

The Organisation of Strugglers  
and Revolutionaries of Kurdistan

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**KURDISTAN**

**AND**

**THE NATIONAL**

**LIBERATION STRUGGLE**

**OF THE KURDS**

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Our organisation is a progressive revolutionary Political Organisation consisting of Kurdish peasants, workers and intellectuals inside and outside of our country.



General M. BARZANI, leader for the Kurdish National Liberation struggle.

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## PREFACE

The main aim of this pamphlet is to provide a wide and general impression on the Kurdish people's struggle for liberation and social justice over a long period of history with particular emphasis of the second half of the Nineteenth Century to the present day. At the same time, a sketchy account of Kurdish society is attempted. We hope that the reader will forgive the shortcomings of this pamphlet, since it might be lacking in scientific basis due to the haste in which the materials were organised and assembled. However, we do hope that this publication would serve its original purpose as an introductory material for further studies on the Kurdish question.

This paper is also intended as an indication of the position of our organisation "B A H O Z" (The organisation of the strugglers and revolutionaries of Kurdistan) in interpreting Kurdish history and the people's fight for liberation. The paper at times gains a debating character in certain sections, mainly to refute certain allegations by pseudo-socialists and so-called revolutionaries.

We would like to point out that we have benefited from the book "Kurdistan and the Kurds" by A.R. Ghassemlou, English edition. Collet's, London 1965; and we are grateful for his pioneering scientific study of the subject.

Our organisation "B A H O Z" invites all the revolutionary and progressive organisations of the world to further co-operation and solidarity in the common struggle against imperialism and reaction.

"B A H O Z"



1. As a geographical concept

Kurdistan literally means the land of the Kurds. It denotes a geographical entity like "Scotland", "Iceland", "Turkistan" or "Afghanistan". The land extends from the Taurus ranges in the west to the Iranian plateau in the east and from Mount Ararat in the north to the plains of Mesopotamia in the south. It occupies an area which is as large as France. The country is divided between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. There are Kurdish minorities in the Soviet Union (in the republics of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan) and Lebanon.

The Kurds number around 16,5 million people in the different countries mentioned above and are divided in this manner: 8 million in Turkey, 5 million in Iran, 2,5 million in Iraq, 600.000 in Syria, 300.000 in the Soviet Union and 40.000 in Lebanon. The Kurds of Lebanon are mainly immigrants from Turkey and Syria who have taken refuge there to escape persecution and oppression or to earn their living because of the lack of employment in their countries and the deliberate government policies of exploiting Kurdistan and keeping it at a poverty-stricken economic level, though Kurdistan is abundantly rich in natural and economic resources.

Kurdistan includes some of the highest mountains in the world, that are well known through their biblical connections, namely Mount Ararat (5.000 m) and Mount Judi as the "places" of "rest" of Noah's Ark.

Officially Kurdistan does not exist today on the maps of Turkey, although it did appear there during the time of the Ottoman empire. In Iran it indicates a small western province, which is far from including all the Kurds living there, while in Iraq and Syria it is classified as the "North" and "Djazira" respectively.

Kurdistan occupies a strategic geo-political position in the Middle East, being situated in the heart of Asia Minor, having oil-reserves and lying at the centre of four Middle-Eastern states with an outlet to the Soviet Union.

The country consists mainly of mountainous terrain, whose summits are snow-covered for a great part of the year. The two well-known rivers "Tigris" and "Euphrates" originate in

North Kurdistan. Their many tributaries, the Murad Su, the Khabour, the two Zabs and Diala in their course over the difficult terrain contribute to the beauty of the country and water some very fertile valleys such as the plains of "Urfa" and "Tigre" as well as Jezireh, Diat, Mush and the valleys of the two Zabs around Arbil and Kirkuk.

Kurdistan, in fact, enjoys one of the outstanding scenic beauties of the world and is acclaimed by many travellers and journalists as "Switzerland of the Middle East". Kurdish folklore is very rich in songs and poetry about the beauty of the country. This beauty, unfortunately, has been destroyed by many factors, including the irresponsible semicolonial policy of the ruling regimes, wars, natural disasters and the ignorance of the population.

The climate varies between the mountainous regions, which brings the cold, and the South, which is characterised by torrid heat. The rainy season lasts from November to April.

Kurdistan lies in the following areas of those countries that rule over Kurdistan: East and South-East of Turkey, West and North-West of Iran, North of Iraq, North and North-East of Syria. Among the biggest Cities in Kurdistan are:

In Turkey: Erzerum, Bitlis, Diyarbekir, Van Elazig, Malatia, Mardin, Sivas, Urfa; G. Antep, Mus, Dersim (Tunceli), Bingol, Karakose, Erzincan, Hakkari, Maras, Adiyaman, Hatay, Kars, Siirt.

In Iran: Mahabad, Khoi, Maku, Sinna, Kirmanshah;

In Iraq: Sulaimania, Kirkuk, Arbil, Mousul, Akra, Rawanduz, Zakho;

In Syria: Kamichilie, Afrin, Amude.

Kurdistan, though mountainous, is quite prosperous and rich in natural resources. Wheat, barley, rice and tobacco are considerable; fruit tress of apples, pears, peaches, apricots, olives and wines are abundant. Along with milk, butter, cheese, wool sheep-rearing and forestry are some of the economic resources of Kurdistan. The mountains are clad with ever-green oak trees, which are used for producing ink and tanning materials. There are practically everywhere deposits of unworked coal. Copper, iron ore, silver-bearing lead, gold, silver are among the many minerals that are escorted from Kurdistan. But the greatest sources of natural and industrial wealth in Kurdistan are chrome and oil. It is significant that the wealth extracted from Kurdistan is never used for its development, which represents one of the ugliest forms of exploitation.

## 2. Kurdistan as a political concept

The term "Kurdistan" has acquired a political character in addition to its geographical meaning, so that it has come to denote a political movement towards specific goals and aims. The political term "Kurdistan" means or represents certain goals which the Kurds are striving for, while it means a threat to the reactionary circles that rule over Kurdistan and have divided it among themselves. At the same time it means something else to the outside observer.

For the Kurdish people and their revolutionary forces "Kurdistan" represents the continuous struggle towards national liberation in all parts of Kurdistan. It further represents their struggle for the elimination of oppression and exploitation; the implication of social justice and development; the victory of a social revolution in Kurdistan with all its progressive aims for the liberation of all the oppressed classes in Kurdish society and first of all, the peasants and workers; the emancipation of the Kurdish people from the tradition-bound, feudal society and the destruction of the out-dated systems that hamper its development; the emancipation of women from centuries of social oppression and discrimination. It also represents the struggle for the liberation of all the oppressed social groups in Kurdish society; the united struggle of the Kurdish revolutionary forces against the ruthless reactionary regimes that have for generations exploited, oppressed and terrorised the Kurdish people and denied it every right to a decent living. It represents the united struggle of the Kurdish people with the revolutionary forces of the ruling nations of Kurdistan (Turks, Persians, Arabs) in liberating their countries from the reactionary regimes and military dictatorships that have sold their countries to the imperialists; the acceptance and recognition of the Kurdish nation among the community of nations and their freedom to practice political, social, cultural and human rights; the unity of the struggle of the Kurdish people with the struggle of all the oppressed nations of the world against imperialism, neo-colonialism and reaction, and for national liberation.

To the outside world the Kurdish movement represents the just struggle of an oppressed and deprived nation for their basic and natural rights.



To the ruling bourgeois, reactionary cliques that are governing the countries, which divide Kurdistan, the Kurdish movement constitutes a big threat to their position of privileges and an end to their ugly exploitation of the working people. Therefore, they apply every form of repression from military terror to mass deportation, to imprisonment, to mass murder, in order to safeguard their position.

