I had was a dress and a bag my aunt had sewn out of bits and pieces.

One day my school teacher got me a cotton jumper from the city. He liked my voice and studiousness very much. I would sing some Turkish songs I had heard from the radio station in Ankara and Kurdish songs from a radio station in Yerevan (USSR), Kermanshah (Iran) and Bagdad (Iraq). Although he had forbidden Kurdish, he could not resist listening to my songs. Kurdish music had really shaken up his personality. Undoubtedly, his Kurdish origin had something to do with it, because this music gave expression to his feelings, sentiments and life experiences. The haunting beauty of Kurdish music was putting holes through oppressive laws. It was our music, it was genuine, it was indigenous. Every song was based on an event and had an ideal. All epics, the living history, would be sung by the most accomplished performers of the time. Hesên Cizrewî, M. Arif Cizrawî, Isa Berwarî, Xehil Ekramî, M. Axa Cizrawî, Gerabete Xaco, Silemane Hinore, Mecide Heqî, Hesên Zîrek and Kawis Axa. It is also necessary to add to this honor roll two female performers Nesrin Şerwani and Meryemxan. There, the might of Turkey, the oppressive laws weren't enough for these giants. They were the inheritors of Kurdistan's history. They were calling us from the depth, the bosom, the heart of thousands of years, every night. Neither the Mongols nor the Abbasids, nor the Ottomans had been able to stifle this history. These voices were taking their nou-

ishment from the volcano on top of Mt. Ararat (The centre of a Kurdish national struggle in 1930, drowned in blood by the Turks - Tr.) It is a volcano that is restless, full of vitality and refuses to die! Without doubt, our teacher, too, was experiencing this stark reality. Nevertheless, knowingly and willfully disgraceful Ankara had taken it upon itself to oppose, to put out this volcano.

On the other hand, there were well known vocalists in our region. Their influence on me is great. I used to listen to the following songs and epics by these vocalists: Eyibe Hetike, Ebdale Zeyreke, Zekiye Delale etc. There! colonialist Turkey had enacted laws to make these songs, these epics disappear. They had thought they had might to do away with these immortal fruits of Kurdistan's history.

The racist Turkish generals, the henchmen in civilian clothes were in direct conflict with the historical roots of Mem Û Zin which legends are made of, which spurts out pure art.

I grew up in this milieu. My sentiments were not affected too much in school... Kurdish presence in the region saved me from being assimilated. On the one hand I was studying, on the other hand I was developing my musical talent. Occasionally, father would make fun of me, "Come, come, speak that devilish language of Turks, let's see what it is like". Because father did not speak any Turkish, which was a foreign language to him. Whenever I spoke in Turkish, he would habitually shape up and stand at attention. Turkish was synonymous with cruelty, torture and military service.

Mother would say, "I know my son will grow up to be a good human being, he is intelligent and studious". She would often come to school and bring fruits from the region. Mother would touch, cuddle and feel proud.

During summer vacation, I would return home and in the heart of Harran, work all days in the fields. We would harvest wheat, lentils, barley and maize.

Frequently, my nose would bleed, I would feel dizzy and collapse onto the hot soil. Of course, the harvest was the landlord's. We worked merely for a basic subsistence. Poisonous snakes and scorpions were my toys. Nevertheless, nature's wild creatures behaved in a more humanitarian way towards us than the landlords and the government. The pains and agonies of childhood have found expression in my songs. For example The Heat of the Summer is one of them.

The sun is burning above;
unbearable the summer heat;
you are working in that field
dug in the dirt amongst the thorns.
The drops of your sweat
are falling on the thirsty ground,
split from the intense heat
like your own lips.
You crush the spikes,
to separate wheat from chaff
but the lender takes your harvest;
for you some remaining dirt.
Oh, my friend, my poor peasant!
Your hard labour of many years
doesn't seem to have got you anywhere.
Your children remain naked and hungry
and you keep on looking for someone who would lend
but this time in vain.
So you left your village, went somewhere else
and you swore never to return.
O, my dear man!
Doesn't matter where you are;
even at the end of the world,
you will still carry the heavy load.
A shepherd for one hundred years,
a cowboy or a plougher,
you will remain poor and hungry
as long as the landlord is your master
and you are at the mercy of the aghas.

On the other hand, in my spare time I would work as a shepherd, farmhand and look after the house. I was constantly in touch with nature. This helped me to understand and study nature and relationships between men and nature. I first saw beauty, art and creativity in nature. In my opinion, an artist who has not closely observed and studied nature's ability to produce and reproduce cannot view his environment properly and is bound to become insensitive.

I completed primary school under such conditions. My self-confidence had increased further. I was experiencing internal convulsions, noisy convulsions. The steam within me would be transformed into music and overflow, in a calm and quiet manner. The steam wanted to force the lid and gush out. But, neither the conditions nor I was ready. And the pressure wasn't high enough yet to cause an explosion... Then I wanted to go to secondary school, but my family's economic situation did not make it possible. What's more, the city was an unknown, dangerous place for me. There was nothing there I could hang onto to continue with my studies. Although I knew and saw the reality, I persisted. But, no contribution by my parents was possible. On top of that, the city was an unknown world to them too. Of course, they didn't want to send their children to an unknown world. At the end, my uncle enrolled me in the secondary school in the Kurdish city of Urfa. My uncle looked after me, fed me for about a month, but his resources were rather limited too. Hence, my ability to continue with my studies was threatened. It was not possible to study when one is hungry and wretched. My studiousness had attracted the attention of a classmate. He took me into his house and looked after me. In exchange, I helped him with his lessons. His family liked me very much. I stayed there for three months. Regrettably, this family just like mine was a poor family with no possibilities. They could not look after me for much longer. Later on, my friends hid me

in a boarding school until the end of the academic year. In this boarding school, there were hundreds of poor Kurdish orphans with no relations. I successfully completed the first year of the secondary school. I turned 14 and was a dynamic youth. I was a full fledged teenager.

During the summer vacation, friends and I worked in the State Production Farm in the Kurdish town of Ceylanpinar. The monthly pay was 340 Turkish liras (TL), (worth about \$US. 70 in 1985 and about \$US. 30.00 at that time — Tr). Three months later, I had exactly 900 TL in my pocket. With this money, I rented a room in Urfa. The rent for six months was 100 TL. It had no electricity or running water. I spent all winter under the dim light of a lantern. My heater, was the old bed I had brought with me from home. But, in defiance of poverty, my grades were looking very good. I was passing my spare time singing songs, but just songs. Oh, how I wished to have a tembour, but where was the money to buy it with?

The room I rented belonged to a poor Kurdish woman. Though she was charging me rent, she would return what she took from me. That is, every night she would bring me food, wash my clothes, nourish me within her means. This was a measure that distinguished a Kurdish mother: Strong character, feelings and valor. The poor woman had given all her life, affection and heart to her son and myself.

I completed secondary school under such difficult conditions. I was growing up. My musical talent was gradually being recognized. The eyes were turning towards me and there were question marks in many minds. During this period Kurdish landlords showed me the green light more. Many were ready to help me. But, I was too proud to accept help from the landlords. As before, I decided to support myself by working in the fields, factories, coffee shops etc. When I started High School, I was totally self supporting.

I graduated from High School in 1973. That year, it will be recalled, was the third year of the Turkish military dictatorship that came to power on 12th March. Hundreds of Kurdish and Turkish patriots, democrats, intellectuals and revolutionaries were struggling to remain alive in prisons... The defense of Kurdish national rights by Kurdish youth, patriots in the case of DDKO (The Revolutionary Cultural Centres of the East — note East in Turkey means Kurdistan since the use of Kurdistan is illegal — Tr) in front of colonialist Turkish judges and prosecutors had really shaken up my generation and myself. This event and the resistance in prisons were the reasons for the birth, development and vitality of the Kurdish patriotism.

In the same year, the points I scored in University entrance examinations allowed me to enrol in Geology section of the Faculty of Science. However, as the fascists had nested there I did not enrol. Instead, I entered the Mathematics section of Gazi Egitim. There I made connections with revolutionary Kurdish patriots, and got to know them closely. Their influence on me cannot be forgotten. With their help and support, I got the opportunity to utilize my talent for our struggle... In the beginning of 1974, the war broke out in Iraqi Kurdistan. A bloody war was going on in Kurdistan... The war was affecting not only the Iraqi Kurds but also ourselves. Along with the war, Kurdistan became topical in the Middle East. We were pulling ourselves together to start a similar war in Turkish Kurdistan. At the time, art and music were the most powerful and common weapons to get organized.

However, before we could pull ourselves together the world press announced with big headlines the collapse of the Kurdish National Movement in Iraqi Kurdistan. This was an unforgettable downfall for us. The defeat at the same time took away the passive thought in our

minds. It gave birth to more active, more vital work. In short, the defeat sowed the seeds of an armed struggle in Turkish Kurdistan.



