MIDDLE EAST REPORT

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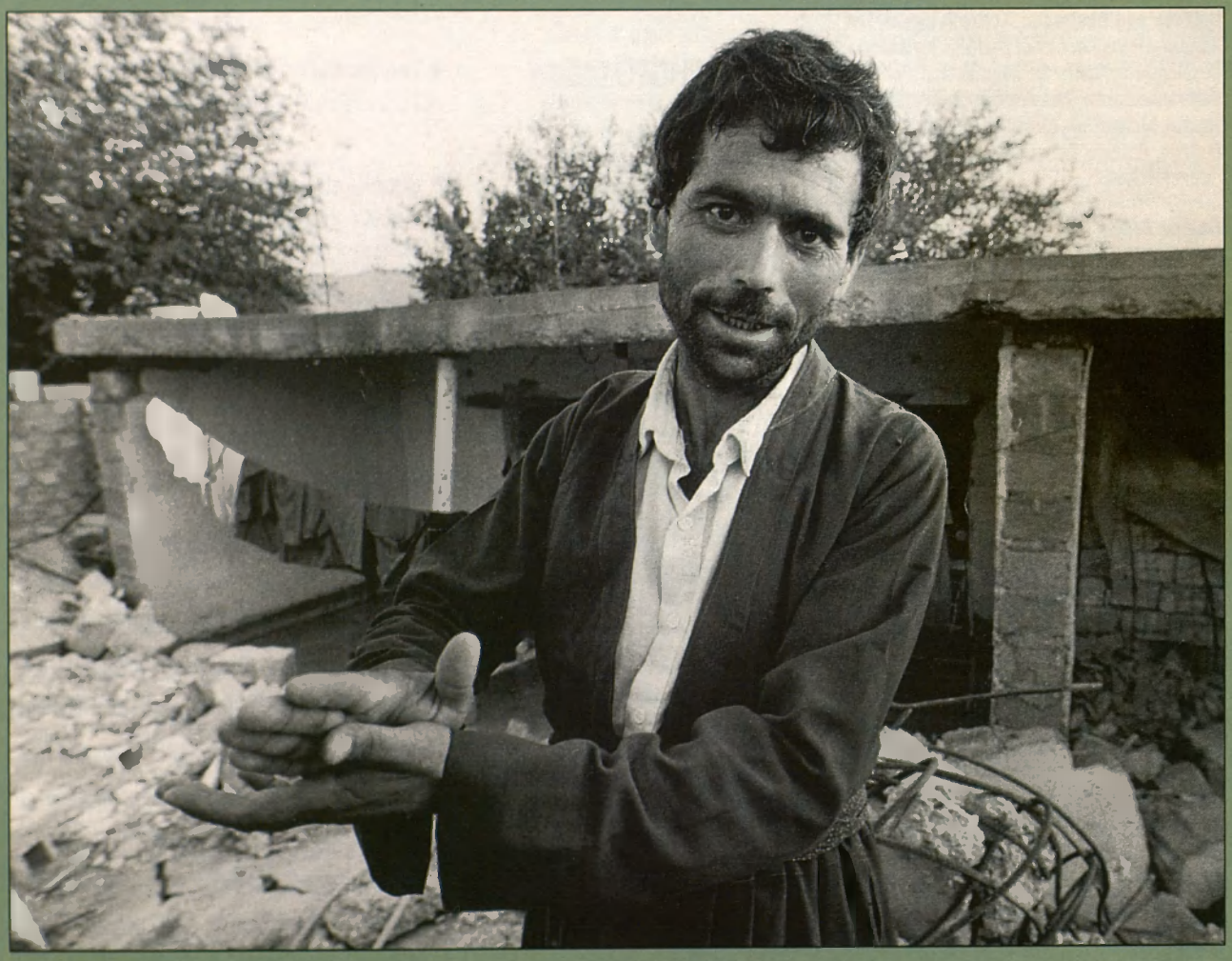
The Kurdish Experience

Amir Hassanpour ■ Chris Kutschera ■ Aliza Marcus ■ Susan Meiselas & Andrew Whitley



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Algeria Between Eradicators and Conciliators

Palestinian Islamists and the New Authority

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For many decades now, those states whose borders include and divide Kurdistan have alternately tried to ignore, deny, manipulate and suppress widespread Kurdish demands for political rights. In this, the rulers have enjoyed the unstinting support of their great power patrons, the broad support of the majority communities, and often enough support as well among different Kurdish communities and social strata. These policies comprise a disastrous record that has exacted a horrible price in blood, treasure, and democratic rights—of Arabs, Iranians and Turks as well as of Kurds themselves. These policies have failed miserably in their repressive goals, and yet they continue as the order of the day.

We have tried to highlight here several aspects of the Kurdish experience. One is the tremendous changes over the last two decades, as new economic and social forces, as well as armies, have penetrated and altered Kurdish societies. Another is the persistence of traditional political leaderships and rivalries. As Amir Hassanpour points out, the serious clashes in May 1994 between the two dominant parties of the Kurdish Regional Government, the KDP and the PUK, have similarities with the territorially-based opposition in South Africa of Inkatha to the African National Congress. What is crucially missing, though, is a regional equivalent to the ANC. While the main responsibility for this lies with the Kurdish leadership, other factors play a role—the recentness and unevenness of social transformations, the meddling of neighboring rivals Iran and Turkey, and, not least, the punishing economic embargo and political isolation imposed by the United States and other powers as well as by Baghdad.

The US remains, for the moment, a most reluctant "protector" of this experiment in Kurdish self-rule, forced hy Turkey's need to stem the refugee crisis that would come with Iraq's reconquest. Here is where we see how little has changed: Western complicity and silence in the face of Baghdad's war of extermination in 1987-88 is reprised, as we write, in the studious inattention to the latest Turkish "final offensive" to crush Kurdisb political militancy within its borders. The dimensions of this current campaign are staggering: some 400,000 Turkish troops are deployed against 30,000 guerillas; nearly a thousand villages have been depopulated since 1993; tens of thousands of Kurds in Turkey now seek refuge in Iraq, and hundreds of thousands of others have been displaced within the country. The economic and political crisis which this war has exacerbated may well trigger a military coup. It is a war that Ankara cannot win, though everyone can lose.

What happens in Turkey—where two-thirds of the Kurds live—and in the self-rule area of Iraq over the coming months and years is likely to determine the political contours of this region for a long time to come. It is a matter to which we will return. ■

Voting for the Kurdish National Congress, Zakhu, 1992. Ann Zimmerman

The Kurdish Experience

Amir Hassanpour

It is difficult to reach a firm assessment concerning the prospects for the Kurdish movement. The present circumstances—the ability of the PKK-led movement in Turkey to survive extraordinary state repression, and the existence in Iraq of a Western-protected Regional Government—are unprecedented. Yet the obstacles confronting a political resolution of the "Kurdish problem" are no less daunting than before.

Numbering over 22 million, the Kurds are one of the largest non-state nations in the world. Their homeland, Kurdistan, has been forcibly divided and lies mostly within the present-day borders of Turkey, Iraq and Iran, with smaller parts in Syria, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The greatest number of Kurds today still live in Kurdistan, though a large Kurdish diaspora has developed in this century, especially in the main cities of Turkey and Iran and more recently in Europe as well. Between 10 and 12 million Kurds live in Turkey, where they comprise about 20 percent of the population. Between 5 and 6 million live in Iran, accounting for close to 10 percent of the population. Kurds in Iraq number more than 4 million, and comprise about 23 percent of the population.

In the modern era, the Kurdish nation, with its distinctive society and culture, has had to confront in all of the "host" states centralizing, ethnically-based nationalist regimes—Turkish, Arab and Persian—with little or no tolerance for expressions of national autonomy within their borders. While the modes and scale of oppression have varied in time and by place, the conditions of Kurds share some important features. First, the Kurdish areas overlap nation-state borders: they thus acquire significance for "national security" and are vulnerable to interference and manipulation by regional and international powers. Second, the Kurdish regions of these countries are usually the poorest, least developed areas, systematically marginalized by the centers of economic power. Third, the dynamics of assimilation, repression and Kurdish resistance in each country have affected the direction and outcome of the Kurdish struggles in the neighboring countries. A fourth shared feature, and the focus of this essay, is that these Kurdish societies are themselves internally complex, and fraught with differences of politics and ideology, social class, dialect and, still in a few places, clan.

In spite of a long history of struggle, Kurdish nationalism has not succeeded in achieving its goal of independence or even enduring autonomy. Do recent events require us to change this assessment? In 1992, a Regional Government of Iraqi Kurdistan was established, but it is economically besieged and functions very much at the sufferance of a Western military umbrella. In Turkey, a ten-year-old armed struggle has effectively defied the unrestrained efforts of the Turkish state to impose a military solution, but a political solution acceptable to the Kurds does not appear imminent.

The Kurdish movement, in contrast to many other national liberation movements, has experienced a persistent contradiction between its traditional leadership and the relatively developed society it seeks to liberate. Only to the extent that this may be changing does the future hold some promise for Kurdish aspirations. Today, about half the population lives in urban centers, and feudal relations of production in rural areas have almost disappeared. Yet the politics and ideology of much of the leadership can hardly be distinguished from the worldview of landed notables of the past.

Amir Hassanpour *teaches communication studies and is author of* Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985. *He is from Mahabad and presently lives in Montreal.*

National Awakening

One reason for this may be that Kurdish nationalism emerged as an ideology long before the formation of the Kurds as a nation, not in a middle class milieu but in a largely agrarian society with a powerful tribal component. From the 16th century to the mid-19th century, much of Kurdistan was under the rule of independent and autonomous Kurdish principalities that produced a flourishing rural and urban life in the 17th century.[1]

Kurdish destinies changed radically around this time, when the Ottoman and Persian empires divided Kurdistan into spheres of influence, agreeing on a border in 1639. In order to protect their sovereignty, the principalities supported one or the other power, and for most of the next three centuries a prevailing war economy destroyed the agrarian system, devastated villages and towns, precipitated massacres and led to forcible migrations of Kurds and the settlement of Turkish tribes in parts of Kurdistan. All of this inhibited further growth of urban areas and settled agrarian production relations, reinforcing tribal ways of life.

Although the war economy retarded the consolidation of the Kurds as a nation, the destruction and suffering stimulated a political consciousness that was unprecedented in the region. This emerged first in the realms of language and literature when, in the 16th century, Kurdish *ulama* broke the monopoly of Arabic and Persian languages over literary production. In 1597, Sharaf Khan, prince of the powerful Bidlis principality, compiled the first history of Kurdistan, *Sharafnameh*. Although written in Persian, this text presents historical data on the degree of independence enjoyed by different Kurdish states. Thus, the first chapter is about the dynasties that enjoyed the privilege of royalty; the second deals with rulers who did not claim royalty but sometimes struck coin and had *khutba* (Friday prayer sermons) recited in their names, and so forth.[2]

The most important literary manifestation of political awareness was Ahmad-e Khani (1651-1706), who in 1694-95 rewrote the Kurdish popular ballad *Mem û Zîn* in the form of a poetic narrative romance. "Why have the Kurds been deprived, why have they all been subjugated?" he asked. He rejected the view that it was because they were "ignorant" or "without perfection." They were subordinated, rather, because they were "orphans," i.e., without a king who would unite the discordant principalities and form an independent kingdom. Although they excelled in qualities of munificence and bravery, the princes refused to unite under the suzerainty of a Kurdish king. Khani is explicitly modern in his conceptualization of the Kurds as a nation. He referred to Kurds, Arabs, Persians and Turks as *milal* (plural of *milla*) not in the then-prevailing meaning of "religious community" but rather in an ethnic sense.[3]

The second apostle of Kurdish nationalism, Haji Qadiri Koyi (1817?-1897), was also a mullah and poet, but even more secular. By the time he was composing his fiery poems in the late 19th century, the remaining principalities had been overthrown by the Ottoman and Persian states. Koyi attacked the shaikhs and mullahs who did not care for the Kurdish language and the notables who ignored the destinies of their people. Living his last years in cosmopolitan Istanbul, he was familiar with the nationalist struggles and the material advancement of modern nations. He constantly advocated use of the Kurdish language. Although his own medium was poetry, he urged the Kurds to publish magazines and newspapers.

Khani and Koyi's propositions amount to a political manifesto: the Kurds are a distinct people with a distinct language, homeland and way of life. The road to emancipation is the formation of an independent and unified Kurdish state. Ideologically, however, Khani spoke for the ruling princes and sought liberation in unification under a powerful king. By contrast, Koyi's ideas reflected budding modern social forces within Kurdish society.[4] He advocated both national liberation and transformation of Kurdish society.

Although these modernist ideas were constantly repeated in poetry and journalism, social forces capable of translating them into political parties and platforms did not enter the scene until the 1940s.[5] How can we account for this lag? For one thing, the fall of the principalities had not been due to the rise of new social forces, and did not by any means put an end to feudal relations and tribalism. Rather, the system of Kurdish principalities was overthrown and replaced by two centralizing although loosely integrated imperial regimes in Istanbul and Tehran. The vacant leadership of the princes was filled by the shaikhs, notables and remnants of princely families who retained property and influence.

These are the elements that continued to shape the nationalist struggle until the mid-20th century. In spite of the diversity of revolts in the first part of the century, their struggle was for a purely nationalist agenda aiming to replace foreign rule by a native rule that would keep traditional structures intact. Democratic rule, the demands of the peasantry for land and water, the hopes of urban masses for a decent life, and the freedom of women were ignored. Militarily, the village and the mountains were the main sites of armed resistance, and the leadership tended to rely on outside powers rather than on a strategy of social transformation of their own societies. When opportunistic outside support withdrew, they gave up the struggle.

Middle Class Nationalism

The first organizational break with feudal and tribal politics occurred in 1942, with the formation of the Society for the Revival of Kurdistan (known as Komalay J.K. or as Komala, the Kurdish word for society or league) in Mahabad, Iran.[6] Its leadership and membership were largely drawn from the urban bourgeoisie, large and small, educated youth, and nationalist-minded members of the clergy and landed aristocracy.

Komala became the Kurdistan Democratic Party in 1945 in order to establish an autonomous republic in part of the area then in the Soviet sphere of influence. The Kurdish Republic of 1946 was the nationalist movement's most important achievement in modern state-building: although it did not claim independence, it had a president, a flag, a cabinet, a national army, and Kurdish was the official language. It was ruled by a party whose leaders were drawn mostly from the ranks of the urban petty bourgeoisie, and which showed respect for the rights of minorities and certain rights of women.[7] Although formed within the borders of the Iranian state, hundreds of Iraqi Kurds took an active part in the military and civil administration, including Mustafa Barzani, who became a prominent military leader. The national anthem was a poem composed by a Kurd from Iraq.

The US and Britain viewed the Kurdish and Azerbaijan republics as extensions of Soviet influence, and supported the shah's military campaign against them. Soviet troops withdrew from Iran in May 1946, and seven months later Iranian forces forcibly suppressed both autonomous republics. Kurds throughout the world still celebrate *dûy rêbendan* (January 22), the foundation date of the republic; its anthem has been adopted as the national anthem; portraits of Qazi Mohammad, the head of the republic, today decorate public and private spaces in areas controlled by the Regional Government of Kurdistan in Iraq.