### 3. The social structure of Kurdish society

Many observers point the tribal character of the Kurdish society and exaggerate the role of that social factor. One can take for certain that this form of social organisation is in the process of disintegration and occupies a very minor role in Kurdish society because of capitalistic economic developments in Kurdistan. It is very true that Kurdish society suffers, like many societies in the countries of the Third World, from outrageous feudal relations and practices, in which the landowner (Agha), the Sheikh or Mulla (the religious dignitary) occupy the position of the people's ruthless exploiters and the peasant is treated more or less as part of the land. Traditional relations are enforced by these groups and enjoy the support of the central government in suppressing the masses of the people.

The majority of the Kurdish people are non-land-owning peasants, followed by craftsmen, shop-owners, small businessmen and a growing proletariat. Industrialisation is at a minimum level in Kurdistan, which has contributed to the absence of a working class movement in the proper sense. The peasants form the largest social class. The family is still the basic unit of social organisation in Kurdish society, which determines the individual's loyalties and affinities. The father occupies the role of the head of the family, followed by the elderly sons and so on. Women are usually respected and treated well, but are unfortunately very far from liberation or enjoyment of equal rights, a field demanding the unlimited attention of the younger generation to work and struggle for. Marriage with more than one wife is disappearing, so that young marriages are, though gradually, under modernising influences.

As far as religion is concerned, Kurdistan is endowed with all the classical religions such as Islam (approx. 80%), Christianity (10%), Yezidism (10%; this is the orig-



inal religion of the Kurds before Islam and is connected with Zoroastrianism, but has undergone modifications and influences from other religions). There is also a small minority of Kurds belonging to the Jewish faith in Syria, Iraq and Turkey. The Kurdish people, in general, are very tolerant as far as religious faith is concerned.

#### 4. The economic structure of Kurdistan

Kurdistan is an agrarian society with strong feudal relations. Between the two world wars and especially after the second world war capitalism and capitalist relations began to develop and thus gave rise to large towns and commercial centres.

The existence of crude oil in Kurdistan attracted the imperialist petroleum monopolies! Petroleum representing the only heavy industry in Kurdistan is exploited by foreign capitalist consortiums and is extracted in "Kirkuk" (Iraq), in "Batman" (Turkey) and "Kirmanshah" (Iran). New oil-extracting centres are exploited by state-owned companies in the respective countries: The Syrian government extracts the oil deposits in "Derik"; the Iraqi government the "Khandeqin" wells and the Turkish government the newly-discovered wells in "Adiyaman". These foreign oil monopolies exert a considerable political pressure in the area. They support the local capitalist and bourgeois circles and are given support by them in return, in a dirty double-deal to exploit the masses of the working people in these countries and penetrate the ruling clique to guarantee permanent reactionary and imperialist oriented circles in power.

It is significant to notice that such a rich country as Kurdistan is still one of the poorest and least developed areas of the Middle East. From the beginning of the 20th century oil and other minerals have been extracted from Kurdistan, worth billions and billions of royalties, without a single penny being used for the development of Kurdistan.

The rise of a small Kurdish proletariat in a country at a minimum level of industrialisation is attributed to the oil industry rather than the growth or a rise of a Kurdish national bourgeoisie.

Other industries include mining are at a very low degree, just so the production of light consumer goods. Carpet-

manufacturing is the only homemade product of any significance.

If one is to consider Kurdistan as a single economic unit (assuming the absence of its political divisions at present) agriculture remains the chief branch of Kurdistan's national economy, of which cattle-breeding constitutes the important part and amounts to 64% of the national income.

Agricultural methods are extremely primitive, and strong feudal relations are prevailing among the rural population. The majority of land is owned by wealthy landowners.

Means of communication are very limited. In winter most of the towns and villages are isolated from one another. The roads, if existing, are narrow and in bad condition. There are still fewer railways (which would not have been laid in the first place, if not for strategic purpose and for the movement of troops to crush the Kurdish people's uprising). Some transport takes place on some lakes (e.g. lake Van and Urmia), but the means of transport are outdated. Air traffic exists only for military needs.

Both the working people in the towns of Kurdistan and the peasantry bear a threefold yoke; they are being exploited by American and British imperialists; by the Turkish, Arab and Russian ruling classes and by the Kurdish feudal landowners.

It is very important to keep in mind that Kurdistan's economy is divided, corresponding to the political division between Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey, though contraband trade is widespread among the different parts of Kurdistan. In regard to its economy different parts of Kurdistan still share basic structural and functional characteristics.

The countries among which Kurdistan is split are economically dependent on others, mainly the imperialist countries, which explains why their economic progress is so irregular and disproportionate. Kurdistan forms the marginal area of all these countries, which for their part are regarded as less advanced. The different parts of Kurdistan itself constitute under-developed areas of these countries and are used in a colonial manner as a source of raw-materials and an outlet market.

As stated earlier, Kurdistan, being an agrarian under-developed country, suffers extremely from the ills of feudal and tradition-bound relationships. The nature of the feudal system supplies the tribal chiefs (aghaz), religious dignitaries (sheikhs) and landlords with enormous power,

which bears the danger of misuse. The tribal relations enable them to conceal intensive exploitation of the peasants under the pretext of "paternal care"; the landlord makes use of his privileged position as a religious dignitary, sheikh or leader of a sect, to pacify the peasants and to suppress class conflict. They add further to their power by supporting the reactionary central governments and the imperialism and are hence given all the power they need by the ruling cliques for their own purposes to exploit Kurdistan. The central authorities give more authority to the land-owning class in Kurdistan by appointing them to state administrative posts or in regionalities and local villages. By this, the land-owners become the loyal dogs of the reactionary ruling circles in these states. The land-owning class is not comprised of feudal lords only. They could be tribal chiefs, religious dignitaries, money-lenders and merchants. But the land-owner can be all these things at the same time, which gives him immense economic and political power. It is this factor that strengthens his position in Kurdistan rather than the rent he receives on the land and of course the support of the central government and the ruling bourgeoisie.

The Kurdish village may be taken as a miniature for the analysis of the social structure in the Kurdish countryside, taking the ownership of the means of production as a criterion. We could then classify the following social groups:

1. - large land-owners
2. - middle land-owners
3. - rich peasants
4. - middle peasants
5. - landless peasants (the majority group)
6. - agricultural labourers
7. - other sections of the population

##### 5. The historical aspect of the Kurdish people's struggle

The Kurds have lived in their country since time immemorial and form one of the oldest nations of the Middle East. There is incontestable historical evidence of their history, culture and presence in that part of the world, and they are acknowledged as a separate nation and ethnic group, no matter what extremes their oppressors may go to in an attempt to deny their existence or origins by pretending



they were Turks, Arabs or Russians.

The Kurds have for many decades been struggling to liberate themselves and to be able to decide their own destinies by themselves, but are denied this right by the colonialists, imperialists and Arabian, Turkish and Persian reactionaries. The Kurdish struggle has taken many forms, depending upon the specific historical period of development: from the form of peasant uprisings to national revolutions, until in our time it has come to take the shape of a social revolution in a united struggle and collaboration with the other oppressed peoples of the Middle East (Turks, Persians and Arabs) for liberation and the establishment of democratic progressive governments and the recognition of peoples' right to self-determination.

The Kurdish revolutionary forces consider themselves allies and brothers of the democratic and revolutionary forces of the Turkish, Persian and Arabian peoples. They support the struggle of the leftist movement of these peoples for liberation and social justice. But one fact seems to hinder their common struggle: the socialist movement, being very young among all these peoples, has been subjected to massive attacks by the imperialists and the reactionaries, leading to a situation in which some of the forces of the left compromise their ideological position by denying the rights of the Kurdish people or by not being able to liberate themselves from their petty-bourgeois background and adhering to the big-nation chauvinism in relation to the struggle of the Kurdish people and their separate identity.