Shivan Perwer in USA in 1985

SHIVAN AND THE WORLD OF MUSIC

Q. When and how did you come to the world of music, Shivan Perwer?

A. As soon as I was born. I opened my eyes with music. My first cry was my first music. My family was a family of musicians. Each one of us had a flute in our hands and a love song on our tongues. Both mother's and father's musical talents were well developed. The earth in our region was spurting music and talent. The task left to us was to work them and decorate them with flowers: Songs about being a shepherd, love songs, eulogies created by blood feuds on the one hand and songs of promise and gratitude for religious purposes on the other hand. All these were a part of our everyday life. In the evenings, villagers would come to our house and form a circle around my father. Father, would take his flute and play well known tunes such as Fatimah and Shivan. Villagers would be rapt in the magical sound, the music would penetrate and stir up their innermost feelings. Everyone would be in love. A time would come when all the villagers joined in the festivities. Then, there were weddings. Colourful Kurdish weddings. With his rather big body, he would take his flute and would stamp his mark on elated feelings. Father's unbelievable flute was as sensitive as a mother and as fertile as a young bride. Because that flute was playing, shouting and propagating a tradition dating back to thousands of years... There was a whole history wrapped up in that sound: vital, rich and unsatiable. On the other hand, mother was created to sing lullabies. The lullabies that mothers sing for their own children.

Mother would sing those for me. Mother's salt was flavoured with this condiment on the same fashion as for other Kurdish brides, Kurdish women. Mother's lullabies resemble no other voice, no other music.

There were a lot of talented and well known vocalists in the region. Vocalists who sang ballads, popular songs, love songs; songs of promise they were. Father had close connections with them. The vocalists who came to our village would first go to the landlords to get something from him and then would gather in our house. Father's flute was a spring of music, a source of inspiration to them. The vocalists would be inspired by the sounds of that flute and out-perform each other. Life would make us suffer on the one hand and would envelope us with art to enable us to cope with it on the other. Who knows? Maybe, this was a law of nature. Otherwise, would the soil of Harran region and the mountains of Kurdistan spurt out such sensitive music?

Occasionally, father would work as a shepherd. It was a day in spring. If I am not mistaken I was four years old. Along with others who milked the livestock, mother took me to my father one day. Father spread his cloak on the ground and we began playing on it. When playing with Father, I distinctly recall singing the following song:

Ebdellaa, poor Ebdellaa;
at the mercy of the Mullah.
You asked him for the daughter's hand;
he'll make you walk on the hot sand.

Father was shaking with laughter and kept asking me to sing it again and again. As I was growing, the national feelings inside me were also developing. The Kurdish National Movement was blossoming at that time. This greening, this flowering was affecting me, too. All these passions, all these events gave birth to my stile.

Even as a small child I would sing for the blowing wind, blossoming flower, singing nightingale; in rythm with the wind I would sing. Suddenly, I would see myself as the hero in these songs. One day I was Siyabend*, the next day Ferhad*... Sometimes I was Dewresh Ebdî*, sometimes Mem* and would call out to the birds and running water. These motifs in time became indelible in my mind and became a part of me. Continously I experienced them, I moved with them and I dreamed with them.

And a day arrived, when the collection overflowed, got out and recognized no obstacle. As I grew up I wanted to have a tembour. An instrument that would be my companion, near to me, live with me, create beauty with me and share with me my duty. But, to find, to touch and to buy this instrument was financially very difficult for me. Though I did not have an instrument, but its shape and workings were embodied in my head with all its vitality. In the end, I found what I wanted so badly in a piece of skin and a rod. The strings were hair from a horse's tail. I would copy that sound and start the work. One day father became aware of the contraption I had made. He said he wanted to see the instrument which I had hidden in a top secret place. One day father found it, started playing it and went from house to house to laught at me. But I liked my tembour very much. One day, the brat of the landlord asked me to play it. I refused. We started a fight. The nose of the landlord's son started bleeding during the fight. This event cost my family dearly. In the end, the landlord's son's little drop of blood forced us out of our home and the village.

* Heroes of Kurdish legends

Q. Shivan, when and where did you give your first concert?

A. The second year in High School at an evening organized by our school in Urfa. I sang in Kurdish and Turkish that night. There were also I. Tatlis, S. Sucu, I. Badilli and the well known principal performers in Urfa in the same concert.

My name was not in the publicity brochures, because I did not want my name to appear there. On the other hand, to tell the truth, I did not want to appear on the same stage with these renegade performers. But I did not refuse my friends' requests. In those days there was this son of "Ehme the lung-kebab maker" selling water or refreshment on the one hand and struggling to become famous through translating Kurdish songs into Turkish on the other hand. But, he had no chance due to his poor, unintelligible Turkish.

The songs I sang that night really excited the people. Because I sang in Kurdish, the large majority of the audience came to congratulate me. But, there was a quarrel among the school teachers, because some racist and fascist Turkish teachers were really upset at my singing in Kurdish. Even the school principal said to me "I will settle this score with you later". With the moral support of some teachers I replied "Do as you please, I am not afraid of you".

Following this concert, I was going to school with the attitude of being a well known artist. Everyone started to look for me, to ask after me. The record producers would not stop following me. The respect I commanded increased. Especially the teachers of Kurdish origin were supporting me and encouraging me to produce good music. I rejected all offers to produce cassettes and records. I would have nothing to do with it. In short, I did not want to betray my people by singing in Turkish. As far as I was concerned the contemporary Turkish songs were stifling the people and making them

degenerates. All this nonsense was pushing people towards a frightening fatalism and pacifism. Songs about fatalism appeared too simplistic to me.

Q. Did you record any cassette tapes before you left Kurdistan?

A. Yes, four tapes and two records.

Q. Can you briefly explain the impact of these on the Kurdish people?

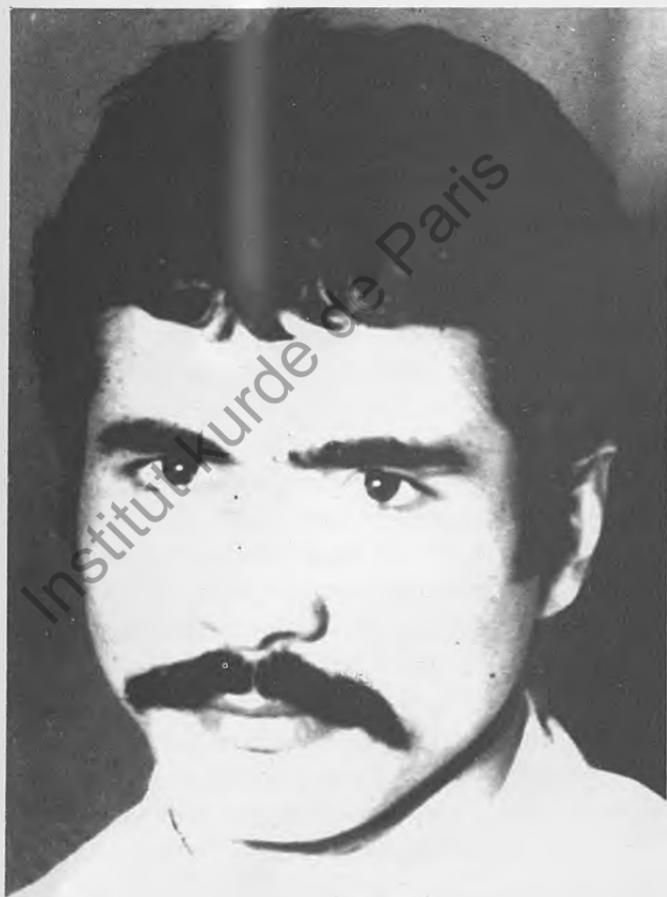
A. The Kurdish people embraced these tapes not just as music tapes, but as vitamins, bread and butter. Because those tapes satisfied the appetites dating back to a few centuries. This demand had been arrested by the colonialist Turkey for years. But, my music demolished prisons, struck the walls around Diyarbakir (Kurdish city and Kurdish cultural capital), united with the Tigris river and flowed without recognizing state borders. Hence, singing in Kurdish became a part of daily life not only within the Kurdish borders but also in colonialist Ankara. At the time, in front of masses numbering tens of thousands I made the Kurdish language and music to which colonialist Turkey wasn't accustomed known out in the open without fear. My songs not only put lumps into the Kurdish people's throats out of joy but also shook down the colonialists. It wreaked havoc in Ankara... The Kurdish music which hitherto had been silent and hadn't been heard much entered into every home regardless of legal restrictions.

In essence, I was perpetuating a tradition, but after I made it modern and contemporary. The music I was making wasn't amateurish afterthoughts. It had filtered through hundreds of years and reached our days.

Q. Shivan, what makes an artist, do you think?

A. I think people, social events are the main factors. Social events give birth to artists as they give birth to other incidents. A genuine artist is not and cannot be born through force, propaganda and lies. Because an

artist is moulded by social events only. That is, the environment provides conditions, and the artist appears on the scene through their impact. Of course, there are powers that claim that they create artists, but this is not natural. This only produces an artificial artist who people do not identify with, do not like, and then reject. Such artists become transparent and disappear altogether in a short time.



Shivan Perwer 20 years old.

EVENTFUL YEARS

Q. In the seventies, to sing in Kurdish was to ask for the cane in Turkey. Yet you managed to do it rather skillfully, what do you say about this, Shivan?

A. What do you mean?

Q. What I mean is this, will you explain these troublesome, eventful years?

A. As I have already said. I prepared myself for the job for a long time. When I started the job, the preliminaries had been completed. The action had remained. The bomb was in my hand. When and where it should explode was the important thing. The atmosphere was filled with fear and hope. Those who knew, those who had contributed to the making of the bomb had their fingers constantly on the detonator. Wondering what sort of repercussions this bomb would cause? Some would be terrified after hearing my songs. To them I had no possibility of living for long. This bomb could kill the maker as well as the detonator. Many held that these songs would bring death by hanging. In this business, there was also the possibility of losing one's head, of being hanged. Some would offer advice, "Be smart, Shivan. You sing in Turkish. Occasionally, you can squeeze Kurdish ones in between, that is enough". Some others would say "you are already dangling from a rope around your neck", to warn me. The more valiant, the more fearless ones would say "Fear not, Shivan, we are with you. You are helping our people a great deal".