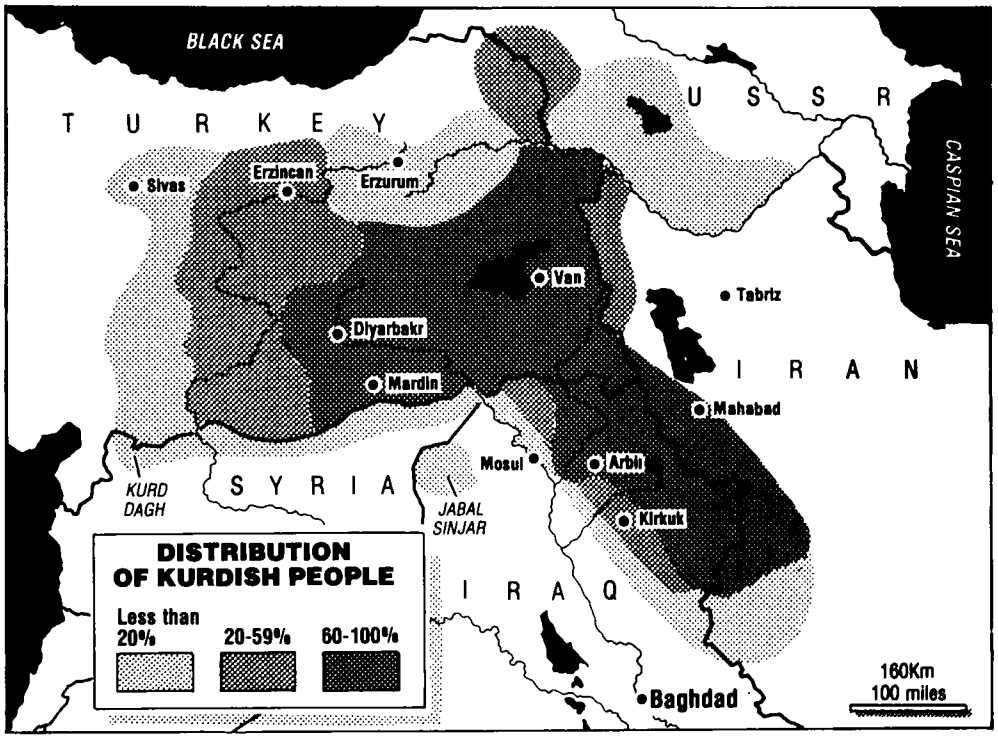
Following the fall of the Kurdish republic, Kurdish Democratic Parties formed in Iraq and later in Syria and Turkey. The majority of leaders and activists were from the modern intelligentsia, but included anyone who was committed to nationalist aspirations. Each party aimed at achieving autonomy for its respective part of Kurdistan and democracy for the country of which they were part. This was due both to political expediency and to the influence of communist parties in the opposition movements of Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Kurdish Society

The 1950s were years of major political upheaval in the Middle East. In Kurdistan, feudal relations of production suffered major setbacks, largely due to peasant uprisings and later to land reforms initiated by the central governments.[8] A visible change in Kurdish society in this period was the rise of the urban population due to the land reforms and the wars in the countryside. Newly-freed peasants moved into Kurdish cities, where the lack of industrial enterprises seriously hindered their transformation into wage laborers. While some rural migrants engaged in seasonal or temporary construction work (contractual or wage labor), others ended up in street vending activities. Some migrants maintained their village ties by working in towns while continuing to farm for family consumption.[9]

The differentiation and specialization in urban

economies introduced new social strata. A small Kurdish working class formed in the oil industry, construction, and a few factories. Small workshops required auto mechanics, electricians, printers, mechanics, plumbers and painters, while services and transport employed many others. A modern bourgeoisie emerged, comprising mainly professionals rather than entrepreneurs—doctors, nurses, engineers, teachers, bank managers, lawyers and journalists. Migrant labor—male and female—travelled as far as Ankara, Baghdad, Istanbul, Tehran, Isfahan and Europe. The traditional intelligentsia, mainly *ulama* and educated landed notables, was displaced by a growing modern intelligentsia. Another feature of changing social relations was the increasing access of urban women to education, and their participation in social, economic, political and cultural life outside their homes.



David McDowall, *The Kurds*/Minority Rights Group

These transformations left their impact on the nationalist movement, expanding its social bases and increasing political, ideological and organizational tension. The urban intelligentsia eventually made their presence felt in the countryside, the traditional domain of the landed aristocracy—this time not as nationalists who sought protection but rather as political and military leaders. This marked the beginning of a bitter struggle within the autonomist movement.

Radical Nationalism

Conflict between old and new broke out in early 1964 in the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq. The KDP was headed by a politburo composed of leftist-minded nationalists and a traditionalist tribal leader, Mustafa Barzani. He had a reputation for courageous struggle against the Iraqi state, had been a military leader in the 1946 Kurdish Republic, and spent 11 years of exile in the USSR. Factions of the landed notables, threatened by Baghdad's land reform and other radical measures, supported the autonomist movement, but were apprehensive about the radical politics of the politburo. They supported Barzani, who cared little for party organization or peasants' unions.

The conflict erupted when Barzani, without the knowledge of the politburo, signed what members considered to be a humiliating deal with a weak Iraqi government. The conflict was not over tactics only, but rather over the question of democracy, the role of party organization, and the social component of the movement. But while modernists maneuvered to contest Barzani's abuse of power, he quickly mobilized peshmerga (guerrilla) forces and replaced the modernists with a loyal politburo. Unprepared for what they called a coup d'état, the modernists lost the initiative and took refuge in Iran.[10]

Between 1964 and 1975, the reformists failed to achieve hegemony in the movement, in spite of considerable support especially in urban areas. In 1966, they entered an alliance with Baghdad against Barzani. Following the 1968 Ba'th takeover, Baghdad and Barzani agreed in 1970 on an autonomy plan to be implemented within four years. The modernists again joined the Barzani camp, although a group who described themselves as Marxist-Leninist came together with urban intelligentsia to form an underground organization that later took the name of the Kurdistan Toilers' League (KTL, or Komala).

Baghdad stalled on implementing autonomy, making Barzani increasingly receptive to US, Israeli and Iranian offers of support should the KDP take up arms again. In 1974, Baghdad unilaterally decreed a Kurdish autonomous region on its terms and launched a military offensive. When Tehran and Washington abruptly terminated support for the KDP in March 1975, following an agreement between Baghdad and Tehran, Barzani announced the collapse of the armed struggle. In the absence of any plans for retreat, thousands of peshmergas surrendered to Iraqi forces, while 100,000 to 200,000 peshmergas and their families and supporters fled, mostly into Iran.

The KTL and other leftists had long maintained that the KDP, with its traditional structure and social base and autocratic leadership, could not successfully lead a campaign for Kurdish self-determination. Together with Jalal Talabani, a leading Barzani critic within the KDP politburo, they formed the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in June 1975 and resumed armed struggle inside Iraqi

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Kurdistan. Their success motivated Iran and Turkey to encourage the remnants of the Barzani leadership to resume guerrilla activities in Iraq as well.[11] The KDP had its main strength in the Dohuk governorate (Badinan region), while the PUK had the upper hand in the governorates of Erbil, Kirkuk and Sulaimaniyya, which covers more than 75 percent of the Iraqi Kurdish population. (Kurds in this latter region speak a dialect called Sorani, which is also spoken by most Kurds in Iran; Kurds in Badinan speak Kurmanji, which is also spoken hy most Kurds in Turkey.)

The period after 1975 was one of heavy repression. Iraqi forces destroyed hundreds of villages in order to create a "security belt" along the borders with Iran, Turkey and Syria, and resettled the inhabitants in camps in southern and less mountainous areas. Baghdad also hought support by distributing some of its rising oil revenues, although productive investments were channeled to the center and south of the country.

With the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war in September 1980, hoth regimes tried to use the Kurds against each other. Baghdad, forced to concentrate its troops on the southern front with Iran, stepped up military conscription, and in the north recruited new lightly-armed militias, which Kurds referred to as *jahsh* (little donkeys), headed hy traditional clan leaders.

Differences of ideology and political practice as well as tactics produced periods of heavy clashes between the PUK and the KDP. The two came together, at Tehran's urging, as the Kurdistan Front in July 1987, just prior to Baghdad's genocidal Anfal offensive.

By 1987, as Iraq began to gain militarily in its long war with Iran, it moved to impose a "final solution" in tbe Kurdish region. Ali Hassan al-Majid, a cousin of Saddam Hussein, took over as head of the Ba'th Party's Northern Bureau, with full authority over state and party resources in that region. Baghdad progressively transferred infantry and armored units from the southern front to the north where, together with tens of thousands of *jahsh* militiamen, they carried out the Anfal campaign in eight stages from February to September 1988.

In early March 1991, following Iraq's defeat by the US-led coalition, popular uprisings erupted first in the south of Iraq and then in the Kurdish cities, towns and complexes. The PUK and KDP quickly moved to take control. They declared a general amnesty, inviting the *jahsh* commanders to join, and in less than three weeks took over virtually all of Kurdistan. In the weeks that followed, though, Iraqi forces retook much of this territory. After millions of Kurds fled to the mountains bordering Turkey and Iran, Western forces intervened to set up a small "safe haven zone" around Dohuk and Zakhu, in the Badinan region dominated by the KDP, and, suhsequently, a "no-fly zone" above the 36th parallel.

The KTL, despite its formative role in the PUK, was overshadowed by the personality and influence of Talabani. After the fall of the Soviet Union, and then the formation of the Regional Government of Iraqi Kurdistan in 1992, the KTL dissolved itself into the PUK. Today the KDP and PUK run the government jointly, with small radical and communist groups and newer Islamist groups on the margins.[12]

The Movement in Iran

The 1961-75 struggle in Iraq overshadowed the Kurdish movements in Iran and Turkey. Although the armed resistance in Iraq initially contributed to the revival of the KDP in Iran (KDPI), Barzani argued that Kurds in Iran should delay their struggle until the KDP had achieved meaningful autonomy in Iraq. In exchange for limited support by Tehran, he ordered those Kurdish activists from Iran who had escaped into Iraqi Kurdistan to stop anti-Iranian activism. One faction followed Barzani, but a group of activists split to form the KDPI/Revolutionary Committee. The Iranian army was able to crush their resistance, helped when Barzani closed the borders. The rest of the KDPI leadership remained in Baghdad and Europe until the Pahlavi monarchy was on the verge of collapse in late 1978.

During their absence, Kurdish society and politics had changed. In 1969, a group of radical intellectuals came together as the Revolutionary Organization of Toilers of Kurdistan, better known as Komala, similar to and helped by the KTL in Iraq. Komala, opposing both pro-Soviet tendencies and the urban guerrilla emphasis of some Iranian revolutionary groups, worked to form peasant unions after the Islamist revolution and acquired much popular support among Kurdish peasants and youth.

As in Iraq, organizational conflict reflected the emergence of new social forces and radical perspectives in the nationalist movement. The KDPI denounced Komala's activities to organize the peasantry and recruit women, arguing that issues of class struggle should await the achievement of autonomy. The KDPI began armed assaults on the leftist groups as early as 1980, and in 1984 launched a confrontation against Komala that continued for several years and took a heavy toll on both sides. The KDPI has since split, weakened by the assassination of two general secretaries.

Unlike Iraq, where the KTL eventually dissolved into the modernist front, Komala has maintained itself as an alternative to KDPI with its call for a socialist Iran in which Kurdish rights to self-determination will be honored. However, much like KTL, Komala has not been able to liberate itself from the burden of traditionalism, or to turn the nationalist movement into a social revolution or a people's war. Since 1984, the leadership and much of the organization of both parties has been based in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Although both Komala and KDPI formally demand autonomy within Iran, an increasing number of Kurds in Iran and Iraq are arguing more openly in favor of independence, pointing to the failure of negotiations and numerous deals between the Kurds and various central governments, government associations of Kurdish leaders, and changing international relations.[13]

The Movement in Turkey

Turkey's Kemalist regime was intent on building a Western-type secular nation-state based on Turkish national, linguistic and cultural identity. The Kurdish response was a series of revolts throughout the 1920s and 1930s led by a combination of landlords, tribal chiefs, shaikhs and urban-based intellectuals. By 1939, the last of these was brutally repressed, leading many to believe that the Kurdish "problem" had been solved. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds were forcibly deported to western Turkey.

By the early 1960s, however, nationalist struggle resumed, encouraged by the upsurge of Kurdish nationalism in Iraq and led by younger Kurdish intelligentsia both in Kurdistan and in Istanbul, Ankara and other Turkish cities, which by then had sizable Kurdish populations. The political spectrum and agendas, while diverse, were influenced, as in Iraq and Iran, by leftist and communist formations.

The period between the military coups of 1960 and 1980 is characterized by recurrent crises within the Turkish state, cycles of repression, and continuing proliferation of Kurdish political and cultural groups in Kurdistan, in Turkish cities, and among Kurdish workers in Germany. Unlike Iraqi Kurdistan, in Turkey most Kurdish organizations in the 1970s espoused socialism. The military regime following the 1980 coup was able to suppress most of these organizations.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party, better known by its Kurdish initials, PKK, survived the repression following the 1980 coup, and launched its first attacks against Turkish military targets in 1984. The PKK is distinguished from other Kurdish political parties by its social base, which includes a sizable portion of workers and peasants. It advocates both socialism and independence for greater Kurdistan, and puts a priority on armed struggle. In the past, it has avoided cooperation with other Kurdish political organizations. The PKK has been open to women's participation, and now claims to have thousands of women in its ranks. Although it has benefitted from some Syrian aid, it has effectively relied on the organized support of the Kurds in Kurdistan and in the diaspora in Turkey and abroad. While the PKK is not the only Kurdish political organization in Turkey, its ability to sustain a campaign of armed struggle against the well-armed Turkish army has won it a leading position and popular support in both urban and rural Kurdish areas, as well as in the Kurdish diaspora.

Prospects

It is difficult to reach a firm assessment concerning the prospects for the Kurdish movement. The present circumstances—the survival of the PKK-led movement in Turkey against extraordinary Turkish state repression, and the existence in Iraq of a Western-protected Regional Government—are unprecedented. Yet the obstacles confronting a political resolution of the "Kurdish problem" are no less daunting than before.

In Turkey, the state has launched the most recent of its "final offensives" designed to crush the PKK. The scale of repression and devastation has been awesome. Turkish human rights organizations report that many hundreds of villages—some estimates go as high as 900 or so—have been "depopulated" and many razed to the ground since the beginning of 1993. Scores of journalists and human rights activists have been abducted and tortured, killed or "disappeared." The ability of the PKK to survive to this point, and to sustain itself largely on the support of Turkey's Kurds rather than outside powers, indicates that its claim to represent a new kind of leadership may be well-founded.

Unlike in Iran and Iraq, where the movement is led by rival parties, the independence movement in Turkey is led by a single organization, one that can boast leading the longest uninterrupted armed resistance in modern Kurdish history. Also, while the Kurdish parties of Iran and Iraq have not been able to undermine the oil-based financial and economic power of those states, the PKK has been able to strike at Turkey's economy, particularly the vulnerable tourist industry. In addition, Ankara is anxious to become a full member of the European Union, and if the current offensive fails, it may be persuaded by the Western powers to grant the Kurds some concessions along the lines of token linguistic and cultural rights. But any policy that falls short of genuine autonomous rule is likely to fail. Although the PKK has indicated it is willing to negotiate on the basis of autonomy, Ankara remains determined to crush it.

In Iraq, many Kurds view the Regional Government of Kurdistan, with its elected parliament and authority over law enforcement units, as an edifice of genuine autonomy. The experience of the Regional Government is important; elections and the relative freedom of political expression and association have been politically invigorating. Many Kurds insist that they prefer the excruciating economic deprivations they must endure now to any return to rule under Saddam Hussein.

This state-building experiment, though, is threatened not only by external foes—including Tehran, Ankara, Baghdad and Damascus—but also by internal conflict. After several years of cooperation in building the Regional Government, the KDP and PUK began a new round of serious fighting in May 1994—ironically on the 30th anniversary of the 1964 Barzani putsch against the KDP politburo. As of the end of May, interventions by Kurdish government officials and by the Iraqi National Congress (the Iraqi opposition front of which the two Kurdish parties are the largest and militarily most significant part) had been unable to halt the killing. Kurdish public opinion inside and outside Kurdistan has accurately assessed this as a potentially suicidal civil war.