One fact emerges clearly from the objective current circumstances in the countries of the Middle and Near East: without the united struggle of all the revolutionary forces in these countries the revolution would suffer severely. A precondition for that, as far as the Kurdish revolutionary forces are concerned, is the declaration and adoption of the just ideological position on the Kurdish national question by the revolutionaries of the peoples of the Middle East that divide Kurdistan, and the recognition of the Kurdish people's right even to separation, if they so wish.

Before going further, we would like to reply to some allegation by certain elements that "the Kurds have never had a national-state in history and, therefore, they have no right to claim or fight to achieve such a state."

In replying to this allegation it should be borne in mind that the whole concept of the nation-state is a new



concept, and it is accompanied by the capitalist development of production and the bourgeois revolutions. Therefore, Russia emerges as a nation-state for the first time in the 16th century, England in the 15th century, Germany and Italy in the 19th century and Syria, Iraq, Turkey as late as after the First World War in this century. The whole system of governments before was either multi-national empires or independent principalities or city-states. The same applies to the Kurdish people. They had their kingdoms in antiquity, e.g. Gutium, Lulubi, Media, or were incorporated into larger empires, e.g. Persia, Rome, Armenia, Islam, Mongol, Ottoman; from the Middle Ages to the middle of the 19th century, they had their independent principalities or city-states, though paying a formal tribute to the Persian or Ottoman Empire. The Kurds even succeeded in establishing their rule over Syria and Egypt for more than 81 years (Saladin and the Ayubite dynasty). Turkey was even established as a nation-state in areas that they moved to as late as the 13th century and in lands that were historically from time immemorial inhabited by Greeks, Armenians and Kurds. And now, by an irony of history, the Kurds of Turkey are told by the Turkish government that they do not exist and have no rights in their own lands.

In conclusion, historical arguments could be extended to extreme lengths and still not be a sufficient criterion. But the most decisive factor is that in the countries of the Middle East, in the same geographical area, but divided politically, there are more than 16 million Kurds divided among four countries, living there since antiquity, who share a common history, a common language, a common social and economic structure and, most of all, share the same feelings of belonging to the same nation (the Kurdish nation) and aspire towards equality and social as well as political justice with the other nations of the area.

One more thought should be mentioned, before we return to our historical narrative. The Kurds are neither related to nor are they part of Arab or Turkish nations, racially or ethnically, and their relation to the Persian people may be compared to the relationship among the French, Italian and Spanish nations.

## A. The Kurds in Antiquity

The Kurds are descendants of the Indo-European tribes that had entered and settled in the Zagros mountains area during the second millennium B.C., such as the Guti, Lulubi and others. The Kurds are generally regarded as the direct descendants of the Medes, who conquered Nineveh (now in Iraqi Kurdistan) in 612 B.C., and established a very strong and rich empire. Although Media was conquered by the Persians in 550 B.C., the Kurds never ceased to lead an independent life in their inaccessible mountains.

Xenophon, the Greek historian, in his "Anabasis" on the retreat of the 10.000, states that the Kardukhoi "living in the mountains are brave and will submit neither to the rule of King Xerxes (of Persia) nor to Armenian rule".

In the Sassanian era, before the Arab invasion in the 7th century A.D., the Kurds were known under this name and were settled in the area corresponding approximately to the territory of present-day Kurdistan.

The Arab invasion dealt a heavy blow to the independent development of the Kurdish people. The Kurds resisted bravely; nevertheless, with time Islam became the religion of the majority of the Kurds.

## B. The Kurds during the Middle Ages

In the period beginning with the invasion of Arabs, who had put an end to the Sassanian rule in Iran, many dynasties followed in succession in Kurdistan. Most significant of these were the Sahddadids, who established their rule in northern Kurdistan in 952 A.D. They were followed by the Marbanids (990-1069 A.D.), who ruled over Diyarbekir. The most famous dynasty was that established by Salahaddin (Saladin) Ayyubi, who fought against the European crusaders. He himself was a Kurd from the tribe of Rawand.

Three large invasions greatly impaired the development of Kurdistan: the Seljug Turks in 1051, the Mongols in 1231, and Tamerlane in 1402, who in succession occupied and ravaged the countries of the area and were the cause of immense and for a long time irreparable economic and social difficulties.

By the beginning of the 16th century, there existed powerful and comparatively centralised states on both Iranian and Ottoman territories. These two strong neigh-

hours used the Kurds in their religious and power rivalries. Kurdistan, which lay between the two countries, became the battleground for both, and the Kurdish people subsequently suffered extremely. Their position could be compared to that of Germany before unification, consisting of independent and separate principalities and city-states, used as a battleground for the big religious wars of Europe. After 1514, these two countries divided Kurdistan between themselves, though retaining the independence of the Kurdish principalities for some time, as long as their power was not sufficient or it suited their purposes. Of the principalities, one should mention: the Kurdish dynasty of Zand, Karim Khan Zand in Iran (1752); the principalities of Ardalan, Rawanduz and Jazireh. As late as 1865, the Shah of Iran abolished the principality of Ardalan.

In the 17th century, the Turks of the Ottoman Empire started to interfere more strongly in the affairs of the Kurdish principalities. By the 1830's, they had already begun to form actual military centres in Kurdistan, which provoked a particular feeling of resistance among the Kurds, that gradually became stronger and found its reflection in their revolts aiming at gaining independence; these uprisings followed one another to the end of the 19th century.

One of those who most courageously fought the Turks was Mohammed Pasha, known as "Miri Rawanduz", who started to call up troops in his principality and to produce weapons, including cannons. More than 200 cannons were made, some of which are preserved up to this day in museums in Iraq. Mohammed Pasha assembled an army of over 30,000 men and declared the country independent in 1826 and achieved a number of victories in the course of a very short time. He occupied regions of Mosul, Mardin and Jazireh. He established contact with "Ibrahim Pasha", son of the viceroy of Egypt, fighting the Turkish Sultan in order to propose joint action against the Ottoman Empire. Having learned this, the Sultan launched a mighty army against Mir, yet the expedition did not succeed. Mir himself, however, induced by religious men, who considered the war against the Sultan as a great sin, unfortunately surrendered voluntarily to the Sultan and left for Constantinople. During the return journey, he was treacherously assassinated by Turkish mercenaries at Trabizon.

Bedir-Khan, the prince of Jazireh, was the next to give the Turks a very strong resistance. By 1834 he had created



a territorial unit including the entire region between Lake Van and Lake Urmia in the north, and Mosul and Rawanduz in the south. The Turks, however, succeeded in turning the Christian population against him, who then refused to pay taxes to Bedin-Khan, for which he had them severely punished. Thereupon Britain and France made an urgent appeal to the Sultan to protect the lives of the Christians. Later, in 1847, Bedir-Khan was defeated and taken prisoner.

One of the biggest revolts that took place was during the Turko-Russian War of 1853-1856 under the leadership of "Yezdansher". The uprising broke out in the Hakkari- and Botan-districts and spread rapidly, so that in the course of a very short time Yezdansher managed to liberate the whole area between Lake Van and north of Baghdad. One of the notable features of the revolt was the vast support it received from the broadest sections of the people. Even the Christian population rendered active help and participated in the uprising. By 1855, the forces of Yezdansher numbered 100.000 people, including Greeks and Arabs, proving that the struggle of the oppressed nations under the yoke of the Ottoman rule was a united one. The revolt continued for two years. Then Britain sent forces to support Turkey and through mediation Yezdansher was persuaded to reconcile with the Sultan. Yezdansher, relying on the promises given, agreed and travelled to Constantinople, thus bringing the revolt to an end. It was, however, a great landmark in Kurdish history and influenced the future developments of the Kurdish people's struggle. His name still lives vividly in Kurdish folklore.

