

Araştırma Makalesi/ Research Article

The Kurdish Question in Iraq (1958-1963)

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Abstract

In Iraq, the Kurdish minority was promised a certain measure of autonomy, especially in education. However, tardiness on the part of the Government and revolts by the Kurds prevented it from being put into effect. In Iran, the Kurds managed to attain a degree of autonomy in the Mahabad area with Soviet aid during the Second World War but lost it again when Soviet troops withdrew. Turkish attempts to assimilate the Kurds were not successful and led to periodic revolts. The Kurdish minority in Syria was not an important political factor. After the 1958 Revolution, Qasim initially found it diplomatic to encourage the Kurds to strengthen his own position. The hopes of the Kurds were turned to disillusionment later by the Government's neglect of them.

The development of a group within the Iraqi government favouring closer ties with the United Arab Republic encouraged a leaning towards the Communists, both on the part of Qasim and of the Kurds, who sided with the

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Government in the suppression of the Mosul revolt of March 1959. Fighting began in 1959 between pro and anti-Communist factions amongst the Kurds, and the latter's desire for independence was stimulated by the government's rejection of a petition for reforms in Northern Iraq. Qasim's policy of arming one faction to control others led to further conflict.

By 1961, the Barzanis had gained the upper hand over their tribal enemies and achieved considerable control in the north of Iraq, the success of which brought other tribes over to their side. Qasim claimed to have crushed the revolt, but it flared up again in the following spring and continued until Qasim was overthrown in February 1963. There was no evidence of significant help being sent to the Kurds from outside Iraq. Indeed, Soviet aid to the Iraqi Army adversely affected Kurdish opinion. The Kurdish rebels under Mulla Mustafa were divided into two basic groups, tribal forces and supporters of the United Democratic Party of Kurdistan (UDPK). The Iraqi forces were not effective, although bombing by the air force caused great destruction. By early 1963 most of northern Iraq was in Kurdish hands.

After an initial period of friendship, the Communists' interests diverged from those of the Kurds, the Communist line being that the Kurds must work peacefully with other sections of the Iraqi population for eventual autonomy. The Communists' first aim was the establishment of "national democracies" with some degree of autonomy for the Kurds. There was no evidence that the Russians wished to see an independent Kurdish state. Nevertheless, the Iraqi Communists found it politic to pay lip service to Kurdish ambitions, and it suited the Russians to keep the Kurds at an optimal level of agitation for the adverse effect upon Turkey and Iran, and also on the Iraqi government.

With the downfall of Qasim, the way was opened for a negotiated settlement between the Kurds and the new Iraqi government, whose outlawing of Communism gave rise to Soviet hostility. Nevertheless, the negotiations broke down, and in June 1963, animosity recommenced. The object of the 1963 revolt was to secure regional autonomy for the Kurds of Iraq. However, a desire for eventual independence and union with Kurds beyond the frontier could not be excluded.

Keywords: Kurds, Kurdish Question, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Iran

Irak'ta Kürt Sorunu (1958-1963)

Öz

Irak'ta Kürt azınlığa, özellikle eğitim vb. konularda belirli bir ölçüde özerklik sözü verildi, ancak hükümetin tembelliği ve Kürtlerin isyanları bunun uygulamaya konmasını engelledi. İran'da Kürtler, İkinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında



Sovyet yardımıyla Mahabad bölgesinde bir dereceye kadar özerklik elde etmeyi başardılar, ancak Sovyet birliklerinin geri çekilmesiyle bu özerkliğini tekrar kaybettiler. Türkiye'nin Kürtleri asimile etme girişimleri başarılı olmadı ve dönemsel isyanlara yol açtı. Suriye'deki Kürt azınlık önemli bir siyasi faktör olmadı. 1958 Devrimi'nden sonra Kasım, kendi konumunu güçlendirmek adına ilk başta Kürtleri teşvik etmeyi politik buldu. Kürtlerin umutları daha sonra hükümetin onları ihmal etmesiyle hayal kırıklığına dönüştü.

Irak hükümeti içinde Birleşik Arap Cumhuriyeti ile daha yakın ilişkilerden yana olan bir grubun gelişmesi, hem Kasım'ın hem de Mart 1959'daki Musul isyanının bastırılmasında hükümetin yanında yer alan Kürtlerin komünistlere yönelmesini teşvik etti. Kürtler arasında komünizm yanlısı ve anti-komünist gruplar arasında çatışmalar 1959'da başladı ve ikincisinin bağımsızlık arzusu, hükümetin Kürdistan'da reform yapılmasına yönelik bir dilekçeyi reddetmesiyle alevlendi. Kasım'ın diğerlerini kontrol etmek için bir grubu silahlandırma politikası daha fazla çatışmaya yol açtı.

1961'e gelindiğinde Barzaniler aşiret düşmanlarına karşı üstünlük sağladılar ve Irak'ın kuzeyinde hatırı sayılır bir kontrol elde ettiler; bunun başarısı diğer aşiretleri de kendi saflarına çekti. Kasım isyanı bastırıldığını iddia etti, ancak ertesi baharda isyan yeniden alevlendi ve Kasım 1963'te devrilene kadar devam etti. Irak dışından Kürtlere önemli bir yardım gönderildiğine dair hiçbir kanıt yoktu. Gerçekten de Sovyetlerin Irak Ordusu'na yaptığı yardım Kürtlerin görüşlerinde olumsuz bir tepki yarattı. Molla Mustafa yönetimindeki Kürt isyancılar iki temel gruba ayrıldı: aşiret güçleri ve Kürdistan Birleşik Demokrat Partisi'nin (UDPK) destekçileri. Hava kuvvetlerinin bombalaması büyük yıkıma yol açsa da Irak kuvvetleri aşırı etkili olduğunu göstermedi. 1963'ün başlarında Kuzey Irak'ın büyük bir kısmı Kürtlerin elindeydi.

Bir hazırlık döneminin ardından, Komünistlerin çıkarları Kürtlerin çıkarlarından farklılaştı; Komünist çizgi, Kürtlerin nihai özerklik için Irak nüfusunun diğer kesimleriyle barış içinde çalışması gerektiği yönündeydi. Komünistlerin ilk hedefi Kürtlere bir dereceye kadar özerklik tanıyan "ulusal demokrasiler" kurmaktı. Rusların gerçekten bağımsız bir Kürdistan görmek istediğine dair hiçbir kanıt yoktu. Yine de Iraklı komünistler Kürtlerin emellerine sözde bağlılık göstermeyi politik buldular; Türkiye ve İran'ın yanı sıra Irak hükümetinin de etkilenmesi için Kürt tencerisini kaynatmaya devam etmek Rusların işine geliyor.

