

Iraq & the Kurdish Question 1958-1970

Sa'ad Jawad

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The Kurdish problem is an important feature of modern Iraqi politics. Already apparent under the monarchy, it developed more acutely after the Revolution of July 1958. The crux of the problem lay in the Kurds' demand for a distinct status within Iraq, in the face of Arab nationalist fears that its fulfilment would ultimately lead to a call for separation.

This study of the development of the Kurdish national movement in Iraq from 1958 until the conclusion of the March Manifesto in 1970 examines the effects of Iraqi politics on the Kurdish national movement and vice versa. Thus the Kurdish question is seen in its Iraqi context rather than as a separate issue. The views and policies of neighbouring and other countries, and the course of the political struggle within the Kurdish national movement itself, have also been analysed.

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TO MY FATHER, MOTHER & STEPMOTHER

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CONTENTS

A note on transliteration

PREFACE

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|-----|
| CHAPTER ONE | Introduction: a History of Iraqi Kurdistan until 1958 | 1 |
| CHAPTER TWO | The Iraqi Revolution and its Aftermath, 1958-59 | 36 |
| CHAPTER THREE | Qasim and the Kurds: Cold War and Open Hostility 1960-1963 | 63 |
| CHAPTER FOUR | The Fall of Qasim and the Second Republic 1962-1963 | 107 |
| CHAPTER FIVE | Attempts to solve the Kurdish problem | 130 |
| CHAPTER SIX | The regime of 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif and the Kurdish question | 153 |
| CHAPTER SEVEN | The Kurds under the regime of 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif: April 1966 to July 1968 | 191 |
| CHAPTER EIGHT | The Ba'th Party and the Kurdish Dilemma | 222 |
| CHAPTER NINE | The international community and the Kurdish national movement | 277 |
| CHAPTER TEN | Conclusion | 321 |
| APPENDIX | | 338 |
| INTERVIEWS & BIBLIOGRAPHY | | 350 |
| INDEX | | 371 |

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Baghdad
May 1981

Sa'ad N Jawad

A note on transliteration

A simplified form of Arabic transliteration, without diacritical marks, has been adopted. Hamza has been omitted, except where final, and ' has been used for 'ain. Kurdish personal names, place names and titles of parties and publications have been transliterated in the form in which they appear in Kurdish publications in Europe

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Preface

The problem of national minorities can prove crucial for new states, particularly in the immediately post-independence period. Very often the dominant nationality, having achieved its primary anti-colonialist objectives, tends to concentrate on the more pressing task of national reconstruction, while ignoring or dismissing the claims of minority populations for autonomy, self-government, or religious and linguistic freedom. Here we may cite such examples as the southern Sudan and Biafra, or even the situation of the Arabs themselves after the Young Turk revolution of 1908-09. In Iraq, one of the most pressing issues facing the new Republic after 1958 was the Kurdish question, which was rendered more acute by the continuing failure of successive governments to provide a satisfactory solution. Apart from acting as a brake on the economic and social development of the country, the constant fighting in Northern Iraq facilitated the military domination of the various regimes in Baghdad, as well as resulting in ever-widening divisions between the Arabs and the Kurdish national movement.

Despite its evident importance, the Kurdish question in Iraq has received relatively little scholarly attention, and although some useful original research has been undertaken,¹ most writers have tended to see it largely in Kurdish, rather than Iraqi, terms. Furthermore, the historical rather than the contemporary aspects of the problems have been stressed.² Two recent works, one by the French journalist Kutschera and the other a collective volume edited by Gérard Chaliand, deserve mention.

Both books are concerned with the Kurds in general; Chaliand's collection contains a long essay on 'Kurdistan in Iraq' by I C Vanly, but also contains articles on Syria, Iran and Turkey which have been particularly useful for the revision of Chapter 9. Kutschera's work is especially valuable for its documentation of inter-Kurdish rivalries during the 1960s which are crucial for an understanding of that period. Although neither work considers the question in the overall context of Iraqi politics, both have provided important new insights into the Kurdish movement in general.

No study of Iraqi politics can now be undertaken without reference to Batatu's major work, The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements of Iraq.. published in 1977. Its breadth, scope and humanity combine to make much earlier writing superfluous, and it is essential reading for a proper understanding of modern Iraqi history. Much other writing on the period is demonstrably partisan; two of the principal Kurdish leaders, Ibrahim Ahmad and Jalal Talabani have both written accounts of the movement from the Kurdish points of view, while the Arab nationalist case is presented by al-Durra, al-Feel and al-Ghamrawi.

The primary source material for the present work consists of interviews, and the official publications of the Iraq government and the various political parties. The actual collection of the materials was facilitated by the kindness of many of those involved in the various series of negotiations. As many of the documents consulted were distributed and published secretly, I am

particularly conscious of my debt to those concerned. Although another round of fighting broke out in 1974-75, and the present situation is still uncertain this study has taken the March Manifesto of 1970 as its conclusion. Regardless of the differences which have led to the resumption of hostilities, both sides have continued to express their willingness to adhere to the March Manifesto. This fact supports one of my main conclusions, that what is needed is greater cooperation and mutual trust rather than a new agreement.

Notes

- 1 See the theses listed on pp 356-357.
- 2 The works of Vanly, Qazzaz and Jwaideh end with the Kurdish revolt of 1961.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: a History of Iraqi Kurdistan until 1958

Most scholars consider the Kurds to be Aryans, but it is difficult to obtain a unanimous view of their origin.¹ As long ago as 400 BC Xenophon, in the *Anabasis*, mentions Khardukhi or Kardukai, a mountain people who harassed his march towards the sea.² The Kurdish language belongs to the Indo-European family, is related to Persian, and has two main dialects. Kurmanji is spoken by the majority of those in Turkey and the northern part of Iraqi Kurdistan. Although spoken by a smaller number, Sorani or Mokrian is in fact more important, for it is the one which is mostly used in literature.³ The area in which this dialect is spoken extends from Sulaimaniya into Iranian Kurdistan. As Sulaimaniya and Mahabad (Sauj-Bulag) are the principal centres of Kurdish nationalism, the political importance of this dialect is obvious. A third dialect, Zoza, is used in very limited areas. Kurdish has no script of its own; Arabic script is used in Iraq, Iran and Syria, Roman in Turkey and Russian in the USSR. According to a 1958 estimate Iran, with 95%, had the highest percentage of illiteracy among the Kurds: Turkey has 90%, Iraq 85% and Syria 80%.⁴ However, it is almost certain that the

2 Chapter One

percentage of illiteracy in most of these countries has decreased since 1958.

The literal meaning of 'Kurdistan' is 'the land of the Kurds'. The word was first used by the Seljuk Sultan, Sanjar, in the 12th century when he established a large province of that name.⁵ There is no generally accepted demarcation of the Kurdish area, "Grand Kurdistan", but it extends over five countries: Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria and the USSR. As a whole, Kurdistan is a complex of high and rugged mountain ranges which vary from 6000 ft in Turkey to 14000 ft in Iran. In Iraqi Kurdistan the limestone ranges of the Zagros rise to 10000 ft with other mountains on the Iranian frontier reaching to over 12000 ft. Iraqi Kurdistan extends over three provinces, Dohuk, Arbil and Sulaimaniya, and there are other Kurdish areas in Kirkuk and Diyala.⁶

Although Kurdish nationalists claim the existence of a long list of resources in Kurdistan, oil is the country's only major product.⁷

The fact that the Kurds are divided between five states makes it difficult to establish their total number; furthermore, most of these states do not recognise a specifically Kurdish nationality or even ethnic identity. Consequently, estimates of their numbers vary according to the personal bias of various writers, between 18 and 7 million.⁸ These figures are extremely difficult to distribute between the various countries. With regard to Iraq, an informed estimate, made by C J Edmonds in 1967, gave a figure of 1,550,000.⁹ However, Kurdish sources have claimed that the Kurdish population in Iraq amounts to 2 million.¹⁰

Kurdish Nationalism before 1958

1) 1826-1931

Throughout their history the Kurds have been subject to the various Empires that have dominated the area. They were ruled by the Seleucids, the Parthians, the Sassanians, the Armenians, the Romans, the Byzantines, the Arabs, the Seljuks, the Mongols and finally the Ottomans. The influence of their rulers can be seen in the succession of religions the Kurds have embraced. From the worship of the Sun, the Kurds have 'passed under the influence of the religions of Zoroaster, Christ, Mithras and Islam'.¹¹ In the sixteenth century, the Ottoman and Safavid empires completely dominated the area; three-quarters of Kurdistan was occupied by the Ottomans, the rest by the Safavids.¹² Sectarian antagonism between the two empires led to warfare, and Iraq, the buffer zone, ended up as the battlefield. Being on the border of the two empires, the Kurds were involved directly in these battles. Each empire tried to gain the loyalty of the Kurdish chiefs in order to use them and their followers as border guards against the other. This deepened, if it did not create, the profound divisions between the Kurdish tribes.¹³ In 1515, the Ottoman Sultan, in accordance with the advice of his Kurdish counsellor, Hakim Idris, issued a decree establishing a number of Kurdish principalities,¹⁴ while the Safavid Shah followed suit in order to propitiate the Kurdish community he governed.¹⁵ Naturally some of these principalities could become stronger by taking advantage of the weakness of the central government whenever possible. The ambitions of some principalities were encouraged by foreign powers, notably the

4 Chapter One

Russians, who encouraged them to revolt against the Porte.¹⁶ In 1826 Sultan Mahmud II began the Tanzimat reforms in the Ottoman Empire;¹⁷ these reforms, which in Kurdistan meant the end of the quasi-independent principalities, were not carried out peacefully. The Sultan's practice of replacing Kurdish governors by Turks was another reason for the Kurdish revolts of that time.¹⁸ By 1840 only one principality was left, that of the Emir Badr Khan.¹⁹

As with other nationalities in the area, Kurdish national consciousness was aroused by the oppressive steps taken against them. The tribal leaders, mostly feudal landlords, who had suffered the loss of their property and their followers, were the first to rebel, but their rebellions had no defined plan or clear national aims.²⁰ However, the revolt of Shaikh 'Ubaidullah in 1880 was to mark a new stage in the development of Kurdish national consciousness. Instead of rebelling on his own, 'Ubaidullah sought the help of other tribal chiefs and formed the Kurdish Tribal League.²¹ Moreover, he did not restrict his revolt to Turkey, but attacked and occupied parts of Iranian Kurdistan.²² In addition, he contacted foreign powers seeking their assistance.²³

Although it was crushed and some of its leaders banished, this revolt was important in two main respects. On the one hand, the powers dominating Kurdistan readopted the practice of propitiating the Kurds. In 1891, the Sultan organised the Hamidié, a²⁴ light Kurdish cavalry regiment under a Kurdish chief, which succeeded in acting as a focus for the warlike spirit of the Kurds.²⁵ On the other hand the 1880 revolt also fostered the idea of establishing

Kurdish political and religious associations.²⁶

Another outcome was the appearance of Kurdistan, the first Kurdish newspaper, in Cairo in 1897, published by a banished member of the Badr Khan family.²⁷ It encouraged the notion of Kurdish independence, and the formation of Kurdish committees in various European countries.²⁸

In the early years of the twentieth century, Kurdish intellectuals, like their Arab and Armenian counterparts throughout the Ottoman Empire, joined the movement of the Young Turks and were encouraged by the Committee of Union and Progress to form their own clubs and associations.²⁹ However, in 1909 the Young Turks went back on their promises, and repressed any separatist activities; the Kurds left the Committee of Union and Progress to form their own Committee of Progress and Development.³⁰ In 1910 a group of Kurdish students and lawyers established the first political party, Hêwa ya Kurd (Kurdish Hope) with a monthly publication Roja Kurd (The Kurdish Day).³¹ However, these activities failed to find widespread support among the mass of the Kurdish population who remained religious and dominated by their tribal leaders. Thus the Kurds responded eagerly to the Turkish proclamation of jihad in the First World War. The Turks now encouraged the Kurds to re-form their clubs and associations,³² originally to counteract the activities of Russian, German, American and British missions in Kurdistan, but as Turkey's weakness and the probability of her defeat became apparent, the activities and hopes of independence of Kurdish nationalists were revived. President Wilson's doctrine of self-determination was

another stimulus,³³ and the activities of various Kurdish groups represented by General Sherif Pasha, who was elected by the Kurdish Committee of Progress and Development to represent them at the Paris Conference, resulted in the 'Kurdistan section' of the Treaty of Sèvres (1920).³⁴ Articles 62, 63 and 64 of the Treaty promised the Kurds autonomy and independence, and although never implemented, it was the first official and international acknowledgement of a Kurdish national identity.³⁵ The failure to implement the Treaty of Sèvres was largely due to the success of Mustafa Kemal's revolt and the failure to establish an autonomous Armenia under American mandate. It was eventually replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, which effectively ignored Kurdish national aims. After this treaty the area was divided amongst five states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and the USSR.

However, this is to anticipate. In Iraq, Kurdish nationalism continued to flourish in the years immediately after 1918. It is probably true that the Kurds in Iraq were more advanced than those in Turkey and Iran; Sulaimaniya was always regarded as a major centre of Kurdish nationalism and culture, and was also well known for its sizeable contingent of ex-Ottoman officers and civil servants.³⁶ Another factor encouraging Kurdish hopes for independence after the war was Britain's promise to secure a special position for the Kurds of the Mosul wilayet, the former Ottoman province which included most of 'Iraqi' Kurdistan,³⁷ which was claimed both by Turkey and the new British-sponsored state of Iraq. In fact, the area had been under British occupation

since 1918. Since the end of the war, British policy had further enhanced Sulaimaniya's status, and strengthened Kurdish nationalism, by making Kurdish the town's official language,³⁸ and publishing some newspapers there.³⁹ The British further boosted Kurdish nationalism through direct contacts with the Kurds,⁴⁰ and by appointing a well known Kurdish personality, Shaikh Mahmud Barzinji of Sulaimaniya, as governor of Sulaimaniya.⁴¹ By May 1919, however, Shaikh Mahmud, resentful of the slow progress towards independence, was leading a revolt against the British. This was soon crushed by the British Army and he was exiled to India.

In 1920 Britain was awarded the mandate for Iraq under the Treaty of San Remo, and a provisional government was set up in Baghdad. One of its most pressing problems was the regulation of the Mosul boundary dispute and the determination of the precise status of the Kurdish inhabitants of the new state. Understanding Britain's determination to prevent Turkey from regaining the Mosul wilayet, King Faisal, whom the British had out on the throne in August 1921, concluded correctly that the Colonial Office and the Admiralty would ultimately favour attaching it to Iraq, although he was obliged to cultivate British goodwill to achieve this.⁴² In fact the King had the difficult task of steering a course between those of his subjects who sought complete independence for Iraq while ignoring the fact that they could only hope to secure the inclusion of Mosul with British assistance on one side and the British themselves on the other. Ultimately, he managed to persuade the nationalists to comply with British

demands until the Mosul issue was decided in favour of Iraq. In the course of the Anglo-Iraqi treaty negotiations it became clear that British support for Iraq's claim to Mosul depended mainly on Iraq's approval of the terms of the treaty,⁴³ which was generally opposed by those Iraqis who still hoped for full independence. The treaty was eventually concluded in 1922 under the explicit threat that Mosul would be forfeited if it were not.⁴⁴

As they were unable to gain Mosul by force, the Turks began to stir up Kurdish nationalist feeling in the wilayet, pointing out the undesirability of Arab domination of the area. In order to counteract Turkish activities, and to force the Iraqis to ratify the treaty, the British renewed their promise of independence to the Kurds, presenting themselves as guarantors of the promise. British troops were pulled out of Kurdistan and Shaikh Mahmud was brought back from exile and reinstated in Sulaimaniya to help fight Turkish influence.⁴⁵ Upon his return, the British and Iraq Governments declared that they "recognise the rights of the Kurds living within the boundaries of Iraq to set up a Kurdish Government ... (the Kurds) will send responsible delegates to Baghdad to discuss their economic and political relations with the two Governments."⁴⁶

The ambitious Shaikh Mahmud was quick to leap at this opportunity. He immediately mustered his own armed forces and on 18 November 1922 declared an independent Kurdish kingdom in Sulaimaniya, with himself as its king.⁴⁷ Since Iraq had no army of its own, and as Britain's support for the Iraq Government was wavering because of the Iraqi Chamber of Deputies'

refusal to ratify the 1922 Treaty, Faisal had no alternative but to treat Shaikh Mahmud as a fellow ruler,⁴⁸ waiting for the appropriate moment to turn against him. In the meantime, Faisal started to canvass the support of other Kurdish elements, especially those opposed to Shaikh Mahmud's authority. Since the future of Kurdistan was still in the balance and because the new state of Iraq had relatively little freedom of manoeuvre, Kurdish nationalism in Iraq had yet another advantage over its counterpart in Turkey and Iran.

However, the year 1923 was to see a fundamental change in the situation of the Iraqi Kurds. Tiring of the stalemate over the future of the Mosul wilayet Britain gradually came round to abandoning its insistence on a special regime for Iraqi Kurdistan.⁵⁰ This change of heart was apparent in the conclusion of the Treaty of Lausanne on 24 July 1923. This treaty did not resolve the boundary dispute, which was now referred to the League of Nations, but it did effectively put an end to the Kurds' hope for full independence. In order to win over the Kurds and the international commission appointed by the League, the King and the Iraq government began to adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards Kurdish nationalism. The King urged his Arab subjects to respect the nationality of 'their brothers, the Kurds' and to encourage them to be good Iraqis,⁵¹ a policy also followed by the Prime Minister, 'Abd al-Muhsin al-Sa'dun, who attacked those who opposed the Kurds studying and speaking their own language. Such exhortations, however, corresponded only very faintly to reality. In February 1923, British troops

were sent into action to put an end to Shaikh Mahmud's kingdom; Sulaimaniya was conquered in May, and a year later his resistance was finally overcome. The Mosul issue was decided upon in December 1925; most of the old Ottoman wilayet was awarded to Iraq, while Turkey received financial compensation. The decision of the League, however, was accompanied by guarantees to the Kurds, which, in fact, necessitated a new treaty between Britain and Iraq. This provided for the continuation of the mandatory regime for 25 years, unless Iraq should be admitted as a member of the League of Nations before the expiration of this period.⁵² The government was asked to respect and secure the national identity of the Kurds living in the wilayet, and it committed itself, internationally, to these guarantees, which were later confirmed by Britain and Iraq when the latter applied to join the League of Nations in 1930. In fact, the British were made responsible by the League for seeing that Iraq took effective measures to carry out these recommendations. To satisfy the League, and in order to secure the acceptance of Iraq's application, the government declared its intention to establish a Kurdish translation bureau and to enact a language law for the benefit of Kurdish speakers. Other promised measures included the appointment of Kurds to key posts in Kurdistan, and in the Ministries of Education and Interior. Furthermore, the King, Crown Prince Ghazi, the High Commissioner and senior ministers all paid visits to the northern areas.⁵³

Although the government's guarantees counted little in terms of practical politics, they gave the Kurds in Iraq an internationally recognised status of a

kind never conceded to the Kurds of Turkey and Iran. However, this special position lacked an organized or broadly representative Kurdish movement to take advantage of it, and the government had no difficulty in going back on its promises after securing the country's independence. At this stage the Kurdish national movement was entirely dominated by tribal leaders, who simply used nationalist slogans in an effort to recover the virtual autonomy they had enjoyed under the Ottomans. They were able to dominate the scene because of the fighting forces they could gather to defy the central government and because of their religious influence, which is borne out by the fact that most, if not all, Kurdish revolts were headed by religious shaikhs. The Kurdish 'intellectuals' were still too weak to lead any movement, let alone a revolt, and thus they subordinated themselves to the tribal leaders for the time being in the hope of transforming an essentially tribal revolt into a national one. However, the division and rivalry between the tribes rendered their opposition ineffective. Towards the end of the 1920s, Kurdish feudal interests came increasingly under attack as the central government began to expand its authority into remoter parts of Kurdistan, aided by the RAF. The revolt of Shaikh Ahmad of Barzan, the older brother of the future leader Mulla Mustafa, is an instance of Kurdish opposition to the growth of the power of the central government.⁵⁴

As we have seen, the Iraq government was able to obtain British support for its application to join the League of Nations, and a new treaty with Britain was signed in 1930. To ease its passage through the

Iraqi Chamber of Deputies, Britain did not insist on any special mention of the Kurds. Hence the text of the treaty naturally disappointed those Kurds who were hoping to obtain a form of autonomy within independent Iraq. Once more Sulaimaniya became a centre of opposition, and there was a serious riot against the treaty in September 1930, the first urban Kurdish opposition to the Government.⁵⁵ In spite of the numbers involved the riot lacked organisation and leadership; in the end it played into the hands of Shaikh Mahmud who took advantage of the situation to return to Sulaimaniya and attempt another revolt. As a result of the joint efforts of the Iraqi Army and the RAF both Mahmud and Ahmad of Barzan were subdued: Mahmud was exiled to Southern Iraq, and Shaikh Ahmad took refuge along the Turkish frontier in June 1932. Mahmud gave a promise not to involve himself in any action against the authorities so as to gain the restoration of his fiefs, and his youngest son Baba 'Ali was taken to be educated in Baghdad.⁵⁶ Ahmad was taken to Constantinople, and later sent into exile at Edirne. Two years later, Ahmad and his brother Mulla Mustafa were handed over to the Iraqi authorities, who exiled them first to Nasiriya and then in 1936 to Sulaimaniya.

The successful subjugation of Shaikh Mahmud and Shaikh Ahmad, which was attributed to the superior qualities of the Iraq Army, coupled with Iraq's achievement of independence, encouraged the government to go back on most of its promises. Thus, instead of finding ways to establish a just and lasting solution to the Kurdish problem it reverted to a policy of persecution and attempted assimilation. The government

persisted in the mistaken belief that the Kurds could be subdued by force, which assured its permanent alienation from Kurdish sympathies.

ii) Kurdish Opposition, 1931-1958

Until 1939, the role of the Kurdish urban intelligentsia was negligible. In the absence of any organised Kurdish party, they found their way into the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), formed in 1934, and 'Jama'at al-Ahali', a grouping of moderate and highly articulate socialists.⁵⁷ In 1936 the first coup d'état in the Arab Middle East took place. As it was inspired by Jama'at al-Ahali, and led by a Kurdish officer, Bakr Sidqi, this coup and its aftermath gave a great boost to Kurdish nationalism in Iraq, although Sidqi himself was in no sense a Kurdish nationalist. The urban Kurdish nationalists became active and laid more open emphasis on their hopes of ultimate independence.⁵⁸ Sidqi was assassinated a year later, and the old clique, aided by rightist elements in the army, took over again.

However, these incidents hardly affected rising Kurdish national feeling, which was also encouraged by the German Legation in Baghdad.⁵⁹ In 1939, the urban intellectuals made moves to form a specially Kurdish organisation and eventually, in 1941, established the clandestine Hêwa (Hope) Party. However, some Kurds with left wing leanings refused to be members on the grounds that it was too 'right wing';⁶⁰ in fact Hêwa was a purely nationalist party. Its leaders argued that it should include Kurds from all classes. It was composed of teachers, students, petit bourgeois and tribal elements. Hêwa, therefore, grew with two rival factions developing inside it,

one to the right and one to the left. The rightists believed that Britain should be propitiated if the Kurds hoped to attain their national rights,⁶¹ and opposed communism, which they branded as an 'imported idea'. The other, leftist, faction was strengthened by the Soviet Army's push into Iranian Kurdistan and its assistance to the Kurdish national movement there. They felt that the Kurds could only achieve their national rights through revolution and socialism.⁶² With such internal rivalry, Héwa could neither produce a leadership that would supersede the tribal one, nor influence the majority of the Kurdish people. As the Kurdish intelligentsia remained divided, they must have realized that they would not alone be able to rally Kurdish support for a national movement, and that a tribal leader was needed. This role fell to Mulla Mustafa Barzani, still in exile in Sulaimaniya with his older brother Shaikh Ahmad of Barzan.⁶³ Since Mulla Mustafa was to dominate the Kurdish national movement until and beyond the end of our period, it is useful to give a brief account of his background. After the Iraqi Army, assisted by the British, had suppressed the revolts of Shaikh Mahmud of Sulaimaniya in the 1920s, the Barzani tribe headed the rebellion against the Iraqi government. The Barzanis were famous for their fighting spirit and their respect for and fear of their leaders,⁶⁴ combined with reverence for their religious position as heads of the Naqshabandi order in their region.⁶⁵ Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani was born in Barzan in 1904. His education in his village, and later in Sulaimaniya was mainly religious; consequently, he was awarded the religious title Mulla. During his studies and in

the course of his travels throughout Kurdistan, Mulla Mustafa gained a first-hand knowledge of his people and country, and by 1943, at the age of 39, emerged as the most powerful tribal leader in Kurdish Iraq. In July 1943, Mulla Mustafa was helped by members of the Héwa party and other tribal leaders to flee from house arrest. After two months, he reached Barzan, his home village, some 200 km from Sulaimaniya, and immediately went into revolt.⁶⁶ At this stage, the writ of the Iraq government had virtually ceased to run in the north of the country, and attempts by the Iraqi Army in October 1943 to subdue him quickly failed. As a result of this failure, and because of the generally unstable situation in Iraq following Rashid 'Ali's revolt, the Prime Minister, Nuri al-Sa'id, clearly influenced by Cornwallis, the British Ambassador,⁶⁷ suggested that measures should be taken to accommodate the Kurds' most urgent demands. Majid Mustafa, a Kurd from Sulaimaniya, was appointed Minister without Portfolio, and instructed to make contacts with Mulla Mustafa.⁶⁸

In January 1944, Mulla Mustafa met Majid Mustafa, and the two exchanged views. As a result, Mulla Mustafa was persuaded to come to Baghdad in February, and submit officially to the government. For his part, Nuri al-Sa'id showed readiness to comply with some of the Kurds' demands, urging that the Kurdish issue should be dealt with seriously. He submitted a detailed plan for the Cabinet in which he proposed the establishment of a new Kurdish province (liwa) of Dohuk, consisting of all the Kurdish districts of the Mosul liwa, the appointment of a Kurdish deputy Director-General in the Ministry of Education, and

increased investment in agriculture and social services in the region.⁶⁹ These moves were designed to detach the more militant of his supporters from Barzani, but unfortunately for Nuri they were acceptable neither to the Regent nor to the Iraqi Parliament, and he was eventually forced to tender his resignation in June 1944.⁷⁰ In April 1945, Cornwallis was replaced as British Ambassador by Stonehewer Bird; this appointment, and the end of hostilities in Europe, marked the end of the 'special relationship' between Britain and Barzani.⁷¹ In August 1945, the government attacked Mulla Mustafa's forces, and thanks to Kurdish tribal differences, the Iraqi Army managed to force Mulla Mustafa to cross the borders into Iranian Kurdistan in October.

Before discussing contemporary events in Iran, which both affected and were affected by the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan, it is useful to summarise the main political and ideological divisions in Kurdish politics, since these had and long continued to have an important influence on the Kurdish national movement as a whole. The high degree of factionalism among the Kurds is by no means an exceptional phenomenon. In general, those Kurds involved in active opposition to the government in Baghdad or Teheran - the situation in Turkey was so different that comparison is almost impossible⁷² - wanted a form of autonomy, but there was no general agreement over the form that this autonomy should take. The less realistic sought a pan-Kurdish state that would encompass all the Kurdish populations of the region, while the more practical sought a form of local autonomy, or federal structure, within one of the existing

national states. Some groups, although keen supporters of autonomy, were concerned that the pursuit of this goal should not conflict with the broader fight against imperialism: the achievement, for example, of a truly independent Iraq. Thus any British sponsored schemes along the lines floated in the course of the conversations between Majid Mustafa and Barzani in 1943-44 were unlikely to commend themselves to this section of the Kurdish 'left'. However, as in many Third World countries, lack of education, the strong political and economic powers of the traditional leaders, and the remoteness of settlements and tribes from one another, substantially contributed to hindering the growth of popular political consciousness. The splits within Hewa have already been noted, and by the summer of 1945 four separate factions were apparent. Shoresh (Revolution), with some 350 members, was the Kurdish Communist Party, which had been founded in 1943. However, the problems facing a communist party in an essentially tribal, rural and religious setting proved overwhelming, and Shoresh members eventually joined or rejoined the main body of the Iraqi Communist Party while simultaneously encouraging the formation of Rizgari (Liberation), a popular front organisation which numbered some 5500 members in 1945, which was the forerunner of the Iraqi Kurdish Democratic Party (PKD-Iraq), founded in 1946⁷³. Two other less important factions were Azadi (Liberty) and Rerast (The True Path).

During the war, Kurdish nationalism enjoyed a brief period of success in Iran, largely due to the encouragement of the Soviet Army, which was in occupation of the north of the country. In 1943,

Komala-i Ziani Kurd (Kurdish Youth Committee) was formed in Mahabad, some hundred miles south of Tabriz and fifty miles east of the Iranian/Iraqi frontier. The Komala was fostered by the Soviet authorities, who encouraged its members to transform themselves into the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (DPK) under the leadership of Qadhi Muhammad, one of the notables of Mahabad.⁷⁴ The group was already in full control of the town and its surroundings,⁷⁵ and in December 1945, Qadhi Muhammad proclaimed the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. Mulla Mustafa, the Barzanis, and other Iraqi Kurdish refugees joined the Republic. Mulla Mustafa was appointed one of its four generals, and the Barzani tribe was regarded as its army. Meanwhile, other Iraqi Kurds were focusing their attention on Iranian Kurdistan. In 1946, Shoresh, noting the progress of the Kurdish movement in Mahabad, sent a representative, Hamza 'Abdullah, to discuss the possibility of co-operation with the Soviets and Mahabadis.⁷⁶ In Mahabad 'Abdullah met Mulla Mustafa, the Barzanis, Kurdish officers of the Iraq Army and other Iraqi Kurdish refugees. After a series of meetings 'Abdullah and the Iraqi Kurds in Mahabad agreed to set up a separate party modelled on the Iranian DPK in Iraqi Kurdistan, an important decision which had the effect of tacitly recognising the division of Kurdistan between the two existing nation states. The Iraqi Kurds in Mahabad established a preparatory committee headed by Mulla Mustafa, which appealed to the Kurds of Iraq asking them to 'endeavour to establish this party', and Hamza 'Abdullah was instructed to make contact with Kurds in Iraq.⁷⁷ He

first wrote letters to the leaders of the Kurdish political organisations to explain the reasons behind the foundation of the new party. It was 'to include all patriotic, loyal, nationalist Kurds, in order to be the vanguard of the Kurdish liberation movement.' To achieve this goal, 'all Kurdish organisations in Iraq should be dissolved and merged in the proposed party'.⁷⁸

'Abdullah returned to Iraqi Kurdistan to establish another Preparatory Committee, consisting of representatives of the four political factions: Shoresh, Rizgari, Héwa and the Iraqi branch of the Iranian DPK.⁷⁹ A series of meetings were held in Sulaimaniya but no final agreement was reached. Instead, a split developed inside the second Committee between the leftists and 'Abdullah, who favoured a form of national front rather than a revolutionary leadership. Although himself a Communist (from Shoresh), 'Abdullah insisted on including two big Kurdish landlords in the new leadership of the proposed party, because of the influence they exerted over the tribes.⁸⁰ The leftists argued that the leadership must be in the hands of 'revolutionary elements to be judged by their political background and readiness to serve the movement, and not by their social position'.⁸¹

Another disagreement arose when the Shoresh representative insisted on maintaining his party organisation in Iraqi Kurdistan. His argument was that 'although small, the Kurdish working class was in need of such organisations',⁸² while 'Abdullah's opinion was that since Iraqi Kurdish society was primitive, and had no working class, revolutionary power lay in the hands of the loyal tribes of the Kurdish nation. 'Abdullah

was victorious in the end and most of the Kurdish Communists left the Preparatory Committee.⁸³

Despite this, the remaining members of Shoresh, together with the bulk of Rizgari and Héwa decided to merge.⁸⁴ On 16th August 1946, a National Conference was elected for the new party, as well as a Central Committee with 'Abdullah as Secretary General. Mulla Mustafa was elected President of the party, and the two landlords, Shaikh Latif, son of Shaikh Mahmud of Sulaimaniya, and Shaikh Ziad Agha (over whom the Preparatory Committee had split) were elected Vice-Presidents.⁸⁵ A decision was taken to publish a secret monthly organ under the name Rizgari (Liberation).⁸⁶ The Party was given a Kurdish name, Parti Demokrati Kurd-Iraq (PDK-Iraq).⁸⁷ The party programme stressed the national aims of the Kurdish people, and their desire to live in an Iraqi union which was to be attained through the 'free will of the Kurds and not be a forceable annexation such as British colonialism had imposed on them'.⁸⁸ Unfortunately the PDK-Iraq's programme lacked any social or economic content and had no clear ideas about relations between Arabs and Kurds. Furthermore, it made no attempt to gather support for the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad. These shortcomings were due to the dominating influence of the tribes, which left the 'politicals' in a minority. Hence the PDK-Iraq was more of a social and cultural gathering than a well-defined political entity. The only Kurdish national group which stayed out of the new party, apart from the Communists, was the Iranian branch of the DPK, headed by Ibrahim Ahmad. Ahmad does not seem to have rated the new Iraqi organisation very highly, and clearly thought that he

stood more chance of leading the Kurdish national movement by remaining the representative in Iraq of the mother organisation in Mahabad. His hopes were shattered after the collapse of the Mahabad Republic, and he had no alternative but to join the PDK-Iraq in June 1947.⁸⁹ After joining, he took over the leadership of the PDK's 'left' wing and began to enlist the support of elements opposed to Hamza 'Abdullah. Between 1946 and 1957 the PDK-Iraq attempted to gain the support of the Iraqi Communists and the Arab nationalist parties.⁹⁰ However, in the absence of Barzani, who had escaped to the Soviet Union in 1947 following the fall of Mahabad, the party's influence in Iraqi Kurdistan was slight, and its activities, along with those of other leftist parties, were severely restricted in the immediately post-war period.⁹¹

In 1950 the Iraqi government designated the PDK-Iraq as a 'fellow travelling' organisation and put 'Abdullah in prison. For a year (1950-51) the party had a 'Provisional Leadership', but in 1951, a second secret congress of the party in Baghdad elected a new Central Committee with Ibrahim Ahmad as Secretary General. Ahmad's first step was to sack 'Abdullah who was still in prison.⁹² In 1953, a third PDK-Iraq congress was held in Kirkuk. It ratified the new Internal Regulations and Programme, and altered the party's name to Parti Demokrati Kurdistan (KDP). Its more leftist stamp was clear; it emphasised agrarian reform, and oil nationalisation.⁹³

Until the second half of the 1950s, however, the KDP was without any influential popular organisation in the area. Following the changes that led to Ahmad's

takeover the nucleus of these organisations began to appear, but only in the big cities. Because the new leadership of the KDP excluded the feudal landlords from membership of the party, they became indifferent to its fortunes. On the other hand, because of its weakness, the leaders of the KDP avoided any mention of class struggle within Kurdish society, and the tribal system maintained its hold upon the Kurdish peasantry unopposed by the Party. Hence the social question was subordinated to the national question, at least for the time being.

After the Soviet withdrawal from Iran, the Mahabad Republic had collapsed. The various Kurdish tribes had been the first to abandon the Republic, some of them going even as far as to assist the advancing Iranian Army. At the same time, the Barzani tribe were forced to cross back into Iraq. Shaikh Ahmad and his followers were put in prison, four Kurdish ex-army officers were hanged in Baghdad, and Mulla Mustafa with about 400 of his men, escaped over the mountains of Iran and Turkey to reach the Soviet Union in June-July 1947. He was to remain there until July 1958. The Barzanis' land and property were confiscated and some distributed to rival tribes who had taken part in crushing Mustafa's revolt in 1943.

During the years following the collapse of Mahabad, Kurdish activities declined. An application for permission to form a legal Kurdish party in Iraq in 1946 under the relatively liberal government of Tawfiq al-Suwaidi was rejected on the pretext that such a party was 'nationalistic and inconsistent with other parties in the country'.⁹⁴ This rejection, apart from deepening the Kurds' feeling of discrimin-

ation led many to join the illegal Iraqi Communist Party.⁹⁵

Until the clandestine KDP took over the leadership of the Kurdish national movement in the mid-fifties, Kurdish students were the only active faction of the movement.⁹⁶ Although enrolled in the Communist-led

General Union of Iraqi Students, they circulated a stencilled Kurdish journal *Ti-Koshi Kotabian*, at a time when other Kurdish political publications were negligible.⁹⁷ The only other political publication

was the KDP journal *Rizgari*. The Iraqi Kurds in exile in the USSR seem to have given little attention to their compatriots' national feelings and aspirations.

This was due to the Soviet Government's policy of dispersing the refugee Iraqi Kurds throughout the country, and giving them political education. Although Mulla Mustafa was occasionally heard broadcasting over Radio Yerevan until 1953, their activities were without any significant effect.⁹⁸

In 1955, however, a political development took place in Iraq which was to have considerable significance for the Kurdish question. Two nationalist parties, the *Istiqlal* and the National Democratic Party merged, and the programme of the new party, the National Congress Party, stressed that 'Arabs and Kurds are partners in the Iraqi homeland'.⁹⁹ In 1957, the KDP

made an unsuccessful attempt to enter the newly established United National Front in spite of the fact that the parties concerned agreed to the idea of 'attracting the independent national elements and the intelligentsia to political activities adopted by the united parties, taking into consideration the racial structure of Iraq, so that the unity of struggle among

Arabs, Kurds and different minorities would be the solid foundation of such a national front.¹⁰⁰ In the same year, however, the leaders of the Front established contact with the underground Iraqi Free Officers' movement.

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Footnotes

- 1 On origins of the Kurds, see Talabani J, Kurdistan wa al-Haraka al-Qawmia al-Kurdia, (Kurdistan and the Kurdish National Movement), Beirut 1971; Edmonds, C J, Kurds, Turks and Arabs, Oxford 1957; Zakhi Beg, M A, Mulakhas Tarikh al-Kurd wa Kurdistan, (A Short History of the Kurds and Kurdistan), Cairo 1939. See also al-Feel, M R, al-Akrad fi Nadhar al-'Ilm (The Kurds from a Scientific Viewpoint), Baghdad 1965, who argues somewhat improbably that the Kurds are of Arab origin. See also Kutschera, C, Le Mouvement National Kurde, Paris 1979, p 7.
- 2 Cited in Safrastian, K, Kurds and Kurdistan, London 1948, p 29.
- 3 Talabani, p 48.
- 4 Gavan, S S, Kurdistan, Divided Nation of the Middle East, London 1958, p 16.
- 5 Kinnane, D, The Kurds and Kurdistan, Oxford 1964, p 21.
- 6 These areas were parts of the Mosul wilayet under the Ottoman Empire.
- 7 Howell, W Jr, The Soviet Union and the Kurds, Ph D Thesis, University of Virginia 1965, p 18.
- 8 Ghassem lou, A, Kurdistan and the Kurds, London 1965, p 22. See also Talabani (1971), p 40.
- 9 Edmonds, C J, 'Kurdish Nationalism', Journal of Contemporary History Vol 6, No 1, 1971, p 72. In this estimate Edmonds puts the total number of Kurds at about 7,000,000, divided as follows: Turkey 3,200,000, Iran 1,800,000, Iraq 1,550,000, Syria 320,000 and the Soviet Union 80,000.
- 10 Kurdistan, No 16, KSSE, January 1972, p 2.

26 Chapter One

- 11 Kinnane (1964), p 22.
- 12 Edmonds (1957), p 6.
- 13 'The two Empires were at war for half the time between 1514 and 1639; had the Kurds been united they would at least have held the balance of power between the two Empires.' Kinnane (1964), p 22.
- 14 Zakhi Beg (1939), 188-90. The principalities were to enjoy a good deal of independence. They were hereditary, and their chiefs' duties were to supply soldiers during war time and send contributions to the treasury. Ibid, p 182.
- 15 Bois, Thomas, *The Kurds*, Beirut 1966, p 140.
- 16 Blau, J, *Le Problème Kurde*, Brussels 1963, p 28. In the 1804-13 war between Iran and Russia, a Georgian leader promised some Kurdish leaders Russian citizenship together with its rights and duties, if they sided with him. Khalfin, N D, *al-Sira 'ala Kurdistan (The Struggle for Kurdistan)*, Baghdad 1969, p 42.
- 17 Sultan Selim III had begun a reform movement earlier, but it had not affected the Kurds.
- 18 Khalfin (1969), p 77.
- 19 Badr Khan, inspired by the rise of the other nationalities of the Empire and by the success of Ibrahim Pasha of Egypt, managed to extend and strengthen his principality. His principality was finally crushed in 1874 with the help of other Kurdish tribes. Kinnane (1964), p 23.
- 20 Bois (1966), p 141.
- 21 Khalfin (1969), p 128; also Talabani (1971), pp 88 and 194-95. There were about 200 religious and tribal representatives present in Neri,

- 'Ubaidullah's headquarters at a ceremony in July 1880.
- 22 'Ubaidullah's revolt was actually triggered off by an Iranian attack on his fiefs. He was first encouraged by the Ottoman authorities to retaliate and then turned against his masters. Khalfin (1969), p 127.
- 23 See Howell (1965), p 130 for the full text of 'Ubaidullah's letter to the British consul in Bashkade. See also Khalfin (1969), pp 120 and 129. The letter maintains that the 'Russians were receiving 'Ubaidullah's representatives during and before his revolt.' For the full text of 'Ubaidullah's nationalistic speech at the meeting of the Kurdish Tribal League, see Talabani (1971), p 194.
- 24 Bois (1966), p 141. 'These regiments were recruited to counter the Russian influence.' Elphinstone, W G, 'The Kurdish Question'. International Affairs, January 1946 Vol XXII p 94.
- 25 Bois loc cit.
- 26 Talabani (1971), pp 90, 197.
- 27 Under Turkish pressure this newspaper was moved to Geneva, and later to Folkestone. Edmonds (1957), p 11.
- 28 Elphinstone (1946).
- 29 Bois (1966).
- 30 'Abd al-Ridha, M, al-Masala al-Kurdia fi al-Iraq (The Kurdish Problem in Iraq), Baghdad 1970 p 34. See also Talabani (1971), p 92.
- 31 Laqueur, W, Communism and Nationalism in the Middle East, London 1956 p 222. Also Bois (1966); Blau (1963).

- 32 Driver, G R, Report on Kurdistan and the Kurds, Jerusalem 1919 p 85. The author maintains that many Kurdish notables were supporters of the Committee of Union and Progress solely for reasons of self-interest. He adds that the British on the other hand, 'encouraged similar clubs during and after the War'. pp 75, 79, 85-94.
- 33 In an article entitled 'An open letter to the Kurds of North and South Kurdistan', published in al-Mufid newspaper by Arab nationalists in Syria, the principles of President Wilson were brought to the attention of the Kurds. They also invoked them to bestir themselves to claim a free Kurdistan. Cited in Driver (1919), p 68. On the effects of this article see *ibid* p 99.
- 34 See Memorandum sur les revendications du peuple Kurde, Paris 1919.
- 35 Bois (1966); Blau (1963).
- 36 Edmonds (1971), p 92. See also WLE 'Iraqi Kurdistan: a little known region', *The World Today*, October 1956.
- 37 eg see Churchill's statement in October 1921 that 'Kurds are not to be put under Arabs if they do not wish to be', quoted Sluglett, P, *Britain in Iraq 1914-1921*, London 1976 p 119.
- 38 Edmonds (1971).
- 39 Edmonds, *ibid*, p 94. 'After the occupation of Mesopotamia, the British administration published seven newspapers, one of them in Kurdish.' Kamal, M A, *National Liberation Movement in Iraqi Kurdistan from 1918-1958*. PhD Thesis, Academy of Science of Azerbaijan SSR. 1969.
- 40 eg by means of such officers as Soane, Noel and

C J Edmonds. See Wilson, A T, Mesopotamia 1917-20: A Clash of Loyalties, London 1931 pp 122-155.

