

*In March 1979, when he died in the United States where he was living in exile, general Barzani had been able briefly to savour his revenge on fate: the Shah of Iran, who had betrayed him by concluding on 6 March 1975 the Algiers agreement with Saddam Hussein and by abruptly halting his aid to the Kurdish resistance, had been overthrown by the Islamic Revolution led by Ayatollah Khomeini. In his turn, he had taken the bitter path into exile.*

*We had just published *The Kurdish National Movement* (Flammarion 1979) and Eric Rouleau asked us to write a biographical note for *Le Monde* in which we retraced the long struggle of the Uncrowned King of Kurdistan.*

*The death of general Barzani brought to a close a long chapter in Kurdish History in Iraq. Newsworthy events would now shift to Iranian Kurdistan, where the Iranian Revolution – briefly – favoured the rise of the Kurdish movement.*

## *GENERAL BARZANI: SUPPORTED BUT SUBSEQUENTLY DROPPED BY THE CIA*

The news of the death, in the USA on the first of March 1979, of General Barzani, reached Mahabad, a Kurdish town a thousand kilometers north-west of Teheran, at the precise moment when the KDPI was officially celebrating its new official status after over thirty years of clandestine activities

*"When I opened my eyes, I was already a slave! At that moment, I was three years old".* For Mullah Mustafa Barzani, there was never any respite: his existence, like that of the Kurdish people, was a perpetual battle against repression.

Born in 1904 in Barzan, a small village now in Iraqi Kurdistan, Mullah Mustafa was thrown into prison, first by the Turks in 1909, with his mother and brothers after the first revolt by his older brother, Sheikh Abdes Salam II. Five years later, Sheikh Abdes Salam II was hanged by the Turks. Born into a family of Sheikhs, religious leaders who, like Iran's ayatollahs today, came to play an increasingly important political role, Mullah Mustafa soon learnt that in a Kurdistan divided between the Ottoman Empire and Persia, both empires in decline, one had to fight for the right to remain Kurdish.

Uprising followed uprising : against the British in 1919; against the central Iraqi government in 1931 and 1932, and again

in 1933 and 1934. After ten years of semi-captivity, Barzani recommenced the struggle in 1943. Pursued by the Iraqi army, betrayed by certain Kurdish tribes bribed by the Iraqi government, he had to seek refuge in 1945 in Iran, where the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad appointed him general. However, after the retreat of the Soviet army from Iran, in May 1946, the collapse of the Republic of Mahabad was unavoidable; and Barzani had, once again, to go into exile, this time to the USSR. He did not return until ten years later, after the revolution that overturned the Iraqi monarchy in 1958. But the honeymoon between the Kurds and General Qassem's government was brief. In March 1961, Barzani regained the mountains of Iraqi Kurdistan; and in the summer of 1961, the war began. A war interrupted by frequent truces linked to the changes of regime in Baghdad.

From 1964, Général Barzani was able to consolidate his power over a territory that he held on to until his movement collapsed in 1975: propped up at the frontiers with Iran and Turkey, the Kurdish "bastion" covered an area of about 35.000 square kilometers. True, none of the large Kurdish towns was included in this bastion; But about half the population of Iraqi Kurdistan, a population of a million, lived

on the territory 'liberated' by the Kurdish nationalists. Practically the entire frontier between Iraq and Turkey and almost a third of the frontier with Iran was entirely outside the control of the government in Baghdad. Within this bastion, Barzani's power was absolute, superior to that of the Prime Minister of an autonomous region.

At the age of sixty, Barzani, who until then had been considered a mere clannish chief, a military leader with somewhat confused nationalist aspirations, turned into a statesman. After being called a "red general" during his exile in the USSR, Barzani was discovered to be a "patrician revolutionary". In fact, he became the uncrowned king of Kurdistan. Of medium height, wearing traditional Kurdish dress, General Barzani struck all who met him with his lively eyes that twinkled maliciously under his characteristic heavy bushy eyebrows. Despite his age and girth, he exuded an impression of physical strength and unwavering energy.

His personality seemed monolithic, with an iron will. Yet, Barzani could surprise his visitors with moments of lassitude and despondency: *"The Kurds have no friends"*, he would often say. In fact, only one thing was of concern to him: high diplomacy and the need for a protecting power. Like the Kurdish personalities in the 1920s'

Constantinople – who naively attempted to persuade France or Great Britain to promise autonomy or independence to Kurdistan – as did his brother, Sheikh Abdes Salam II, who implored the British to restore order in Kurdistan, Barzani was convinced that only the protection of a great power would help the Kurds.

## COMPLEX RELATIONS WITH THE SHAH

Having relied on the British until 1945, Barzani may have been tempted to appeal to the Soviets. But when he saw the way they "dropped" the Republic of Mahabad, he realized that America was the dominant power in the Middle East. From then on, Barzani had one sole obsession: at all cost to gain the support of the USA, offering in exchange to overthrow Qassem's government, and then that of the Baath Party, while at the same time stressing the strategic position of Kurdistan on the southern border of the USSR or making tempting references to Kirkuk's petrol reserves.

In 1972, things changed dramatically. After the signing of the Iraqi-Soviet Treaty in April, Kissinger, hitherto opposed to all intervention by the CIA in favour of the Kurds, changed course. At the end of May 1972, during a confidential meeting with the Shah of Iran, President Nixon, trying to stop Soviet penetration in the strategic region around the Persian Gulf, gave the go-ahead to a CIA plan which awarded Barzani 16 million dollars between August 1972 and March 1975. For his part, the Shah offered Barzani an aid package many times larger than that of the CIA according to an American Commission of Enquiry. And finally, Israel too donated a certain amount of aid to Barzani, using the Jewish immigrants who had come out of Iraqi Kurdistan in the 1950s as intermediaries between the Israeli Government and Barzani who made several trips to Israel. Henceforth, Barzani allowed himself to become increasingly dependent on Iranian aid though he never had the slightest illusions about the intentions of the Shah. Ever since the time of the Republic of Mahabad, Barzani knew exactly what were the Shah's views on a people's right to self-determination.

Barzani, however, had blind confidence in the United States. And unfortunately, no one in his entourage was able to tell him that the US Government would not necessarily feel obliged because of a CIA operation. During the Arab-Israel conflict in October 1973, he was tempted to use the moment to launch his Peshmergas (Kurdish guerrilla fighters) against the Iraqi army. Kissinger dissuaded him. It is clear now that although he encouraged a "cancer" which might undermine the Iraqi regime, neither he nor the Shah wanted the Kurds to succeed in achieving real autonomy, let alone their own state.

The war in Kurdistan was about to turn into an open conflict between Iran and Iraq when there was a spectacular reconciliation between the two countries on 6 March 1975 in Alger. The Shah and Saddam Hossein embraced and announced a "global agreement" which importantly included Iraq's renunciation of all territorial claims in exchange for a complete halt to Iran's support for the Kurds. A few hours later, Iran withdrew its artillery and missiles from Kurdistan.

On 10 March 1975, Barzani sent a desperate plea to the CIA station in Teheran. His main message was that : "We are menaced with complete destruction. There is no justification for this. We appeal to the American Government and to your agency to intervene as you have promised." The message remained unanswered. It was the end. In the evening of 30 March, Barzani sought refuge in Iran, and the

Kurdish rebellion crumbled.