Kasım'ın devrilmesiyle birlikte, Kürtler ile Komünizmi yasadışı ilan etmesi Sovyetler Birliği'nin düşmanlığını getiren yeni Irak hükümeti arasında müzakere yoluyla bir çözümün yolu açıldı. Ancak müzakereler başarısızlıkla sonuçlandı ve Haziran 1963'te çatışmalar yeniden başladı. 1963 isyanının

amacı Irak Kürtleri için bölgesel özerkliği güvence altına almaktı; ancak nihai bağımsızlık ve Kürtlerle sınırların ötesinde birleşme arzusu da göz ardı edilemez.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kürtler, Kürt Sorunu, Irak, Türkiye, Suriye, İran.

Introduction

The origins of the Kurds are obscure. Their language is from an Indo-European family, being similar to Persian. They are mostly Sunni Muslims, although a few tribes are Shi'i, and some belong to smaller sects such as the Ali Ilahi, Shaikh Bagheri and Yazidi.¹

"Kurdistan" broadly means the territory inhabited by the Kurds as a homogeneous community. It is divided between Turkey, Iraq and Iran, with small overlaps into Armenia and Syria; thus, its boundaries do not coincide with any international frontiers or internal administrative divisions, and even within generally Kurdish areas, there were pockets of Assyrians, Armenians and Turks. According to the League of Nations Commission in 1925, the number of Kurds in Iraq was estimated at 500,000. Today the figure is about 4 to 5 million.²

The Kurds are divided into transhumant (i.e., seasonally moving livestock to a different region) semi-nomads living an essentially feudal and tribal life and settled Kurds, living either as peasants or in towns such as Damascus, Mosul, Baghdad, and Kermanshah. Here, particularly in Iraq, the more educated engaged in trade, the army or the civil service. There was little affection between the peasant and tribal Kurds in Iraq and their more educated brethren in local administration, who were seen to have identified with the (Arab) "establishment". The oil industry's growth in some Iraqi Northern Iraq

¹ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Phebe Marr, *The Modern History of Iraq*, (Oxford: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 176-179. Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett. *Iraq since 1958*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1990), pp. 79-84. Ritchie Ovendale, *The Middle East since 1914*, (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 286-287.

² FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Marr, Op. Cit., pp. 176-179. Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, Op. Cit., pp. 79-84. Ovendale, Op. Cit., pp. 286-287. C. J. Edmonds, *Kürtler, Türkler ve Araplar*, Avesta Yayınları, İstanbul 2003, p. 19. See Bilal Şimşir, *Kürtçülük-I: 1787-1923*, Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara 2017.

towns brought about the emergence of a Kurdish urban proletariat within what was originally Kurdish tribal territory.³

The regions inhabited by Kurds form a land bridge, albeit a mountainous one, between the oil-producing areas of Iraq and the southern borders of the former Soviet Union. Thus, a united Kurdish state, if possible, would be of great strategic importance. However, the Kurds were never united politically as one people (chiefly because of physical obstacles). They had lived a tribal and often nomadic life with its associated disputes and differing dialects and customs; nor had they ever submitted totally to the Iranian, Turkish or Arab central governments who exercised sovereignty over them. Despite the Kurds' consciousness of a separate racial identity, Kurdish revolts did not generally assume a "national" character. They were expressed by isolated tribes, or small groups of tribes, of discontent with local administration or economic conditions.⁴

Kurdish nationalism in its modern form arose during the early 20th Century amongst some of the intelligentsia of İstanbul and other towns of the Ottoman Empire, such as Diyarbakır and Damascus. The Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination appealed to the various subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire and, with other foreign influences, helped to produce the modern form of Kurdish nationalism. A contributory factor may have been the Kurds' fear that an Armenian State would be established in Eastern Turkey, where the two peoples inhabited the same areas and where the Kurds might fear Armenian reprisals for their part in the events of 1915. While Kurdish nationalism had thus been in existence in the larger towns of the Ottoman Empire, Kurds in the provinces seemed to have been motivated more by racialism, tribal feuds and desire for gain than by political ideals. The nationalists in Damascus played an important role in making Kurdish aspirations known to the Western world, a function performed by members of the (Syrian) Badr Khan family. The Treaty of Sevres (1920) envisaged an autonomous Kurdish-inhabited area but

³ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Marr, Op. Cit., pp. 176-179. Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, Op. Cit., pp. 79-84. Ovendale, Op. Cit., pp. 286-287.

⁴ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Edmonds, C. J. 'Kurdish Nationalism', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Nationalism and Separatism (1971): 87-107.

was never ratified because of Turkish opposition. Instead, the Kurds of Turkey, Iraq and Syria found themselves divided by international frontiers where before there had been but provincial boundaries. Thus, as the Kurds (apart from the small number in the Soviet Union) were split into four sections instead of the previous two, they found themselves more divided than before. Their subsequent history in each sector is described below.⁵

Kurds in Iraq

In Iraq, under British tutelage from 1920 to 1936, steps were taken to improve conditions among the Kurds. However, the efforts of the British High Commissioner to induce the Iraqi government to grant a special regime to the Kurdish districts were hampered by a series of Kurdish revolts. Those of 1924 and 1930-31 were led by a notable individual of Suleimaniya, Shaikh Mahmud, who had, in 1919, occupied Suleimaniya and entitled himself Ruler of all Northern Iraq, and that of 1931-32 by Sheikh Ahmad Barzani. The primary aim of both these leaders was to be left alone to exercise their feudal authority over as many of their fellow Kurds as they could contrive to control rather than any broader objective of, for example, a comprehensive Kurdish state. However, they were undoubtedly able to play upon racial and traditional tribal feelings to gain support. Obligations were placed upon the Iraqi Government and the Mandatory Power by the recommendation of the League of Nations Frontier Commission, which visited the Kurdish areas of Iraq in 1925, to take measures for "Kurdicisation" of the administration, courts and schools of those areas. The British Government was working to liquidate the Mandate by 1932, which gave rise to Kurdish fears for their status in the future, more so since there were no safeguards written into the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty of 30 June 1930. However, in 1932, after nine petitions to the League of Nations by various Kurdish bodies, a formal declaration regarding minorities' rights was made by the Iraqi Government to the Council of the League. Succeeding Iraqi Cabinets delayed the introduction of these changes, but when Mulla Mustafa Barzani and members of his tribe came out in open revolt in 1945, this

⁵ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Edmonds, C. J. 'The Kurds and the Revolution in Iraq', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (Winter 1959): 1-11.

was due less to Kurdish nationalism than to personal ambition, allied with economic discontent (in particular shortages of grain and clothing) and local grievances with Government officials. Mulla Mustafa was eventually defeated by the Iraqi Army with the help of heavily subsidised hostile Kurdish chiefs and fled to Iran.⁶