In those days, there were quite a few artists of Kurdish origin who had reached the pinnacle of success in Turkey. Although the Kurdish people had no expectations of them, some Kurdish intellectuals in contrast

were worshipping these artists. To the evenings dubbed "Eastern evenings" this type of artists were constantly invited. And just to hear these performers utter one or two Kurdish words thousands of Turkish liras would be spent without hesitation. These artists who knew the situation well would fill their pockets in exchange for one or two Kurdish words such as "lo lo, le le".

It was September 1975. Again, intellectuals of Kurdish origin had organized an "Eastern Night". Many artists of Kurdish origin were invited. But many did not have enough courage to show up. One of them was brought to Ankara from Istanbul by a private plane. The whole purpose was to hear this vocalist say half a line in Kurdish "le le le waye, xezale le waye" (Oh, oh my pet, oh oh). The place, Guney park, Ankara. A myriad of Kurdish groups were present. Parliamentarians, teachers, students, landlords, hedonistic sheikhs. Then in addition to this wellknown vocalist, there were performers who would bare it and shake their bellies. In short, a variety of performers representing night life in Ankara filled the Guney Park.

The program commenced with songs. Virtually everyone was impatient for the big shot vocalist to get on the stage at the conclusion and say a few Kurdish words. As to the Kurdish landlords, their interest lay in the belly dancers. The shaking belly, the gyrating thighs of the curvaceous belly dancer were covered with the landlords' thousand turkish lira notes. As the girl twisted, the landlords, too, twisted in their chairs.

At the end, the famous vocalist of Kurdish origin appeared in his white clothes. The place came to life instantly. The artist crouched on one occasion, and extended his arms and sang "oh, oh, oh" for a few minutes. Then, as a face saving exercise he also squeezed the Kurdish word for pet or gazelle between these "oh's". The audience upon hearing the Kurdish word went wild! There was no end to the standing ovation.

In particular, the Kurdish landlords wanted to hear "the pet" again and again. Because the Kurdish gentlemen were very fond of the pet, all the pets! They confused me. The vocalist and the audience were both Kurdish... What's more the song he sang in Turkish, too, were from Kurdish. The passion of these people, who had harboured such appetite for their own values for years, for the gazelle, was enough to make me cry. I starting sobbing.

A patriotic friend sitting next to me could not hold back his tears when he looked at me. He pleaded with me, "Shivan, if you get on the stage, these people are finished". He insisted: "Whatever it costs, get on the stage and sing". I was between the horns of a dilemma. I struggled with myself. Is it more difficult to get up there or not to? Getting on the stage wasn't all that easy and straightforward. I had to set the fuse on fire. In the end, I decided to explode the bomb. Yes, the bomb had to explode right there, in the capital city of the colonialists, Ankara... To my friend I said, "Go and ask the organizing committee to include me in the program". A joy, an excitement emerged among those who knew me and belittling smiles among those who knew me not. There was discussion between the two groups. Without listening to them, I snatched the bomb and jumped on the stage. I turned to the audience: "Sit down friends", I said, "I will now sing for you the original gazelle, the real gazelle". And I brought down the gazelle from Mt. Ararat, placed her in lake Van. Washed my gazelle as I pleased. I resurrected Siyabend*, brought life to Xecê*, the gazelle loved, shed tears, became a legend and entered into the heart of Kurdistan.

The night was enveloped by such excitement, such passion that it is not easy to find words to describe, as if everyone was inebriated. The bomb I exploded turned the place upside down at once. Ankara was experi-

* The hero and heroine of an epic Kurdish love story.

encing tremors. Colonialist police were on the alert. Before long the heavy-handed force entered the hall. The organizing committee was apprehended. They were tortured for days. The committee turned out to be very valiant, very patriotic. The police constantly asked them, "Tell us, who is he? Is he one of Barzani's brigands or a Russian agent? Who is this creature?"

The expectations I created saved me from treachery, from the colonialist police. They all kept me in hiding. Despite all searches, the Kurdish people protected me, fed me for a whole year, though frequently I was out in the open. But, people's affection kept my identity hidden from the colonialist forces. Then, constantly I was making nightly appearances and performing in front of audiences numbering around thirty thousand. Every night was eventful and bloody. Every concert meant cruelty, torture, prison for the organizing committees. Nevertheless, in spite of all this, everyone would eagerly do his duty, would look out for me. Occasionally, friends would say, "Shivan, because of you today I got caned 50 times by the police" and laugh.

Later on, we shifted our concerts to Kurdistan. Starting with Urfa through to Diyarbekir, Batman, Siirt, to Agri we endeavoured to organize nights. We were in constant touch with people, who really liked me. This affection was intense enough to defeat anything. An armed struggle was not my purpose. People's awakening, coming to life, seeing the set up were of vital importance to me. Because, the conditions for an armed struggle had not emerged yet. Therefore, incidents at concerts made me sad. My friends who were hot blooded contributed to the recurrence of such scuffles. To my way of thinking conflicts with the police could frighten the people and make them feel cool towards us. Because, the Turkish state was for terrorism. The blood-thirsty generals were often fishing in muddy waters. In our first concert in Kurdistan, five artists performed in

Ondi re-named by the colonialists as Suruc in Urfa province. It was in a big cinema. There was so much interest in the concert that only 10 % of those who came to the door could be admitted. The heavy-handed force who understood the significance of the event, declared martial law that night in Suruc. Furthermore, two hundred policemen were brought in from Urfa and Antep. And around fifty military personnel carriers had surrounded the region. Before the concert started, the police wanted to detain the performers and members of the organizing committee. When the people rejected this, there was conflict. The challenge then was to avoid being caught by the colonialists. The people and the heavy-handed force were in the midst of a very bloody conflict. It was chaotic. The villagers were attacking the police with thick sticks, the ones they hit could not get up again. There were many injured. Close to 300 people were arrested. Among them was the beloved man who had valiantly fought, resisted and spent many years in their jails, Muhterem Biçimli. That night bought him exactly two years in prison. He took it with joy. To him, prison, dungeon and torture meant nothing. The might of the colonialists could not cope with him.

What a pity, he died in a car accident. His memory lives within us. The Kurdish people that night took me away under the very eyes of the police. They could find no trace of me in spite of all their searches. This was the most beautiful and striking testimony to the non-existence of a weapon as powerful and as effective as people's affection.

Then, towards the end of the same year, a night was organized at the Sports Show Palace in Istanbul. The speaker was my valiant friend Necmettin Buyukkaya. I shall always cherish the genuine interest, he showed in me and the courage and support he gave me. With a sensitivity in line with his valor and patriotism he was in charge all night. He was a fearless warrior who had

emerged in the 60's. He was as tough as the Harran plaine, as passionate as the Kurdish mountains. But like so many of our valiants, the generals with blood on their hands took him away from us, too. The dungeons in Diyarbekir, the history of Kurdistan will of course settle Necmettin's accounts with the colonialist executioners. Also present was my very good friend Ferid Uzun. As is known he was a good musician too. The forces of evil also took him away from us. Ours is a deep wound. I returned to Kurdistan again after that night in Istanbul. The fascist prosecutors were looking for me everywhere.

Because the voice, the music I was making wasn't mine — it belonged to my people, I could not use it irresponsibly. Furthermore, it became evident that after that night no overt concerts could be organized in Kurdish towns and cities under the occupation of the Turkish Armed Forces. It was necessary to change tactics. With new tactics in 1976 we organized a night in the Kurdish city of Sehresiyar re-named by the colonialists as Dogubeyazit. Of the organizers, two were the late Mustafa Camlibel and Salih Kandal. Kandal was independent at the time. There was a lot of interest in the night. The Kurdish people were expecting a great deal from us. Such nights should be organized throughout Kurdistan, they would point out. But the colonialists resorted to barbarism in Dogubeyazit, too, nothing short of what had taken place in Suruc. Again arrests, jailings, torture.

I returned to Ankara again. By then I was in every city, every town, every village and every home. Which one of these could Ankara catch and take its revenge from? The Turkish Government in its search for me was leaving no stone unturned. Because of me, people were constantly subjected to torture. The time had come to depart from this land. And in June 1976 I parted from my beloved Kurdistan and settled in West Germany.

THE YEARS IN EUROPE

Q. Eight years have gone by Shivan. During this time what have you encountered, what have you seen and what have you experienced?

A. Before reaching Europe, I knew that the events in Kurdistan were reflected here too. I had considerable knowledge on this subject. The appearance in Europe of the groupings, divisions, frictions in the homeland could not be avoided. Therefore, I had to act in a careful and sensitive manner. I had a road map in front of me in line with my political and artistic work in Kurdistan. As soon as I arrived here, I made contact with all Kurdish organizations and political parties regardless of their politics. What mattered to me was to let Europeans know the terrible situation the Kurds were in, not the interests of this or that organization. Publicizing the Kurdish question in Europe was the most important thing to me. All past and present national liberation movements have endeavoured to enlist the support of public opinion in Europe. Although we are so close to Europe, we have failed to take our national question to the Europeans. In this, our divisions and personal interests are as much to blame as the countries colonizing Kurdistan.