The other important revolt of the Kurdish people towards independence in the 19th century was that of Obeidullah of Shamdinan, which broke out in 1880. Obeidullah made use of his authority to unite the Kurdish tribes. He was aware that only the unification of the Kurds and, at the same time, a friendly policy towards other national minorities could enable him to attain his goal. When in 1885 he was advised to massacre the Christian population, he answered: "The Turks need us only as a counterbalance to the Christians, and when there are no Christians, they will turn the reprisals on ourselves."

In a speech at Naw Chia later on, he said: "...I am simply of the opinion that now, at such a suitable moment, when the Kurdish chiefs have been attacked by the Iranian government, we cannot miss the opportunity to seize all the



territories from Turkey and Iran settled by Kurds, which came under my authority, and established an independent Kurdish principality". It is remarkable that this time the Turkish and Iranian governments, having learned about the Shaik's intentions, suppressed this last important Kurdish revolt of the 19th century together with their joint forces.

### C. Kurdistan before and during the First World War

The beginning of the 20th century in the Middle East was a period of fierce struggle among the Russians, the British and the French, and it turned even more fierce with the entry of another rival - the Germans. The struggle also included Kurdistan. According to the terms of the secret "Sykes-Picot" Treaty of 1916, Kurdistan was to be divided into three areas belonging to the French, British and Czarist Russia respectively.

The Russian Revolution of 1905 was followed by revolutions in Turkey and Iran as well. In Iranian Kurdistan "Anjumans" (Soviets) were formed in Mahabad, Sinna, Saqqiz and Kirmanshah. About the same time, an uprising occurred by the Kurds of Kirmanshah under the slogan of Kurdish autonomy. The Kurds in Turkey made use of the victory of the Young Turks (1908) and began to take steps for promoting the idea of an independent Kurdish state. The periodical "Kurdistan" appeared as early as 1892, first published in Cairo, later in Geneva. In 1908, "Hatawi Kurd" ("The Kurdish Sun") was launched as the Bulletin of the Kurdish Society for Rise and Progress ("Taali ve Taraqqi Cemiyeti"). The periodical "Roja Kurd" was the organ of the (Kurdish Hope) "Hiwa" association and appeared as the last in a series of journals and periodicals that flourished for the Kurdish cause at the time. But the First World War put an end to such activities.

The Young Turks movement showed some tolerance towards the subject peoples of the Ottoman Empire. They conceded them some cultural rights and freedom to organise themselves, which gave a chance for Kurdish activity to flourish as mentioned earlier. But this process was to end after a few years, when the Young Turks came to power in 1908 and showed their real motives and chauvinist policies. They aimed at a strong centralised government and initiated a major campaign of forced assimilation or "Turkification" of

the subject nations. It was the Young Turks who expelled and massacred two million Armenians and expelled 700.000 Kurds from their territories, who then perished due to this action. The Young Turks harboured big-nation chauvinist notions in aspiring towards the establishment of an enlarged Turkistan (Turan). They intended to send an expedition under the leadership of Enver Pasha to liberate the Turkish peoples in Central Asia. Enver Pasha ravaged and destroyed Kurdistan completely along his route, but his expedition came to a miserable end.

The great October Revolution in Russia put an end to the "Sykes-Picot" agreement and Russia withdrew from the war. Turkey surrendered in 1918, and the First World War came to an end. This led to the fall of the Ottoman Empire and all the subject nations were promised independence.

In May 1919, the "Kurdistan Taali re Taraqqi Cemeyeti", which was founded in 1908, declared that it aimed at immediate independence for Kurdistan, according to point 12 of President Wilson's peace programme. Party organisations were established in all the Kurdish towns and were planning an uprising the same year at the same time as the Greek offensive in the West. But the Allies advised them not to do so, with reference to the fulfillment of the Kurdish aspirations "in the Peace Agreements". The Kurds then formed a delegation under the leadership of Sherif Pasha to present their case to the "Paris Peace Conference" (1919). The Treaty of Sevres (10.8.20) consequently recognised in Art. 62, 63 and 64 the rights of the Kurds to have a state of their own, to be joined later by the Kurds of Iraq, if they should so wish. But this treaty was not fulfilled because of the refusal of Turkish nationalist forces, headed by Mustafa Kemal, to acknowledge the Peace-Treaty imposed on the Osman Empire.

As a result of the Agreements after the First World War and the non-fulfillment of the "Sèvres Treaty" of 1920, Kurdistan came to be divided among four states instead of two, namely, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.

#### D. The Kurds in Turkey after the First World War

Meanwhile, Mustafa Kemal, a young officer at that time, contacted the Kurdish leaders and promised them at a meeting in "Sivas" that they would get the same rights as the Turks if they fought against the imperialist forces. The

Kurds agreed and an organisation was formed, called "Society for the Defence of the Rights of Eastern Anatolia". The Kurds fought along with their Turkish brothers in the war against the Western powers, hoping that they would enjoy their national rights after victory, as promised by Mustafa Kemal. When the National Assembly of Turkey met in Ankara in 1920, it included 72 Kurdish deputies.

The war was won by Mustafa Kemal in the summer of 1921. The Sultanate was abolished, a "Republic of Turkey" was proclaimed and a new treaty was negotiated with the Allies in Lausanne in 1923. During the negotiations, the leader of the Turkish delegation, Ismet Inönü, said: "Turkey is a country with two peoples, Turks and Kurds; and both would enjoy the same right to decide in the country". But the result of the Lausanne Treaty was that the Kurds were denied all their rights and they did not receive any guarantees, except certain statements against discrimination, the protection of minorities and cultural rights to use their language in articles (38) and (39) of the Treaty.

It did not take the Kemalists very long after the Lausanne Treaty to show their true intentions. A law was passed forbidding use of the Kurdish language; the Kurdish members of Parliament were completely powerless. The firmer the position of the Kemalists became, the sharper were their attacks on the democratic rights of the population and the national rights of the Kurds. Furthermore, the Turkish government began the implementation of a chauvinistic assimilation policy against the Kurdish population.

The Kurds became very discontented and began to resist these injustices committed against them, which led to an armed revolution on 11 February 1925. The unpreparedness of the Kurds militarily, politically and ideologically, apart from inner conflicts and lack of organisation, condemned this revolution from the start. After a series of bloody battles, the rebellion spread all over Kurdistan and many cities, including Diyarbakir, fell into the hand of the rebels. The revolt was suppressed with the help of the French imperialists in Syria, who let the Turkish army pass through its territory, in order to encircle the Kurdish forces. The rebellion was crushed in April, 1926. The Turkish army had massacred about 250.000 Kurds in the process. Shaikh Said, Dr. Fuad and other leaders were condemned by a military court and executed. The President of the court, who had sentenced 53 leaders of the revolt to death, declared during the trial, on June 28, 1925: "Some



of you have made misusage of government authority, others the defence of the Caliphati, a pretext for the revolt, but all of you were at one in the matter of creating independent Kurdistan."

The barbarity of the method of dealing with the Kurdish people in Turkey after this revolution incited the late Prime Minister of India, J.L. Nehru, to write the following passage about this revolution:

"So the Turks, who had only recently been fighting for their own freedom, crushed the Kurds, who sought theirs. It is strange, how a defensive nationalism develops into an aggressive one, and fight for freedom becomes one for dominion over others. In 1929, there was another revolt of the Kurds and again it was crushed, for the time being at least. But how can one crush forever a people who insist on freedom and are prepared to pay the price for it?"