In one of the last interviews Barzani gave after being accorded political asylum in the United States, Mullah Mustafa Barzani refused to retrace the history of his forty-year struggle to gain recognition for the rights of the Kurdish people to nationhood. He bitterly declared : "I have not succeeded; I have failed. My greatest error was to put my trust in the American Government which then proceeded to betray us" (Washington Star, 18 April 1978).

Until the very end, fate was against him. The "uncrowned king" of Kurdistan died in exile without his last wish being fulfilled. Suffering from incurable cancer, he was struck down by a heart attack just as he was preparing to return to die on Kurdish soil, in Iranian Kurdistan which had finally been liberated from the Shah's oppression.

*Le Monde*, 4-5 March 1979

### *Iraq 1974*

*This was the last photo we took of general Barzani at Haj Omran, one afternoon in September 1974. We had just accompanied him as he went for his daily walk, we said goodbye, and were beginning to make for home when, on looking back for the last time, we saw him standing quite alone on this road. The photographer's instinct proved too strong and the finger pressed the shutter. We were never to see him again.*







*Iraq - Iran 1979*

*Sheikh Ezzedine Hussein making his way to the headquarters of the KDPI*

*After accidentally discovering the Kurdish question in 1971, we became, in the space of less than ten years, so-called specialists, guided, fortunately, by numerous Kurdish friends. After having published *The Kurdish national Movement*, in which we were among the first to make use of the very rich British archives, we broadened the scope of our reportages to include Iranian and Turkish Kurdistan.*

*In October 1979, we did our first reportage in Kurdistan Turkey. Thanks to Kendal Nazan of the Kurdish Institute at Paris, we met with Mehdi Zana, the then mayor of Diyarbakir, and Mahmut Begik, one of his assistants. And we had our first contacts with the leaders of the Turkish Kurdish parties. After decades of submission, the Turkish Kurds raised their heads again: it was the awakening, and the multiplication of the parties all of which dreamed of independence. We continued our journey as far as Dogu Bayazit, and crossed the Iranian border at Bazargan. After spending a few days with our friends from the Iraqi KDP at the camp in Ziweh, we joined the peshmergas of Abdul Rahaman Ghassemlou's KDPI.*

*What a distance had been travelled since our first meeting at general Barzani's HQ in 1971. The refugee working in the Planning Ministry in Baghdad, had become the chief of a guerrilla organization that could boast several thousand combatants and which posed a threat to Khomeini's Islamic regime. The days when he secretly summoned a congress of the KDPI in Baghdad in 1973, and a conference of the party's Politburo in a château in the Loir et Cher, in France, in 1977, belonged to another age. And when he held a big meeting in Four Lanterns Square, in Mahabad, on 20 November 1979, on the very spot where Qazi Muhammad, the president of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, had been hanged thirty years before, the Iranian Kurds could hope that their dream was at last going to come true. Meanwhile, the Iraqi Kurds were still assessing the impact of the collapse of general Barzani's movement in March 1975 and tearing one another apart in the process. We met for the first time with Jalal Talabani at his headquarters in the valley of the parties from where he led the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the new party he had founded in 1976 and which would never cease vying with the KDP for the leadership of the Iraqi Kurdish movement.*

*Our articles which developed in reportage mode certain of the elements contained in our investigation represented a rigorous account of the situation at the end of a decade (1970-1980) that had witnessed so many upheavals in Kurdistan, and raised the still unresolved issue of the unification of the Kurdish movement.*

## THE KURDISH POWDER KEG

*A valley, on the border between Iran and Iraq, has become the refuge of the Kurdish resistance. The new Iraqi Kurdish parties founded after the collapse of the Kurdish movement in 1975 and the Iranian Kurdish parties which had just broken with the new Islamic régime have installed themselves on either side of the border and begun the armed struggle. In Turkey, after decades of terrible repression, it is the awakening. Numerous organizations emerge but fail to put a united front in place. Throughout Kurdistan can be seen a radicalization of the Kurdish movement. Iraqi and Iranian Kurds have taken up arms again. When will the armed struggle break out in Turkish Kurdistan?*

### WEAKNESS OF A DIVIDED RESISTANCE

The old dismantled nation persists, in the face of the States, in affirming its identity. But the dream of a Grand Kurdistan has not been the foundation of the struggle.

The creation of an independent Kurdistan was provided for, in 1920, in the Treaty of Sèvres. Sixty years later, the Kurdish people is still torn between five countries: Turkey (6 to 8 million), Iran (5.5 million), Iraq (2.5 to 3 million), and, in a lesser proportion, Syria and the USSR (respectively 500.000 to 800.000 and 300.000) (1). Since that time, the Kurds have struggled unceasingly to affirm their national identity. But, like their territory, their national movement is split.

The Islamic revolution in Tehran had given rise to high hopes – soon to be quenched with great bloodshed – in Iranian Kurdistan where armed confrontations resumed. But, apparently, there was nothing new to report in Turkey or Iraq. Victim of a repression that systematically struck the intellectuals, the Kurdish movement was deprived of leaders of high calibre and became a prey to extreme factionalism. To give an account of its action, in 1980, is first of all to sketch out a picture of its rival branches.

There exists today nevertheless a sort of headquarters of Kurdish resistance, in a part of the Iran-Iraq border towered over by snow-capped summits over 3.500 metres

high. A few huts near a small river – or rather a torrent – which does not even have a name. Already, however, that of ‘valley of the parties’ is starting to be known throughout the Kurdish world.

It is indeed in this liberated zone, which entirely escapes the control of the Iranian and Iraqi authorities, that are to be found the headquarters of the principal formations of the Kurdish resistance: Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou’s Iranian Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDPI), Jalal Talabani’s Patriotic Union of Iraqi Kurdistan (PUK), Dr Mahmoud Osman’s Iraqi Kurdistan Unified Socialist Party, and since quite recently, the Iraqi Communist Party, which after having broken with the régime in Baghdad, decided, in its turn to take up the armed struggle. Sheikh Ezzedine Hussein, the Iranian Kurdish religious leader with close links to Komala (Kurdistan Marxist-Leninist Committee), is also established there.

The valley of the parties is both a huge military training camp, and a revolution school where young militants – few of them are over 30 – match their opinions on the teachings of Marx, Lenin, Mao, Che Guevara, and... Enver Hodja. Lastly, it is the symbol of the divisions of a nationalist movement that is more fractured than ever, at a time when the Iranian revolution, the serious economic and political crisis in Turkey and the resumption of the armed struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan offer a unique opportunity to those wishing to reconstruct

a Kurdistan dismembered by the Treaty of Lausanne a little less than sixty years ago.

The Iraqi and Iranian Kurdish movements, engaged in a pitiless armed struggle, envisage nevertheless the solution to the Kurdish issue solely within the framework of their respective States, and ask only for autonomy. Whereas the Turkish Kurdish movement, emerging with difficulty from several decades of ruthless repression and as yet incapable of supporting an armed struggle, is asking, for its part, for nothing less than independence.

### IN TURKEY: THE AWAKENING

In order to overcome terrorism, the Turkish government proclaimed martial law in May of last year in the majority of the provinces in Kurdistan. Thousands of people were arrested – over 5.800 in the region of Diyarbakir alone. The army multiplied roadblocks and controls at the entrance to the cities, searching passengers and car boots. Without warning, it would surround a café, and frisk all the customers. And yet the leader of an illegal Kurdish organization, sentenced to more than forty years in prison, could hold a conversation at a table outside a café for over four hours with a journalist.