Kurds in Iran

The Kurds in Iran, under the weak Government of the Qajar Dynasty, had been left more or less to their own devices and were repressed under Reza Shah (1921-41). However, after his abdication, the return of the tribal leaders soon led to a re-establishment of lawless conditions. Iranian Army attempts to maintain order were successful to various degrees. In 1941, after the entry into Iran of British and Russian forces, the Kurds were at first mildly encouraged by the Russians, who feared a deterioration of the military situation in the Caucasus and wished for friendly relations with possible dissidents. Subsequently, the Russians repressed them in the interests of peace along the supply line across Iran. In 1943, there were signs that Kurdish nationalism, as distinct from mere lawlessness, was increasing and that its leaders were in touch with the Tudeh Party. During 1944 a local notable, Qazi Muhammad of Mahabad, emerged as Kurdish nationalist leader. Although he visited Tehran to try and convince the central Government of his loyalty, he later went to Baku, in company with other Kurdish leaders; there, the Russians advised them to join the "Azerbaijan Democratic Party", in return for which they would receive Soviet support for their independence movement. By 1945 a "Kurdish Republic" was in existence, under Russian protection, and enjoying limited support in and around Mahabad, but this too collapsed in the following year when the Soviet Union withdrew its troops from Iran. Qazi Muhammad submitted to the Iranian Government, whose authority was thus re-established, and he, with several others, was later executed. Mulla Mustafa Barzani, who had

⁶ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Avshalom H. Rubin, "Abd al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, Resistance and Revolt, 1958-1963", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (May 2007): 353-382. C. J. Edmonds, 'The Kurds of Iraq', *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Winter 1957): 52-63. See David McDowall, *Modern Kürt Tarihi*, Çev. Ayşenur Domaniç, Doruk Yayınları, Ankara 2004.

taken refuge in Iran after his defeat in Iraq, escaped with some of his followers to the Soviet Union. Subsequently, increasing central Government authority in the area followed, with a certain amount of material progress, such as new roads, asphalt streets, and water supplies, stimulated by the tour of that province by the Cabinet in the summer of 1958. In 1962, when the Iranian Government embarked on its land reform programme, it selected the Kurdish-inhabited area as one of the first areas for its application. This was aimed at undermining the position of the landlords and Aghas, and it is hoped that the ordinary people will come to feel that their interests are as well served by remaining in a tolerant and reasonably progressive Iran as by fighting to unite with their brethren in other countries.⁷

Kurds in Turkey

The Kurdish-inhabited area of Turkey is a mountainous territory. Its inhabitants' way of life was predominantly tribal and feudal. In Ottoman times, there were periodical revolts, and the Turkish Republic's policies of laicisation and Westernisation produced yet more in 1925, 1926, 1930 and 1937-38. Fighting in these revolts was savage, and the ruthlessness with which the army repressed each rising generally sowed the seeds of the next. Thus Turkish attempts at assimilation of the Kurds failed, and they remained one of the main problems for Turkey. Discontent seems to have been rooted more in sentiments of oppression and dissatisfaction with material conditions than in Kurdish nationalism or pan-Kurdish sentiments.⁸

Nevertheless, revolts tended to take on a racial aspect, although not all Kurdish tribes were involved at any one time. The presence in the National Assembly of some 36 Kurds, members of the New Turkey Party (NTP), ensured that the Government's official policy to Kurds in Turkey remained fairly "soft", but it was certain that the authorities would in no way wish their Kurds to regard themselves as anything other than Turkish nationals. As the NTP's Kurdish members represented the landowners and tribal elements, who had, therefore,

⁷ McDowall, Op. Cit., pp. 404-430.

⁸ See Abdulhalûk M. Çay, *Her Yönüyle Kürt Dosyası*, Boğaziçi Yayınları, Ankara 1993. Uçar, Fuat, "Demokrat Parti Döneminde Kürt Sorunu: Gelişimi ve Etkileri, *The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*, Number: 43 (Spring 2016), pp. 175-200.

a stake in the central Government, which did not interfere in the feudal system prevailing in Eastern Turkey, no recurrence of organised Kurdish disaffection in Turkey was foreseen. The Government remained alert, however, to the danger of Kurdish nationalism, particularly in student circles.⁹

Kurds in Syria

According to Syrian sources, the Kurdish community in Syria was thought to number up to 250,000; the majority lived in tribal groups along the Turkish frontier, were engaged in agriculture and were generally “undeveloped”. Although they sometimes complained of discrimination by the Syrian authorities, as did most minority groups in Syria from time to time, they were not thought to be very politically conscious, and they were too few to carry much influence. However, the Syrian Government was uneasy about Kurdish infiltration from Turkey and Iraq into the Jezireh area, where they might present a future threat to the security of Syria. In Damascus, there was a community of about 20,000 Kurds, some of whose leaders, notably Dr Nafizi and the Badr Khan brothers, showed themselves to be partisans of an autonomous Kurdish state. However, their activities confined themselves mainly to cultural and intellectual fields. Dr. Kamran Ali Badr Khan, who lived in Paris, periodically appealed to the United Nations for Kurdish independence, but met with little public response and did not seem to be recognised as an official spokesman for the Kurds in Iraq.¹⁰

Kurds in the Soviet Union

According to the 1959 census, there were 58,799 Kurds in the Soviet Union, of whom approximately 16,000 were in Georgia and 26,000 in Armenia. They were mainly settled, and a Soviet-style culture was imposed upon them. The Russians paid some attention to Kurdish cultural matters and published a new Kurdish grammar in 1962.¹¹

⁹ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Anita Burdett (Ed.), *Records of the Kurds: Territory, Revolt and Nationalism, 1831–1979*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁰ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Marr, Op. Cit., pp. 176-179.

¹¹ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Çay, Op. Cit., pp. 448-471.