(J.L. Nehru, Glimpses of World History, Vol. II, Allaha-bad 1935, p. 1108.)

A well-known Turkish communist, S. Üstünel, has left the following eye-witness account of the methods used by the Kemalist clique: 1)

"The Kurdish people are really paying a high price for their liberty. We observe villagers returning from police and gendarme stations unshattered, though many of them are covered with wounds. As to violence towards people, the Kemalists have surpassed even that of the bloody sultans; they excel in cruelty practiced on the national minorities by turkifying them forcibly. They have expelled the Lazas from their districts and kill Kurds on a mass scale, just as they did in the cases of the Armenians. They have murdered already 100.000 Kurds, set fire and ravaged thousands of Kurdish villages. The villages that have been razed to the ground were declared "prohibited territory", yet these "prohibitions" cannot help the Ankara government, as it tries to conceal the traces of their bloody policy. Ibrahim Fallig was the first general inspector and governed in Kurdistan. His punitive expeditions ravaged the whole area. We were several Communists, imprisoned in one of the fortresses lying within the area of the general inspector. Gendarmes were

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1) Üstünel, The Road of Struggle, pp. 17, 46.



leading Kurds out of the prison, shot them and then returned. Afterwards they sold the silk belts of the shot Kurdish boys in prison."

In March, 1926, the Kemalist clique passed a special law "for the preservation of peace", by which it aimed at using this law as an instrument against political opposition or national demands by minority groups. In 1951, this law was changed and included as articles 141 and 142 of the constitution and was used to crush and eliminate the leftist and minority movements in Turkey.

The Turkish newspaper "Vakit" wrote about the suppression of the 1925 Kurdish revolution: "There is no Kurdish problem, where a Turkish bayonet appears." (Vakit, May 7, 1925.)

It should be added that the attitude shown by the Turkish bourgeoisie, when the course of cruel dictatorship towards all democratic elements is taken into consideration, could not have been different. If the nationalism of an oppressed bourgeoisie struggling against imperialism is of a general and "defensive" nature, it assumes a reactionary and chauvinistic character; when applied towards an oppressed nation, it becomes "aggressive".

The Turkish government used the Kurdish revolution as a suitable pretext for oppressing all democratic and especially all working-class movements throughout the country. Ismet's clique, employing the law of 1926 for the preservation of peace, broke up the Trade Union Organisation in Istanbul and made mass-scale arrests. In this way, the reactionary forces themselves linked the fate of the Kurds struggling for national rights and freedom with the struggle of the working class in Turkey against reaction, for liberation and democracy.

In 1927, all the Kurdish nationalistic organisations were united in the Khoiboun Party (Independence Party). The party consisted mainly of intellectuals, feudals and landlords. This party organised an uprising and declared a Kurdish government in the Ararat region, led by Ihsan Nuri (a general in the Turkish army) in 1929. The Iranian authorities gave the Turkish troops their permission to use Iranian territory in order to attack the rebels from the rear. After a long and strenuous fight, the revolt was finally crushed with the help of a great number of troops, artillery and aircraft.

The "Second International of the European Social-democratic Parties", in a resolution on 30 August,

1930, protested against the Turkish government's crime against human rights and the terms of the Lausanne Treaty, but without success. On August 31, 1930, one could read a statement by Turkish Prime Minister İnönü in the Turkish newspaper "Milliyet", stating: "Only the Turkish nation has the right to make claims to ethnic rights in this country. No other element has this right." The same man who declared at the Lausanne Conference that "Turkey is a country with two peoples: Kurds and Turks" now said this.

The same newspaper "Milliyet" published in September, 1930 a statement of the Turkish Minister of Justice, Mahmud Essad, which showed the fundamental attitude of the Turkish bourgeoisie towards the Kurdish people: The Turk is the only master in his country. Those who are not of pure Turkish origin have only one right in this land: the right to be servants, the right to be slaves". This fascist statement has been the guiding principle of the successive Turkish reactionary governments to this very day.

In 1930, 1935 and 1937, further armed uprisings took place in the Kurdish areas in Sason and Dersim (Tunceli), but were crushed mercilessly, followed by mass-deportations of the Kurdish people. Ever since, Turkish Kurdistan has been completely closed to the outside world. A reign of terror has been established there by military means, forced-assimilation policy, ideological brainwashing and an attempt to efface all traces of Kurdish identity by denying their language, culture and traditions. The ruling regime even went so far as to use pseudo-science in an attempt to prove the nonexistence of Kurdish people and Kurdish language. After the 1937 uprising in Dersim, led by Seyd Reza, more than 70.000 people were massacred, including women, children and old people; entire villages and districts were destroyed. In May, 1937, the Turkish Minister of the Interior declared that the Kurdish problem no longer existed: "In Turkey, there are no Kurds, only mountain-Turks". He continued: "These robbers must be civilised by violence".

In the 1940's, there were no Kurdish armed up-

risings. They were now one of the world's most oppressed minorities. Their country was closed to the outside world. They were left to illiteracy, disease and poverty. Their name "Kurd" or "Kurdistan" did not exist officially; there was only the "East". They were called "robbers" and "bandits". Anyone who dared to protest ended in prison for years without trial. The only achievements the Turkish fascists brought to the Kurdish people were armies, tanks and blood. The editor of the Turkish newspaper "Son Posta" wrote in 1948 about Dersim, ten years after the uprising of Seyd Reza there: "...and I have spoken with people living in this district. They have seen no government official except the tax-collector and the gendarmes... I tried to get to know the people, their inner lives and their spirit, but I found nothing to prove our past work. There is no industry, no agriculture, no trade... there is no doctor, the people do not know the meaning of the word medicine. There are no roads to connect the villages."

The same newspaper "Son Posta" wrote in April, 1946: 1) "In Turkey no Kurdish minority ever existed, either nomadic or settled, with national consciousness or without it".

In the 1950's, the same policy was adopted by the Turkish government: occasional arrests among the Kurds for forming a secret political party, or publishing a Kurdish alphabet or book, or simply for claiming that they were Kurds. In December, 1959, for example, 49 Kurds were imprisoned and sent for trial under the false charges of "separatism" and sentenced 1968 variously. (Daily Telegraph, 5.1.1961; Aksam (Turkish Journal), 4.1.1961.)

In 1960 a coup d'Etat took place in Turkey, which brought a relatively liberal constitution to Turkey. But the same old policies were applied to the Kurdish question. The reactionary government was replaced by Kemalist militarists, the other side of the same fascist coin. General Gürsel, who became president, made many nonsensical statements about the

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1) Son Posta, April 11, 1946.



Kurds after taking power. In 1960, paying a visit to the Kurdish provinces, he told a large Kurdish audience in Diyarbakir: "There is no such thing in the world that is called "Kurdish nation". Spit in the face of those who call you Kurds"! (Hürriyet, 25.1960.) At a later stage during the same visit in 1960, he said: "If these unadapting 'Mountain Turks' do not keep silent, the army would not hesitate to bomb and destroy their homes and villages and there will be an unimaginable blood bath". These are the words of the President of the Turkish Republic to his people. What could be more provocative than that! These are the statements of the "civilised" President of Turkey. Also, in the course of a conversation with a foreign diplomat at an official government reception in Ankara, President Gürsel was asked by a foreign diplomat about the position of his government concerning the Kurdish people in Turkey; he furiously replied: "This diplomat seems to be ignorant of world history. There isn't such a thing as the Kurdish people." (The Times, 27.7.1960.)