- 41 Here it is important to stress the extremely factionalised nature of Kurdish tribal politics. British officers in Iraqi Kurdistan constantly complained of endemic rivalries between powerful chiefs, 'none of whom would accept the overlordship of any single leader', (Sluglett(1976)p 116). In fact, Shaikh Mahmud's writ never ran far outside the town of Sulaimaniya. For details of Shaikh Mahmud's earlier career see Kutschera (1979), pp 63-65.
- 42 In 1922 King Faisal tried to bypass the British administration in Iraq and to include the Kurdish areas in the first elections in the country. See Docs P O/49, 3rd October 1922 and P O/65, 3rd July 1923, Royal Archives, Baghdad.
- 43 Sluglett (1976), p 86.
- 44 See al-Hasani, A, Tarikh al-Wizarat al-Iraqia (A History of the Iraqi Cabinets, Sa'ida 1965 Vol 1, pp 188-89. After securing the reduction of the period of the treaty from twentyfive years to four years, the Iraqi Parliament ratified it two years later by 37 to 24 with 8 abstentions and 31 absentees. See al-Hasani, loc cit, Sluglett (1976), pp 88-89.
- 45 See Sluglett (1976), p 120.
- 46 See Edmonds (1957), p 312.
- 47 A Kurdish Cabinet and a Kurdish Army were also formed. Shaikh Mahmud also raised a Kurdish flag, printed stamps, published a newspaper and contacted the Russians. See Talabani (1971), pp 107, 217-221; al-Taakhi No 1278 and Kutschera

(1979), p 65.

- 48 See King Faisal's letters to Shaikh Mahmud and to the latter's Prime Minister. Doc 1/5/1923 No 56 and Doc 1/1/1b 1922 November 20th. Royal Archives Baghdad.
- 49 British policy in 1923 was to agree to the inclusion of some of the Kurdish districts in the Iraqi election, although Sulaimaniya was always kept out. King Faisal despatched his Prime Minister to survey the opinion of the heads of the communities in the province. The Premier wrote back saying that 'all of them (the Kurdish heads of communities) decided already to swear fealty to Your Majesty, and to be attached to the state of Iraq, under more or less similar conditions as establishing the local councils. Some of them were suggesting that Sulaimaniya should be considered another liwa of Iraq, with other suggestions which one can only interpret as a sincere desire to join Iraq. The vast majority were against the return of Shaikh Mahmud ... Turkish threats and propaganda were scarce if not nil ... However the following day all these people changed their minds and told me that since they do not know how to differentiate between good and bad, they are leaving the question of their future to the High Commissioner and that they will accept the latter's decision'. Doc No M/1/2 Sulaimaniya 31st May 1923. Royal Archives, Baghdad.
- 50 It seems that the British administration had finally concluded that an independent or autonomous Kurdistan would be an unviable prospect

because of its hostile neighbours. Henceforth, they began to encourage the Iraq government to grant the Kurds a special position within the Iraq state.

- 51 See al-Hasani (1965), Vol II p 47; Sluglett (1976) p 192.
- 52 See Sluglett (1976), pp 123-125.
- 53 See Longrigg, S H, Iraq 1900 to 1950, London 1953, pp 194-96. In fact the measures taken by the Iraq government were part of the demands submitted by the Kurds in a number of petitions to the League of Nations and to the government between 1926-30. Other demands included autonomy, the use of Kurdish in government offices, and the establishment of a new all-Kurdish liwa of Dohuk, consisting of the Kurdish areas in the Mosul liwa. For the period 1926-30 see Sluglett (1976), pp 182-94; 199-206. See also Talabani (1971), p 110.
- 54 See al-Hasani, Vol III pp 178-84; for Shaikh Ahmad's genealogy see Kutschera (1979), pp 113-116. Shaikh Ahmad's revolt also had an obscure religious character; see Sluglett (1976), p 213.
- 55 For details see Sluglett (1976), pp 190-192.
- 56 Longrigg, S H, (1953), p 194. Baba 'Ali later became a Minister under Qasim.
- 57 See Amin, M A, Jama'at al-Ahali: Its Origin, Ideology and Role in Iraqi Politics 1932-46. University of Durham PhD Thesis 1980.
- 58 One example of their activities in these years is the booklet al-Akrad wa al-Arab (The Kurds and the Arabs) published by a 'group of young Kurds' (the writer was Ibrahim Ahmad) in 1937. See al-Hasani, Vol IV pp 292-93, also Khadduri, M,

- Independent Iraq, a Study in Iraqi Politics, 1932-1958, London 1960 p 107. Ahmad republished this booklet under his own name in Baghdad in 1961.
- 59 Edmonds, C J, 'The Kurds of Iraq', Middle East Journal Vol 11 1957 p 59.
- 60 Talabani (1971), p 121.
- 61 al-Haidari, S, Mudhakarāt Hawla Hizb-i Rizgari Kurd (Memoirs of the Rizgari Party), unpublished manuscript memoirs. al-Haidari was one of the leading founders of Rizgari and the Communist Party in Kurdistan.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 al-Barzani wa al-Thawrat al-Kurdia fi Barazan (Barzani and the Kurdish Revolution in Barzan), a pamphlet published by the Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP, p 3. In fact Mulla Mustafa's period of exile in Sulaimaniya marked an important turning point in his development as a national leader. See Edmonds, 'The Kurds and the Revolution in Iraq', Middle East Journal Vol 13 No 1 1959 p 7.
- 64 Eagleton, W, The Kurdish Republic of 1946, London 1963 p 50.
- 65 'Abdullah Hamza, Thawrat Barzan, al-Muthaqqaf, No 11-12 August-September 1959 p 13; Batatu, H, The Old Social Classes and Revolutionary Movements of Iraq Princeton 1978 p 79.
- 66 He managed for the first and last time to get the support of his main rivals, especially the Zibaris.
- 67 For details, and for Mulla Mustafa's apparently cordial relations with the British Embassy, see

- Kutschera (1979) pp 139-40, which quotes correspondence between Barzani and Cornwallis in December 1943.
- 68 See al-Hasani (1965), Vol VI pp 286-9.
- 69 See Longrigg (1953) pp 325-26.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Kutschera (1979) p 145.
- 72 For the Kurdish movement in Turkey, see Kutschera (1979) pp 79-105, 121-29, 338-43.
- 73 See al-Haidari S; 'Abd al-Ridha (1970) p 75.
- 74 Qadhi Muhammad was a hereditary judge and religious leader. For further details see Eagleton (1963), and Roosevelt, A, 'The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad', MEJ Vol 1 No 2 July 1947. Like Barzani, Qadhi Muhammad's leadership rested on traditional and religious rather than political ideological foundations.
- 75 Edmonds (1971) p 96.
- 76 Talabani (1971) p 145.
- 77 Talabani p 146. See also al-Haidari's memoirs.
- 78 al-Haidari's memoirs. Talabani, ibid.
- 79 This was based at Sulaimaniya and headed by Ibrahim Ahmad. Ahmad attended the meetings as an observer. Talabani (1971) p 150.
- 80 'Abdullah was acting under the influence of Mulla Mustafa, himself influenced by the Soviet representative in Mahabad, who favoured Qadhi Muhammad as leader of DPK-Iran, and President of the Mahabad Republic in 1946 because of his personal prestige.
- 81 Talabani (1971) pp 147-49. See also al-Haidari, memoirs.
- 82 al-Haidari, memoirs; Talabani, ibid.

- 83 Talabani, *ibid.* These Communists thereupon re-joined the Iraqi Communist Party, forming the Iraqi Communist Party-Kurdistan Branch (ICPK).
- 84 Shores and Rizgari's Central Committees convened at the beginning of August 1946. While Rizgari voted unanimously to merge with the new party, the Shores split into two groups, one merging with the new party and the second refusing (later returning to the ICP).
- 85 Talabani (1971).
- 86 In 1956 the name was changed to Khabat-i Kurdistan and after 1958 to Khabat (struggle). Talabani, p 273.
- 87 As they used the English word party Iraqis came to call it Hizb al-Party and this title became more or less official.
- 88 Talabani (1971) p 151, pp 327-28.
- 89 Interview with Ahmad. For details of the fall of the Republic see Eagleton (1963), Roosevelt (1947) and Kutschera (1979), pp 180-83.
- 90 'Bref, le PDK-irakien est à sa naissance un parti anti-impérialiste, anti-réactionnaire, qui participera au 'front national' avec le Parti du peuple (Hizb al-Sha'b) d' 'Aziz Chérif, le Parti national démocrate (de Kamil Chadirchi), et le Parti communiste irakien'. Kutschera (1979) p 193.
- 91 Particularly the Communist Party. See Batatu (1978) pp 628-705.
- 92 Talabani (1971) pp 166-68.
- 93 *Ibid.*
- 94 Khadduri, M, *Republican Iraq: A Study in Iraqi Politics since the Revolution of 1958* (London 1969) p 174. Various Arab nationalist parties

were legalized at this time.

- 95 See Batatu (1978) pp 659-705.
- 96 Van Rooy, S E, 'The struggle for Kurdistan' Survey of International Relations August 1962 pp 112-118.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Edmonds, C J, 'The place of the Kurds in the Middle Eastern Scene' Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society Vol XLV ii April 1958 p 152. See also WLE 'Iraqi Kurdistan p 428.
- 99 al-Hasani, A, 'Hawla al-Jabha al-Watania fi al-Iraq' (On the National Front in Iraq), al-'Irfan, Beirut Vol 59 No 6 1971 pp 714-16.
- 100 See F, al-Samir, 'Popular movements and social structure in modern Iraq' in Mouvements Nationaux d'Indépendance et Classes Populaires aux XIX et XX siècles en Occident et Orient, Paris 1971 Vol I pp 396-97.

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CHAPTER TWO

The Iraqi Revolution and its Aftermath, 1958-59

The first intervention by officers in politics in Iraq took place in 1936, when the Army carried out the first military coup d'état in the modern Arab World. Although short lived, the 1936-37 experience exerted a lasting influence on the younger generation of officers, who continued to play an important role in Iraqi politics. In 1952, as a result of the success of the Egyptian Free Officers' Movement, Iraqi officers began to organise themselves in cells, with the intention of overthrowing the regime. In 1956 the various cells merged into one, headed by Brigadier 'Abd al-Karim Qasim. Their central committee consisted of fourteen officers of different ranks. None of them was a Kurd, although the Kurds supported the movement, believing that it would be sympathetic to their cause.¹

In the lengthy and numerous meetings held before the Revolution, the Kurdish question seems to have been given scant ^{rank} attention by the officers. The reason was, as one leading officer later put it, that 'there was no Kurdish problem on the political scene that needed study or settlement by the Free Officers. The officers did not think of exploring the national rights of the

Kurds or any other minority'.² Nevertheless, it seems that this attitude was not shared by all the officers. As the post Revolutionary period proved, some of them, especially Qasim, had indeed considered the Kurdish question and were in favour of granting the Kurds some of their national rights.

On 14th July 1958, the Iraqi monarchy was overthrown by the Free Officers. Qasim became the first Prime Minister of the new Republic with Colonel 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif as his deputy.³ A 'sovereignty council' was established, composed of an Arab Sunni, who was head of the Council, and two deputies, one Arab Shi'i and one Kurd.⁴ From Qasim's viewpoint the Council was ideal since it included three prominent members of the three main communities in Iraq.

On the day of the Revolution, Ibrahim Ahmad, the Secretary-General of the KDP, was under house arrest in Kirkuk.⁵ He immediately telegraphed Revolutionary Headquarters confirming his party's support, hoping that the new Republic would usher in a 'new era in the strengthening of Arab-Kurdish relations, resulting in the prosperity and progress of the two peoples'.⁶ This was followed on the 16th July by a declaration addressed by the KDP to the Kurdish people :

The KDP, the vanguard of the Kurdish liberation movement, bearing in mind its historic mission to accomplish the goals of the Kurdish nation, hails as solid bases for the welfare, freedom and equality of the Kurdish and Arab peoples the increasingly important Arab liberation movement, its success in liberating Iraq, the establishment of the Republican regime and the withdrawal from

the Baghdad Pact, which was clearly detrimental to the Kurdish nation. Thus our party is determined to maintain and defend the Iraqi Republic with all its capabilities and power.⁷

In general, both Kurds and Arabs rejoiced at the revolution. But while the Arab nationalists called for unity with the UAR, and the Communists for social and economic reform, the Kurds tended to emphasise Arab-Kurdish brotherhood and greater liberty for Kurdistan.⁸

The new government's response to the growing national feeling of the Kurds was positive. The first Republican cabinet included a well-known Kurd, Baba 'Ali, son of Shaikh Mahmud Barzinji of Sulaimaniya. Furthermore the government ordered the immediate release of a number of Kurdish nationalists including Shaikh Ahmad of Barzan and the poet Goran.

Two weeks after the Revolution a provisional constitution was announced, drafted by a committee formed largely of members of the former United National Front,⁹ which maintained the Front's notions of Arab-Kurdish partnership. Thus the second article of the constitution stated that Iraq was an integral part of the Arab nation, while the third declared 'Arab and Kurds are partners in the Homeland, and their national rights are recognised within the Iraqi entity.' Article 19 declared 'there shall be no discrimination on grounds of race, nationality, language, religion or belief.' Needless to say this constitution gave an enormous boost to the Kurdish national movement and to Kurdish nationalism. A delegation headed by Ahmad visited Qasim on the same day as the constitution was proclaimed; Ahmad deliver-

ed a speech reviewing Arab-Kurdish relations since the rise of Islam, emphasising that the Kurds had joined the Arabs in their struggle against the monarchy and that as they had shared a common plight before 1958, they also deserved the glory of the Revolution. At the end of his speech Ahmad mentioned some points which he maintained were obstacles in the way of the progress of Kurdish nationalism. 'The old regime', he said, 'enrolled a few Kurdish spies and traitors and satisfied their demands, but ignored the Kurdish population as a whole. It also attempted to abolish the Kurdish language by forbidding its use or study. They changed the name of Kurdistan to the North of Iraq and the Kurds to the Northerners' ... The old regime discriminated against the Kurds over official appointments,¹⁰ awarding scholarships to students and admitting applicants to the military colleges. Moreover, the Kurds were not given their legitimate political rights.'¹¹

In his reply to Ahmad and the other Kurdish delegates Qasim stressed the desirability of Kurdish-Arab brotherhood, and renewed the invitation to the Kurdish leader Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani to return to the country.¹² He did not, however, mention Kurdish autonomy or discuss the kind of national rights his government was prepared to grant to the Kurds. Nevertheless he was regarded as a pro-Kurdish figure to the extent that his views began to arouse the opposition of his Arab nationalist colleagues, who decided to oppose Mulla Mustafa's return,¹³ arguing that the Republic was not yet established on a solid foundation and that Mulla Mustafa's many enemies in the north might be aroused against it by his return.

'Arif and some other senior army officers, mainly Arab nationalists, were of the same view. This annoyed Qasim who ended the discussion by saying 'the Barzanis have had enough troubles in their exile under the old regime, and we should be more tolerant'¹⁴. This suggests that Qasim's tolerance was essentially born of sympathy, although he was widely criticised for having approved and encouraged Mulla Mustafa's return. Possibly he feared that the Kurds would have been hostile to the Republic from the very beginning had he refused to welcome Mulla Mustafa. Furthermore, the KDP delegations gave him the impression that the Kurdish intelligentsia were the force of the day, and that he was winning the support of this important part of the Kurdish people.

In early October 1958, Mulla Mustafa was in Prague; Ibrahim Ahmad was called to the Ministry of the Interior to receive four passports for Mulla Mustafa and his senior associates from 'Arif, the Minister, and departed immediately for Prague. On 6th October Mulla Mustafa arrived at Baghdad Airport, having landed at Cairo en route,¹⁵ and some four hundred of his followers and fellow-exiles arrived at Basra aboard a Soviet ship a few months later.¹⁶ Mulla Mustafa was acclaimed as a national hero and was cordially received by Qasim; he was given a motor car, a generous allowance, and was housed in a house formerly belonging to the late Premier, Nuri al-Sa'id. In return Mulla Mustafa declared his loyalty to the regime and to Qasim, denounced imperialism, praised the anti-colonial struggle, and called for the Kurds of Turkey and Iran to be granted the same rights as those enjoyed by their fellow nationals in Iraq.¹⁷

Subsequently Qasim and Mulla Mustafa reached what was stated to be a full understanding on matters concerning co-operation between Arabs and Kurds,¹⁸ which was expressed in a number of measures taken by Qasim to enhance Mulla Mustafa's position as leader of the Kurds. Qasim also legalised the Kurdish press and the KDP, while Mulla Mustafa supported Qasim against his rivals in return.

By the end of 1958 the Kurds had great expectations from the new Republic, and of some form of self-government in particular. However, there were other groups in the country whose aspirations had also to be accommodated. On the political level there were three factions :

- 1 - The National Democrats, who demanded a democratic republic with a parliament and free elections.
- 2 - The pan-Arabs and Istiqlalis, who wanted an immediate merger with the UAR.
- 3 - The Communists, who demanded free elections, suggested federation with the UAR as an alternative to total unity, and asked for their party's participation in the government.

All these forces were competing for ascendancy. To add to the confusion a struggle for power broke out between 'Arif and Qasim shortly after the Revolution. This struggle, which began over the question of union with the UAR, was reflected in the parties forming the FNU, and the Kurds were drawn into the struggle. 'Arif began to tour the country to drum up support for immediate unity.¹⁹ Qasim, on the other hand, was not enthusiastic; he had no desire to defer to Nasser, and preferred close co-operation or, if there was no alternative, a form of federation with the UAR. In

this he was supported, of course for a variety of different reasons, by the Communists, the Kurds and a section of the Democrats.²⁰ Armed with the support of these three groups, Qasim managed for the time being to curtail the Arab nationalists' influence, oust 'Arif, and consequently to dispense with the idea of unity with the UAR.

As a result, the Iraqi Communist Party and the KDP, now under Mulla Mustafa's control, began to operate more or less freely, and for a while enjoyed a brief ascendancy over the Ba'thists and Arab nationalists. In March 1959, a sanguinary confrontation between the two sides took place in Mosul, one of the main centres of Arab nationalism in Iraq, where the majority of the population was conservative, Nasserist and anti-communist. It was here that Qasim's opponents, who had begun to accuse him of having betrayed the Arab cause and the Revolution, had more freedom to act, and his unwise decision to transfer many officers dissatisfied with his policy to this area strengthened its position as an anti-Qasim city. The delicate situation in the country as a whole was challenged by the decision, in February 1959, of the Peace Partisans, a leftist faction, to hold their annual meeting in Mosul in March. Many Mosulawis, particularly the local military commander, Colonel Shawwaf, tried unsuccessfully to persuade Qasim to cancel the meeting. As the Peace Partisans, who numbered nearly 250,000 began to converge upon Mosul on 5th March, there were demonstrations and counter-demonstrations, and on 8th March Colonel Shawwaf attempted a military coup, supported by the Ba'th Party, the Nasserists, and members of the Shammar tribe. All these elements were

in fact armed and encouraged by Syria to overthrow Qasim.²¹ The Syrian regime also established a broadcasting station on the Syrian-Iraqi borders in order to announce and support the coup against Qasim. In the course of the revolt, in which the Communist side counted 110 killed, and the nationalist side about 200, the Kurds (Barzanis and members of the KDP), took advantage of the confusion to harass their enemies.²² Qasim had to accept, and sometimes support, the acts of men armed by his regime, since this was often the only way he could maintain his own position.²³

The turning point in Qasim's relation with the Communists and Kurds was the 'bloody doings' at Kirkuk in July 1959. This again was an attack on anti-communists and anti-Kurds by Communists, Kurds and members of the PRF.²⁴ As this second massacre coincided with the ICP's campaign aimed at forcing Qasim to include them in the Government, it was widely put about by the nationalists that the ICP had deliberately planned these acts in order to 'terrorize the nation into submission and clear the way for a final takeover'.²⁵ The ICP also succeeded in getting the support of the KDP and some Democrats to form another national front under their leadership. At this point Qasim seems to have reached the conclusion that the time had come for him either to include them - particularly the Communists - in the Government, or to crush their influence. Opting for the second alternative, he obtained Mulla Mustafa's support, rejected the Communists' demands for participation in the Government and for the formation of a new national front, and started his clampdown

on them. He condemned the Kirkuk massacre as 'barbaric and inhumane', promising to bring all those responsible to trial. Mulla Mustafa, in turn, ousted the pro-Communist Secretary-General of the KDP, Hamza 'Abdullah,²⁶ to bring the party into line with Qasim's policy. During the following months the KDP and Mulla Mustafa's men aided Qasim in every possible way in his anti-Communist measures. His reward was the legalization of the KDP.

The KDP and its legalization, 1957-60

Under the secretaryship of Ibrahim Ahmad, the PDK's influence among Kurdish intellectuals had increased.²⁷ 1957 saw a substantial consolidation of the Parti Demokrati-Kurd (PDK) for in that year the Kurdish branch of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICPK) started to negotiate with the PDK without the knowledge of its mother organisation. Shortly afterwards the Central Committee of the ICPK and a considerable number of Kurdish Communists went over to the PDK, and the party's name was changed to the United Kurdistan Democratic Party (UKDP). However, the UKDP was not permitted to enter the United National Front in the same year.²⁸ Although the 14th July Revolution promoted Mulla Mustafa and the Barzanis' position, it also boosted the position of the UKDP, although Qasim supported Mulla Mustafa and not the UKDP leadership. However, like other political parties after the Revolution, the UKDP began to operate more or less freely before it was actually licensed in 1960. It was accepted in the reorganised United National Front, and when Mulla Mustafa returned to Iraq he took over the leadership of the Party.²⁹ However, the UKDP did not press immediate demands,³⁰ and its leader was

completely subordinated to Qasim, who saw both party and leader as useful instruments to stem the growing tide of Arab nationalism and later the increasing influence of the Communists.³¹

Gradually, at the end of the 1950s the UKDP began to split into two parts: the first, headed by Ahmad, represented the majority³² while the second consisted of four members, all old Communists, who were against the Ahmad group but had little support inside the party. The group of four approached Mulla Mustafa, who in turn brought the old Secretary-General, Hamza 'Abdullah 'back' into the party. The return of these two reinforced the anti-Ahmad group, where the position was now seriously threatened.³³ Opposition to Ahmad seems to have begun as a result of his alliance with the Arab nationalists; clearly, he really thought that Arab nationalism was the force of the future, and that union with the UAR under President Nasser's leadership was soon going to come about.³⁴ He was also encouraged by President Nasser's initiation of a Kurdish broadcasting service in 1958, and by his meeting with Nasser in October 1958. For his part 'Abdullah evidently thought that Communism was the force of the future.³⁵ According to Ahmad, Mulla Mustafa threw in his lot with 'Abdullah and the four on Qasim's advice.³⁶

When the Arab nationalists failed to bring about a speedy union with the UAR,³⁷ Ahmad's position was shaken, and criticism of his policy grew more intense. Even when he tried to co-operate with the ICP, with whom he signed a Covenant of Co-operation, his critics accused him of signing on unequal terms.³⁸ Feeling stronger than ever, the 'Abdullah group encouraged

Mulla Mustafa to submit his resignation, and not to withdraw it unless Ahmad and Jalal Talabani, another member of the Politbureau, left the party.³⁹ In January 1959 the intra-party coup was successful, and 'Abdullah regained his old post as a Secretary General of the UKDP with Mulla Mustafa's blessing.

'Abdullah now became fully subordinate to the ICP. The UKDP Youth, Teachers' and Women's organisations were integrated with their Iraqi counterparts, which were already under the ICP's control, and the newly-legalised UKDP organ, Khabat, followed the Communist line.⁴⁰ Furthermore, 'Abdullah, together with the new Central Committee, supported and signed the Covenant of the proposed new United National Front.⁴¹ The Covenant was also signed by the left wing of the National Democratic Party, and nearly all the professional unions. Faced with a serious potential adversary of a group of organised political forces under Communist domination, Qasim declared his dissatisfaction with the front,⁴² simultaneously condemning the 'barbaric acts', of the Communists and Kurds in Mosul and Kirkuk. Mulla Mustafa gradually became aware of Qasim's attitude towards the parties and the Front,⁴³ and accordingly invited 'Abdullah to a meeting in order to dissuade him from his pro-Communist policy. 'Abdullah declined and sent a harsh letter to Mulla Mustafa.⁴⁴ The latter's response was typical: he sent a band of Barzanis to storm the UDKP's headquarters and oust 'Abdullah and his group. To confirm their loyalty to Qasim, the remaining members of the Politbureau announced that they were prepared to suspend their party's activities in line with Qasim's policy.⁴⁵

Following Mulla Mustafa's second coup the UKDP remained without a Secretary-General for two months. During this period the Ahmad-Talabani faction was active; in fact both Ahmad and Talabani were among the first to congratulate Mulla Mustafa for his action against 'Abdullah.⁴⁶ In October 1959 the UKDP held its Fourth Congress; with the goodwill of Mulla Mustafa, Ahmad was re-elected Secretary-General and Talabani was reinstated in the Politbureau. The UKDP's leadership was again entrusted to Mulla Mustafa.

Ever since he had returned to the party, Ahmad had been trying to alienate it from Mulla Mustafa's influence, although he continued to pay lip service to his leadership. To stress the separate entity of the UKDP, Ahmad published the new programme of the party, consisting of a preamble and twenty-three articles.⁴⁷ The preamble was a general survey of the Kurds' history and struggle in Iran, Turkey and Iraq before the 1958 Revolution, and also made reference to the contribution of the Kurdish people to the Revolution. The major items of the programme were as follows :

The UKDP is a democratic revolutionary party, representing the interests of workers, peasants, salaried officials, authors and revolutionary intellectual Kurds. (Art 2). In its political struggle and social analysis the party acknowledges its debt to Marxist-Leninist doctrine. (Art 3). The party strives to safeguard international peace, in line with the resolutions of the Bandung Conference and the Afro-Asian bloc, and to pursue a national anti-imperialist policy. (Art 5).

The most important paragraph was Article 6a. After allusions to the strengthening of the fraternal ties between Arabs, Kurds and other minorities, there followed the declaration that the party would struggle to widen the national rights of the Kurdish people on the basis of autonomy within the entity of Iraq and to include such an article in the permanent constitution. Section 6b discussed the strengthening of the party's relations with Communist and democratic organisations in Iraq and other countries. Other articles dealt with the representation of Kurds in all government services and councils, with due regard to the minorities inhabiting Kurdistan; the adoption of agrarian reform in Kurdistan; the development of the industry, economy and finance of Kurdistan; direct elections and the granting of votes for women; the development of Kurdish studies; the situation of Kurdish refugees in Iraq,⁴⁸ and finally support for the struggle for self-determination on the part of the Kurds in all parts of Kurdistan.⁴⁹

In January 1960 Qasim legalized the formation of political parties under the new Association Law. Democratic as this looked at first, Qasim's move was in fact an attempt to trim what was left of the influence of the political groups, since at the end of the one month period in which licences had to be applied for only three parties had been legalized, one of which was the UKDP.⁵⁰ Since Qasim's policy was to play one political group against the others in order to weaken them all, his decision to legalize the UKDP indicated that the latter's turn had not yet come, since he depended on the UKDP and Mulla Mustafa to cripple the real ICP. However, Qasim did not let

the UKDP's application pass entirely unchallenged. Mulla Mustafa and Ibrahim Ahmad (respectively President and Secretary-General), applied for a licence on 9th January 1960. The application, which included the party's 1959 Programme and the names of fifty party supporters, was submitted to the Minister of the Interior. In the course of the month which followed Ahmad received no official objection to his party's application,⁵¹ and at the end of the month he went to thank the Minister and receive the licence.⁵² To his surprise the Minister of the Interior handed him a programme different from the original one, claiming that the new programme had been written by Qasim himself, and that it was in accordance with this that the licence had been granted. When Ahmad objected the Minister advised him to see Qasim.⁵³

Some of the changes involved important matters of principle; the party's name had been changed to the Kurdish Democratic Party, the phrase 'we strive' had been altered to 'the party endeavours', the word Kurdistan had been omitted from the programme, and the phrase 'the Kurdish people' had been changed to 'the Kurds' or 'our brothers the Kurds'. The article dealing with the Kurds' right to autonomy and the adoption of Marxist-Leninist doctrine was also omitted. At a meeting between Qasim, Ahmad, Mulla Mustafa and other prominent leaders of the UKDP, Qasim argued that the word 'autonomy' could be used by his enemies against him while the Revolution was still fresh. 'Autonomy could give these enemies the idea of giving away Arab land.' He said that he was sympathetic to the Kurds' right to autonomy but not to the

inclusion of this right in the programme. 'You may mention it in your newspaper', he told Ahmad. With regard to Marxist-Leninist doctrine Qasim explained that since he had refused the ICP a licence because of it, it would be difficult to accept it from another party. Eventually Qasim won the Kurdish delegation over, and the changes he made were accepted; even the party's name was changed, on Qasim's advice, to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).⁵⁴

This meeting was important not only because of the changes made in the KDP's programme; it also showed Qasim's authority over the party and its weak ideology. It also marked a deterioration of relations between Qasim and the KDP; in the long argument that took place, Qasim directly accused Ahmad and some of his colleagues of co-operating with hostile elements to overthrow him, referring to Ahmad's co-operation with the Arab nationalists at the beginning of the Revolution.⁵⁵ Nevertheless Ahmad and his group dropped the articles and swallowed the accusation in order to get the licence. But in 1960 the Fifth Congress of the KDP refused to accept Qasim's amendments and only accepted the new name.⁵⁶

Other components of the Kurdish national movement

Alongside the 'intellectual' wing of the Kurdish movement, represented in the UKDP and KDP, there were the tribes, whose leaders had formed the active nucleus of the movement until the middle 1940s. As we have seen, Mulla Mustafa was their unchallenged leader until his departure in 1947, when he was forced to take refuge in the USSR. It seemed that his eleven years' sojourn in the Soviet Union had had little effect on his political outlook, since he

continued to value people according to their wealth and the number of fighting men they could rally around them. However, his own long record of fighting against different Iraqi regimes, and his exile in the USSR made him a legendary figure for many of his countrymen, which enabled him to regain the presidency of the KDP in 1958. After returning to Iraq, his main objective was to conquer the tribes which had fought against him under the old regime.⁵⁷ He had no difficulty in keeping his own tribe loyal to him and was more or less unaffected by the ideological trends sweeping over Iraq after the Revolution. In spite of the fact that his main interests remained within his tribe, he succeeded, in a series of 'coups' and skilful manoeuvres, in subordinating the KDP, or at least in securing the loyalty of its Central Committee. His own tribesmen, the Barzanis, were the backbone of the Kurdish fighting forces, later known as the Peshmerga, 'those who face death'. With this force of some 2000 men, and with the support of other tribes, Mulla Mustafa was able to ensure that his will prevailed over the Kurdish national movement.⁵⁸ Since he had no ideology, he resorted to complicated tactics and force to maintain his supremacy. This was evident during the 1961 Revolt when he managed to gain the support of a wide variety of groups, including shaikhs, feudal landowners, religious leaders, Communists, peasants and workers. The first three groups saw him as the protector of their interests and prestige, mainly because he opposed progressive tendencies within the movement and the government's reforms. His tactical skill was shown in the way in which he managed to combine the various different groups; he

first ousted the old generation of shaikhs and feud-
alists from the movement and replaced them by their
sons. This younger generation normally put national
aims before feudal interests, yet he secured an un-
challenged position among them because of his
prestige, and the respect that they felt for him and
his tribe. He gained the support of the Communists
by keeping all the dissidents within his ranks,⁵⁹ and
the areas under his control became a safe refuge for
elements opposed to successive Iraqi regimes, provid-
ed they obeyed him. Despite many reservations about
his ideology, the KDP had to follow him since there
was no-one in its ranks to rival his experience,
magnetism, and military expertise.⁶⁰

Mulla Mustafa's faction was the most tightly knit and
strongest organisation within the Kurdish national
movement. Two other factors gave his faction a prom-
inent position. First, his tribe occupied territory
that was very difficult to attack. Secondly, as the
revolt progressed, it was the only faction recognised
by foreign countries sympathetic to the Kurdish cause,
and hence to receive arms, ammunition and other moral
and material support.⁶¹ At the beginning of the 1961
Revolt, Mulla Mustafa's forces were purely tribal,
ill-organised and motivated largely by tribal bigotry.
A few years later, they had undergone a form of
training and organisation, although tribalism remain-
ed the predominant influence. Ultimately, the position
Mulla Mustafa enjoyed inside the Kurdish national
movement gave credence to his claim that his faction
was the legitimate representative of the Kurdish
people.⁶²

The other tribal forces in Kurdistan were largely

motivated by their impatience with, and resistance to, what appeared to them to be encroachments by the government on their property or their freedom of action, and by feuds, quarrels and friendships with their neighbours. Thus the national feeling had no effect on them. Such tribes were the Zibaris, Herkis, both bitter enemies of Mulla Mustafa, and others. The old regime, taking advantage of the division among the leaders of these tribes and their enmity towards the Barzanis managed to get their support against Mulla Mustafa's growing influence by promising to let them keep their lands and property. Of course Mulla Mustafa himself belonged essentially to this class but differed from them by espousing national beliefs and having less property to fear for. Thus it was inevitable that the triumphant return of the Barzani leaders from the Soviet Union in 1958, the freedom of action given to the KDP under the new regime, and the declaration of the Agrarian Reform Law would combine to arouse the fears of these tribes. But because of their animosity to the Barzanis, they could always be regarded as a powerful ally to the regime in the face of a break-out by Mulla Mustafa or the KDP, which was what actually happened after the eruption of the 1961 Revolt when they became permanent allies of successive governments.

The government formed an irregular force from their ranks called al-Fursan ('the Knights') in 1963, but their motivation always remained tribal and materialistic. Their leaders' hostility to the Barzanis was passionate, and this was communicated to their obedient followers. Apart from that, none of them had a political organisation, and they were in no sense

unified. They dealt separately with the government.⁶³ While the tribes dominated the rural areas, the July Revolution boosted the position of the Kurdish intellectuals. Although the KDP was the most influential organisation, its position was challenged by two factions, one to the left represented by the ICPK,⁶⁴ and one to the right represented by the Kajyk party, founded in 1959 by Kurdish intellectuals who had long been living in Europe, especially in Germany. The Kajykian ideology is a collection of international doctrines: nationalism, racialism, socialism and liberalism, but given a Kajykian stamp. Nothing detailed has been written or said about this party, apart from its own Kajyknameh, the Kajyk constitution, which has been published in three markedly different versions.⁶⁵ What is clear in Kajykian ideology is its uncompromising belief in the separation and independence of Grand Kurdistan, its anti-Communist stand, and its nihilistic attitude.

Footnotes

- 1 For further details see Batatu (1978) pp 764-807.
- 2 Interview with Major-General Najji Talib, October 1973. Talib was one of the original fourteen Free Officers. In 1966 he became Prime Minister. Khadduri however maintains that the Free Officers did discuss Kurdish national rights and were ready to give the Kurds a measure of local government. Khadduri (1969), pp 29-30.
- 3 'Arif, a staunch supporter of President Nasser also became Minister of Interior and Deputy Commander in Chief.
- 4 This was Khalid al-Naqshabandi, an ex-army officer and a member of a prominent Kurdish family with religious connections.
- 5 Dann, U, Iraq Under Qassem: a Political History 1959-1963, London 1969, p 16.
- 6 Talabani (1971), p 227.
- 7 Ibid, p 278.
- 8 Dann (1969), pp 100-101. Edmonds, C J, 'The Kurds and the Revolution in Iraq', Middle East Journal, Vol 13, Winter 1959, No 1, p 4; Batatu (1978), pp 815-812.
- 9 Khadduri (1969), p 64; Dann (1969), p 36. See also p 23 above.
- 10 This seems somewhat unfair; the old regime did not in fact discriminate against individual Kurds. The last Royal premier, Ahmad Mukhtar Baban, was a Kurd, as were a fair number of high ranking officials. See al-Durra, M, al-Qadhia al-Kurdia fi al-Iraq, Beirut 1966, pp 234-5. The discrimination

was rather against nationalist Kurds who were always accused of being 'fellow-travellers'.

- 11 Talabani (1971), pp 279-84.
- 12 This was an answer to Mulla Mustafa's request to be allowed to return home which he cabled with his congratulations to the new regime.
- 13 Qasim was later accused by Arab nationalists of attempting to alienate Iraq from the Arab camp by permitting the return of Mulla Mustafa, in order to use him and his tribe to implement his own policies; see al-Durra(1966), pp 279-82.
- 14 Interview with 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Hasani. See also Dann (1969), p 139 and al-Ghamrawi A, Qissat al-Akrad fi Shimal al-'Iraq (The story of the Kurds in the North of Iraq), Cairo 1967, p 380.
- 15 Where he met President Nasser, apparently on 'Arif's advice (Interview with Ahmad).
- 16 The UAR press and some Arab nationalists maintained that the Soviet ship contained Kurds who had been trained in guerrilla warfare. Whatever the truth of this, these followers of Mulla Mustafa were sent to the north with government aid. See al-Durra, pp 282-83. See also al-Hukuma al-Watania wa Mushkilatal-Shimal (The National Government and the Problem of the North), Ministry of Guidance Baghdad 1965.
- 17 See Edmonds, C J, 'Great Britain and Iraq, 1914-58' Round Table, June 1959; Dann (1969), p 197. In fact the reaction of those of Iraq's neighbours with Kurdish minorities was significant. In response to Iraqi encouragement of the Kurds, Iran increased its radio programmes in Kurdish and published a weekly journal, Kurdistan. In Turkey

- and Iran leading Kurdish figures were arrested. Kurds opposed to the Shah published a secret weekly, also called Kurdistan, and formed a number of secret organisations. In Syria a Kurdish doctor founded a Kurdish political party. See Van Rooy, S E, 'The Struggle for Kurdistan', Survey August 1962, p 114; Rondot, P, 'La Nation Kurde en face des mouvements Arabes', Orient, Paris No 7, 1958 p 68; Kinnane, p 58; Israel Naamani, 'The Kurdish Drive for Self-Determination', Middle East Journal, Vol 20, 1966, No 3 p 283.
- 18 Khadduri (1969), p 175.
- 19 He was supported by the Arab nationalists, Ba'thists and Istiqlalis; see Batatu (1978), pp 808-860.
- 20 The Communists could point to the fate of their comrades in Egypt and Syria after union, while the Kurds were concerned about the overwhelming Arab majority which would result from union.
- 21 See Petran, T, Syria, London 1972, pp 132-3, and Batatu (1978), p 866-889. Syria was then part of the UAR.
- 22 Dann (1969), p 175. The KDP urged its followers to fight 'in self defence against Arab chauvinism' p 174. The figures are taken from Batatu (1978), pp 888-9.
- 23 Loyal army detachments arrived later to take control of the city; however, they did not succeed in completely curbing the ICP's influence.
- 24 'Nothing harmed the Communists more than the bloody doings at Kirkuk in July 14-16 (1959) ... But the more immediate blame falls clearly upon fanatic Kurds of differing tendencies. It is significant that all but three of the 31 officially reported

- as killed and all but six of the 130 known to have been injured in the incidents were Turkmen ... On the whole it was in the inveterate enmity between Kurds and Turkmen that the outrageous fury that gripped the city had its roots'. Batatu (1978), p 912. For an eye-witness account by the Kirkuk Chief of Police, see *ibid*, pp 915-6.
- 25 Dann (1969), p 223.
- 26 Hamza 'Abdullah, the first Secretary-General of the KDP, had been ousted by Ahmad in 1953. He was returned with the support of Mulla Mustafa in January 1959. The circumstances of his dismissal and replacement by Ibrahim Ahmad later that year are obscure: see Kutschera (1979), p 209.
- 27 See pp 21-22 above.
- 28 This led to a series of accusations and counter accusations between the two parties, in the course of which the ICP was accused of opposing the UKDP joining the FNU. See the ICP pamphlet *Radd 'ala Mafahim Bourgeoisia Qawmia wa Taswafia* (A reply to bourgeois, nationalist and destructive opinions) 1957. See also *al-Masala al-Kurdia* (The Kurdish Problem) Baghdad 1969, p 29.
- 29 Mulla Mustafa maintained that the party's leadership had been bestowed on him by Qasim. See Adamson, D, *The Kurdish War*, London 1964, p 95. Ahmad and the other doctrinaires did not oppose this 'appointment' thinking that they could benefit from Qasim's good relations with Mulla Mustafa. Interview with Ahmad.
- 30 Even when the UKDP made urgent demands, Qasim could easily put them aside, sometimes with the help of Mulla Mustafa himself.

- 31 See al-Masala al-Kurdia (1969), p 21; Dann (1969) p 271.
- 32 Between 1952 and 1958 Ahmad dominated the party, and 'Abdullah and Mulla Mustafa were refused the right to participate in the party, let alone in policy-making. Ahmad maintained that he refused to accept Mulla Mustafa before 1958 because he did not want to brand the party as being directed from the USSR. (Interview with Ahmad).
- 33 See al-Masala al-Kurdia (1969), p 20.
- 34 This also explains his early courtship of 'Arif: see page 70 below.
- 35 Schmidt, D A, Journey Among Brave Men, Boston 1964. p 123.
- 36 Interview with Ahmad. Ahmad asserted that Qasim advised Mulla Mustafa in their first meeting in October 1958 to be careful of Ahmad's intentions. 'Awni Yusuf, a Kurdish Minister in Qasim's cabinet, maintained that Qasim was always suspicious of Ahmad's intentions. Interview with 'Awni Yusuf.
- 37 This was marked by the collapse of Colonel 'Arif's coup in November 1958.
- 38 al-Masala al-Kurdia (1969), p 15. As a matter of fact the original draft of the Covenant was acceptable to the Ahmad group, who were the majority. In the Covenant the two parties agreed that the Kurdish right to self-determination was to be recognised, that Iraq belonged to both the Kurds and Arabs (Art 7), and that Kurdistan was to be organised as a province administered by Kurds (Art 8). Because of these two articles the Central Committee of the ICP refused to ratify the

- Covenant. Yet Mulla Mustafa and the four refused to support it because it gave the ICP freedom of action in Kurdistan, (Art 9). The ICP was victorious, and articles 7 and 8 were struck out. See Dann (1969), pp 140-41.
- 39 Ahmad was forced to resign and Talabani was suspended. *al-Masala al-Kurdia* (1969), p 21. Ahmad claimed that Mulla Mustafa asked him to leave for the sake of the party. Mulla Mustafa's argument was that his good relation with Qasim could serve the party better than Ahmad's holding office. Interview with Ahmad.
- 40 Vanly (1970), p 116. *Khabat* was legalized in April 1959.
- 41 Dann (1969), pp 212-13.
- 42 Qasim described the front as 'an erroneous concept' for the parties it was supposed to be composed of were 'non-existent'; 'had the majority supported it I would also have to support it'. Dann (1969), p 213.
- 43 Interview with Ahmad.
- 44 Interview with 'Awni Yusuf.
- 45 Dann (1969), p 213.
- 46 Interview with 'Awni Yusuf.
- 47 See *al-Durra* (1966), pp 289-96. The Programme had not changed since 1953. 'Abdullah made no changes, and Ahmad, who wrote the second programme, was anxious to stress his developing ideology. It appeared in *Khabat* in 27 November 1959.
- 48 Those were the refugees who had come to Iraq from neighbouring countries after the July Revolution.
- 49 Vanly (1970), p 118, also *al-Durra* (1966), pp 289-96.