Effect of the 1958 Revolution

Upon assuming power in July 1958, Qasim was faced with the fact that the separatist tendencies of the Kurds were likely to be as much of a problem to his regime as they had been to his predecessors. The collapse of the ancient regime also perhaps gave the Kurds more hope of independence from Baghdad or, at least, of autonomy. On 27 July 1958, Qasim announced the text of an "Interim Constitution for the Transitional Period in Iraq", which annulled the Iraq Basic Law and all its amendments. Article 3 of this Constitution stated, "The structure of Iraq is based on co-operation between all citizens. Their rights will be respected, and their freedoms safeguarded. The Arabs and the Kurds are considered partners in this homeland. This Constitution recognises their national rights within the limits of Iraq unity". Initially, however, the Kurds seemed to distance themselves from the Revolution, being content with making public assertions of support while waiting for some practical good to accumulate. In August 1958 *Zhin* (Life), a Kurdish weekly, explained to its readers that "the realisation of Kurdish aspirations will require time, and we must arm ourselves with patience. Another factor in Kurdish support for the Revolution may have been the hope of the more educated Kurds that it would bring about the gradual removal of the feudal system in Northern Iraq."¹²

Qasim's Policy towards the Kurds

In general, Qasim's policy towards the Kurds was to recognise them as a distinct entity in Iraq but to insist that they were part of the Iraqi nation and must work with the Arabs for the common good. Initially, he was thought to have feared intervention in Iraq on the part of neighbouring countries that were members of the Baghdad Pact. His early concessions to Kurdish feelings may, therefore, have been due to the need to prevent other countries from exploiting them as a weapon against his regime. He may also have been aware that Kurdish hostility, even without foreign intervention, could prove fatal to his regime at a critical time. How far he may have intended to go in his concessions to the Kurds was not certain. However, it can be said that he inherited from the previous regime the idea that the Kurds in Iraq

¹² FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Marr, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 176-179.

were a nuisance and that they should be repressed if they showed signs of separatism. If quiet, on the other hand, they could safely be neglected. Thus, Qasim was merely carrying on the traditional Iraqi Kurdish policy, which was responsible for the 1958 revolt as it was for that of 1945.¹³

Kurdish Membership of the Presidential Council

Baghdad's gestures towards encouragement of the Kurds in 1958 included the presence of a Kurd in the three-man Presidential Council, a son of Shaikh Mahmud (a noted Kurdish leader in the early days of the Mandate), as Minister of Public Works, and a visit in August by Brigadier Arif, before his downfall, to Kurdish areas, where he seemed to have been enthusiastically received, and where he was welcomed by Shaikh Latif, son of Shaikh Mahmud.¹⁴

Return of Mulla Mustafa and Kurds from the USSR

The Kurds reciprocated for a short time after the Revolution. In a message from the USSR congratulating Qasim on the Revolution, Mulla Mustafa, leader of the Barzani tribesmen who revolted in 1945, said, "long live Arab-Kurdish fraternity under the banner of Iraqi unity". In August 1958, Mulla Mustafa was granted permission for himself and two companions, Mir Haj Ahmad and Asad Khoshawi, to return to Iraq; it is thought that Qasim may have invited him to return. The Government allotted pensions and funds for their accommodation in Baghdad. Mulla Mustafa, indeed, was given a former residence of Nuri Said. He continued to side with Qasim for some time and occasionally issued calls for closer unity. In April 1959, some hundreds of Kurds returned, some with Russian wives, to Iraq from the Soviet Union, from where they had fled after Mulla Mustafa's defeat in 1945-46 and were paid pensions on a scale according to their rank. At one time, there were fears that some of these Kurds might have been Communists or that some Soviet Kurds might have infiltrated their ranks, but nothing came of these fears.¹⁵

¹³ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See McDowall, Op. Cit., Passim.

¹⁴ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See McDowall, Op. Cit., Passim.

¹⁵ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa, "The Kurdish Struggle in Iraq according to British Documents (1963-1975)", *Tarihçi 1, no. 2 (Mayıs 2021): 151-186.*

The Communists' Attitude to the Kurds

Towards the end of 1958, however, a split developed within the Iraqi Government over closer ties with the United Arab Republic (UAR). Kurdish opinion, fearing that the Kurds would be vastly outnumbered in such a union, aligned itself with Qasim and his friends, who were against such ties. The Communists, too, sided with Qasim and acquired wider influence in Iraq as a result of his dependence upon them. Thereafter, there were reports of an increase in Communist activities in Kurdish areas and of talks between the Communist Party of Iraq and Kurdish parties. The Communists, who had little to gain from moves towards greater Arab unity, exerted themselves to win over the Kurds and to curb separatist tendencies or channel them in the direction of Communism. On 10 November, the Iraqi Communist Party and the United Democrat Party of Kurdistan (UDPK) published a "Pact of Co-operation", in which the right of the Kurds to determine their own development was recognised, but "schismatic" ideas were condemned as a trick of the imperialists. Mulla Mustafa's policy at that time of supporting Kurdish-Arab unity within Iraq and expressing confidence in the Government's professions of goodwill towards the Kurds, as in the Interim Constitution, was no doubt responsible for the United Democratic Party's toning down their advocacy of Kurdish independence to the point where they could meet the Communist point of view. However, it was not likely that, given Mulla Mustafa's past dealings with Iraqi Governments, he really trusted Qasim. He may have thought it prudent to wait and see what Qasim would do and meanwhile prepare for revolt in case the new Government should prove no more willing to grant concessions to the Kurds than any of the previous ones.¹⁶

The Mosul Revolt

In March 1959, when Colonel Sbawwaf raised a revolt against the Government in support of Nasser and a wider Arab nationalism, many Kurds feared such a development supported the Iraqi Army in suppressing the revolt. Afterwards, they were sent back to their areas

¹⁶ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. George Lenczowski, *The Middle East in World Affairs*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), pp. 288-296.

(though not disarmed). In the confused period between the start of the revolt and the arrival of Government forces, the Kurds found themselves in alliance with the Communists in street-fighting against the insurgents. However, the UDPK claimed that its political views and discipline prevented the whole of Northern Iraq from being subdued by the Communists.¹⁷

Refugees from Northern Iraq in Iran

In May 1959, the British Embassy in Tehran reported that the normal seasonal migration of Kurds from Iraq into Iran was being systematically prevented on the Iraqi side and subjected to close security control by the Iranians. At the same time, stories appeared in the Iranian Press of defections of Iraqi Kurds to Iran and of fighting between Kurds and Iraqi Government forces. There were also reports of fighting between the Barzanis and the Loulan section of the Baradost. By the end of May, the Iranian acting Foreign Minister, Dr. Sadr, informed the British Ambassador that there were several hundred refugees from Iraq in Iran and that more were expected. The Iranian Government were uncertain whether to let them stay in Iran or not. The British Government advised them to do their utmost to maintain the peace in the area. There were at this time rumours that the Iranians might be plotting to use the Kurdish situation to their own advantage, e.g. by arming refugees and sending them back to Iraq, but this they denied.¹⁸

The abovementioned fighting was apparently due to discontent among certain Kurdish tribes at the Baghdad Government's tendency to Communism and the help which other Kurdish factions, e.g. the Barzanis, were rendering to the Iraqi Army to prevent Kurds from fleeing to neighbouring countries.

Mulla Mustafa's Desire for Kurdish Autonomy

By October 1959, however, it became apparent that all was not well between Qasim and Mulla Mustafa. The former was reputedly unwilling to encourage the Kurds in any separatist ideas by allowing

¹⁷ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Lenczowski, Op. Cit., pp. 288-296.