The conditions in Europe were very different. Here, guest workers from Kurdistan numbering in the hundreds of thousands had adapted to the different European atmosphere. This adaptation, masses of people alienated from their own society, presented me with serious obstacles. There was no possibility of finding here those warm-hearted, vital and dynamic individuals as in Kurdistan. No doubt, this too, was the inevitable product

of social life in Europe. In short, Europe had pushed the individual towards selfishness and personal interest. Therefore, many were approaching me for selfish reasons.

Unfortunately this reality dawned on me later than I would have liked. It is not easy to recognize, study a new environment and appreciate the types of people such an environment produces. However perceptive, however knowledgeable a person may be it is difficult to understand the conditions instantly.

Nevertheless, I was attempting to do a few things in spite of all this. Because the situation of my country and my people was dreadful. I was making mistake after mistake particularly due to the affection and respect I held for the individual. To me, people were sacred. For a person like myself who had spent his childhood and youth in poverty, believing in people, uniting with them, responding to their requests were unavoidable. I would open my arms and embrace everyone who approached me. I didn't want them to feel pain, as I had. There was no question of personal gain on my mind. Whereas, many would make overtures to me, would want to reach somewhere else by stepping on my shoulders. I was in a world outside all this, my assets, my commodity was Kurdistan. 20 million Kurds were my family, my reason to be. I had millions of brothers, sisters, children.

So for these people, for their freedom everything had to be done. It could only be done through work, through action. I was bored with inaction, laxity and silence. Events developing in Kurdistan were affecting me terribly, making me lose sleep. I could not remain outside these events. A life without Kurdistan was good for nothing.

Before long, my efforts began to bear fruit. Up to that time, other than Newroz (The Kurdish New Year) no social evenings had been organized in Europe.

On the other hand there were no readily visible signs of social activities. The only thing being done was some work on language and writing. But there were a large number of Kurds in Europe. Many of them were not even aware of their ethnic origin. Those who knew a little were involved in various Turkish organizations. They had no national demands. To them, Turkey was indivisible. And we were tangled up in the web and would eventually get some democratic rights from colonialist Turkey. All the functions organized, all the demonstrations centred on this theme. The "folk" singers frequently invited from Turkey performed in Turkish only. Although more than half of the audiences were from Kurdistan singing in Kurdish and playing Kurdish tunes were strictly forbidden. Furthermore, requests for Kurdish songs were sternly rejected and those making these requests were made to look like incorrigible chauvinists by the Turkish organizations. Because the chauvinist tradition in Turkey, manifested itself here too. In short, Europe had changed many things, had done away with many habits, but not chauvinism.

This situation was affecting me very much. The situation should not be allowed to continue. Various Kurdish organizations just couldn't stop bickering to look at the reality. What mattered to them was the interests of their own organizations. Yet, there was no possibility of going to a people devoid of culture and whose values had been turned upside down. It was necessary, firstly, to uncover the values created by the people and put them into a workable condition. If a people are deprived of their culture and not exposed to their culture everyday then those people are finished. Because people need to express their joy, pain and agony. This is possible only with an alive, vital culture that is relevant to everyday life.

The executioners of the Kurdish people have forbidden our culture and want to deprive us of it because they understand this reality. I experienced this stark reality in Europe. This cultural massacre had to be stopped. Therefore, as a first priority we organized cultural evenings. It was necessary to reform our culture, rescue it from undue alien influences and have it experienced by our people. Before long people came to demand concerts everywhere. Concerts were very well attended. They opened the way for the birth of self-confidence, increased the value of Kurdish music. The situation opened not only the eyes of the individual but also those of the various Kurdish organizations. They too, began to organize evenings frequently. Every organization made close connections with us, because a way to reach and unite the people was through Kurdish music. Many organizations who had not been able to gather more than 50 people at their meetings were startled when they met thousands at concerts. Suddenly those who sang in Turkish were no longer worthy of worship. Wheat and chaffe were being separated in Europe. In the final analysis, despite all the negatives, the question of Kurdistan is assuming great dimensions. Major steps were taken in these last ten years. The Kurdish question did not remain restricted to the Middle East, it has become international. No longer is the Kurdish language and culture presumed to be dispossessed and pathetic. In particular, the Kurdish music sold piece by piece to the colonialists in the market place is reaching its national owner in strides. Today, there is demand for Kurdish music in many countries. Let's not forget that national liberation is a cultural resistance, too. The colonialists cannot overpower the cultural resistance dating back to thousands of years and with our tembour and lyrics we will always stand by and be a part of this resistance.

I am the friend of those who suffer;
I am the friend of the revolutionaries;
I am the troubadour of the suppressed;
I am the citizen of Kurdistan.
I am all ear to what people say;
No one can buy me, I am not for sale,
I am the friend of struggling nations,
I am a fighter for my country
writing and singing the ballads of freedom.
Come and let us all join hands,
together we will grow roses.
I am the supporter of the people,
full of hope and aspiration.
I am clear about my aim;
I cause fright to the enemy.



Shivan in Stockholm 1983



Shivan Perwer and his son Serxebun in Australia in 1984



Shivan, Serxebun, Mahmut Baksi and Gulistan in San Francisco in 1985

Institut kurde de Paris

**THE
REALITY
OF
CULTURE**

THE REALITY OF CULTURE

In the past many Kurdish poets and artists used to dedicate their poems and songs to the landlords, religious leaders and generals. The main objective of the poets and artists was to praise these influential people and attempt to glorify and immortalize their deeds. Neither the Kurdish people nor the natural beauty of Kurdistan featured in their works of art and literature.

Then, the following questions arise: Firstly, did these poets and artists contribute anything to the Kurdish culture? And secondly, who left the rich and flowing Kurdish language to Shivan and other artists of our day? It is necessary to keep in mind that every adversity carries with it the seeds of opportunity. It cannot be denied that irrespective of their contents, the works of art produced and handed down to us have had favourable impact on the development, enrichment and survival of the Kurdish language. From this point of view, many Kurdish poets and vocalists have secured for themselves a first place in the Kurdish history and have immortalized their names through their works.

Then, it is of course, necessary to segregate from the others Ehmede Xani, the author of "Mem and Zin", considered to be the epos of Kurdish literature. Ehmedi Xani back in the 1600's saw and wrote about the Kurdish reality that I have been addressing to. In Xani's work Kurdish patriotism and Kurdish reality are incredibly powerful. When the peoples of the region were in the midst of religious conflicts and identified themselves as Christian and Moslem rather than by their ethnic origins, Xani's thesis for an independent Kurdistan was all too advanced. It is, indeed, all too

remarkable when one considered the fact that Xani lived before the rise of modern nationalism.

To prove the point let me quote from Xani's own work translated from Kurdish to Turkish in 1968 by the Kurdish author M. Emin Bozarslan. The work was promptly banned by the colonialist government of Turkey.

Ehmede Xani in this immortal work says the following under the heading: "Our Trouble"

Our Trouble

Bartender! For the love of God, please
Pour som wine into the crystal glass
Let the glass with the wine show the world
Let there appear whatever it is that we wish
Let the events ahead of us come to light
Let us know if the future holds promise for us
Look! Our misfortune has reached its zenith,
Has it started to come down do you think?
Or will it remain so,
Until come upon us the end of time?
Is it possible, I wonder, that for us, too
A star will emerge out of the firmament?
Let the luck be on our side for once,
Let our lady luck wake up for a change.
Let there emerge from within us, too, one to shoulder the earth
Let there be a king of our own, too.
Let his sword attest to our might
Let it be known the power of our pen,
Let there be an answer to our trouble
Let there be demand for our knowledge.
If we had an exalted leader,
A do-gooder wanting a poem
Our bullion, too, would be stamped
It wouldn't be so unwanted and suspect.
However pure and clean they may be,
Value is added to gold and silver with a stamp
If we had a king,
If God saw him deserving of a crown
If a throne was appointed to him,
Our luck would turn around.

If he, too, was provided with a crown
 Of course, for us too there would be respect.
 He would feel sorry for us orphans,
 He would set us free from bondage to the cravens.
 They would not be victorious over us these Turks
 Ours would not turn into ghost towns,
 We wouldn't become fugitives, dispossessed,
 wretched,
 We wouldn't bow our heads in defeat to the Turks,
 the Tadjiks
 But God made it so from time memorial
 He made the Turks and the Persians attack us.
 Although it is disgraceful to be their subjects,
 This disgrace belongs to the persons of repute
 This is a matter of honor for the Chiefs, the leaders
 What can the troubadours and the dispossessed do?
 Whoever took the mighty sword in his hand,
 Established in a manly manner a state for himself.
 Because the world is like a prize bride,
 Its fate, too, is determined by the mighty sword
 But its dowry*, trousseau, jewels and wedding presents
 Are goodness, generosity, kindness and forgiveness.

I asked the world, "What is your dowry?"
 "Benevolence", it said to me.
 In short, "With the sword and goodness,
 the world submits and bows its head to man."
 I am confused by God's wisdom:
 In this world of States
 Why have the Kurds remained Stateless, dispossessed,
 What for have they all become fugitives, condemned?
 They have conquered the spring of fame with sword
 They have subjugated the land of benevolence
 Every one of their Chiefs is of Hatem's generosity*
 And of Rostem's bravery is every one of their men
 Look! From Arabia to Georgia
 It is all but Kurdish lands like a fortress
 Like a great wall the Kurds stand between the Turks
 and the Persians
 Here and there are all the Kurds occupying all four
 corners.