The general secretary of another

organization can set out, without fear of being disturbed, the programme of his party in a hovel in a small village, less than 50 metres away from a soldier attentively watching the border – a border across

*In Turkey, the Kurds... see themselves as a colonized and occupied nation. And they want independence*

which tons of weapons are able to pass. The members of the central committee of a third organization can meet in another village, a few kilometres from a large town where the army is making a fresh show of strength. For the army and the police see nothing, and can see nothing.

An entire population has entered into rebellion. In Iran and Iraq, the Kurds consider themselves minorities and maintain ambivalent relations with the central government. In Turkey, they see themselves as a colonized and occupied nation. And they want independence. While resolved to move on as quickly as possible to the armed struggle, they are still, for the most part, at the stage of heightened awareness and organization – phenomena that police forces the world over are powerless to control.

## AN ALMOST SUCCESSFUL ASSIMILATION

The Turkish government's policy of assimilation almost succeeded. Boarding schools were built in the big market towns in which young Kurdish peasants spent their five years of obligatory primary education. The use of the Kurdish language was forbidden, and the young Kurds had to learn to become good Turkish citizens and good Kemalists thanks to the Turkish language.

The families were often – for economic

reasons – party to this campaign of assimilation: "My father was a nationalist who had been involved in Sheikh Said's movement" (2), said a militant primary school teacher now a member of one of the illegal Kurdish organizations. But we were ten brothers and sisters: my father owned only a little land, and he wanted to have done with this miserable existence. He wanted me to become a schoolteacher. In Kurdistan, to possess a teaching diploma is a dream, it is the guarantee of economic independence. And for that, the Kurdish language was not useful, on the contrary. Believe me if you will but my father demanded that we speak Turkish at home – and there was a little box into which we had to put 25 kuruş (centimes) every time we used a Kurdish word.

"After spending five years in this way in primary school, and another five in secondary school, followed by a course at the primary schoolteachers training college, I was completely conditioned: as far as I was concerned, I was a Turk, and everything Kurdish was something to be ashamed of". Nearly all the thirty-year old militants told the same story.

"There are in Turkey thousands of Kurds who think they are Turks and I was one of them", said another militant.

It is more often than not towards the age of twenty, after having been an active member of one of the numerous organizations of the Turkish left, that young Kurds become conscious of their identity. Generally speaking, however, they are incapable of explaining the mechanism of this gradual awareness that began in the 60s and found expression within the Turkish Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), strongly influenced by general Barzani, and the POT (Workers Labour Party).

As in Iran and Iraq, the movement is rooted in a purely nationalist current and a socialist one. Very soon, however, the Communist Party showed itself to be incapable of proposing a satisfactory solution to the problem, and, after serving as active members of autonomous organizations within the POT, the Kurdish nationalists founded the D.D.K.O. – revolutionary cultural hubs of the East.

Starting in 1971, the movement became radicalized: after the military coup d'Etat of 12 March 1971, the Kurdish militants put on trial in Diyarbakir raised the issue in political terms, declaring that the Constitution treated the Kurds as slaves,

and colonized peoples, and completely rejecting the country's political system.

A few years later, around 1975, one witnessed the foundation of a certain number of Kurdish nationalist organizations, all with the same objective – the independence of Kurdistan – without it always being possible to make out whether this extreme factionalism was due to ideological causes or to personal rivalry.

On the right, one single organization, the Turkish Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), was still solidly established in south Kurdistan, in particular near the Syrian and Iraqi border. At its congress in October 1977, the KDP adopted in its turn the objective of independence, and declared itself "open to Marxist-Leninist principles", to use the expression of its new general secretary. In reality, the Turkish KDP remained highly conservative and maintained close relations with the Iraqi KDP which it provided with decisive assistance by ensuring the shipment of a consignment of weapons infiltrated across the Syrian border. The majority of the Turkish left-wing militants, while criticising the reactionary positions of the KDP, acknowledge that it is probably the only movement possessing a sufficient presence and organization to be described as a party.

On the left, total confusion reigns. Three organizations – Ozgurluk, the DDKD and the KUK – signed nevertheless, in March 1980, a joint declaration, in the hope of forming what one could call the Turkish Kurdistan Communist Party.

Headed by intellectuals grouped around two journals, Ozgurluk (Freedom) and Roja Walat (the Sun of the country), Ozgurluk advocated the 'independence of Turkish Kurdistan and its federation with a democratic Turkish State. Believing as it did that the division of Kurdistan was now a clear and present reality, and rejecting the project of a Grand Kurdistan as utopian, Ozgurluk was probably the Kurdish organisation that maintained optimal relations with the Turkish left wing, in particular with the TKP, (Turkish Communist Party). It was resolutely pro-Soviet and anti-Chinese. However its split, in late 1978, into two rival organizations, Ozgurluk and Ozgurluk Yolu (the Path to Freedom), would considerably weaken this organization, several leaders of which were obliged to go completely underground.

As for the DDKD (Democratic and Revolutionary Cultural Association),



founded in 1974, it initially comprised three autonomous organizations, in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Subsequently, its activity would extend to Kurdistan proper. By its own definition, a national democratic movement founded on Marxist ideology, the DDKD possesses two journals – Jina Nu (New times) and Tirech (Dawn) – to disseminate its views. For the DDKD, the Kurds form a single people artificially divided after the First World War. The liberation and independence of the four parts of Kurdistan (in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria) can alone bring about a solution. To this effect, it advocates the creation of a central organisation for the four regions and recourse to the armed struggle. The DDKD maintains poor relations with the Turkish left-wing parties (TIP, Workers Labour Party; TSIP, Turkish Socialist and Labour Party; TKP, Turkish Communist Party) that cannot conceive of a solution to the Kurdish issue outside the framework of Turkey itself, and defined it as regional underdevelopment unrelated to colonial dependence. Moreover, the DDKD was, for its part also, resolutely pro-Soviet and anti-Chinese.

The KUK (Partisans of the national liberation of Kurdistan), born of a split in the Turkish KDP after the 1977 congress, represents the Marxist-oriented left wing of a party not yet able to free itself of the influence of the Barzanists. As a supporter of an initially limited independence of Turkish Kurdistan, the KUK envisages as a first stage its federation with a Socialist Turkish State. However it passes harsh judgement on the current left-wing organizations (TIP, TSIP, TKP) deemed revisionist, and backs the "true Turkish working class", as yet still unorganized.

On the fringes of these formations, a group of intellectuals, gathered round a lawyer, Ruchen Aslan, (imprisoned in late 1979), founded a review destined to give its name to their group: Rizgari. In this bilingual (Kurdish and Turkish) publication, their wish was to study the history of the Kurdish national movement and to offer new perspectives. The review was seized and banned as soon as the first issue appeared, on 21 March 1976. In the nine issues and eight brochures published illegally since then, the militants at Rizgari became, in their turn, the advocates of the independence of the four regions of Kurdistan. In addition, having now learnt the lessons of the failure of the Palestinian

movement, due, in their opinion, to the fact that the Palestinians have limited their struggle to Palestinian territory alone, they maintain that one has first of all to create a revolutionary movement in Kurdistan, and subsequently gather all the Kurds together within a single national front; and lastly, "stage the revolution in the Middle East with the participation of Arab, Turkish and Persian workers".