- 50 The parties which applied for a licence were the ICP, the National Democratic Party, the UKDP, the Republican Party and the Islamic Party (two factions). A small group of dissident Communists, under the leadership of Da'ud al-Sayigh, had also applied for a licence for another Communist Party. This group, which also called itself the 'Iraqi Communist Party', the UKDP and the NDP were legalized. See Dann (1969), pp 269-303, and Batatu (1978), pp 936-41.
- 51 Ahmad said that he sensed official dissatisfaction with his party's programme in his dealings with the Chief of Military Censorship. (Interview with Ahmad).
- 52 Interview with Ahmad.
- 53 Ibid.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 See pages 70-71.
- 56 See Appendix I.
- 57 Qasim told Mulla Mustafa in their first meeting in 1958 to forgive and forget his old tribal enemies. Mulla Mustafa replied that, with all deference to Qasim, forgiving his Kurdish enemies was impossible, 'for they were criminals'. Dann (1969), p 138.
- 58 Mulla Mustafa could easily muster about 6.000 fighting men from his tribe and its allies. This force constituted a third of the whole Kurdish fighting force, which was estimated at around 20.000. See for example Schmidt (1964), pp 59-65.
- 59 al-Thawra al-'Arabia, (the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party's organ), No 9, May 1969, pp 61-68.
- 60 However, he had in fact never led or directed his

forces in a major battle. (Interview with S Fakhri).

- 61 When the Kurdish Revolt became an international issue after 1963 Mulla Mustafa's representatives, and not those of the KDP were accepted in Egypt and Belgium.
- 62 al-Thawra al-'Arabia, 9 May 1969.
- 63 In fact al-Fursan's relations with later regimes depended mostly on the strength or weakness of the latter. Relations between the two sides were therefore unstable. Many of the al-Fursan, fearing reprisals from Mulla Mustafa's forces under a weak regime, secretly established friendly relations with him. However, the anti-Barzani tribes were armed and subsidised by the Iraqi Army, under whose command and protection they usually fought.
- 64 The role of the ICPK will be discussed in Chapter Nine. The name of KAJYK was formed from the first letters of its full name 'Komala Azadi Jinanway Yakity Kurd'. (the Party for the Freedom, Resurrection and Unity of the Kurds).
- 65 al-Kajyknameh: Falsafat Hizb Khajyk fi Suttur, (Aspects of Kajyk ideology), Kajyk publications, 1971. Qazzaz, S T, Nationalism and Cultural Pluralism: the Kurdish Case. (Ph D dissertation, The American University, Washington 1971), pp 123-126; Vanly (1970), p 123.
- 66 al-Kajyknameh, pp 11, 15. Vanly (1970), p 123. See also al-Thawra al-'Arabia, 9 May 1969.

CHAPTER THREE

Qasim and the Kurds: Cold War and Open Hostility
1960-1963

The state of relative democracy which prevailed in Iraq during the first year of the Revolution (military government with free public comment) gradually began to give way to military dictatorship. After first appearing as the great hope of the majority of the Iraqis, Qasim went back upon most of his promises and began to assert his sole authority. As a result the 'Transitional Period', which he claimed, would be 'the shortest in history', lasted for the whole of his regime. In an attempt to rule unopposed, Qasim tried with a fair degree of success to weaken all influential political parties and pressure groups and subordinate them to himself. As he had no ideology or political party of his own, he attempted to play off the various political groups against each other. After encouraging the Communists and the Kurds to unite against the Arab nationalists, he then turned against the Communists in July 1959. He began by removing Communist and fellow-travelling officers from sensitive posts, retiring them, and sometimes replacing them with Arab nationalist officers while

his security forces were gradually making life difficult for ICP members. This eventually provided the Arab nationalist officers with sufficient influence in the Army to overthrow him in 1963. The Kurds supported Qasim in this policy, and by the end of the year he had largely succeeded in neutralising Communist influence.¹

By 1960, therefore, the Kurdish nationalist movement, with its different components, was the only influential group that remained in Iraq and Qasim sought to find a means of muzzling it. However his policy of balance proved a failure for three reasons. First, there was no well-organised pro-government group in Kurdistan to use against the Kurds. Secondly, Qasim failed to win over any Kurdish faction to his side in his fight against Mulla Mustafa and the KDP. Instead, he favoured a number of aghas who had collaborated with the ancien régime, an element particularly hated by the nationalists.² Finally, and perhaps most ominously for the future, Qasim failed to appreciate the fact that Kurdistan was geographically well endowed for the Kurdish nationalists' defence of their interests.

The various components of the Kurdish national movement naturally differed in their attitudes towards the July Revolution. The traditional feudalists and aghas feared it; Mulla Mustafa and the Barzanis regarded it as a victory for themselves as well as an opportunity for revenge against their enemies, and in the eyes of the KDP and the

intellectuals it was a 'step towards self-determination'.³ Soon they were all to be disillusioned, and Qasim himself began to realize that he was unable to fulfil the high hopes which he had encouraged. However, he now applied his policy of switching support from one faction to another to the Kurds.

Qasim, the Aghas, the Landowners and the Tribal Forces

The Royalist regime had been largely supported by great landowners, who were generally inclined to crush any nationalist or anti-monarchical activities. This policy was particularly evident following the collapse of Mulla Mustafa's revolt of 1943-45, when most of the Barzani lands were either given to or taken over by rival tribes as a reward for their support in putting down the revolt. Until 1958, the domination of the anti-Barzani tribal elements was complete, and as the new regime authorized the return of the Barzanis without resolving this fundamental antagonism, a rupture between the Republic and these elements was more or less inevitable.⁴ Apart from the fact that they were mostly pro-monarchy, the landlords felt particularly threatened by the new government's proclamation of a progressive Agrarian Reform Law in September 1958. They were also concerned at the growth of the KDP's influence. However, despite the power they enjoyed in terms of fighting capability, these elements failed to

present a serious threat to the nascent Republic because of the collective support of the Barzanis, the KDP, and the ICP which had the Popular Resistance Force under its control, and also because of the inter-tribal divisions existing among the 'opposition'. Thus the July Revolution had the effect of re-introducing two rivalries in Kurdistan, between the government and the traditional aghas and landlords on one hand, and between the Barzanis and their traditional enemies on the other. This animosity was manifested in the Lolan rebellion of May 1959, which was a belated reaction of the conservative landowners to the Revolution.⁵ It was put down mainly by the joint efforts of the Barzanis, the KDP and the PRF, and its leaders fled to Iran.⁶ However, the Lolan rebellion also saw an intensification of the rivalry between the Communists, and the KDP under Mulla Mustafa, since the GOC of the 2nd Division at Kirkuk gave his support to the Popular Resistance Forces and even jailed a number of KDP members. Still voicing his personal loyalty to Qasim, Mulla Mustafa vehemently denounced this and reported to Qasim the excesses of the Communists in the north;⁷ It was obvious that he was not prepared to accept any other authority in Kurdistan but his own. Qasim made use of these allegations for his anti-Communist campaign and clamped down on the ICP by dissolving

the PRF. Mulla Mustafa took advantage of the new situation both to encourage and assist Qasim in his anti-ICP drive and to consolidate his own personal position.

The new situation appeared to place Mulla Mustafa in an uncontested position in Kurdistan. However, Qasim was aware of his growing power and set about cautiously trimming his influence. To this end he issued a decree pardoning those who had participated in the Lolan rebellion and successfully persuaded them to return to Iraq.⁸ Presumably his immediate intention was not to use these tribes against Mulla Mustafa, since he still required his assistance, but to lay the foundations for foiling any future attempt Mulla Mustafa might make to dominate Kurdistan.⁹ Nevertheless, Mulla Mustafa failed to grasp this hint and continued his attacks on his rivals.¹⁰ He was twice summoned by Qasim, first in an attempt to deter him, and secondly to make it clear that the government would not forgive such acts in the future.¹¹ At this stage the personal differences between the two leaders occasioned the final break. Qasim always thought of himself as the 'Sole Leader' of the Iraqi people - not only Arabs but Kurds and other minorities. His alliance with, or more correctly his dependence on Mulla Mustafa was only to enable him to use the latter and his tribal forces to balance other potentially dangerous forces, rather than to enhance Mulla Mustafa's position. For his part Mulla Mustafa believed that his loyalty to Qasim need not weaken his status as national leader of the Kurds. In any

case, the differences were overshadowed by the euphoria that followed the success of the July Revolution and the struggle for power that ensued. But as time passed and both men became more secure, differences began to emerge, and the second year of the Republic brought the growing atmosphere of mistrust to the surface. While Qasim was recovering in hospital after the attempt on his life in October 1959, Mulla Mustafa hastened to him to offer him a personal guard from the Barzani tribe. Qasim rejected the offer and ignored Mulla Mustafa by conferring with other visitors,¹² presumably thinking that this was an attempt to belittle him and to show him that without the alliance and protection of Mulla Mustafa he was always in danger.¹³ On a second visit Mulla Mustafa claimed responsibility for the assassination of the chief of a rival tribe, the Zibari,¹⁴ which seems to have made Qasim more determined than ever to trim Mulla Mustafa's forces. Furthermore, he now believed that his lenient attitude towards the Kurds, the Communists and the PRF was one of the reasons, if not the main one behind the Ba'thists' attempt on his life.¹⁵ Thus he came to the conclusion that unless he tightened his own control Mulla Mustafa would be encouraged to defy his authority. After leaving hospital and resuming his normal duties, Qasim began to show Mulla Mustafa less attention and to show more respect to his rivals.¹⁶ He played down Kurdish claims to separate nationhood, and spoke disparagingly of their role in Iraqi history. Hence in the winter of 1960 he announced that all the revolts that had occurred in Iraq before 1958 had originated with, or been

encouraged by the 'imperialists', with the exception of those of 1920, 1936 and 1941.¹⁷ This implicitly criticised all the Kurdish revolts and uprisings, including those of Mulla Mustafa, and the announcement damaged the relationship beyond repair.

While the 4th Conference of the KDP was meeting under the chairmanship of Mulla Mustafa, Qasim was receiving delegates from the Herki and Surchi tribes, who were both anti-Barzani. The news of this meeting took precedence over the KDP's conference in Qasim's newspapers,¹⁸ and by the end of 1960 his support in terms of arms and money for the rivals of the Barzanis was an open secret. From this time on Mulla Mustafa was clearly waiting for Qasim to sever the alliance.¹⁹ The final break between the two came about in the winter of 1960-61 while Mulla Mustafa was in the USSR, when fighting broke out between the Zibaris and the Barzanis. The Barzanis accused Qasim and his administration of encouraging the Zibaris to attack in Mulla Mustafa's absence.²⁰ Mulla Mustafa returned from the USSR to find that all privileges bestowed on him by the Republic had been withdrawn. He tried to no avail to meet Qasim,²¹ but realising that he could put his faith in him no more, he left for Kurdistan.

Qasim's rupture with the KDP, the third component of the Kurdish national movement, although less overt, had occurred as early as 1958. The causes were a mixture of over-expectation on the KDP's side and a degree of tactlessness on both sides. The overthrow of the monarchy and the declaration of the Republic

had fulfilled the KDP's first major objective. Their second, autonomy, was, they argued, to be a natural and immediate consequence of the first. To Qasim and his fellow officers on the other hand, the Revolution was only a beginning; the new regime would have to go through a 'transitional period', after which a permanent constitution would be incorporated to safeguard the national aims of the country. Without any consideration of the fact that 'under a military administration, still preoccupied with consolidating its position, no one could dare to raise a discordant note',²² Ahmad spoke indirectly about administrative autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan during his very first visit to Qasim.²³ Ahmad urged the inclusion of the principle of autonomy in the Provisional Constitution which was being prepared.²⁴ Qasim, then still in the process of consolidating his position, convinced Kamil al-Chadirchi, the veteran leader of the NDP, to persuade Ahmad to leave this matter to the permanent constitution.²⁵ In general the Kurds seem to have failed to understand that although their position was enhanced by the Revolution, they still only represented a small faction in Iraqi politics. Furthermore, after a few meetings it became clear that both Qasim and Ahmad distrusted one another.²⁶ In particular, Ahmad clearly believed that 'Arif, Qasim's deputy was the rising star of the revolution, the Nasser to Qasim's Naguib, and he acted accordingly. Thus as early as August 1958 Ahmad began to propitiate 'Arif and the Ba'thists, who were then 'Arif's allies.²⁷ As well as being angered by these moves, Qasim also believed that Ahmad was plotting with 'Arif against him.²⁸ Qasim's suspicion of Ahmad

and consequently of the KDP was increased when a large number of maps of 'Great Kurdistan', along the lines of those submitted to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, appeared in Baghdad and Kurdistan after the Revolution. Copies were brought to Qasim,²⁹ who accused the KDP of circulating them.³⁰ To dispel Qasim's suspicions Mulla Mustafa 'reshuffled' the Central Committee of the KDP, replacing Ahmad as Secretary-General by Hamza 'Abdullah.³¹ This step proved unfortunate, since 'Abdullah pursued a generally pro-Communist policy at a time when Qasim was preparing to suppress the ICP. Ahmad's re-election to the Secretary-Generalship in September 1959 may be said to mark the final break between Qasim and the KDP; from then on, Qasim ignored the party, believing that he could always control the Kurdish nationalist movement through Mulla Mustafa, and hence saw no real threat in the KDP's growing demand for effective autonomy. However, the way in which he amended the KDP's programme³² suggested that he did not believe that the party's leaders were serious about their ideology, particularly their desire for autonomy. Moreover Qasim was sure that this particular demand would always provoke the traditional accusations of separatism, which would almost certainly rally the Army and other Arab elements behind him. Qasim's idea of curbing the political organisations became clear in the summer of 1959, when he began to suppress the leading political parties one by one. By the end of 1959 he was sure that the ICP ceased to present any threat to him,³³ and in January 1960 obviously felt secure enough to announce his decision to permit political parties. We have already seen how

this manoeuvre was used to discredit the KDP,³⁴ and to stress Qasim's control of it. Qasim also gave the party's leaders the impression that it was only given a licence for Mulla Mustafa's sake, since the latter always took Qasim's side in the meeting that preceded its legalization, giving the KDP leaders the impression that the party's destiny was entirely dependent upon Qasim's relations with Mulla Mustafa. They also became apprehensive of Qasim's anti-parties attitude, and realised that their turn might also come. In order to show that they would not be cowed, they restored the constitutional articles which Qasim had rejected at the party conference in May 1960. Throughout this period the activities and opposition of the KDP's leaders embarrassed Mulla Mustafa and put a strain on his relations with Qasim.³⁵ Without disclaiming the KDP's general support for the Republic, Khabat escalated the campaign for Kurdish national and cultural rights.³⁶ It criticised the government for its failure to give any substance to the third article of the provisional constitution, which stated that Kurds and Arabs were partners in the homeland, and later condemned the contradiction between this and the second article, which stated that Iraq was part of the Arab nation.³⁷ As a result of this article, Khabat was suspended and its publisher, Ahmad, was put on trial for 'stirring up national dissension and inciting fanaticism'.³⁸ A few months later the Kurdish weekly Deng-i Kurd was suspended for two months and its editor was exiled to the south of Iraq, for an attack on the 'Kurd-hating authorities of Kirkuk'.³⁹ It was also followed by the suspension of other Kurdish magazines, including Azadi, Hetaw

and Jin, and the exile of their editors.⁴⁰

As the year 1960 came to an end the KDP's national demands became more pressing and the government more adamant.⁴¹ Having successfully curbed the ICP's influence, Qasim probably now felt confident that he could do the same with the KDP; in fact it seemed that he was deliberately provoking a reaction from the KDP in order to justify his attempt to suppress it. In an effort to play down differences between Kurds and Arabs he cancelled the Kurdish Teachers' Congress which was to take place in Shaqlawa in February 1961.⁴² He gave no reason for this, but it may be partly explained by his constant advice to the Kurds to participate in Iraqi rather than purely Kurdish organisations, and his stated policy of treating the Kurds as an 'indistinguishable, indivisible segment of the Iraqi People'.⁴³ Qasim also declared that the word 'Kurdu' from which the name 'Kurd' was derived, was a Persian title bestowed on valiant warriors whose descendants later became part of the conquering Muslim army,⁴⁴ insinuating that the word had no national significance. This was clearly intended to show the Kurdish nationalists that he did not regard the Kurds as a distinct group that could qualify for nationhood. To reflect this viewpoint a series of articles in the government newspaper al-Thawra⁴⁵ at the beginning of 1961 attempted to play down the differences between the various nationalities living in Iraq. The theme of these articles was that Iraq was 'one nation and not a collection of peoples'.⁴⁶ The KDP, together with the ICP and the NDP, angrily repudiated these articles, and took the government severely to task for not acting against the paper.

Qasim neglected these complaints, and persisted in his policy of attempted assimilation,⁴⁷ conducting a campaign of harassment against the KDP leaders at the same time.⁴⁸ Ahmad himself was arrested in March 1961 on a charge of complicity in the murder of Sidiq Miran a supporter of Qasim, in February 1961. This charge was entirely unsubstantiated, and was directed against Ahmad in his capacity as Secretary-General of the KDP, showing the hardening of the regime's attitude towards the party.⁴⁹

Although Ahmad was acquitted (in spite of going underground and being tried in absentia) he continued to lead what was now an openly anti-Government campaign. On 21st March 1961, on the occasion of the Kurdish New Year (Nowruz), Talabani delivered a strongly nationalist speech to a Kurdish gathering; Khabat published the speech, only to be closed down the next day,⁵⁰ and by April 1961 the Kurdish nationalists had no officially sanctioned paper to represent them.⁵¹ Some of the KDP branches in Baghdad and other large cities were closed down and others remained at risk.⁵² This deteriorating situation, combined with the beginning of armed tribal activities in Kurdistan, encouraged the KDP to approach Qasim with two Notes. The first, presented on June 8th 1961, was of a general nature and concerned the political situation in Iraq, complaining about the government's indifference to Kurdish national and cultural demands.⁵³ Issued while the situation in Kurdistan was critical, the second was more specific. It blamed Qasim's government for not giving the Kurdish language the attention it deserved, not appointing Kurds to responsible posts, not locating any important economic

projects in Kurdistan, for pursuing a policy of divide and rule in Kurdistan, putting restrictions on the acceptance of Kurdish students for higher education studies and in the military academies, persecuting the KDP and its organs, and for being generally indifferent towards the national feeling and dignity of the Kurdish people. The Note also deplored the laxity with which the authorities in Kurdistan had handled this critical situation. It further warned that such a situation would open 'the country to the danger of a civil war from which only imperialism and its stooges will benefit, and its ill effects will be felt only by the Arab and Kurdish peoples' ... the Note demanded

1 - The withdrawal of the Army reinforcements sent to Kurdistan,⁵⁴ and of officials who had played a prominent role in the recent incidents.

2 - That Kurdish should be made the official language in the Kurdish areas.

3 - The return to Kurdistan of transferred officials and the restoration of democratic liberties.

4 - That more attention should be given to Kurdish social and economical conditions.

5 - Full implementation of the third article of the provisional constitution and the establishment of full equality between Arabs and Kurds in every way, 'as two fraternal nationalities under the Iraqi Republic'.⁵⁵

Qasim ignored both Notes, and in consequence, the KDP called for a general strike throughout Iraqi Kurdistan on 6th September to commemorate the Kurdish revolt of 1930.⁵⁶ The strike was successful, but

Qasim could still not be persuaded to take a more positive attitude to the Kurdish question.

The Early Stages of the Kurdish Revolt

The war in Kurdistan had a variety of origins. It began as inter-tribal fighting, and then passed through a number of stages before reaching the level of a revolt involving the whole Kurdish national movement. The result was a confusing amalgamation of tribal, detribalized and indoctrinated groups. We have already seen that by 1960 Qasim's regime had come to represent a threat to all components of the national movement; the landlords were threatened with the loss of their lands, the Barzanis and their leader had fallen out of favour, and the KDP and its members were being persecuted.

In 1961 Qasim increased assistance to the anti-Barzani tribes, and inter-tribal clashes became more and more frequent. These were accompanied by a wave of assassinations carried out both by government agents and by anti-government tribes.⁵⁷ The most important of these was the assassination of Sidiq Miran by a member of the KDP in February 1961, which has already been mentioned. Fearing the government's punishment or reprisals from the relatives of the murdered man, Miran's assassins fled to Mount Safin, with 50 policemen in pursuit. The government's failure to arrest those responsible marked the success of the first major act of defiance at a time when feeling against the regime was very high amongst the tribes. Indeed, to the KDP's leaders, this marked the beginning of the Kurdish Revolt.⁵⁸

Taking advantage of the prevailing confusion, some

of the Kurdish landowners and tribal leaders who had fled to Iran after the July Revolution returned to Iraq and began to organize resistance to the government. To give themselves a greater legitimacy, they established the Shoresh Party⁵⁹ and called for a revolt. Their activities became more explicitly anti-government after their followers attacked and occupied a number of police posts.⁶⁰ The government's authority in the region began to diminish slowly, but Qasim did not react; a natural ditherer, he also must have thought that these forces were merely tribal and could be easily defeated. Furthermore it might have made tactical sense to wait until these factions weakened themselves before intervening to crush them. Probably he also thought that he could easily detach any Kurdish uprising from the Barzanis, since he enjoyed the trust and friendship of their spiritual leader, Shaikh Ahmad, completely underestimating the strength of feeling that rallied the Kurds around their national hero, Mulla Mustafa. This inter-tribal fighting, together with the departure of Mulla Mustafa and the leaders of the KDP for Kurdistan in the spring of 1961, constituted an ominous warning that he entirely failed to heed.

At the same time, the Agrarian Reform and Land Tax Laws began to be applied in Kurdistan.⁶¹ The Agrarian Reform Law limited individual holdings to 1350 acres in the North, while a Land Tax was levied on all cultivated areas, and (with some restrictions) on tobacco, the main crop of Kurdistan.⁶² In June 1961 a tribal delegation went to Qasim with a petition asking for the abrogation of the Land Tax, the amendment of the Agrarian Reform and a plea to end

inter-tribal fighting. Qasim refused to see them. The head of the delegation returned to Kurdistan, refusing to pay the Tax, or to allow the implementation of the Agrarian Reform. The rebellion immediately mushroomed with support from large landowners and small peasant proprietors; the latter were easily persuaded to join in because of the abuse of the Land Tax Law.

In July Mulla Mustafa, who was still comparatively inactive, found it expedient to strike at his rivals, since he was sure that the government would not find it easy to come to their aid. Thus in August he took command of the Barzani forces and inflicted heavy casualties on his tribal rivals in Kurdistan.⁶³ As a result, the mountainous areas fell either under Mulla Mustafa's control or under the control of friendly tribal leaders.

At this stage Qasim was involved in two major crises: his claim to Kuwait, and the dispute with the oil companies. Qasim seems to have been under the impression that the oil companies, and Britain, the foreign power most affected by his activities, were working to overthrow him, or at least put obstacles in his way. Since the option of foreign invasion was unlikely to be taken five years after Suez, Qasim became convinced that his enemies would use a national element to threaten his regime, and as soon as the tribal rebellion began, concluded that his enemies had indeed found the element on which they could depend.⁶⁴ Nevertheless he made no attempt either to put down the rebellion or to meet the Kurds' demands, but simply ordered the local police forces, which were virtually powerless, to restore

order.⁶⁵ Thus between June and September 1961 the rebellion mushroomed to extend over most of the mountains of Kurdistan and some of the towns.⁶⁶ Initially, the leadership of the tribal forces was in the hands of the Ako tribe headed by Abbas Mamend.⁶⁷ As Mamend was a veteran ally of Mulla Mustafa, the latter was drawn into the conflict by giving assurances that he would assist Mamend in the event of an attack by the government.⁶⁸ However, until 11th September there was no confrontation between the Army and the tribes. On that day an Army column on a normal patrol⁶⁹ was attacked by tribal forces,⁷⁰ and Qasim was now compelled to respond,⁷¹ ordering the indiscriminate bombing of the tribal forces and their villages, including Barzan, blaming Mulla Mustafa for the troubles in the north.⁷² This bombardment finally pushed Mulla Mustafa himself to come out openly against Qasim,⁷³ and ended the reluctance of the other tribes, who were beginning to believe that the Republic was no different from the ancien régime; both, it seemed, were prepared to 'put paid to' the Kurds.

However, the Iraqi Army initially succeeded in putting down the tribal rebellion largely because of its lack of organisation, and Mulla Mustafa, now the leader of the Kurdish forces, was forced to take shelter in the mountains. Taking advantage of the severe weather conditions, the rebels struck again in December, attacking the Army's camps and communications. By that time the tribal forces were divided between those who were against the Agrarian Reform, and consequently against the Government, namely the Barzanis and their allies, and the pro-government

and anti-Barzani tribes, like the Zibaris, Herkis and Baradosts.⁷⁴ At this stage the only neutral part of the Kurdish national movement was the KDP.

The Participation of the KDP

When the rebellion commenced in June 1961, the KDP immediately denounced it as 'reactionary, inspired by imperialists, and directed against the progressive Iraqi Republic'.⁷⁵ It decided to stay out of it, and Ahmad went to Kurdistan to try to restrain KDP members who had begun to join in the fighting without the consent of the party.⁷⁶ However, at a meeting in July the Central Committee split into two groups.⁷⁷ The majority, headed by Ahmad, maintained that the time for a Kurdish revolution was not yet ripe; they recommended preparation for a revolution under the leadership of the KDP, and the maintenance of contacts with the government. They added that the KDP should only declare war in one of three cases: if the right to Kurdish autonomy was not included in the permanent constitution; if the KDP were to be closed down, or if there was an attack on the Barzanis. This faction believed that tribal loyalty to the nationalist movement was still tenuous. Iran, they held, was using the tribes for its own ends in order to undermine the July 1958 Revolution, to which the party still adhered. Moreover, they believed that given the necessary time the KDP would be able to stage its own 'progressive' revolt without depending on the tribes; they still remembered the revolts between 1920 and 1947.

However a minority, headed by Talabani, asserted that the KDP should declare war immediately. This faction

feared that the tribal leaders would come to dominate the rebellion and sought to pre-empt the initiative by declaring it a national revolt. Nevertheless, both sides agreed to seek the advice of Mulla Mustafa.⁷⁸ Two members of the politbureau, 'Umar Mustafa on behalf of the majority and Talabani on behalf of the minority, were despatched to meet Mulla Mustafa, while a third member, Nuri Taha, was sent to Qasim in an attempt to play for time.⁷⁹ Mulla Mustafa favoured the majority view, but nevertheless told the KDP emissaries that they should also declare war if the Ako tribe was attacked by the government.⁸⁰ Meanwhile, the KDP's leaders managed to get a signed statement from Shaikh Ahmad of Barzan in which he asked the tribes to join the Revolt although he later retracted it in a radio broadcast.⁸¹ Ultimately it was to be Qasim himself who pushed the KDP to join the war, for on 24th September, while announcing the successful containment of the rebellion and Mulla Mustafa's condemnation of it, he declared that the KDP was to be closed down.⁸² Thus, although not over-enthusiastic, they began to consider joining the rebellion, and actually did so in December 1961. Throughout the period between September and December 1961, the KDP's position was in the balance. Finally, however, the party seems to have come to the conclusion that unless it took over the leadership of the rebellion and turned it into a national Revolt its role as the vanguard of the national movement would be terminated. As soon as the decision to participate had been taken, party publications began to refer to the KDP's leadership of 'the Kurdish national progressive revolt'.⁸³ But this was blatant wishful thinking

since the tribal forces under Mulla Mustafa were the essence of the Revolt. In fact the KDP's decision to join a tribally based revolt was one of the main reasons for the decline of its reputation, at least among intellectuals. Had the KDP remained true to its championship of Kurdish national aspirations, it would never have submitted to the tribal leadership of the rebellion and thus ruined its chances of leading the movement.⁸⁴ The leaders came to realise this in 1964, when Mulla Mustafa ousted them by force in order to assert his domination and sign an agreement with the government.

The KDP Central Committee's decision to join and support the rebellion in December was followed by the formation of a special Kurdish force, the Peshmerga, 'those who face death'.⁸⁵ Between then and April 1962, when the KDP launched its first full scale attack against the Iraq Army, the party gradually built up and organised its forces. In order to maintain their own independence the KDP's leaders set up headquarters in Mawat, north-west of Sulaimaniya, and kept their Peshmerga fighters strictly under their own leadership; Talabani commanded the eastern sector around Sulaimaniya while 'Umar Mustafa commanded the western sector around Kirkuk. Ahmad was, as usual, the ideological leader.

The KDP's decision to join the Kurdish tribal rebellion was naturally a great boost to the latter,⁸⁶ since it now possessed the national character which previous uprisings had lacked.⁸⁷ The area under rebel control now became divided in two: the northern region, under Mulla Mustafa and the traditional tribal leaders, and the southern region under the KDP (see map on p 83).

N. E. IRAQ

Area claimed by the Kurds

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Operations in the northern region conformed to the familiar pattern of tribal warfare and underlined the irony of peasants carrying arms to fight the central government for their masters' rights. Hence this region remained politically inactive apart from one contact which Mulla Mustafa made with Qasim through an intermediary at the beginning of 1962. Qasim refused the request, which was couched in the vaguest of terms, to send an official delegation to negotiate Kurdish demands and find a peaceful solution.⁸⁸ In fact the traditional leaders were satisfied with regaining control over their lands, and masked their real intentions by talking very generally about 'Kurdish Rights'. It was significant that some of them changed sides after the KDP decided to join the rebellion.⁸⁹

In the KDP's southern region, in contrast, the Agrarian Reform was already being implemented, and the former landowners were prevented from returning to their lands. When the KDP announced that it would continue to support the implementation of land reform, several landowners found it more expedient to join the government in return for a generous cash allowance.⁹⁰ Even though its inferior fighting ability forced it to rely on some tribal forces the KDP always tried to make the people in its area understand that the 'popular Revolution, the Revolutionary Army, and the Intellectual Cadres', were the only way to avoid the fatal mistake of the past, tribal domination. It also introduced the idea of peasants' committees, which functioned at village level, in a further attempt to raise political consciousness.⁹¹ As well as carrying out educational programmes, the

KDP continued to publish Khabat, and began a broadcasting service in mid 1963. Although the KDP presented a challenge to the conventional leadership of Mulla Mustafa and landed interests, the idea of opening an active front against the Iraq Army was so attractive that neither Mulla Mustafa nor the traditional leaders could afford to reject it.

The Kurdish justification for the Revolt and their attempt to 'Iraqify' it

Following the establishment of the Iraqi state in 1920, all Kurdish revolts and rebellions were branded either separatist or tribal by the new rulers. Any attempts to achieve decentralization were regarded as undermining the fragile structure of the new state. Furthermore the Arab population of Iraq found it difficult to accept the idea of autonomy, and the limited objectives of the various Kurdish revolts, their essentially tribal character, and the lack of co-operation between the Arab and Kurdish nationalist movements confirmed their suspicions. Hence the Kurdish national movement's claim that their revolts were anti-colonial and thus a part of the overall nationalist movement⁹² failed to attract widespread Arab support.⁹³ However, under the monarchy the Kurds did not need to justify their acts, since a revolt against a corrupt pro-British regime was justification in itself.

The objectives of the July Revolution were to put an end to the pro-British government and the abuses accompanying it, and to pursue a progressive internal and foreign policy. These were also the aims of the KDP, but, as a result of severe provocation from

Qasim, and, it must be stressed, after a period of considerable misgiving, they threw in their lot with Barzani and his allies. This act, and the war in general, was widely criticised by the Communists and Arab nationalists, who blamed both the Government and the KDP and asked them to work for a peaceful settlement.

Having made the decision to participate, the KDP changed its attitude entirely, and referred to rebellion as a 'just war' waged by the oppressed Kurds against a chauvinistic dictator.⁹⁴ Qasim was now described as an evil and dangerous threat to the Kurdish nation and its liberated national movement, as well as to the unity of Iraq.⁹⁵ As for the use of force, the KDP stated that 'the Kurdish people has learned from its own experience that dictators never step down unless the people's revolutionary pressure, with the use of arms if needed, obliges them to do so'.⁹⁶ Presumably the KDP feared that it might lose the leadership of the movement to the tribal leaders, especially when the latter's forces succeeded in maintaining their resistance to the central government. However its refusal to seek a peaceful settlement was less of a reflection of its determination to continue the fighting than an admission that the real fate of the Revolt was in the hands of Mulla Mustafa and the tribal forces. Needless to say, these forces were most unlikely to withdraw their opposition to a regime which continued to threaten their own vested interests. However, the KDP seems to have thought that if it took over the leadership of the Revolt, its tribal character would somehow be transformed, and in fact the party maintained that after

its participation the Revolt took on a more progressive form.⁹⁷ In any case, the KDP's aim was to gather support from the Arab population; in other words, they tried, for the first time, to 'Iraqify' the Revolt.

The KDP's attempt to 'Iraqify' the 1961 Revolt

As a party representing a minority, the KDP was aware of the fact that 'without the support of the other political groups in Iraq, it could not achieve its national objectives'.⁹⁸ Before resorting to arms, the KDP made several unsuccessful attempts to enlist the support of the ICP and other progressive parties.⁹⁹ They were generally advised to stick to peaceful means of achieving their objectives. In the face of this basic lack of sympathy, and following their participation in the Revolt, the KDP now made overtures proposing an alliance on its own terms, in an attempt to broaden the objectives of the Revolt. This was also part of an attempt to isolate Mulla Mustafa and the tribal faction, or at least put them in a minority, since their own military inferiority meant that they would not otherwise be able to dominate the Revolt.¹⁰⁰

In their declaration of March 1962, the KDP explained that,

'in order to restore democracy and to fulfil the national aims of the Iraqi people, the patriotic parties and organisations in Iraq, together with individual Iraqis should co-operate with the KDP to establish a united patriotic front, and to work to overthrow Qasim'.

Such a front, the declaration declared,

'is the only way to build an Arab-Kurdish federation within the Iraqi Republic, let alone the establishment of a democratic regime, and also to preserve national independence.'

Although admitting 'the existence of some difficulties in establishing such a front while the war was continuing in Iraqi Kurdistan', the KDP described these obstacles as 'imaginary ...

'The actual situation in Iraqi Kurdistan and the victories which the Kurdish partisans are gaining under the leadership of the courageous struggler Mulla Mustafa, should give the incentive and encouragement for the establishment of this front.'

The declaration also attempted to minimize the differences between the various political groups in Iraq by stating that 'the most pressing matter facing the patriotic forces is to put an end to the anomalous situation in Iraq', assuming general agreement in this point. As Qasim was held to be responsible for this situation, the front was a way of achieving 'the demands of our patriotic liberated revolution', that is, autonomy for Kurdistan and democracy for Iraq, thus embracing the demands of all Iraqis. On the other hand, the declaration blamed the Iraqi political parties for

'betraying the Arab-Kurdish partnership by not voicing their disapproval of the oppressive measures practised by the Arab rulers against the Kurdish people, by neglecting the Kurdish national Revolt, and by not enlightening the masses.'

The declaration concluded that the fulfilment of the objectives of the Kurdish Revolt and the establishment of a national front were the best way of

achieving an equal and lasting partnership in Iraq.¹⁰¹ Although the idea of establishing a progressive democratic front was sound, the KDP's approach was tactically inept and the attempt failed.

In 1961-62 almost all political groups in Iraq (Communists, Arab nationalists and Democrats) were dissatisfied with Qasim's dictatorial measures. They also stressed the need for a united front, with the participation of each party on its own terms, the restoration of democracy and the ending of the war in Kurdistan. Nevertheless they criticised the KDP for joining an essentially reactionary Revolt, since they were unwilling to link Kurdish national demands with the overthrowal of the regime.¹⁰² Here it is important to note that neither the ICP nor the NDP wanted to see the forcible elimination of the regime. They argued that it was still fundamentally patriotic and only required the reversal of its more negative aspects such as the lack of democracy and the suppression of political parties. The ICP rejected the KDP's accusation against Qasim, since they held that he was not entirely responsible for the war in Iraqi Kurdistan, although they always blamed him for initiating and not stopping it.¹⁰³ They held that the elements primarily responsible were colonialism and reactionary forces, who were also the principal enemies of the Iraqi people in general, of Kurds as well as Arabs.¹⁰⁴ Thus the ICP argued that both Qasim and the Kurdish nationalist movement were patriotic and 'to a certain extent progressive'; hence prolonged conflict would only weaken two patriotic national forces, and strengthen the common enemy. Consequently, any national front should in-

clude all patriotic forces, including the government, in order to achieve the objectives of the whole Iraqi people.

Furthermore, since the ICP had no military support, Qasim remained its only hope. As far as the proposed front was concerned, the ICP, as the vanguard of the Iraqi nationalist movement, was not keen to join a body in which it did not have the upper hand. Finally, the evident tribal domination of the Kurdish Revolt was a further reason for the ICP's lack of enthusiasm. In putting forward these arguments the ICP was well aware that the war had intensified the discontent of anti-Qasim political and military forces, especially the Ba 'thist-Nasserist coalition; this group was most likely to replace Qasim because of the support it enjoyed within the newly purged Army.¹⁰⁵ At this stage the coalition was urging vengeance against both Qasim and the ICP for their part in 'diverting the 14th July Revolution from its nationalistic path, and for their crimes against the Iraqi people in Mosul and Kirkuk'.

The Ba 'thist-Nasserist group itself was also in favour of a national front and of working to overthrow Qasim. Yet it was naturally not prepared to accept the KDP or the ICP, let alone Mulla Mustafa, as partners, since it accused them of being 'Qasim's collaborators'. Moreover, it refused to accept the idea that the Kurdish Revolt was a patriotic one working for the national aims of the Iraqi people. This 'suspect' Kurdish rebellion was designed to divert the course of the Arab nationalist struggle in Iraq. It also does not represent the Kurdish people.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore the nationalist coalition

was not prepared to put autonomy for Kurdistan as an item in the covenant of the proposed front. The coalition purported to believe that the Kurdish war was simply the result of a personal dispute between two former allies, Qasim and Mulla Mustafa.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, since the KDP's links with the ICP were stronger than with any other party, the nationalists feared that a front including both parties would put them in a minority. The coalition also refused to give the Kurdish Revolt any support to enable it to bring down Qasim, because it was putting the final touches to its own coup against him.

Generally, the other political parties were not impressed by the claim of the KDP that it was at the head of a unified national movement under the leadership of Mulla Mustafa. They were convinced of the failure and ultimate disintegration of the Kurdish coalition.¹⁰⁸ In fact, one of the most serious weaknesses of the KDP's position was that it had resorted to arms against a Republican regime which had declared in favour of at least some Kurdish claims, as well as other progressive reforms. This meant that the Kurdish national movement was apparently unable to differentiate between reactionary and progressive governments, and the KDP's refusal to come to terms with Qasim made other parties accuse it of placing its emotions before the national interest. Finally, it is evident that through its subordination to tribal forces, the KDP forfeited much of its actual and potential influence in Iraqi politics.

The objectives of the Kurdish Revolt

In general terms the objectives of the Kurds ranged

from securing a degree of autonomy and the recognition of their right to a separate national entity to the achievement of full independence. The desire for some form of autonomy has very deep roots in Kurdish history, and goes back far beyond the present century. However, in the first half of this century Kurdish objectives were generally defined by the tribal leaders, who regarded themselves as the representatives of the Kurdish people. Naturally, leaders like Shaikh Mahmud Barzinji or even Shaikh Ahmad of Barzan had no clear ideas about Kurdish national objectives. It was only in 1939 that a Kurdish political party, Héwa, was first established. The emergence of Héwa provided the possibility of the presentation of genuine national objectives, and represented a move on the part of the intellectuals against any possible assimilationist measures that the government might contemplate. Hence Héwa defined its objectives as 'the unification of Kurdistan and the creation of an independent Kurdish State'.¹⁰⁹ This party was followed in 1945 by the leftist Rizgari Party, which introduced the idea of 'self-determination'.¹¹⁰ As we have seen, the collapse of the Republic of Mahabad in 1947 dashed Kurdish hopes for independence and the unification of Kurdistan. As a result the objectives of the Kurds became vague, and according to one scholar, they concluded that an 'inflexible position in favour of independence would harden resistance to the granting of autonomy'.¹¹¹ Hence although the KDP set out Kurdish claims in terms of autonomy, their ultimate aim was independence.¹¹² In the context of the 1961 Revolt, Kurdish aims were both long-term and short-term, first to obtain political advantage by holding

the government forces at bay, and then to obtain autonomy for Kurdistan and democracy for Iraq. In fact, the notion of autonomy was ambiguous, and interpretations differed between individuals and leaders.¹¹³ An internal KDP circular of 1968 declared that:

'the Kurds form a distinct nation living in a binational State ... The first legislative and national right of such a people is that it should govern itself, and to maintain the right to preserve its distinct identity within the united entity'.¹¹⁴

Autonomy, the KDP explained, meant

'a sort of political decentralization, which means in turn the distribution of duties and competence between the central government and the decentralized authority ... The constitution should be the document which directs and governs these activities ... However, political decentralization in general means that the central government should transfer its duties, except those concerning the presidency, defence, foreign affairs and finance, to the decentralized authorities'.¹¹⁵

The KDP argued that this would permit a small nation to establish its local identity by establishing a local executive council and a legislature by means of democratic elections, and that this arrangement would also fulfil cultural, economic and internal objectives. Finally the circular maintained that

'autonomy for Kurdistan does not mean separation, or a step towards it. Nor is it a tactical or a provisional goal ... Autonomy only means having a local identity within the Iraq State. This aim

has been adopted after a full consideration of our people's circumstances, and of those of the fraternal Arab people in Iraq'.¹¹⁶

Although the KDP adhered to the desire for autonomy throughout the Revolt, it was either subordinated to short-run objectives, or enlarged to look more like independence. Thus it gave the impression that the main concern of the Revolt was not to achieve autonomy so much as to create de facto independence in Kurdistan. In any case the weakness of the Qasim regime and its successors certainly revived Kurdish hopes for independence. Mulla Mustafa made this clear on several occasions,¹¹⁷ as did many of the KDP leaders in private.

'The type of democracy for Iraq which the KDP favours is a parliamentary form of government in which the people, through electing their representatives, can restrain and watch the executive',¹¹⁸ the KDP declared in 1964. It also means 'a society which is democratic politically, economically and culturally ... with full individual and public liberties; that is, freedom of the press and of expression and to form political and professional associations'.¹¹⁹ The KDP insisted that these liberties should be enshrined in a permanent constitution.

However, throughout the years of the Kurdish Revolt, between 1961 and 1970, many Iraqis came to believe that this objective was merely for public consumption, for by waging continuous war against successive regimes the Kurdish Revolt contributed importantly to the establishment of military rule in Iraq. As successive regimes were weakened by the war, the Army remained the only effective power. However, on those occasions

when they could have co-operated with other political parties to oppose a dictatorial regime, the Kurdish leaders chose instead to co-operate with the regime and even helped to suppress opposition to it.¹²⁰

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Footnotes

- 1 The ICP never opposed Qasim's oppressive measures towards the party; instead, the leadership continued to support him, arguing that his anti-Imperialist foreign policy was more important than their own party's freedom of action. See Batatu (1978), p 957.
- 2 eg Sidiq Miran, who had been an MP under the monarchy. See p below.
- 3 See Edmonds (1959). Also, Ahmad's speech immediately after the July Revolution, Talabani (1971), pp 279-84.
- 4 Following the declaration of the Republic some Kurdish landowners fled to Iran. Others remained in Iraq, cautiously watching events, which deepened their sense of dissatisfaction.
- 5 Jwaideh W, The Kurdish National Movement. Its origins and development. Syracuse University Ph D Thesis, 1960. Part II p 823.
- 6 See 'Abd al-Ridha (1970), p 105 and Van Rooy (1962) p 114. See also the ICP's declaration of March 1962. This incident also marked a one year rupture between Qasim and the anti-Barzani tribes. Qasim collaborated with them when his relations with Mulla Mustafa became tense.
- 7 Interview with S Fakhri.
- 8 Dann (1969), p 199.
- 9 He might have also feared that Iran would use these forces against the Iraqi Republic.
- 10 He directed his attacks against the Zibaris, and the Herkis.
- 11 Cited in al-Durra (1966), p 228.
- 12 Interview with M Kubba, a member of the

Sovereignty Council, who was present.