Kurdistan, dowry is what the bridegroom pays his bride's hand.

Both sides make the Kurdish clans
 Targets of their poison-tipped arrows
 As if the Kurds hold the key to crossing the borders
 Each clan is as strong as a great wall
 However rough and stormy they get
 These Turkish ocean and Persian sea
 It is the Kurds who are splattered with blood
 And like a rampart separates the two.
 Generosity, benevolence, bravery,
 Chivalry, guardianship and valor
 All are credited to the Kurdish clans
 The fame of their sword and their benevolence is
 farflung
 To the same extent they cherish freedom and
 independence,
 They hate submission and obligations.
 It is the spirit of independence and exalted benevolence
 That has become the obstacle to shouldering the bur-
 den of obligation
 Always without unity it is because of this,
 Divided and pitched against one another they stand
 If we had unity amongst ourselves,
 If we all together obeyed one another
 The Turks, the Arabs and the Persians
 Would all together be in our servitude
 Then we would perfect the art of government and the
 religion
 Then we would acquire all the wisdom and command
 nature
 Wheat would be separated from the chaff then,
 Would come forth the real achievers then.

As is evident, Ehmede Xani, 300 years ago pointed to Kurdish patriotism, to Kurdistan's reality and complained about the never ending conflicts between the Kurdish chieftains. I just wonder if Ehmede Xani would write anything differently if he were to rise and study the Kurdish situation today? I don't believe so. Nevertheless, the Kurdish chieftains, the Kurdish princes Xani complained about in their capacity as the sovereign rulers of their localities continuously fought

• Hatem and Rostem are legendary figures renowned for generosity and bravery, respectively.

against the enemies and kept the Kurdish language and culture alive and well. That is, notwithstanding all their undesirable affairs, they prevented domination of alien cultures in Kurdistan and ensured the survival of our customs, traditions and language. If this wasn't so, could Ehmedê Xani produce such striking, rich works of art?

Very well then, what is today's reality? Forget about regions, we have not managed to protect ourselves, our family, our own home from the bad influences of countries ruling Kurdistan. Those of us with political views ranging from extreme right to extreme left often look down on our own language, culture and past. We don't protect and preserve them and we tend to avoid them.

I believe today's Kurdish political organizations are obliged to read, study and research this work of art very carefully and seriously. Xani's philosophy, world view, and counsel constitute a treasure each in its own right, a treasure that cannot be easily found. Drawing some proper conclusions from his work, thinking and getting organized accordingly is the duty of every Kurdish patriot. If not, we will fail to avoid absurd theories and gossips amounting to "The history of Kurdistan begins with us!". Furthermore, such absurd thesis not only means spreading butter on the enemies' toast, but also endangers the future of Kurdistan. Those who fail to let their members and sympathizers know the Kurdish people's past and its role and place in history cannot be a part of this struggle by words or deeds. At the very best they would amount to nothing more than a boil, an abscess which has appeared for its own sake.

But their efforts will come to naught. Because the Kurdish history is so rich, so profound, so noble that it can easily melt and make disappear such individuals and organizations. Our history has never condoned and will not condone those who deny it, those who behave contrary to its realities.

WHY KURDISH?

Ehmedê Xanî, Shakespeare of Kurdistan, explains the significance and the beauty of writing in Kurdish.

When ignorance reigned supreme
Empty found Xani the chair of wisdom.
So not because of his qualifications or competence
But just for the loyalty to his people and passion to
preserve
In short, due to obstinacy or helplessness and
desperation
Commit this act he did against the prevailing custom
and tradition*
He threw caution to the wind and took the plunge
Seemingly made of pearls and precious stones,
The language of Kurds he rearranged and reorganized
And thus, for the people he suffered.
So that no one can say "The Kurds are unjust, base-
less with no origins.
Various peoples have the Books**, only the Kurds do
not."
And so that men of thoughts cannot say, "The Kurds
Did not choose love as one of their aims.
Altogether they neither want nor are wanted,
Altogether they neither love nor are loved.
The taste of love did not fall to their lot,
Devoid are they of metaphoric as well as true love."
Definitely not! The Kurds are not so green,
But they are waifs and powerless.
Unwise and ignorant they all are not,
Just deprived and dispossed.

* Xani is referring to the custom and tradition of writing in Arabic and to a lesser extent in Persian. The writing in Kurdish was frowned on by the vested interests in the 17th century, today in 1986 Kurdish is outlawed in Turkey and the Turkish courts imprison those who write in Kurdish.

** Books here mean the Holy Books, the Torah, the Bible and the Koran.

If we had a leader to look after us,
A compassionate one who knew the subtleties
If science, intellect, maturity,
Poetry, prose, reason and wisdom
Were the things he valued in his court
Honored as valid currency, legal tender
Then, I would raise the flag of poetry
To the top of a mast towering the earth.
I would recall from the heavens the spirit of Melayê
Ciziri*

And along with him I would resurrect Elî Herîrî*.
I would give such joy to Feqiyê Teyra*,
He would remain content till eternity.
What am I to do, the market is rather still
There are no customers for vintage wine
Especially in this day and age the purse
Has become the friend and darling to all of us.
That is, because of greed for money and gold,
As each one of them has become such a sweetheart,
If you sell all of science for one cent,
If you give all of philosophy in exchange for a pair of
shoes
No one will take it to blaze the trail
And no one will come to the party.
When we realized that such is our day and age,
When we realized fighting is all for money,
We took to becoming an alchemist
And when we saw that was not possible,
We acted with fairness for a while
And we cleaned counterfeit jewels.
Deception wasn't the heart's desire,
As a go-between it never acted.
Faith we lost in religion and gold never came by,
Out of desperation, at the end, we became a
coppersmith.
For exhibition out we brought our hidden copper,
All blank were they with no seals, so we prayed.
Our prayers were answered in the positive,
Vehicles they became for our task.
Though these coins are not legal tender,
They are simple, clean and precious.
Without deceit and pretention they are complete,
And handy are they for people to do their business

* The three masters of Kurdish literature.

It is pure Kurdish, no doubt about it,
Gold it is not, so they can't say "It is low in carat"
Our own red copper it is, this is quite clear
Silver it is not, so they can't say "It has faded"
"Worthless it is" do not say for our currency,
It only lacks the stamp of those preceding the Shahs.
Had it been decorated with seals and stamps,
With no demand and mixed-up it would not have
remained.

It is a darling unattached to anyone,
Therefore, it is guilty and with no intention
Currencies of people with no powerful backers,
Unless stamped with the seals of Sovereigns
Are spoiled, useless according to many scholars,
But are highly regarded by many philosophers.
Yet, the Sovereign of our time, knowledgeable man,
Did not listen to us with the ear to understand,
Mirza is this gentleman's name,
Whose looks are pure alchemy,
Deceitful heart he transforms to crystal,
Counterfeit coins he transmutes to pure gold
Were there a hundred loads of red counterfeit coins
To yellow he would instantly convert with one look.
He brings down the exalted to the lowest with his
wrath,
And he elevates the lowest to the pinnacle with his
favor
He detains generals like captives,
Then he releases them like derelicts
Without obligation and expectation of anything in
return
He makes rich with his benevolent hand
Thousands of poor and desperate everyday
Hundreds of beggars every moment
Had he looked at us once,
Had he turned his blessed face towards us
All these coins would be transmuted to gold
All these words would turn to poetry
But very dear is his look
Therefore he did not look at us specifically
A blessing for the populace is he,
Oh dear God grant him continuity!

I wonder if it is necessary to add anything to what Xani has already written? I believe Xani quite clearly and concisely stresses the place and significance of one's mother tongue. At that time the prevailing languages were Arabic and Persian in arts and literature. Those who were good in these languages would rise above the others in the society and enjoy the trappings of success.

Is the situation any different today? Is there any chance in today's Turkey for anyone writing in Kurdish to rise, to become a success, even to live? Forget about writing, even speaking in Kurdish is like playing with fire in colonialist Turkey.

Then, shall we give up our mother tongue since the situation is so bad? I believe the answer to demolishing this wall of shame lies in Xani's philosophy. At least, we need to be as honorable, as brave and as determined as he was. In a way, a measure of patriotism ought to be our readiness to jealously embrace, preserve and protect our mother tongue. If not, we will have difficulty rescuing the language of Kurds from oblivion.

It is a pity that many of our intellectuals and educated have withdrawn to a corner and are accepting as normal the extraordinarily barbarous things that are happening. Furthermore, some of them feel no shame, don't blush from translating verbal Kurdish literature to Turkish and presenting to their readers as Turkish literature. There is no honor or dignity left in these individuals. They are in the business of marketing the honor and moral values of a nation. In exchange for money, they are proffering a whole culture, tradition and history to the arch-enemies of the Kurdish nation. History has never forgiven those who deny their culture and heritage and offer them for sale to enrich themselves. The Kurdish people will sooner or later settle the score. No one should entertain any doubts about this at all.

Do you want an example? There is Mr Yashar Kemal. This person, for years, without any doubt, hesitation or shame has been denying his own identity, his own mother and offering his people's culture and heritage to the colonial oppressors bent on annihilating the Kurdish cultural identity. No mother in the whole wide world could possibly be as sorry, as sad, as wretched as Yashar Kemal's mother. Any author who joins forces with the oppressors to deny his own mother and his identity, is nothing but a crawler and a disgrace, no matter how famous he is, even if he is a Nobel laureate.