It must be emphasized, as this essay has tried to do, that this conflict, much like that in South Africa between the African National Congress and Inkatha, is rooted in the

See **Hassanpour** *page 23*

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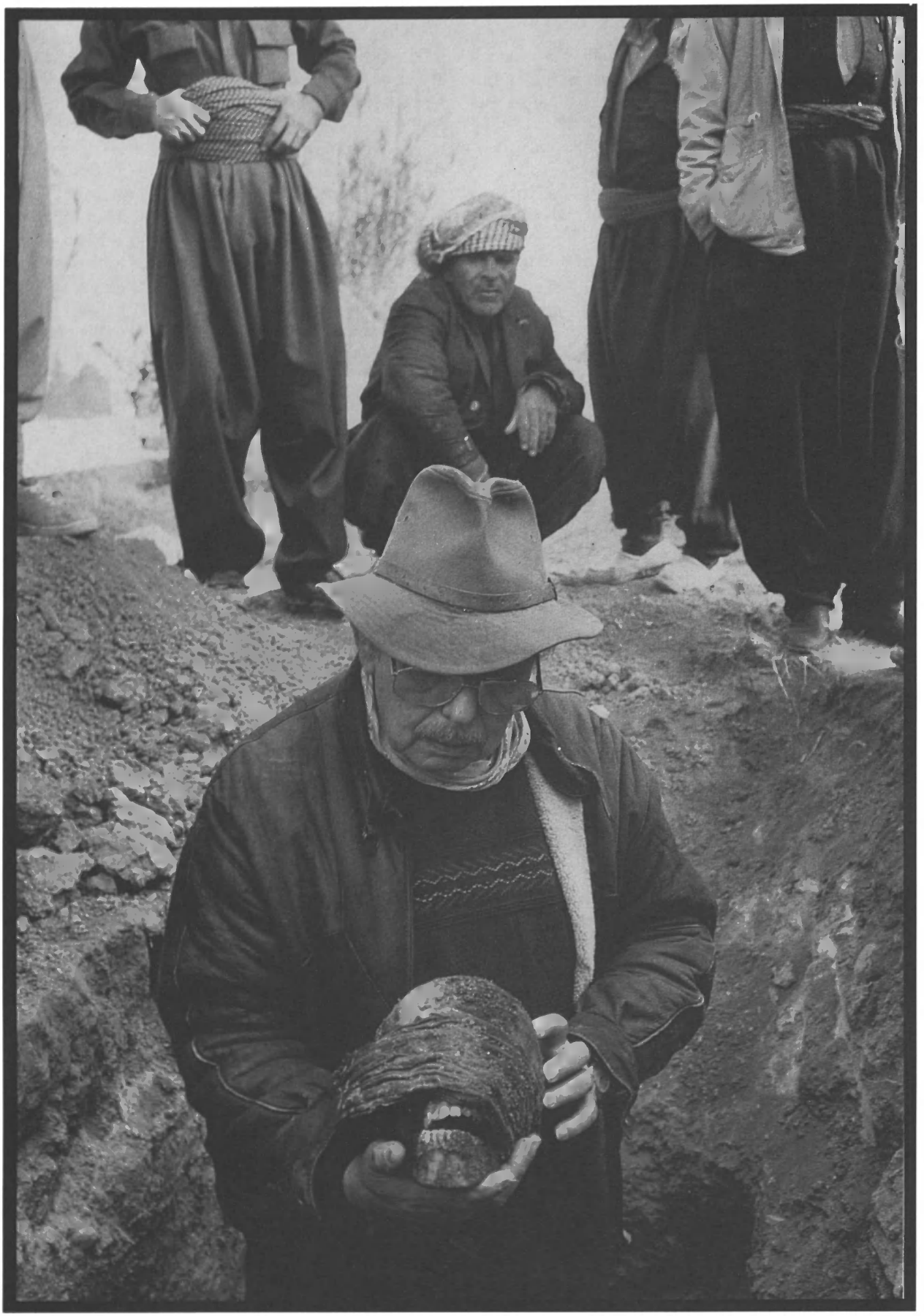


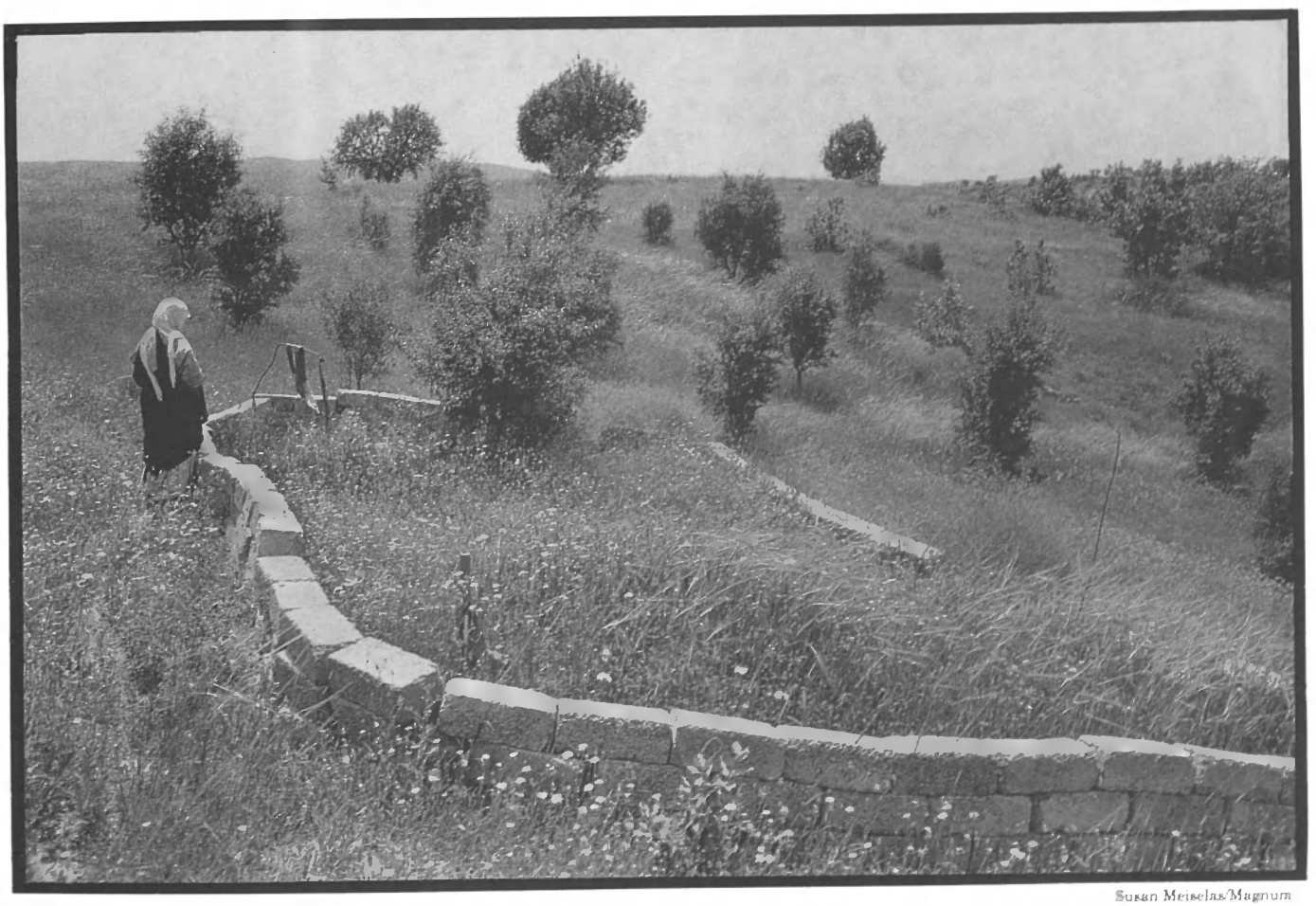
Susan Meiselas/Magnum

The remains of Anfal

Photos by Susan Meiselas. Text by Andrew Whitley.

The physical remains of the General Security Directorate's victims are strewn throughout Iraq, buried anonymously in common graves. It is hard for anyone outside the Ba'th's inner circle to estimate how many young men went before firing squads after summary trials, or sometimes no trial at all, between the Ba'th Party coup of 1968 and the fall of 1991, when the Iraqi Kurdistan Front, backed by Western air power, took control of a northern enclave. Conservatively, 100,000 men, women and children were "disappeared" during the seven month long Anfal campaign in 1988. Tens of thousands of others perished during the routine political killings that preceded, and followed, Ali Hassan al-Majid's paroxysm of anger. Perhaps somewhere in the Directorate's Baghdad headquarters there is a master tally of the dead. Judging by the truckloads of security archives captured by the Kurds during their 1991 intifada, and transferred to the US for safekeeping, the record-keeping was meticulous to

Susan Meiselas *is collaborating on a book about the photographic history of the Kurdish nationalist movement,* In the Shadow of History *(Random House, forthcoming).* **Andrew Whitley** *is the former executive director of Human Rights Watch/Middle East.*



Susan Meiselas/Magnum

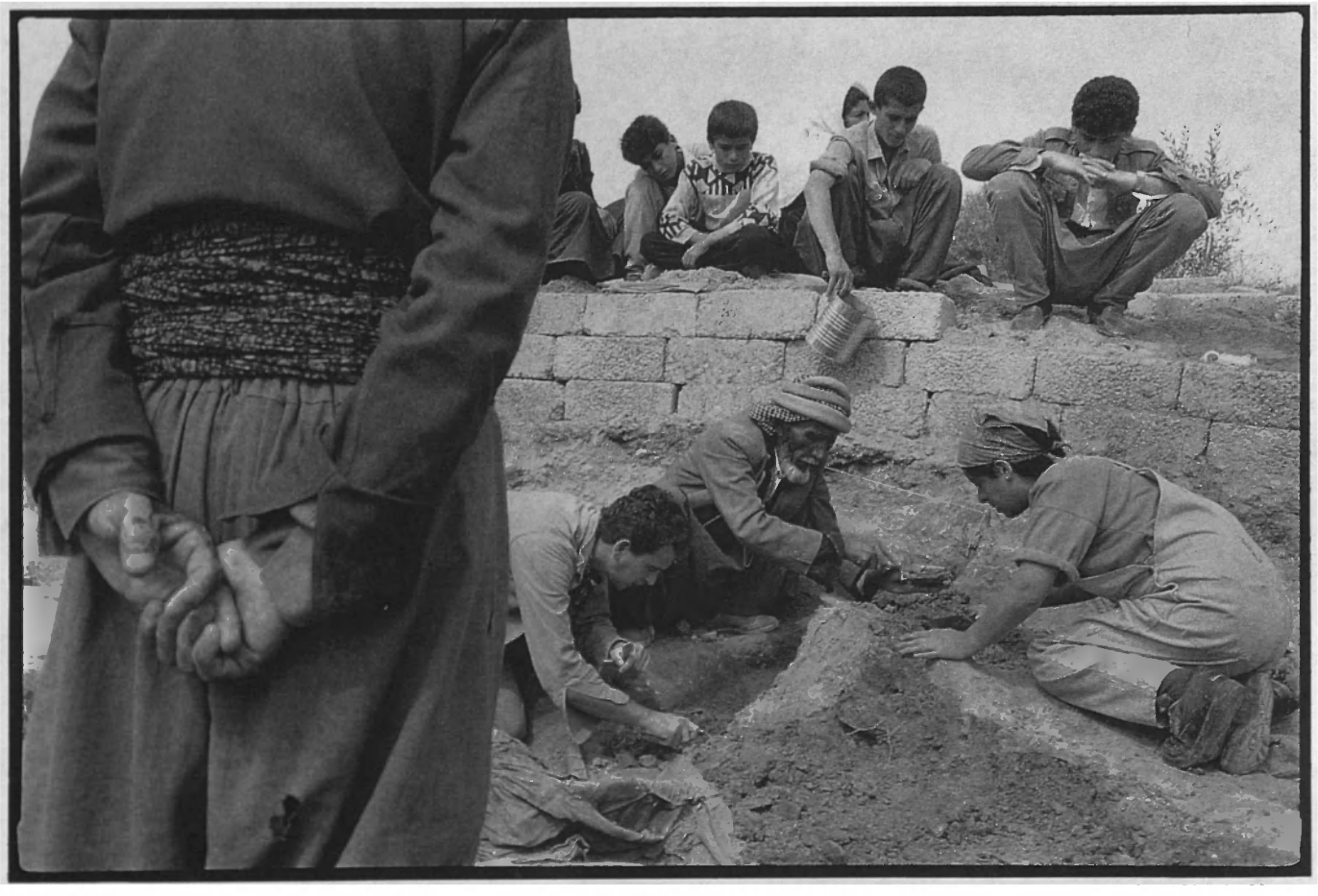
Above: Koreme gravesite before exhumation began, August 1988. Left: Forensic anthropologist Dr. Clyde Snow holds the blindfolded skull of an executed male teenager, estimated to be between 15 and 18 years old, found with two bullet holes indicating close-range assassination.

the point of obsession.

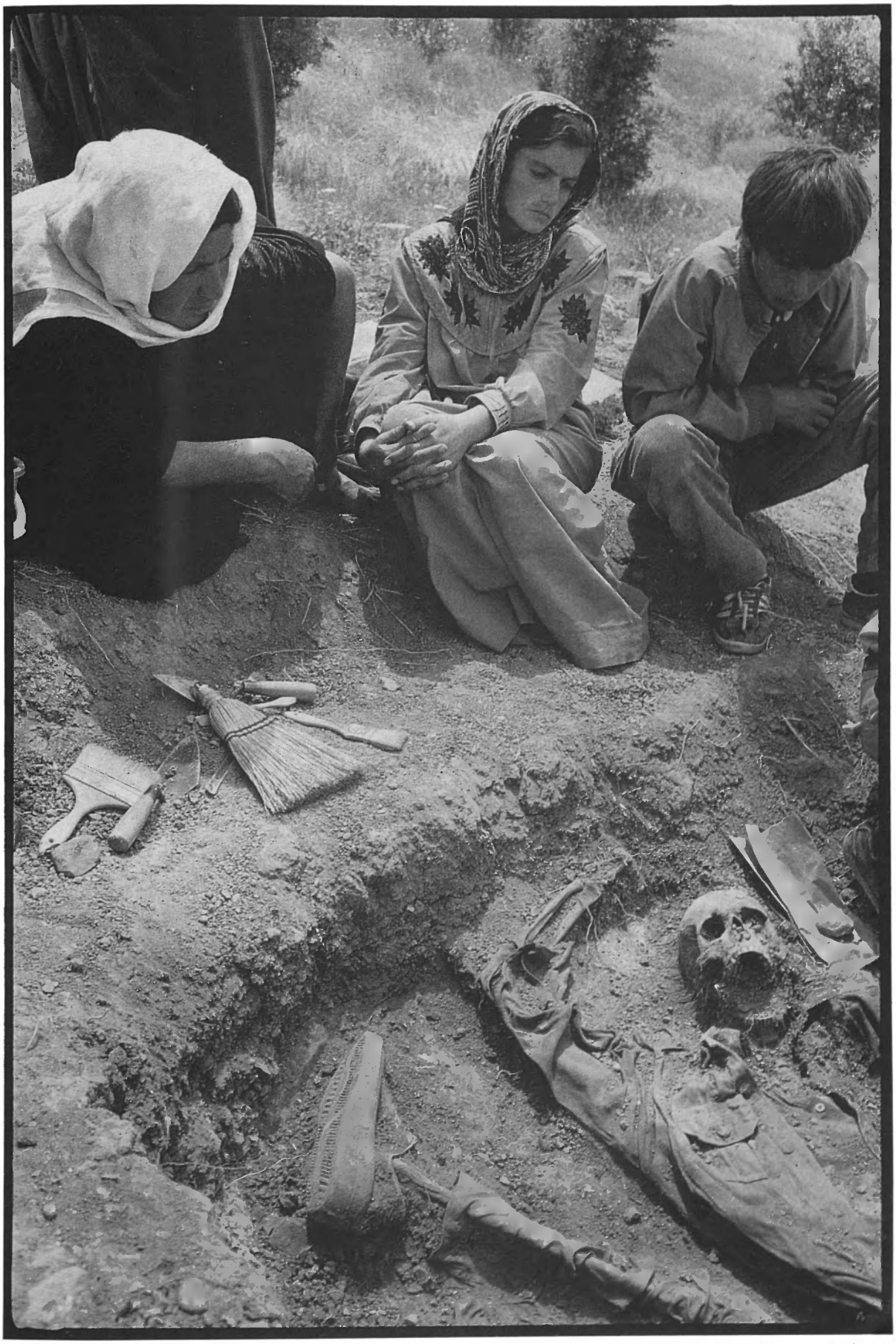
In the Badinan hills of Dohuk governorate, the village of Koreme was one of hundreds of Kurdish communities lying in rebel-controlled territory to feel the scourge of the Anfal. Near the end of the campaign, 27 male villagers—none of them fighters—were summarily executed on a hill outside Koreme, after returning from a fruitless attempt to escape into Turkey. In late spring 1992, Human Rights Watch / Middle East and Physicians for Human Rights exhumed their bodies and conducted a forensic examination to determine the cause and circumstance of their death. Dr. Clyde Snow, the forensic anthropologist renowned for his work documenting the trail of rightwing Latin American death squads, led a team of Latin American specialists to work with local Kurds on the task of unearthing, literally, the facts. As all the dead were positively identified, one by one, the notion of international technology transfer took on new meaning.

To have been able to exhume the victims of a genocidal campaign like the Anfal, take oral testimony from the survivors and from relatives of the deceased, and read the government's own account of how and why it committed such gross abuses is probably unique in the annals of human rights work. To have done all this while that government was still in power, its security apparatus yet to be defanged, its armies waiting only a few kilometers away across an undeclared ceasefire line, was remarkable.