¹⁸ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Farouk-Sluglett and Sluglett, Op. Cit., pp. 79-84.

them the educational and administrative autonomy which Mulla Mustafa had stated that he wished to achieve. He was also reported as saying that his long-term aim was the establishment of an independent Kurdish State. The UDPK's Constitution of October 1959 showed evidence of a strong Communist bias. However, it was unknown whether this represented Kurdish views or was merely written to please Qasim, who then, six months after the Mosul revolt, appeared to be relying on Communist support.¹⁹

Registration of the United Democratic Party of Kurdistan (UDPK)

The situation remained uneasy in 1960, with trouble between the Barzanis and the Zibaris, chiefly over land and the murder of a Zibari by the Barzanis. In February, the Government licensed the political parties again. The United Democratic Party of Kurdistan, of which Mulla Mustafa was the leader, produced a revised programme, which Qasim subsequently amended to exclude references to Kurds in other countries. The party accepted this change, which contained several noticeable changes from the 1959 Constitution, amongst them a marked toning-down of the Communist bias.²⁰

Her Majesty's Ambassador's Interview with Mulla Mustafa

The British Ambassador asked to call on Mulla Mustafa as soon as the UDPK was licensed, and on 21 February, had an interview with him and his brother, Shaikh Ahmad, in the course of which Mulla Mustafa said that almost all the Kurds were in favour of Communism because they recognised practical help when it was given to them, and that "a drowning man clutches at a straw". It is likely that by "Communism", Mulla Mustafa meant Communist Governments—who might produce material aid—rather than the theories of the local Communists. Her Majesty's Ambassador gave a general account of the meeting to Hashim Jawad, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, in an attempt to allay suspicions that the British were plotting with the Kurds. It also caused some agitation in the Turkish Government.²¹

¹⁹ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Bilal Şimşir, *Kürtçülük-II: 1924-1999*, Bilgi Yayınevi, Ankara 2020.

²⁰ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Şimşir, Op. Cit. Passim.

²¹ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Şimşir, Op. Cit. Passim. Çay, Op. Cit., pp. 448-471.

Split between Kurdish Democrats and Communists

On 20 April 1960, the official publishing organ of the UDKP, *Khabat*, published an attack on the Communist Party (subject to Moscow and banned in Iraq), which it accused of trying to impose its will on all other groups in the country. This was the first open sign of a split between the UDKP and the Communists, although the UDKP's programme had already toned down the party's pro-Communist bias. In any case, the more feudal elements were already opposed to Communism and seemed to reflect opposition to Communist efforts to exploit Kurdish Nationalist sentiment. The Communist Party contended that "isolationist separatist conceptions in the democratic movement only serve the enemies of the Kurdish people".²²

Kurdish Delegation to Qasim and Further Unrest

By 1960, Kurdish opinion was also hardening against Qasim's Government because they had been promised a better deal, but no attention had been paid to their needs. On 23 August, a group of Kurdish leaders submitted to Qasim a note relating their grievances and asking for, among other things, agricultural reform, the prevention of attempts to widen the breach between the Kurds, the Arabs and the Turkish minority, and liberty for the Kurds to prevent the spread of Communism in their area. Qasim was angered by the note and refused to see the delegation. There were again reports of talk about independence, which had been soft-pedalled since the Revolution, and of fighting between the Barzanis and their traditional enemies, the Zibari, Harki and Baradost tribes. These fights were said to be taking on a political character as a result of Qasim's divide-and-rule policy of arming the Zibaris. *Khabat* denounced the "aggression by Kurdish feudalists" and called on the Government to put an end to it. The upshot was to exacerbate further the Kurds' relations with Qasim.²³

Barzanis' Defeat of Tribal Enemies

During the first half of 1961, this unrest continued to increase. In June, Qasim sent for Shaikh Ahmad Barzani, who apparently had made

²² FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Lenczowski, Op. Cit., pp. 288-296.

²³ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Şimsir, Op. Cit. Passim.

no commitments. Raids by hostile tribes against the Barzanis and limited counter-attacks by them continued until early July when they unleashed a full-scale offensive against their attackers. This resulted in victory for the Barzanis and the flight of many of their opponents to Turkey and Iran and to parts of Iraq where the Government could protect them. Iraqi Army units arrived on the scene towards the end of July but took no action.²⁴

Kurdish Successes

Mulla Mustafa's vigorous attack and the army's inaction swung over to his side many Kurdish leaders who had, at that time, looked suspiciously at what they considered his Leftish leanings. They ousted or neutralised most Government posts in their tribal areas until, by the end of August, the semicircle of mountains from the north-west of Mosul to the south-east of Kirkuk was effectively under Kurdish authority. From mid-July, pamphlets were circulated by the UDKP which, while affirming the party's loyalty to the Iraqi Republic, called for the end of martial law and repressive action against the party, the establishment of a democratic Government, the observance of Kurdish national rights, increased industrial development, and the exemption of tobacco plantations from agrarian reform.²⁵

Counter-attack by Qasim

At the beginning of August, the Kurds seemed to have given the Government one month to accept their demands. By early September, there was no settlement in sight, and the Kurds extended their area of control, attacking Government posts and establishing roadblocks. Qasim finally took military action on 10 September, and after some 10 days of fighting, large-scale resistance by the Kurds was reported to have stopped. Subsequent events proved that it was only a temporary

²⁴ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See McDowall, *Op. Cit.*, *Passim*.

²⁵ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. FO371/140682, FO371/52369, FO371/2718, FCO8/3243, FCO8/3244, FCO2335, FCO8/2308, FCO51/147, FCO51/191/RR6/10, FO371/140682/E1821/20, FO371/140682/E1821/9/59, FCO51/147/RR6/14, FO973/687.

respice. Although reported as being wounded and in hiding, Mulla Mustafa was thought to be holding out in the remoter hills.²⁶

Qasim's Accusations against the British

Qasim, who had at first played down the seriousness of the situation, on 7 September blamed the "imperialists" for the rising, and the Iraqi Press accused the British, the Iraq Petroleum Company (IPC), the Americans and CENTO. On 23 September, Qasim accused the British Embassy of financing the revolt, at the same time exonerating the Soviet Union. The latter probably were not concerned and indeed were in somewhat of a dilemma: on the one hand, the Iraqi Army was dependent on them for supplies, while on the other hand, they had in the past aided Mulla Mustafa and might wish to use him again in the future. The Iraqi Communists took the line that Mulla Mustafa was a loyal citizen of the Republic and had been unjustly attacked, but the chiefs on the Iranian frontier were imperialist agents who must be suppressed.²⁷

In September, the UDPK decided to take up arms with the tribes in a tactical alliance whose objectives, for the time being, would be essentially nationalistic. The party's President, Mulla Mustafa, was already in revolt against the Government as head of a fighting tribe. This led to the party's dissolution by the Government on 10 October on charges of undermining security and creating dissension. In early October, for unclear reasons, Shaikh Ahmad sent a telegram to Qasim proclaiming his loyalty to the government's cause. One theory is that, by so doing, he was able to secure Barzan against attack by the Government and give the Barzani tribe members a safe base, freeing them for action in other areas. This was not a new manoeuvre in the history of the Barzani brothers' various campaigns against the Government. After a breathing space, there were again reports that Mulla Mustafa was gaining the upper hand in the mountainous areas near Amadiya and, in January 1962, that a cease-fire had been

²⁶ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. FO371/140682, FO371/52369, FO371/2718, FCO8/3243, FCO8/3244, FCO2335, FCO8/2308, FCO51/147, FCO51/191/RR6/10, FO371/140682/E1821/20, FO371/140682/E1821/9/59, FCO51/147/RR6/14, FO973/687.