- 13 In fact Mulla Mustafa blamed Qasim for not accepting a long-standing offer to provide him with a Barzani guard.
- 14 Interview with 'Awni Yusuf. See also al-Durra (1966), p 288 for Ahmad Zibari's murder.
- 15 In 1960 Qasim put on trial a number of Communists and Kurds, accusing them of participating in the Kirkuk massacre of 1959. See the ICP's Declaration of 26th May 1962. See also Vanly (1970), pp 93-94 and O'Ballance, E, The Kurdish Revolt 1961-70, London 1973 , p 72.
- 16 The rivals of the Barzanis sensed the growing differences between Qasim and Mulla Mustafa and began to approach the former. They began by visiting Qasim in hospital. (Interview with Kubba) and complained about Mulla Mustafa's acts in the north. (Interview with Yusuf).
- 17 Interview with 'Awni Yusuf.
- 18 Dann (1969), p 299.
- 19 Interview with 'Awni Yusuf.
- 20 Qasim was accused by the Kurds of granting to Mulla Mustafa permission to visit the USSR while encouraging the Zibaris to attack. Dann (1969), p 334.
- 21 Interview with Yusuf. Yusuf, who arranged a meeting between Qasim and Mulla Mustafa, accused Qasim's entourage of deepening the differences.
- 22 Edmonds (1959), p 9.
- 23 The text of Ahmad's speech can be found in Talabani (1971), pp 279-84.
- 24 al-Masala al-Kurdia (1969), p 45.
- 25 Dann (1969), p 136.

98 Chapter Three

- 26 Talabani (1971), p 278; also interview with Ahmad.
- 27 Meetings between the leaders of the KDP and the Ba'th Party together with articles in both parties' organs calling for the consolidation of their relationship were features of this period.
- 28 Interview with Ahmad.
- 29 Interview with S Fakhri; see Dann (1969), p 142.
- 30 Interview with S Fakhri.
- 31 This followed the removal of 'Arif in November 1958. Ahmad was removed in January 1959. See Chapter Two above. Mulla Mustafa's personal hatred of Ahmad was another reason behind the latter's removal.
- 32 See p 49 above.
- 33 See Batatu (1978), pp 920-1, quoting the Communist paper Ittihad al-Sha'b of 2 August 1959.
- 34 See pp 48-9 above.
- 35 Interviews with Ahmad and Muhammad Hadid.
- 36 See Middle East Record, Vol I, 1960 pp 250-51.
- 37 Khabat, 19th October 1960. Some extracts are in Vanly (1970), p 90. Also in Orient No 17, 1er trim, 1961 pp 189-91. Qasim had a very high opinion of the provisional constitution which he regarded as the solution for any differences; see Dann p 64. See below p 118.
- 38 Dann (1969), p 332.
- 39 Ibid, and Vanly (1970), p 93.
- 40 Vanly, ibid.
- 41 Middle East Record Vol I, 1960 pp 250-1.
- 42 The Government also closed down the branches of the Teachers Union in the Kurdish areas.
- 43 The KDP's declaration of 16th March 1962

criticised the resolutions of the 4th Congress of Iraqi Teachers for trying to assimilate the Kurds by omitting all mention of Kurdistan.

- 44 Dann (1969), p 331.
- 45 The editorials of this paper were treated as the Government's viewpoint because of the very close relationship between its editor and Qasim.
- 46 See Vanly (1970), p 94; Dann (1969), p 331. Middle East Record Vol 2 p 282.
- 47 Eg by changing the Kurdish names of schools and public places, and by cancelling some of the Kurdish festivals and conferences.
- 48 In the year following Salih al-Yusufi's arrest in October 1960 hardly any ranking members of the KDP escaped prison or exile or both. See Khabat of 12th March 1961; also Dann (1969), pp 332-334.
- 49 See the KDP's reply to this accusation in Khabat of 12th March 1961. Khabat argued that this was part of the government's anti-Kurdish nationalism activities. In fact Miran's assassin was Mahmud Kawani, a member of the KDP, who was later killed in action in 1962. (Interview with S Fakhri). Ahmad admitted that those accused were members of the KDP. (Interview with Ahmad).
- 50 It continued to be published secretly.
- 51 Dann (1969), p 333.
- 52 Dann, *ibid*. The Baghdad branch was also the target of a crowd of demonstrators, who stormed the building. The Kurdish guards opened fire killing and wounding several demonstrators. O'Ballance (1973) p 73; Arfa, H, *The Kurds, a Historical and Political Study*, Oxford (1966) p 135.

- 53 See Vanly (1970), p 95 and Blau (1965), p 57 for the demands and a summary of this Note.
- 54 Apparently no reinforcements had been sent; see Dann (1969), p 336.
- 55 For full text see Talabani (1971), pp 288-297.
- 56 Interview with Ahmad. The 1930 revolt was instigated by Kurdish students in Sulaimaniya against the new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty which made no formal mention of special rights for Kurdistan or the Kurds. See Hourani, A H, Minorities in the Arab World, London 1947, p 97, and above p 12. See also Talabani (1971), p 296.
- 57 See the ICP's declaration of 26th May 1962 and their letter to Qasim of the same date.
- 58 Interview with Ahmad.
- 59 Not to be confused with the Communist Shoresh of 1941; this was a right-wing party established shortly before the beginning of the Kurdish Revolt of 1961. It was mainly composed of tribal leaders and landlords with connections in Iran. See 'Abd al-Ridha (1970), p 103 and the ICP's declaration of August 22nd 1961.
- 60 Interview with Ahmad.
- 61 See Talabani p 295 (the KDP's memorandum to Qasim). Also 'Abd al-Ridha (1970), pp 109-110, and Gabbay, R, Communism and Agrarian Reform in Iraq, London (1978), pp 108-122.
- 62 See Kinnane (1964), p 64. See also the KDP's declaration of 16th March 1962.
- 63 Couland, J, 'L'Irak et le problème Kurde', Democratie Nouvelle (Paris) November 1961, pp 90-91.
- 64 Qasim's first reaction after admitting the exist-

ence of the Revolt was to expel the British Ambassador and sever diplomatic relations with Britain, which he accused of having instigated the rebellion. In his book *The Middle East in Revolution* (London 1970), the then British Ambassador to Iraq, Trevelyan, refuted this accusation. See pp 199-205.

- 65 The police garrisons in the isolated areas where the rebellion started had already been overrun by tribal forces.
- 66 Zakho was occupied for a short period by tribal forces, aided by its governor. See al-Durra (1966) p 301. Interview with Ahmad.
- 67 Kinnane (1964), p 64.
- 68 Interview with Ahmad; Dann (1969), p 336.
- 69 Interview with M Hadid; see also Dann (1969) p 337.
- 70 This occurred near Bazyan. It was reported that some 23 soldiers were killed. Abbas Mamend was the head of these forces. See O'Ballance (1973), p 75; Dann (1969), p 337.
- 71 Interview with Hadid.
- 72 Qasim's press conference of 23rd September 1961; see also Dann (1969), p 337.
- 73 Interview with Ahmad; see also Dann, *ibid*.
- 74 This is not to suggest that these tribes were not against the Agrarian Reform, but were assured by the government that they could retain their land as a *quid pro quo* for assisting the government forces against the Barzanis and their allies.
- 75 Interview with Ahmad. This was largely because of the evident participation of leaders who had returned from Iran.
- 76 *Ibid*.

- 77 See Dann (1969), p 337; also Vanly (1970), pp 99-100.
- 78 This was a direct admission on the part of the KDP's leaders of Mulla Mustafa's domination.
- 79 Interview with Ahmad; see also Vanly (1970), pp 99-100.
- 80 Interview with Ahmad.
- 81 This naturally confused the KDP leadership; (Interview with Ahmad).
- 82 Kutschera (1979), p 214.
- 83 See 'Abd al-Ridha (1970), p 113, and KDP's letter to the ICP dated 24th April 1962, in which they justified their participation in the tribal rebellion by asserting that 'now the Revolt has emerged in a new national progressive shape under the KDP's leadership'.
- 84 Kutschera, whose general grasp of Kurdish politics is sound, fails to understand the KDP's misgivings at this point. See p 215.
- 85 Since all components of the Kurdish national movement were now participating, it can justifiably be claimed that the rebellion had become a National Revolt.
- 86 The KDP also claimed that it participated in the rebellion when the 'tribal leaders were on the verge of collapse, if they had not already collapsed'. See the KDP's letter to the ICP of 24th April 1962.
- 87 As with other Kurdish risings, the 1961 Revolt got very little assistance from Kurds living in neighbouring countries. See Vanly (1970), pp 143-44, about Kurdish solidarity with the Revolt in Iraq. Also Kinnane (1964), p 65.

- 88 See the ICP declaration of 26th May 1962. See also the KDP's letter to the ICP of 24th April 1962.
- 89 See 'Abd al-Ridha (1970), p 113 and the ICP's letter to the KDP of 5th June 1962.
- 90 Eventually they became part of the Fursan, a pro-government Kurdish force.
- 91 These committees were abolished by Mulla Mustafa in 1964.
- 92 Although the KDP tried to participate in all national political activities between 1946 and 1958 its role remained negligible. Individual Kurds were more active in other parties like the ICP.
- 93 Only in its third congress (1953) had the KDP claimed that the Kurdish liberation movement was an equal partner with the Arab nationalists in the cause of Iraqi liberation. 'Thus the party was bound to work within and for the interests of the whole democratic movement in Iraq and its people'. See Talabani (1971), p 168.
- 94 For his part Mulla Mustafa justified the tribal Revolt in terms of discontent with the Agrarian Reform, the inter-tribal war in Kurdistan and the government's failure to stop it. Moreover, as a tribal leader, Mulla Mustafa took Qasim's rebuff as a personal insult. As a tribal leader too, he paid no attention to public opinion, and expressed no political demands or objectives. He spoke only once, and then vaguely, about the Kurdish national rights. See Kinnane (1964), p 64.
- 95 See the KDP's declaration of 16th March 1962. This was the first declaration from the KDP after

its announced participation.

- 96 In fact the KDP ruled out any peaceful settlement with Qasim even if the latter 'had agreed to free all the prisoners and negotiated. Qasim's hand was stained with Kurdish blood and we are not prepared to shake it', the KDP's declaration of 16th March 1962 maintained. See also the KDP's letter to the Iraqi Communist Party of 24th April 1962.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 al-Masala al-Kurdia (1969), pp 13-14.
- 99 According to Ahmad the KDP's leaders also sought the support of a progressive sovereign state. Interview with Ahmad.
- 100 This approach bore fruit after a number of tribal leaders joined the government side. See the ICP's letter to the KDP of 5th June 1962 and 'Abd al-Ridha (1970), p 113.
- 101 See the KDP's declaration of March 1962.
- 102 The ICP's letter to the KDP of 5th June 1962.
- 103 Ibid.
- 104 Ibid. The ICP reached this conclusion after noticing that some feudalists and suspect elements had joined the Kurdish war in the hope of bringing the Republican regime down.
- 105 See pp63-64 above.
- 106 Nidhal al-Ba'th, Beirut 1973, Vol 7 p 280. 'Suspect' (mashbuh) is a favourite weapon in the Arab nationalists' verbal armoury and implies connivance with imperialism.
- 107 al-Thawra 22nd December 1969 No 404.
- 108 See Dann (1969), p 335 for Ahmad's attitude towards Mulla Mustafa. The KDP's leaders' views

about Mulla Mustafa were also expressed privately to other leaders or party members on several occasions.

- 109 Qazzaz (1971), p 76. Hêwa's internal crises, however, weakened its faith in the feasibility of such far-reaching objectives and limited them to that of securing a separate identity for the Kurds. This could be discerned from its demands to the government during Mulla Mustafa's revolt of 1943-45. See Arfa (1966), p 120.
- 110 In fact Rizgari was more realistic for although its ultimate objective was the unification of Kurdistan, it maintained that this should not take precedence over the liberation of Iraq. Its primary objective was an administrative autonomy. See Rizgari's first manifesto, Talabani (1970), pp 137-38, also al-Haidari's memoirs.
- 111 Howell (1965), p 183.
- 112 On several occasions the appeal for independence was more pronounced, especially in 1936 following the first coup d'état in Iraq, and in the first half of the 1950s following the creation of Israel. Cited in Howell (1965), p 189.
- 113 See here Israel T Naamani 'The Kurds Drive for Self-Determination', The Middle East Journal, No 3 Vol 20 1966, p 294.
- 114 al-Kader, No 2 August 1968.
- 115 Ibid.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 On the ideological side the call for independence began to gain ground at the end of the 1950s, culminating in the formation of Kajyk, which called for independent, greater and unified

Kurdistan. Significantly enough the appeal for independence also found support within the Peshmerga. See Vanly (1970) p 123. Even Mulla Mustafa supported Kalyk in the end. Interview with S Fakhri and his lecture on 14th November 1975.

118 Khabat No 475, December 1964, and No 474 November 1964.

119 Ibid.

120 See for example the Observer of 29th December 1963, on the KDP's anti-Communist measures in Kurdistan for the KDP leaders' views on a one-party state. See also Adamson (1964), pp 186-7 and Adamson in the Sunday Telegraph, 29th December 1962.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Fall of Qasim and the Second Republic,
1962-1963

By the beginning of 1962 Qasim's regime began to show obvious signs of weakness. The Kurdish war had escalated; the suppressed political parties began to find more support inside the Army, and the oil companies were dissatisfied with the Law No 80.¹ Iraq had also become isolated internationally as a result of Qasim's claim to Kuwait.² By the end of the year his political future was no longer a subject for debate; the question was rather of who would replace him and when.

Faced with this question mark, the KDP's leadership now attempted to identify and make contact with the future rulers. The Communists and the National Democrats were out of the question; the first, though critical, always sought to sustain Qasim,³ while the second were too weak to stage effective opposition owing to the dissensions within their ranks. The Ba'thists and Nasserists were the more likely candidates for many reasons, including

their influence within the Army and among civilians, their good organisation (especially the Ba'thists), and their hostility towards Qasim. Hence Ahmad took the initiative in contacting the Ba'thists and Nasserists on the grounds that this would ensure the continuity of the Kurdish Revolt. He also thought that an early agreement would make it easier for the Kurds to reach an overall settlement when these groups were in power. The man Ahmad chose to contact was a retired colonel, Tahir Yahya.⁴ He first approached Karim Qarani, a Kurdish officer,⁵ and asked him to explore, through Yahya the possibility of co-operation between the Kurds and the Army against Qasim. Yahya agreed to consider the idea and asked Ahmad, again via Qarani, to give further thought to such co-operation. In fact Yahya wanted to secure Kurdish support or neutrality for the coming coup, since a move against Qasim would require the withdrawal of some forces, especially the Air Force, from the north, and this could not be done without jeopardising the Army's position in Kurdistan. The Kurdish leadership fully perceived this and pressed Yahya for a written undertaking to be binding on both sides. After informing Mulla Mustafa and the KDP's Central Committee Ahmad sent a written reply on 18th April 1962, assuring Yahya of the Kurds' support, stressing that the aims of the Kurdish Revolt were 'to overthrow Qasim, achieve autonomy for Kurdistan

and to establish a democratic regime in Iraq.'
He added:

'the Kurdish people possess the undeniable right to separate from the state, but do not desire to exercise this right. To avoid any misunderstanding in the future it is essential that you should recognise in advance the internal autonomy of the province of Kurdistan, and that this recognition should be publicly announced in one of the early proclamations of the government of the revolution'.⁶

Ahmad further proposed to Yahya that:

'His Excellency Mulla Mustafa shall be invested as the governor or Prime Minister, of this territory (Iraqi Kurdistan), giving him the right to form the government of an autonomous Kurdistan. These conditions will serve as guarantees against all possibilities of future misunderstanding. They also constitute a real application of the 3rd Article of the Iraqi Constitution ... The Comrades with whom I have had discussions consider the acceptance in black and white of these conditions an essential basis for the beginning of negotiations on other matters of detail'.⁷

Ahmad also expressed the Kurds' readiness to start talks with anyone anywhere, although he preferred

Kurdish territory since it permitted greater freedom of movement. A further Kurdish condition was that 'the future Iraqi Cabinet should include five Kurds'.⁸ Yahya gave an oral answer to Ahmad, giving general assurances, and Ahmad was also asked to name the five Kurds for the cabinet.⁹

The KDP meanwhile established contact with the other nationalist political parties. Two members of the KDP's Central Committee, Salih al-Yusufi and Shawkat 'Aqrawi, were sent to Baghdad on a secret mission to see various politicians.¹⁰ The two KDP delegates met leaders of the Istiqlal Party,¹¹ and through the mediation of Brigadier Fu'ad 'Arif.¹² al-Yusufi also managed to meet 'Ali Salih al-Sa'di, the Secretary-General of the Ba'th Party.¹³ Although the Ba'thists were highly suspicious of the Kurdish Revolt Sa'di thought that Kurdish nationalism should be propitiated, especially while the coup d'état was being prepared. This was to be done by making concessions to some of the Kurds' cultural demands.¹⁴

However, the Sa'di-Yusufi talks resulted in controversy. The Kurds later claimed that the two were about to sign an agreement on autonomy for Kurdistan, but that this was hindered by the sudden occurrence of the coup against Qasim.¹⁵ Sa'di denied this, and stressed that there were no serious negotiations with the Kurds before February 1963. His talks with Yusufi formed a more or less informal political dialogue, in which they recounted Qasim's faults and decided

how to co-operate against him. There were no agreements for the future and the Ba'th Party did not approve of and certainly did not promise autonomy to the Kurds.¹⁶ One of the reasons, Sa'di explained, was the lack of any strong Kurdish cadres in Baghdad who might help the Ba'th Party in its future takeover. He also complained that except for Talabani the Kurdish leadership never wanted to discuss the Kurdish question in terms of Iraqi politics, always treating it as a purely Kurdish one. However, there was general agreement within the Ba'th leadership that the problem existed and required some sort of solution.¹⁷ However, following these contacts, both Sa'di, representing the Ba'th, and Yahya, representing the Nasserists, seem to have agreed that the Kurds were overestimating their own importance. Hence they deliberately began to ignore them, and there were no further contacts between the two sides.

On 8th February 1963, the Ba'thist-Nasserist coalition seized power and established a National Council for the Revolutionary Command (NCRC) in which the Ba'thists were in the majority. This coup was to be known as the Ramadhan Revolution.¹⁸ The first reaction of the Kurds was one of enthusiasm, and as they were still in Baghdad, Salih al-Yusufi and Shawkat 'Aqrawi, together with Fu'ad 'Arif, went to the NCRC headquarters (Baghdad Radio Station) to congratulate the nationalists. They assured the NCRC members of

their support and sent them a telegram in the name of the KDP declaring that the 'Kurds admired the movement that had overthrown Qasim and were waiting for positive steps to be taken by this movement towards solving the Kurdish question on the basis of self-government, which would ensure everlasting brotherhood.'¹⁹

The new regime's attitude towards the Kurds was gradually revealed through its various proclamations. The first, on which the Kurds had placed high hopes, was promulgated without any mention of the Kurds or their rights, and simply spoke about the new regime's intention to 'achieve the national unity of Iraq'. However, later in the broadcast there was an appeal for an end to 'the glorious insurrection' of the Kurds,²⁰ although nothing was said about autonomy. On 9 February a new government was formed. Colonel 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif was promoted to the rank of Field Marshal and elected by the NCRC as the first president of the Iraqi Republic. He was also appointed as Commander in Chief of the armed forces. Brigadier Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, a prominent member of the Ba'th Party, was appointed as the new Prime Minister. al-Sa'di became the deputy premier and Minister of the Interior.²¹ Ba'thist members held key positions inside the new Cabinet, which also included two Kurds, Fu'ad 'Arif and Baba 'Ali, and some Nasserists. Colonel Yahya was promoted to the rank of General, and became Chief of Staff. Shortly afterwards it became clear that Sa'di was leading an extremist and very effective Ba'thist faction inside the government; al-Bakr was leading the moderate Ba'thists, mainly army officers, and President 'Arif and General Yahya

were leading the Nasserists.

At this early stage the Kurdish leadership in Kurdistan seems to have been bewildered over the next step, presumably due to uncertainty about whether the coup would actually succeed. Qasim was still holding out in his headquarters in the Ministry of Defence, and news was spreading about loyal troops and groups such as the Communists being mobilized to support him. Qasim was finally captured and executed on 9 February, and his Communist and military supporters rounded up and imprisoned or executed over the weeks and months that followed.²²

As the Government did not announce its immediate intention to implement autonomy, some hawks inside the Kurdish leadership thought that the Kurds should continue fighting and take advantage of the prevailing confusion, although a majority, which included Mulla Mustafa, argued that they would gain greater benefit from a negotiated settlement with the new regime. This view eventually prevailed, although both factions persisted in their demand for autonomy. On 10 February the KDP sent a telegram to the NCRC, welcoming the coup and asking for the declaration of a ceasefire, the release of Kurdish prisoners, compensation for the injured, the removal and punishment of officials responsible for torturing the Kurds, and finally the immediate and official declaration of the Kurds' right to autonomy within the Iraqi Republic.²³ They also asked the government to send a delegation to spell out the terms of autonomy. Meanwhile the government declared a ceasefire, as did Mulla Mustafa,²⁴ and the Kurds asked for a helicopter to take a Kurdish delegation to Baghdad.²⁵

The political situation in Iraq following the
Ramadhan Revolution

During the first days of the Revolution, the Ba'th leaders were pre-occupied mostly with purging the leftists, and the regime's newly-formed National Guard units engaged in street battles against the Communists and Qasim's other supporters. The violence of these purges caused confusion and outrage in the country, and the situation in the capital naturally took priority over other issues such as the Kurdish question which was in any case of relatively little concern to the new rulers. At the same time many leftists who were being sought by the civilian and military authorities sought asylum in Kurdistan, where Mulla Mustafa and the KDP were in control.²⁶ Since the regime still appeared unstable, the time seemed propitious for the Kurds to press for concessions.²⁷ In fact the new government itself made the first move, and a two-man Kurdish delegation, consisting of Talabani and Yusufi, arrived in Baghdad on 19 February to negotiate a settlement.²⁸ In his initial talks, Talabani tried to demonstrate to the new regime the essentially just and patriotic nature of the Kurdish Revolt, and to make them accept the term 'autonomy',²⁹ particularly in order to counter the Arab nationalist accusation that foreign agencies, especially Iran and the oil companies, were behind the Kurdish Revolt and that if the Kurds were to be given autonomy, those powers would use Kurdistan as a base from which to conspire against the Iraqi Revolution.³⁰ For their part the government representatives argued that such an important matter as autonomy should be decided at a bigger

and more representative conference,³¹ and although they declared that they had no objection to autonomy in principle, they considered that the problem should be discussed within the broader context of Arab unity.³² The Kurdish delegation agreed. The Ramadhan Revolution was regarded by Arab nationalists as a victory for Arab nationalism over the more 'cosmopolitan' rule of Qasim, who had apparently tried to alienate Iraq from the Arab camp. Nasser, who had conducted a long campaign against Qasim, was the first to acclaim this victory.³³ The regime thus considered that the only way to consolidate its shaky position was to unite Iraq with the UAR (Egypt). Thus Talabani was advised to join the Iraqi delegation leaving for Egypt to celebrate Unity Day on 22 February 1963.³⁴ Ostensibly, Talabani's visit was designed to demonstrate Kurdish support for Arab nationalism. At the same time, the new regime made it clear that the granting of autonomy to Kurdistan would be misunderstood by Nasser and the Arab nationalists and that it was in the Kurds' best interests that Nasser should be fully briefed on the subject. Thus Talabani left for Cairo, apparently without consulting Mulla Mustafa, which was to cause friction later. Although he found Nasser generally in favour of autonomy, it was clear to Talabani that the prime concern of the Iraqi delegation was to initiate a union with Egypt, and that the whole question of Kurdish national rights was not a particularly vital item on the agenda.

The Kurds and Arab Unity

Ever since the establishment and the annexation of

the Mosul wilayet, the Kurds' main concern had been that a state with an overwhelming Arab population would endanger their existence as a national entity. Politically conscious Arabs, on the other hand, were generally divided into Arab nationalists, who wished to see Iraq 'reunited' with the rest of the Arab world, and Iraqi nationalists, who wished to transform Iraq into a cohesive state including all the various communities, and to try as far as possible to co-operate or federate with other Arab countries without endangering the fragile unity of Iraq. Put simply, the struggle was between those who wanted unity before a transformation of the social and economic structure, and those who gave social and economic transformation a higher priority than unity. With their fear of assimilation, the Kurds naturally favoured the second viewpoint, and their fears were given greater immediacy when Arab nationalism came into its own. Until the rise of Nasser, and in particular until the full episode in 1956, the rulers of Iraq, beginning with King Faisal I in the 1920s, tried with some success to persuade the Kurds and the other minorities to accept the new Iraqi entity. They also encouraged the Arab population to 'help the Kurds to be good Iraqis'.³⁵

Obviously, the rise of Nasser and the emotional enthusiasm for Arab unity that swept through the Arab world after 1956³⁶ acted as a challenge to the adequacy of the notion of an Iraqi entity. Initially the Iraqi Kurds had supported Nasser as a symbol of liberation from imperialism, as indeed did Communists and leftists all over the Arab world.³⁷ His prestige and influence amongst the Kurds grew higher after

the initiation of the unity between Egypt and Syria in 1958,³⁸ and they even tried to contact him in order to co-operate with his regime against the monarchy.³⁹ However, it is significant that the UAR Charter failed to make specific mention of the Kurds, in spite of the fact that some 11% of the population of Syria is Kurdish.⁴⁰ Nevertheless immediately after the Revolution of July 1958, the Iraqi Kurds acclaimed Arab nationalism in order to secure a favourable status in an enlarged UAR, which then seemed imminent.⁴¹ When it became clear that the government itself was divided over the issue of unity they made public the conditions for their acceptance of union with the UAR. In a letter to Qasim and 'Arif on 11th September 1958, the KDP stated that:

'the question of unity or federation with the UAR appeals to us because of the way in which it will contribute to achieving and strengthening the unity of the country (Iraq) and in widening the national rights of the Kurdish people, which are outlined in the Provisional Constitution ... We believe that the best way is not to hurry in adopting any step, unity or federation, before fully exploring the issue involved ... The new entity of course would leave the Kurds in a much smaller minority. That is what makes the Kurds adhere more and more firmly to their national rights and more sensitive in their attitude to any of the schemes put forward ... The Kurds' experience with the Turks during the Kemalist regime, and with the Iranians on many occasions, has taught them very hard lessons ... They feel, however, that any advance made by Arab nationalism

towards achieving its objectives must also be accompanied by more expansion in Kurdish national rights ... In order to attain these goals we suggest that:

1 - If Iraq participates in a federation with the liberated Arab states, a form of self-government for Kurdistan must be proclaimed within the framework of Iraqi unity.

2 - If Iraq unites with the UAR, Kurdish nationhood in Iraq must be recognized and Kurdistan must be accepted as a federal member of the new state'.⁴²

However, Qasim rejected the idea of immediate unity and set himself against the Arab nationalists in Iraq with the help of the Kurds and the Communists. In March 1959 the Kurds went so far as to condemn the 'Nasserist dictatorship over the Kurdish people in Syria'.⁴³ Their attitude naturally put the Kurdish national movement at odds with the Arab nationalists. Of the two the KDP was more ideologically involved, and for two years (1959-61), it indulged in a fierce argument with the nationalists over Arab unity and Arab nationalism, in particular when the KDP called on its followers to participate in crushing the Mosul Revolt of 1959 in self defence against 'Arab chauvinism'.⁴⁴ The dispute had reached its peak in 1960 following an article which appeared in *Khabat* about the contradiction in the Provisional Constitution between the 2nd and 3rd articles.⁴⁵ Ahmad, who wrote it, built his argument on the fact that Iraq had no separate existence before the British occupation.

'British interests required that Iraq be

comprised of two provinces: Mesopotamia with its Arab population, and the Mosul wilayet, with its Kurdish majority and other minorities ... To say that Iraq is a part of the Arab nation is wrong from both a scientific and a logical point of view ... Iraq as a whole cannot be considered as a part of the Arab nation. Only the historical Arab Iraq, which did not include Kurdistan, can be considered as an Arab country. Moreover, the non-Arab peoples of the Iraqi Republic do not constitute a part of the Arab homeland. Some time in history, Kurdistan became part of the Islamic state, as happened in the case of other Muslim countries. Kurdistan, therefore, should not and certainly cannot be considered as a part of the Arab world. Hence it is necessary that the article dealing with this issue in the permanent constitution should be clarified and made more precise in order not to give any scope for misinterpretation and dissent. A satisfactory formula should state that the eternal Iraqi Republic is formed of a Kurdish part - Iraqi Kurdistan, and an Arab part - Mesopotamia. Only the Arab part forms part of the greater Arab nation. The real interests of the Arab and Kurdish nationalists should also be considered and put in an appropriate clause to affirm the existence of the true Iraqi entity'.⁴⁶

The Arab nationalists, however, always asserted that the northern frontiers of the Arab homeland were formed by Turkey, and the land to the south of it, ie Iraqi Kurdistan, was Arab land inhabited by other ethnic groups. Hence they regarded Kurdish territory

as lying within Turkey and Iran only. In the nationalist view, the Kurds in Iraq are only a minority living in an Arab land.⁴⁷ The Arab nationalists also claimed that the Kurds, or any other minority, should be cleared off this land if they cause any trouble to the Arab nation,⁴⁸ and they totally rejected the idea of autonomy.⁴⁹ With the passage of time the hostility grew deeper and the Kurds were accused of hindering the sacred aim of Arab unity.⁵⁰ In replying to these allegations Khabat suggested that the nationalists' attitude amounted to a kind of 'Arab colonialism', and warned extremist Arab nationalists against chauvinism. Khabat also poured scorn on the idea of treating the Kurdish nation as part of the Arab nation simply by enlarging the concept of Arab nationalism.⁵¹ It argued that the Kurds, who had always supported the idea of Arab unity and the Arabs' struggle for liberation and independence, and had supported the struggle in Algeria and Oman, expected sincere Arab solidarity with their cause in return. The Kurds also maintained that the 'foreign policy of the Iraqi Republic should be responsible for defending the Kurdish people, and the Kurdish national question outside Iraq'.⁵²

Furthermore, the Kurds made a clear distinction between Arab unity and Iraqi unity, and while they had some reservations about the first concept, they pledged their full support for the second. Separatism has thus never been an issue in the period under discussion. The KDP's doctrine of Kurdish-Arab brotherhood in Iraq is deeply felt and believed in but the KDP could not guarantee the continuity of this belief if the Arab nationalists did not change their 'chauvinistic

attitude'.⁵³ As many Arab nationalists held deep religious convictions, the Kurds stressed the historical and religious links between the two peoples; these links would help to build genuine brotherhood, and also encourage the Arabs to support the national rights and aims of the Kurds.⁵⁴

Attempts at Unity: Iraq and Egypt, February-April 1963

As we have seen, in the immediate aftermath of the February 1963 coup the new Iraqi regime sought unity with the UAR (Egypt) at any price, and for the time being the KDP was swept along with the current. In his meeting with President Nasser,⁵⁵ Talabani was apparently given assurances against any hostility from Arab nationalists towards the Kurds. On 8 March another Ba'thist-Nasserist coalition took over in Syria and joined immediately in the unity negotiations. Fearing that Nasser's assurances might have been forgotten amid such overwhelming Arabism, Talabani addressed a memorandum to the Iraqi delegation to the talks in Cairo, with copies to the other two delegations. Apart from demonstrating the disarray in which the stampede to Cairo had left Talabani and his team in Baghdad, the memorandum sought to 'enlighten the Iraqi delegation about the Kurdish people's attitude towards the relationships currently being negotiated between Iraq and other Arab states in order that any arrangements which may result do not conflict with Kurdish national rights'.⁵⁶ Talabani insisted that the Kurds should be represented in these talks 'because the result ... would affect the Kurdish people and their national rights in Iraq'. He stressed that although the Kurds had no objection to the idea of Arab unity, they would insist that:

1 - If Iraq were to remain completely independent, the Kurdish people would ask only that their national rights to autonomy be respected on the basis of decentralization, as agreed upon.⁵⁷

2 - If Iraq were to be fused into a United Arab Republic, this would necessitate the creation of a Kurdish entity distinct from the Iraqi entity; this territory would also be attached to the central government of the UAR on the same footing as Arab Iraq and Syria in a way that would fully preserve the personality of the Kurdish people.

3 - If Iraq were to join an Arab federation, it would be necessary to accord wide autonomy to Iraqi Kurdistan, in the classical meaning of the term.⁵⁸

Eventually the three countries, Iraq, Egypt and Syria agreed to form a Federal Arab Republic, and the agreement was declared on 17 April 1963. It did not mention the Kurds or their rights, and the Kurds seem to have come to the conclusion that the agreement was largely designed to consolidate Iraq's position against their movement. This suspicion was confirmed four months later when Syria agreed to merge with Iraq and to send a contingent of 5,000 men from its army to fight in Kurdistan alongside the Iraqi Army.⁵⁹ In fact the various attempts to unite Iraq, Egypt and Syria, and to merge Syria with Iraq failed,⁶⁰ and there were no further efforts in this direction for a decade.

Instead, those Arab leaders who claimed to favour political unity embarked upon a step-by-step policy, establishing military, economic and educational unions as a preliminary to full union. The Kurds viewed these agreements with suspicion, complaining

that the establishment of the Unified Political Command between Iraq and Egypt in 1965, which was designed to foster this functional approach, was not submitted for their approval.⁶¹ On the Iraq government side nothing was done to relieve Kurdish fears, and after Qasim the various regimes tended to make Arab unity their primary objective. The government of 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif went as far as to state this in a provisional constitution. The Kurds naturally came to believe that their own nationality would suffer in any new Arab entity. Furthermore, most, if not all, of the joint communiqués signed between Iraq and various other Arab countries in the 1960s described the Kurdish Revolt as a separatist movement and urged Iraq to suppress it.⁶²

Footnotes

- 1 This law deprived the oil companies of 99% of the unexplored land, which was handed over to the newly formed Iraq National Oil Company. This led observers to believe that the move to oust Qasim was a victory for the Iraqi Petroleum Company. See *Jeune Afrique*, No 123, 25th February 1963. See also Dann (1969), p 359 and Penrose, E & E F, *Iraq: International Relations and Economic Development*, London 1978, pp 257-73; 381-383.
- 2 After Kuwait became independent in 1961 Qasim severed diplomatic relations with any country that recognised it.
- 3 See pp 89-90 above.
- 4 Yahya was a key figure in the anti-Qasim group. A nationalist, who was also a Free Officer, he became Chief of the Police but was put on the retired list following the Mosul Revolt in 1959. He served later as Prime Minister in 1963-65 and 1967-68.
- 5 Qarani came originally from Sulaimaniya and was a friend of Yahya.
- 6 Schmidt (1964), p 248. Vanly (1970), p 175.
- 7 *Le Monde*, 12th March 1963, also Vanly (1970), p 175.
- 8 *Ibid.* See Schmidt (1964), p 249 for the names suggested by the KDP for inclusion in the future Cabinet. Previous Cabinets had included only two Kurds.
- 9 *Ibid.* Ahmad was also told that the date had been set for the coup.

- 10 Schmidt (1964), pp 249-52.
- 11 Interview with Siddiq Shanshal, leader of the Istiqlal. Yusufi was told by Shanshal that his party was ready to co-operate on the condition that the KDP gave a firm assurance that it would not work to separate Iraqi Kurdistan and not ask for more than Iraq could offer. These contacts carried little weight because of the Istiqlalis' national influence in Iraqi politics. The only possibility was that the leaders of the Istiqlal might occupy a key position in any future change of government.
- 12 A Kurd who enjoyed Mulla Mustafa's trust for a while. He collaborated with the Arab nationalists against Qasim. See p 219 footnote 64.
- 13 Interview with Sa'di.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 al-Masala al-Kurdia, (1969), p 46. Also interview with Ahmad. Schmidt (1964), p 250.
- 16 Interview with Sa'di.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Since it occurred on 14th of the month of Ramadhan.
- 19 Schmidt (1964), pp 250-51.
- 20 O'Ballance (1973), p 99.
- 21 The Cabinet included five officers. About ten of the Cabinet members were Ba'thists, three were sympathizers, and the rest were Arab nationalists, more or less inclined towards Nasser. See G Haddad, Revolution and Military Rule in the Middle East: The Arab States, Part One, New York 1971, p 128.
- 22 For details see Batatu (1978), pp 974-994.

- 23 al-Masala al-Kurdia (1969), pp 46-48.
- 24 In fact an effective ceasefire had already been declared by Qasim in January 1963. See Kinnane (1964), p 72.
- 25 Schmidt (1964), p 251.
- 26 Some of the KDP leaders arrested the Communist refugees, and twenty seven of them who sought asylum with 'Ali 'Askari were shot on his orders. Mulla Mustafa, on the other hand, ordered the Peshmarga to accommodate the refugees, a policy likewise followed by Talabani. Thus the majority of Communist and Qasimite refugees supported these two Kurdish leaders. Interview with Fakhri.
- 27 The New York Times, 18th February 1963.
- 28 Yusufi was already in Baghdad. They met the new President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Defence and the Chief of Staff.
- 29 See Schmidt (1964), p 252.
- 30 See American University of Beirut, al-Watha'iq al-Arabia (The Arab Documents), Vol I 1965, pp 620-22.
- 31 Schmidt (1964), p 253.
- 32 Ibid; Khadduri (1969), p 269.
- 33 Eg'During the events of Mosul in March 1959 the UAR was closely tied to what was afoot'. Batatu (1978), p 872 f.
- 34 ie the day in 1958 when Egypt and Syria had united forming the UAR. Nasser continued to celebrate this date as the symbol of Arab Unity even after the withdrawal of Syria in 1961.

- 35 See al-Hasani (1965), Vol II, p 47.
- 36 See Vatikiotis P J, Nasser and his Generation, London 1978, passim.
- 37 See Talabani (1971), pp 170-72.
- 38 For Nasser's favourable reaction to the Kurds see Chapter 9 below.
- 39 The KDP had tried but failed to contact Nasser via Syria. Then they tried to contact him by sending Ahmad, who failed to get official permission to travel. Eventually the Kurds succeeded in meeting leaders of the Arab nationalist parties in Syria who were pro-Nasser. See Talabani (1971), pp 171-2.
- 40 Here again figures are unreliable. In Chaliand, G, (ed) People without a country; The Kurds and Kurdistan, London 1980, Nazdar gives a figure of 825,000 Kurds in Syria in 1976.
- 41 See the KDP's letter to Nasser on the initiation of a Kurdish broadcasting service. Viennot, P, Contribution à l'Étude de la sociologie et de l'histoire du mouvement national kurde, unpublished thesis, École Pratique des Hautes Études, Sorbonne 1969, p 155.
- 42 Talabani (1971) pp 315-16.
- 43 Viennot (1969), p 158.
- 44 Dann (1969), p 174.
- 45 See pp 72-3 above. This article was instigated by an argument during the meetings of the International Union of Students held in Baghdad, between the President of the General Union of the Iraqi Students and the representative of the Kurdish Student Society in Europe over the merger of the Kurdish Student Union in Iraq with the General Union of Iraqi Students.

- 46 A full translation of this article appeared in Orient No 17, 1961, pp 189-90. In the argument over this question, Ahmad added that 'if the KDP did not draw attention to the contradiction in these two articles of the constitution before, it was because it wanted to leave the matter until the permanent and definitive constitution had been considered, and because the defence of the Iraqi Republic had priority over other matters at that time'.
- 47 See Dann (1969), p 141. See also Abu Jaber, K, The Arab Ba'th Socialist Party: History, Ideology and Organisation, Syracuse 1966, p 166, and 'The Kurds and the Concept of Iraqi Unity' in Kurdish Journal Vol 5 No 3, September 1968.
- 48 Cited in Talabani (1971), p 323. Also Dann (1969), p 141.
- 49 Autonomy was also regarded in some nationalist circles as tantamount to creating another Israel in the north of Iraq. Jeune Afrique No 140, pp 24-30, June 1963.
- 50 Khadduri (1969), pp 222, 233.
- 51 Cited in Talabani (1971), p 324.
- 52 See the resolutions of the Kurdish Students Society in Europe of 1960. Cited in Viennot (1969) p 156.
- 53 Talabani (1971), p 318.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 See Chapter 9 below about Nasser's talk with Talabani and his Kurdish delegation in Cairo in 1963.
- 56 Talabani (1971), pp 321-23 has a full text of this letter.

- 57 For this previous agreement, see Chapter 5, Section 1 below.
- 58 Talabani (1971), pp 321-3; *ibid.* Also Vanly I, *The Revolution of Iraki Kurdistan*, p 26 published by C D K P R April 1965, London. Mulla Mustafa's faction were not concerned with the question of Arab unity. 'The Kurds have nothing to do with this problem of Arab Unity' Mulla Mustafa declared on one occasion in 1963. Schmidt (1964), p 241.
- 59 In October 1963 Syria agreed on a military and economic merger with Iraq as a first step towards total unity. The Kurds also heard about meetings between Syrian and Iraqi officers to discuss general collaboration, which they suspected would be directed against them. Schmidt (1964), p 245.
- 60 In fact the 17 April Tri-Partite Federation was stillborn. By the time it was signed, differences between Nasser and the Ba'th rulers in both Iraq and Syria were already evident.
- 61 See the Kurdish memorandum to President 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, 11 October 1964, in al-Ghamrawi (1967) pp 323-35. See also al-Durra (1966), pp 360-8.
- 62 See American University of Beirut (1966), pp 332-33; and 1965 p 328.