What distinguishes Rizgari from the

*Drawing published in Le Monde Diplomatique in September 1980 and reproduced with the kind permission of Plantu*



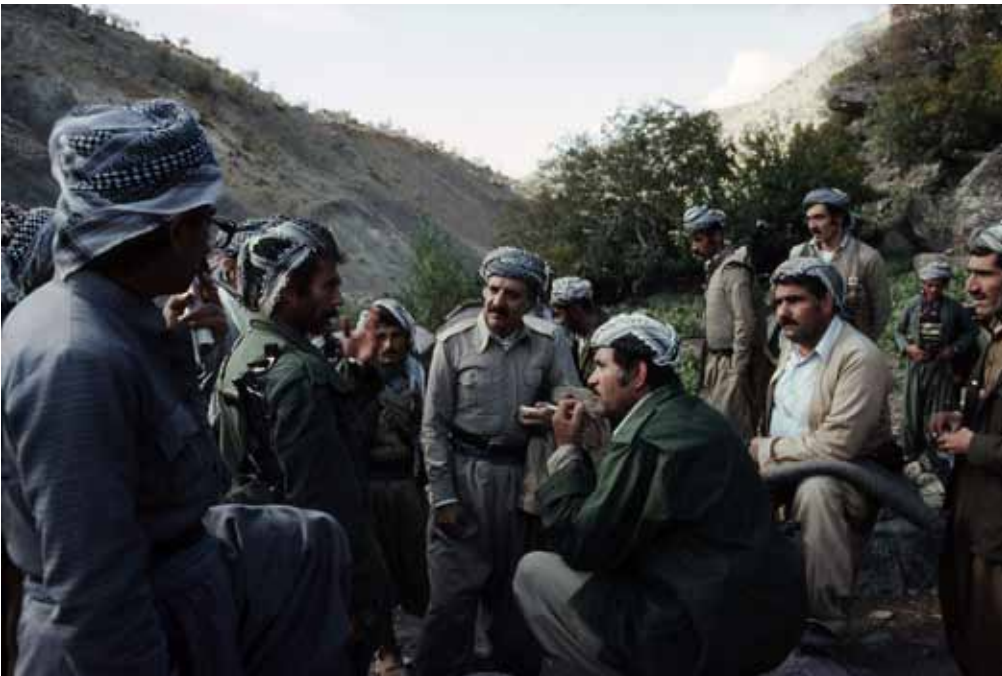
other movements is its extremely critical attitude towards the USSR. *"The Soviet Communist Party has never made a declaration concerning the right of the Kurds to self-determination"*, asserted one of its leaders still at liberty, observing that *"the USSR provides no aid to the KDP's struggle in Iran, but that it aids the Baath, which is oppressing the Iraqi Kurds"*. This does not prevent Rizgari from banking on the aid of the Soviet Union *"once the Kurdish movement has become a political force, it will have to take this into account in its capacity as a great power"*.

## THE PART PLAYED BY THE PEASANTRY

More systematically anti-Soviet, the Maoist movement Kawa (which takes its name from Kurdish mythology) is fighting for the independence of Kurdistan, while at the same time putting the struggle against the USSR on the same level. Its militants assert that Moscow is furnishing arms and money to certain Kurdish organizations which it makes use of for its expansionist policy. After the death of its leader, Ferit Uzun, a young engineer from Siverek, assassinated on 22 November 1978 by the militiamen of a grand feudal lord of that same town, the movement split up in its turn into two rival organizations, the one pro-Chinese and the other pro-Albanian.

*Iran 1979*

*Valley of the parties, at centre, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, general secretary of the KDPI, in discussion with a peshmerga chieftain*



Lastly, the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) is the most controversial movement. Formed in 1976 by a political science student hailing from Ourfa, and initially known under the acronym APO (the Kurdish nickname of its leader, Abdullah Ocalan), it assumed its present name in 1978. The PKK can be distinguished from all previous organizations by the fact that it advocates immediate recourse to the armed struggle. This alone, he asserts, makes it possible to raise the political awareness of the peasants, by *"demonstrating to them that colonial power is weak, and that it is possible to combat it"*. Its militants began by gaining certain successes among the peasants who welcomed them and provided them with assistance without, for all that, one's being able to speak of liberated zones.

But after the proclamation of the state of siege, the leaders of the party were divided as to the advisability of continuing the armed struggle; some of them asserted that this would only heighten the repression and worsen the fate of the peasants. During a meeting at the end of last week, Apo, the leader of the PKK, reportedly acknowledged the validity of this thesis. But the partisans have not ceased the struggle, in particular in the region of Siverek, where confrontations have led to more than two hundred deaths since May 1979. The adversaries of the PKK, in particular the DDKD, the KUK and Ozgurluk, see in this the proof that this party is infiltrated by agitators working on behalf of the Turkish special services.

One cannot help feeling profound unease at the extreme factionalism of the Kurdish organizations, which do not hesitate to have recourse to arms to settle their differences. Entrenched behind an abstract and theoretical language, the leaders of these organizations are not reluctant to attribute the proliferation of the Turkish Kurdish organizations to the fact that *"the Turkish Kurdish intellectuals are more scientific" than the Iranian or Iraqi Kurds*. As for the settlements of accounts, one must see in them, said one of them, *the proof that "our organization is better in Turkey: first of all, we settle the problems between ourselves, after which we will be facing only one enemy: colonialism, imperialism"*.

If all these organizations draw their inspiration from Marxism, each one declares, furthermore, that it is the sole guardian of true Marxism.

With the exception of the PKK, all the organizations of the Kurdish left do indeed



draw their inspiration from classical Marxist schemas. For them, it is the Kurdish working class that must lead the revolutionary movement, for the *"increasing awareness of a peasant goes only as far as the boundaries of the land he wants to own"*. Nevertheless, the working class is practically non-existent in Turkish Kurdistan, 99% of the industries being established in the purely Turkish region of the country. If a Kurdish proletariat there be, it is to be found in the suburbs of the big cities: Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir and Izmit, where several hundreds of thousands of Kurds live. By far the most underdeveloped of all the parts of Kurdistan, Turkish Kurdistan is an essentially rural country: without peasant mobilization, the future of the movement seems ill-assured in this country. At the limits of survival, the peasants in Kurdistan live the most often on lands belonging to large landowners or aghas, whose estates extend over 10.000 donums (2.000 hectares approximately) or more. For a day's work, they are paid 250 pounds – enough to buy 10 kilos of bread. Living more often than not in hovels indistinguishable from the wallows that shelter their cattle, they are often unable to speak Turkish. 75% of Kurds can neither read nor write, according to an intellectual for whom *"the Turks are not even capable of giving us their culture"*. And if they have to go into town for an administrative matter, or to see a doctor, they are accompanied by an interpreter provided by an agha or the tribal chieftain – another means of controlling the peasants and building up a clientele. In the villages, during elections, the agha knows exactly how everyone votes, and it needs a lot of courage to vote against his wishes – at the risk of losing one's land, work and daily bread. The economic and cultural underdevelopment of the campaigns is obvious, but the Kurdish nationalist organizations have not yet done anything to exploit this immense potential for revolt. As a former cadre of the PKK observed: *"Ankara gives us nothing to keep us"*.