²⁷ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Şimşir, Op. Cit. Passim. Çay, Op. Cit., pp. 448-471.

declared for peace talks. This, however, came to nothing. Fighting then continued during the spring of 1962, with Iraqi forces containing the area in revolt but apparently unable to make any headway in the mountainous areas.²⁸

Kurdish Attacks on Oil Installations

On 1 April 1961, Kurdish rebels attacked an oil company installation at Shuwana without accomplishing much; in August, they attacked a degassing station and blew up a pipeline complex near Kirkuk. In an attack on 12 October on an oil installation at Ain Zalah, the British Fields superintendent, D. C. Dankworth, was carried off by a band of Kurds and later released into Iran. Later, another IPC employee, F. Gosling, was abducted and subsequently released. These actions represented an attempt by the Kurds to gain publicity outside Iraq for their continuing revolt. The Iraqi Government were concerned that the Kurds might embark on a policy of sabotaging the oil fields, which would be practically impossible for the Government to prevent. However, Mulla Mustafa shrank from this both because of the effect it would have had on Arab opinion and also because he did not wish to precipitate a crisis in the country (by disrupting the economy) until he was sure that the successor Government would be to his liking, that is, by coming to a prior arrangement with other opposition elements.²⁹

End of Negotiations and Journalists' Visits to Northern Iraq

By early July, Shaikh Ahmad Barzani had been summoned to Baghdad for an interview with Qasim, but the negotiations broke down, after which he was detained in Baghdad. In July 1962, the Kurds succeeded in arranging for an American and a Swiss journalist to tour Northern Iraq and write up the revolt from the Kurdish side. During one of the August tours, Mulla Mustafa appealed unsuccessfully, through articles written by D. A. Schmidt of the New York Times, for American help in the struggle for independence. D. Adamson of the

²⁸ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See McDowall, *Op. Cit.*, *Passim*.

²⁹ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. FO371/140682, FO371/52369, FO371/2718, FCO8/3243, FCO8/3244, FCO2335, FCO8/2308, FCO51/147, FCO51/191/RR6/10, FO371/140682/E1821/20, FO371/140682/E1821/9/59, FCO51/147/RR6/14, FO973/687.

Sunday Telegraph was also invited on a tour of the area, which he described in his paper.³⁰

Battle of Rowanduz Gorge

The rebels emerged successfully from a series of battles along the Rowanduz Gorge in August, resulting in the Raikan and Loulan tribes' contingents, who had been aiding the army, withdrawing, and two army brigades being surrounded. Shaikh Rashid Loulan fled and sought refuge in Turkey, which was refused. The Kurds continued to hold their own throughout the winter until, on 8 February 1963, Qasim and his Government were overthrown by a military coup d'etat.³¹

Kurdish Appeal to the Security Council

On 18 October 1962, the New York Times reported that Amir Kamran Ali Badr Khan (of the Syrian family), a professor of Kurdish literature and language in Paris, had announced that the Kurdish rebels would send a petition to the Security Council's President for October asking for an international committee to be sent to Kurdistan and for a halt to be ordered to what they termed "Qasim's policy of genocide". Nothing seemed to come of this, and there were reports that the Soviet delegate would, in any case, not raise the matter. Badr Khan, however, also sent a circular letter to Missions to the United Nations. Attempts to advertise the Kurdish cause abroad were also made by such organisations as the Kurdish Students' Association in Europe (KSAE), Dr. Kamran Badr Khan's "Kurdish delegation", and "Centre for Kurdish Studies". It was reported that in 1962, members of the KSAE set up a Committee for the Defence of Kurdistan (CDK) to publicise the revolt in Iraq and to obtain financial support for it, a certain amount appears to have come from Communist Governments, chiefly Czechoslovakia. About a quarter of the CDK's membership is Communist, but the remainder is thought to favour a non-Communist Kurdistan. The CDK was in touch with the rebels in Iraq, and it was

³⁰ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. FO371/140682, FO371/52369, FO371/2718, FCO8/3243, FCO8/3244, FCO2335, FCO8/2308, FCO51/147, FCO51/191/RR6/10, FO371/140682/E1821/20, FO371/140682/E1821/9/59, FCO51/147/RR6/14, FO973/687.

³¹ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See McDowall, Op. Cit., Passim.

Ismet Sherif Vanly, President of the KSAE, who, in June 1962, arranged the Swiss journalist's visit. The KSAE at first reflected the UDPK's line supporting Qasim, but later, as Kurdish separatism gathered momentum, it also opposed him.³²

Help from Outside

There was no evidence to support the Iraqi Government's accusations that the Kurds had received equipment from other Governments, apart from the possibility that Turkish and Iranian frontier officials may have been ignoring the smuggling of non-military supplies (food and clothing, for example). It is believed that the Kurds received cash from the Iranian Government and that Kurdish tribe members were given training in heavy weapons units of the Iranian Army. The Shah and some of his advisers, prompted perhaps by their apprehensions of a violently Arab- nationalist Iraq and possibly an Arab Union dominated by Nasser on their frontier, were tempted to consider supporting the Iraqi Kurds. The British and American Ambassadors, when consulted, pointed out the danger to Iran of encouraging Kurdish separatism and told the Iranian Foreign Minister that Iran's interests would be better served by doing what she could to promote a settlement of the dispute. The Kurds may have received some financial aid from the Communist bloc, but given the Communists' attitude to the revolt at the time, this was not likely to have been substantial. A Kurdish student group was allowed to raise a small supply of funds privately in Communist capitals. The fact that the Kurds possessed quantities of Russian arms could be explained by their capture of Government posts and by the desertion of army and police personnel. Indeed, outside the context of this revolt, it was to the Government forces that the Russians supplied arms, which were used against the Kurds. Knowledge of this fact may have resulted in the Russians losing popularity among the Kurds.³³

Kurdish Rebel Forces

³² FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Ismet Sharif Vanly, *Le Kurdistan Irakien*, (Neuchâtel: Entité National, 1970).