CHAPTER FIVE

Attempts to solve the Kurdish problem

After his trips to Cairo and Algiers in February 1963 Talabani thought that there was no need to delay negotiations for a peaceful settlement. He thought that the Arabs' support for Kurdish rights embodied in President Nasser's approval was encouraging, and pressed for negotiations. At this stage the Iraq government was still divided over the way to solve the Kurdish question; the officers opposed the idea of negotiations and were prepared to go to war again, while the Ba'thist civilians, headed by Sa'di, were more aware of the political repercussions and urged tact. They realised the difficulties of crushing the Revolt and decided on defeating it from within by 'infiltrating or splitting the Kurdish movement'.¹ Thus on 16 February, the new government declared its programme. It promised to solve the Kurdish problem peacefully 'after consulting the Kurds themselves to know their demands'.² Although the Ba'th Party seems to have taken over 'with no

positive programme of action ... and it was not prepared to handle the Kurdish problem',³ Sa'di attempted to find a middle-of-the-road policy towards the Kurdish question which would satisfy both the civilians and the military. Apart from his prominent role in the new regime, Sa'di had the further advantage of his recent talks with Yusufi, which had given him some idea of Kurdish demands. Although he did not believe in autonomy Sa'di was convinced that in order to overcome the problem it was necessary to concede some of the Kurds' cultural demands. If the Kurds still proved intransigent, then force should be used against them.⁴ However, the extent of the confusion and violence after the Ramadhan Revolution ruled this out for the time being, and it was therefore agreed that the government should act tactfully. Such tactics would calm the Kurds' growing militancy and see how far they were prepared to compromise. It would also give the military time to reorganise the Army in order to use it to strengthen the government's bargaining power, and if necessary, to strike at the Peshmerga. Apart from Talabani's trip to Cairo, no serious contacts had been made between the two sides by the end of February although Ba'thist officials spoke favourably about 'Kurdish Rights'.⁵ As Mulla Mustafa's impatience increased and his threats to resume hostilities became more serious,⁶ the government declared on 1 March that 'in recognition of the ties of brotherhood and friendship between the Arabs and the

Kurds, the Ramadhan Revolution is determined to eliminate all ill-effects of the defunct Qasim regime by guaranteeing the rights of the Kurds'.⁷ This communiqué sums up the basic attitude of the Ramadhan Revolution; it did not describe the Kurds as a people or a nation with national rights; it only mentioned them as 'brothers and friends of the Arab people', and it was clearly because of these two attributes alone, rather than any claim to separate nationhood, that the government was guaranteeing their rights. Mulla Mustafa replied that 'we are not begging for our rights', and asked for a quick implementation of autonomy.

In order to show the government's good will a delegation led by the Chief of Staff, General Tahir Yahya, accompanied by the Kurdish Ministers and two other Kurdish personalities, left for Kurdistan. It was preceded by Talabani, who was sent to placate Mulla Mustafa. To give an indication of his attitude Mulla Mustafa had refused to meet the delegation in the town of Rowanduz and insisted that they came to his headquarters in the remote village of Kani Miran. The differences between the two sides were immediately evident. General Yahya declared that his delegation was on a courtesy visit, hinting to Mulla Mustafa that 'his refusal to go to Baghdad does not mean any changing in the protocol procedure'. He explained that 'this fratricidal war was imposed by the old regime on the Kurds and Arabs ... the Ramadhan Revolution was the

Revolution of those two people united against the arbitrariness and oppression of Qasim', and hoped that the two ethnic groups would now cooperate harmoniously under the new regime. Mulla Mustafa began by saying that he would be as he used to be, 'brutally frank'. He argued that 'there is no distinction between Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, Assyrians, Christians, Muslims and Jews; all are the sons of the common Iraqi fatherland'. Nevertheless, although they had lived together throughout history, the Arabs and the Kurds were still two different peoples. Hence he advised the Iraqi government to declare autonomy as a precondition for the termination of hostilities. After three hours of talks the two delegations failed to find any common ground, although they declared that they had reached a mutual understanding and that details would be worked out by a joint committee.⁸

Subsequently Mulla Mustafa was accused of presenting what the government described as 'impossible demands'⁹ which could not form the basis of any negotiations. First, he asked that the government should formally recognise the Kurds' right to autonomy immediately, and send a copy of this document and of the new constitution which embodied it to the United Nations. It should also be broadcast on Baghdad Radio, and published in the official Government Gazette. Second,

Iraqi Kurdistan should include areas extending to Turkey in the north, Iran in the east, Syria in the west, and the mountain chain of Hamrin to the south, in other words, the whole of the old Mosul wilayet with the exception of the city of Mosul itself, with the rich oil fields of Kirkuk and its different ethnic groups. Third, Kurdish should be the official language of the area, and a second language in the rest of Iraq. There should be a Kurdish Vice-President of the Republic, and Kurdistan should also be given a separate council of ministers and its own national assembly. Although Defence, Finance and Foreign Affairs should be the responsibility of the central government, Kurdish ministers of state should be appointed to these ministries, and the central cabinet and any future national assembly should include a fair proportion of Kurds.

However, the most critical paragraph in those demands was that entitled 'The Army'. Here Mulla Mustafa demanded the creation of armed units in Kurdistan composed only of Kurds, again in proportion to their number. 'This force should comprise all armed units, Air Force, Infantry, Armoured Division ... etc.' He also asked for the creation of military institutions in Kurdistan similar to those existing in the rest of the country. 'Until these forces are formed, the Kurdish Peshmerga should be maintained and subsidised

by the Iraqi Government'. He also demanded that 'a share which should be not less than two-thirds of the whole national(oil) revenue' ¹⁰ should be allotted to Kurdistan. Finally, he asked for the formation of an autonomous government to sign an agreement with the central government covering these demands, ¹¹ and warned that his army would resume fighting if the Iraqi government did not meet these demands within three days. ¹²

Under such conditions no agreement seemed possible unless the Kurds moderated their attitude, for the Ba'thists' idea of self-administration and cultural rights could never square with these far-reaching demands. Hence the argument favoured by the military, that the Kurdish problem could only be solved by force began to be viewed more sympathetically in government circles. The new government concluded that Mulla Mustafa had begun to regard himself as a real power in Iraqi politics, and that they were only encouraging his ambitions by dealing with him on an official and equal footing. ¹³ It was therefore decided that no more official negotiations should be conducted with him. Next, a team of well-known Iraqi personalities, representing all communities and political trends except the Communists, was asked to contact Mulla Mustafa.

The task of this 'Popular Delegation' which arrived in Kurdistan early in March, was first to persuade Mulla Mustafa to moderate his demands, ¹⁴ and second, to give the Army leaders time to organise their troops. ¹⁵ Both aims were partially realised. In the first place the Delegation succeeded in pacifying Mulla Mustafa, and induced him to accept the term 'decentralization',

which was more acceptable to the government than autonomy. It suggested that Iraq should be divided into decentralized provinces, and Kurdistan should be one of them. Kurdish and Arabic should be the official languages of this province, and of every other area where the Kurds formed a considerable minority.¹⁶ Looking at the Kurdish question in the Iraqi political context in general, the Delegation's main concern was equality between Arabs and Kurds, and the co-operation necessary between the two peoples for the establishment of a democratic regime in Iraq. Such a regime would have the capacity to grant the Kurds their full national rights. When it came to the thorny question of Kirkuk, the Popular Delegation, like the government, could not accept that this province should be part of the autonomous region. In the first place that the province had an 'international status' in the sense that there were binding contracts between the foreign oil companies and the central government, and secondly the province was essentially multi-ethnic in character.¹⁷ In the end the Popular Delegation persuaded Mulla Mustafa and the Kurdish leadership to conduct negotiations with the government by presenting essentially reasonable demands. On its return to Baghdad the Popular Delegation presented its recommendations to the government which were to serve as the basis for negotiations. Their recommendations included:

'recognising Kurdish Rights on the basis of decentralization, declaring a general amnesty for the Kurds, replacing certain officials in Kurdistan who were considered hostile to the Kurdish people, lifting the economic blockade of Kurdistan,

revoking all orders confiscating the property of those who participated in the Kurdish Revolt, and finally withdrawing the Army units to their former positions before September 1961'.

The government also ordered the immediate lifting of the economic blockade, and a general amnesty was published in the Official Gazette.

On the subject of decentralization, Deputy Premier Sa'di announced on 9 March:

'Since one of the main aims of the Ramadhan Revolution is to establish a modern system, based on the best administrative and governmental methods, and since the method of decentralization has proved to be beneficial, the Revolution, acting on the revolutionary principles announced in its first communiqué, has provided for the strengthening of Arab-Kurdish brotherhood and for the respect of the rights of the Kurds and other minorities, and has approved the national rights of the Kurdish people on the basis of decentralization. This should be enshrined both in the temporary and permanent constitutions when they are promulgated. A committee will be forced to lay down the broad outlines of decentralization.¹⁸'

Two days later Sa'di defended the government's declaration of 9 March, observing that 'the Iraqi provinces will have their own administration in all fields, except those of Foreign Affairs, Finance and Defence ... This decision conforms to the right of a people to choose their future, and it is a result of an objective analysis of the current situation in Iraq'.¹⁹ Sa'di believed that the use of the term 'self-administration', and the grant of some of the

Kurds' cultural rights, would satisfy the Kurds and put an end to the war.

For their part the Kurds viewed the two declarations as a continuation of the government's pacification tactics, and realised that they did not in fact contain a substantial solution to the Kurdish question. Furthermore, because the Ba'thist regime in Iraq had been strengthened by the same party's successful take-over in Syria on 8 March, the government could now afford to take a stronger line on the Kurdish question. Hence its promised 'Committee to lay down the broad outlines of decentralization' never materialised, and instead the government devoted every effort to attempting to conclude the tripartite unity talks with Egypt and Syria. The Kurds protested and pressed for the resumption of talks but the government continued its delaying tactics, asking the Kurds to submit their demands officially.

Meanwhile, the seeds of division between the KDP and Mulla Mustafa began to grow in Kurdistan itself. Fearing the mounting popularity of the KDP inspired by its representative, Talabani, Mulla Mustafa called a general conference without the knowledge of the KDP's leaders.²⁰ He was particularly concerned that Talabani should not appear to be seen as the sole representative of the Kurds and that at the very least, if this actually happened, it should only be with his blessing. Mulla Mustafa also wanted his excessive demands to be endorsed by the Kurdish representatives. The conference took place in Koi-Sanjaq on 18 March,²¹ and despite the high percentage of tribal shaikhs Talabani was elected chairman. It was agreed that a negotiating team should be

elected,²² and this team was instructed to submit a more detailed plan for autonomy to the government.²³ At the end of March, Talabani arrived in Baghdad to find the new rulers negotiating a unity agreement in Cairo; accordingly, he sent them a memorandum asking for Kurdish participation in these talks.²⁴ In order to gain more time the Iraqi government instructed the Popular Delegation to negotiate with Talabani's team again, this time to define the term decentralization.²⁵ A few days after the talks started it became obvious to Talabani that the Delegation did not have any official standing to sign an agreement with the Kurds, and that the talks were actually a waste of time. In one of the meetings, he asked the Delegation about their capacity to sign an agreement, and when the members began to temporise, he threatened to return to Kurdistan unless an official government team was appointed.²⁶ Thus two ministers, General Salih 'Ammash of Defence and Major General Naji Talib of Industry, were included in the Popular Delegation, together with the Deputy Minister of Interior and others.²⁷

The talks then shifted to the Ministry of Industry, but the main theme of the negotiations remained unchanged. In spite of the fact that the government was not prepared to accept, and in fact rejected, the Kurds' claims,²⁸ the Kurds used the pretext of the Tri-partite Unity to step up their demands,²⁹ submitting a detailed plan for autonomy on 24 April,³⁰ which was designed to give them a free hand in their region without intervention from the government. They also wanted a Kurdish administration in the region which would deal with legislation, the

executive, justice, internal affairs, education, health, agriculture, municipal affairs, rural affairs, labour and social affairs, local defence, development and tourism; furthermore any Iraqi military movements in the region were to be made conditional upon the consent of the Kurdish administration. Other demands included a proportional share of the oil revenue, and equality between Arabs and Kurds in official appointments, as well as the inclusion of the oil fields of Kirkuk, Khanaqin and north west Mosul in the autonomous region. A separate Kurdish identity should be officially recognised if Iraq merged with any other Arab country, and a Kurdish Vice-President of the Republic and a Kurdish deputy chief of staff should also be appointed.³¹

In May 1963 the negotiations reached stalemate, apparently over the Kirkuk issue. The Kurds wanted this province to be included in the Kurdish region, while the government wanted it to be a separate province because of its mixed population,³² although they came round to accepting the inclusion of Chamchamal, a sub-district of Kirkuk with a Kurdish majority, in the Kurdish autonomous province. Of course the government viewed 'decentralization' differently from the Kurds, seeing it simply as involving the administrative division of Iraq into provinces, each of which would enjoy a fair amount of freedom in running its local affairs under the government's supervision. There was to be no separate freedom of legislation, and members of the Kurdish executive council were all to be appointed by the government. Furthermore the central government wished to retain the right to cancel any resolution from the

executive council of the autonomous province.³³ Moreover although Kurdish was to become the second official language after Arabic, it was only to be taught in the primary and intermediate schools of the region.³⁴ There were other differences over the Peshmerga; the government envisaged the dissolution of the Peshmerga once agreement was reached, while the Kurds insisted that they should be kept on as border guards. Thus the negotiations broke down, and on 10 June the fighting was resumed on an intensive scale. The Kurdish delegation in Baghdad was arrested, and all contacts with Mulla Mustafa's faction were stopped.

Both sides must take some responsibility for the breakdown of the negotiations. Naji Talib later claimed on the government side that agreement would have been possible with the Kurds had the Peshmerga not continually breached the ceasefire.³⁵ In fact the overthrow of Qasim had given both sides considerable confidence, which resulted in their both assuming uncompromising and inflexible positions during the negotiations. Mulla Mustafa claimed the credit for creating a situation which led to Qasim's overthrow and considered that the Ba'thists had simply given the final push to a tottering regime. He even maintained that no government could survive without his support,³⁶ and he interpreted the government's readiness to negotiate as a sign of its own weakness.³⁷ He continued to threaten to use force even when the Kurdish team was in Baghdad for negotiations, and the feeling of bad faith persisted. The Kurds also increased their demands almost indefinitely until they reached a point where no government could have accepted

them without endangering its sovereignty.

On the other hand, the ceasefire period revealed that the Kurdish leadership was as disunited and undecided as ever, a fact which clearly emerged from different suggestions and viewpoints of Talabani, the KDP, Mulla Mustafa, and Kurdish representatives abroad. In consequence the government resorted to the military solution sooner than it might otherwise have done. Fundamentally, however, the government was never really serious in its dealings with the Kurds, handing over the negotiations to a powerless delegation and failing to present any serious plan.³⁸ The government wrongly thought that Ba'thist successes in Syria, and the various differences within the Kurdish national movement would strengthen their position against the Kurds. They were wrong in allowing the military to persuade them that the Kurdish Revolt could be quashed by a concentrated offensive.

Attempt at a Military Solution

By the time that the Kurdish Revolt erupted in September 1961, Qasim was completely alienated from the Army, and he ran the operations personally from his office in the Ministry of Defence. His conduct of the war was inconsistent, to say the least, and as a result the Army suffered many defeats. His statements that the war would quickly be over proved to be untrue, and many officers blamed Qasim for their own failings. Soon Qasim himself began to be accused of creating the Kurdish problem and of not having dealt seriously with the Kurds. He was also accused of prolonging the war to 'increase the isolation of the Army which he dreaded'; throughout the war the

officers complained that they were not being given sufficient means to suppress it.³⁹

As we have seen, the notion that the Kurdish movement could be dealt with by force had deep roots in Iraqi politics.⁴⁰ Hence Qasim's successors, and especially the military, were always hostile to negotiations; militarily speaking, and judging by Mulla Mustafa's friendly relations with hostile powers, a Kurdish state in the north would, they maintained, be a threat to Iraq.⁴¹ Few Nasserist or Ba'thist officers were prepared to assert the idea of autonomy for Kurdistan, seeing it as a first step towards complete independence, a fact which they claimed was apparent from the continued escalation of Kurdish demands. 'After autonomy what would the Kurds ask for next?' they asked themselves.⁴²

At the time of the Ramadhan Revolution the Army officers were the main force behind the installation of the Ba'thists in government. Although the Ba'thists and their militia the National Guard seemed to be in control, the officers remained the real power. They held key posts in the new government, and were capable of replacing the entire regime by another.⁴³ Hence after Qasim's fall they felt that nothing would stop them from finishing the Kurdish Revolt. In an attempt to combine the plan of civilian Ba'thists for a peaceful settlement with the solution favoured by the military, Sa'di succeeded in getting the officers to accept the civilians' argument, provided that if the Kurds were not satisfied with cultural concessions force would again be used against them. The Army leaders probably knew beforehand that the Kurds would not settle for less than full autonomy, and they

accepted Sa'di's argument only to enable them to reorganise their troops. On 3 May 1963, Sa'di's faction suffered a reverse and Sa'di himself was demoted from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Guidance. The officers' faction now began to move towards a complete takeover.

Nevertheless the officers and the Ba'thists failed, as Qasim had done before them, to appreciate the strength of the Kurdish nationalists;⁴⁴ thus they initiated the negotiations on the assumption that whatever they offered the Kurds the latter would have to accept gratefully.⁴⁵ But the new regime faced determined negotiators who wanted to achieve their maximum demands, taking advantage of the state of internal confusion. They did not believe that the government could afford to fight them and the Communists at the same time, and felt that they were speaking from a position of strength in view of their various contacts and the promises that they had been given by the Ba'thists before the Ramadhan Revolution. In their turn, the Kurds failed to understand that while they were preparing to overthrow Qasim the Ba'thists had needed all the assistance they could get, but once they had achieved their objectives all such promises would be revised.

With Qasim's fall, however, the Kurds grew more militant, and when the first communiqué of the Ramadhan Revolution made no mention of the Kurds' right to autonomy, the KDP leaders believed that they 'have been tricked once more'. Some even suggested that Kurdish forces should occupy all the cities of Iraqi Kurdistan,⁴⁶ and Mulla Mustafa was quoted as saying that his forces could have advanced into the

heart of Iraq 'as the armed forces were so weak and disorganised'.⁴⁷ He also observed that in relations between nations nothing counted except strength, and that under the circumstances he had the strength.⁴⁸ Such statements soon filtered through to the Iraqi leaders, and resulted in a strengthening of the officers' position. Moreover, the constant escalation of Kurdish demands coupled with support for the new regime from tribal leaders opposed to Mulla Mustafa made the new leaders more keen to resume war against him.⁴⁹ Thus in spite of the various attempts at a peaceful settlement, a military solution appeared more likely in the spring of 1963, as 'real confidence between the Kurds and the Ba'thists was nil from the start'.⁵⁰

Twenty days after the Ramadan Revolt, Mulla Mustafa's discontent with the new regime became manifest. 'I have ordered our guerillas to return to their fighting positions ... We are not begging for our rights; if they (the Iraq government) do not declare our rights we will fight for them until death, even if this should mean separation from the Iraqi Republic'.⁵¹ A few days later he criticised Talabani's trip to Cairo and Algiers, and the way the new government was trying to solve the Kurdish problem: 'Iraqi Ministers go strolling around Cairo instead of negotiating seriously with the Kurds', he added.⁵² At his first meeting with General Yahya on 5 March he threatened to go to war if his demands were not accepted, and these threats were repeated several times between March and June 1963. Reading backwards from later events, it seems likely that the Iraq government intended to seek a military

solution from a comparatively early date, although the government was prepared to wait until the summer in the hope of finding an alternative, however remote, to a resumption of hostilities. Furthermore the government also probably thought that even if a swift and total victory proved difficult to achieve, a major show of force would make the Kurds more ready to compromise. Throughout March and April both sides began to reinforce their positions, and in May each side began to accuse the other of hindering the attempts for peace. It became obvious that there would be a confrontation between the two forces sooner or later, and a full scale war might result.

At the end of May the government's policy underwent a fundamental change; a peaceful solution in Kurdistan looked impossible, and a break with President Nasser,⁵³ who supported the Kurds' demands, was also inevitable.

The Ba'thist leadership thus sought to gain two victories at once; by resuming the war in Kurdistan they would not only crush the Kurdish Revolt, which would strengthen their position internally, but also enable them to score a tactical victory over Nasser by accusing him of backing a separatist movement.⁵⁴

More evidence of Nasser's apparent complicity was provided by a second visit to Cairo by Talabani on 18 May.⁵⁵ During the first week in June the Army paraded through the streets of Kirkuk and Sulaimaniya, and later attacked some Kurdish positions.⁵⁶ On 10 June the government issued a communiqué which listed twenty-three breaches of law and order by the Peshmerga. These included the Kurds' attempt to establish de facto independence, attacks on Army patrols, kidnappings of Arab and Kurdish officials,

raids on villages, and sheltering Communists.⁵⁷ The main aim of the communiqué was to justify their call to the Kurds to surrender within twenty-four hours. The government's offensive began on the same day. The offensive took the shape of a three-front attack; the main effort was directed towards the Arbil-Rowanduz pass and actually succeeded in capturing Barzan in August. A second column advanced towards Koi-Sanjaq, captured it and reoccupied Rania but was soon forced to retreat to Haybat Sultan, a range of mountains to the north of Koi-Sanjaq. The third column advanced to take 'Amadia and the mountains overlooking it, while a Syrian contingent of 5,000 men was in operation in the Zakho-Dohuk area. To assist the Army the government formed the Fursan forces, divided into two regiments, one named after the Kurdish hero Salah al-Din, and the second after the Arab hero Khalid Ibn al-Walid. The first consisted of anti-Barzani Kurdish tribes and the second of Arab tribes loyal to the government, a highly dangerous step which transformed the struggle into a sectarian war.⁵⁸

After the capture of Barzan in August and the surrender of Shaikh Ahmad, the Army moved to the area round Sulaimaniya. In October it managed to capture the strategically important Kurdish position of Chami-Rayzan,⁵⁹ an operation which was thought to be the end of the Kurdish Revolt. This assumption was in fact premature since the bulk of the Kurdish fighting forces were still intact in the mountains, although their effectiveness was hindered by lack of co-operation and growing mistrust between Mulla Mustafa's forces and those of the KDP. At all events

the government's hopes of destroying the Kurdish Revolt did not materialize, and the Ba'thist regime itself was brought down only a month later, in November 1963.

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Footnotes

- 1 Interview with Sa'di. See also the government's plan for autonomy; al-Durra (1966), pp 326-34.
- 2 Vanly (1970), p 179.
- 3 Abu Jaber (1966), p 84.
- 4 Interview with Sa'di.
- 5 See Le Monde, 5th February 1963.
- 6 See The New York Times, 2nd and 3rd March 1963.
- 7 The New York Times, 2nd March 1963.
- 8 Le Monde, 8th March 1963.
- 9 al-Thawra newspaper, 17th December 1969.
- 10 The claim to two-thirds of the national oil revenue was based on the fact that this proportion of Iraq's oil production was derived from Kurdish claimed areas. It was also said that the Kurds asked for their share of the national oil revenue to be paid directly to them by the oil companies. Le Monde, 23rd March 1963.
- 11 al-Durra (1966), pp 308-309. Also al-Masala al-Kurdia (1969), pp 50-51. Later on the KDP leadership denied any knowledge of or responsibility for these demands. Ibid.
- 12 al-Durra (1966), p 308.
- 13 This was generally the view of the military, who considered Mulla Mustafa to be a bandit and always discouraged official talks with him.
- 14 There were: Shaikh Muhammad Ridha al-Shabibi of the old National Front, Husain Jamil of the National Democratic Party, Fa'iq al-Samarra'i of the Istiqlal Party, Faisal al-Khayzaran of the ruling Ba'th Party, Dr 'Abd al-'Aziz al-Duri, of the Arab nationalists, and Zaid Ahmad 'Uthman, a

- Kurd. Interview with Jamil. See al-Durra (1966), pp 309-310.
- 15 The Popular Delegation was not told the real object of their mission. Only al-Khayzaran knew it. Interview with Khayzaran.
- 16 Interview with Jamil.
- 17 Interview with Jamil.
- 18 Khadduri (1969), pp 270-71.
- 19 Le Monde, 16th April 1963.
- 20 al-Masala al-Kurdia (1969), p 51.
- 21 See Khadduri (1969), p 271. Schmidt (1964), p 258.
- 22 The Kurdish team included seven negotiators, assisted by fourteen advisers. See Khadduri (1969), p 271; also al-Durra (1966), p 312.
- 23 See al-Masala al-Kurdia, al-Nour publications, p 51; also Edmonds 'The Kurdish War in Iraq: A plan for peace', JRCAS, Liv/1 February 1967.
- 24 See Chapter 4 above.
- 25 al-Durra (1966), p 313.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Ibid, p 314; also interview with Naji Talib.
- 28 al-Masala al-Kurdia, ibid.
- 29 The Economist, 15th June 1963.
- 30 al-Durra (1966).
- 31 See al-Durra (1966), pp 318-24 and Adamson (1964) for the Kurds' plan for autonomy.
- 32 al-Durra (1966), p 314. Interview with Jamil.
- 33 See al-Durra (1966), p 314.
- 34 Ibid.
- 35 Interview with Naji Talib.
- 36 Le Monde, 16th April 1963.
- 37 See American University of Beirut (1963) pp 547-549; also al-Jamahir, 11th June 1963.

- 38 The Iraqi government plan for decentralization was promulgated on 10th June 1963 - the same day as the military operations against the Kurds were started.
- 39 Le Monde 16th April 1963. For accusations against Qasim see al-Durra (1966), p 278 and al-Ghamrawi (1967), pp 379-88.
- 40 See Chapter 1, passim.
- 41 By that time, in 1963, the officers regarded the Communists, leftists and Qasimists who fled to Kurdistan as a danger to the state. Soviet diplomatic support for the Kurdish cause was to increase this fear, as was the support given to the Kurds by Israel and Iran. See Chapter 9.
- 42 Interview with Hadi Khammas.
- 43 'In fact the Ba'thists looked dominating only because of the Army's support, and fell when the latter withdrew its support', Haddad (1971), p 131.
- 44 Khadduri (1969), p 268.
- 45 The new Ba'thist Minister for Foreign Affairs declared 'Mulla Mustafa has no right to present demands. It is enough that we are dealing with outlaws'. Le Monde, 16th April 1963. The government also argued that the reasons for the Kurdish Revolt ceased to have validity after the fall of Qasim. See al-Durra (1966), p 336.
- 46 Le Monde, 12th March 1963. Cited also in Vanly (1970), p 181.
- 47 O'Ballance (1973), p 99. See also Schmidt (1964), pp 239-40, about Mulla Mustafa's threats to the government.
- 48 The New York Times, 3rd March 1963.
- 49 Those leaders assured the Ba'thist leaders of

- their loyalty and their opposition to Mulla Mustafa immediately after the Ramadhan Revolution. Interview with Fakhri; see also al-Durra (1966), pp 343-44.
- 50 Schmidt (1964), p 249.
- 51 The New York Times, 2nd March 1963.
- 52 Le Monde, 12th March 1963.
- 53 At that time a new Iraqi Cabinet was formed from which all the Nasserists members had been dropped. Some Nasserista officers accused of conspiring against the Ba'thists were put on trial or on the retired list.
- 54 President Nasser continued to disapprove of solving the Kurdish question by force. He supported the Kurds' national demands, and the Egyptian newspapers used to publish both the Kurdish and the government communiqués. See Le Mond, 19th June 1963.
- 55 Talabani claimed that this second visit to Cairo was undertaken on the Iraq government's advice. See The Times, 3 June 1963.
- 56 Schmidt (1964), p 245.
- 57 See the government's communiqué; al-Durra (1966), pp 338-40. Also Sa'di's press conference on 10th June 1963. American University of Beirut (1963), pp 547-549.
- 58 al-Durra (1966), p 347.
- 59 A gorge to the north-west of Sulaimaniya from which Kurdish guerrillas used to attack other towns as well as Army convoys.

CHAPTER SIX

The regime of 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif and the Kurdish question

In October 1963, while the war was still going on in Kurdistan, a schism finally came to the surface between the 'extremists' and the 'moderates' within the leadership of the Ba'th Party, in which President 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif allied himself with the moderates. In fact, the split was largely between personalities, although it was rapidly alleged that the followers of 'Ali al-Sa'di were attempting to introduce 'socialism'; ideological factors, however, seem to have played an insignificant part in what followed. The 'moderates', headed by Premier al-Bakr and assisted by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Talib Shabib and the Acting Minister for the Interior, Hazim Jawad, argued that the time was not yet ripe for the implementation of such a programme.¹ For two weeks the two factions vied with each other to strengthen their positions, sometimes with the use of force. Finally on 18th November 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, together with the Nasserist officers, and some 'moderate' Ba'thists, managed to take over.² 'Arif became the unchallenged leader of the new regime,³ and the NCRC was reconstituted to include only senior army officers. Because of the fierce offensive carried out against them by the Ba'thists, the

Kurds were relieved to see them go.

'Arif's regime had two main immediate objectives, the consolidation of its position and the conclusion of the Kurdish war. The first naturally took precedence over the second, yet it was obvious that an end to the unpopular war in Kurdistan would in fact strengthen the regime. 'Arif's attitude towards the Kurds was therefore conciliatory; he believed that the Kurds had had enough during the second round of fighting, and were probably ready to drop their more excessive demands. In his first press conference after ousting the Ba'thists 'Arif stressed his government's readiness to make peace with the Kurds. 'We lived with the Kurds, our brothers, in this country sharing it ... we are going to live with them by the will of God till life ends.'⁴

In fact 'Arif had been a staunch advocate of the use of force against the Kurds and it was difficult to imagine that he would really change his mind. However it is possible that he had realised that the Army was unable to crush the Kurdish Revolt although it was the only power that could mount any serious opposition to it. Of course, since 1958 the Iraqi armed forces had been seriously weakened by politics and purges;⁵ a fair number of high ranking and efficient officers had been dismissed or killed either during the First Republic or after its fall in 1963. Furthermore the Kurdish Revolt itself had forced Qasim and his successors to dispense with the majority of, if not all, officers of Kurdish origin, either by retiring them or transferring them to the south. A number of leftist and Qasimist officers had sought asylum in areas controlled by

Mulla Mustafa⁶ after the Ramadhan Revolution, and in the course of the coup against Qasim some units of the Army and Air Force had been withdrawn from the north to reinforce the central government. Shortly after the Ba'thists came to power in February 1963 the Army's position was challenged by the Ba'thist militia, the National Guard, which had grown in strength at the expense of the Army. In June 1963 the Army had once again been involved in full-scale operations in Kurdistan while political purges and violent bids for power continued. Another factor weakening the Army was a degree of reticence on the part of the Soviet Union because of the purge of leftists. There was a drastic cutback in the supply of arms and spare parts to the Army at a time when four out of five Army divisions and the whole Air Force were equipped with Soviet arms. The split inside the Party in October 1963 had also been violent and more tanks, army vehicles, and planes had been destroyed in the course of 'Arif's counter-coup in November. The military balance in Kurdistan was further upset when 'Arif ordered the Syrian forces fighting in Kurdistan to leave Iraq.⁷ Finally, the onset of winter, which rendered military operations difficult, especially for a demoralised army, was a further factor contributing to changing 'Arif's attitude. Since the Kurds had the advantage over the Army their leadership could scarcely be expected to stop fighting in response to vague promises from 'Arif. However, according to Sa'di, 'Arif contacted Mulla Mustafa secretly before moving against the Ba'th Party and asked him 'to resist the Army offensive until he could oust

the Ba'thists'.⁸ This allegation is partly confirmed by the dramatic change in the course of the war following the overthrow of the Ba'th Party.⁹ Immediately after seizing power, 'Arif assured Mulla Mustafa of his good intentions through his brother Shaikh Ahmad of Barzan and Baba 'Ali, the son of Shaikh Mahmud, who both sent messages to Mulla Mustafa urging him to compromise.¹⁰

At the beginning of December 1963, 'Arif officially requested the Governor of Sulaimaniya¹¹ to contact Mulla Mustafa. The latter received him and dispatched Salih al-Yusufi to explore the possibility of a ceasefire in more detail. Moves towards a peaceful settlement gathered momentum during the first Arab Summit in Cairo in January 1964.¹² Both 'Arif and Mulla Mustafa were advised to make peace by Nasser, Ben Bella and other leaders, Nasser apparently offering his personal mediation.¹³ Negotiations between Mulla Mustafa and the government at first went smoothly. Because of his dissatisfaction with the KDP mediation during the first round of negotiations of February-June 1963 as well as his fear of the KDP's growing popularity, Mulla Mustafa directed the talks in person and reached an agreement with 'Arif. The agreement was promulgated on 10 February, together with a letter from Mulla Mustafa, who signed personally rather than in his capacity as President of the KDP. The agreement reads:

'For the sake of our common interest and because of the response of our brothers the Kurds to the appeal of Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani; and because we desire to restore the normal course of life in the northern part of our beloved country, and to foil

the plots of the imperialist stooges, and to preserve the blood of innocent people, we have decided the following:

- 1 - To recognise the national rights of our brothers the Kurds within a unified Iraqi State. This recognition is to be embodied in the Provisional Constitution.
- 2 - To release all those accused of participating in the incidents of the north, and to restore the property confiscated from accused Kurds.
- 3 - To reinstate the government administration in the northern region.
- 4 - To reinstate dismissed employees.
- 5 - To lift the economic blockade.
- 6 - Committees are to be established for the immediate reconstruction of the northern region, and for the arrangement of compensation for those who have suffered losses or injuries.
- 7 - Steps are to be taken for the restoration of security and stability in the northern areas. We hereby ask our brothers the Kurds to return to their normal course of life for the sake of the prosperity and unity of our homeland in the face of the imperialist stooges. For our part we will endeavour to improve the legal rights of the Kurds, as of all the people of the Iraqi Republic. May God witness our intentions'.

Field-Marshal A S 'Arif

Mulla Mustafa's letter, which began with a quotation from the Qur'an, read:

'In response to the wish of Field-Marshal 'Arif, President of the Republic, to preserve the country's unity, to put an end to the fratricidal

war, and to save innocent blood, we have decided to declare a ceasefire. I hereby ask my brother Kurds to return to their usual dwellings and to concern themselves with their own civil affairs. This will give the national authority the time it needs to initiate the measures necessary to re-establish the normal life, security and stability of the Region, which is a vital precursor of the declaration of the national rights of the Kurds, who are to live together with the rest of the Iraqi people in an Iraqi nation unified against colonial intrigues. The re-establishment of security and the rule of law in the Region will solve all problems. May God direct honest men to establish the prosperity, success, and unity of this country'.

Mulla Mustafa al-Barzani¹⁴

The KDP's leadership immediately denounced the agreement on the grounds that it made no explicit mention of Kurdish autonomy. Nevertheless, it was hailed as a major victory for the President, since it was far less than the Kurds had previously demanded. Most observers believed that there were some secret clauses,¹⁵ although in a press conference at Rania on 22 February Mulla Mustafa was at pains to deny this and stressed his adherence to the agreement. He did admit the existence of a vague 'gentlemen's agreement' on various issues, which were to be explored in detail later.¹⁶ 'Arif also denied the existence of any secret clauses; he paid tribute to Mulla Mustafa, accusing the 'KDP warmongers' of being spies and agents of imperialism, and of working to endanger Kurdish-Arab relations.¹⁷ He even went to far as

to threaten the use of force against any group opposing Mulla Mustafa.¹⁸ Naturally, this agreement had a very considerable impact on the Kurdish national movement and the KDP in particular. In fact the '10 February Agreement' brought the longstanding schism between Mulla Mustafa and the KDP into the open. However what followed the conclusion of the agreement was not simply a split inside the KDP, but the beginning of a new era for the whole national movement, during which tribal domination was firmly re-established.

The split inside the Kurdish national movement

In defiance of Mulla Mustafa's orders, the KDP refused to obey the ceasefire agreement, or to allow the return of the civil administration to the areas they controlled. This move represented a major split inside the KDP and consequently inside the movement as a whole. However the '10 February Agreement' did not actually bring about the split, although it was its immediate cause.

The contradictions inherent in the KDP gradually led to a series of struggles between the Kurdish intelligentsia and the tribal shaikhs. The latter could mobilise fighting forces against any regime, while the former hoped to take over the leadership of the Kurdish masses. Politics in the Middle East is highly personalized and Kurdistan was no exception. Late in the 1950's and throughout the 1960's, Mulla Mustafa, Ibrahim Ahmad and Jalal Talabani, were the three prominent Kurdish personalities who symbolised the different trends within the movement. The struggle within the KDP began as a fight for

supremacy between Mulla Mustafa and Ahmad, with Talabani, a member of the Politbureau, joining in and eventually superseding Ahmad.

The rivalry between the three men was mainly personal, and related to their social, ideological and educational backgrounds. Under the Republic, their rivalry was intensified by the greater scope for competition given by the freedom now enjoyed by the Kurdish movement. The animosity between Mulla Mustafa and Ahmad went back to the time when they both became representatives of the Kurdish national movement. Like other educated Kurds, Ahmad always blamed Mulla Mustafa and his tribal influence for the failure of the Kurdish national movement.¹⁹

Furthermore, Mulla Mustafa's wide popularity among the people of Kurdistan and his scorn for political parties served only to deepen Ahmad's hostility. Mulla Mustafa was strictly religious, had no ideology, was opposed to any leftist tendencies, and had a great respect for tribalism. As a tribal leader he was accustomed to being obeyed, and his position was enhanced by his talent for gathering supporters in addition to his own tribe, the Barzanis. He dominated Kurdistan because of his effective opposition to a succession of regimes in Baghdad.

For his part, Ahmad was forced to recognise that time was the only advantage he had over Mulla Mustafa. He was always prepared to forgive and bury all differences for the sake of the Kurdish movement. By the early 1960's the split between the 'tribals' and the 'intellectuals' had widened. As a result Mulla Mustafa's tribal and religious background

and his lack of formal education caused the intelligentsia to look down on him, while the intelligentsia's socialist and reformist beliefs made them unpopular with the tribes, who always regarded them as godless Communists. However, Ahmad took advantage of Mulla Mustafa's exile to dominate the KDP in the years before 1958. He even blocked an attempt by Mulla Mustafa to join the KDP in 1957.²⁰ In the latter part of the 1950's Talabani came on the scene as another distinguished Kurdish leader,²¹ and the 1958 Revolution gave him the opportunity to prove his calibre.²² It is interesting to note that Talabani, a very different character from either Mulla Mustafa or Ahmad, was liked and regarded as a man of the future by them both; he managed to obtain Mulla Mustafa's favour by deferring to his tribal seniority, and gained Ahmad's confidence by becoming his son-in-law. Much younger and more active than the others, Talabani was dedicated to the KDP's cause as well as to his own leftist and Marxist beliefs, and was always uncompromising in matters of principle. He had a reputation as a talented orator, a good military commander, and a distinguished writer, and was without personal ambition. He also managed to maintain a middle-of-the-road position between Mulla Mustafa and Ahmad.²³ However, being extremely impulsive, it was always possible that he might turn against one of the two men, most probably Mulla Mustafa.

After his return in 1958 Mulla Mustafa was regarded as the unchallenged hero and leader of the Kurdish people, and Ahmad and the intelligentsia had no alternative but to concede the Presidency of the KDP

to him, thus adding to his stature as the catalyst for the tribal forces. Because his strength was essentially based upon it, Mulla Mustafa's main interest remained in his tribe. He never had much concern for the KDP, although he always tried to keep people loyal to him inside its leadership.²⁴ In this situation Ahmad's only room for manoeuvre was to draw up rules and regulations in an attempt to nullify the effectiveness of the party's president. Nevertheless, the events of the first two years of the Iraqi Revolution proved that Ahmad's own position inside the KDP depended largely upon Mulla Mustafa's approval.²⁵

The deep division between Mulla Mustafa and the KDP, although played down by the latter, became more acute during the Kurdish Revolt which the KDP had initially denounced.²⁶ Eventually, as we have seen, the KDP joined in, in April 1962, setting up its headquarters in Mawat, north of Sulaimaniya, in the mistaken belief that it would then be beyond Mulla Mustafa's area of influence. The KDP was bound to feel inferior when it compared its forces with those of Mulla Mustafa, and this sense of inferiority led it to acclaim Mulla Mustafa as the leader and hero of the Kurdish national movement and Revolt, and the Barzanis as its backbone. In its various proclamations the KDP confirmed Mulla Mustafa's legendary image in the mind of the Kurdish layman, so that when they eventually split it was impossible for the KDP to destroy this image. During 1961-64 the KDP leaders carried out a systematic programme to enhance the prestige of the party and their own position in it, in order to try to challenge the tribal trends that

always existed in the movement. While this programme met with a limited success in the Sulaimaniya region, it failed totally in the area controlled by Mulla Mustafa.

As the Revolt progressed, two centres of power developed: Mulla Mustafa and the tribal elements in the Arbil region and Badinan²⁷ (in the north), and the KDP in the Sulaimaniya region (the south, or Soran). Differences between the two groups were patched up during the fighting, because of fears that dissent would simply play into the hands of the government, but the divisions were always likely to surface in peace-time.²⁸ During the first ceasefire, February-June 1963, the popularity of the KDP, and particularly of Talabani, appeared to have surpassed even that of Mulla Mustafa; the latter's attempt to isolate the KDP at the Koi-Sanjaq conference failed, and Talabani's popularity grew even greater.²⁹ It was probably at this stage that Mulla Mustafa's idea of eliminating the influence of the KDP took root.³⁰ Another factor which served to widen the gap between Mulla Mustafa and the KDP was the second Army offensive; while the Army attacked Mulla Mustafa's section first, the KDP stayed aloof and did nothing to ease the pressure on Mulla Mustafa's forces, which led the latter to accuse the KDP of being an accomplice of the government.³¹ The resumption of fighting in June 1963 brought the two factions together once more, although the first ceasefire had left deep scars on the relationship.

Mulla Mustafa's opportunity came in December 1963, when 'Arif bypassed the KDP and established direct communications with him. Apart from the satisfaction

it gave him in being treated as the sole leader of the Kurdish people, this also reinforced Mulla Mustafa's intention of dispensing with his old rival Ahmad. The KDP was entirely left out of the second round of negotiations, an omission which only came to light when Mulla Mustafa signed the 10 February Agreement with 'Arif. Ahmad and three other members of the six-man Politbureau were out of Iraq,³² while Talabani and Nuri Shawiz were in Kurdistan. Although they did not know the precise details of the agreement, Talabani and Shawiz accepted the idea of a ceasefire, perhaps thinking that Mulla Mustafa had accepted it in order to gain time. For his part, as soon as he learnt of the agreement Ahmad hastened back to Kurdistan and immediately denounced its terms. He had no difficulty in gaining the full support of the Politbureau, including that of Talabani. Ahmad and his group naturally viewed the agreement as a sell-out for the Kurdish national struggle; it gave them even less than previous governments had been prepared to concede. They condemned the agreement for not mentioning the Kurds as a nation; both 'Arif and Mulla Mustafa were charged with deliberately ignoring the name 'Kurdistan'.³³ The KDP was particularly suspicious of the third clause of the agreement which asserted the necessity of the return of the civil administration to Kurdistan. This, together with Mulla Mustafa's order to the Peshmerga to lay down its arms, was regarded as 'stabbing the revolution in the back, and putting an end to the armed and political struggles of the Kurds before the national objectives have been achieved.' Moreover, the agreement not only neglected Kurdish national

objectives, replacing them by such vague terms as 'the national rights of our brothers the Kurds', but spoke merely of 'improving the legal rights of the Kurds and of all the Iraqi people'. Furthermore, the KDP leaders saw the threat of their own imminent liquidation in references by 'Arif and Mulla Mustafa to 'putting an end to the intrigues of imperialism which seek to trouble brotherly relations in Iraq'. As they were the only elements that opposed the agreement, they naturally took this statement as a reference to themselves.³⁴ Lastly the KDP pointed out that the 'Arif-Mulla Mustafa agreement paid little attention to the issue of compensation for injuries and damages or to political prisoners'.³⁵ Mulla Mustafa, however, cared little for the KDP's viewpoint, and insisted on honouring his agreement with 'Arif. In successive telegrams he ordered the KDP and the Peshmerga to admit the governmental civil administration to the territories they controlled. He also warned the KDP that any resistance to the government forces would be taken as a declaration of war between the KDP and himself.³⁶ By that time munitions and provisions, as well as money, were³⁷ pouring in to Mulla Mustafa from 'Arif's government. In an attempt to upstage Mulla Mustafa, Ahmad called a special party military conference; this proved a failure, since only five out of the eighteen Central Committee members and the six-man Military Command attended both meetings.³⁸ The majority either remained loyal to Mulla Mustafa or stayed aloof. Ahmad suffered yet another setback when his order to the KDP military commanders to purge the Peshmerga's rank and file of Mulla Mustafa's supporter was ignored.³⁹

It was only then that Ahmad realized that he was leading a party whose loyalties were split, with the majority owing their primary allegiance to Mulla Mustafa. However, although Mulla Mustafa's orders were explicit, Ahmad was determined to ignore the 10 February Agreement, and to prevent the return of civil administration. Faced with the possibility of a clash with Mulla Mustafa, for which the party did not have the strength, Ahmad and his Politbureau decided to visit Mulla Mustafa for discussions. This was the first sign of the KDP's failure.⁴⁰

The meeting took place at Mulla Mustafa's headquarters at Sanka Sar, a village in the Qalat Diza region early in March 1964.⁴¹ The meeting and the events that followed it underlined the KDP's poor organisation and its members' split loyalty;⁴² Ahmad and the five members of the Politbureau vainly asked Mulla Mustafa not to treat the Agreement as a final settlement, and to regard it simply as a ceasefire. They argued that the government alone benefited from the ceasefire, and if the Kurds were to continue the fight against the regime, they could attain most of their demands. Mulla Mustafa agreed that the government was weak but added that 'the Kurds should not expose such weakness', and that it 'should be given the time necessary to settle the Kurdish question'. Moreover, he insisted that the 10 February Agreement was a final settlement, to which he had given his word of honour as the Commander-in-Chief of the Kurdish forces. He rejected the KDP's suggestion to send a more detailed memorandum to the government,⁴³ arguing that the Kurdish people had suffered enough in the course of the second round of fighting and that they needed time

to recover.⁴⁴ This recovery could not take place, in his opinion, without the return of stability and civil administration to the Kurdish areas.