Since late 1991, Human Rights Watch / Middle East has been compiling the facts about the Anfal and, more broadly, examining the fearsome machinery of repression deployed by the Ba'th—not just against the Iraqi Kurds, but against suspected dissidents of any stripe. What remains is to elicit from Baghdad a full accounting for its victims, just as the regime was compelled to divulge its nuclear secrets. Even though the facts should by now be clear, political (and, for some, economic) considerations are giving some members of the UN Security Council pause for thought. ■



Above: Middle East Watch forensic team at work cleaning skeletons with Koreme villagers assisting clearing dirt from mass graves. Right: Koreme gravesite with local villagers looking on.



Susan Meiselas/Magnum

Diyarbakir, in southeast Turkey. R. Maro/Medico International

Mad Dreams of Independence
The Kurds of Turkey and the PKK

Chris Kutschera

Will the Kurdish civil society that has taken shape little by little be doomed to disappear in yet another phase of "total war"?

Politics has always been a difficult and risky business for Kurdish nationalists in Turkey. The hegemony today of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), with its history of dogmatic Marxism-Leninism and its attachment to armed struggle, is very much a reflection of the refusal of successive Turkish nationalist regimes to accommodate Kurdish aspirations for cultural and political autonomy.

The stirrings of progressive Kurdish nationalist politics in Turkey date to the late 1950s and early 1960s, when Kurdish intellectuals in Istanbul and Ankara formed cultural clubs and organizations. The summer of 1967 saw mass student demonstrations in 19 Kurdish cities and towns, including 10,000 marchers in Silvan and 25,000

Chris Kutschera *is the author of* Le Mouvement National Kurde *(1979). This text is excerpted and adapted by Joe Stork from a chapter written for an expanded and updated English edition of that book.*

in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir.

Organized activism took two forms, very much as it did in neighboring Iraq. One was the July 1965 formation of an explicitly Kurdish organization, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (KDPT), in Diyarbakir. The KDPT program included an explicit demarcation of "Kurdistan" with Kurdish as the official language and an exclusively Kurdish government bureaucracy, proportional Kurdish representation in Turkey's parliament, and economic investment. By 1968, many KDPT leaders were imprisoned, assassinated or in exile.

The other path of Kurdish political engagement was through the leftist Workers' Party of Turkey (Türkiye Işçi Partisi, or TIP). Although the TIP officially took a negative stand on the Kurdish question, by 1969 the secretary-general and the president of the party were both Kurds. At the end of 1969, TIP president Mehmet Ali Aslan challenged a 1967 decree outlawing "the distribution in Turkey of any material of foreign origin in the Kurdish language," and started a bilingual Turkish-Kurdish journal, *Yeni Akiş (New Current)*, which raised explicitly the question of Kurdish national rights until it was suspended after four issues. This period also saw the publication of a Kurdish-Turkish dictionary and socioeconomic studies of Kurdistan. Like the Communist Party in Iraq, the TIP, in its fourth congress in 1970, acknowledged the Kurdish question—the first time a legal Turkish party had taken even this smallest of steps.

The formation in early 1969 of the Revolutionary Cultural Centers of the East (DDKO in Turkish) marks the beginning of the separation of the Kurdish nationalist left from its Turkish Marxist counterpart. DDKO came together initially in the two university cities of Ankara and Istanbul before spreading to Diyarbakir and other cities. It represented a new generation, some of whose members, like Mahmut Kilinç and Mehdi Zana, are key figures in the non-PKK political leadership today.

The Kurdish attention to culture was a response to a policy of forced, systematic assimilation emanating from the Turkish center. Starting in the early 1960s, for instance, Kurdish peasant children were sent to boarding schools in large villages in which Kurdish was forbidden. "My father was a nationalist," one schoolteacher said in 1980, "but we were ten children and he wanted to finish with this misery. To have a teacher's diploma was a dream, it guaranteed economic independence. For this my father forced us to speak Turkish at home. There was a small box in which we had to put 25 kurus every time we used a Kurdish word!" Many Kurdish militants today tell a similar story.

The Turkish government's alarm at the revival of Kurdish nationalism increased following the March 1970 autonomy agreement in Iraq between Baghdad and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) led by Mustafa Barzani. Under pressure from the army, Prime Minister Suleiman Demirel launched authorized commando operations against a number of Kurdish towns and villages that set a pattern for abusive collective punishment that continues today. This repression increased following the March 1971 army coup.

The military government proceeded to outlaw leftist Turkish as well as Kurdish organizations, including the TIP and the DDKO, and imprison many of their cadres. The prisons functioned as schools, however, and this period spawned explicitly Kurdish leftist groupings including the Socialist Party of Kurdistan in Turkey, better known as Ria Azadi (Kurdish for Road to Freedom, the name of their journal) and Rizgari (Liberation, which also published a journal of that name). The 1970s and early 1980s was a period of ferment, in which Kurdish left nationalist formations experienced serious factionalization.

Military Option

Paradoxically, the PKK was born not in Kurdistan but in Ankara, where Abdullah Öcalan and other Kurdish students were active in the Turkish extreme left but questioned the attitudes of those groups towards the Kurdish question. More surprisingly, some of the founders and later leaders of the PKK were Turks. They disseminated propaganda, recruited members, and established regional committees that would only come together on certain occasions such as the end of Ramadan so as to avoid attracting the attention of the authorities. They adopted the PKK name in late 1978 - early 1979. What distinguishes the PKK from other Kurdish parties is less the "democratic centralist" organization or the Marxist-Leninist language than an emphasis on armed struggle distinguished by its ferocity. The other distinguishing feature is PKK emphasis on the need to mobilize the peasantry: southeastern Turkey has virtually no industrial working class, as almost all industry is in the west and center, and the rural economic structure is marked by very large landholdings with serf-like conditions for workers.

The formative years of the PKK as an organization coincided with the years of martial law that followed the September 1980 military coup. The repression of the 1980s, both in numbers of persons seized and imprisoned and in the extent of systematic torture, was far worse than before. The few journalists who managed to attend trials in Diyarbakir wrote that prisoners were sometimes brought to court in metal cages loaded on trucks, hardly able to walk or stand. Prison conditions were so barsb that prisoners staged prolonged hunger strikes tbat lasted more than a month at a time, or, in more than a few cases, committed suicide. On March 21, 1982, Mazlum Doğan lit three matches to celebrate Nowruz and hanged himself in his cell rather than make a televised confession. A few weeks later, on May 18, four prisoners wrapped themselves in benzine-soaked newspapers and set themselves on fire. When their comrades attempted to put out the flames they refused, insisting that it was a "freedom fire."

In Kurdistan, the extent and ferocity of the repression decimated the Kurdish parties, some of which decided to disband. The regime thus cleared the way for the PKK. Abdullah Öcalan left for Syria and Lebanon just prior to the September coup and set about regrouping the PKK there. The first PKK armed assaults on Turkish forces,

in 1984, were on gendarme forts. The Turkish regime, much like the French in Algeria, recruited "village guards"—16,000 by the end of 1989 and nearly twice that number by 1993. But this did nothing to impede the growth of the PKK, which systematically attacked them as "collaborators." PKK guerrillas—they do not use the term *peshmerga* because of its association with Barzani's "feudal" movement in Iraq—were not fussy about who might end up in their line of fire. Between 1987 and 1989 they destroyed some 137 schools as "instruments of Ankara's policy of assimilation." It was not until the end of the decade that Öcalan indulged in an "autocritique," saying that PKK armed actions needed to be "more selective."

PKK tactics gave the Turkish authorities a great deal of leeway in portraying them as bloody terrorists, a task made all the easier by the rigid censorship of events in Kurdistan and the obliging attitude of most of the Turkish press. It was only after some Turkish journalists noticed that many victims of the so-called "Red Kurds" had been killed by army weapons that the dimensions and consequences of Turkish martial law began to breach the wall of silence surrounding "the Southeast."

The Turkish government has maintained a martial law regime over the country's 11 Kurdish provinces to this day. The option of choice has persistently been the military option: from launching "hot pursuit" raids into Iraqi Kurdistan to destroying villages and killing and displacing tens of thousands of people. For a brief period in the wake of the 1991 Persian Gulf war, President Turgut Ozal spoke in measured terms of a more liberal policy towards the Kurds, and laws prohibiting the use of the Kurdish language were repealed. But following Ozal's death in April 1993, it has become clearer than ever that when it comes to the Kurdish question, it is not the civilian elected government which determines policy but the army-dominated National Security Council.

Many have lost a great deal in this war, but the least of them is the PKK. "If Jezireh is ours today," says Öcalan, speaking of a town near the Iraqi-Syrian border, "it is half thanks to our efforts. But the other half, Turkey presented to us on a silver platter." The PKK have an estimated 12,000 to 15,000 full-time fighters. Öcalan declared last September that he would have twice as many at the end of 1994.

Tactical Relations

The recent course of events in Turkish Kurdistan cannot be understood without appreciating the relationships of the PKK with the Kurdish parties of Iraq. Despite sharp differences of ideology, strategy and method, the PKK signed an agreement in 1981 with the KDP, which, after all, controlled the Iraqi part of Kurdistan along the border with Turkey. The agreement gave the PKK transit rights and rear bases in KDP territory. Turkish military pressures after September 1983 heightened the differences between the two groups that were not overcome even by "summit" meetings between Öcalan and Masoud Barzani (son of KDP founder Mustafa Barzani) in Damascus in 1984 and 1985. It was then the turn of Jalal Talabani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which signed a memorandum of agreement with the PKK in May 1988. The agreement was never implemented but at least the parties maintained "bridges."

The establishment of a Kurdish government in northern Iraq in June 1992 brought the contradictions between the two movements to a head. One factor was the Iraqi Kurdish leadership's effort to establish good ties with Ankara as a way of maintaining relief supply routes and the allied military protective cover over Iraqi Kurdistan. In November 1991, Talabani appealed to Öcalan to declare a ceasefire, or at least to cease operations from camps in Iraq. Instead PKK attacks increased, and Öcalan denounced Talabani as an "agent of imperialism." As the dispute escalated, the PKK enforced a blockade on the only road from Turkey into Iraqi Kurdistan in July 1992, exacerbating the negative effects of the UN sanctions and the Iraqi blockade on the Kurdish region of Iraq.

The PKK and the Iraqi Kurdish parties each consider themselves to be the leading force in the struggle for Kurdish liberation. For the PKK, "the government of Erbil does not represent much....Each tribe is a power." The PKK could tolerate "tactical relations" between the Kurds of Iraq and Ankara, but not the alliance that they see the Kurdistan Regional Government having established with the Turkish army and intelligence forces. The Kurds of Iraq, for their part, are not prepared to sacrifice "a free Kurdistan, with freely elected political institutions...for the death of two Turkish gendarmes that does not bring much," said Jowhar Nameq, chair of the Kurdish parliament in Erbil, at a Paris press conference in December 1992. "The PKK claims there are no borders between the parts of Kurdistan," said Adnan Mufti, formerly a leader of the small Kurdistan Socialist Party. "So we ask them then, why don't you fight Saddam Hussein?"

On October 4, 1992, the Kurdish government in Erbil issued an ultimatum to the PKK: either withdraw from the border bases or be expelled. Iraqi Kurdish attacks began the next day, and Turkish government forces intervened the following week. On October 27, after heavy fighting, including extensive Turkish air attacks, PKK leader Osman Öcalan (Abdullah's brother) discussed ceasefire terms with Talabani and Barzani. Turkish forces renewed their attacks two days later. Estimates of PKK losses ranged from 150 (Osman Öcalan) to 4,500 "eliminated" (Turkish chief-of-staff Gen. Doğan Güres). By any reasonable measure the PKK suffered a serious defeat.

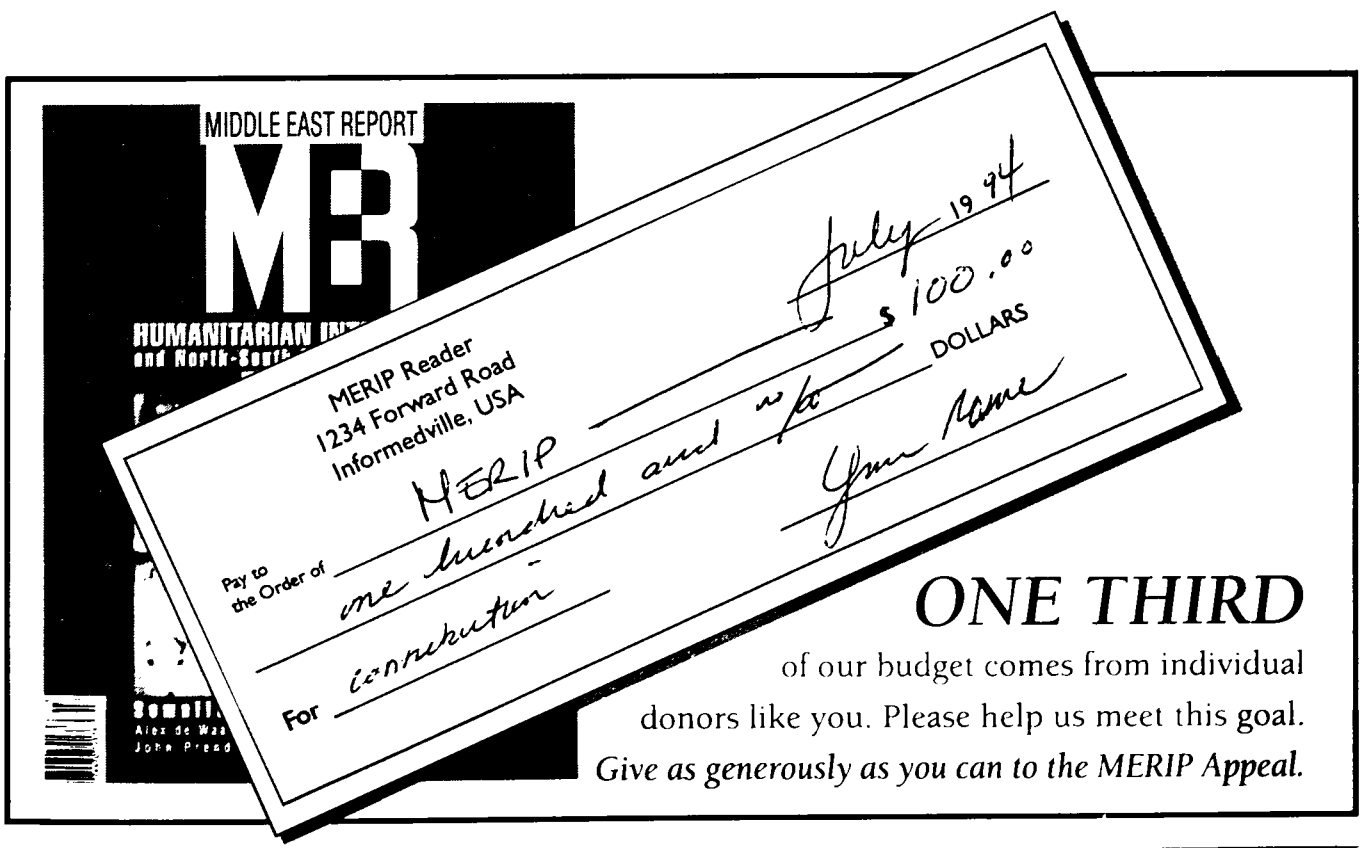
For years Jalal Talabani had been striving to convince Abdullah Öcalan to proclaim a unilateral six-month ceasefire to test the will and strength of Turkish civilian leaders. In the spring of 1993, on March 17, at a base in Lebanon with Talabani present, Öcalan announced a ceasefire from March 20 to April 15 and declared that the PKK did not intend "to separate immediately from Turkey." Two days later, on March 19, a PKK agreement with the Kurdistan Socialist Party brought an end to the longstanding PKK

vendetta against the other Kurdish parties. More significantly, the March 19 agreement proposed that the Kurdish question could be solved in the context of "a democratic and federal regime" and set out nine conditions for a political solution.

Ankara chose to see only PKK weakness in the ceasefire. All that was left to Öcalan, said Interior Minister Ismet Sezgin, was "to surrender without conditions." Nevertheless, on April 16, Öcalan announced an unlimited extension of the ceasefire and repeated the conditions for negotiation outlined earlier. To this Demirel replied, "If [Öcalan] gives up killing, we won't reward him [with] a region of Turkey." Ozal, who had been the most forthcoming Turkish leader regarding the Kurds, died suddenly the next day. Within a month, Turkish Kurdistan was again engulfed in violence.