³³ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Şimşir, Op. Cit. Passim. Çay, Op. Cit., pp. 448-471.

The Kurdish rebel forces, numbering probably about 10,000 men, consist of various elements: Mulla Mustafa's Barzanis, numbering about 800; his tribal allies; partisans of the UDKP or persons operating under its direction; police deserters, perhaps about 60 per cent of the police in Kurdistan, and army deserters; several hundred miscellaneous volunteers, including some fugitives from Iran. Their arms consisted chiefly of various types of rifles, machine guns, and mortar, much of this equipment having been captured from Government forces or brought over by deserters. Because of the mountainous nature of their territory, they did not appear to have made much use of motorised transport. Mulla Mustafa, the acknowledged leader of all these elements, had a charismatic attraction for his followers and proved to be a capable guerrilla leader. Nevertheless, there was some division of purpose between the UDKP and the tribal groups, who, although they had combined against a mutual enemy, could not be said to be natural allies and might well have turned on each other if they were victorious.³⁴

Iraqi Government Forces Involved

Before Qasim's demise, the Government had two infantry divisions, with supporting arms including artillery and armour, involved in Kurdistan, apart from the local police, many of whom seemed unreliable and unwilling to fight their compatriots. The Government used aircraft to bomb villages in rebel areas, thus causing widespread destruction and loss of life (chiefly to non-combatants in the villages). The Iraqi Army showed itself to be somewhat inefficient, particularly in the mountainous areas where it could not use its tanks effectively. To forestall fifth-columnists and future deserters, a policy was adopted of moving Kurdish personnel to other areas and using Arab troops in Kurdistan. The morale of the latter was not good, and they were unused to operating in the mountains.³⁵

Kurdish-controlled Areas

By early 1963, most of Northern Iraq was under rebel control (or, at least, out of effective Government control), except for the main

³⁴ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Şimşir, Op. Cit. Passim.

³⁵ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See McDowall, Op. Cit., Passim.

northern towns of the plain: Kirkuk, Erbil and Suleimaniya. Other towns were either in rebel hands or surrounded but retained by army garrisons who were there on sufferance. This had the advantage for the Kurds that they could buy food in the towns, while the presence of the garrisons restrained Qasim from bombing them, thus alienating the sympathies of the inhabitants from the Kurdish cause.³⁶

The Role of the UDPK

From the information available, it would seem that the UDPK was now the strongest in the Southern area of Northern Iraq and particularly in such towns as Suleimaniya, which had for long been a centre of Kurdish nationalism and where there was an urban proletarian population open to more up-to-date political influences than the predominantly tribal areas of the North. Such towns as Kirkuk, the centre of the oil industry in Iraq, possessed similar populations which were less exposed to tribalism and its loyalties. While the "Kurdish nationalist" tribal movement was widely supported by the UDPK, many of whose members were educated, urbanised Kurds, it seems likely that if an independent Kurdish state were to gain some measure of autonomy, the UDPK and the Aghas would once more find themselves in opposition to each other, since the former stood for some measure of social progress and most of the latter would have preferred the status quo. Mulla Mustafa was the natural fighting leader of the Kurds in arms against the Iraqi Government, but the party might have preferred another President in time of peace. Therefore, in the event that the Kurds had achieved their aims, there would have been little prospect of a peaceful, settled future for them.³⁷

The Communist Attitude to the Kurdish Revolt, 1961-62

³⁶ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. FO371/140682, FO371/52369, FO371/2718, FCO8/3243, FCO8/3244, FCO2335, FCO8/2308, FCO51/147, FCO51/191/RR6/10, FO371/140682/E1821/20, FO371/140682/E1821/9/59, FCO51/147/RR6/14, FO973/687.

³⁷ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. FO371/140682, FO371/52369, FO371/2718, FCO8/3243, FCO8/3244, FCO2335, FCO8/2308, FCO51/147, FCO51/191/RR6/10, FO371/140682/E1821/20, FO371/140682/E1821/9/59, FCO51/147/RR6/14, FO973/687.

For some time after the Revolution of 1958, the Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurds largely agreed to support Qasim, but they began to diverge again by the spring of 1960. By 1962, the Communists, fearing that the Kurdish revolt might unseat Qasim and allow a Right-wing Nationalist Government to come to power, were issuing pamphlets calling for a negotiated solution to the Kurdish problem. On 26 February 1962, *Pravda* vigorously attacked Qasim for his "vicious" policy of using the Iraqi armed forces against the Kurds who were attempting to secure the national rights guaranteed to them by the Provisional Constitution and criticised his efforts to represent their just demands as a separatist movement and their leaders as imperialist agents. The editorial added that the ICP supported the UDPK in favour of a peaceful settlement of the problem. In April, the newspaper *Saut al Ahrar* published an "Appeal to establish Peace in Iraqi Kurdistan" (backed by a large demonstration in Baghdad), calling on the Government to prevent further loss and damage to the State. This appeal, which was signed initially by 11 men, of whom only two were Kurds, and all were known for their Left-wing views, met with a poor reception by the Government. In May, Communist papers published lists of a further 500 signatories, eight of whom were arrested and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. The Communists objected violently and accused the Government of isolating itself from the "popular masses" by repressing all democratic forces. In August 1962, they claimed that the problem was "widening the breach between the Government and national forces" and thus permitting the "Imperialists" to re-establish themselves. The ICP demanded self-government for Northern Iraq within the Iraqi Republic, to be achieved through "a peaceful mass struggle on a broad national front". This, however, was not to replace the right of self-determination for the Kurdish nation, including the formation of an independent State to unite the Kurds, which was "a matter for the future."³⁸

The Communist Attitude to Kurdish Independence

From the previously mentioned indications, it appeared that the Soviet line on independence for Kurds outside Iraq at that time was

³⁸ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. *World Marxist Review*, August 1962. Lenczowski, Op. Cit., pp. 288-296.

that agitation for this would only weaken the hand of, and even alienate, the Communist Parties of those countries. The first essential was establishing a "national democratic" Government following a Communist line or entirely Communist-controlled. With the establishment of such a system, and possibly thereafter a degree of autonomy for the local Kurds, most of the latter's wrongs would be righted, and they would have no cause to feel themselves an oppressed minority. In the short term, the Russians would probably prefer to have seen Qasim survive, hoping he could be pushed, either by the Communists or a United Front, in the direction of "national democracy". Nevertheless, the Iraqi Communists felt obliged to offer autonomy or possibly eventual independence to the Kurds in order not to incur their hostility. A further Soviet motive to keep the Kurds at an optimal level of agitation was the potential trouble it could cause for Turkey, Iran and the Government in Iraq.³⁹