For their part the KDP leaders thought that the Kurdish people would not suffer any more in a continuation of the fighting than they had suffered during the previous war. Moreover, the return of the civil administration, 'apart from giving up Kurdish land that has been gained through fighting and sacrifices, would weaken the position of the Kurdish movement and split the loyalty of the people of these areas'.⁴⁵

As the meetings dragged on Mulla Mustafa's patience began to run out. He put an end to further discussion by repeating the claim that 'he was the President of the party and the Commander-in-Chief of the revolution; he had accepted the ceasefire in that capacity and his orders should be obeyed by both the Peshmerga and the KDP members'.⁴⁶ In the last meeting of this visit, Ahmad told him that 'according to our party's programme, the president cannot issue direct orders to members; only the Party's Conference, or its Politbureau can do so. If you so desire, form another party according to your own regulations, and then we might join in and follow your wishes and orders'.⁴⁷ Mulla Mustafa could not swallow such defiance in his headquarters and among his own followers, and threatened to put Ahmad and his group in prison if they continued to defy his leadership. Fearing for their lives, the Politbureau members left secretly for the KDP headquarters at Mawat. Following the Qalat Diza meeting, it was clear that Mulla Mustafa and Ahmad had reached a point of no return. One of them had to submit and Ahmad was the

more likely to do so. In fact he had anticipated this and offered his resignation.⁴⁸ Meanwhile Mulla 49 Mustafa began to talk about replacing him by Talabani, but Talabani rejected the offer and suggested that Ahmad's post as Secretary General should be carried on by a three-man committee.⁵⁰ At the end of March, Mulla Mustafa, determined to stress his authority, called for yet another military conference. This conference was a further victory for his faction as all the Kurdish commanders except those of the Politbureau attended. Mulla Mustafa replaced the commanders of the three Kurdish divisions with men loyal to him,⁵¹ and only Talabani retained his position. In April Ahmad decided to call the long-delayed Sixth Party Congress which was only attended by the small but influential Ahmad group. The resolutions of the Congress criticised Mulla Mustafa, condemning him for 'taking decisions which do not correspond with the interest of our revolution and people ... We are obliged, therefore, to draw the attention of party members to the fact that Mulla Mustafa's actions have exceeded his competence as a President. According to Article 22 of the party's internal regulations, the President only has the right to address, advise, or instruct the Central Committee or the Plenum of the party. He has no right to make direct orders to party organisations or members ... Only the Central Committee, the Conference and the General Congress have this right ... For this reason the Conference declares that all orders and instructions issued by Mulla Mustafa as the President of the party are a breach of party regulations, and members of the party and units of the Peshmerga should

disregard them. The Conference draws the attention of Mulla Mustafa to the fact that he must act according to party regulations and not undertake any individual actions in future, nor should he infringe party regulations. He should also submit to this resolution within one week and denounce all his previous acts and orders'.⁵²

This resolution was kept secret for a time, and when it was made public Mulla Mustafa's disfavour was extended to Talabani, who identified himself completely with Ahmad.

Attempts at mediation continued throughout May although both sides were gathering their forces. Eventually Mulla Mustafa accepted the Ahmad-Talabani group's participation in the talks which were to take place on 2 June between the Kurds and the Prime Minister, General Yahya.⁵³ During these negotiations both factions prepared for a final show-down. Thus at the beginning of the meeting Mulla Mustafa addressed the government's delegation saying, 'now sirs, you have to negotiate with the representatives of the people', pointing to the Ahmad-Talabani group. This set off a bitter dispute with Yahya, while Mulla Mustafa himself either remained silent or expressed the pro-government view throughout the talks. For its part, the KDP 'managed to reorganise itself and present a united front'.⁵⁴ As the Ahmad-Talabani group realised that they could not challenge Mulla Mustafa's power, they decided to discredit him in the eyes of the Kurds by presenting themselves as the most uncompromising defenders of Kurdish national rights.⁵⁵ Thus Mulla Mustafa was able to make the KDP leaders appear as the extremist faction of the

national movement and his expectation that this would increase the government's help to him in his hour of need was subsequently borne out.⁵⁶

In June 1964 Mulla Mustafa attempted to carry out the total liquidation of the Ahmad-Talabani group. He approached Ahmad through 'Abbas Mamend Agha, leader of the Ako tribe and one of his steadfast supporters and asked him to come to Rania, another of his headquarters, for further discussions. The object of this was to organise another general congress, since that of Mawat was 'illegal because the President and the majority of the Kurdish delegates were not present'.⁵⁷ On 14 June Ahmad and Mulla Mustafa

agreed to form a neutral preparatory committee which was to organise the proposed congress on 25 June.⁵⁸ At night Ahmad discovered that Mulla Mustafa had left Rania after forming a committee which included nobody from the Ahmad-Talabani group. He was sure that he had been brought to Rania to be arrested, returned secretly to Mawat,⁵⁹ and immediately ordered the publication, in a pamphlet, of the resolutions of the Mawat Sixth Congress. As the resolutions were made public, confusion prevailed within the KDP and the majority of the Peshmerga left the party to join Mulla Mustafa.⁶⁰ Even Ahmad's anti-Mulla Mustafa declaration to the Kurdish people, which was to be broadcast over the radio station of the Kurdish Revolt still under the control of the Politbureau was torn up by Nuri Shawiz, a member of the bureau.⁶¹ On 1 July Mulla Mustafa called for a repeat of the Sixth Congress of the KDP. His appeal was successful, and with the exception of the Ahmad-Talabani group, the majority of the Kurdish delegates arrived at

Qalat Diza. During this Congress, which was held between 1 and 9 July, the Ahmad-Talabani group sent three of their members to attend its sessions, but they were arrested by Mulla Mustafa's forces.⁶² Mulla Mustafa was re-elected President of the KDP and a new Central Committee formed.⁶³ The resolutions of the Qalat Diza Congress were divided into internal Policy and external Policy. With regard to internal policy, the Congress somewhat surprisingly stressed its rejection of the return of the civil administration to Kurdistan. It formed a Kurdish National Council for the Command of the Revolution, presided over by Mulla Mustafa, which included representatives from the KDP, the Peshmerga and the Kurdish tribes. This body was to assume supreme authority in the Revolt. By this move Mulla Mustafa managed to subordinate all Kurdish elements to himself. The 'second' Sixth Congress also decided to send a memorandum to the government asking for autonomy for Kurdistan. The Mawat Contress was condemned as illegal, and fourteen out of eighteen members of the old Central Committee were expelled.⁶⁴ In short the result of this 'second' Sixth Congress proved that Mulla Mustafa's main intention was to get rid of Ahmad and to subordinate the KDP to his own authority.⁶⁵

With regard to external policy, the resolutions ranged from Kurdish support of President Nasser, for his steps towards developing the UAR, to that of 'supporting the unity of the people of the two Germanys', and to support 'the struggle for liberation of the People of Palestine, Cyprus, South Africa, Cuba, Angola, and Oman'. It also 'congratulated' the

USSR and the USA on their 'fruitful co-operation in space matters'. These resolutions serve to illustrate the rather shaky ideology of the KDP's new leadership. On 10 July, the radio of the Kurdish Revolt in Mawat broadcast an appeal to the Kurdish Peshmerga inviting them to revolt against Mulla Mustafa and the new Central Committee.⁶⁶ The Ahmad-Talabani group ignored Mulla Mustafa's order to hand over the radio station, and on 16 July a force headed by Mulla Mustafa's son Idris forced the Ahmad-Talabani group with about 4000 of their supporters,⁶⁷ to cross the borders into Iran.⁶⁸ They refused to be disarmed by the Iranian authorities, and tried to return to Kurdistan; they were defeated again and recrossed into Iran where they were disarmed. The leaders of this group were sent to Hamadan and later to Tehran to live under Iranian government supervision.⁶⁹ Mulla Mustafa was quick to reorganise the KDP's leadership. In particular he made clever use of the old Communist Kurds who had deserted the ICP and joined the 1961 Revolt. These members, like Habib Karim, the new Secretary General, and Muhammad Mahmud, alias Sami, had broken with the ICP when it allied with Qasim and opposed the 1961 Revolt. They accepted Mulla Mustafa as the only national leader who could rally the Kurdish people, and had quickly split with the Ahmad-Talabani group. Due to the experience and effort of these people the KDP's activities, far from becoming paralysed, were greatly extended. The consolidation of Mulla Mustafa's position inside the Kurdish national movement did not stop at the point of ousting his opponents from the KDP. In October, he called a general conference, to which he

invited most of the Kurdish tribal leaders, the leaders of the Peshmerga, some leaders of the KDP, and a number of independent Kurdish personalities.⁷⁰ The meeting took place at Qalat Diza on 28 September and lasted for two days with about 350 representatives.⁷¹ The purpose of this was twofold; first, Mulla Mustafa wanted to discredit the Ahmad-Talabani group, and secondly he was anxious to 'constitution-
alise' the Revolt. Thus, the 'People's Conference', as it was called, was charged with the duty of 'drawing up the laws and regulations for the revolution of Iraqi Kurdistan'.⁷² These laws and regulations were laid down, and in fact were identical to those in force in the rest of Iraq.⁷³ The other important decision was to establish the 'Council for the Command of the Revolution of Iraqi Kurdistan'. The CCRIK was to become the supreme authority of the Revolt, and included the KDP's Politbureau, the leaders of the Peshmerga, and various tribal and religious leaders, most of whom were supporters of Mulla Mustafa. A move of great significance and importance was the inclusion in the CCRIK of two Lurs, two Christians and a Jew. Mulla Mustafa was elected the President of the Council, which put the KDP and the Peshmerga under his unquestioned authority.⁷⁴

The collapse of the second ceasefire and the third Kurdish war

It was obvious almost immediately that the 10 February Agreement was not a 'fundamental and lasting settlement', as both 'Arif and Mulla Mustafa hailed it. In fact a settlement was as far out of

reach as ever. Both parties were forced to sign the Agreement for reasons of political expediency, rather than from any basic belief in the democratic right of peoples to determine their own status. As soon as the Agreement was concluded, differences in approach were revealed which threatened the shaky peace in Kurdistan.

'Arif believed that what the Kurds needed was 'the reconstruction of the north'. Failing to appreciate the growing political consciousness of the Kurds however, he embarked upon achieving unity between Iraq and Egypt, although he rightly guessed that the Kurds' own domestic crises would hinder any combined opposition to this unity. The other card he could play was to attempt to use 'Islamic fraternity' as a possible basis for Kurdish-Arab relations in Iraq, and to leave the question of actual participation in the government as it had been before 1961.⁷⁵ Thus Islam was to be a substitute for Kurdish nationalism, and the Kurds were to rely on the government to grant their demands. In order to translate this idea into action, 'Arif continued to work towards the goal of Arab unity. On 28 March 1964, he announced the establishment of a new all-Iraq party, the Arab Socialist Union. Planned on the Egyptian model, the party was theoretically to 'include all factions; nationalists and Kurds'.⁷⁶ Needless to say, its main objective was to hasten Arab unity. Naturally the Kurds refused to join the ASU.⁷⁷

Again, Arab unity took precedence over the Kurdish question in the new Provisional Constitution, once more modelled on an Egyptian prototype, promulgated on 5 May. In this Constitution the Kurds were

mentioned rather vaguely in Article 19, which read, 'Iraqis are equal before the law in rights and duties, with no distinction of race, birth, language or religion. Citizens should co-operate to safeguard this land, which includes Arabs and Kurds, whose national rights within the Iraqi Republic this Constitution recognises'.⁷⁸ The first three articles were as follows:

1 - This Republic is a democratic, socialist state, drawing its democracy and socialism from the Arab heritage and the Islamic spirit. The Iraqi people form a part of the Arab nation; their objective is total Arab unity, which the government pledges itself to realise as soon as possible, starting with unity with the UAR (Egypt).

2 - The Iraqi Republic is a fully sovereign state; no part of its territory can be ceded.

3 - Islam is the official state religion and the principal base of the Constitution. Arabic is the official language'.⁷⁹

On 26 May 1965 'Arif and Nasser signed a Unity Convention, which aimed at achieving the total unity of Iraq and Egypt in a series of stages.⁸⁰ Nothing was said about the Kurds.

However, throughout 1964 'Arif's other objective was to reorganise the Army. Through the mediation of President Nasser, the Soviet Union agreed to supply Iraq again with arms and spare parts.⁸¹ The Kurdish question began to receive less attention, especially during the KDP split. Meanwhile, Mulla Mustafa's main concern was to subordinate the KDP, and in order to achieve this he was obliged to come to terms with 'Arif. He was by no means prepared to allow his

great prestige - already somewhat shaken by his acceptance of the February Agreement - to dwindle for lack of effort to preserve it.⁸²

Significantly, he became more militant after his successful anti-KDP 'coup'. After the 'second' or Qalat Diza Sixth Conference, the first official 'breach of law' registered against Mulla Mustafa's forces was on 17 August 1964, three weeks after they had pushed the Ahmad-Talabani group across the Iranian frontier.⁸³ But by the end of 1964 the state of affairs that had necessitated and brought about a ceasefire was over and hostilities were about to erupt at any moment. Mulla Mustafa began by protesting against the new Constitution which he regarded as a 'step backwards';⁸⁴ he also declared that Kurdish national rights were the most important part of the February Agreement, and that the government tackled matters wrongly by having neglected to set out these rights in the Constitution.⁸⁵ Apart from the strength he gained from having succeeded in dominating the KDP Mulla Mustafa also profited from the coming of winter, which rendered military operations difficult in Kurdistan. Thus in October he felt strong enough to submit his first memorandum to 'Arif, which was followed by a series of letters and demands. Most of these demands were familiar enough. They included the amendment of the Constitution to include the Kurds' right to autonomy, the inclusion of the oil fields of Kirkuk and Khanaqin in Kurdistan, the acceptance of Kurdish as an official language in Kurdistan, a proportional share of oil revenue, the retention for the time being of the Peshmerga forces, the appointment of a Kurdish Vice-President for the

Republic and wider Kurdish participation in the government.⁸⁶

In November 1964, Premier Yahya resigned and was asked to form yet another cabinet. In a letter 'Arif asked him to 'speed the reconstruction of the North of Iraq and the solution of all outstanding matters connected with this problem, ensuring, however, the preservation of national unity'. He also specified that the main tasks of the new cabinet should be the modernisation of the Army and the establishment of unity with Egypt.⁸⁷ This presidential order came at a time when relations between the Kurds and the government had deteriorated, and it is probable that by this time 'Arif could foresee another round of fighting in Kurdistan. As if to underline the fact that the Kurdish question was an internal matter, Colonel Subhi 'Abd al-Hamid, the new Minister of Interior, re-established contacts with Mulla Mustafa. In a letter in reply to the October memorandum, the minister blamed Mulla Mustafa's own faction for the 'peculiar situation in the north', and for the 'stagnation of the Kurdish question'. The minister held the Peshmerga 'responsible for the delay in reconstructing the north and in carrying out the remaining clauses of the 10 February Agreement'. The minister argued further that by lifting the economic blockade, issuing a general amnesty, specifically mentioning Kurdish national rights in the Constitution, reappointing and compensating most of the Kurds who had suffered because of the Revolt, and finally by beginning the reconstruction of the northern region, the government had fulfilled most, if not all of its promises. He told Mulla Mustafa that

'sending memoranda containing impossible demands and asking for 'Independence', (as he called autonomy) which was not mentioned in the February Agreement, would neither help to get the region back to normal life, nor help towards holding objective negotiations.' The minister's main charge against Mulla Mustafa, however, was that he had not disbanded the Peshmerga, 'as you bound yourself to do in your promise in the 10 February Agreement ... Ten months after the end of the fighting we find that you have not carried out your promise'.⁸⁸

Mulla Mustafa, on the other hand, totally rejected the idea of disbanding the Peshmerga. He told a correspondent that 'the Peshmerga were formed to answer a historic national need. They have become a great force to defend the Kurds' rights, and do not aim at aggression. Those who want the Peshmerga disbanded before the Kurds have obtained their aims and objectives are looking at the matter in a topsy-turvy fashion, like the man who puts the cart before the horse'.⁸⁹

Between October 1964 and March 1965 several letters and memoranda were exchanged between Mulla Mustafa and the government. All this was largely an effort to play for time while both parties were jockeying for position. Throughout the winter of 1964-65 the government took steps to reinforce its authority in Kurdistan, while the Kurds retaliated by re-occupying various remote areas.⁹⁰ While Mulla Mustafa was satisfied with the state of no war no peace, the army officers began to press President 'Arif to resume the war. Hence on 11 February 1965 the Minister of the Interior sent a final and determined letter to Mulla

Mustafa, ordering him to submit to the government. He refused the Kurds' two major demands: autonomy for Kurdistan and the retention of the Peshmerga forces.⁹¹ The letter also contained the explicit assertion that the government would take effective action to restore law and order in Kurdistan.⁹²

The third war was triggered off by the assassination by the Peshmerga of three army officers on their way to Baghdad for the Greater Bairam holiday. Their bus was looted, they were lynched, and their bodies burned.⁹³ On 3 April 1965 the Army launched a full-scale offensive against the Kurdish forces,⁹⁴ and the third war dragged on for a year without any party claiming a major victory. It was conducted in the same old way; the government attacked and occupied the towns and larger villages, while the Peshmerga retreated to the mountains using hit-and-run tactics. This time, however, the government suppressed all news of the war.⁹⁵ In the first place, it believed that the Kurdish question was essentially an internal matter on which its reputation could not be publicly questioned. However, this approach also left room for negotiations with the Kurds without any loss of face on the government side.

The resumption of the war had a stimulating and unifying effect upon the Kurds. It brought together the different factions of the Kurdish national movement under the leadership of Mulla Mustafa, who was 'now accepted as the leader of the revolution, since all other differences were subordinated to the task of defeating the Iraqi Army'.⁹⁶ The Peshmerga of the Ahmad-Talabani group, who had fled to Iran, asked for and received permission to join the fighting.⁹⁷

In September 1965 the first civilian Prime Minister since 1958, Dr al-Bazzaz, was appointed to the government, although this did not signify that the war was to be ended. The Army officers, headed by the President, 'Arif, and the new Minister of Defence, Major General 'Abd al-'Aziz al-'Uqaili, who had joined the Cabinet on the condition that the Kurdish war would be intensified,⁹⁸ still had the upper hand. In fulfilment of al-'Uqaili's conditions, the Army launched a surprise offensive during the winter of 1965-66, in an effort to deny the Kurds their normal winter breathing space. The offensive was a success and the Kurdish forces were forced to evacuate some important posts. These winter attacks were hailed as paving the way for the 'major and final offensive against Mulla Mustafa's headquarters', planned for April 1966. But before the Army could carry out this plan, President 'Arif died in his helicopter, caught in a sandstorm during a tour of southern Iraq. The war was brought to a confused halt while all attention was turned to Baghdad, where yet another struggle for power was taking place.

Footnotes

- 1 For details see Batatu (1978), pp 1003-1026.
- 2 The new regime was known as 'Thawra Tishrin', the November Revolution. To the Ba'thists it was 'Radda Tishrin al-Aswad', the Black November Setback.
- 3 'Arif became the C in C of the armed forces, and the President of the NCRC, in addition to being President of the Republic.
- 4 'The New York Times', 23rd November 1963.
- 5 Between 1958 and 1968 there were four distinct changes of regime in Iraq, as well as nine attempted coups and an unspecified number of foiled coups. Marr, P A, 'The Iraqi Revolution: A case study of Army Rule', Orbis, Vol 14 No 3, 1970, pp 715-16.
- 6 Kinnane put the number of officers as high as 70 and included a brigadier. See Kinnane (1964), p 80. However, those officers joined other Kurdish rank and file soldiers who had already deserted the Army with their arms in 1961 and after. The flow of deserters continued throughout the Revolt, mainly because of the weakness of successive governments, and the high rank they would acquire inside the Peshmerga. The Kurdish leadership always asserted that their main source of arms and supply was the Iraqi Army. See Mudhakhirat Akrad al-'Iraq li Mu'tamar al-Qima al-'Arabi al-Thalith (Memorandum of the Kurds of Iraq to the third Arab Summit American University of Beirut, al-Wathaiq al-Arabia, 1965, pp 620-22.
- 7 He feared that this force might try to aid the

ousted Ba'th Party, since this party was still in power in Syria.

- 8 Interview with 'Ali Salih al-Sa'di. If these allegations were true, it can also be assumed that as a quid pro quo Mulla Mustafa asked 'Arif to help suppress the KDP's influence, and that 'Arif, wishing to take advantage of the differences inside the Kurdish national movement, agreed. Later on 'Arif and Mulla Mustafa threatened to use force against any group threatening either of them. See the KDP's pamphlet 'Itifaqiat al-Mushir-Barzani, Sulh am Istislam?' (Field Marshal Barzani's agreement; is it peace or surrender?), 19 April 1964; Le Monde 13 June 1964; and O'Ballance (1973), p 118.
- 9 See al-Ghamrawi (1967), pp 379-88; al-Jarida newspaper 15 November 1966.
- 10 Interview with Fakhri.
- 11 Brigadier 'Abd al-Razzaq Mahmud.
- 12 See Le Monde 17 January 1964, and 13 February 1964.
- 13 Interview with Habib Karim, the Secretary General of the KDP. Also al-Wathaiq al-Arabia 1965, pp 620-22. President Nasser also declared, in a move to lessen Arab nationalist opposition to a possible agreement with the Kurds, that 'peace with the Kurds would strengthen Arab union', Le Monde 14 February 1964. Yet President Nasser, in a move designed to show the Kurds that the Iraq government was not negotiating from a weak position, dispatched a mission of the Egyptian Air Force to Baghdad. Le Monde, *ibid.*

- 14 al-Durra (1966), pp 351-53; Itifaqiat al-Mushir-Barzani
- 15 Le Monde, 12 February 1964.
- 16 See Le Monde 3 March 1964; Itifaqiat al-Mushir-Barzani . . .; and Serge Gantner 'Le mouvement national Kurde', Orient No 32-33, 4^e trim. 1964-1965, pp 95-111. See also Vanly (1970), pp 219-220.
- 17 Le Monde 13 June 1964.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 See Talabani (1971), pp 264-68, Adamson's interview with Ahmad in the Sunday Telegraph 29 December 1962.
- 20 Interview with Ahmad. Ahmad justified this by claiming that as Mulla Mustafa was living in the USSR, the KDP's leadership did not want to give Nuri al-Sa'id the excuse that the party had links with the Communist bloc.
- 21 Talabani was also a law graduate. See Talabani p 171 for his first mission to Syria in 1957.
- 22 He became a member of the Politbureau in 1957-58. After the July Revolution he became the editor of Kurdistan, a Kurdish newspaper which became a standby for the KDP's organ Khabat.
- 23 He was of tribal origin, from a wealthy family of Koi-Sanjaq.
- 24 Schmidt (1964), p 124.
- 25 See Chapter 2, section 2 above.
- 26 See pp 80-81 above.
- 27 Badinan is that part of Kurdistan in the Mosul province lying north and west of the Great Zab river. See map p
- 28 In fact during the fighting, visitors to

- Kurdistan were always aware of Mulla Mustafa's dissatisfaction with what he used to term 'the Mawat Empire'. He accused the KDP leaders of laziness and of paying more attention to party conferences than to the national struggle. See al-Nur newspaper 26 August 1969, Adamson (1964), passim. The Sunday Telegraph 29 December 1962.
- 29 By then Talabani referred to Mulla Mustafa as 'just one man in a national movement'. The Observer 5 January 1964.
- 30 The KDP accused Mulla Mustafa of forcing Talabani to submit impossible demands to the Iraqi government in 1963. See al-Masala al-Kurdia (1969), p.51. If this was true, then Mulla Mustafa was clearly trying to force a confrontation between the KDP and the government representing them as the extremist wing of the Kurdish national movement.
- 31 Interview with Fakhri.
- 32 They were in Europe. Schmidt (1964), p 124.
- 33 In his letter Mulla Mustafa spoke about 'The Kurdish Region', while 'Arif referred to the Kurdish people as 'our brothers the Kurds', and to 'Kurdistan' as 'the North of Iraq'.
- 34 Itifaqiat al-Mushir-Barzani. See also 'Arif's interview with Le Monde 13 June 1964. Mulla Mustafa's declaration that he had no objection to 'Arif's idea of abolishing political parties 'as long as it serves Iraq's interests', tended to confirm the KDP's suspicions. See Le Monde 3 March 1964.
- 35 They complained that Mulla Mustafa used to put the issue of compensation high on his list of

demands from any government, and were astonished at his neglect of this matter when he signed the February Agreement.

- 36 Itifaqiat al-Mushir Barzani
- 37 Fakhri's lecture on the Kurdish question in Iraq given at Oxford 14 November 1975.
- 38 Vanly (1970), pp 222-23.
- 39 Interview with Ahmad.
- 40 Ahmad explained that he and his group did not want Mulla Mustafa to come to Mawat; the KDP leaders probably feared that Mulla Mustafa's presence might influence the remaining loyalists. Interview with Ahmad.
- 41 Itifaqiat al-Mushir Barzani
- 42 During the dispute with Mulla Mustafa, the party's activities were completely paralysed. Interview with Ahmad.
- 43 Itifaqiat al-Mushir Barzani ...; Interview with Ahmad.
- 44 Itifaqiat al-Mushir Barzani ..., Vanly (1970), p 220.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 He also claimed that he had been pressed by foreign powers to accept the ceasefire. He would not, however, give the names of these powers. See Itifaqiat al-Mushir Barzani Later on he declared that the foreign powers were the Americans, the Russians, and Nasser. al-Nur, 17 February 1969. Interview with H Karim. It is hard to believe, however, that such pressure did exist, Mulla Mustafa's main aim was to get rid of Ahmad and his group.
- 47 Interview with Ahmad. When al-Yusufi, a member

of the Central Committee, tried to mediate by saying that Ahmad did not mean to insult Mulla Mustafa, but was simply reminding him of the regulations, Mulla Mustafa told Yusufi 'you are lying, and Ahmad means what he says, for he is the one who wrote the regulations'. Ibid.

- 48 Kinnane (1964), p 83. Since Talabani was expected to replace Ahmad, the latter's move was not to be regarded as a complete retreat. Ahmad might have intended to exercise his power through Talabani.
- 49 Interview with Karim.
- 50 Kinnane (1964), p 83.
- 51 Vanly (1970), pp 221-222.
- 52 Itifaqiat al-Mushir Barzani.
- 53 Interview with Ahmad. The KDP delegation consisted of Ahmad, Talabani, 'Ali 'Abdullah, and al-Yusufi. Mulla Mustafa also invited tribal leaders to these talks. See Le Monde 8 July 1964, for details of these conversations.
- 54 Interview with Ahmad.
- 55 Le Monde 8 July 1964.
- 56 During the negotiations the government delegation was angered by the rigid position of the KDP leaders; their stand was described as 'chauvinistic'. Interview with H. Khammas. In the beginning of the talks, Ahmad asked about the precise definition of the term 'administrative autonomy which assures the Kurdish control in the economic, social and cultural fields in Iraqi Kurdistan'. 'The North of Iraq', replied Premier Yahya, 'cannot be designated by the name Kurdistan without opening the way to secession'. Ahmad remarked

that 'Iran has officially used the word Kurdistan without impairing the unity of the Persian state ... Moreover, this is a fundamental issue, rather than a polemical one, on which the future of the Kurds in Iraq depends'. Ahmad also remarked that 'autonomy for Kurdistan should be carried out by a democratic regime, authorising the Kurds to have an elected legislative council, and a powerful executive council, distinct from that of Baghdad'. To this an Iraqi official remarked that 'the Kurds want all the advantages of independence without the inconveniences'. In the end Yahya suggested that this question should be postponed until the election of a parliament within three years.

No agreement was reached over the dissolution of the KDP (which the government wanted to merge into the Arab Socialist Union), or over the State Party, or over the dissolution of the Peshmerga. There was a similar disagreement over the question of extraditing the Iraqi Communists and supporters of Qasim who had sought asylum in Kurdistan after February 1963. Talabani counter-proposed that the government should declare a general amnesty. The Iraqi officials declined on the grounds that such an amnesty would revive 'seditious Communist and Ba'thist activities'. In other words, the Ahmad-Talabani group not only denounced Mulla Mustafa's previous agreement with 'Arif and his leadership, but also put forward their own terms as a possible solution to the Kurdish question. See *Le Monde* 8 July 1964.

57 The KDP's declaration of July 1964 (resolution

- of the VI Congress).
- 58 Interview with Ahmad, also Gantner (1964-5).
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Interview with Fakhri.
- 61 Interview with Ahmad.
- 62 They were 'Ali Hamdi, 'Ali 'Abdullah and 'Aziz Shamzini. Hamdi was killed, Shamzini was handed over to his father who was living in Iran, and 'Abdullah was released shortly afterwards. Interview with Ahmad and Karim.
- 63 Habib Mohammad Karim was elected Secretary General, and Dr Mahmud 'Uthman, Mustafa al-Qaradaghi, Hashim Aqrawi, 'Aziz Aqrawi, Ali Sanjari, Ramadhan Aqrawi, Ismail 'Arif, Akid Sidiq, Numan 'Issa, Dr Fu'ad Jalal, Yadullah Karim, Baba Tahir Shaikh Jalal, Shaikh Mohammad Harsin, Mohammad 'Ali Amin, Salih al-Yusufi, Isma'il Mulla 'Aziz, and 'Umar Sharif, were the members of the Central Committee. Interview with Karim; Vanly (1970), p 231.
- 64 Following the resumption of war in April 1965, Mulla Mustafa's faction claimed that the dissidents were only seven members of the old Central Committee, the rest having returned to the party. See Khabat No 495, March 1967. Mulla Mustafa also dissolved the Peasant Committees and the Kurdish military academy.
- 65 The KDP's declaration of July 1965 (resolutions of the VI Congress).
- 66 Vanly (1970), p 223.
- 67 See Vanly (1970), p 223.
- 68 Twelve people were killed, eight from the Barzani tribe. Vanly, Ibid. Ahmad claimed that his group

- did not fight Mulla Mustafa's forces. 'Had they fought they would have achieved a conciliation rather than expulsion'. Interview with Ahmad.
- 69 Vanly (1970), p 224. Most of the support for the Ahmad-Talabani group during the dispute came from Kurdish students in Europe. Seeing the regime of 'Arif co-operating with Mulla Mustafa, the Iranian government tried to help the Ahmad-Talabani group. See O'Ballance (1973), p 120.
- 70 Vanly (1970), pp 231-232.
- 71 Ibid.
- 72 See Dastur Majlis Qiyadat al-Thawra li Kurdistan al-Iraq.
- 73 A taxation system was also introduced. Ibid.
- 74 Vanly (1970), p 231.
- 75 al-Hukuma al-Watania wa Mushkilat al-Shimal, Baghdad 1965, p 52.
- 76 Khadduri (1969), p 224. Le Monde 28 March 1964.
- 77 For the KDP's justification of their refusal to join the ASU, see Radd al-Hizb al-Dimokrati al-Kurdistani: fi al-Afkar al-Warida Hawl al-Qadia al-Kurdia (Reply of the KDP: concerning current thinking on the Kurdish question), Khabat Publication, July 1965.
- 78 al-Shawi M, al-Qanun al-Disturi fi al-'Iraq, Baghdad 1966, p 261. Vanly (1970), p 258.
- 79 al-Shawri (1966), p 261.
- 80 Khadduri (1969), p 224, pp 229-30.
- 81 The Economist 23 May 1964, and 13 June 1964. Nasser also sent more troops to Iraq which were stationed in Baghdad. Marr (1970) p 729.
- 82 Mulla Mustafa's prestige was shaken even more when he signed a document called 'Clarification

- of the Kurdish national rights', in which he accepted the new constitution. See al-Hukuma al-Watania... p 44.
- 83 Ibid, p 27; Le Monde 7 July 1964.
- 84 The New York Times 24 January 1965.
- 85 Khabat Nos. 476 and 477.
- 86 al-Hukuma al-Watania ... pp 35-41 and 56-63.
- 87 The Times 16 November 1964. al-Hukuma al-Watania ... p 45.
- 88 al-Hukuma al-Watania ... pp 46-49; Khabat No 477.
- 89 Interview with Mulla Mustafa in Khabat No 476.
- 90 The incident that caused complications was the detention of fifteen Peshmerga while passing through Mosul with their arms. A Peshmerga commander, 'Issa Swar, retaliated by attacking the Iraqi post of al-Sindi. See Vanly (1970), p 257; Le Monde 18-19 October 1964.
- 91 al-Hukuma al-Watania., ibid.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Ibid, p 49. Interview with Karim, who explained the incident away as the 'emotional over-reaction of a local commander'.
- 94 O'Ballance (1973), p 125.
- 95 Following the Egyptian example in the Yemen.
- 96 The Daily Telegraph 4 May 1965.
- 97 Ahmad himself was not allowed to return from Iran. Talabani, 'Ali 'Askari and Hilmi Sharif were put under arrest by Barzani as soon as they crossed the frontier. They escaped in January 1966. Kutschera (1980), p 251 (quoting Vanly (1970), p 224, and p 258.
- 98 See Khadduri (1969), p 266.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Kurds under the regime of 'Abd al-Rahman
'Arif: April 1966 to July 19681 - Civilian-military rivalry and the election of
President 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif

The sudden death of President 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif paved the way for a struggle between the generally more 'moderate' civilian element and the military faction inside the government. Although weak and disorganised, the civilians began to gain support and to exert more influence because of the officers' poor performance in general, and especially in their handling of the Kurdish problem. The civilian challenge to the military had become more effective under 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, and was indeed sometimes encouraged by him. His position within the Army was secure, and this had enabled him to take a wider view; he gradually became aware of the need for a return to civilian rule and of the dangers of living in a state of continuous war. At first he attempted to counter military influence by giving more power to civilians. On 6 September 1965, he removed Premier Yahya and appointed the Nasserist Air Vice-Marshal 'Arif 'Abd al-Razzaq in his place,¹ but he also appointed a civilian, 'Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, as Deputy Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs,² and it was to al-Bazzaz that 'Arif had delegated the task of selecting the other members of the cabinet. al-Bazzaz selected an overwhelmingly civilian

Cabinet and the Premier and his fellow officers were left in a minority.³ 'Arif's other pro-civilian move had been the formation, on 9 September, of the National Defence Council composed of civilians and officers, to replace the NCRC, a body entirely composed of officers, which had been the supreme authority in the country.⁴

Gradually al-Bazzaz began to assert his authority, and as expected, the Kurdish question and its peaceful solution came high on the agenda. Indeed it was said that he had refused to take over until he felt sure he had a solution.⁵ Immediately after the formation of the new Cabinet, the Provisional Constitution was amended. Two major changes reflecting al-Bazzaz' influence may be mentioned. First, the clause dealing with Kurdish rights was clarified, which now read:

'Iraqis are equal, in their duties and rights, without distinction of race, language, religion or any other reason. This constitution recognises the national rights of the Kurds within the Iraqi people in a national and brotherly union'.⁶

The second amendment authorized the NDC to call the whole Cabinet to joint meetings to discuss or decide on all important matters,⁷ which effectively guaranteed a civilian majority inside the supreme decision-making body. al-Bazzaz' influence became even greater when he took over from 'Abd al-Razzaq who had attempted a coup only ten days after his appointment.⁸

In the programme of his first Cabinet, al-Bazzaz promised to try to restore peace to all parts of Iraq and to 'safeguard the unity of its territory'.

The programme also added that the government 'recognises the national rights of our brother Kurds - the rights for which the temporary constitution was amended - it sincerely desires to work according to the provisions of the constitution ... The new administrative law will affirm the reality of Kurdish nationalism and will enable our citizens in the north fully to preserve their language and cultural heritage. It will also enable them to carry on local activities which do not conflict with the unity of the country and in no way paves the way for the loss of any part of our homeland'.⁹

However, al-Bazzaz' appointment should not be regarded as an outright victory for the civilian faction, particularly because the officers had shown their mettle in successfully foiling 'Abd al-Razzaq. Hence Major General 'Abd al-'Aziz al-'Uqaili became the new Minister of Defence, alongside al-Bazzaz and his civilian majority. In contrast to al-Bazzaz, al-'Uqaili was well known for his extreme attitudes towards the Kurdish question in general and Mulla Mustafa in particular,¹⁰ and he eventually managed to win 'Arif over to his plan to intensify the war against Mulla Mustafa. Thus 'Arif gave the go-ahead for the winter offensive at the end of 1965.¹¹

Amid this mounting militarism al-Bazzaz' disposition towards peace and declarations in its favour gained him popular support but no really influential backing. However, he seems to have foreseen the probable failure of the military solution and put out feelers towards Mulla Mustafa.¹² Although the latter's response was encouraging,¹³ these moves could not

halt the Army's offensive. The presence of al-'Uqaili and al-Bazzaz thus completely polarized the Cabinet and although outright confrontation was avoided while 'Arif was still alive, his death in April 1966 served to bring this about. For al-Bazzaz it meant the loss of his strongest supporter, while the officers seized the opportunity to reimpose their influence. Their new-found power was demonstrated in the election of a new president; they overruled the civilians, despite the civilian majority in the NDC, and brought General 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif, the elder brother of the former president, to power. 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif had been acting Chief General of Staff, and a member of the National Defence Council. Politically he seems to have been almost without ambitions, and had never been regarded as a danger by any of the previous Republican regimes. Even when his younger brother 'Abd al-Salam was under arrest or close observation by the security service, he remained unmolested. He was elected President on 17 April, al-Bazzaz retaining his Premiership. Realizing that he did not have sufficient support amongst the military, al-Bazzaz had thrown his weight behind the weaker military candidate¹⁴ in order to preserve greater freedom of action.

The 'civilian' approach and the June 29th Declaration

Political power now began to oscillate between the military and civilian wings of the government. The military regarded the election of an officer to the top of the hierarchy as a victory for them while the civilians felt similarly about the retention of al-Bazzaz. Although 'moderate', the new President was

beholden to his military sponsors, and had to keep in step with them. For his part al-Bazzaz failed to appreciate the realities of the situation and became more and more outspoken, especially after the resignation of al-'Uqaili.¹⁵ At all events, both President and Prime Minister were keen to solve the Kurdish question in order to strengthen their own positions. In order to gain public support, Mulla Mustafa had announced a one month ceasefire 'in order to give the new government the time needed to ponder upon the Kurds' demands'.¹⁶ However, differences arose between 'Arif and al-Bazzaz as to how the problem should be solved. al-Bazzaz wanted a reconciliation with the Kurds, but 'Arif was undecided. Given his military background, and the way in which he had been elected, 'Arif was more likely to concede to the officers' pressure. In his first press conference on 18 April 1966 he asked the Kurds to 'co-operate with their brothers the Arabs to maintain Iraqi unity and security, and to raise the standard of living of all the people'.¹⁷ He also promised that the Kurds would be given a sort of 'local rule'.¹⁸ al-Bazzaz always believed that the Kurds were a different people who possessed all the elements of a nation, and that Iraq consisted of different nationalities,¹⁹ and now felt freer to express these ideas publicly. In his first press conference, al-Bazzaz was more precise, frank and articulate than the President. 'The Kurdish question', he said, 'amounts to the question of whether the integrity and unity of Iraqi territory should be maintained or not'.²⁰ He assured the Kurds that his government regarded them as people of a distinct nationality, of which they had a right to be proud, and believed that they

should also be free to maintain their own language and culture. 'These rights, together with the freedom to deal with local issues [such as health and social affairs], will be guaranteed in the 'Law for the Provinces' which the government is considering'. He also maintained that when a peace settlement was concluded his government would embark upon a comprehensive programme of reconstruction. Finally, al-Bazzaz declared that he was not prepared to accept 'separation or any step towards it'.²¹ Although he continually stressed his intention to seek a peaceful solution, he warned the Kurds that his appeals were not made from a position of weakness; 'the brave Iraqi Army is ready, as it always has been, to maintain the integrity of our homeland'.²² This statement was made partly to flatter the Army and to acknowledge the military opposition, and partly in response to expressions of dissatisfaction with his moves. The officers, who had always thought that a victory over the Kurds was possible, responded with determination; they brought pressure to bear on President 'Arif to continue the war and warned him against pursuing al-Bazzaz' policy. Only three days after al-Bazzaz' press conference, the President declared, 'no autonomy will ever be granted to the Kurds ... We shall not bargain over our country ... The government has never envisaged negotiations with rebels. It will not countenance a ceasefire.'²³ In the meantime, the Army was given the go-ahead by its Commander in Chief 'Arif himself, for the last stage of the 'Spring Expedition'. For the time being, al-Bazzaz had to accept this, but perhaps his acceptance was a tactical move against the Army leaders. He foresaw that

any conventional operation aiming to crush Mulla Mustafa's influence completely would be a failure, and prepared for his final showdown with the military, as any military debacle would certainly give al-Bazzaz and his 'civilians' a freer hand. Even if the Army did manage to weaken the Kurdish Revolt, al-Bazzaz' position would still be strengthened, since negotiations would inevitably follow.

The final and most important stage of the 'Spring Expedition' was operation 'Tawakkalna 'ala Allah' ('We depend upon God'). As planned by 'Uqaili, the operation aimed at occupying the Hamilton Road, which runs from the Rowanduz to the Iraqi-Iranian frontier. Spread out along the last thirty miles of this road were all the KDP headquarters and institutions, as well as Mulla Mustafa's own headquarters. The Army leaders estimated that this 'final' operation would take one month to complete, since its preparatory stages had been already commenced in the course of the previous winter. The operation began on the night of 2-3 May, but three weeks later the Army was heavily defeated by some 1700 Peshmerga, near Mount Hindarin, north-east of Rowanduz.²⁴

This battle, in which several hundred government troops were killed, was a turning point in Kurdish-government relations, as well as in the military-civilian struggle in Baghdad. Now stronger than ever, al-Bazzaz quickly asserted his desire for peace. As soon as he heard of the defeat he ignored the Army completely and re-established contact with Mulla Mustafa through another popular delegation²⁵ whose primary objective was to meet Mulla Mustafa and to persuade a Kurdish delegation to come to Baghdad. At

the same time, in order to counteract any exaggerated demands by the Kurds on the strength of their victory he initiated another round of talks with the Ahmad-Talabani group,²⁶ presumably to show Mulla Mustafa that he was not the only representative of the Kurdish people.