The Kurds of Turkey are in a paradoxical position. Cultural repression in Turkey is fiercer than in Iraq or Iran, yet Turkey is also where at least the formal attributes of democracy are most respected. Scores of Kurds have served in the Turkish parliament over the years, but in the past these have been landed notables with long-standing ties to Ankara and no wish to advertize their Kurdishness. Since 1983, though, the several legislative elections have provided an arena in which militant younger Kurdish politicians have been able to seize very limited maneuvering room. The elections of October 1991 were the first to witness the emergence of a genuine and explicitly Kurdish bloc, when 18 deputies elected on the Social Democratic (SHP) ticket broke off to join the small People's Labor Party (Halkin Emek Partisi, or HEP). It was a mixed group—some saw themselves as close to the PKK, while others were more traditional social democrats and nationalists. The Turkish authorities, though, had little tolerance for anyone aspiring to "the equality of the Turkish and Kurdish peoples...within the framework of the legitimate principles of law," as former HEP chair Feridun Yazar put it during his trial. On July 3, 1992, the State Security Court indicted the founders of the HEP for "separatist propaganda." On July 15, 1993, the Constitutional Court outlawed the HEP, a few days after the deputies had resigned to form the Party of Democracy (DEP). In December 1993, Hatip Dicle, considered close to the PKK, was elected DEP chairperson. On March 3, 1994, the parliament voted to lift the parliamentary immunity of seven DEP deputies. They were arrested at the door of the parliament and charged under Article 125 of the penal code ("crimes against the state"), which carries the death penalty.

The DEP will likely meet the same fate as the HEP before it, but the recomposition of the Kurdish movement in Turkey seems irreversible. The access to power of a "Kurdish government" in Iraqi Kurdistan, the acceleration of the war in Turkish Kurdistan, and the March 1993 agreement between the PKK and other Kurdish parties in Turkey can hardly be interpreted otherwise. The question now is what course will prevail among Turkish political authorities—the brief opening initiated by President Ozal before his death, or the military-dictated hardline of President Suleiman Demirel and Prime Minister Tansu Çiller. Will the Kurdish civil society that has taken shape little by little be doomed to disappear in yet another phase of "total war"? ■



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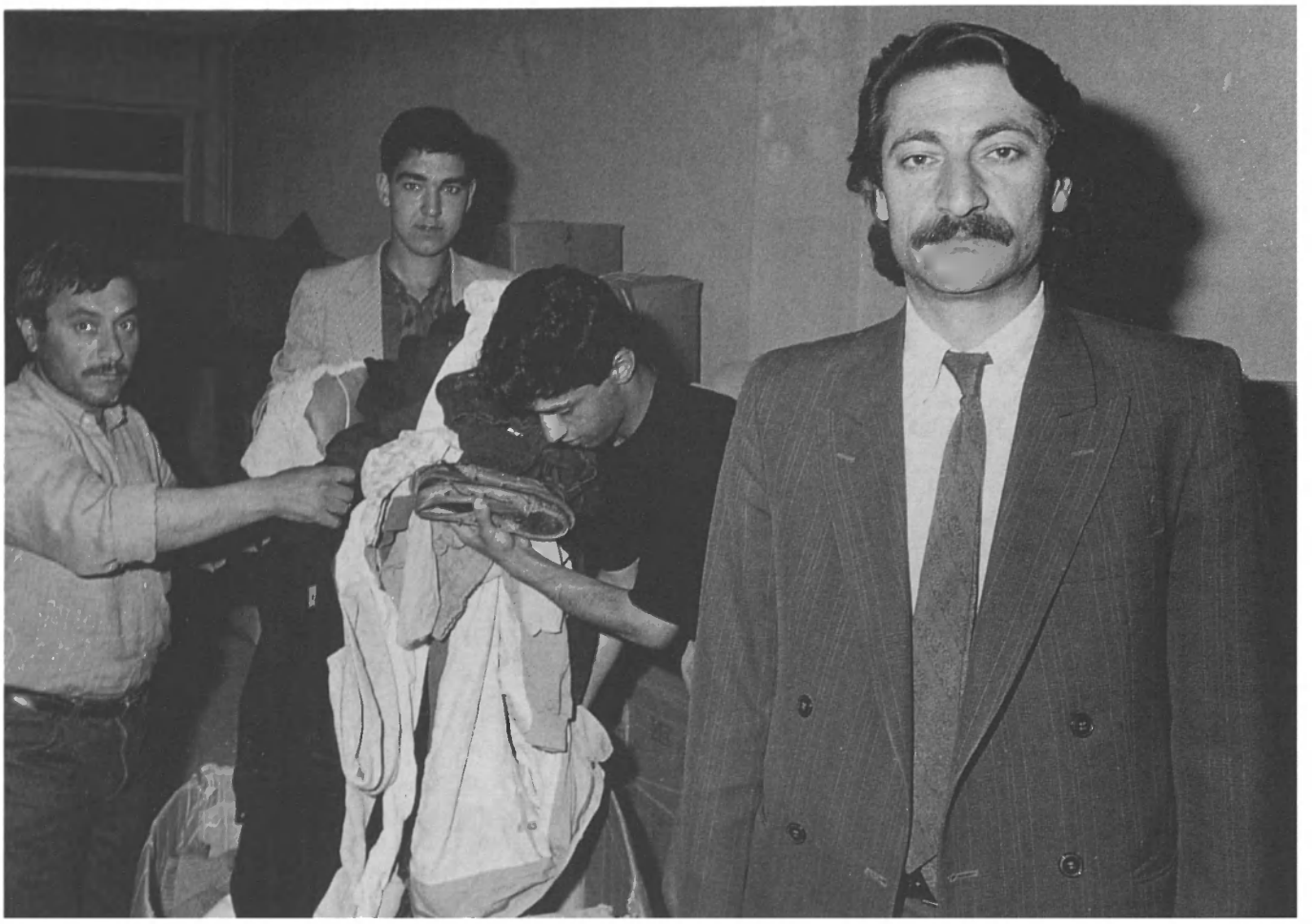

Haşim Haşimi, mayor of Cizre, Turkey in an office of the local Relief Committee. R. Maro/Medico International

City in the War Zone

Aliza Marcus

Ankara, in its zeal to crush Kurdish nationalism, has managed to undermine and destroy non-violent Kurdish movements, in effect helping ensure PKK dominance

Saki Işikçi sits in a coffeeshop below a picture of the founder of the Turkish republic—Mustafa Kemal Ataturk—and ticks off the problems he faces as the deputy mayor of Cizre: bad roads, poor schools, not enough water, no jobs. The city's monthly budget barely covers municipal salaries, and emigrants from outlying villages are straining social services.

And then there is the war between the Turkish army and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) to control southeast Turkey, home to about half the country's estimated 12 million Kurds. "The government isn't interested in us," says Işikçi, whose house and car were firebombed last August by Turkish soldiers claiming to be ferreting out PKK guerrillas. "They are only concerned about the war, and driving us from the southeast. To them, we are all terrorists."

Işikçi, a nervous looking man, these days rarely visits the municipality's office, a ramshackle building with bullet-scarred walls and darkened hallways. Last summer, the mayor, Haşim Haşimi, was detained by police who accused him of aiding the PKK, and now Haşimi, too, spends most of his time elsewhere. "Nothing has been

Aliza Marcus *is a journalist who frequently writes on Turkey.*

spared," says Işikçi, marveling for a moment at the lack of authority elected officials in the southeast hold these days. "My house, the mayor's building, even the hospital, they have all been attacked by soldiers."

Cizre is on the verge of collapse. Decades of government inattention and the United Nations economic embargo against neighboring Iraq have crippled the economy. A few dimly lit shops struggle on, selling cheap goods, and a couple of grimy garages hawk smuggled Iraqi fuel.

If Cizre one day disappears, its people scattered westward, far from the widening war zone, it will be due to a confluence of events rooted in the Turkish government's long-standing desire to destroy Kurdish nationalism and the PKK. And when Cizre finally does cease to exist, as many here believe will happen if the fighting continues, it will mark yet another setback for Ankara as well as for the people who call it home. The human rights abuses of the government and its security forces translates into more support for the guerrillas. Despite the PKK's own violent practices, the group is respected as the only organization with the will and strength necessary to pursue Kurdish goals of self-determination.

Turkey for the Turks

Cizre and its 24 outlying villages scattered in the surrounding plains and mountains were never high on Ankara's list of priorities. Since the founding of the republic in 1923, successive Turkish regimes, determined to establish a strong central government, have viewed the southeast's periodic displays of Kurdish nationalism with apprehension.

The first of these localized insurrections erupted in 1925, and others followed through the mid-1930s. Although the Kurds had fought side by side with the Turks in the war of liberation, led by Mustafa Kemal, they emerged with few rights under a regime self-defined as Turkish. Kemal, who took the name Ataturk (father of the Turks) in 1934, moved to destroy Kurdish nationalism by decimating Kurdish social structures and implementing a policy of forced assimilation. Leaders of the uprisings were hanged and their supporters imprisoned. Land was expropriated, families were relocated to western Turkey and Kurdish language use was banned. The regime opened cultural and educational societies to teach Turkish language and history and implant a new national Turkish identity.

Economic investment lagged, however. People in Cizre still recall when the trappings of development first appeared—it was not until the mid-1950s that the city was hooked up to electricity and running water.*

The decade of water and light followed the country's first multi-party elections in 1947, in which Kurds were wooed by the new Democrat Party. The party was not pro-Kurdish, but was untainted by the harsh assimilationist policies of the Kemalists. When the party triumphed in the 1950 national elections, Kurds were rewarded with some basic social services.

"Since the beginning of the republic, the government didn't give any help to this region," says Mayor Haşimi. It was not until 1961, when a Kurd from Diyarbakir became minister of health, that the region acquired health facilities. "But since then," the mayor adds, "no improvements have been made on the facility."

By 1968, Cizre had received a bridge, new roads and widened streets, a park named after Ataturk, a cinema and a variety of municipal buildings. Ankara considered such favors sufficient to bring the Kurds of Cizre—and throughout the region—into the arms of the Turkish state.

Cizre's economic heyday in the 1980s was thanks to the highway which cuts through the center of the city, a road that crosses into Iraq to the east and Syria to the west. At the height of commercial traffic, some 5,000 gaily painted trucks passed through Cizre daily, lumbering to Iraq and back, bringing with them a huge demand for services. Repair shops, restaurants and cheap hotels cropped up on both sides of the road for miles outside of the city. Young boys sold cigarettes as truckers idled at Cizre's one stoplight. Others bustled about the tea shops offering to clean the grease off drivers' shoes.

"We had the cheapest, best goods in the area," said Haşimi, recalling the days before the 1991 Gulf war, when trade with Iraq was embargoed. "From all over people came here to buy and sell. Everyone was earning a good living, from the small children to their fathers. But when the border was closed, 90 percent of the shops closed down." For all its riches, Cizre has never compared with a city in western Turkey. The highway is paved, hut the narrow dirt roads in residential neighborhoods are hisected hy streams of raw sewage. The shops are well-stocked, hut with the cheapest, most basic goods. The schools are still overcrowded even though some families cannot afford to send their children to school. Electricity is available only intermittently and water pipes do not extend to every house. Cizre never had a proper factory, and some people only survive on migrant labor. Depending on the season, families can be found picking cotton in Adana, selling fruit in Istanbul, or working in restaurants along the Mediterranean coast.

Good Village/Bad Village

In the summer of 1984, 84 kilometers away from Cizre, guerrillas from the PKK opened their first offensive against Turkish security forces. The military's response was quick and harsh: hundreds were arrested, and security forces tortured and beat recalcitrant suspects. The government was no doubt caught off guard: the region had been under emergency and then martial law since 1979, and the 1980 military coup had ushered in a whole new round of repression. Tens of thousands of Kurds throughout the country were detained, periodicals shut down and restrictions on Kurdish expression strictly enforced.

*This and other historical details about Cizre come from Abdullah Yasin, *Butun Yönleriyle: Cizre* (1983).

Around Cizre, the guerrillas made more enemies than friends. By this time, nearly every village in the area had a school. Turkish television was intermittent, but a proper transmitter was under construction. Turkish newspapers were available every day—or at least every other day. By one count, in 1983 there were more than two sheep for every one of the area's some 32,500 people, not to mention the Angora goats (one per person), cows and water buffalo. With the coal mine up the road and the traffic off the highway, many villages found that trade was a lot smoother if they remained on good terms with the authorities.

But Turkish security forces treated everyone harshly. By the late 1980s, they had separated "good" villages from "bad" by means of a simple test: if villagers did not agree to join the village guard, a government-sponsored Kurdish militia which paid participants a hefty wage, they immediately came under suspicion. Around Cizre, a number of villages provided village guards, some of whom joined solely to deflect military pressure.

The PKK attacked villages and guards and also dealt severely with villages that refused to support them with food and water, or which did not seem amenable to the group's Marxist-Leninist message of liberation. Still, when all was said and done, many Kurds around Cizre came to respect the PKK's campaign of Kurdish nationalism. Feelings toward the PKK grew warmer as the security forces upped their pressure. The PKK might come in and kill a pro-government *mukhtar* and his family, but the security forces would detain a whole village, beat the men and women, ransack houses and then kill a couple of people just for show. By the end of the 1980s, the army had banned villagers from grazing animals and farming on the mountains into which the PKK retreated after attacks. Tractors were confiscated and nightly curfews were enforced. Villagers fled to nearby towns.

Around the time the rural economic base started to crumble, Turkey embarked on its ambitious Southeast Anatolia Project (GAP), a multi-billion-dollar project to harness the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The plan envisions nearly two dozen dams and some 19 power plants which will boost irrigated land by a third and double electricity capacity. The government touts the project as an example of its commitment to developing the southeast. The dams, once complete, will make arable huge swatches of now-arid land. The boost in agricultural output will presumably increase jobs and wealth, and attract light industry to the region.

Some Kurds fear that big landowners will quickly take possession of the new arable land, leaving villagers not much better off than before. The government has also used the project as an excuse to relocate Kurds whose homes were targeted to disappear under vast lakes. The GAP, meant to integrate potentially productive parts of Kurdistan into Turkey's economy, is more likely to marginalize further the mountainous region to the east where the PKK is strongest. PKK guerrillas have recently torched machinery and tried to bomb a couple of dams.

Nor have the guerrillas ignored Ankara's other investments in the region. Oil refineries in nearby Batman have been bombed, as has the now-idle pipeline through which Turkey used to transport Iraq's oil. Guerrilla attacks have slowed road construction (the PKK argues that the roads transport soldiers), cut tourism (last summer close to 30 tourists were kidnapped by the group) and halted archaeological digs. The burgeoning war—in which 11,700 people have died, some 500 in the first two-and-a-half months of this year alone—is also cited by Central Asian states that are loath to pipe oil to Western markets through Turkey.

Establishing Autonomy

These days, downtown Cizre is a dismal sight of half-shuttered shops and overcrowded coffeehouses. Under pressure from the security forces, thousands of people have streamed in from the countryside. The city's population is now around 60,000, up from 20,200 in 1980. Many immigrants are not from Cizre's outlying villages—of which at least a fourth have been forcibly emptied by soldiers—but from more distant parts of the region.

Some in Cizre fear their city will go the way of Sirnak, a nearby town of 29,000 bombed by soldiers almost two years ago. The attack on Sirnak was ostensibly precipitated by a clash with the PKK, but when the shooting stopped about 50 hours later, the police station, government buildings and military base had escaped virtually unscathed and almost all casualties were civilian. So far, promised government restitution has not materialized.

Cizre may indeed become another Sirnak. Its people are known for being strong PKK supporters, something that often sets off a shooting spree by soldiers. "The guerrillas are Kurds, they are fighting for our homes, our lives and our national identity," says a truck driver who frequently passes through town. "But the government—well, they are only interested in beating and killing us. Every night I go to bed and wonder if I will live to the morning."

Last September, Cizre was closed off for two days after soldiers clashed with three guerrillas hiding out in a house. When the smoke cleared, the guerrillas were dead, the house in which they were hiding destroyed, and lots of other houses had been damaged. By the time the curfew was lifted, downtown Cizre was littered with shattered glass. A month earlier, soldiers had also embarked on a shooting spree—no one is quite sure what set it off—during which they managed to destroy a row of restaurants and service stations just outside the town. Along the way, a couple of houses in a nearby village were shot up and, when his truck was firebombed, a sleeping driver burned to death.