In 1960, 55 well-known Kurdish notables were exiled with their families to Western Turkey. (Cumhuriyet, 15/16.11.1960; The Times, 15.12.1960; Daily Telegraph, 23.11.1960.) In 1963, another 23 Kurdish patriots, including some Kurds from Iraq and Iran, were imprisoned on charges of working for the Kurdish separatism and were faced with death sentences, but released after a few years of imprisonment. (Milliyet, 18.9.1963.)

The early 1960's were characterised by attempts of Kurdish patriots to raise demands for the human democratic and national rights by publishing periodicals or books in Kurdish language or about the Kurdish problem, while the Turkish bourgeoisie was intensifying its oppression against the Kurdish people and implementing a ruthless assimilation policy. Suat Seren, a member of Parliament (a member of Demirel's party) said in Turkish Parliament: "We have two main enemies, Kurds and Russians, the Kurds are the bigger enemies". (In Parliament, 1959.)

In 1967, the Turkish government issued a decree (No. 6-7635) on 14 February, 1967, which was published in the official journal, forbidding "the distribution or import of materials with foreign origin

that deal with the Kurdish problem in the Kurdish language or publications or records in Kurdish inside Turkey". By this decree, the Turkish government was aiming at keeping every trace about the Kurdish people away from Turkey and keeping its people in ignorance by suppressing every cultural activity of the Kurds. At the same time it hired a number of so-called academics and professors to make all sorts of allegations and cheap statements about the origin of the Kurds and their language (that officially does not exist) being part of the Turkish race and their language belonging to the Altai-group of languages. That is Turkish bourgeois "science" presented to the world.

Since 1969, commando-units established with the main purpose of invading the Kurdish provinces and terrorising the peasant population have tortured and killed people in the hundreds by these actions.

In 1970, the President of the Turkish Republic, Cevdet Sunay, said: "There is no Kurdish people, no Kurdish culture, no Kurdish language".

The centres of the "revolutionary cultural organisation for the East of Turkey (DDKO)" were invaded by the police on 16.10.1970 in Istanbul and Ankara. Their members were arrested on alleged charges such as "establishing the foundations of a Kurdish state the undermining of national feelings, indoctrination of teams for anarchistic actions, etc."

After the fascist military takeover of March, 1971 the Kurds have been subjected to extreme suppressive measures: the commando units are given a free hand, the state of emergency reigns over Kurdistan; thousands of Kurds are imprisoned. Even Turks having written about the Kurdish question are imprisoned with the Kurds in Diyarbakir prison. The Turkish Labour Party was forbidden, mainly because it adopted a resolution on its 4th Congress in 1970 recognising the existence of the Kurdish people. Only 300 of the more than 4.000 Kurdish political prisoners have been sent to a public trial and about 20 of them are facing death sentences. There is now a conspiracy of silence concerning the Kurdish question in Turkey. It is closed to the outside world; there are no reports from Kurdistan and the censure is especially tight on this question.

The following statements are typical for the ruling bodies of the Junta of March, 1971:

1) The Minister of Justice, Ismail Arar, said in a press-conference, justifying the military takeover and the establishment of a fascist regime, the following:

"Turkey is being threatened with a rebellion among its 4 millions of Kurds, who are armed with weapons from Czechoslovakia" 1), and that "the Turkish intelligence service has discovered a Kurdish Underground Independent Party (PDK) that is organised and armed with the support of Mustafa Barzani, who leads the Iraqi Kurds. The party already has a flag and stamps, ready for an independent state". (A.P. Ankara, 28.4.1971.)

2)"There is no nation that is called "Kurd", the Kurds are a Turanian (Turkish) people and belong to the Turkish race. The Kurdish language is a Turkish dialect and belongs to the Altay-group of languages". (The public prosecutor at the trial of 25 Kurds in Diyarbekir on 10.12.1971.) 1)

#### E. The Kurds in IRAN after the First World War

After World War I, few uprisings occurred in Iranian Kurdistan. The most notable of them was led by "Simko" in the Urmia region from 1921 to 1930. Simko liberated a large part of Iranian Kurdistan, and after having established contact with Sheikh Mahmud, he visited him in Iraki Kurdistan in Sulaimania in 1923. Simko, however, showed very short-sightedness in committing the extraordinarily shameful crime of murdering Mar Shamun, the leader of the Assyrians. His position was thereby greatly weakened.

Reza Shah, becoming ruler and dictator of Iran in 1925, adopted and practised a strict centralising and assimilating policy towards all nationalities, including the Kurds. Therefore he was interested in the removal of Simko. After having won several fights against Iranian, Turkish and Iraqi troops, Simko was invited to the town Shno under the pretext

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1) Cumhuriyet, 11.12.1971.



of negotiations with the Iranian forces, but was insidiously murdered by them on June, 1930.

The next significant rebellion against the oppression by the central government broke out in the South in the autumn of 1931 under the leadership of Jafar Sultan from Hamadan. Like other cases, this uprising too was cruelly crushed, which induced some members of the Iranian Parliament to state that "for Iran there existed no Kurdish problem". The Kurds were alleged to regard themselves as Iranians and think of nothing else but Iran.

As in Turkey, the Iranian Kurds, too, were deprived of all national rights: the Kurdish language was banned and the Kurds were not even permitted to wear their national costume. Many of them were imprisoned for disobeying; some of them were even exiled. This state of affairs lasted until World War Two.

During the Second World War, the allied forces occupied Iran and divided it into two spheres of influence because the Shah and his government supported Nazi Germany. Kurdistan was not directly occupied by the Western allies after the expulsion of the Iranian forces from Kurdistan in 1941. The Kurds took advantage of this situation and organised themselves into "Komalay Iyanewağ Kurdistan" (The Society of Kurdish Revival) in September, 1942.

In November, 1945, the "Komalay Iyanewağ Kurdistan" changed into the "Kurdistan Democratic Party" (DPK), which soon attained great popularity and gained the support of large sections of the peasantry, the working people of the towns and the intelligentsia.

The programme of DPK included as its main points: Freedom and self-government for the Kurdish people within the framework of the Iranian state; the Kurdish language to be used in education and to become the official language in administration; election of the provincial council of Kurdistan, which was to become the leading body in the district; the establishment of a front with the people of Azerbaijan in joint struggle with the other national minorities; improvement of the economic situation through the exploitation of Kurdistan's natural resources; the advance of agriculture and commerce,

hygiene and education; efforts to enable the Kurdish people to strive freely for the happiness and progress of their country.

One of the greatest shortcomings of the DPK programme of that time was that it did not include the "land reform" and the distribution of land among the peasants.

On January 23, 1946, the "Kurdish Republic of Mahabad" was formed with DPK as the main force behind it. Though this Republic lasted less than a year, it brought progress for the Kurdish people. Kurdish became the official language - for the first time, Kurdish children were taught their mother tongue legally. The number of Kurdish newspapers, journals and books increased to an unprecedented degree. The first Kurdish theatre was established. For the first time, Kurdish women took part in the political and cultural life of their country. The peasants took over land from the landlords, though there was no official land-reform. National military forces and militias were established. But the most important achievement was "national liberty".

After less than one year the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was most brutally suppressed by the Iranian reactionaries, supported by American and British imperialists. More than 15,000 people were massacred in Kurdistan and Azerbaijan. The leaders of the Republic, Qazi Muhammad and members of his government, were executed on March 31, 1947. The Iranian army and gendarmerie started to ravage Iranian Kurdistan.