Naturally, al-Bazzaz knew that the negotiations with the Kurds could not be kept secret. Thus he appeared on television on 15 June to declare his readiness to recognise 'Kurdish nationalism and the Kurds' national rights'. He maintained that his government had already prepared a comprehensive solution to settle the Kurdish question. He admitted that his drive for peace was opposed by a number of Iraqis, and by elements in the rest of the Arab world who accused him of pursuing a weak and faceless policy. He denied these charges and asserted that the Kurdish question could only be solved peacefully, 'by giving the Kurds their full national rights'. He argued that the war against the Kurds, apart from its general undesirability, was only in the interests of 'the people on the other side of our borders (i.e. Iran) who have designs on our country's land, wealth and waters'. He affirmed that the crux of the problem was the 'lack of confidence that exists between the Kurds and their legal government'.²⁷ Finally he revealed in passing his previous contacts with the Kurds during the days of the younger 'Arif and gave an assurance that his government was nearer to a final settlement than ever before. He did not say whether President 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif was in favour of these moves or not, but after the Army had so evidently failed, 'Arif could do little else but take al-Bazzaz' side.

The television interview was in some sense a test of the Army's reaction. al-Bazzaz' only mention of the Army was at the end, when he praised it 'for doing its duty in preserving the country's unity ... on this Army will fall the duty of reconstructing the Kurdish areas in peace-time'. In fact the demoralized Army leaders did not respond to the Prime Minister's challenge. Presumably they knew little if anything about the progress of the negotiations with the Kurds and had little idea of how far al-Bazzaz was prepared to give in to them. Moreover, they needed another ceasefire to reorganise their forces.

The talks between the government delegation, led by al-Bazzaz, and the Kurds, led by Habib Karim the Secretary-General of the KDP,²⁸ lasted for seventeen days. Both Mulla Mustafa and al-Bazzaz feared that the Army would embark on another offensive to restore its morale and reputation, and were equally keen to take advantage of the situation to reach a settlement.²⁹ Another factor encouraging a speedy settlement was the growing Iranian threat to Iraq. Ever since al-Bazzaz had come to office his attention had been devoted to what he termed 'the Iranian threat to Iraq's borders and waters'.³⁰ As part of a policy to force a rearrangement of its borders with Iraq, Iran had long given encouragement and practical support to Mulla Mustafa's Revolt.³¹ In an attempt to counter-act this interference, al-Bazzaz began to stress the common interests of the Arabs and Kurds. From this standpoint he saw no harm in recognising the Kurds as a national entity within Iraq. Thus giving in to the Kurds was not a national loss; 'it would be a national loss to give in to Iran's growing designs

on the Shatt al-'Arab'.³² To woo the Kurds, al-Bazzaz promised that he would endeavour to build a democratic Iraq in which they would have their proportional share.

Thus on 29 June 1966 al-Bazzaz appeared on Baghdad Radio and Television to announce the agreement that had been reached. This agreement, known as the '29 June Declaration',³³ was a turning point in Kurdish affairs in Iraq. It included fifteen clauses, of which three were secret. As he had promised, al-Bazzaz recognised the national rights of the Kurds explicitly; the document states that 'the Iraqi home-land includes two main nationalities, Arabs and Kurds'.³⁴ He also promised to clarify these rights in the permanent constitution when it was promulgated.³⁵ This was the first time that any government had recognised the bi-national character of the Iraq state, and did not make an attempt to assimilate the Kurds under some vague Arab-Iraqi banner. The Declaration also promised the Kurds decentralization to give them freedom to deal with their own affairs; Kurdish provinces, districts and sub-districts were to have a recognised corporate personality, and free elections for the administrative councils were also promised (Article 2).

The June Declaration also paid special attention to Kurdish language and culture. Kurdish was to be regarded as an official language and was to be used as the medium of instruction in schools in the Kurdish areas together with Arabic (Article 3). The University of Baghdad was to give special attention to the study of the Kurdish language, its literature and ideological and historical traditions; a university was to be

opened in Kurdistan when funds were available (Article 6). The Kurds were also promised 'their own political and literary press in the Kurdish region', in Arabic, Kurdish, or both, 'according to the wishes of the people concerned' (Article 8). The other area of special concern in the Declaration was the restoration of democracy and a parliamentary system of government in Iraq (Articles 4 and 8); the government pledged to hold elections 'within the period stipulated in the Provisional Constitution',³⁶ in one year's time. In consequence, the Declaration maintained, 'the parliamentary system will be accompanied by the establishment of certain political parties and organisations'. (Article 8). Coming from a person like al-Bazzaz, the Kurds found it difficult to dismiss the promise of restoring democracy as a mere talk, for he himself clearly desired to return Iraq to civilian rule.

Equally important was the issue of equality between Kurds and Arabs in all spheres in Iraq, 'in grants, ministries, public departments, and in the diplomatic and military services'. The Declaration also undertook to appoint only Kurds to posts in the Kurdish regions, 'as long as the number required is available' (Article 5). Articles 9 and 10 discussed the stabilization of the region after the end of violence, which was itself seen as the basic prerequisite for the declaration of a general amnesty and the reinstatement of all dismissed Kurdish employees, workers and soldiers into their old posts or units. The dissolution of the pro-government Kurdish irregular units, the Fursan, would also depend on the re-establishment of peace in the region.

In Article 11 the government pledged to spend funds 'now being spent on military activities and unnecessary actions, on the reconstruction of the north', in addition to the money the government had already allocated to carry out the economic development of the region. This article also spoke about the creation of institutions and departments to deal with the development and improvement of the Kurdish region. Finally the government promised to compensate all those who had suffered damages, and to resettle Kurds who had been evacuated back in their own regions. In the other three secret clauses the government agreed to the long-standing Kurdish demand for the creation of a new all-Kurdish province out of the Mosul province (Dohuk).³⁷ In the second secret clause the government promised to allow the KDP to operate publicly 'as soon as elections have taken place and parliament is formed'. Finally the government was to declare a 'step-by-step general amnesty'.³⁸ Another gentleman's agreement gave the KDP the right to publish a daily newspaper in Baghdad, partly as a quid pro quo for the termination of the Kurdish Revolt's radio service.³⁹

The growth in the strength of the Kurdish national movement

The immediate result of the June Declaration was peace in Kurdistan, with Mulla Mustafa having the upper hand. Thus the announcement of this Declaration was very much against the wishes of the military. Apart from their feeling of humiliation, the latter felt that they were being defied, and that they were losing ground to the civilians. In their eyes, the Kurdish question had become a matter of honour, and

al-Bazzaz had failed to take this fact into consideration. For his part al-Bazzaz became increasingly confident, and began to criticise the military in public.⁴⁰ He further antagonized the officers, especially the survivors of the original Free Officers Movement, by his conservative attitudes,⁴¹ especially his attempts to 'rehabilitate' the old landed classes; he also sought 'to liberate trade, especially imports'.⁴² Ultimately, he failed to recognise the fact that 'although demoralized, the Army was the only power that could protect the government, and that he was himself indebted to an officer, the late 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, for his own office'.⁴³ In fact he paid little attention to the power the officers still had and to the influence they could exert on the President, who was himself an officer. He himself had no political machinery apart from his Cabinet, whose resolutions naturally depended on Presidential approval.

On 30 June 1966, the day after the announcement of the June Declaration, there was a second attempt to overthrow the regime, again by Air Vice Marshal 'Arif 'Abd al-Razzaq. Although he had the support of a number of military units, 'Abd al-Razzaq's coup was foiled the same day.⁴⁴ His ambitions undoubtedly predated the Declaration, but he exploited the wave of discontent in the Army aroused by al-Bazzaz' policy for his own ends. The fact that he depended on forces stationed in the north who were actively participating in the war against the Kurds tends to support this view. Nevertheless al-Bazzaz once more took advantage of this unsuccessful attempt, which he wrongly regarded as the military's final attempt at a show-

down, and increased his attacks on the officers.⁴⁵ He thought that the indifference which greeted 'Abd al-Razzaq's bid for power indicated that the country had grown tired of military coups, and took this as a clear sign of support for his policy. He failed to appreciate that 'public opinion could scarcely have influenced the outcome of the military operation, and had 'Abd al-Razzaq succeeded, he would have replaced 'Arif, with or without public approval'. On the other hand, the swiftness with which loyal troops, under the leadership of 'Arif himself crushed 'Abd al-Razzaq's attempt, restored the officers' morale and confidence, and boosted that of the President.⁴⁶ The military's subsequent move was to exploit 'Arif's military background, in order to 'revenge' themselves on al-Bazzaz.

In July, while al-Bazzaz was on a state visit to the USSR, the officers' lobby became more active, and brought pressure to bear on the President to dismiss him. When he returned he found 'Arif reluctant to endorse Cabinet resolutions. In answer to al-Bazzaz' complaints, 'Arif hinted at the desirability of a Cabinet reshuffle; and in such circumstances, before he could implement any of the June Declaration, al-Bazzaz tendered his resignation. He was replaced by another army officer, Major General Najib Talib, a member of the original Free Officers Movement. No sooner was al-Bazzaz removed than the Kurdish question began to get less and less attention, since Talib represented the Officers' viewpoint. He also believed that the Kurdish problem was a regional rather than an Iraqi question, and that Mulla Mustafa who spoke in the name of Kurdish nationalism, did

not represent all the Kurds. It followed that Talib was not prepared to recognise the June Declaration as a solution to the question, and in fact he accepted it only with the greatest reluctance after two weeks' silence.⁴⁷

Despite the President's instructions on this matter in his letter of appointment, and warnings from the Kurds against submitting to the officers' will,⁴⁸

Talib made no mention of actually implementing the Declaration. Indeed, apart from vague promises of a general amnesty and of rehabilitating the north,⁴⁹ his government did nothing constructive whatever in this direction. Instead of turning to the Kurds to find a modus vivendi, Talib turned to the officers, seeking their advice 'on the country's outstanding problems'.⁵⁰ Needless to say, most, if not all, of these officers considered that Iraq's internal and financial difficulties were caused by the Kurdish war, and by the government's indecision towards Mulla Mustafa.⁵¹ However, despite the advice of some hardliners to resume the war, Talib was well aware of the Army's state of disorganisation and refrained from doing so. However, he was also anxious not to give Mulla Mustafa's forces any breathing space, and to this end set about liquidating the Kurdish Revolt from within by cultivating existing deep inter-factional differences. Thus his government sponsored the Ahmad-Talabani group, which was already armed and subsidized by the state,⁵² and encouraged it and the Fursan forces, to attack the Peshmerga positions.⁵³ Thus the war between the government and the Kurds was replaced by Kurdish inter-factional fighting.

Nevertheless, the gap between Mulla Mustafa's forces and those of his rivals was very wide, since they failed to present any real threat to Mulla Mustafa's position. In any case, at this stage it seemed that President 'Arif himself had other ideas on possible solutions to the Kurdish problem. He was more keen than Talib to win Mulla Mustafa's support because he feared that tension in Kurdistan or a new offensive against the Kurds would backfire on the regime itself, providing ambitious officers with an excuse to conspire against it. Despite opposition from his military colleagues, 'Arif decided to take the initiative and visit Kurdistan on 26 October. The visit included a meeting with Mulla Mustafa, the first and last made by an Iraqi head of state. Apart from indicating the existence of a division between the President and the officers, the visit also gave a major psychological boost to the Kurdish national movement in general, and to Mulla Mustafa's position in particular. In fact most, if not all, the KDP's declarations after 'Arif's visit stressed the importance of Mulla Mustafa's role in Iraqi politics, and the great influence of the Kurdish national movement and Revolt in Iraq.⁵⁴ During their meeting, 'Arif reaffirmed his adherence to the June Declaration, while Mulla Mustafa complained of the government's reluctance to implement it. The two leaders also reached a verbal agreement to pursue negotiations in order to carry out the Declaration.⁵⁵ The President also promised to disband the pro-government Fursan forces, and pledged himself to facilitate the return to their villages of the Kurdish tribes that had been evacuated. The Kurds were also promised a better share

in Iraqi political life.⁵⁶

Of course, as could have been foreseen, the President's promises proved futile, since he had neither power nor influence over the officers, and as a result of the government's obvious ineffectiveness, Mulla Mustafa's position became considerably strengthened. Thus he called for the 7th KDP Congress to take place at Galala in November, where the regime was roundly criticised for 'its failure to implement the June Declaration'.⁵⁷ The Conference also declared that 'although the Declaration, with its secret clauses, contained less than what the Kurds were aiming at, the Kurds accepted it as the minimum necessary to pave the way for their final objective, autonomy'.⁵⁸ Mulla Mustafa was asked to present a memorandum to the President and Prime Minister, complaining that the government had failed to take any of the steps which should logically have followed the announcement of the June Declaration, such as a ceasefire, provincial law, or a general amnesty. The memorandum claimed that for their part the Kurds had honoured all their promises, such as releasing prisoners, stopping radio transmissions, and re-opening all public roads. The memorandum also declared that the Kurds had

'accepted the June Declaration only to give well-intentioned people inside the government the time they needed to reflect upon the Kurds' objective, autonomy ... But it seems that there exist some malicious people in high places within the government who hate to see peaceful and normal relations in Iraq between the Kurds and Arabs'.⁵⁹

The reference to 'well-intentioned' people was clearly

to al-Bazzaz and the President, while 'malicious people' meant Talib and the other officers. Finally Mulla Mustafa asked President 'Arif to form a 'joint committee' which enjoyed real power to implement the June Declaration. Again 'Arif was unable to press the officers to honour the Declaration.

In spite of the Army's evident opposition, contacts between Mulla Mustafa's faction and the government continued. 'Arif maintained his own personal policy of pacifying the Kurds. As time passed he grew more aware of the virtual impossibility of any future military victory, particularly after failing to persuade the Shah to seal the borders and stop assisting the Kurds in the course of a visit to Teheran in March 1967.⁶⁰ In his turn, Mulla Mustafa took advantage of the President's difficulties and his conciliatory attitude, and increased his contacts and his demands. His two sons Idris and Mas'ud frequently visited the capital to meet the President and other religious and conservative personalities. In March 1967 Mas'ud managed to persuade 'Arif to allow his father's faction to publish a daily newspaper,⁶¹ called al-Taakhi (Fraternity), which first appeared on 16 April 1967. It was always critical of the government and challenged its policies on many occasions, while the government lacked the strength or authority to respond effectively. Any threat to close down the paper could always be countered by Kurdish threats to resume their radio transmissions and to withdraw their representatives from the government. Meanwhile in the Kurdish areas there were almost daily clashes between Mulla Mustafa's forces and those of his rivals, to which the Army turned a blind

eye, protecting those forces, and sometimes even accommodating them in its own camps.⁶²

On 9 May 'Arif dismissed Talib and assumed the premiership himself.⁶³ In order to broaden the base of the government, he appointed four deputies to represent various sections of the population. The Kurdish representative was Major-General Fu'ad 'Arif, a follower of Mulla Mustafa, whom he had recommended for the post.⁶⁴ At the same time, the uncompromising position taken up by the officers, and their increasing encouragement of Mulla Mustafa's rivals suggested that another major offensive was in the offing for the summer of 1967. Any such efforts had to be abandoned because of the gravity of events on the Arab-Israeli front in May and June. Although minimal, the Iraqi involvement in the June 1967 war certainly added to the state of disorganisation the country was already in, and left Mulla Mustafa with a virtually free hand to establish de facto independence in the areas under his control. He refused the President's demand that he should send a contingent of Peshmerga to fight against Israel as evidence of Arab-Kurdish solidarity, and instead requested the government to withdraw its remaining troops from Kurdistan.⁶⁵

The government was further shaken by the defeat in 1967; 'Arif himself resigned the premiership and asked Tahir Yahya to form yet another Cabinet on July 10, presumably hoping that Yahya's past experience and relatively strong position would help to restore some of the regime's prestige and implement the June Declaration. The second hope collapsed immediately as Mulla Mustafa promptly refused to let his representatives join the new Cabinet on the grounds that the

regime was living in a state of continuous crisis, as 'all the governments, including that of Yahya, lack popular base'. He demanded a more representative national government in which the Kurds would have a proportional share; 'only such a government will be able to do away with the abnormal situation in Iraq and prepare for parliamentary democracy'.⁶⁶

To this Yahya responded by appointing two Kurds, rivals to Mulla Mustafa, as ministers in his Cabinet; nevertheless, he soon realized that his government was not strong enough to contemplate another major confrontation with Mulla Mustafa's forces. He therefore adopted the President's policy of appeasing Mulla Mustafa, although he did not neglect the other Kurdish factions. Thus he had one meeting with anti-Mulla Mustafa tribal leaders and another with Mulla Mustafa himself in September, as a result of which he included a supporter of Mulla Mustafa in his Cabinet.⁶⁷

Needless to say the government's continuing submission to Kurdish pressure provided Mulla Mustafa with a golden opportunity to expand his authority further over the Kurdish areas, even to cities and small towns where the government administration was theoretically in control.⁶⁸ The districts under his direct control had their own administration, consisting of a three man committee, made up of a member of the KDP, a member of the Peshmerga, and a representative of the people, all appointed by him. In other Kurdish areas theoretically under government control, the representatives of Mulla Mustafa were usually more effective than the official administration.⁶⁹ Furthermore, Mulla Mustafa's Peshmerga were also able to strike at their rivals, the Ahmad-Talabani group,

even when they were protected by the Army and stationed in its camps.⁷⁰

The Army, whose forces were divided between protecting the regime, consolidating the Jordanian front, and guarding the oil installations and pipelines, was naturally unable to stand up to this defiance.⁷¹

The situation was further complicated by the fact that after the 1967 War the notion of Arab unity began to regain currency,⁷² which once more aroused the Kurds' fear of an overwhelming Arab majority, and pushed Mulla Mustafa further and further into the hands of the Iranians, and even, ultimately, of the Israelis.⁷³ Also, by that time Mulla Mustafa

seems to have become convinced that the Peshmerga forces could become, as indeed they did, the factor which would sway the balance in his favour, and he concentrated every effort on strengthening them.⁷⁴

When the government nationalized the press in 1967, al-Taakhi was allowed to start publishing again two months later as the only private newspaper in the country; Mulla Mustafa had, as usual, threatened that his faction would resume its radio service if they could not retain their paper.⁷⁵ He also threatened to withdraw his representatives from the Cabinet.⁷⁶

During the first half of 1968 therefore, relations between the Kurds and the government were generally characterised by mutual fear. They had to accept the existence of each other and attempted to strengthen themselves while creating as much trouble as possible short of full-scale war.⁷⁶ Furthermore, the government knew that unless the Iranians sealed off their borders and stopped their assistance to the

Peshmerga, no Army offensive could hope to end the Kurdish resistance. Hence while claiming its adherence to the June Declaration, the government quietly increased its assistance and encouragement to the Ahmad-Talabani group. Apart from attempting to weaken Mulla Mustafa's position and the effectiveness of the Peshmerga, 'Arif and Yahya also sought to make the Kurdish question the rallying point for all political forces, especially the Army. In fact, the Ahmad-Talabani group managed to mount an effective ideological opposition to Mulla Mustafa's position and forces,⁷⁷ although their military success was limited to harassing the Peshmerga.

By the spring of 1968 it became clear to Mulla Mustafa's faction that the government's weakness was preventing any serious operations being launched against them. Thus they argued, with a great deal of truth, that

'because of the military, political and financial difficulties facing it, the government does not possess the means to wage a total war, despite the existence of some adventurers inside it ...

Realizing these difficulties, the government is resorting to the tactic of liquidating our revolution peacefully, by using the Ahmad-Talabani group, intensifying propaganda against us, and increasing local tensions by attacking our forward forces ... All this is undertaken with the aim of prolonging the ceasefire to undermine our strength by attrition'.⁷⁸

However, Mulla Mustafa's faction also refrained from waging total war against the government because of its fear that such a war 'will only hurt the enemy

but will not force him to change his attitude to the point of recognizing the legitimate rights of the Kurds',⁷⁹ and also because 'the Kurdish Revolt has not reached the point of self-sufficiency, and has to deal with the more serious threat of the dissident groups'.⁸⁰ Moreover, a weak and disorganised government in Baghdad would be unable to restrain their own increasing domination over the Kurdish areas. Hence they were unwilling to press home their military advantage against it, realising that it would most likely be replaced by a more effective military regime.

In May the government suffered another embarrassment when it closed down al-Taakhi again for 'publishing a statement prejudicial to national unity'.⁸¹ The two Kurdish Cabinet ministers immediately resigned from the government and returned to Kurdistan, while the publisher of al-Taakhi, Salih al-Yusufi submitted a sharp note to President 'Arif attacking the chauvinism and dishonesty of various ministers who were deliberately harming Arab-Kurdish relations.⁸² The President's attempt at the end of June to persuade the Kurdish ministers to withdraw their resignation ended in failure.⁸³

In what proved to be a final and unsuccessful attempt to persuade the Shah to stop his assistance to the Kurds, Yahya visited Iran in June.⁸⁴ Iranian support for the Kurds was a constant embarrassment to the Iraq government, and the political parties were openly criticizing the government's weak and 'cowardly' stand over the Iranian threat. Thus the opposition of the underground parties coincided with the Army's dissatisfaction with a regime, which 'had become so

factionalised that any combination of the opposing political and military groups could have overthrown it'.⁸⁵ On 17 July 1968 a combined force of the Army and the Ba'th Party put an end to the era of the 'Arifs; this second 'July Revolution' was the fourth to take place in Iraq in a single decade.

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Footnotes

- 1 He was Commander of the Air Force, and a popular figure among the military. See Khadduri, (1969), pp 243-44.
- 2 al-Bazzaz was a member of a well-known family in Baghdad. A graduate of Baghdad Law College, he pursued further studies at King's College London and was called to the English bar in 1939. An Arab nationalist who combined nationalism with religion, he became Dean of the Law College in Baghdad, and was later Iraqi Ambassador to Cairo and London. He was also a good friend of the first President 'Arif. See Khadduri (1969), pp 250-52, and Penrose (1978).
- 3 In the new cabinet there were only three officers compared with nine in the previous one; see Khadduri (1969), pp 244-45.
- 4 See al-Shawi (1966), p 206.
- 5 The Economist, 16 October 1965.
- 6 al-Shawi, *ibid.*
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 'Abd al-Razzaq was in favour of more rapid unity with Egypt than 'Arif seemed able to arrange. Thus when 'Arif left Iraq to attend the Arab Summit in September, he attempted to oust him, but his efforts were foiled by loyal troops. He fled to Egypt, while 'Arif rushed back to Baghdad. For details see Khadduri (1969), pp 245-46.
- 9 Khadduri (1969), pp 254-55.
- 10 Khadduri, *ibid.*, p 266. See also the declaration made by al-'Uqaili in the Republican Palace in October 1966. al-Jarida (Beirut) 15 November 1966; also cited in al-Ghamrawi(1967), pp 379-88.

- 11 See above, pp 179-80.
- 12 See al-Bazzaz' TV declaration of 15 June 1966. He visited Egypt, Turkey, and Sa'udi Arabia in an attempt to involve them in his attempts to find a peaceful settlement. He managed to persuade President Nasser to oust the Kurdish representative in Cairo, and declare his support for the Iraqi government's attempt to maintain Iraqi unity. al-Bazzaz also succeeded in getting Turkey's support and a pledge to check the Kurds crossing the borders with Iraq. The visit to Sa'udi Arabia was probably to ask King Faisal to mediate between Iraq and Iran to persuade the Shah to stop giving assistance to Mulla Mustafa's forces. The New York Times, 1 January 1966.
- 13 Interview with H. Karim.
- 14 'Arif was clearly a compromise candidate, since al-Bazzaz and al-'Uqaili had both stood for the position. See Batatu (1978), pp 1062-1063.
- 15 After his failure in the presidential election, 'Uqaili refused to participate in another cabinet. The new Minister of Defence was a moderate officer, chosen by al-Bazzaz himself.
- 16 See G Solomon, 'The Kurdish national struggle in Iraq', New Outlook, Vol 10, March-April 1967, p 10. Also The Times 18 April 1966.
- 17 Khadduri (1969), p 273.
- 18 The New York Times 19 April 1966.
- 19 al-Bazzaz, A, al-Iraq min al-Ihtilal hatta al-Istiqlal, Baghdad 1967, pp 286-288.
- 20 al-Bazzaz' press conference of 23 April 1966. American University of Beirut, al-Wathaiq al-'Arabia, 1966, pp 238-241.

- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 The Guardian 28 April 1966; O'Ballance (1973), p 136.
- 24 For details of this battle see René Mauriès, *Le Kurdistan ou la Mort*, Paris 1967, pp 171-212; Vanly (1970), pp 263-67, and *Le Monde* 25 January 1966.
- 25 Interview with Habib Karim.
- 26 The Financial Times, 22 June 1966. O'Ballance (1923), p 139; Vanly (1970), p 268.
- 27 The quotations are from the text of al-Bazzaz' television interview.
- 28 Other members of the delegation were Salih al-Yusufi, Brigadier Nafiz Jalal and 'Ali 'Abdullah.
- 29 The speed with which an agreement was reached tends to confirm this.
- 30 See al-Rawi, I, *Min al-Thawra al-'Arabia al Kubra Ila al-'Iraq al-Hadith* (from the great Arab Revolution to Modern Iraq), Beirut 1969, p 296. See also al-Bazzaz' Interview on 15 June 1966.
- 31 See Chapter 9 below.
- 32 al-Rawi (1969), Ibid.
- 33 al-Bazzaz refused to call it an agreement, or the talks leading to it as negotiations, claiming that agreements and negotiations do not take place between the people of one country. al-Wathaiq al-'Arabia 1966, pp 364-65.
- 34 For full text see Khadduri (1969), pp 274-76.
- 35 Ibid.
- 36 i.e before May 1967. By considering this matter seriously, al-Bazzaz managed to tone down the Kurds' demand for their second objective -

'Democracy for Iraq'.

- 37 The Kurds had asked for this since 1929, and Nuri al-Sa'id had suggested it as a possible solution in 1944, but he was opposed by Arab nationalists in Parliament and the cabinet. See above pp 10,15.
- 38 Khabat No 503, June 1968. See also Mulla Mustafa's memorandum of 28 November 1966.
- 39 al-Yusufi's memorandum to President 'Arif 25 May 1968.
- 40 Interview with Major General Najib Talib. Khadduri (1969), p 281. See also Penrose, E F, 'Une Tentative de Gouvernement Civil en Irak', Orient No 39, 1966, pp 12-13.
- 41 O'Ballance (1973), p 141; interview with Talib.
- 42 For details see Batatu (1978), p 1064.
- 43 Interview with Talib.
- 44 For details see Khadduri (1969), pp 278-80.
- 45 Interview with Talib.
- 46 Khadduri (1969), pp 281-2.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 See Khabat, No 489, August 1966.
- 49 Solomon (1967), p 16.
- 50 See al-Jarida, ibid.
- 51 Ibid, for the attitude of al-'Uqaili who was present at this meeting. See also Middle East Record Vol 3, 1967, p 358.
- 52 The Ahmad-Talabani group, who had joined Mulla Mustafa at the beginning of the third period of fighting in April 1965, broke again with him and joined the Iraqi government in January 1966. See Khabat No 495, March 1967. The group's pronounced ideology was strongly to the left. They adopted a new strategy, that of giving a higher priority to

defeating reactionary and feudal elements in Kurdistan than to securing Kurdish national rights. Thus they co-operated with successive governments in the hope of destroying Mulla Mustafa.

- 53 See the KDP's declarations of 23 April 1968 and 5 February 1968. The Ahmad-Talabani group was referred to by Mulla Mustafa's faction as the 'new mercenaries'. See Mulla Mustafa's memorandum of 28 November 1966.
- 54 See, for example, Mulla Mustafa's memorandum of 28 November 1966 to President 'Arif and Premier Talib, his interview with al-Taakhi, 25 August 1968, al-Yusufi's memorandum to President 'Arif on 25 May 1968, Khabat No 503, June 1968, and the KDP's declarations of 20 October 1967 and 25 November 1967.
- 55 Solomon (1967), p 17.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Vanly (1970), p 270.
- 58 Mulla Mustafa's memorandum of 28 November 1966. Vanly (1970).
- 59 Mulla Mustafa's memorandum. Ibid.
- 60 The Financial Times, 15 March 1967.
- 61 The Middle East Record (1967), *ibid.*
- 62 The KDP's declaration of 20 October 1967.
- 63 In fact Talib's government suffered many setbacks, especially in its attempt to solve the outstanding question of oil negotiations with Syria, and was obliged to resign. See Khadduri (1969), p 286-89.
- 64 For Fu'ad 'Arif, see Batatu (1978), pp 785, 844-5, 1007, 1065. 'Arif had been a member of Qasim's second cabinet, but resigned in 1961 over his

Kurdish policy.

- 65 Le Monde 12 October 1968.
- 66 See the KDP's declaration of 23 April 1968: Middle East Record, p 359. See also Mulla Mustafa's interview with al-Taakhi on 20 August 1968.
- 67 Middle East Record (1967), *ibid.*
- 68 Volsky, D, 'Arabs and Kurds', New Times, 24 January 1968, No 3, p 14.
- 69 *Ibid.* See also Khadduri (1969), p 277, and Edmonds, C J, 'The Kurdish War in Iraq', World Today, December 1968, p 518.
- 70 The KDP's Declaration of 20 October 1967, and of 5 February 1968.
- 71 Some 17,000 members of the Iraq Army were then in Jordan. See The Times, 21 May 1969.
- 72 For details of the Iraqi political situation following the June 1967 defeat see, for example, The Financial Times, 13 and 20 September 1967.
- 73 See Chapter 9, below.
- 74 The KDP's declaration of March 1968.
- 75 See Middle East Record, p 360 (1967), Vol 3. See also Salih al-Yusufi's memorandum. According to The New York Times, the radio service was resumed immediately, see The New York Times, 21 March 1968.
- 76 See the KDP's declaration of March 1968. The New York Times 21 March 1968. See also Edmonds (1968).
- 77 The Times, 17 August 1968.
- 78 The KDP's declarations of 5 February 1968 and 23 April 1968. See also Volsky (1968).
- 79 The KDP's declaration of March 1968.
- 80 *Ibid.*
- 81 Kimball, L K, The Changing Pattern of Political Power in Iraq, New York 1972, p 143.

- 82 See al-Yusufi's memorandum of 25 May 1968.
- 83 The New York Times, 24 June 1968.
- 84 The Financial Times, 25 June 1968.
- 85 Kelidar, A, 'Shifts and Changes in the Arab World'
The World Today, December 1968, p 508.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

The Ba'th Party and the Kurdish Dilemma

i) The Revolution of 17-30 July 1968 and the return of the Ba'th Party to power

When the Arab armies were defeated in June 1967, the fall of the governments in the countries most closely concerned was immediately anticipated. Not surprisingly, because of the absence of any strong government, Iraq was one of the first to experience such a change. President 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif's failure to provide any real leadership, and his indecision and weakness led him to depend heavily on a clique of officers headed by General Tahir Yahya, whose reputation was by no means above reproach. Members of this clique were later described, with some justice, as 'corrupt, thieving and inefficient'. Failure to participate in the Arab-Israeli war, the continuing deterioration of the political, economic and social situation in Iraq, and failure to solve the Kurdish problem were further factors bringing 'Arif's regime into disrepute.

In these confused circumstances the banned political parties underwent something of a recovery. Most active were the Arab Ba'th Socialist Party (ABSP)

and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). Although these two parties had undergone severe splits, they managed to recover and reorganise themselves.² The Ba'thists' organisation and influence manifested itself in their leadership of the massive popular demonstrations following the 1967 war, and in their effective opposition to the government's later attempt to buy French Mirage fighters, while the extent of the Communists' organisation was apparent in their victory in the student elections at the University of Baghdad in March 1967, and in the leadership of a small peasant revolt in the marshes of the south led by the Committee of Armed Struggle in 1968.³ However, the two parties failed to establish a united front to oppose the 'Arif-Yahya government. This was probably because the Ba'thists were confident that their supporters within the armed forces would assist them to supersede 'Arif without any assistance from the Communists, while the Communists themselves were naturally distrustful of the Ba'th in the light of the events of early 1963. Thus each party continued to work separately against the regime.

In spite of their obvious weakness, 'Arif and Yahya clung to power, with 'Arif becoming more and more of a puppet in Yahya's hands. For his part, Yahya paid little attention to his Cabinet, which gradually became incapable of dealing with the increasingly grave crises the country was facing. In June 1968 four ministers, the two Kurdish supporters of Mulla Mustafa and two Arab nationalists, resigned, and Yahya was unable either to persuade them to stay or to replace them.⁴ Meanwhile, various politicians and army officers were bombarding 'Arif with memoranda

criticising his policy, or the lack of it, in various fields and especially the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Kurdish problem. They also urged him to sack Yahya, and to adopt drastic measures to deal with the deteriorating situation in the country. In these circumstances, because of its weakness and the opposition it faced from the military, the government failed to implement the June Declaration. This failure, and the government's seemingly endless delaying tactics, caused major discontent on the Kurdish side, which was clear from successive statements from Mulla Mustafa and the KDP. 'Arif ignored these warnings, and retained Yahya which meant that only a military coup could remove both of them from office.⁵

On 17 July the Army, supported by the Ba'th Party and its militia, went into action to put an end to the regime. Coming thirteen months after the June war, a delay which was almost more surprising than 'Arif's fall, the 17 July coup was regarded as the first, though belated, reaction to the fiasco of the previous year. The new rulers were a combination of Ba'thist elements, headed by Major General Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr,⁶ and other army officers, headed by Colonel 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Na'if, Deputy Chief of Military Intelligence. A new Revolutionary Command Council (RCC) was formed which promoted al-Bakr to the rank of Field Marshal, appointed him Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces, and elected him the third President of the Iraqi Republic, while al-Bakr asked al-Na'if to form a new Cabinet. This consisted of some independent officers and others from the Premier's group, as well as Ba'thists. To pre-empt any hasty Kurdish reaction to the new regime, the

new Cabinet also included four Kurdish ministers, two from Mulla Mustafa's faction, one representing the Ahmad-Talabani group, and one independent.

As expected, the new government pledged itself to put an end to all outstanding problems, including the Kurdish problem, in order to concentrate on improving the economic situation and on fulfilling Iraq's duties on the Palestine issue.⁷ However, nothing was actually said about how the Kurdish problem was to be solved, though it was generally understood that the new regime would not risk any immediate confrontation with the Kurdish Peshmerga. Nevertheless, the new government's attitude towards the Kurdish question remained somewhat confused. There were reports that al-Na'if refused to consider al-Bazzaz's agreement with Mulla Mustafa (the June Declaration) as a basis for a settlement,⁸ while there were also reports that he or one of his aides was visiting the north of Iraq in secret to effect a reconciliation with Mulla Mustafa's faction.⁹ At any rate the Kurdish question had to fade into the background once more, to await the outcome of yet another struggle for power in the capital.

Although the Ba 'thists were the civilian power that claimed to have masterminded the coup and provided popular support for the new regime, the officers under al-Na'if were getting most of the credit and seemed to be aiming at strengthening their control over the government. In such circumstances a confrontation between the non-Ba 'thist and Ba 'thist elements was more or less inevitable. Since the Ba 'th had already been driven from power in 1963 by an officer, 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, whom they had brought in as a figure-

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head, they were unlikely to wish to repeat the experience. On the other hand, the Ba'thist leadership was also endeavouring to remedy the bad reputation the party had acquired during its first period in office (February-November 1963), and to show that they had fully absorbed the lessons of that time. To achieve this, the Party needed to have complete control of the country's affairs.

al-Na'if, on the other hand, had underestimated the strength of the Ba'thists and was confident that he could tilt the balance in his favour through the military power at his disposal. These differences were deepened by the fact that the two sides were ideologically very far apart; al-Na'if was a conservative, indeed an extreme conservative, while the Ba'thists claimed to be on the left. Thus, apart from sharing a desire to remove 'Abd al-Rahman by force, the two sides had different ideas on almost every single issue. Hence only thirteen days after the 17 July coup, the two groups were at loggerheads.¹⁰ The Ba'thist elements, headed by President al-Bakr and Saddam Husain, then a member of the Regional Command,¹¹ easily out-manoeuvered their opponents, sacked al-Na'if and his allies, and assumed full control of the country. President al-Bakr assumed the premiership and formed an overwhelmingly Ba'thist Cabinet on 30 July 1968. Immediately after taking full control of the country the Ba'thist leaders lost no time in presenting themselves, their ideology and their party, as the ultimate panacea for the country's ills.

ii) The attitude of the Ba'th Party towards the Kurds
 What was later to become the Arab Ba'th

Socialist Party began as a secret group of nationalist intellectuals formed in 1940 by two French-educated Syrians, Michel 'Aflaq and Salah al-Bitar.¹² Their ideas tended to the left while emphasizing Arab nationalism, Arab unity and anti-Communism. In 1943 this group became known as the Arab Ba'th Party, drawing its main support from students, the salaried class, army officers and the petit bourgeoisie. Towards the end of 1943 the Arab Ba'th Party came into the open, participating in the resistance against the French and later in the Palestinian war of 1948.¹³ Unlike most other political parties in the Arab World, the Ba'th did not restrict its activities to the country of its origin. It was envisaged as a universal Arab party which was to have branches in every Arab country,¹⁴ and indeed by 1950 it had branches in Lebanon, Iraq and Jordan, as well as supporters in other countries.¹⁵

The Party's influence grew even greater in 1953, after its merger with another Syrian party, the Arab Socialist Party, founded by Akram Hourani. This merger added the word 'Socialist' to the name of the Party,¹⁶ although its main objective remained that of Arab unity. As 'Aflaq, the Ba'th's philosopher and founder maintained, 'any viewpoint on or remedy for the vital difficulties of the Arabs, either in part or in toto, which does not emanate from the axion "The Unity of the Arab People", is an erroneous outlook and an injurious cure'.¹⁷ The imperative need for unity was also stressed in the party's constitution, which was headed by the motto 'One Arab Nation with an Eternal Mission', and the triple slogan 'Unity, Freedom, Socialism'.

The Arab fatherland was regarded in the Ba'th constitution as an 'indivisible political and economic unity'; it was also held that 'no Arab country can live apart from the others'.¹⁸ Article 7 of the constitution also defined the Arab world as 'that part of the globe inhabited by the Arab nation, which stretches from the Taurus Mountains (Iraqi-Turkish border), the Pusht-i Kuh Mountains (Iraqi-Iranian border), the Gulf of Basra (ie the Arab Gulf), the Arab Ocean, the Ethiopian Mountains, the Sahara, the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean'.¹⁹ According to this definition, Iraqi Kurdistan was an integral part of the Arab World, and the Kurds, together with the other minorities, became increasingly suspicious as neither the party's constitution nor its leaders gave any definite idea about the status of the minorities living within this Arab nation.²⁰ Perhaps the founders of the Ba'th had in mind the Arab Empires of Damascus and Baghdad, which had included different nationalities and minorities within their boundaries; it is also significant that the national problem was not in any way central to Syrian politics, for Syria was suffering from pressing economic and social difficulties. This also explains the party's emphasis on the need for a new social and economic order.

However the expansion of Ba'thism into countries which contained comparatively large non-Arab minorities increased the need for a new formula to accommodate them, but such a need was not met. Not only was the party's constitution devoid of any reference to these minorities, but the party leaders failed to give them any assurances about their status.

In fact some Ba'thist leaders, taking Article 7 almost as an article of faith, denied the Kurds in the Arab World any right to self-determination on the grounds that this would imply Arab occupation of foreign territory - a clear contradiction of the Article. In consequence, most of the minorities in the Arab World wanted nothing to do with the Ba'th, fearing that it aimed at a policy of assimilation.²¹ This fear gained substance when the Iraqi Ba'th opposed the KDP's attempt to join the Front of National Union in 1957. Indeed, the Kurds saw the Ba'thist-Arab nationalist success in achieving the union of Egypt and Syria in 1958 as another threat to their position.

Things changed after the Revolution of July 1958 and the admission of the KDP to the re-organised United National Front. Thereafter the KDP's influence as an effective pressure group continued to grow, bringing it into direct confrontation with the Ba'th and the Arab nationalists. However, the admission of the KDP to the Front did not stem from any belief on the part of the other partners in the Kurds' national rights, or in giving the Kurds their share in Iraqi politics; it was in fact a tactical and emotional move to consolidate the nascent Republic. This was obvious in the struggle between the various parties immediately after the formation of the Front, which resulted in its dissolution a few months later; the Ba'th-KDP dispute was one of the reasons for the dissolution. At first the two parties clashed over the question of the union of Iraq with the UAR. The Ba'th was more than enthusiastic, while the KDP was clearly and publicly hesitant; this angered the Ba'thists and led

them to believe that the non-Arab minorities would always be an obstacle to Arab unity. Their break with Qasim over the same issue soon afterwards deepened the hostility between themselves and the nationalists on the one hand, and Qasim, the ICP and the KDP on the other. The rupture between the two sides became final in February 1959, when both Mulla Mustafa and the KDP assisted Qasim in his attacks on the Ba'thists following the failure of the Mosul Revolt.

However their success in putting down the Mosul Revolt gave the Kurds more confidence and encouraged them to voice their opposition to Arab unity and demand more control over their own affairs. It was only then that the Ba'th Party's Beirut newspaper al-Sahafa published an article expressing the party's ideology or policy towards the non-Arab minorities living inside the Arab World, perhaps in an attempt to counter Qasim's 'pro-Kurd' policy and to rally the support of Arab nationalists against the Kurds' demand for autonomy, which was regarded as a step towards separation. The article argued that no non-Arab minority living inside the Arab World could claim any part of the Arab World as their own; they were living there only because 'the generous Arab nation has taken all these minorities under its protection'. The article gave the minorities the choice of 'either remaining in the Arab homeland, or else emigrating into their own countries'. Referring directly to the Kurds, it maintained that 'Arab nationalism supports the struggle of the Kurds for a Kurdish state', although the Kurdistan which the article envisaged was to 'consist of those parts of Kurdistan included in Turkey and Iran'. While supporting and encouraging

this 'friendly, liberated and democratic Kurdistan', the article made it clear that the Arab nation was not prepared to cede any parts of its own territories to others.²² This article left the Kurds with no illusion about the Ba'thists' attitude towards their demands in Iraq. However, at that time, the Kurds were still closely allied with Qasim, and paid little attention to this comment.

Throughout the Qasim regime, the Ba'th party was more concerned with its opposition to Qasim, whom they regarded as the prime threat to Arab unity and a major obstacle in its way. Hence the increasingly serious Kurdish problem was relegated to a secondary place well below their major objective of opposition to the regime. The Kurds, represented by the KDP and Mulla Mustafa, were not regarded as a people with national demands, but merely as Qasim's allies, and the Communists were similarly classified. The KDP and the ICP were held responsible for all the shortcomings of Qasim's regime. Thus the gap between the Ba'th and the Kurds widened, and the two parties embarked on entirely different courses of action. Any rapprochement between the two, even after the KDP had taken up arms against Qasim, was made difficult because of the Ba'thist belief that neither Mulla Mustafa nor the KDP were the true representatives of the Kurds, who, they argued, were not at heart opposed to Arab unity.²³ Ba'th publications used to distinguish between the 'loyal and true Iraqi Kurds', and the 'separatist, feudalistic and imperialist Kurdish stooges'.