Local residents say there is no civil authority to which they can appeal. The mayor and deputy mayor readily admit they have no power. The government-appointed administrator has not been open to complaints about security forces abuses. When M. Ali Dincer, a human rights lawyer whose office was firebombed by soldiers, tried to complain, he was told that the guerillas must have perpetrated the act. "At one o'clock in the afternoon the PKK

is driving around Cizre in tanks?" asks Dincer. "The people are lying because they are afraid of the terrorists," responds Omer Adar, the smooth-talking government administrator.

For now, the only economic aid seems to be going to the neighborhood controlled by village guards. They need their own school—they are so hated by other residents that their children cannot safely be sent to schools in the center of the city. "Soon, when the fighting ends, there are a lot of things we will do all over Cizre," insists Adar, describing proposals for a vast irrigation system, agricultural investment and a host of vocational training programs. A Kurd himself, Adar believes Kurdish agitation for greater rights is nothing more than PKK propaganda. "Only some ignorant people who don't know anything about the world want Kurdish education—after all, what use would it be in the world? The Turkish language and culture are very rich, while the Kurdish culture is a very ignorant culture. There is no future for Kurdish."

The PKK cannot add electricity lines or pump more water, but it does offer a well-functioning judicial system, after-school classes in Kurdish, and an enforceable moral code. Tired of being beaten by your husband? The PKK will explain to him that men no longer are allowed to beat their wives. Trouble collecting on a bill? The guerrillas do not like it when one Kurd tries to cheat another. Too many teenage boys getting drunk? The group will ban alcohol. Is pornography ruining local morals? The movie theater will be shut down. Was your brother murdered in a fight over a woman? The PKK will put the assailant on trial.

"There's no longer any need for people to seek out the PKK when they have a problem, because the PKK is everywhere. It will hear about the problem and take steps to deal with it," explains one local Kurdish professional. "The PKK has to do this. The government doesn't care anymore if one Kurd kills another Kurd."

Cizre's experiences are reflected throughout the southeast. According to the Turkish Human Rights Association, at least 874 villages have been forcibly emptied and more than 500 Kurdish activists mysteriously murdered since 1991. Torture of police detainees is rampant, as is arbitrary arrest and harassment.

Economically, much of the region is in a state of disrepair and disintegration. Rarely a week goes by without a politician in Ankara stating that economic factors are at the root of the guerrilla war, but establishing a well-functioning economy in southeast Turkey means creating a secure environment for businesses and farmers. This would require halting arbitrary detention and torture, mysterious murders of activists and shooting sprees by the security forces. Villages could no longer be burned down because the people refused to take up arms against the guerrillas. It also means an environment in which discussion of Kurdish life and aspirations is not throttled as "separatist propaganda." Restrictions should be lifted on free discussion of Kurds in Turkey, their past, present and future. With state-protected—and even promoted—freedoms, public and private interests will feel free to invest in economic development in the southeast.

After all these steps are taken, it might turn out that the Kurds want more. Perhaps the PKK is the party of choice for the Kurds. Ankara, in its zeal to crush Kurdish nationalism, has managed to undermine and destroy nonviolent Kurdish movements, in effect helping ensure PKK dominance. Between the state and the guerrillas, Kurds have not had many options for protesting restrictions on their identity. But even without the PKK, a majority of Kurds may continue agitating for full separation from Turkish control. Ankara must take the chance and deal with it democratically. Right now, the only thing certain is further bloodshed by both the PKK and the Turkish army as long as changes are not made. ■

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Kurdish Broadcasting in Iraq

Ann Zimmerman

Television station of the PUK in Zakhu, Iraqi Kurdistan, 1992. Ann Zimmerman

In the transition from exile to autonomy, Iraqi Kurdish parties have set up the first Kurdish-controlled television channels in the Middle East. Their broadcasts now reach more than half of the estimated 3 to 4 million people in "Free Kurdistan."[1]

The battle over who defines Kurdish culture is inherently linked to political control. The evolution of Baghdad's Kurdish-language TV channel reflects a history of carrot-and-stick policies aimed at undermining resistance to the central government. Iraqi concessions to Kurdish autonomy in 1970 included adding Kurdish-language programs to the Arabic channel in Kirkuk. By 1972, the station had added a Kurdish language channel with programs for other minorities. Its transmission covered the provinces of Kirkuk, Sulaimaniyya and Erbil.

All official mass media produced within the autonomous Kurdish region was censored by the government. Attracted by the prospect of reaching larger audiences, however, Kurdish writers, performers and artists from these provinces began producing works for the new channel. Older Kurds living in Zakhu, a border town, say that before the 1991 uprisings they preferred Baghdad's Kurdish station to the channels of neighboring Turkey (available at the twist of an antenna) or the national Arabic broadcasts.

Following the collapse of the Kurdish resistance movement in 1975, Baghdad embarked on an Arabization campaign which included the relocation of thousands of Kurds into concentration camp-like complexes within and outside of Iraqi Kurdistan. Among its efforts to make such repressive policies more palatable, the government distributed truck-loads of color television sets to Kurdish civil servants, casino owners and Ba'th Party members. In 1979, 30,000 color sets were given to Iraqi Kurdish refugees repatriating from Iran. In 1986, Baghdad started a second Kurdish channel to service the Mosul and Dohuk districts.

Most government censors were Arabs, dependent on Kurdish translators to interpret Kurdish originated or adapted scripts. A Kurdish playwright described these security officers as "thugs who did not understand the art of theater." In order to present Kurdish nationalist messages, Kurdish TV producers and playwrights used subversive subtexts. Sympathetic translators neglected to interpret such nuances to censor officers. For example, the Ministry of Information accepted scripts on the nationalization of British oil holdings and on Israeli oppression of the Palestinians—topics ripe for comparison with Baghdad's economic and social repression of its Kurdish population. These parallels were highlighted by featuring key characters in traditional Kurdish clothing and using titles referring to Kurdish heroes and nationalist symbols.

Iraq later boasted of an increase in Kurdish language degree holders, and a significant number of these were earned by Arabs assigned to learn Kurdish for security purposes. "In the beginning," recalls a Kurdish actor from Sulaimaniyya, "they really didn't understand what we were doing. But by 1988, they had well-trained censors. Instead of reviewing a translated script, they sat in the studio and marked our performances word for word. We felt like they knew our culture better than we did."

By the 1990s, television sets had reached necessity status in urban areas. "When Saddam was here, we were not free to move because of the curfews and military police," a Kurdish sportscaster said. "Now we are free to move, but we still have no entertainment, no fuel to travel, and many are without jobs. So we spend a lot of time watching television." A survey following the 1991 uprising showed that in Zakhu and Dohuk, 31 percent of households had purchased new televisions as part of their initial furniture replacements.

During the uprising, government television facilities were priority targets. PUK leaders ordered their peshmerga to seize transmission towers

Ann Zimmerman *worked with Kurdish television stations in northern Iraq in 1992 producing health education programs.*

and equipment. After people returned from exile, the PUK held a monopoly on opposition broadcasts until 1992 when election campaigns for the Kurdish National Assembly generated two other channels.

Regular programming by the three channels averages five hours per evening and all day Fridays and other Islamic and Kurdish holidays. A typical evening begins with lines from the Quran, followed by cartoons, international and local news, traditional and contemporary music from Iraq and neighboring countries, a weekly local feature show, political commentary, and an international film.

The programming reflects party policies, but the sponsors agree on the importance of Kurdish self-definition. Local producers create most of their own shows, covering topics on education, women's issues, entertainment, Kurdish history, the performing arts, comedy, folklore, arts and sciences, medicine, sports, and special programs for the region's smaller Assyrian, Turkoman, Yezidi and Arab minorities. Show hosts and hostesses now enjoy status as local celebrities, though most had never seen the inside of a station before the uprising.

The new channels also provide Iraqi intelligence with a window into the north. Some Kurds fear that association with the opposition through their broadcasts will endanger relatives in government-controlled areas. Three doctors from Dohuk and Zakhu declined on separate occasions to appear on politically neutral programs to discuss health issues. For Kurds who continue to cross into Baghdad-controlled areas to visit family or conduct business, appearance on TV increases their risk of being singled out at government check points.

The new transmissions have provided public opportunities to address "forbidden" political issues and acknowledge once-banned histories and heroes. The increase in foreign programming smuggled into the region has also served to break Baghdad's stranglehold on information from the outside. Iraqi government films of atrocities have become important denominations for contemporary Kurdish identity. Other foreign and resistance-made documentaries in this genre include records of the aborted uprisings, the mass exodus, the Anfal campaign, the chemical attack on Halabja, and videotapes captured from Iraqi security buildings during the uprisings which document torture and executions. "Saddam's Crimes" are among the most popular video rentals. As one shopowner explained, "Some people sleep through 'Rambo,' but if you ask them about any part of 'Saddam's Crimes' they can recall every point in detail."

Since its first broadcasts in October 1991, the PUK channel has featured these films on a daily and weekly basis, reflecting PUK determination to convince northern Kurds to shut all doors to future negotiation for Saddam's return. The other parties are less sure of the West's reliability and the limits on Saddam, and their stations rarely show "Saddam's crimes." ■

Footnote

1 Stations in Dohuk have been forced to a virtual standstill since August 1993 when Baghdad stopped providing electricity to the governorate.

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Clinton, Ankara and Kurdish Human Rights

Maryam Elahi

Southeastern Turkey. Susan Meiselas/Magnum

China makes the headlines, but US policies toward the top three recipients of US aid—Israel, Egypt and Turkey—are perhaps the most egregious examples of the failure of the Clinton administration to make good on its commitment to human rights. While the human rights situation in the Israeli-occupied territories and Egypt has received some media attention in the US, that of Turkey has by and large been ignored. In 1993, when Turkey re-ceived close to $500 million in military assistance from the US, the situation had deteriorated to the point where torture of political prisoners and extrajudicial killings were the norm in the southeast of the country. The government is extremely reluctant to prosecute those responsible for torture in the name of the state. In fact, human rights violations are carried out with impunity by members of the Turkish security forces, leading one to conclude that they operate with de facto government endorsement.

Maryam Elahi *is program officer on the Middle East, North Africa and Europe at Amnesty International in Washington, DC.*

The US is fully aware of the situation, yet no clear high-level message has been sent warning that the systematic abuse of human rights constitutes a violation of US law authorizing foreign assistance. To the contrary, the Clinton administration has signaled Ankara that gross human rights violations are acceptable in the battle against "terrorism." Meeting with Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Çiller on October 15, 1993, President Clinton stated: "It's not fair for us...to urge Turkey to not only be a democratic country but to recognize human rights and then not to help the government of Turkey deal with the terrorism within its borders." He went on to praise Turkey as "a shining example to the world of the virtues of cultural diversity." Clinton's tribute flies in the face of overwhelming evidence of massive persecution of advocates of Kurdish cultural rights.

The escalation of the armed conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and Turkish security forces has had a direct impact on the deterioration of the human rights situation in southeastern Turkey. The interior minister admits that 600 villages have been emptied. This systematic destruction has been accompanied by threats, abductions, "disappearances," torture and killings of civilians. On September 17, 1993, one day after nearby clashes between security forces and the PKK, helicopters flew over Palamdzu village tents, pitched on the Cet pasture in the Ovacik area. The helicopters dropped explosives on the fleeing villagers, killing two and wounding seven—all unarmed civilians. In a similar incident on March 26, 1994, eight people, including three children, were killed when warplanes bombed Kumcati village near Sirnak. Official statements claimed the bombing was "accidental," although at least three other Kurdish settlements were bombed the same day. All had refused to join the state armed village guards.

Last year, several hundred people were victims of political killings in southeastern Turkey. The current scale and pattern of extrajudicial executions is unprecedented in recent Turkish history. The victims, who are often taken from their homes in the middle of the night and shot, include members of the independent Turkish Human Rights Association and the Democracy Party (DEP), and journalists. The government has denied the collusion of the security forces, instead pointing to the PKK and Hizbullah (an Islamist organization), but has failed to regularly and systematically investigate cases or to produce sufficient evidence for indictments. The PKK has committed killings, but it frequently claims responsibility, as its goal is to intimidate and discourage "collaborators."

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture monitors member states' adherence to the European Convention against the Use of Torture, to which Turkey is a party. After its third visit to Turkey, the

Committee broke with its tradition of confidential reporting, announcing in December 1992 that it had found extensive proof that "torture and other forms of severe ill-treatment of persons in police custody remain widespread in Turkey." Most torture occurs during the initial interrogation and detention of prisoners. Ensuring proper access by lawyers is the single most effective measure that the Turkish government could take to prevent torture, but incommunicado detention is common for political detainees.

The Çiller government, like its predecessors, has failed to set up independent commissions to examine the dramatic increase in allegations of extrajudicial executions and prosecute those involved in human rights violations. The government also has failed to put into force legal structures to provide safeguards for detainees. In meetings in late 1993 with the Turkish prime minister, members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee failed to press her to take measures to improve Turkey's human rights situation. The 1993 State Department's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices documents systematic abuses, yet both the administration and Congress have failed to act on it. The first sign that this may change is a 1994 US House of Representatives Appropriations bill. It conditions 25 percent of US aid for the next fiscal year on verification by the Secretary of State that Turkey is addressing allegations of abuses against civilians in the southeast. It remains to be seen if this language will be retained in the final version.■

From **Hassanpour,** *page7*

persistence of traditional regionally-based power in the face of a rapidly changing sociopolitical map. In Kurdistan, while the Regional Government confronts economic blockade and political boycott by neighboring states, the two major parties have themselves weakened it by dividing government offices into their respective spheres of influence. Popular outrage has escalated in Kurdish cities as the two sides have continued to fight. In late May, women marched from Sulaimaniyya to Erbil, the seat of the Regional Government, demanding that the killing stop. Like other, earlier mass actions including the uprising of March 1991 in Iraq, this illustrates the growing readiness of urban masses to challenge traditional authoritarian leaderships and to demand accountability from the self-centered political parties.

In Iran, the regime has won the military contest against the autonomist movement, although Komala and the two KDPI factions continue guerrilla operations even in the cities. The Islamist groups organized by Tehran are seen by most Kurds as collaborators. While there are no prospects for autonomous rule under the Islamic Republic, any serious crack in the state structure in Tehran will bring Kurdistan under the control of the Kurdish parties once again.

Kurdish demands for self-rule constitute a democratic pursuit that is incompatible with the despotism and ethnic-based nationalism of the Middle Eastern states. As for many of the democratic and revolutionary movements in the region, Kurdish rights to self-determination continue to be their blindspot. In circumstances of uneven political and economic development, Kurdistan has offered valuable opportunities as a base for liberation that goes beyond Kurdistan. That these opportunities have not been seized demonstrates the weaknesses of these movements as well as the problems of Kurdish nationalism. ■

Footnotes

1 Towns and cities have been a permanent feature of Kurdish life. In the mid-17th century, Bidlis had a population of about 26,000 with some 1,200 shops and workshops, five *madrasas* and seventy *maktabs*, and a sizable group of *ulama*. Although trade was flourishing, they were, much like pre-industrial medieval European cities, under the domination of the landed aristocracy. Ideology in this context is meant as a more or less coherent set of ideas—political, philosophical, aesthetic, literary, religious, etc.—that can be attributed to a social class or group.

2 Although sources ignore the role of lower classes in history, we know, from the earliest recordings of popular ballads in late 19th and early 20th centuries, that the peasantry was conscious of the question of state power. See Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan, 1918-1985* (San Francisco: Mellen Research University Press, 1992), p. 56.

3 See articles "*Milla*" and "*Millet*" in *The Encyclopedia of Islam*, Volume VII, Fascicules 115-16, 1990, pp. 61-64.

4 For references to the works of Khani and Koyi, see Hassanpour, pp. 66-99.

5 "Modernist" refers here to a political agenda calling for an end to feudalist and tribal relations, modern education, economic development, and political freedoms. This trend, first recorded in Koyi's poetry in the late 19th century, was radicalized in the 1940s and 1950s under the influence of the Communist movement.

6 Later formations in Iran and Iraq also had the word for "league" in their names and also became known as Komala. They have no organizational link with the Komalay A.K.

7 Britain and the USSR entered a tripartite agreement in 1941 with Iran by which their forces occupied the southern and northern parts of Iran respectively for the duration of World War II. The primary objective of Soviet support for the Kurdish and Azerbaijan republics of 1946 was the security of its southern borders, and Moscow chose to accommodate Tehran rather than encourage Kurdish autonomy or independence. For a brief survey of the Kurdish Republic, see Amir Hassanpour, "The Nationalist Movements in Azarbaijan and Kurdistan, 1941-46," in John Foran, ed., *A Century of Revolution: Perspectives on Social Movements in Iran* (University of Minnesota Press, forthcoming).