The same pattern of relations existed today in Iranian Kurdistan between the people and the oppressive reactionary regime of Iran. There are arrests, assimilation attempts and the non-recognition of the existence of Kurds. DPK is still very active in Iranian Kurdistan and is a part of the opposition united in overthrowing the reactionary regime of the Shah. Some of their members are continuously in prison and the party is growing in strength in the countryside. In 1969 they organised an armed revolution, but it was ruthlessly suppressed and their hanged leaders were shown on village-squares for weeks to intimidate the population. The new programme of the

"Democratic Party of Kurdistan" (Iran), approved by the 3rd Party Conference in June, 1971, avoided the shortcomings of former programmes, by declaring the land-reform part of their programme (Art. 23/24) and demanding autonomy for Iranian Kurdistan within the framework of a democratic Iran (Art. 4).

#### F. The Kurds in IRAQ

After the First World War the Kurdish national liberation struggle developed a considerable speed. The Kurds of Sulaimania-area declared their Kurdish independence under the leadership of Shaikh Mahmud Barzinji in 1919. The British and the Arab armies of Iraq fought fiercely against Shaikh Mahmud's forces. On June 16, 1919, he was wounded at the battle of Darbandi Bazyan and taken prisoner. On July 25, 1919, he was sentenced to death by a British court. The sentence was changed to life-imprisonment, however, and Shaikh Mahmud was exiled to India.

In April 1920, Iraq had become a British mandate and in August, 1921, a kingdom, headed by Prince Faisal. The Kurdish and the Arab people of Iraq resisted strongly against this development, but their opposition was crushed vigorously by the British colonialists. The Kurdish population rejected King Faisal in the referendum held for that purpose, and boycotted it, making thus clear their opposition to any attachment to the Arabic part of Iraq under King Faisal. To keep the population calm, the British colonialists were forced to let Shaikh Mahmud return to Sulaimania from exile in September, 1922. He immediately started to liberate the rest of Southern Kurdistan, including Kirkuk, where oil-deposits had been discovered. The British colonialists led their forces against him. The war continued for a number of years. After having learned the terms of the "Treaty of Lausanne", which did not even mention the rights of the Kurdish people, the Kurds intensified their struggle against the "colonist powers". On January 20, 1923, the government of



Shaikh Mahmud appealed to the Soviet government under the leadership of Lenin for support and the establishment of mutual contacts. In 1924, Shaikh Mahmud's forces were finally defeated and he concluded a treaty with the Iraqi government. One of the terms of this treaty was that the Kurdish language was to be taught in schools in the Sulaimania-area.

In 1925, the League of Nations had sent a commission to Southern Kurdistan to decide the future of the Vilayat of Mosul in the border dispute between Turkey and Iraq. The commission reported to the council of the League, that seven-tenths of the population of Mosul are Kurds and that: "The Kurds are neither Arabs, Turks or Persians... They are different and clearly distinguishable from the Turks and still more different and remote from Arabs." The commission further recommended that instead of including the Mosul Vilayat in Turkey or Iraq, "an independent Kurdish state should be created." By this, the League of Nations recognised the existence of the Kurdish people as different from the Turks, Arabs and Persians, and it further recognised their right to an independent state.

In June 1930, the British Mandate over Iraq expired and Iraq formally became an independent state. As a pre-condition for its membership in the League of Nations, Iraq agreed to grant the national rights of the Kurds within the framework of the state. Elections were to take place in the summer of 1930 to elect a national assembly for Iraq. The Kurds refused to take part in the elections and demanded a local administration and general assembly of their own. A general strike was declared in the town of Sulaimania in September, 1930. The strike began on September 6, 1930. The police and the army opened fire on the demonstrators, injuring 200 people and killing 45. Mahmud, until then having merely observed the events, took up arms again. The armed struggle lasted over a year. The Iraqi regime was quick to declare its readiness for granting the Kurds their national rights as in all previous situations, but was as quickly ready to neglect them afterwards.

In 1932, another rebellion occurred in Barzan, the northern part of Iraqi Kurdistan, under the leader-

ship of Shaikh Ahmad. In this uprising, Mustafa Barzani, a younger brother of Shaikh Ahman played an important rôle for the first time. The rebellion was suppressed, chiefly by the British airforce (R.A.F.), which bombed the villages of Barzan, destroying 1.365 houses.

Another revolt broke out in Barzan in 1943, this time headed by Mustafa Barzani, who had just escaped from exile in Sulaimania. The revolt spread with great speed. The Iraqi government entered into long negotiations with Barzani, sometimes making promises, sometimes threatening, but with no positive outcome whatsoever, so that by spring 1945, the insurgents resumed armed struggle, which was also joined by Kurdish officers of the Iraqi army. The Kurdish nationalist political party "Hiwa" (Hope) closely co-operated with the revolt.

The struggle continued until 1945, when the fighters of Barzan crossed into Iranian Kurdistan, where in those days preparations for the establishment of a democratic republic were made in Mahabad. The Barzani forces joined the Army of the Mahabad Republic and served it courageously. After the fall of Mahabad, the forces re-entered Iraq and fought against the Persian, Iraqi and Turkish armies, to make their retreat into the USSR, where they were granted asylum.

In 1946, the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq (K.D.P.) was established in secrecy from the following groups: the "Hiwa" party, the Rizgai party, the Shoresh-group (the Kurdish branch of the Iraqi Communist party - which actually called itself the Communist Party of Kurdistan) and members or representatives of K.D.P. of Iranian Kurdistan in Iraqi Kurdistan.

This party was a typical marxist party and its programme was a very detailed and progressive one. They elected Mustafa Barzani their president in absentia, a position which he fulfills until now. This party became very popular and active in Kurdistan and belonged to the underground united front opposition to the reactionary regime of Iraq, which was overthrown in July 1958.

The Revolution of 1958 recognised the bi-national

character of the republic of Iraq and this was included in Article 3 of the constitution which implied the recognition of the Kurdish people's right of autonomy within Iraq. The party was very active at this period and increased its membership and support considerably. It published many newspapers and periodicals in Kurdish and the cultural activities of the Kurds were flourishing.

The D.P.K. and the masses of the Kurdish people started to demand the application of Art. 3 of the constitution. But the military dictatorship of Kassim, a very unbalanced person, which has destroyed all opposition, refused to fulfill it and initiated an armed attack by the Iraqi army against the Kurdish masses. This forced the Kurdish people to defend themselves and take up arms under the leadership of D.P.K. and its president Mustafa Barzani. This revolution is now in its 11th year and has won continuous victories, which has in turn lead to the toppling of many military dictatorships in Iraq. The Iraqi government was forced to reach an agreement with the Kurdish revolution in March, 1970, by which it recognised for the first time the Kurdish autonomy. Recently, however, reports are reaching Europe that the Iraqi government is backing out and violating the terms of this agreement, which may lead to the resumption of war.

#### G. The Kurds in SYRIA

The Kurds in Syria together with the Arab people were placed under the mandate of imperialist France until 1946, when Syria gained independence. During this period the Kurds were at times given relatively free cultural activities and freedoms, but no national rights. After independence, Syria was ruled by successive bourgeois reactionary nationalist elements, which denied the Kurds every right. After 1949, Syria was shaken by the epidemic of military coups d'état that have taken place to the present time. These military dictators or cliques were adventurists of the first class and were motivated mainly by egoistical reasons to gain power. The Syrian people, Kurds and Arabs, suffered extremely



from the hands of these irresponsible military juntas. The Kurds were denied their separate existence and were not granted any rights, not even civil rights at times. A period of relatively democratic freedoms existed between 1954 and 1966, that gave the Kurds a chance to form the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Syria (D.P.K.) in 1956 and to carry out its work in the underground ever since. This party gains the support of the majority of the Kurdish population and is very strong in the Kurdish areas. After 1962 a certain plan was adopted by the Syrian government for the forced assimilation of the Kurdish people with clear racist and discriminatory intentions. This plan was called "The Arab Belt", by which 300.000 Kurds out of 600.000 were declared "immigrants" and lost Syrian citizenship. In implementing this plan, the Syrian government had to evacuate the Kurds from a stretch of 15 km along the Syrian-Turkish and Syrian-Iraqi borders and settle Arabs there instead of them.