Institut kurde de Paris

YILMAZ GUNEY AND THE QUESTION OF KURDISTAN.

The struggle to shatter and emerge from stainless steel cocoons has been the never ending quarrel of the oppressed peoples' concerned performers, writers and troubadours. They are the ones who nourish and intensify the anger, frustrations and struggles of the masses against oppression, injustice and exploitation and pass them on from generation to generation. Sometimes the heroes of great legends become the embodiment of millions, loom on the horizon and become immortalized.



Mahmut Baksi and the Kurdish film-director Yilmaz Guney in Paris 1982

Yilmaz Guney was one of those.... a man for the masses. Yilmaz Guney who spent a great deal of his most productive years of his life in the oppressors' prisons won the coveted palme d'or in the Cannes Film Festival in 1982 for his film "Yol" (The Way). He produced this film when he was in the oppressors' prisons. Undoubtedly, winning the award was a very significant event. It wasn't just a cultural event but also a political victory. In the sense of shattering and coming out of cocoons made by the oppressors, it was a remarkable event that contributed to bringing the people of Kurdistan and the peoples of the world together in fraternal bonds.

By declaring himself to be a "Kurdish director" after winning the award, Yilmaz Guney slapped in the face not only the colonialists but also those performing artists of Kurdish origin in their servitude.

Towards the end of the same year, for the Swedish television, I made an interview with Yilmaz Guney who

justifiably had earned himself an honorable place in the Kurdish history. In the hope of teaching a lesson to people like Yasar Kemal*, I present the dialogue about Kurdistan exactly as it took place:

— Would you please tell me about yourself briefly?

— My real name is Yilmaz Putun. I am 46 years old. My father was a Kurd from a village around Siverek (In Turkish Kurdistan - Tr), my mother a Kurd from the Cibran Clan from the Kurdish city of Muş. During the general mobilization for the big war, I was born to these two people who had left their hometowns for the Turkish city of Adana.

During my childhood and youth, Kurdish and its Zaza dialect were spoken at home. But, I was not conscious of my national identity in the political and scientific sense. As my political knowledge increased I became awa-

re of my real situation. It dawned on me that I was an assimilated Kurd. In the school, we were told that we were Turks. We were raised in line with the national and official ideology.

In 1955, I completed High School in Adana. At the time I was being investigated by the Turkish police because allegedly I had made propaganda for communism in a short story.

I ended up in prison in 1960. I got out after two years. At this time I played in action and adventure packed films portraying popular characters.

After 1970, that is, following my return from the compulsory military service, I began to feel a significant change in myself. The change was a necessity. Coming into embrace with the Kurdish people anew, seeing first hand the Kurdish reality from a very close proximity because of my military service in the Kurdish city of Muş really shook me deep down.

After 1972, as is known, I spent all my time in the prisons.

— Altogether how many years were you imprisoned?

— Altogether 12 years.

— After you were released, you made some significant films such as "The Friend" and "The Anxiety", what can you say about this period?

— In May, 1974, I was released from the Penitentiary thanks to the general "amnesty". I was planning six stories. One, in essence, was revealing conditions.

— They were your stories, of course?

* Mr Y Kemal, a Kurd, is accused of acquiring fame and fortune by plagiarizing and turning Kurdish epics into Turkish novels. He is said to be indifferent to the plight of his people, the Kurdish people - - Translator.

— Yes, they were all mine. In "The Anxiety", in short, I began to tell about the poor Kurdish peasants who came to the Turkish city of Adana to work in the cotton fields. My characters were all Kurds. But, then, as is known, I was framed. My name was connected with the killing of a judge. Therefore, I was given 19 years' prison sentence. So, I was free for 3 months and 20 days only.

— How did "The Way" become a reality?

— I wrote the script in prison. It is about the experience of inmates in half way prison who are given one week's leave. With this I wanted to present a panoramic view of Kurdistan and Turkey. Making of the film followed a path different from that of the others hitherto made. I started with real life stories. The Cactus Film Company in Switzerland and I financed the films. After the filming, I did all the necessary work. Of course, there were many difficulties encountered in the process. But, none of them was insurmountable. Many, many think as follows: "How could such a film be made under the fascist military dictatorship? Since such a film was made, there must be a free environment in Turkey, albeit "a partial one". On this subject, it is absolutely necessary to say: "It is not possible to speak of any freedom in Turkey, even partial freedom."

— And the plot of the films?

— "The Way", as is known, is the story of inmates on leave from the halfway prison. The main characters are three Kurdish friends named Mehmet Salih, Seyit Ali and Omar. Of these, Omar plays a significant role in exposing the national oppression suffered by the Kurdish people. Seyit Ali plays a very significant role in revealing the relations, especially within the family, of Kurdish peasants in a feudal set up. Mehmet Salih, too, is more or less the same.

Through "The Way", we portrayed people and communities in Turkey and Kurdistan. We explained a reality. A reality to which many people reacted strongly. For example, identifying Kurdistan in "The Way" made many people, especially the chauvinists, break a few jars. And they branded me a traitor. I have always been declared "traitor" by the Turkish ruling circles. I don't feel hurt or sad because of this. I would feel sad if my people called me traitor. However, today my people embrace me and claim me as their own. Of course, as a natural result of this the Turkish ruling circles attack me. There could be nothing more natural.

— What does the film say and do for the Kurdish people?

— Through this film, in particular the restrictions on the struggle of the Kurdish people with a very long history were, in part at least, documented. Because, the fact that the Kurdish people and their ancestral homeland are colonized has long been overlooked. In "The Way" we pointed out, in an unmistakable way, to the existence of colonized Kurdistan in Turkey. And we showed it to all the people of the world. Secondly, we exposed the oppression suffered by the Kurdish people not to the Kurds themselves but to those who did not know the Kurdish people, those who were not aware of this oppression. It wasn't our purpose to tell the Kurdish people "Look, you are being oppressed". The Kurdish people know it anyway. They experience it everyday.

— As a Kurdish artist in exile, what contributions can you make to the Kurdish People's national struggle?

— Basically, expositions of artistic or political nature can be made. The realities surrounding the Kurdish people can be exposed. Organizing the Kurdish people's struggle on the basis of its connections with other peoples, deeply imbedding the training and the struggle can be done. However, it is clear that this is a matter of time. I am confident about the future.

— Are you thinking of making a film in Kurdish?

— I am thinking of a film that will reveal the history of the Kurdish people's struggle. However, both the preparations and the preliminary work will take a long time. But, I believe I will succeed. I have a habit: I don't speak much on something I haven't done yet.

— As we're on the film, I want to point out to one of your particularly noteworthy approaches, that is, the role of women. For example, an actress can save the film without saying a word. Can you tell me a few things on this?

— Movements are what matters in films. In plays, you can explain the problems through dialogues, but in films, movements, looks and appearances are more important. In films, if you can make good use of a face, you can replace a whole page of dialogues with one look.

— How about the oppressed women characters?

— This too is rather natural. Because, in Kurdistan the woman's place is visible. The woman's oppression is two fold in Kurdistan. The oppression is both feudal and also it is about the inability to obtain economic freedom. Her liberation is dependant on the liberation of her nation as well as her class.

— When you won the first award at the Cannes Film Festival, you said to the world press "I am a Kurdish director and performer". What made you say that?

— It is necessary to explain that as follows: A human being should not deny his national origin, ethnic roots, he should claim his national origin. Whereas, even if I were not of Kurdish descent, I would still as a democrat, consider it my duty to work against national oppression. Even if we looked at it solely from this point of view, we see that the Kurdish nation is today really under intense national oppression. Just think, a nation that is not allowed to speak its own language, not allowed to sing its songs. The slightest movement about the political realities are suppressed with excessive penalties... For example, today there are over 20 thousand Kurdish militants, Kurdish revolutionary democrats in

jails. But, in Turkey this question (the Kurdish question) is overlooked, even though it is necessary to put it forth in a most open and frank way. Because, the 12th September, 1980 Coup didn't take place merely to suppress the Turkish democrats in Turkey or to stop the struggle of the Turkish workers but also to intensify oppression of the Kurdish nation.

— The majority of performers of Kurdish origin — particularly those who have achieved international fame — deny their national origin for personal gains. You did not choose to do so, why?

— I don't see anything unnatural about this. I am of Kurdish origin and I say I am of Kurdish origin. Furthermore, it is not necessary to be an oracle or to look into a crystal ball to see the oppression the Kurdish people are suffering. This is a very obvious reality, like all nations, the Kurdish people will struggle for national liberation and liberation is the right of the Kurdish nation. That is, every nation is entitled to self-determination. I really believe in my people.

— In Kurdistan, there is a quiet awakening, a flame of resistance that cannot be dimmed. How do you see the future?

— When I speak of Kurdistan, I don't speak of just the part of Kurdistan colonized by Turkey, I speak of the whole Kurdistan colonized by Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. In my personal view, Kurdistan is at the crossroads and has the potential of being the Key to the revolution in the Middle East. Either the national oppression it suffers or the class oppression or their combination will in the near future culminate in transforming Kurdistan into the red hot centre of revolutionary changes in the Middle East. As for the long run I can say: No nation consents to the yoke and shackles imposed on it. Especially, a nation like the Kurdish nation, so conscious of its national honour can never accept such bondage. The ruling ideology even denies the very existence of the Kurdish nation.