The Situation after the Iraqi Revolution of 8 February 1963

On 8 February 1963, a military coup d'etat overthrew Qasim and his government, and Qasim himself and several of his associates were executed very shortly afterwards. The army officers who seized power (the National Council of the Revolutionary Command) appointed an apparently Ba'athist government, strongly anti-Communist, and headed by Abdul Salam Arif. The Government soon issued a declaration announcing inter alia their intention to bring about the "national unity of the people with all its requirements of Arab Kurdish fraternity 'respecting the minorities' rights and thus enabling them to take part in national life". Two Kurds were made ministers in the new government: one of them, Baba Ali, son of Shaikh Mahmud Barzinja of Suleimaniya, had also been a minister in Qasim's government. There were indications that the new regime wished to come to terms with the Kurds (indeed, they could hardly afford not to for the time being), while the Kurds, for their part, appeared to be determined on autonomy. A message from the UDKP, broadcast on Baghdad Radio on 9 February, spoke of establishing a "just self-government for our people within the beloved Iraqi Republic". By the end of February, talks were being held in Baghdad between the new government and a

³⁹ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Lenczowski, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 288-296. See Şimşir, *Op. Cit. Passim*.

Kurdish delegation led by Jalal Talabani, and later, a government mission composed of the two Kurdish Ministers and the Chief of Staff went to the north for talks with Mulla Mustafa. On 9 March, it was announced that the Government was prepared to grant the Kurds their "national rights based on decentralisation", a concession said to have been wrung from it by Mulla Mustafa's threat to recommence hostilities.⁴⁰

Both sides were reported to have agreed to negotiate. However, it became apparent that the Kurds were demanding more than the Government was prepared to concede, in particular, a percentage of Iraq's oil income and the withdrawal of Arab troops from Northern Iraq. In addition, they wanted various local affairs to be managed by a Kurdish executive council appointed by a legislative council elected by the residents of the area. The new Iraqi Government did not seem earnest in their negotiations and conducted precautionary troop reinforcements in the north. The two Kurds in the Cabinet, Fuad Arif and Baba Ali, resigned. The announcement, in Cairo on 17 April, of agreement between the United Arab Republic (UAR), Iraq and Syria on a kind of Federal Union further stiffened the Kurdish attitude since it sharply emphasised the risk of the Kurds becoming a still smaller minority in a new and broader Arab State. Kurdish memoranda were addressed to the Arab delegations, and a Kurdish emissary discussed the question with Nasser in Cairo. It was reported that the Kurds had postulated that Northern Iraq should be a fully autonomous, equal member in the projected Federal Union.⁴¹

A successful conclusion of the negotiations with the Iraqi Government became increasingly more improbable, and on 8 June, widespread skirmishing commenced between the Iraqi Army and the Kurds. On 10 June 1963, the Government issued an ultimatum to the Kurds that they should lay down their arms or take the consequences, and civil war began once more in Northern Iraq.

Changes in Communist Attitude to Kurds

⁴⁰ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See Şimşir, Op. Cit. Passim.

⁴¹ FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. See McDowall, Op. Cit., Passim.

The new regime's suppression of Communists in Iraq caused a violent reaction on the part of international Communism. It brought calls for a Kurdish revolt against it by *Radio Peyk-e Iran*, a station broadcasting from East Germany. Officially, the CPSU confined itself to a statement broadcast on 16 February condemning the new regime, presumably since it did not wish to alienate it entirely. The Soviet Union is, of course, in a delicate position vis-a-vis Middle Eastern Governments, which were not pro-Western, but which repressed their Communists. A *Pravda* article of 22 January acknowledges this dilemma in general terms but does not say what can be done about it—except, of course, that in the end, nothing can stop the spread of Communism. Between the 8 February Revolution and early June 1963, there were several reports of Kurdish attacks on pro-Communist villages and bands. However, after the resumption of hostilities in Northern Iraq, there were reports of Communists who were sought by the Iraqi authorities joining the Kurds with their arms. There were also rumours that some of the Iraqi Communist exiles in Czechoslovakia had gone to join Mulla Mustafa. Whatever its relations with the Iraqi Government, however, Communism's attitude towards Kurdish independence did not change, for on 15 June, *Tass* issued a statement condemning the Ba'ath Party and calling for "Kurdish national autonomy within the framework of the Republic".⁴²

Conclusion

Neither Mulla Mustafa nor Ibrahim Ahmad, Secretary-General of the UDKP, described the revolt's aims as the institution of a completely independent Kurdistan. They declared that they were hoping for autonomy for the Kurds within the several countries they inhabit, although their ultimate policy regarding a completely independent Kurdistan might depend on the willingness of those countries to grant local autonomy. However, it must be remembered that although they might have been content with regional autonomy, independence had been the dream of almost every Kurd for centuries. Moreover, it was improbable that either Iran or Turkey would ever grant any formal autonomy to minorities whose existence has been officially denied. It is worthy of note that both Mulla Mustafa and the UDKP denied that

⁴² FO370/2718/LR6/9/G. Lenczowski, *Op. Cit.*, pp. 288-296.

they were Communists. Given the Kurdish skill in opportunism and their opposition to the ICP, and their undoubted nationalism, there was no reason to suppose that ideological Marxism would find a firm foothold amongst them.

From the military point of view, the rebels would seem to be able to control the mountain areas without outside help. However, without modern equipment, they would have been unable to maintain control of any parts of the plain for long. On the other hand, the Government, while able to hold the plains, would probably be unable to seize or hold mountainous areas because of the army's lack of training in mountain warfare, the superior morale of the Kurds and the relative ineffectiveness of inefficiently used aircraft against guerrilla forces in the mountains. During the revolt of 1962-63, the Kurds continuously extended the range of their raids into the plains, and the Government forces regularly failed to stop them.

There are three factors in this revolt (1958-63) which distinguish it from previous revolts in Iraq:

(a) the solidarity of the Iraqi Kurds vis-a-vis the Government (Mulla Mustafa having defeated pro-government tribes, such as the Zibaris and Shaikh Rashid Loulan's section of the Baradost, and won over tribes that had previously remained neutral) has given the revolt more of a national character than, for instance, that of 1945.

(b) The movement for social and agrarian reform (as represented by the UDPK) is stronger than in previous revolts, where the main emphasis was on preserving the positions of the Aghas involved.

(c) Whereas, in the past, it had been the Kurdish intelligentsia who called for a national State, mostly without having a material stake in the revolt or any apparent close connection with the dissidents, it now seemed that there was a close degree of solidarity between the Kurdish expatriates and their compatriots in their home territories.

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