8 According to Hanna Batatu, the 1948 revolt in 'Arbat village was "the first uprising of its kind in the Iraqi countryside—an uprising against the landed shaikh instead of under his leadership—and in this sense set the tone to the fervid, if intermittent, agrarian unrest of the fifties." *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements in Iraq* (Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 614.

9 The scope of capitalist development in Kurdistan has been debated among communist organizations in Iran and Turkey but, interestingly, not in Iraq.

10 The history of this important conflict has not been adequately studied. According to a contemporary account, Barzani represented "historically and objectively the last traces of tribal and patriarchal mentality in the very bosom of the Kurdish nationalist movement." Serge Gantner, "Le movement national kurde," *Orient*, Paris, Nos. 32/33 (1964/1965), p. 101. The same issue also includes the KDP politburo's critique of the deal.

11 The PUK maintains that this was in order to abort a potential leftist hegemony of the Kurdish movement. See *Kamele* (organ of the KTLI), No. 6 (Fall 1979), pp. 21-22.

12 At the KDP's 11th Congress in 1993, some groups and individuals who had split after its collapse in 1975 rejoined the party, which renamed itself KDP United.

13 A Party for Independence of Kurdistan (Parti Serbexoyi Kurdistan) was formed in 1990 in the diaspora.

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Algeria Between Eradicators and Conciliators

Hugh Roberts

To avoid open war, a bargain is needed between the Islamist movement and the state—a bargain either at the expense of democracy or one that returns to the electoral process and constitutional government.

Since becoming president on January 30, 1994, Lamine Zeroual has taken significant steps that point toward "reconciliation" between the state and its Islamist opponents. Zeroual has moved to establish his authority, notably by appointing a new government and reshuffling the military command in the spring. His advent to the head of state represents the best prospect of a resolution of Algeria's political crisis since it burst open in October 1988.

The crisis in Algeria is profound and multi-faceted, but it is the *political* dimension which is fundamental. No strategy of economic reform can be successfully undertaken, let alone bear fruit, while the political framework—the state itself—is in flux. Only internal political forces can achieve a durable resolution of the political crisis. A definitive victory for one side or another is not a prospect. The army has failed to crush the rebellion of the Islamist opposition, and the rebellion has failed to mount a challenge on a scale which might overthrow the state.

The brutal test of strength which has been taking place, however, has done immense damage to the state. It has lost the allegiance of the bulk of the population as well as the ability to maintain order, let alone implement policies. Either stability will be restored through functional compromise, or the state will continue to disintegrate. Zeroual's accession to the top post makes a functional compromise between the Algerian state and the armed rebellion a possibility for practical politics.

The guerrilla war that the most determined elements of the Islamist opposition have waged since 1992 is a response to the behavior of the state. The regime adopted a pluralist constitution in February 1989, then allowed Islamist parties to form (in violation of the spirit of the law on political associations of July 1989). It then allowed the most dynamic of these parties, the Islamic Salvation Front (Front Islamique du Salut, FIS), to win local and regional elections in June 1990 and the first round of the national legislative elections in December 1991. But a month later, in January 1992, it suspended the electoral process, and in March it banned the FIS altogether.

Suspending the electoral process, while questionable, was legally defensible: resigning as president when he did, Chadli Benjedid made a mockery of the two-ballot procedure. But the subsequent banning of the FIS had no local warrant, given the lack of constitutional legitimacy and hence the questionable legal authority of the men who made the decision. It made political sense only as the preliminary in a strategy to co-opt the FIS's mass constituency into a viable alternative politics.

Mohammed Boudiaf, the first president of the High State Committee which took power in January 1992, had such a strategy and the personal credibility to make it succeed. But his plan for a new catch-all National Patriotic Rally (Rassemblement Patriotique Nationale) capable of winning over the urban poor and youth died with him six months later. His assassination ensured that the rebellion against a discredited and apparently unreformable state would grow relentlessly unless and until the state moved to readmit Algerian Islamism into a legal and open process.

Since the FIS was banned, a guerrilla movement known as the Armed Islamic Movement (Mouvement Islamique Armé, MIA), led by Abdelkader Chebouti, has been at the forefront of armed resistance to the state. The MIA is a revival of an earlier movement of the same name, led by Mustapha Bouyali between 1982 and 1987. When the FIS was founded in 1989, many former members of Bouyali's movement joined and went along with Abassi Madani's strategy of operating within the framework of the 1989 constitution. When the FIS was banned, many FIS militants, as well as the former Bouyalists, turned to guerrilla activity as the only remaining strategic option.

It is not clear that the MIA has ever seriously envisaged a revolutionary seizure of power. It has never attempted to mobilize popular support on a large scale, or to provoke a collapse of the state by targeting senior power holders. The MIA instead has been

Hugh Roberts *writes on Algeria and works with the Geopolitics and International Boundaries Research Center at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London.*

Algeria. Nadia Benchallah

content to attack security forces and low-level functionaries, especially local government officials appointed by the central government in place of elected FIS members. Its behavior has been consistent with a strategy of applying pressure to make the regime regret its decision to ban the FIS, and to induce the government to readmit the substance of radical Islamism to the political process.

If the MIA had been able to maintain a monopoly of the guerrilla resistance to the regime, then a political resolution along the line Zeroual favors might be well advanced by now. But there has been a joker in the pack. The MIA's position is seriously contested by a rival organization, the Armed Islamic Group (Groupe Islamique Armé, GIA), which began to make its distinctive presence felt last summer.

The GIA subsumes various elements which were never part of the FIS and always opposed the FIS's constitutionalist strategy, including the "Afghans"—Algerian veterans of the Afghanistan war—and comprises at least four distinct groups operating in different areas: Sidi Bel Abbes in the west, the Medea district south of Algiers, the eastern suburbs of the capital, and the Jijel district in the northeast. These groups appear to be more or less autonomous but share a refusal to negotiate with the state and a penchant for ferocious and savage attacks. The GIA has claimed responsibility for all 36 foreigners killed since last September, and is likely responsible for the killing of intellectuals and unveiled women, and for the assassination of a former prime minister, Kasdi Merbah, last August.

The GIA has been a massive embarrassment for the FIS and the MIA. The Algerian media regularly cites its appalling acts of violence as evidence of general Islamist barbarism, and thus as grounds for refusing any dialogue with the FIS. The MIA apparently fears sanctioning a negotiated settlement lest it be outflanked by this radical rival. The competition between the two movements has forced them repeatedly to up the ante as they strive to expand from their initial bases into new territory. This situation has made it impossible for the FIS to respond unequivocally to Zeroual's gestures, which in turn strengthens the faction within the regime opposing negotiation with the FIS.

Since the June 1992 assassination of Mohamed Boudiaf, two tendencies have been confronting one another within the Algerian power structure—broadly speaking, those who favor a strategy of brutal suppression of the Islamist movement (les éradicateurs),

and those who argue that a compromise must be negotiated if the state is to be preserved (les conciliateurs).

In so far as the "eradicators" have had a political vision, it has been that of a modern state *à la française*, implying a radical rupture with the populist tradition of the FLN state and a secularist separation between politics and religion. The main adherents of this project have been those officers who served in the French army and who have held commanding positions in the Algerian military hierarchy since 1988 (notably, chief-of-staff Maj. Gen. Mohamed Lamari, gendarmerie chief Maj. Gen. Benabbas Ghezaiel, military security chief Maj. Gen. Mohamed Mediene Former and former Interior Minister Selim Saadi) and the French-educated wing of the political class.

This tendency has enjoyed the sympathy of Paris and the bulk of the French-language press in Algeria, but has only minority support within the Algerian people. Organized civil support has been largely confined to the national trade union (the Union Generales des Travailleurs Algériens, UGTA), the small Berberist party known as the Rally for Culture and Democracy (Rassemblement pour la Culture et la Démocratie, RCD), and the former communists of the Ettahadi Party.

Because of its small following, the "eradicator" position has been consistently oriented towards the most authoritarian concept of the state and the most repressive strategy for dealing with the rebellion. The democratic aspirations of many who belonged to the UGTA, the RCD and Ettahadi have increasingly gone by the board, and the implication of these elements in the policy of the hardliners has tended to discredit the entire "democratic" discourse in Algeria. Moreover, when the "dialogue" process was taken out of the High State Committee's hands and entrusted to a newly-constituted National Dialogue Commission last November, all talk of a "project de societe" (social project—code for the modernist vision) was dropped. It is no longer clear what the positive content of the eradicators' vision is now, beyond defense of their own Western lifestyles.

The "conciliators" have operated on the premise that the state's loss of popular legitimacy over the last five years makes impossible the implementation of a radical program of Jacobin modernization *à la française*. The state, they argue, must strike a compromise with the substance of the Islamist movement. Only if the FIS has a stake in the political process and a share of power can the state hope to harness its formidable capacity for channeling puhlic opinion on the streets. This is absolutely essential, in their view, to ensure public acceptance of the difficult terms of a structural adjustment deal with the IMF.

Zeroual clearly shares the view of the "conciliators," and he is ideally equipped to translate it into an effective policy. He never served in the French army, and has never been a part of the coterie that has dominated Algeria's defense establishment these last five years. He joined the National Liberation Army (Armée de Liberation Nationale, ALN) in 1957 at the age of 16, and fought in the guerrilla struggle inside Algeria until independence. This gives him a measure of personal legitimacy which none of his peers in the military hierarchy can match. The Islamists' propaganda against the state as being the tool of "bizb franca" (the party of France) has been without much of a target since Zeroual became president.

Zeroual, moreover, resigned his post as Commander of Land Forces in 1989, when President Chadli overruled his pragmatic views on army modernization in favor of Khaled Nezzar's alternative proposal to refashion Algeria's army along French lines. He thus acquired a solid reputation as a man of integrity, and avoided being implicated in the army's subsequent decisions to smash the FIS demonstrations and arrest Abassi Madani on trumped-up charges, or to ban the FIS. Nor is he implicated in the assassination of President Boudiaf or in General Lamari's policy of all-out repression.

Zeroual's policy is clearly in the long-term interest of the army, which needs to conduct an orderly retreat from its dangerously exposed role in the controversial business of government. Only this will repair its frayed unity, which is needed to safeguard the foundations of its power. Zeroual's problem is that this policy nonetheless threatens powerful interests, especially within the officer corps. Over and above its proselytizing mission, the Islamist movement is the vector of a number of social demands, notably those of the frustrated Arabic-speaking majority resentful of the disproportionate status and privileges of the French-educated elite and, more generally, of a demand that those guilty of corruption be brought to justice.

The FIS almost certainly considers that it had tacit understandings with Algeria's rulers—between Madani and Prime Minister Mouloud Hamrouche from September 1989 to June 1991, and then between Abdelkader Hachani and Prime Minister Sid Ahmed Ghozali from July 1991 to January 1992. The FIS holds the army responsible for the breakdown on both occasions, and is therefore disinclined to agree to any third bargain without cast-iron guarantees of good faith. As long as the generals responsible for the repression in June and July 1991 and since September 1992 are still at their posts, why should the FIS make a deal? It would have little to gain and much to lose, and could hardly expect to deliver a ceasefire on the part of the MIA, and thus the restoration of order on which its own ability to resume open political activity depends.

Over and above the hostility of the modernist and secularist elements of the Algerian middle class, then, Zeroual has had to reckon with opposition from many of his military colleagues fearful for their own futures. While he is almost certainly unwilling to agree to FIS demands to make a public example of any military commanders, he has needed to marginalize those associated with the repressive strategy of the "eradicators" and bring on—or bring back—officers with whom the Islamists have no score to settle and who are loyal to him personally.

It was never realistic to suppose that Zeroual would be able to do this all at once. And it is a measure of how thor-

oughly Western media misrepresents what happens in Algeria that Zeroual, universally depicted in late March as the helpless prisoner of his hardline opponents, should now have proved strong enough to sack Malek and Saadi, appoint a new government of his own choice, and then purge and reorganize the army leadership mainly to his own liking. This he did on May 5, replacing the "French school" officers commanding the police and the Constantine military region, while also ensuring that men loyal to him took over the Oran and Blida regions as well as the command of the army and air force.

The difficulty he has encountered in making these moves is illustrated by the angry demonstrations which his opponents in the Malek government allowed to take place, and by articles in the French-language press accusing him of splitting the army in the process. While such a split, and a consequent descent into all-out civil war, cannot be ruled out, it remains, on balance, unlikely. Zeroual's policy enjoys powerful support with much of the political class. He can count on the FLN and the main Kabyle-based party, Hocine Ait Ahmed's Socialist Forces Front (Front des Forces Socialistes, FFS), which swept the Kabylia region in 1991. It is more likely that the imperative of maintaining army unity will work for Zeroual and his supporters rather than against them, and that the balance of forces within Algeria will eventually enable them to restore order through a compromise with the Islamist rebellion.

What is at issue now is whether such a compromise will be at the expense of political pluralism, or whether it will be consistent with the principles embodied in the 1989 constitution. This is a point which the most experienced of Algerian pluralists, Hocine Ait Ahmed, appears to have appreciated all along, while it seems never to have occurred to the secularist die-hards of the RCD. One question worth asking, therefore, is why the French media have given such prominence to the inflammatory declarations of Zeroual's opponents (notably RCD leader Said Sadi's full-page interview in *Le Figaro* on March 30) and have passed over in silence the numerous counsels of moderation emanating from more representative political leaders.

It is also worth asking why the French media were so dismissive of the significance of the change in government in April, and played down the military changes in May, while making a massive fuss about the alleged failure of the pro-dialogue demonstration on May 8. These demonstrations mobilized at least as many people as the anti-dialogue demonstrations two months earlier. And they did so despite the fact that, alone of the major parties, only the FLN was actively supporting them. The FIS clearly refused to mobilize its supporters on behalf of Zeroual's policy until its own demand for legal status had been conceded.

If a full descent into open civil war is avoided in Algeria, it will be through a bargain of some kind between the Islamist movement and the state. This bargain can either be at the expense of democracy, or it can be to the advantage of democracy by permitting a return to the electoral process and a constitutional government on the basis of pluralism. If the FIS is legalized again, a return to political pluralism will be in sight. If it is not, a very different kind of deal, perhaps between the state and armed rebels of the MIA directly, will be in the cards, and Algerians can forget about democracy for a generation. Every statement on the situation made by official spokespersons for the French government since January 30 has had the effect, if not the purpose, of making it harder for Zeroual to re-legalize the FIS.

But then, the idea that France really wants to see an authentic Algerian nationalist such as Zeroual succeed in restoring order to Algerian politics, when its own favorites have repeatedly and spectacularly failed, is far from self-evident. ■

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The Islamist Movement and the Palestinian Authority

Graham Usher speaks with Bassam Jarrar

Bassam Jarrar, a leading Islamist thinker in the occupied territories, is a teacher of Islamic studies at UNRWA's Teacher Training Center in Ramallah in the West Bank and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Union of Islamic Scholars. He was among the 415 Palestinians expelled by Israel in December 1992 for alleged membership in the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas.

There have been two prevailing views on the role of Hamas in the coming period. For some, it is in the vanguard of a "rejectionist" Palestinian bloc bent on wrecking the PLO-Israeli Declaration of Principles, while others believe the renewed political legitimacy and economic sustenance autonomy will supposedly confer on the PLO will marginalize groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

One would do better to listen to what Islamist leaders are actually saying, and to analyze events on the ground. Since Oslo, Hamas representatives have repeatedly said that they do not want conflict with the nascent Palestinian authority, but their peace will come with a price—namely, influence on the social and cultural fronts via the schools, mosques and law.

This interview was conducted in March. Since then, events have demonstrated that Palestinian Islamists are fully cognizant of the new realities raised by self-rule, and for the politics it augers. In April, Hamas offered a "ceasefire with the occupation" if Israel withdrew to its '67 borders, dismantled all settlements and permitted international observers to be stationed along the Green Line. One week later, Hamas' and Fatah's military wings in Gaza signed a pact outlawing all violence between them and placing a moratorium on the vexing issue of collaborator killings. And in May, leading Hamas figures let it be known that they were considering the idea of an "Islamist political party" and that the "resistance to occupation" need not be by "armed struggle alone," but also by "words, opinions and unifying the people."

People here regard these moves as extremely important, not just because they imply Hamas' de facto recognition of Israel, but equally because they suggest Hamas' metamorphosis from a sociomilitary movement into the loyal political opposition of the new Palestinian polity.

What Hamas will want in return for this compromise is currently the subject of a fierce debate within Palestinian Islamism. Jarrar, an informed and significant voice in that movement, here spells out some key aspects of Palestinian political struggle in the new era.