— What sort of Kurdistan are you thinking of?
— The Kurdistan I am thinking of is a united, independent and democratic Kurdistan.
— Do you believe that such a Kurdistan will be established?
— Yes, I certainly believe it will be established ...
— Can you summarize?
— First I want to say: Friends should look at the nature of today's dictatorship in Turkey very carefully. Because, the big majority of them still do not know what the fascist dictatorship wants to do and will do and its anti-people character. We the revolutionary democrats will expose all these. We want to return to our homeland some day. Though some are able to return now, we cannot. When I say Turkey, I want to make the following very clear: We call it Turkey because its official name is Turkey. There is a Turkey today which encompasses Kurdistan as an internal colony. To say Turkish Kurdistan is in my opinion more correct. The people of Turkish Kurdistan will move one step forward with the demolition of the fascist dictatorship. Understanding this and the struggle against fascism are of vital importance to me. I must also say that some Turkish friends have chauvinistic attitudes that belittle other nations. I believe such attitudes are not in the interest of the people. The real issue is that of freedom for all people regardless of their ethnic origin. Today millions of liras earned by "guest workers" in Europe are spent on weapons and instruments of oppression by the ruling circles in Turkey. This oppression is perpetuated against the Kurds, the Turks and other minority groups. The most important thing that must be said on this matter is that the enemy of the Turkish, Kurdish and other minorities' working people is a common enemy. It is necessary to struggle against this common enemy.

Again in his speech on the occasion of opening the Kurdish Institute in Paris, Yilmaz Guney in summary

said: "The Kurdish question is not just a question of a cultural suppression. The Kurdish question is not merely a Kurd Vs Turk, Kurd Vs Arabs or Kurd Vs Persian conflict either.

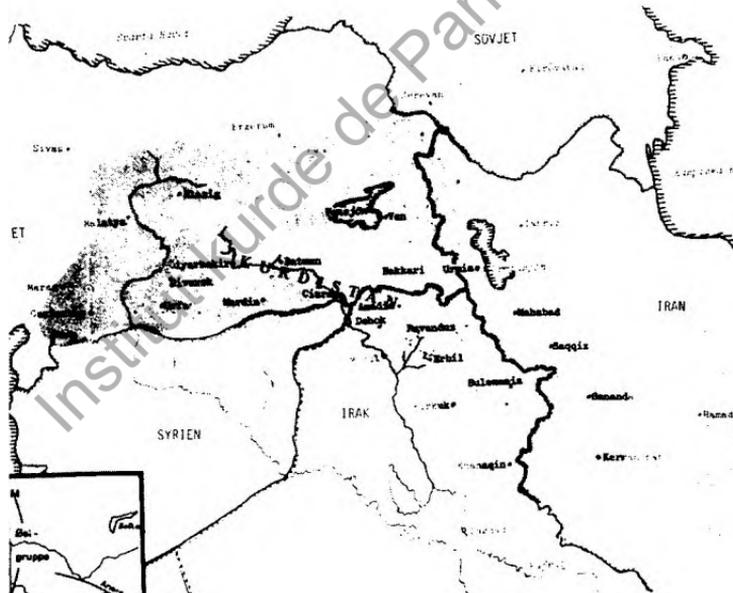
From whichever way one looks at it, be it from its social, political and geographic point of view or from its potential for revolutionary changes, Kurdistan is the backbone of the Middle East. If this aspect is properly assessed, the key to the revolutionary changes in the Middle East will be found right here. It is therefore necessary to look at the question not just from a nationalistic point of view, but from the point of view of an interest common to the peoples of Turkey, Iran, Kurdistan, Syria and Iraq. Long live united independent and democratic Kurdistan".

Neither the colonialists' nor the fascists' might was sufficient to overcome Yilmaz Guney... What a pity that on 9th September, 1984, death singled him out from among us. He lives and will continue to live in the hearts and minds of Kurdish people, indeed, of all oppressed peoples of the world.

AFTERWORD

"The day will come when the terrible persecutions and the indignities suffered by the Kurds will be seen to be a blight on all mankind."

**Mr P. Kintominas, LLB
Australia**



In a nutshell, hastening the advent of that day is Shivan's primary mission. Shivan is not just an entertainer. He informs, motivates and inspires. He is a fighter. His unique weapon is the artistic expression of the suffering of his people with a long heritage, but virtually unknown to the world.

A whole people, 20 million of them, all victims of a grand conspiracy, a conspiracy of silence, a conspiracy necessitated by geopolitics, balance of power, spheres of influence, military alliances, call it what you will. Shivan is committed to shattering this conspiracy, just as a high note shatters a crystal glass and just as the sound of trumpets brought down the walls of Jericho.

It is not possible to understand Shivan's significance, indeed, even relevance, in a national struggle for life and death without some factual knowledge of his people, the much maligned and grossly neglected Kurdish people. The word to be underlined here is "factual". For until a few years ago, the three leading American dictionaries described the Kurds essentially as "Tall, pastoral, warlike predatory people." Here it is, the victims of Turkish, Arab and Persian predators described as warlike and predatory. Can you imagine an entry in a dictionary referring to Black Americans as "Inferior people eager to enslave themselves to plantation owners to satisfy their cotton picking craze."? Can you imagine an entry describing the Jews as "Members of an outdated religious cult engaged in usury."?

Yet such has been the basic information about the landlocked Kurds whose ancestral homeland has been divided and kept backward under chronic martial laws and states of emergency off limit to outsiders. As incredible as it may sound, it is against the law in Turkey to say "I am a Kurd" or "There are Kurds in Turkey". It is against the law to listen to Shivan's music, indeed any Kurdish music and it is against the law to write or read anything in Kurdish. And it makes no difference whether it is the Turkish constitution, American Declaration of Independence or something on wild Kangaroos in Australia one reads, if it is in Kurdish a prison sentence is a certainty. In Iran, bombed and besieged the Kurds have become refugees in their own land.

They are referred to as "Children of the Devil, agents of Zionism, Imperialism, Communism etc. bent on creating another Israel". In Iraq, the Kurds are officially recognized as a minority and there is an officially autonomous region -- a much shrunk Iraqi Kurdistan. Nevertheless, forced Arabization is in full swing. Kurdish villages in the 20-25 Km strip along the border have been raised to the ground, wells and springs poisoned and cemented and the area denuded of vegetation. The inhabitants have been forcibly re-settled in arid, desert areas in southern Iraq. Wherever a smack of oil is found, the Kurdish population is replaced by Arabs. In Syria, faced with a myriad of problems the government has been more tolerant of Kurds lately. However, the Kurdish language is officially forbidden there as well. The Kurds in the Soviet Union -- amounting to about one-tenth of 1 % of the the total population -- by all accounts enjoy a good measure of cultural freedom. Their rather insignificant number scattered in a few Soviet Republics could hardly make them a threat to the Soviet Union. And they are a good showpiece.

The roots of this indecency

The Kurdish tragedy began in the aftermath of WWI. With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the Anglo-French colonial powers divided the Middle East into spheres of influence. In line with Woodrow Wilson's plan for World peace, the Kurdish claims for statehood were recognized in the Treaty of Sevres in 1920. It was never ratified. Its successor, the Treaty of Lausanne signed in 1923 ignored the rights of the Kurds but carved up the Kurdish land, Kurdistan. And thus the present day states of Turkey (as successor to the Ottoman Empire), Iraq and Syria came into being. And thus began the collective repression of the Kurds. And so the vision of a united, independent and democratic Kurdistan remains a nightmare for the rulers in

Ankara, Bagdad, Teheran and Damascus.

Ethnically the Kurds are Indo-European and their language, Kurdish, is completely different from Arabic and Turkish in syntax, grammar and vocabulary. Kurdish and Persian are related much the same way as French and Spanish are to one another and belong to the Iranian group of Indo-European languages. The Kurds have

been living in the same geographical area since well before 2000 BC. Their empire, the Medes Empire fell to the Persians in 7th century BC and in 7th century AD the Kurds and the Persians were forcibly converted to Islam and their populations were decimated in the process. Historically the most significant Kurd is Saladin who took Jerusalem from the Crusaders in 1187 and established the Ayyubid dynasty.

By contrast, the Turks moved westward from central Asia, were converted to Islam on the way and settled in Asia Minor (present day Turkey) in 11th century AD. About two centuries later in 1300, the house of Osman established an empire to be known in the West as the Ottoman Empire. At its peak in 17th century, the Ottoman Empire stretched from frontiers of Kurdistan in the East to the gates of Vienna in the West encompassing all of the Arabian peninsula and northern Africa. It was a multicultural, multinational, multilingual empire. The language of the court and the official language was Ottoman, a combination of Turkish, Arabic, Persian and Kurdish.

Thus, for centuries the Kurds played an important buffer role between two powerful Islamic empires --- the Sunni Ottoman Empire and the Shii Persian or Safavid. In 1639, Kurdistan was divided between these two empires. The present day border between Turkey and Iran roughly approximates this partition.