The Kurds are suppressed socially and politically, so that one could continuously find Kurds in prison. They are discriminated in all fields of life and denied the most basic human rights. A hate-campaign has been the main policy of the Syrian government against the Kurds.

#### H. The Kurds in the SOVIET UNION

The only country that has given the Kurds their cultural and civil rights, although being a very small minority of 300.000 in different Republics, is the Soviet Union. The Kurds are treated equally and they publish their own newspapers and magazines and having their own radio-stations. Kurdish culture has advanced at a very quick speed, and many scientific works about "Kurdology" have been published, getting all the support and encouragement of the Soviet people.

## I. The Kurds in LEBANON

There are about 70,000 Kurds in Lebanon. They are mainly immigrants from Syria and Turkey. Though many of them do not have Lebanese citizenship after many years' residence, the Lebanese government showed a very reasonable and humanitarian attitude to this question by allowing the Kurds to organise their own social, cultural and political clubs and to publish newspapers. The Lebanese government gave licence for the formation of a Kurdish Democratic Party there, which is the only legal Kurdish party in the Middle East.

### Conclusion: Implications for the Future

From the above short historical account, it may be observed, many uprisings took place. They were numerous, extensive and nationwide in character. If one is to search for the reasons that have sparked these Kurdish uprisings, it can be attributed to the ruthless national oppression that they have been subjected to. The national consciousness of the Kurds gradually increased, and simultaneously the national discrimination exercised by the ruling classes of the respective countries increased. The struggle against national oppression created a link between all sections of Kurdish society: the peasants, members of the petty bourgeoisie, the intelligentsia, and the feudals. Heavy exploitation of people, mainly the peasantry, by the governmental authorities, high taxation, economic pressure exercised by the army and the gendarmerie on the rural population, all this added to national oppression, incited large masses of the peasantry to rebel, at most times under the leadership of clan chiefs, religious leaders and feudals. Those elements cost the Kurdish movement dearly before World War II for the following reasons:

1. The feudal leaders and chiefs were the only mediators between the governments or ruling circles of the respective countries and the Kurdish population, which did not get in contact with the central authorities except for the tax-collector or the army,

In this situation, there was only little chance for developing an own self-consciousness towards the central government, that would have led to a larger foundation for the respective national liberation movements.

2. The hegemony of the feudals in the Kurdish national movements led to the further fatal consequence that, to crush the revolt itself, it often was sufficient for the government to do away with the leaders of the revolt.

3. Furthermore, the hegemony of the feudals prevented the spreading of social and economic progress because of their own backwardness and lack of education.

The main force in all these revolts was the peasantry driven into the struggle by unbearable exploitation, poverty and national oppression. Although based on the existing tribal relations, the revolts were led by the feudals, - very often the Sheikhs, enjoying enormous moral authority - they were not of tribal character, but because of the joint struggle of the suppressed peasant- and working-people, real national liberation movements.

After World War II, the whole structure of Kurdish society had undergone a very important social and economic transition, which led to the emergence of radical, petty-bourgeois, national parties, as well as marxist parties of workers, peasants and intelligentsia, to lead the Kurdish movement. The national oppression against the Kurdish people had not decreased, but the class struggle was taking a clearer shape, and the contradictions among the different classes were more apparent due to the recent developments.

A line emerged which led to the common struggle of the Kurdish progressive forces and the democratic forces of the other nations to liberate their nations from the grip of reaction and imperialism, and establish democratic popular systems under which the rights of the Kurdish people are recognised.

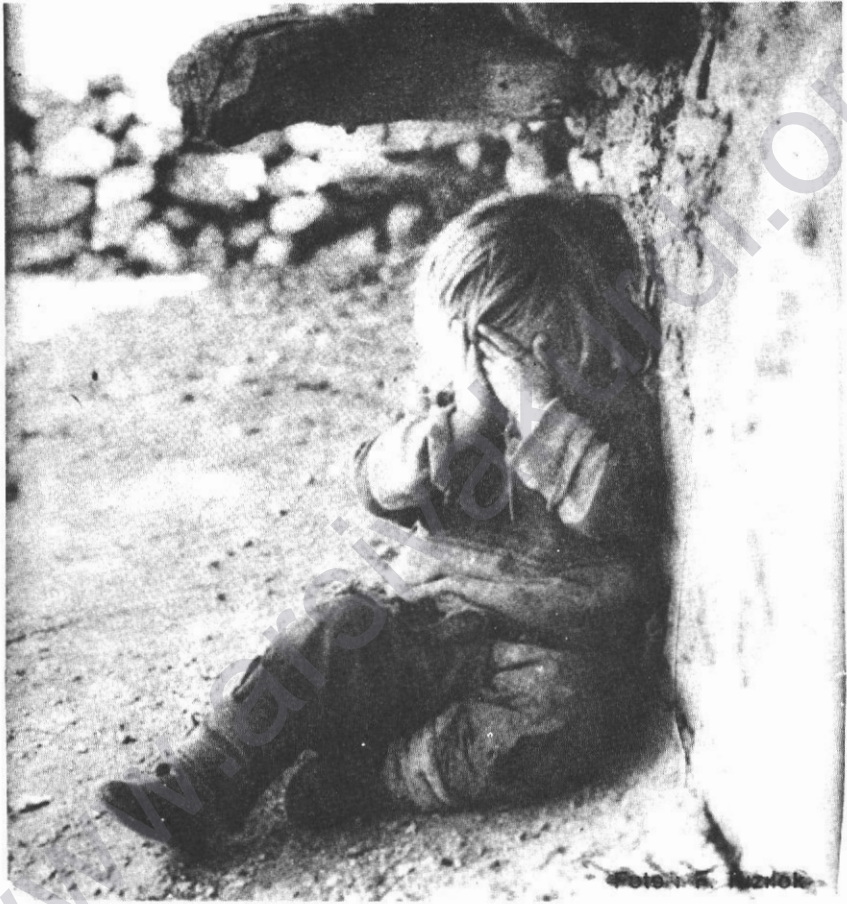
The Kurdish movement has made many advances in all fields since the Second World War and their rights are recognised and acknowledged by all the democratic forces of the area and the world. But they must



develop their own movement further by socialising and revolutionarising their struggle to make Kurdistan a revolutionary base for the social liberation of the Middle and Near Eastern countries.

There is no doubt that the revolutionary potential of the Kurdish question is very high, so that, with a revolutionary base established in Kurdistan and the common struggle of the revolutionary movements of the people of the area, the victory of the social revolution in that part of the world would be advanced and guaranteed.

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Kurdistan and its people

Art. 7

Our organisation is against all kinds of imperialism and support all the peoples in the world, claiming for social justice or leading their national liberation struggles.

Art. 9

Our organisation is convinced that the true owners of the land in Kurdistan are the Kurdish peasants.

Our organisation, depending on its own means and efforts for trying to inform the world public about the situation of our people, is very grateful for every kind of help and support, whether material or ideal.

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The territories inside the hatched lines are inhabited by Kurds.

Turkey	8.000.000
Iran	5.000.000
Iraq	2.500.000
Syria	600.000
	<hr/>
	16.100.000

The total of Kurdistan is 500.000 km<sup>2</sup>

This map was presented to the United Nations in a "Memorandum about the situation of the Kurds and their demands" in Paris 1948. It was produced based on a map of Kurdistan, made in April 1946.