## FRATRICIDAL STRUGGLES IN IRAQ

On 6 March 1975 in Algiers, on the occasion of a meeting of OPEC, Iran and Iraq signed

a reconciliation agreement under the terms of which the Shah undertook among others to halt all assistance to the Iraqi Kurdish autonomists. There was deep distress among the Iraqi Kurds who had taken refuge in Nagadeh (Iran), and it was thought that the movement in Iraq would collapse. However, on 22 May (1975), a certain number of militants on the left of the Iraqi KDP met in a hotel in Mahabad and founded the Iraqi Kurdistan Social Democrat Movement, which would swiftly transform itself into the Kurdistan Socialist Movement. Among the founders: Ali Askari, Omar Dababa and Dr Khaled, linked since 1964 to the fraction of the KDP headed by Jalal Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmed; and less well-known figures like Taher Ali Wali and Rassul Mamand.

At more or less the same time, extreme left-wing militants founded the Kurdistan Marxist-Leninist Committee or Komala, while democrats, such as Jalal Talabani, Kemal Khoshnao and Kemal Fouad, members of a third organization, the General Line, set up the preparatory committee of the Kurdistan Patriotic

*The Turks are not even capable of giving us their culture*

Union. The latter was responsible for drawing up a programme, and for bringing together all the democratic and socialist organizations in Iraqi Kurdistan. When, on 1st June 1976, some forty Komala militants from Syria entered Badinan, in northwest Iraqi Kurdistan to resume the struggle, the union of these various organizations had not yet been achieved. This expedition was clearly premature: a month after its entry into Kurdistan, its chief, Ibrahim Azou, was captured and executed.

A few months later, the leaders of the Kurdistan Socialist Movement, Ali Askari and Dr Khaled, entered Iraqi Kurdistan in their turn. They however established their base in a region they knew well, in the Qala Dizeh - Koy Sanjak sector, in the southeast. Very soon, some one thousand peshmergas rallied to Ali Askari. The situation was sufficiently favourable on the military level to permit, a year after the resumption of

the armed struggle, the meeting, from 30 August to 12 September 1977, of the founding congress of the Kurdistan Patriotic Union (PUK), attended by sixty-three delegates, including Jalal Talabani, who had come from Damascus and who would then be designated secretary general of the new formation.

Born in 1933 in Koy-Sanjak, a graduate of the law faculty in Baghdad, Jalal Talabani had quickly made a name for himself as one of the young radical go-getters of the Iraqi KDP. In 1961, he was a member of the small minority group of this party who wanted to begin the armed struggle without further ado, at a time when most of the leaders of the KDP preferred to temporize, probably under the influence of the Iraqi Communist Party.

Jalal Talabani enjoyed at that time privileged relations with general Barzani – now deceased – who described him as his "son". But after the ceasefire of 10 February 1964, he figured among the leaders of the KDP who, along with Ibrahim Ahmed, Omar Dababa and Ali Askari, broke with Barzani whom they described as a tribal

figure and even considered the *"greatest danger for the Kurdish revolution"*. After a brief resistance, they were forced to seek refuge in Iran. Blinded by their hatred of Barzani, the Talabanists would rally in early 1966, to the Baath régime and form units that brought together two thousand

mercenaries, the *Jash* who, until the signature of the 11 March 1970 agreement, would continue the struggle against general Barzani's peshmergas.

Described by his friends as a brilliant theoretician and leader of men, universally appreciated for his joviality and his loquacity Jalal Talabani was a puzzling political figure. Indeed, after reproaching general Barzani for allying himself with the Shah of Iran, he, in his turn, would ally himself with another oppressor of the Kurdish people, general Hafez al Assad, the Syrian president, who saw in him an instrument for the destabilization of Iraq, precisely as the Shah had made use of Barzani.

And indeed, in 1976, Damascus became the capital of the Iraqi Kurdish resistance, supplying it with arms and money. The congress of the PUK in September 1977 would also elect a Politburo and a central



committee comprising representatives of the three founding movements, and adopted the slogan: Autonomy for Kurdistan and democracy in Iraq, a formula identical to that of the Iranian KDP. Its general secretary detailed to us as follows the PUK's position in regard to the question of autonomy: "... I am not afraid to be described as a separatist.

*The Kurdish people lives in an artificially divided country. We are not a minority, we are a nation. However, today, we are fighting for autonomy. My generation will probably never witness the independence of Kurdistan".*

His party based its strategy on the participation in the Iraqi National grouping, a coordination committee of the Iraqi opposition, in which could be found, alongside the PUK, such Arab political organizations as the Arab Socialist Movement (originating from the Arab nationalist movement), the left-wing Baath (a pro-Syrian faction of the Iraqi Baath), the central Command of the Iraqi Communist Party (resulting from a split within the ICP), and various movements of Nasserian inspiration: the Congress Party of Ayat Said Thabet, who had fled to Libya; the Socialist Party of Rachid Mohsen, former head of Aref's intelligence services who had sought refuge in Cairo, and the Unity Party.

*"Thus, stressed Jalal Talabani, no-one can accuse us of being pro-Zionist or pro-imperialist".* Despite the scepticism that may be inspired by the backing given to the PUK by ghost-like organizations within the Grouping, it is certain that Jalal Talabani was able to establish very close links with the régimes in Damascus (through the left-wing Baath) and in Aden (through the Arab Socialist Movement), with the result that the arming of his movement was assured.

The PUK controlled between three thousand and three thousand five hundred peshmergas under the command of Ali Askari. From 1977, violent confrontations took place against the helicopter-borne units of the Iraqi army. But scarcely three months after the congress of that year, the PUK opened negotiations with the régime in Baghdad on the initiative of the Palestinians who, since president Sadate's visit to Jerusalem, wanted to see Iraq join

the refusal front. Ali Askari met with Saddam Hussein on 23 November 1977 in Baghdad. The negotiations involved three essential points: the application of the statute of autonomy, legalization of the parties, and the situation on the 20km wide border strip in which all the villages had been razed and the inhabitants

*"My generation will probably never witness the independence of Kurdistan".*

*JALAL TALABANI*

displaced.

The Iraqi vice president replied that any application of a statute had its defects, that the legalization of the parties could only be implemented within the framework of the national front, and that, as far as the border strip was concerned, no discussion was possible. The same measures were applied in the Arab regions. This meant failure, and operations resumed after Ali Askari's return to Kurdistan.

The resumption of the armed struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan by the Kurdish left would have the unforeseen consequence of the resurrection of the KDP headed by people close to general Barzani. A few weeks after the Algiers accord on 6 March 1975, Sami, one of the closest advisers to general Barzani, the Prime minister of the Kurdish bastion, had acknowledged that the *"Kurdish armed movement is finished... Politically speaking, this team of leaders is finished"*. General Barzani's team would, indeed, disperse, some remaining in Iran, others taking refuge in Europe or the United States, and still others, like Habib Kerim, the former general secretary of the KDP, going so far as to profit from the amnesty to return to Baghdad.