—Graham Usher

How would you characterize the Islamists' attitude toward the interim period of Palestinian self-rule, particularly their relations with the new Palestinian authority? You said recently that because the Islamist movement will form the "main opposition" to self-rule, "this will lead to interaction with the transitional authority." What do you mean?

Although the Islamic movement rejects the Declaration of Principles [DOP], it has no interest in defeating it by force. It views its role as one of trying to convince Palestinians of the agreement's shortcomings, and of dealing with its negative aspects on both the Arab and Islamic levels. But it does not seek confrontation with the transitional authority, because confrontations will not promote these objectives.

Dialogue, however, depends ultimately on the attitude of the authority. If elections for the Palestinian municipalities and professional associations are held in a democratic way, then this will promote a rapprochement between the opposition and the authority. If the opposition is denied its democratic rights, there will be tension.

Similarly, in the field of education, if the new school authorities try to falsify certain aspects of Palestinian history, there will be conflicts. Islamists want a curriculum that is based on Arab and Islamic civilization, not one that is adulterated by foreign influences. I am talking here of the cultural curriculum rather that the scientific curriculum. If, on the other hand, the authorities take cognizance of these concerns, then again, there is room for reconciliation.

Finally, there is the issue of personal status [family] law. This is particularly important for Islamists because in most Arab countries this is explicitly based on *shari'a* law. It is not necessary for me here to say what I think the personal status law should be. This is a matter for the Palestinian *ulama*. But if the authorities deal with the law in a subjective way, this could lead to violations of the *shari'a* and so to infringements of our human rights as Muslims. We are not against innovation [*ijtihad*] in law, but we cannot compromise on rights that are guaranteed by the *shari'a*.

If there were cooperation over issues like these, wouldn't the Islamists be participating in self-rule?

Graham Usher *is a journalist working in the occupied territories.*

No. There is a distinction between the Islamists' attitude toward the transitional authority and its attitude toward the peace process. "Interaction" refers to the relationships that the Islamists want to obtain between the Palestinian groups during the transitional period. Let me repeat: they have no interest in fighting the Palestinian authority. They do, however, have an interest in fighting the Israeli occupation. Were, say, the Islamists to stand in the self-rule election, this distinction would be lost and would create confusion among their supporters.

Firstly, from the Islamists' point of view, participation in self-rule gives legitimacy to the peace process. Supposing the Islamists won the election. They would then be in the position of negotiating with the Israelis on the basis of the Oslo accords. They would have to recognize the legitimacy of the agreement even though they reject it! For this reason the Islamists distinguish between elections for the municipalities and associations, etc., where they would participate, and elections for the autonomy born of the DOP, where they wouldn't.

Secondly, and especially after [the massacre in] Hebron, the Islamists believe that the present atmosphere in the occupied territories is hardly conducive to democracy. Palestinians thus feel obliged to participate in the autonomy for the negative reason of wanting to be rid of this atmosphere. They are like a man in a tunnel: he is given a "choice" to leave the tunnel or wait for the train to kill him. Of course, he will leave, but this is hardly independence.

Thirdly, should the Islamists participate in self-rule elections, then naturally their supporters would vote for them. In effect 90 percent of Palestinians in the occupied territories would then become involved in the autonomy in some way, lending the DOP a credibility it otherwise would not have.

I still don't see how the Islamists can wield legislative influence without participation in the self-rule institutions. It is not going to be professional associations or the municipalities that will draw up school curricula or law....

But the transitional authority will have to take cognizance of what the associations and municipalities are saying—if, that is, it wants to build an atmosphere of genuine national consensus during the interim period.

Under what conditions would the Islamist movement, and particularly Hamas, agree to a cessation of the armed struggle against Israel? For example, last October, Hamas' spiritual guide, Shaikh Ahmed Yassin, is reported to have said that if Israel withdraws to the '67 borders, then Hamas would be prepared to declare a ceasefire with it.

Yes, he did say that. But remember, for Hamas the '67 borders are no more legitimate than tbe "borders" of Gaza and Jericho, so it would be a ceasefire and not peace, and certainly not a recognition of Israel. In my opinion, to speculate now about what would be the possible conditions of an armistice with Israel is futile. In any case, the only possible ceasefire would be one declared unilaterally by the Islamists. It certainly won't arise out of negotiations with the Israelis. The Islamic movement refuses, and has always refused, to be hemmed in by conditions dictated by the enemy. It will cease the armed struggle when it sees it to be in its best interest to do so. In other words, it will take the initiative.

The same logic applies to the Islamic movement's relations with the transitional authority or the PLO. While they don't seek conflict with the authority, this doesn't mean that the PLO has the right to lay down conditions about, say, Hamas' military operations against the occupation. This is a decision solely for Hamas.

Now for sure, the main bone of contention between the Islamists and the PLO is likely to be this issue of armed struggle during the transitional period. And if, for instance, Hamas launched an attack against settlers or soldiers in Ramallah or Gaza during the autonomy, this would undoubtedly cause problems for the PLO leadership. But what if Hamas were to hit targets in Tel Aviv or at the Israeli embassy in Cairo? What has the PLO to do with the protection of Tel Aviv or Cairo?

Does the Islamist movement want to reform the PLO or does it want to stand as a political alternative to it?

The Islamic movement is very concerned about the current state of the PLO. For example, after Oslo, some Palestinian factions sought the disintegration of the PLO. The Islamists, however, insisted on the preservation of the PLO. The PLO has a long history of struggle and therefore of legitimacy in Palestinian eyes, and there is currently no real alternative to it. Thus it would not be in the Palestinian interest—including the interest of Palestinian Islamists—to have it fall apart.

The Islamic movement's position is quite clear: it wants a national dialogue between all national and Islamic forces based on democratic reform of the PLO and its decision-making structures. If, however, the PLO disintegrates because of the catastrophic political decisions its leadership has made—specifically, its acceptance of Oslo—then this is due to those decisions. The blame cannot he laid at the door of the Islamists. But if it does disintegrate, this does not mean that there is a political vacuum. The Islamic movement is there because it exists independently of the PLO, and is an integral part of Palestinian political culture. ■

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Against All Odds, A Chronicle of the Eritrean Revolution
By Dan Connell. Trenton, New Jersey: Red Sea Press, 1994. 277 pages.

Reviewed by Basil Davidson.

After five years of tough and tiring travels and on-the-spot inquiry and research in Eritrea, Dan Connell gives us a valuable book of information and conclusions, one that adds much to our picture of the Eritreans who liberated their country from colonial misery under successive Ethiopian—or Ambaric—regimes. Like other serious observers of the Eritrean scene, he finds it deserving of respect and of far closer attention than it has generally received. For Eritrea's liberators have carried through a "unique experiment in democratic, social and economic development," an experiment, moreover, that "remains directed toward building a more egalitarian, just and multicultural society." These high claims may appear to signal one more exercise in do-gooding optimism, or another bout of sentimental illusion-mongering. But they arise from a very thoughtful and perceptive study, and readers of this "chronicle" will find that these claims stand on firm ground.

When the Eritreans—about three-and-a-half million in 1994—declared their post-colonial independence in 1993, they celebrated the joyful end of more than 30 years of harsh and costly struggle against invaders and aggressors. Still more impressively, perhaps, they carried over the threshold of peace a project in self-development that stands today in happy and wide contrast to the many years of pain through which this people has been obliged to pass. How was it done, using what political and social guides or principles? Connell's response derives from his years of courageous reporting between 1975 and the early 1990s. Together with Stefano Poscia's *Eritria* (Rome: Edizioni Associate, 1989), Connell's book is the most useful of several books of reportage produced out of the Eritrean events and dramas of the past many years. And since Eritrean developments have an all-African field of relevance, no one wanting to have and to test reliable opinions about Africa today is going to be able to ignore *Against All Odds*.

Connell's title doesn't exaggerate. The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF), chief instrument of this anti-colonial achievement, began in near total isolation from any outside source of aid or even friendly encouragement; and it had to continue in this isolation for years until, quite late, relief came from UN and NGO sources. Far from being a useful diversion to the Eritreans, the Cold War had thrown its destructive weight entirely in the favor of one or another enemy of the EPLF. Outside powers contributed to the oppressions exercised with great ferocity by the government of Ethiopia under the dictatorships of Haile Selassie and Mengistu Haile Mariam. To justify these outrageous aggressions, those dictators claimed that Eritrea had been an integral part of Ethiopia in medieval times, or earlier—tantamount to saying that most of France was part of England, since it had once been so in those same times.

"Diplomacy" preferred to accept that absurdity, and not even the Organization of African Unity, to its shame and utter discredit, questioned Ethiopia's imperialism. More than anywhere else in post-colonial Africa, the young men and women of Eritrea's guerrilla bands, and the eventual army that grew from those bands, had to rely on their own skill and daring to seize arms from their enemies and defy the whole "established world." This isolation imposed heavy burdens and called for effective self-reliance. But it enabled Eritrea to complete its struggle for independence without incurring any external debts, material or ideological. In the Middle East, in this way if not in others too, Eritrea has indeed stood alone. Scheming or ambitious neighbors, near and far, have persistently tried to fish in these waters to no profit.

Connell's report on all this is vivid in its humane dimensions. One sees more clearly how the essential aims of winning and conserving unity of action were pursued through a struggle for genuinely democratic participation. One understands better just how and why the *style* of the EPLF since its early days—its abrasive realism, its compensating accent on modesty and abnegation, its avoidance of rhetoric, its decency of aims and methods, along with a refusal to give much attention to external voices—was formed and could become decisive in the desperate years of the mid-1970s.

Connell's assessment of women's self-emancipation is especially good, and the only regret is that the book isn't a good deal longer. Even so, much about this very unusual people's movement shines through. Consider that the EPLF was able, as a grassroots resistance movement, to raise, maintain and continually enlarge an army of volunteers, about one-third of whom were women—not counting those women who staffed and often controlled networks of social, educational and medical self-assistance. In fact, this movement provides a range of practical lessons of more general relevance to Africa and beyond.

The whole Eritrean experience has been largely ignored by the outside world, most disgracefully in Africa and the Middle East. Yet whatever may now happen—Connell leaves the record to speak for itself—it can be said with confidence that this small country is going to count for much in the unfolding fortunes of the whole Horn and the Middle East. Its influence, however tactfully brought to bear, should weigh in on the scales of peace and good governance. Here is one national community where acute poverty has not been allowed to march together with self-induced frustration. ■

Basil Davidson *has written more than 20 books on African political and social history, including* The Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation-State *(Times Books, 1992).*

Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature
Edited by Salma Khadra Jayyusi. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. 744 pages.

Reviewed by Salah Hassan.

Salma Jayyusi's *Modern Palestinian Literature* brings together works by more than 70 writers and is unquestionably the most extensive anthology of 20th century Palestinian writing available in English. Like Jayyusi's other major compilations, *Modern Arabic Poetry* (1987) and *The Literature of Modern Arabia* (1988), the Project of Translation from Arabic (PROTA) directed the preparation of this anthology. Its vast sampling of Palestinian literature makes it especially suitable for libraries, and the bibliographical information of the authors will be useful to students looking for other works by particular authors.

Many of the 232 poems, 25 short stories and 14 excerpts from novels and autobiographies present narratives of occupation, exile, imprisonment and resistance which go beyond official national discourse. Some foreground Arab culture, Third World solidarity, feminism, Marxism or Islam. Ghareeb 'Asqalani, Mahmoud Darwish, Emile Habiby, Akram Haniyyeh, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra, Sahar Khalifeh, Hisham Sharabi, Fadwa Tuqan and Ghassan Zaqtan are only a few writers who connect Palestinian concerns with broader movements and struggles against homogenization and marginalization. The individual texts, taken together, illustrate the pluralism in Palestinian culture and oppose a narrow patriotism. *Modern Palestinian Literature* appears to provide a format in which diverse Palestinian cultural identities are molded into a collective national shape. However, it is not evident that the canonizing method of a "definitive" national anthology offers a wedge against further fragmentation, censorship and repression.

The anthology's claim to comprehensiveness may be fatal for the work of Palestinian writers not included. Most of those anthologized live outside the occupied territories and Israel, and were born before 1948. It is not enough for Jayyusi to state that "the balance [of good writing?] still tilts decidedly in favor of Palestinian literature written in exile" (pg. 7). Nor can she gloss over the limited selection of women authors and writers under 40 years old. By its very nature, an anthology excludes works and subverts differences in order to advance a constructed unity. The editor's introduction should address the political implications of what seem to be merely practical decisions.

Jayyusi argues that after 1948 one can trace the contours of a modern Palestinian literary tradition distinct from other Arabic literatures. The overarching nationalist perspective, the detailed political chronology at the beginning, excerpts from personal accounts in the final section and explanatory footnotes tie modern Palestinian literature to regional political developments. Yet Jayyusi expresses an ambivalence regarding this relationship:

> Because of their immediacy, political factors often tend to interfere in the artistic process, sometimes diverting it from its natural course in favor of a certain commitment or ideology. However, the history of modern Arabic literature, particularly poetry, and especially in the decades since the Palestine disaster of 1948, shows that art has its own way of reasserting its natural course of development and growth. (1-2)

Jayyusi's notion of a pristine art undercuts the anthology's political force. She seeks to identify avant-garde aesthetics and a nascent "modernism" as markers of a specific Palestinian literary tradition in order to situate the writings within the "acceptable" rubric of a national culture as opposed to international politics. Yet, by her own admission, while "all Arabic literature nowadays is involved in the social and political struggle of the Arab people, politics nevertheless imposes a greater strain on the Palestinian writer"(2). Jayyusi uses the introduction to set up an awkward opposition between art and politics characteristic of conservative cultural attitudes that require the minimization of political references to legitimize the artistic value of literature.

Anthologizing is one of the principal publishing strategies for presenting Arabic literatures in English translation. It cannot, however, replace the need to translate and publish entire works by individual Arab authors. Unlike PROTA's daring publication of novels, short story collections and poetry by various Arab authors, this broad national anthology speaks more to the requirements of US publishers and certain segments of the academic community than to the need for a challenging presentation of Arab culture and politics. The publication of *Modern Palestinian Literature* satisfies a demand for English translations of Palestinian literature; unlike many of the pieces included, it does not take up the urgent need to question the hegemonic effects of the nationalist project. ■

Salah Hassan *is a graduate student in the program of comparative literature at the University of Texas at Austin.*

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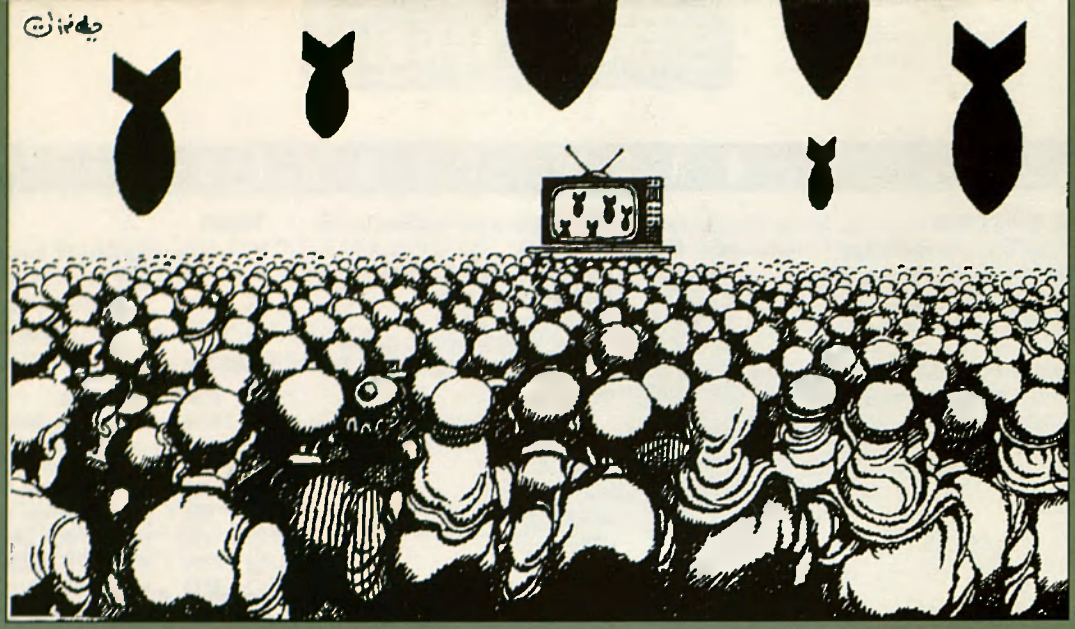

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