As the Ottoman Empire began to decline, the sub-

ject nations fought for and won their freedom always with the support of the rival Christian Empires. The Kurdish people had and missed a golden opportunity for an independent Kurdistan in the aftermath of WWI. Many gullible Kurds fell for Mustafa Kemal's promises of a republic where no one would be wronged, everyone would be free and have full rights, the notion of an independent Kurdistan was an imperialistic plot to divide, weaken and defeat the faithful! And so, in October 1923, Turkish Republic was proclaimed and within 18 months, in 1925, the Kurdish language, music and national costume were outlawed in the new republic. Like it or not everyone within Turkey's borders were by legislation declared to be Turks. The words Kurd and Kurdistan like Armenia and Pontus were forcibly erased from dictionaries and literature. Potential opponents were put on trial in the so-called Independence Tribunals. Mustafa Kemal, though chose to be single, saw no irony in bestowing upon himself the title 'Ataturk' meaning father of the Turks. The Kurds officially became 'Mountain Turks' who had forgotten their native tongue, Turkish. Successive Kurdish movements for freedom were ruthlessly suppressed and over a million Kurds were resettled in Turkish areas. Fascism was on the rise in Germany, Italy, Spain and Mexico. Ataturk was the irreplaceable eternal chief and head of the only lawful political party. He would choose and assign candidates to electorates as he pleased and ruled with an iron hand until he died in 1938. Many slogans were coined: One Turk is worth the whole world! What a joy it is to be able to call oneself Turk. Turkish blood is clean, pure and superior! These slogans are still in most conspicuous use. There was an intense competition amongst the sycophants to glorify Ataturk in exchange for awards and material riches. The competition, too, is still in full swing in today's Turkey. Many nice, indeed noble and admirable sayings were attributed to

him and two absurd theories were formulated to please him: The Turkish history thesis claims all civilizations were founded by the Turks. This theory makes the Sumerian, Greek, Egyptian etc. civilizations Turkish! Only if Aristotle and Alexander the Great knew they were really Turk! The sun language theory claimed all languages to have derived from Turkish. For obvious reasons these two theories are no longer emphasized and the new generation of Turks may not know them.

Going by his words, it is quite clear Ataturk had an answer to everything, and Kemalism is the official ideology of the Turkish governments. Yet, Nobel Peace Prize Nominee, Turkish Sociologist Dr I Besikci says:

“Kemalism is based on lies. It is racist and colonialist. Kemalism is not compatible with the contemporary concepts of democracy, human rights and freedom of expression. To cover up Kemalist lies, the Turkish governments continue to, on the one hand, bestow awards and material riches on sycophants and on the other hand, imprison and torture those who seek the truth and speak of facts. Talk is cheap, deeds are what matters. Therefore we need to judge M K Ataturk by his deeds and not solely his words.”

Not surprisingly, Dr Besikci is now in prison serving a ten year sentence for maintaining in a scholarly manner that there are Kurds in Turkey.

The Turkish constitution and the Penal Code are pre-occupied with the Kurdish people. This pre-occupation is very well camouflaged, however, for the unwary Westerners. The recurring expression is “the ethnic and territorial integrity of the State”. Political parties, Associations, Unions, Human Rights Centres, Press, Media and individuals are forbidden to say, write, print or broadcast anything that might imply any detraction from this “integrity”. Thus, saying there are Kurds in Turkey is an attempt to divide Turkey. Mr S Elci, a prominent Kurd, said “I am a Kurd. There are Kurds in Turkey”. For this ‘crime’ he was recently

sentenced to 2 1/2 years at hard labour.

With all these restrictions and bans and severe penalties, many Kurds found it increasingly difficult to express themselves in Kurdish and to learn about and to experience Kurdish culture and heritage. This difficulty in turn gave some credibility to the official claims that Kurdish is not a real language, but a collection of some words from Turkish, Persian and Arabic, that there is no such thing as Kurdish culture. The so-called Kurdish language and culture are primitive parodies of much superior Turkish. Some well "educated" Kurds began to feel ashamed of their primitive language and culture and started to re-iterate the Turkish governments' absurd claims.

Shivan's Significance

Those who move by hard facts and cold logic alone sold their stocks and wrote off their investments in the future if Kurds and Kurdistan. For they don't know that emotions, passions move far more men and women to action than hard facts and cold logic ever can.

Out of this relentless systematic demolition of the Kurdish culture, Shivan emerged. In an apparent defiance of logic and reason Shivan rejects and repudiates all the promises of coveted awards and material riches in favor of being a fugitive in exile far away from many of his loved ones. Before taking refuge abroad, Shivan risks his life and future to show just a glimpse of the haunting beauty and the disarming elegance of the Kurdish culture which has produced such glorious poetry and music and color and pathos.

People who have seen even a glimpse of the promised land can no longer be fooled by absurd claims, false promises and even fatal threats. And Shivan is no longer on his own. The number of Shivans is on the increase in all areas.

Perhaps Shivan's single most remarkable achievement has been the turning around of the passive, fatalistic music to vibrant meaningful and action centred music to be an inexhaustible source of optimism and courage for the much maligned, abused and grossly neglected Kurdish people. As the roving Ambassador of the Kurdish nation Shivan who originates from that part of Kurdistan under Turkish occupation speaks for all occupied and divided Kurdistan and will, no doubt, help shatter the conspiracy of silence on the plight of the Kurdish people.

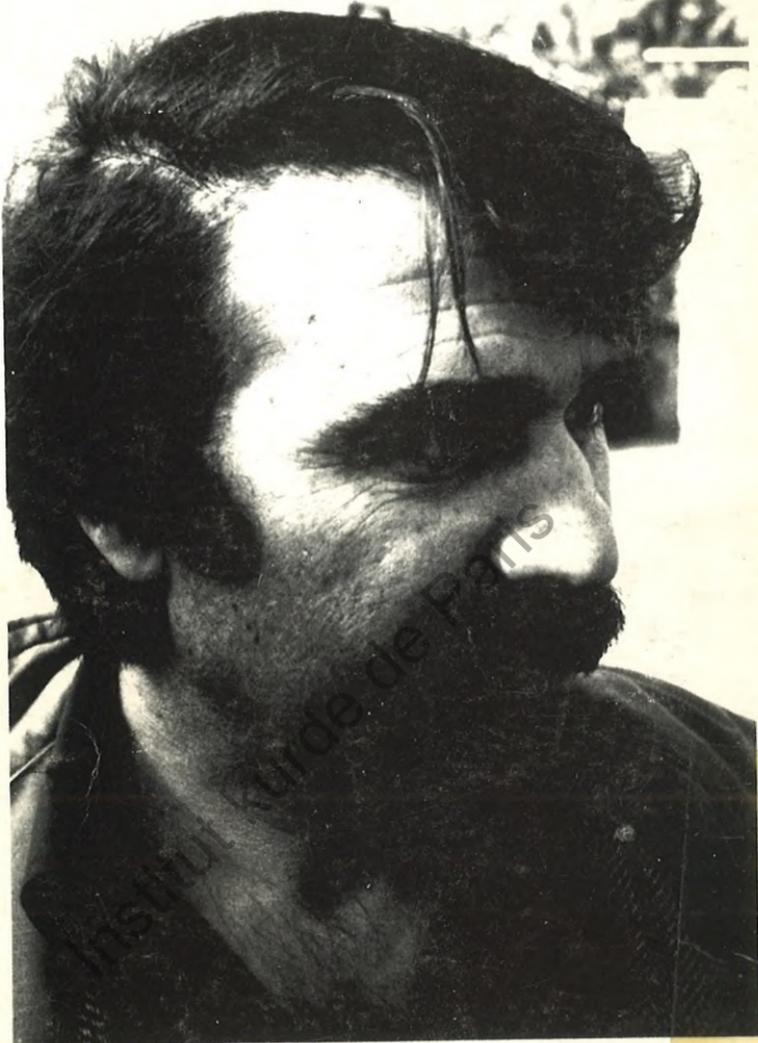
And those with a rather selective sense of justice, conscience and compassion may well ask themselves right now just why they are a party to this conspiracy.

Shivan's emergence is a living testimony to the words of the Indian Prime Minister J L Nehru:

"So the Turks who had only recently been fighting for their own freedom crushed the Kurds who sought theirs. But how can one crush forever a people who insist on freedom and are prepared to pay the price for it?"

BAWERMEND

Institut kurde de Paris



Mahmut Baksi, the author of this book, was born in Bitlis, a Kurdish town in Turkish Kurdistan, in 1944. His leftwing and patriotic activities brought him in the end of the 1960'ties into conflict with the Turkish authorities.

His first two books were published in Turkey 1968 and 1969. The first one was a novel about a Kurdish family and the second about a well-known Turkish leftwing writer, Sadi Alkalic, who in 1967 became the prisoner of the year of Amnesty International.

In 1970, because of his political activities and writings Mahmut Baksi had to leave Turkey. Since then he has not been able to go back. Because even outside of Turkey he has been hitting the Turkish government with his pencil and speeches, condemning the oppression of the Kurdish people especially in Turkey.

After a short stay in West Germany, Mahmut Baksi, since 1971, has been living in Sweden. Here he has published more than 10 books. As a member of the

Swedish Writers and Journalists Unions, a radio journalist, a regular contributor to the daily Swedish newspaper Altonbladet and a writer of books for adults and children in Kurdish, Turkish and Swedish, he continues to work for the Kurdish cause and for an independent Kurdistan.

This book about the Kurdish singer Shivan Perwer was written to make the Kurdish culture known to people all over the world. Kurdistan is a nation of 20 million people living in parts of Irak, Iran, Turkey and Syria, which are dividing Kurdistan. In all these countries the Kurds are oppressed, their human and cultural rights are violated, their language forbidden and abused. This is why the Kurds are fighting for their freedom and independence.

Elin Clason
Swedish journalist
February 1986