The general himself however was not slow to react to the arrival in Kurdistan of the first commandos of the PUK. In spring 1977, he asked his son Idris to send to Kurdistan four former military chiefs in whom he had total confidence: Arif Yacine, Hamid effendi, Mullazem Younis

*Drawing published in Le Monde Diplomatique in September 1980 and reproduced with the kind permission of Plantu*



and Mustafa Nerway, in order to resume the armed struggle.

At the same moment, the general's other son, Masoud Barzani, set up a provisional leadership of the KDP, in which were to be found some veterans like Sami, Ali Abdullah and Nuri Shawess, but, above all, second-ranking figures and former cadres of Parastin, the Kurdish special services, of which Masoud was the head.

The general's supporters experienced great difficulties in relaunching the armed struggle: the situation was very bad for the Kurds living in refugee camps in Iran, where they were closely watched by SAVAK. When they succeeded in escaping and entering Iraq, the general's emissaries, pursued by the Iraqi army, were unable to remain more than twenty-four hours in the same village. However the Iraqi régime was pursuing a systematic policy of repression, Arabization and displacement of populations that soon caused many Kurds to forget general Barzani's mistakes – particularly in Badinan, a region with a majority tribal population. Furthermore, thanks to the aid supplied by the Turkish Kurdish tribes and the Turkish KDP, the Barzanists soon had at their disposal a force of around three thousand peshmergas operating from bases situated on the Turkey-Iraq border.

The conflict between Talabanists and Barzanists was inevitable: controlling as they did the access to Badinan, Masoud Barzani's supporters considerably hindered the Talabanists' communications with Syria and jeopardized the shipment of their armaments.

In the spring of 1978, Jalal Talabani sent several hundred peshmergas, under the command of Ali Askari and doctor Khaled, "to cleanse Badinan" and to seek arms in Syria. At the beginning of June, a bloody battle opposed Talabanists and Barzanists on Turkish territory. The result was a crushing defeat for the former: Ali Askari, doctor Khaled and Sheikh Hussein, the Yezidi chieftain, were captured and executed by the Barzanists. Some fifty peshmergas from the PUK were killed, two to three hundred others were taken prisoner and a dozen or so died of cold.

Following this battle, the Kurdistan Socialist Movement was decimated. The survivors abandoned Jalal Talabani and rallied to the preparatory Committee of the PSK headed by Dr Mahmoud Osman, a former member of general

Barzani's Politburo that had in vain sought integration within the PUK. In August 1979, Dr Mahmoud Osman founded, together with Rassul Mamand and Taher Ali Wali, the Unified Socialist Party of Iraqi Kurdistan, in an endeavour to follow a third way, to the left of the KDP, but without surrendering to the accommodations accepted by the PUK. With no resources, and slender forces, Dr Mahmoud Osman had to fight at one and the same time against the soldiers of the Iraqi army and the supporters of Jalal Talabani, with whom he had actually shared a tent until 21 March 1979. In his turn, in early October 1979, he went to Baghdad to negotiate with Saddam Hussein and request loyal application of the statute of autonomy. But in vain.

In the same year, two more important events would overturn the Iraqi Kurdish chessboard: the break between the Iraqi Communist Party with the régime of Saddam Hussein, and the Iranian revolution.

For long kept secret by the Iraqi

*Iraq 1979*

*Jalal Talabani, general secretary of the PUK, with his peshmergas*



Communists, who were attempting to safeguard their party's privileges – a legal existence, with two ministers in the government, offices, newspapers – the deterioration in the relations between the CP and the Baath were exposed to all after the publication of a report by the central committee of the ICP on these very relations. In May 1978, some thirty cadres of the party were executed. A few

months later, the break became total: on 13 May 1979, the Baathist police seized the presses of Tariq al Chaab, the CP's newspaper, and closed the party's headquarters down a few days later. In August 1979, Tariq al Chaab reappeared in secret, after a meeting of the central committee of the party, which decided to break off all relations with the Baath, refused to negotiate with the régime of



Saddam Hussein and invited all members of the party to combat it until its downfall.

## A FRONT AGAINST THE BAATH

At the end of 1979, several members of the Politburo and the central committee of the ICP had set up their headquarters in the valley of the parties, near those of Jalal Talabani, from where they led the armed struggle against the Baathist régime. Furthermore, the ICP invited the Iraqi organizations to constitute a democratic front. Isolation of the Baath was now complete.

Actual construction of the front raised tricky political problems. In effect, the ICP was inviting Dr Mahmoud's PSU, Jalal Talabani's PUK and Masoud Barzani's KDP - which were still fighting a fierce struggle - to unite within one and the same organization.

The Iranian revolution was however to have more considerable repercussions. Until the last days of the Shah's régime, the peshmergas of the PUK had had to fight on

*At the end of 1979...  
isolation of the Baath was  
now complete*

two fronts: when, in November 1978, the Iraqi army launched a large-scale offensive against Jalal Talabani's headquarters in the valley of the parties, the Iranian army took up positions on the other side of the river and the government in Tehran even authorized an Iraqi colonel to station himself on Iranian territory, on one of the mountains overlooking the valley, to lead operations: the snow, which had begun to fall without interruption, was to save the Kurdish maquisards, paralyzing as it did the helicopters of the Iraqi army, while several dozen soldiers died of cold. Since the Iranian revolution, Iranian territory has become a sanctuary for the peshmergas of the PUK.

## ISLAMIC POWER IN IRAN

In Iran, the revolution was to be, for the KDPI, the un hoped-for opportunity to achieve the two objectives of its programme: autonomy in Iranian Kurdistan and democracy in Iran. But its leaders make no secret of the fact that that events have happened too quickly: from one day to the next, a clandestine party, which had set itself the aim of one member for every tranche of one thousand inhabitants (that is five thousand members for Iranian Kurdistan as a whole), has had to take over the administration of a territory roughly one fifth the size of France.

Within the space of a few months, the Kurdish leaders were obliged to face the facts: the fall of the Shah had not brought Iran the democracy they wished for and, starting in August 1979, they had to confront a brutal offensive. Once again, they were caught short: the majority were still in Mahabad when the army launched its assault, and it was in totally improvised fashion that they had to withdraw to the mountains and set up their headquarters in the valley of the parties. For several weeks, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, general secretary of the KDPI, was sheltered by an overhanging rock which, before him, had welcomed generations of shepherds.

A year later, after a winter truce punctuated by negotiations, came a new offensive. To many people's surprise, the Iranian Kurds were not crushed by the bludgeoning of the Iranian artillery and aviation.

The leaders were very discreet on the subject of their military organization, but they admitted to having five thousand fighters, distributed over eight hez, or armies. And what about their armament? Many G-3s; American-manufactured weapons; Kalashnikovs; some Brno rifles; RPG-7s, fearsome anti-tank weapons; Uzi machine guns (manufactured in Iran under Israeli licence). Almost all these weapons bear Iranian army inscriptions, and many of them were even engraved with the arms of the Empire.

Very shortly after the revolution, the Kurds had captured the garrison at Mahabad; then, in late August 1979, that of Sardasht, where they came upon a considerable quantity of armaments. In Mahabad, over three thousand rifles, and many heavy

weapons: RPG-7s, dushkas (machine guns) but also 86 and 105-millimetre guns, and even TOW missiles. Similarly in Sardasht, where the maquisards appropriated considerable supplies and munitions depots.

"We have spent fortunes, A.R. Ghassemlou told us, paying the truck drivers who transported all this equipment to a safe place". If one realizes that on the black market, in Iran, a Kalashnikov fetches no less than 2300 € and a bullet 2,3 €, it can be easily understood what the capture of these two Iranian garrisons meant for the Iranian Kurds: "It was enough for five years, as Ghassemlou was wont to repeat. Nevertheless, they still had munitions problems, lacked anti-aircraft weapons, with the exception of dushkas, and remained highly vulnerable to attacks by fighter bombers and, above all, by Iranian army helicopters.

## THE GAME PLAYED BY BAGHDAD

The Iranian Kurdish Democratic Party (KDPI) is often suspected of receiving substantial aid from Iraq, both in money and weapons. Its general secretary asserts, for his part, that this aid has been limited to hosting the refugees who had evacuated the Kurdish towns at the time of the assault by the Iranian forces during the summer of 1979, and to treatment in Iraqi hospitals of the severely wounded who could not be looked after on the spot. "Until now, we have not received any arms from the Iraqis", he declared. And he added: "If in the future we accept Iraqi aid, it will only be under the following conditions:

"It must not be given to the detriment of the Iraqi Kurdish people, nor of the Iraqi people full stop - which means that we will not agree in return to any action whatsoever against the Talabanists or the Barzanists.

"We must always be in a position to refuse this aid; we should not put ourselves at any price in a situation of dependence".

"For the moment, continued A.R. Ghassemlou, the Iraqis are offering us "parachut", a shorter version of the Brno; we don't need them: we want SAM-7s, "dushkas" of Soviet manufacture, to be able to combat the helicopters... but I don't think the Iraqis will give us any".

In reality, the Iraqis are acting today in Iranian Kurdistan in the same way as the Shah acted against them, in Iraqi Kurdistan, before the 6 March 1975 accord. Saddam Hussein is seeking rather to destabilize Iran than to help the Kurds to obtain their autonomy. It was thus that he is having arms distributed to the chieftains of the Jaf Kurdish tribes in the region of Qasr Shirin, as he seeks to strengthen the uncontrolled elements. He is also aiding general Oveissi who, from Baghdad, is trying to recruit Kurdish tribes in order to launch a counter-revolutionary movement financed by the entourage of the ex-Shah. If its leaders were indeed surprised by events, the KDPI is by far, among all the Kurdish organizations, the one that nurtures the most highly developed political project. The militants of the Iranian Komala (a Maoist organization established principally in the region of Merivan and Sanandaj) frequently reproach the leaders of the party of being democrats, of having sought refuge abroad, in Iraq or in Europe, while they, for their part, were fighting against the oppression of the Shah.

And yet, Ghani Boulourian, one of the members of the Politburo of the KDPI, spent the twenty-five years that preceded the downfall of the Shah in Iranian prisons; while the general secretary, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, was in 1954 among the founders of the Mahabad committee at the origin of the present party, and contributed, in 1956, to the drafting of the party's first programme.

Dominating very markedly, thanks to his personality and his political culture, the Kurdish movement of this last quarter of a century, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, who has held the post of general secretary since 1971, was born in 1930 in one of the little villages that his father, an Iranian Kurdish feudal landlord, owned west of lake Urmieh. As a very young man, he went through a mystical period, as a result of which he has retained an excellent knowledge of the Koran and Arabic. But, very soon, he would be reading the works on Marxism that were circulating under the counter in Iran, and when he arrived in France, in 1949, to begin his university studies, he had already begun supporting revolutionary ideas. After being involved in meetings against the Shah, he was stripped of his bursary by the embassy. He would continue his studies in Czechoslovakia.

In a life punctuated by exiles, three episodes helped to shape his political thinking:

In 1953, at the time of Mossadegh, Ghassemlou was active politically in Tehran in a KDP that was generally affiliated with the Tudeh Party. He looked on helplessly as Mossadegh's movement collapsed and soon broke with the Tudeh, which had abandoned the idea of starting an insurrection.

In 1968, he was in Prague, where, after being awarded a doctorate in economics, he taught at Charles University. On 20 August, he was present when Dubcek's

*Iran 1979*

*From left to right in the forefront, Adnan Mufti, Dr Mahmoud Osman, and Rassul Mamand, with the peshmergas of the Kurdistan Socialist Party (KSP)*

*Iran 1979*

*Sheikh Ezzedine Hussein, spiritual head of the Iranian Kurds, close to Komala, praying at his HQ in the valley of the parties*





socialism with a human face was crushed by the tanks of the Warsaw Pact.

Finally, from 1970 to 1974, he found himself in Baghdad working as an expert in the Ministry of Planning. After the signature of the 11 March 1970 agreement, that granted the Iraqi Kurds autonomy, he observed the gradual worsening in the relations between general Barzani and the government in Baghdad. He also followed very closely the final negotiations regarding the statute of autonomy that preceded the resumption of the war in 1974. More than any other nationalist leader, he was aware that if the Kurds knew how to make war, they did not know how to win negotiations.

At the same period, he was directing from Baghdad the reorganization of his party in Iran, with the support of the Iraqis. He was personally acquainted with the Baathist leaders, and had no illusions about their motivations. When, in 1974, Saddam Hussein asked him to condemn Barzani

*"If we have to fight for a long time, then we will fight for more than just autonomy"*

**ABDOUL RAHMAN  
GHASSEMLOU**

in the Iranian KDP newspaper, Kurdistan, GhassemLou refused; the Baath then banned the publication of this newspaper and GhassemLou left Iraq.

A fluent speaker of six or seven languages, possessing a colossal memory and gifted with an unflinching sense of humour, Abdul Rahman GhassemLou had no doubt sufficient political experience to extract from a great country like Iran the autonomy of one of its provinces. Having remained a Marxist, despite what his adversaries might say, he wanted to establish in Kurdistan a "democratic socialism". *"We are not, he explained, social democrats like Kreisky, who administers capitalism. We want socialism, like in Czechoslovakia, but together with democracy."*

## AUTONOMY AND SEPARATISM

From the initial contacts in the spring of 1979, the negotiations between the Iranian KDP and imam Khomeini came up against the very concept of autonomy. When, in March 1979, a Kurdish delegation handed him a detailed memorandum concerning the demands of the Kurdish people, the imam made a long-winded speech in his own vague style, on the subject: *"We are all Muslims, we must preserve our unity: within this framework, we will all have the same rights"*.

When the Kurdish delegates wished to clarify these rights, imam Khomeini added: *"There is no problem, you will have roads, schools, and hospitals"*. The delegates insisted nevertheless: *"But we want our political rights, we want autonomy"*. The imam then asked: *"This is not contrary to the unity of Iran? No? Well then, examine the question with Bazargan"* (Prime minister at the time). But when the Kurdish delegates explained to the Prime minister their conception of autonomy, Bazargan exclaimed: *"But that is separatism"*.

What are the Iranian Kurds asking for? On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1980, the KDPI handed an emissary of president Bani Sadr a text in six points summarizing their demands:

- 1) The national rights of the Kurdish people, in the form of autonomy, must be enshrined in the constitution.
- 2) The geographical limits of Kurdistan will be chosen taking into account historical and geographical factors, and the decision of the majority of the inhabitants of the regions concerned.
- 3) An autonomous Kurdistan will elect a general council by universal suffrage.
- 4) The general council of an autonomous Kurdistan will elect an executive commission to manage its economic, cultural and administrative affairs.
- 5) The Kurdish language will be considered the official language in Kurdistan, alongside Persian.
- 6) All internal affairs, including security, will be the responsibility of the local autonomous bodies.

What president Bani Sadr, like Bazargan before him, rejected was the creation of autonomous institutions specific to Kurdistan: the grouping of the four Kurdish provinces within a single entity, the election of a general council (that the Kurds

also call the Kurdistan national assembly). On the other hand, he was prepared to grant certain socio-economic concessions and greater decentralization.

As far as the present leaders were concerned, the setting up of an autonomous Kurdish entity would open the way to separatism. Moreover, they appeared convinced that the heads of the movement cherished the dream of a Grand Kurdistan that would throw the region's borders into question.

Nevertheless the general secretary of the KDPI has shown, throughout his career, remarkable constancy, persisting as he does in limiting his demands to the autonomy of Iranian Kurdistan.

In 1958, on his return from Baghdad, after the Iraqi revolution, general Barzani declared one day to A.R. GhassemLou: *"For me, borders do not exist"*, and he proposed the creation of a single party for the Iranian, Iraqi and Turkish Kurds, of which his interlocutor would be the general secretary. GhassemLou refused this offer. Twenty years later, in an essay on Iranian Kurdistan (3), A.R. GhassemLou would write that, *"if clearly there are similar economic, political and social conditions"* in all the parties in Kurdistan, which give them a "common aspect", *"one must not exaggerate these common characteristics"*. He stressed that *"it is not only borders that separate"* the Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi Kurds, for, over several decades, they have also been subjected to different influences in the countries in which they live – thus concurring with the ideas supported in Turkey by Ozgurluk.

Bringing up, in his refuge in the valley of the parties, the subject of the functioning of the future autonomous institutions of Kurdistan, the general secretary of the KDPI remarked: *"The central government will retain a certain percentage of the oil revenues: 30 to 40 %. The rest must be distributed in proportion to the population. And if they refuse? If they want Kurdistan to remain part of Iran, they will have to give us a share of the oil revenues"*.

On another occasion, envisaging the hypothesis of a prolonged struggle, he observed: *"If we have to fight for a long time, then we will fight for more than just autonomy. Hani al Hassan (who had transmitted a message from the KDPI to the Ayatollah) warned: initially, we Palestinians were fighting to stay in our homes. Then with the increase in the number of martyrs, we would have been satisfied with administrative*

decentralization. Subsequently, we wanted autonomy. Now, we want independence"... However, the general secretary immediately added that "if the Iranian government grants us the Iraqi statute of autonomy of 1974 – with its executive and legislative arm – we will accept immediately... But obviously, not in the way it is applied in Iraq".

## EXACERBATED CONTRADICTIONS

An un hoped-for historic opportunity for the Kurdish national movement, the Iranian revolution heightened still more the contradictions between the various organizations;

Seeking to gain support in Kurdistan, Jalal Talabani first of all helped to arm the militants of the Iranian Komala before establishing relations with one of imam Khomeini's sons-in-law. When the Iranian army attacked the Iranian Kurdish peshmergas, he posed as a mediator. What was the price of this mediation, which the Iranian KDP rejected: there were in Lebanon and Syria substantial shipments of weapons – in particular heavy weapons for use against tanks and helicopters – which it was difficult to get sent through Turkey. The ideal solution consisted in obtaining from imam Khomeini the authorization to have them delivered directly to Iran, by plane. When asked about this, Jalal Talabani

*Was the uprising of Iranian Kurdistan destined to be crushed in its turn, as that of general Barzani had been crushed five years before in Iraqi Kurdistan?*

admitted with a disarming smile: "Why not? That could be the price of my mediation". The Barzanists also hastened to exploit the possibilities offered them by the fall of

the Shah: after meeting imam Khomeini on two occasions, Masoud Barzani gained total freedom of movement for the tens of thousands of Iraqi Kurds still sheltering in Iran and was given the equivalent of 30 million francs, and two thousand weapons – weapons that the Iraqi peshmergas had had to hand over to the Iranian army on crossing the border after the 6 March 1975 accord.

But the price of these new relations that Masoud Barzani had just established with the imam was clear: his supporters had to be Kurdistan's policemen. A series of incidents will illustrate this situation. At Ushnu, during a demonstration, last year, the Iraqi peshmergas fired into the crowd, killing six people. During the offensive in the summer of 1979, one of the Iranian Kurdish chieftains, Taher Khan, son of Simko, was about to attack Urmieh with his tribe in order to reduce the pressure of the Iraqi army on Mahabad. Masoud Barzani brought all his influence to bear with a view to preventing him from intervening. At Paveh, lastly, the KDPI peshmergas encircled the Iranian Defence minister and were on the point of capturing him when they found themselves short of munitions. Masoud Barzani's supporters had blocked the road by which their reinforcements were conveyed. Recalling these incidents, A.R. Ghassemlou did not mince his words: Masoud Barzani and his supporters were jash, mercenaries in the service of imam Khomeini. The meeting from 4 to 9 November last (1979), on Iranian territory, near Ziweh, of the congress of the Iraqi KDP, during which Masoud Barzani would be elected president of the party, was to confirm the existence of special relations between his movement and the Islamic régime.

If the Iranian Kurds cannot hope for any aid from the Iraqi organizations, those in Turkey, favourable to independence, provide a certain assistance to the KDPI. But the narrow ideological constraints within which these organizations operate prevent them from comprehending the scope of the historic events taking place before their very eyes. Alarmed by the dissensions and the numerous settlements of accounts, Ghassemlou declined the offer to dispatch combatants to participate in

the struggle against the Iraqi army.

Was the Kurdish national movement doomed for all that? Was the uprising of Iranian Kurdistan destined to be crushed in its turn, as that of general Barzani had been crushed five years before in Iraqi Kurdistan? And what would the future hold for Turkish Kurdistan if, in its turn, it took up arms?

In Turkish Kurdistan, we are witnessing at this moment a heightened awareness which the Turkish left wing and the power in Ankara have similarly chosen to blindly ignore. And the refusal of the authorities in Tehran to grant autonomy to the Iranian Kurds heralds the continuation of the struggle. In the final analysis, this may ignite the spark that will trigger the march to unification of the movement.

*(1) In all, 15 to 17 million (in 1980). In the absence of statistics, these figures are merely estimations that probably understate reality: In Syria, the Kurds represent at best 10 % of the population and are located essentially in the Djézireh, Kurd-Dagh (Kurd mountain), near Aleppo, and in the big cities. Relatively few in number, they have only ever played a marginal rôle: they have traditionally, however, afforded the Turkish, Iraqi and Iranian Kurds the benefit of the Syrian "sanctuary". Concerning the Kurds in the USSR, see Kendal's remarkable study published in the work by several hands, The Kurds and Kurdistan, published by Maspero (Paris, 1978).*

*2) All the quotations reproduce remarks taken from interviews granted us in November 1979 and May-June 1980.*

*3) A.R. Ghassemlou, Iranian Kurdistan, 1978 (36 pages, publisher and place of publication unspecified in the work in question*

*Le Monde Diplomatique, September 1980*