Thus when the Revolt escalated, the Ba'thist leadership failed once more to see that it was essentially a national movement. They maintained that the Revolt

was caused by the break in relations between Qasim and Mulla Mustafa, and did not result from the denial of Kurdish national rights as the KDP maintained. The Ba'th Party also believed first, that the Kurdish Revolt was not part of the Iraqi national movement proper, and secondly that most Kurds lived in Turkey and Iran where conditions were appalling. By stressing this, the Ba'th and the other Arab nationalist groups tried to encourage the Kurds to act against Turkey and Iran, thus shifting their struggle to neighbouring countries. 'Although supported by some genuine and faithful Kurdish nationalists,' the Ba'thist declarations argued, 'this Revolt was triggered off by Qasim's policy of divide and rule'.²⁴ Instead of discussing ways of solving the problem the Ba'th Party used it simply as another means to attempt to discredit Qasim and his regime. The Ba'th leaders maintained that 'the interests of the true Iraqi Kurds would never conflict with those of the Arab people of Iraq',²⁵ and Mulla Mustafa and the KDP were accused, together with Qasim, of encouraging racial segregation. In another statement the Ba'th accused Qasim of triggering off the Kurdish Revolt in order to 'distract the people's attention from his hated rule, to conceal his failure to claim Kuwait and his conciliatory stance towards the oil companies.'²⁶ Mulla Mustafa was not mentioned by name, but was referred to as a 'suspect element',²⁷ who was 'aiming at separating the north of Iraq' with the support of feudal and reactionary elements. 'To foil such an attempt', the statement warned, 'honest Kurdish elements should not associate themselves with such a suspect revolt'.²⁸ Yet the same

statement showed the Party's appreciation of Kurdish discontent with Qasim, which they regarded as further evidence of widespread discontent with his rule, but argued that 'the Kurdish problem will not be solved nor Kurdish national objectives achieved'²⁹ through such a suspect revolt. 'Only by putting an end to the dictatorial and reactionary rule of Qasim, and by uniting the Iraqi people against it, can we solve problems of Iraq'.³⁰ Hence a change of regime was regarded as the only remedy.

Nothing was said about the Kurds' national objectives and demands. Instead, the Kurds were urged to 'unite their struggle with that of the rest of the Iraqi people in defying Qasim's regime'.³¹ This appeal should not of course be interpreted as support for the Kurdish Revolt, since the Ba'th and its leadership roundly condemned it, even going so far as to criticise Qasim for his hesitation in crushing it.³² The call for a united effort against Qasim was in fact an attempt to form a nationwide anti-Qasim movement, guided and if possible headed, by the Ba'th party. This call was unlikely to obtain any response from the KDP, Mulla Mustafa, or any other Kurdish group, for two main reasons. First, it was doubted whether the Ba'thists could actually overthrow the regime. Secondly, the Kurds were convinced that the Ba'th Party's foremost objective was Arab unity, and that if attained, this objective would put the Kurds in an even greater minority. The Ba'th Party failed to allay this fear, never giving any clear assurance to the Kurdish nationalists that Arab unity was not equivalent to Kurdish assimilation.

However, it seems that the progress of the Revolt, coupled with the officers' discontent with Qasim's way of dealing with it, aroused the fear on the part of the Ba'th that a group of army officers, or the Kurds themselves, would steal a march on them and put an end to the Qasim regime. It was thus no accident that the Ba'th was concerned to try to win over the Kurds during the last year of the Qasim era and to discourage them from acting on their own. To achieve this unity of struggle the Ba'th intensified its propaganda against Qasim, declaring again and again that he was the main obstacle in the way of the Iraqi national movement.

When the Kurds stated that democracy for Iraq was their objective the Ba'th Party announced that 'Kurdish national aims are part and parcel of the whole people's aim to achieve democracy and prosperity'.³³ As the KDP and Mulla Mustafa showed no signs of accepting co-operation with the Ba'th, refused to be treated as second-class allies, and insisted on being treated as equals,³⁴ the Ba'th Party warned against isolating the Kurdish struggle from that of the Iraqi people as a whole. This, they claimed, 'represents racial and separatist attempts which will endanger and damage the popular movement itself'.³⁵

Nevertheless, especially at the end of 1962, the Ba'th's declarations began to give more attention to the need for co-operation between Kurds and Arabs so as to 'heal the increasingly severe breach between them'.³⁶ Accusations against Mulla Mustafa, Qasim and the KDP, of inciting and prolonging the fighting and of harming Kurdish-Arab relations were repeated

and enlarged upon.³⁷ Thus when the date for the coup against Qasim was set, the Ba'thist leadership began to realize the impracticality of ignoring the Kurdish Revolt altogether, and a more pragmatic and at times more realistic policy was pursued without, however, any commitments being given. This new stand was best demonstrated in Sa'di's meeting with al-Yusufi in January 1963,³⁸ at a time when the Ba'thist leadership was sure that the move against Qasim would be bloody and fraught with difficulty, and would necessitate the co-operation, or at least the tacit approval, of all anti-Qasim forces. They also realised that although it would not hamper the actual takeover, a continuing state of war in Kurdistan would weaken the post-coup's regime's chances of survival, especially if Mulla Mustafa or the KDP chose not to support it. This assumption led the Ba'thist leaders to think seriously about appeasing the Kurds. Without changing their basic attitude towards the Kurds and Kurdish nationalism, the Ba'th party managed to pacify the Kurdish leadership by giving them some assurances.³⁹

The Ba'thists' success in overthrowing Qasim in February 1963, and the power struggle that ensued, left the Kurdish question in abeyance once more. In the end, as we have seen, nothing substantial was done to solve the problem.⁴⁰ The Ba'th's mistake was to give its struggle with the Communists a higher priority than the Kurdish problem, which left the Party pre-occupied and disunited, and its members ignorant of the urgency of the Kurdish question.⁴¹ On the other hand, when the Ba'th showed itself prepared to accept decentralization as a solution

the Kurdish leadership made the mistake of increasing its demands, taking advantage of the chaotic situation in the rest of the country. Gradually, therefore, the conviction that it was essential to use force against the Kurds, which was firmly held and canvassed by the military, took precedence over any more rational ideas, and the regime risked its future in a bitter and fruitless war in Kurdistan. No doubt their absorption in the day to day struggle to stay in power prevented the Ba'thists from realizing that continued unrest in Kurdistan would encourage other officers to try to topple the regime. The Ba'thist leadership also seem to have underestimated the strength of the Peshmerga, and failed to realize that after three years the Revolt was firmly established. To counter it, the government had only a disorganised Army, which had undergone several purges and was deeply involved in a bitter political struggle.⁴²

The shock of losing power in Iraq in November 1963 was so great for the rank and file of the Ba'th that a change of policy in many areas might have been expected. But even at this stage the party neglected the fact that the war in Kurdistan was a major factor in its fall, and its leadership concentrated on overcoming the party's internal problems. After being driven out of power the Iraqi Ba'th Party underwent a process of self-criticism and reconstruction, and instituted a search for a new leadership. At the beginning the party was split into two factions, one supporting Sa'di, the Secretary-General, in Iraq, the other remaining loyal to the National Command which was now stationed in Syria.

A few months later the National Command ousted Sa'di in an attempt to unite the different factions, while Sa'di in turn criticised the National Command and formed another party, Hizb al-'Amal al-Thawri, the Party of Revolutionary Action. Thus the Iraqi Ba'thists had nothing to focus their loyalty upon; some remained loyal to the National Command, others left the party altogether, and a third group was divided between several prominent leaders of the party still in Iraq. This turmoil gave birth to a new leadership called 'The Committee to Reorganise the Region', which was itself soon to be superseded by a new Regional Command dominated by General al-Bakr, Saddam Husain, a rising young politician, and 'Abdullah Sallum al-Samarra'i, a leading party tactician. This Command was soon to be joined by other leaders such as General Salih Mahdi 'Ammash and General Hardan al-Takriti. By 1966 the new Regional Command was strong enough to appeal to those who had left the party as well as to challenge the followers of the National Command and force them to change sides.

It is interesting that during this process the various Ba'thist factions continued to believe that the war in Kurdistan, which their party had conducted while in power, was a necessary measure against a separatist and subversive movement. As a result not a single declaration that the use of force against the Kurds was misguided was issued by any of the factions. Instead the party's opposition was once more directed against the various regimes in Baghdad. However the new Regional Command did attempt to establish relations with Mulla Mustafa's leadership

and to open a dialogue between itself and the Ahmad-Talabani group,⁴³ while contacts were also established with Mulla Mustafa's faction.⁴⁴ Such contacts were part of the Ba'th Party's attempt to establish a national front before coming back to power in July 1968. The KDP and Mulla Mustafa were not enthusiastic, and these contacts were soon ended, but the dialogue with the Ahmad-Talabani group was more successful. It is difficult to say how thoroughgoing these talks were; the two factions had found a common platform in their opposition to, and suspicion of, Mulla Mustafa's intentions. However this relationship was to prove more beneficial to the Kurdish cause when the Ba'th Party returned to power in 1968, for two reasons. First, the Ahmad-Talabani group showed that it did not have inflated demands like those presented by Mulla Mustafa. Secondly, it seems that the Ba'th was convinced by Ahmad and Talabani that the leadership of Mulla Mustafa could be replaced if their faction were to be assisted by arming their followers and by taking measures generally in favour of the Kurdish national movement. These arguments of Ahmad and Talabani, together with a growing sense of realism on the part of the Ba'th gradually caused the leadership to take a more amenable attitude towards the Kurdish situation. In fact, at this stage, when the new Ba'thist leadership was more confident of taking over, it began work on a revised Kurdish policy which aimed at solving the problem peacefully by 'recognising the Kurds' national rights without distinction'.⁴⁵ The new policy was fostered by the Ba'th Secretary-General, 'Abdullah Sallum al-Samarra'i and was supported by Saddam Husain. After

coming to power on 30 July 1968 the Ba'th Party had the chance to put its new Kurdish policy into practice.

iii) Steps towards reconciliation

The Ba'thists' success in removing al-Na'if, which made the regime look at least temporarily secure, was to provide them with the opportunity to speak with a good deal of optimism about solving the problems facing the country. When they set to work to carry out the functions of government, the Ba'thist leaders realised that the first problem on their agenda was to stabilise the regime. They considered that this could be achieved if three requirements were fulfilled; the neutralization of the Army, the careful treatment of the Kurdish question, and the propitiation of the other political parties which would lead to the formation of a new front. This programme, however, was certain to encounter many difficulties. The neutralisation of the Army was bound to take a long time, while any attempt to establish a new front was not likely to meet with much success because of the other parties' mistrust of Ba'thist intentions, arising from their experiences in 1963.⁴⁶ The third objective - that of finding a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem - immediately encountered a major obstacle, that of Mulla Mustafa's refusal to co-operate with the new government. This refusal was given practical expression by Mulla Mustafa's prevention of his two representatives from continuing their Cabinet membership in President al-Bakr's new Cabinet. Mulla Mustafa insisted that according to a previous agreement made some hours before the formation of the post-July 30 Cabinet,

the Ba'th leadership had agreed to include four Kurdish ministers of his faction alone, not to include any 'anti-Kurd' elements⁴⁷ (referring to the Ahmad-Talabani faction), and finally to make clear that the government intended to respect the June 1966 Declaration.⁴⁸ In the event, although declaring its adherence to the June Declaration, the government insisted on including Kurdish ministers from the other factions, thus assigning Mulla Mustafa's representatives only two seats in the new Cabinet.

It was clear that the government was not ready to accede to Mulla Mustafa's 'orders' in its first days in office. On the contrary, the government took this episode, which they said arose from Mulla Mustafa's 'anti-Ba'th feeling', as an excuse to discredit Mulla Mustafa's leadership, accusing him of abandoning his duties and refusing to shoulder any responsibility.⁴⁹

In the end the Cabinet was formed without any member of Mulla Mustafa's faction and only the Ahmad-Talabani faction was represented. It is interesting to note, however, that at this stage neither the government nor Mulla Mustafa was prepared to break off relations with each other altogether. The government firmly maintained its adherence to the June declaration and its intention to solve the problem peacefully, and it also decided to keep the newspaper al-Taakhi in publication despite Mulla Mustafa's refusal to co-operate.

Mulla Mustafa, on the other hand, made it clear that his refusal to let his representatives join the cabinet did not mean that he was against the new regime. 'Our attitude towards it will be determined by its policy', he added.⁵⁰ Of course he may well

have been forced into taking this position out of fear that if he were to break with the government completely the arena would be left clear for the Ahmad-Talabani group to improve its position, with, of course, the government's assistance. Mulla Mustafa's declaration that he was ready to co-operate with the new government if it would drop the Ahmad-Talabani representatives tends to confirm this. The government's decision to keep a link with Mulla Mustafa and his KDP was also a result of studied calculations. Examining its own order of priorities the government seems to have concluded that the stabilization of the regime should come first with the Kurdish problem closely following. Bearing their 1963 experience in mind, the Ba'thists decided against adopting a military solution to the Kurdish problem because such a course of action, apart from not putting an immediate end to the Revolt, would, as happened in 1963, most probably provide army officers with the influence and position to enable them to conspire against the regime. On the other hand, there was very probably a strong feeling inside the government that other national groups and parties were suspicious of it and were still in need of a demonstration of its good faith despite its declared intention to pursue progressive policies. It realised that nothing would prove this better than a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem. Such a settlement would necessarily be based on granting the Kurds autonomy or a form of autonomy, which would itself indicate a fundamental change in Ba'th ideology and consequently win over the other political parties. In the meantime the government decided to take

measures to make the other groups accept the idea of joining the Ba'th Party in a new national front. This attempt gathered momentum following the ICP's cautious, though not unfavourable declaration that 'to join the Ba'th in any front was premature', and their request to the government to give them the freedom to act legally.⁵¹ Thus it was clearly up to the government to take the initiative to break this deadlock. Indeed, the first move came four days after the ousting of al-Na'if, when it was decided to meet some basic Kurdish cultural demands. The government set about implementing the relevant clauses of the June Declaration, since these represented most, if not all, Kurdish demands at that time, and all sides approved of it. The government also believed that such a step, coupled with repeated declarations of its intention to solve the problem peacefully, would take much of the steam out of the Kurdish opposition, restore confidence in the Ba'th Party, and finally encourage all other national parties to modify their attitude towards it.

On August 4 a decree was promulgated putting Article Six of the June Declaration into practice. This provided that the Kurdish language was to be taught at all levels in every Iraqi school. A Kurdish Cultural Academy was to be set up together with a university in Sulaimaniya. A few days later another decree was issued giving an amnesty to those who had participated in the Kurdish war. The amnesty was of a new kind, since the deserters from the Army and police were not made to return their arms.⁵² Furthermore, ministers were ordered to reinstate all dismissed civil servants, as far as possible, in their previous jobs.

In the meantime President al-Bakr called upon all 'patriotic, progressive and anti-imperialist' forces, to put negative politics behind them and join in a front which would take effective responsibility in power.⁵³ Other decrees favouring Kurdish national rights soon followed. The first, issued on September 24 1968, declared Nawruz, the Kurdish new year, as an official national holiday. The second was another recognition by the Government of Kurdish nationalism and the Kurds' right to preserve their nationality. The last decree established a bureau for Northern Affairs attached to the RCC.⁵⁴

Thus the government scored their first psychological victories against Mulla Mustafa and the KDP by approaching the problem positively, and attempting, for the first time, to speak to the Kurds over the head of their leaders. This victory encouraged the government to make further attempts to discredit Mulla Mustafa's faction and the KDP. The government thought that Mulla Mustafa's position inside the Kurdish national movement must be declining because he had kept Kurdish society on a war footing against successive governments for too long. This in turn encouraged it to take further advantage of inter-Kurdish divisions, especially the deep animosity existing between Mulla Mustafa and the Ahmad-Talabani group. Here it was assisted by Mulla Mustafa's continuing intransigence. al-Taakhi newspaper, the last link between the government and Mulla Mustafa's faction, was closed down and the government threw its weight wholeheartedly behind the Ahmad-Talabani group. Ahmad himself was made head of the newly established Kurdish Cultural Academy, and his faction was given facilities

to publish a newspaper on behalf of the Kurdish national movement. In fact the Ahmad-Talabani group, which continued to call itself the official KDP and carried on the clandestine publication of its own *Khabat*, was regarded as a more sophisticated and better organised party than Mulla Mustafa's. Its 2000 odd members were being better educated and more dedicated to the party than Mulla Mustafa's.⁵⁵ The first issue of *al-Nour*, the newspaper of the Ahmad-Talabani faction, appeared on 12th October 1968. It voiced the beliefs and ideas of this faction, and naturally supported the government's Kurdish policy. The core of the faction's doctrine was their assertion that the Kurdish problem could only be solved by co-operation between the Arab and Kurdish national liberation movements, and by the application of socialism to Iraq.⁵⁶ Needless to say, these beliefs coincided with Ba'athist ideology. It was obvious that the Ahmad-Talabani group's unconditional support derived not only from their belief in the government's ability to solve the problem, but also from their own need for government assistance against Mulla Mustafa's faction. Government assistance included military and financial as well as moral support. At the same time both Ahmad and Talabani were encouraging the government to make concessions in favour of the Kurdish national movement so as to cement their own claims to be the real representatives of the Kurdish people. The government saw Ahmad and Talabani as possible substitutes for Mulla Mustafa and continued to support them.

Naturally, Mulla Mustafa was not expected to concede defeat so easily. He thought that he could foil the

government's attempts to push him into obscurity by continuously harassing its forces and hindering its policy. First, he and 'his' KDP belittled the government's steps to implement the June Declaration. They claimed that action had only been taken in relatively unimportant fields, and this had been done only to give the government time to consolidate its position and to boost the position of the Ahmad-Talabani group. The KDP also deplored the government's decision to ignore Mulla Mustafa's leadership, which they maintained was the only real representative of the Kurdish people. 'To solve the problem the Government has to negotiate with the party that signed the June Declaration', it maintained.⁵⁷

The government's Kurdish policy and its encouragement of the Ahmad-Talabani faction intensified and deepened Kurdish factional divisions. After October 1968 there were frequent clashes between the Mulla Mustafa and Ahmad-Talabani factions in Kurdistan, with the government stepping in on the latter's side. Mulla Mustafa's faction, which suffered considerable loss of morale in this conflict, took these incidents and the new Provisional Constitution (which again only mentioned Kurdish national rights in an obscure article), as good excuses for recommencing direct hostilities against the government.

In November 1968 a further KDP declaration launched a sharp attack on the government's measures, stating that it was not implementing anything except 'secondary matters', and that promises to release prisoners applied only to those Kurds who were prepared to assist the government.⁵⁸ It criticized the government for 'its lack of seriousness in find-

ing a satisfactory solution to the problem', and launched a fierce attack on the Ahmad-Talabani faction, which seems to indicate the success the latter had had in harming Mulla Mustafa's hold upon the Kurds. However the KDP also declared that it was ready to come to terms with the government if it abandoned its support of the Ahmad-Talabani faction and implemented the June Declaration.⁵⁹ The government naturally took this as a further sign of weakness and carried on its support of Ahmad and Talabani. As the clashes between the two Kurdish factions continued, with the government involved more and more on the side of the latter, Mulla Mustafa decided to escalate the fighting by attacking government interests and strongholds. In December the Peshmerga attacked the Baghdad-Kirkuk train; four people were killed and several injured.⁶⁰ This attack was particularly significant since it took place in the Kirkuk area which was believed to be more securely held by the government than any other part of the north because of its oil installations and reserves. It also showed Mulla Mustafa's despair, for it was the first time that his forces had attacked civilian targets. As Mulla Mustafa probably expected, government forces, especially the Air Force, went into action against the Peshmerga and the region was once again embroiled in bitter fighting throughout the winter of 1968-69.

However, none of these events were sufficient to deflect the government from its attempt to find a peaceful settlement. At the beginning of 1969 the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party, the second highest command in the Party, and certainly the most

influential, met in its VIIth Congress to lay down a plan for the future of Iraq and the party. Naturally enough most of the meetings of the Congress were devoted to discussions of the Kurdish problem.⁶¹ The seriousness and importance attached to the question by the Party can be gauged from the fact that the Regional Command had decided to postpone its meetings from the end of December 1968 in order to set up a special Committee to consult other national and progressive organisations and prepare a detailed report on the problem.⁶² By this time, the civilian faction which had the majority inside the Regional Command was showing its preponderant influence over the military in directing the affairs of both the party and the country. The special Committee to prepare the study and recommendations was formed out of this faction.

By January 1969 the report was ready and the VIIth Congress was reconvened to discuss it. It was obvious that those who had prepared the report, which was a comparative study of ways to solve the Kurdish problem, were in favour of a peaceful solution. In contrast to the military group, the civilians did not regard the problem as a matter of honour. The widespread support for a peaceful solution, or at least tacit opposition to all-out war, became clear in the Resolutions of the VIIth Congress:

'The Kurdish question and the national aspirations of the Kurds in Iraq constitute one of the most important issues facing both the Arab liberation movement and the national movement. Many years have passed without any rational solution to this question being

achieved, and this has brought disasters for our Arab and Kurdish compatriots. Furthermore, the imperialists and their reactionary stooges have been given an opportunity to interfere in Iraq's affairs by exploiting our failure to achieve a solution to the problem ... The Congress affirms that our Party ... looks on the progressive national aspirations of the Kurds with respect and regards them as legal, humane and legitimate rights. Our party also appreciates that making good these rights would certainly strengthen the march of the masses in Iraq towards eliminating imperialism and achieving democracy, socialism and unity ... The Congress believes that the solution of this question should be based on the principles of Kurdish-Arab brotherhood, and the belief in the right of both peoples to preserve their national identity.⁶³

The Resolution ended by recommending the speedy implementation of those articles of the June Declaration still outstanding, and that more attention should be given to agriculture, industry and the summer resorts of the north, as a step to achieving economic unity and local self-government. The proposals of the Congress can be summarized as follows:

- 1 - Any solution should be peaceful, and all attempts to jeopardize Arab-Kurdish relations should be vigorously opposed.
- 2 - The outstanding articles in the June Declaration should be speedily implemented.
- 3 - Direct relations should be established between the Kurdish and Arab masses, and there should be a

strengthening of Ba'thist relations with the progressive, national, political and professional Kurdish organizations, in order to bypass the traditional leaderships.⁶⁴

Clearly, the Ba'th Party's attitude towards the Kurdish problem seemed to have undergone considerable changes, and the Resolution represented a definite shift of policy in the direction of practicality. Apart from the leaders' desire to strengthen the regime, this change in policy derived also from the close relations between the Ba'th Party and the Ahmad-Talabani group. The constant use of the phrase 'progressive Kurdish forces' was a clear reference to the group, making a clear distinction between it and Mulla Mustafa's following, which was always regarded as traditional. The Resolution was obviously binding upon the government, although it was forced to react to Kurdish defiance in March 1969 and was ultimately to become involved in military operations.

Despite the government's declaration in February 1969 that it had implemented virtually all the articles of the June Declaration except those concerning the creation of the all-Kurdish province of Dohuk and the future of the Peshmerga, the escalation of hostilities threatened to jeopardize government policy towards the Kurds for a while. The regime became involved once more in what it had been endeavouring to avoid; what was meant to be a 'punitive expedition' dragged on well into the spring of 1969.

As the fighting in Kurdistan continued, with the government unable to establish the national front it badly needed, it was now Mulla Mustafa's turn to believe that the regime was disintegrating. He there-

fore took the opportunity to call on the other national parties to co-operate to find a solution to the Kurdish question,⁶⁵ and this appeal was followed by further requests from the KDP for co-operation to overthrow the regime.⁶⁶ The KDP reminded the public that the Kurds had not forgotten their experience with the Ba'th Party in 1963⁶⁷ presumably in an attempt to canvass support against a regime which, the KDP feared, might have gained the support of a number of Kurds after the adoption of several pro-Kurdish measures. In the meantime the KDP continued to boast about its military might, which it represented as the factor which would play the decisive role in bringing down the Ba'th.⁶⁸

The turning point came about in March-April 1969 when three factors combined to swing the balance in favour of a peaceful settlement. The first was the success of the Peshmerga in attacking the Kirkuk oil installations with their newly acquired long range artillery.⁶⁹ The second and more important factor was Iran's decision in April 1969 to declare the 1937 Treaty with Iraq 'null and void',⁷⁰ a step which was bound to escalate the Iranian-Iraqi dispute. The third factor was Iraq's increasing difficulties with the oil companies, which meant that oil revenues were not going to be paid consistently, a policy frequently employed against Iraqi republican regimes. In such circumstances, the new leaders did not feel sufficiently financially secure to conduct a full scale war in Kurdistan.

In fact the government was beginning to realize that by continuing the fighting it was leaving many gaps of which the enemies of the regime could take

advantage. The most serious threat came from Iran, which had long been conducting a dispute with Iraq over Iran's right to use the Shatt-al-'Arab waterway, over which Iraq claimed complete sovereignty, and the precise demarcation of certain areas of the border between the two countries. The Iranians had made no secret of their intention to amend the 1937 Treaty since 1965, but they did not bother to lay any great emphasis on the issue because the regimes of the two 'Arifs were simply too weak to offer any opposition; thus in 1966 the Iranians proceeded to ignore the 1937 Treaty and began to use the waterway as they chose. When the Ba'thists came to power, the likelihood of a strong government in Iraq became greater, and Iran now risked confrontation. In order to avoid this the Iranians resorted to trying to weaken the new regime. First they increased their support for the Peshmerga, enabling them to strike at the most vital targets in the north of Iraq, particularly Kirkuk, and also provided the Kurds with advanced artillery. In addition the Iranian intelligence service was actively involved in plotting against the Ba'th, and exacerbating the sectarian division between Sunnis and Shi'is.⁷¹

As the government began to take stock of the situation, it became clear that it could only manage to keep the Kurds at bay with its comparatively limited resources, while the Kurds could infiltrate and hit vital targets. On the other hand the government saw clearly that if it were to give in to Iran it would be humiliated internationally. As the Iraqi Army was not ready to fight on two fronts, it realised that it must find a solution through conciliation and

moderation.⁷² It also realised that in the prevailing circumstances the Kurds would not accept anything short of full autonomy, which Ba'thist ideology had always rejected as a step towards separation. Thus the government had the additional and urgent duty of convincing the Party's members and the Iraqi people as a whole of the need for a peaceful settlement based on autonomy.⁷³ This probably explains the long delay between the promulgation of the Resolution of the VIIth Congress in January 1969, and the achievement of a settlement in March 1970. Through speeches from prominent members and in its publications the Party began to give frequent and detailed accounts of the Kurdish question and Kurdish national demands, and sought to stress the rights of the Kurds and the need for a peaceful solution.

Early in 1969 the paper al-Thawra al-'Arabia, which was only circulated to Party members, published three studies of the problem. In the first, which appeared in April 1969, the paper discussed 'international aspects of the Kurdish question'. This article gave a fairly full account of the history of the Kurdish problem in Iraq accusing the 'imperialist' powers, such as Britain, of having exploited it for their own purposes. After repeating what the Regional Congress had said about the Kurdish question and the need for a solution, the writer explained the extent of foreign interest in the problem and the various attempts to exploit it. The article also stressed the Ba'th Party's moral obligation to give the problem more attention and asked members to make themselves thoroughly acquainted with the details. It was described as having been brought about by

'the imperialists', who used Israel and Iran as spear-heads to implement their plots against the Iraqi Republic and Revolution. The article repeatedly acknowledged that the Kurds had their own legitimate national rights, and that the denial of these rights by successive governments had driven the Kurds to revolt.⁷⁴ In short the Party justified, for the first time, the Kurds' use of arms against earlier regimes, as well as the struggle for Kurdish national demands in general.

The second study gave an account of the different components of the Kurdish national movement, and the development of political parties in Kurdistan since the establishment of the Iraqi state. In discussing Mulla Mustafa's faction, the writer made it clear that it was the strongest inside the movement for many reasons; its numerical strength, its good armaments and reserves, the moral and material support it received from various sources, and finally its strategic occupation of well protected terrain.⁷⁵ It was particularly significant that this article represented Mulla Mustafa's faction as a moderate one by stating that its 'sole demand was a statement from the government accepting the June Declaration as the basis on which the fulfilment of the Kurdish national rights should be built,' and that it did not brand it as separatist, a charge which would naturally serve to alienate all Iraqi nationalists from the Kurdish Revolt. The Ba'th's attempt to paint a better image of Mulla Mustafa in the minds of its own members indicated the government's ultimate intention to come to terms with the KDP.⁷⁶ At this stage Michel 'Aflaq, the founder and philosopher of the Ba'th, also

stepped in to support the government's efforts to convince the Iraqi Arabs and, more important, Party members, of the need for a peaceful settlement based on autonomy. While criticising various negative aspects of the Iraqi Kurdish movement, he declared that 'the party has no objection to the Kurds' right to have a sort of autonomy'.⁷⁷

Meanwhile, as a further example of its good intentions, the government promulgated a decree establishing a new all-Kurdish Province of Dohuk on 28 June 1969. The establishment of Dohuk was the subject of one of the secret clauses in the June Declaration, and was also one of the bases for any settlement with Mulla Mustafa. Previous governments had always refrained from conceding this demand because they believed that the creation of an area with defined boundaries would make it easier for the Kurds to work for separation.

In a third article, the Ba'th paper discussed the different attitudes of the various Iraqi political parties towards the Kurdish national movement and its demands. As all these groups stressed the need to make good the Kurds' legitimate national rights, and considered local government as the only basis for this, the article concluded that the Ba'th agreed with them, declaring that autonomy, al-hukm al-dhati, was the best solution.⁷⁸ It was the first time that any nationalist party in Iraq had made such a statement.

Having informed Party members about the Kurdish question and the need for a peaceful solution the government proceeded to put feelers towards Mulla Mustafa. In September 1969 'Aziz Sharif, an

ex-Communist and leader of the old al-Sha'b party, was sent as an unofficial delegate to meet the KDP politbureau and Mulla Mustafa, to convey the government's readiness to reach a peaceful settlement.⁷⁹ As the answer he received was positive, Sharif went back to Baghdad and later returned again to Kurdistan; the way was now clear for direct negotiations.⁸⁰ At this stage it was obvious that these moves towards a peaceful settlement could not be kept secret, and the government decided to bring the subject out into the open. However, before opening direct negotiations the government took the initiative in laying good foundations for them. On 17 December 1969 the Ba'th Party daily al-Thawra carried a long article entitled 'How to solve the Kurdish question', which was signed by the editorial board.⁸¹ Again, this article was the first frank and objective public statement put out by an official Iraqi newspaper. The article started with the premise that 'the Kurdish question is a national one ... And our era is that of the struggle of oppressed nationalities to assert themselves as national entities, and to liberate their countries from all forms of imperialist domination. The revolution of these oppressed nationalities is an essential part of the international revolution ... Thus the Kurdish question, being a national question, is a symptom of the age and is in tune with its movement. It is also essentially liberating and progressive. However, although the struggles of oppressed nationalities have often taken similar paths of a struggle against imperialism, the particular circumstances that have surrounded the Kurdish people have directed them

along a special path different from that of other nationalities.'⁸² Both the Arab and the Kurdish nations were described as struggling for liberation and unity; the Arab nation was neither arrogant nor chauvinistic, but 'oppressed, and a prey to imperialist forces'. All this was a prelude to the conclusion that to preserve its liberal and progressive essence the Kurdish cause should unite its struggle with that of the Arab liberation movement. 'This essence cannot be preserved if the Kurdish leaders behave as if they were struggling against an imperialist and chauvinistic nation ... The differences between the two nations, Arab and Kurdish, are minimal, and should not be taken as an excuse for dispute.'

These admissions constituted a turning point not only in Ba'th Party policy towards the Kurdish question but also in official, that is governmental, attitudes. As well as exonerating the Kurds' armed struggle, the Kurdish movement as a whole was now seen as part of the international revolution and the Iraqi movement. The article gave accounts of the progress of the Kurdish national movement and of the united Kurdish-Arab struggle. A more detailed account was given of the reasons for the division of the Iraqi national movement, the mistakes of the Kurdish leadership and the reasons for the Kurdish Revolt of 1961. Mulla Mustafa's leadership was blamed for the separation of the Kurdish struggle from that of the rest of the Iraqi people. The article argued that the Ba'th was now best placed to solve the problem for a variety of reasons:

'First, as an Arab nationalist party, the Ba'th is not going to neglect the interests of Arab

nationalism in its attempts to solve the Kurdish question. Secondly, the Ba'th Party believes that there is a vital relationship between human and national issues; here it differs from the ICP which puts its cosmopolitanism above national feeling and aspirations. Thirdly, the Ba'th Party is not chauvinistic, and is opposed to the oppression of nations. Fourthly, the Ba'th believes in socialism and democracy, the two essential bases for the solution of any national question. Lastly, and most important, it is a fact that any political group wishing to solve this question must be in power in order to be able to put its ideas into practice. All solutions remain academic if the movement proposing them is in opposition ... The Ba'th Party's accession to power is a historic opportunity for the Kurdish national movement and all other national forces to solve the Kurdish question ... All these considerations explain why the military regimes failed to solve the problem'.⁸³

The article added that excessive demands on the Kurdish side would not help in reaching a settlement. Clearly the Ba'thist leadership wanted to make this point before embarking upon any negotiations, bearing in mind their experience with Mulla Mustafa's demands in 1963.⁸⁴ Another significant point was the assertion that the Ba'th Party had been in favour of a peaceful settlement in 1963, but that Mulla Mustafa's intransigence had foiled this and thus indirectly given prominence to the military, who were in favour of total war. This statement was also

evidently a warning to Mulla Mustafa's leadership that the military were once more opposed to a peaceful settlement, and that they might force the government to embark upon another war if peace were not attained.

Another matter discussed in the article was the so-called crisis of confidence between the government and the Kurdish leadership.⁸⁵ Mulla Mustafa had been able to maintain that he had lost confidence in all Iraqi governments, especially that of the Ba'thists, because 'they had deceived him when he believed in their promises'. This time it was claimed that the Ba'thist leadership itself had lost confidence in Mulla Mustafa's leadership, and examples of his readiness to co-operate with all governments except that of the Ba'th were given to support this view. The writer maintained that 'whenever the Ba'th Party comes to power Mulla Mustafa's objective changes from demanding the implementation of fundamental Kurdish national rights to working to topple the regime itself ... This is also apparent from the fact that all the positive steps which the government has taken in favour of Kurdish nationalism have failed to lead Mulla Mustafa to take one move in a positive direction, and his attitude remains negative towards the Ba'th Party and the government'.⁸⁶ Finally the article stressed how vital it was that the Kurdish leadership should take advantage of Ba'thist readiness to solve the Kurdish problem, and called upon them to co-operate with the government 'in directing the efforts of all national forces against imperialism and Zionism'. It was obvious that this article would make a great

impact upon Kurdish and all other nationalist forces in the country, and even outside it. The government's decision to make this discussion public was an encouragement to the other parties to participate in negotiations for a peaceful settlement. Indeed, the ICP, KDP and the Ahmad-Talabani faction all elaborated on the article in their own papers.⁸⁷

Khabat's answer to the article in al-Thawra was of similar length, mainly concentrating on answering al-Thawra's charges against Mulla Mustafa's leadership, although its tone was conciliatory, maintaining that Mulla Mustafa and the KDP had always been in favour of peace and would support the government's efforts to find a peaceful settlement.⁸⁸ However the appearance of the article in al-Thawra also provided an excuse for the different Kurdish factions to attack and condemn each other for the movement's mistakes.⁸⁹

As a result of the KDP's encouraging response, the Ba'th Party decided to send Samir 'Aziz al-Najm, a member of the Regional Command, to Kurdistan to mark the first direct contact between the government, Mulla Mustafa, and the KDP. al-Najm stayed one day in Kurdistan and affirmed the government's willingness to lay firm foundations for a long-standing agreement.⁹⁰ At this stage, and after obtaining the necessary 'guarantees', the KDP decided to send a member of its politbureau, Dara Tawfiq,⁹¹ to Baghdad to explain the Kurdish point of view to the government. Tawfiq met with Saddam Husain, the Deputy Chairman of the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party and the man who was apparently the chief sponsor of a peaceful settlement, as well as the Regional Command itself. The

position taken by Tawfiq seems to have been acceptable, or at least encouraging, to the Ba'th leadership, and accordingly a larger government delegation was formed and sent to Kurdistan to set the formal negotiations in motion.⁹² The government delegation furnished with a personal message from President al-Bakr to Mulla Mustafa, arrived in Kurdistan and met with a Kurdish delegation headed by Mulla Mustafa himself.⁹³ The two sides engaged in preliminary negotiations, and different aspects of the various Kurdish demands were discussed. Autonomy was agreed on in principle, and the details were left to be worked out later. The real negotiations began in January 1970 in Baghdad with another Kurdish delegation headed by Dr Mahmud 'Uthman which included some of the most prominent members of the KDP Politbureau. This delegation conferred with the Iraqi leaders, although Saddam Husain did not participate directly, simply maintaining contact and keeping in touch with the two delegations.⁹⁴ These talks were gradually becoming more wide-ranging and nearly all the prominent leaders on both sides took part.⁹⁵ The slow pace of the negotiations could only indicate the extent of the differences between the two sides, and indeed these differences were often very considerable. Some concerned the Kurds alone while others concerned the form of government Iraq should have. The most important issue was the demarcation of the Kurdish region, and at the centre of this was the dispute over whether the oil rich province of Kirkuk should be included in the autonomous region. The Kurdish side insisted that Kirkuk was Kurdish, although also inhabited by other small minorities.

The government maintained that this province was a mixed region and had to be left in its hands, suggesting a compromise under which the areas with overwhelming Kurdish majorities, notably the sub-district of Chamchamal, should be included in the autonomous region.⁹⁶ The Kurds refused this and stuck to their initial suggestion.⁹⁷ Another point of conflict was the future of the Peshmerga forces. Although the government acceded to Kurdish demands that these forces should be transformed into border guards, disagreement arose over the number of the Peshmerga to be included in the new force. The government accepted five thousand but the KDP asked for ten thousand. A third issue concerned the political system in Iraq and Kurdish participation in it. The Kurdish delegation wanted structural changes in the executive and legislature, arguing that the Kurds should participate in the executive-cum-legislature, the RCC, or in any future national council, in proportion to their numbers in the total population of Iraq. They also asked for the formation of a coalition government which would include representatives of the other national parties.⁹⁸ The government made several attempts to meet Kurdish demands, or at least offer a compromise. To the first demand, the demarcation of the Kurdish area and the inclusion of Kirkuk, the government suggested that this matter was in fact not crucial to the problem; the issue was not whether this or that region should belong to this or that side but rather that 'the Kurds in Iraq should all enjoy a democratic status which would enable them to exercise their national rights'.⁹⁹ The government also argued that the

problem was to find the right legislation to ensure these rights rather than to try to define the land on which these rights would be exercised. The government further reasoned that if it were to accept the Kurds' right to enjoy their national aspirations then administrative divisions would neither help nor prevent the Kurdish people from exercising this right. It insisted that the negotiations should concentrate on Kurdish national rights and the legal framework to secure them, hinting further that insistence on a precise area would lead the government to sense a disposition for separation, which, if it came about, would lead to more disasters and suffering for Kurds and Arabs alike. Naturally, the government was not prepared to surrender control of the country's most vital resource. The Kurds were keen to include Kirkuk in the autonomous region, since they believed that if it were included their demand for two-thirds of the national oil revenue would be justified. A compromise was reached after a suggestion by 'Aziz Sharif that the future of Kirkuk and the other disputed areas should be decided later by a plebiscite.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand the government promised to return the Arab tribes which had been newly settled in Kurdistan to their former homelands.

With regard to the other problem, that of Kurdish participation in the government, the government stressed that this could be achieved by establishing a national front which would include all progressive and nationalist parties. The Ba'th Party was working to establish such a front under its own leadership, and was faced with hesitation on the part of the Communists and the KDP. Both these parties insisted

on equality within the front, which would enable them to participate positively in legislation. The Ba'thist leaders refused this suggestion since they were determined to have the leading role inside the front. This issue was very critical and the government needed more time to deliberate upon it. Yet it was anxious not to let this question damage its drive to reach a peaceful settlement, which was beginning to look as if it was within reach. The government delegation therefore argued that the present discussions were solely for the purpose of solving the Kurdish problem and were only concerned with the national rights of the Kurds.¹⁰¹ However, the government managed to go some way towards satisfying the Kurds' desire to play a fuller part in Iraqi affairs. A decision was taken to include five Kurdish ministers in the Cabinet, compared with two in previous cabinets, and the appointment of a Kurdish Vice-President of the Republic was also promised. Through this demand for participation, the KDP was clearly aiming at getting 'firm guarantees' to ensure that the government would be unable to renege on its promises and attack the Kurds at will. To this the government replied that there was no more effective guarantee than the belief of both sides that continuation of the armed struggle would not solve the problem. 'However, there are various other guarantees the Kurdish leadership can rely on', the editor of al-Thawra maintained. 'First there is the fact that the Kurdish leadership is now negotiating with a political party with a popular base, and not with one person, as was the case with Qasim, the two

'Arifs and Bazzaz ... The other important guarantee is the Ba'th Party's sincere intention and ability to reach a peaceful settlement ... Any other guarantees would prove fruitless ... Thus the Ba'th Party should be supported to remain in power to implement any agreement ... which will itself constitute a guarantee'.¹⁰² This was yet another attempt to demonstrate to the Kurds their dependence on the Ba'th Party to achieve their national demands. Without giving any guarantees, al-Thawra was trying to enlist the KDP as an ally for the government. Agreement was quickly reached, however, on a number of other principal and secondary issues, which encouraged both parties to stick to the negotiations. The future of the Peshmerga forces was agreed upon after a compromise on the number to be incorporated into the proposed border guard. Six thousand would be admitted, the others returning to their previous jobs, while the government was to support those left without a job until it could find work for them. It was also agreed that Kurdish should be the official language in those parts of Kurdistan where Kurds formed the majority, and a secondary language in the rest of Iraq. The Kurds were given the right to form their own political and professional organisations. The government also undertook to withdraw its irregular forces, the Fursan, from Kurdistan, together with some units of the Army. Both sides pledged the implementation of the Agrarian Reform in Kurdistan.¹⁰³ It was obvious that the government's amenability to Kurdish demands (especially that concerning the Peshmerga) and its general preparedness to accept demands which the Ba'th had considered quite out of

the question in 1963 increased the sense of optimism among the Kurds that a peaceful settlement was possible.

Despite these hopeful beginnings, a rift soon arose. According to Kurdish claims, an agreement was reached on the other critical issues on 4 and 5 February, when Mulla Mustafa sent his two sons Idris and Mas'ud at the head of a Kurdish delegation to sign it. But according to a Kurdish source, 'the government went back on its promises and presented a new agreement totally different from that reached in the talks'.¹⁰⁴ The KDP delegation was deeply angered and went back to Kurdistan with the intention of breaking off the negotiations for good. However, according to 'Uthman, 'thanks to Sharif, who went back to Kurdistan with the delegation, thus maintaining the link between the two sides', a breakdown was averted. Sharif, who had participated in all the talks, managed to convince the Kurdish leadership to stick to the negotiations and to reach a final settlement. In the end the KDP agreed to send a memorandum to the government on 14 February, praising its initially positive attitude, but listing all the differences between the initial agreement and that presented by the government.¹⁰⁵ Although never confirmed by the government, it may well have been that the Ba'thist leadership had begun to feel overwhelmed by what it saw as ever-increasing Kurdish demands, and was possibly also faced with opposition from the officers for giving in to the Kurds. It therefore wanted to pursue delaying tactics in the hope that the Kurds would eventually moderate their demands. However, although the Kurdish question continued to be

regularly discussed in the various newspapers, especially al-Thawra, contacts between the government and Mulla Mustafa's faction ceased after 15 February, the date on which the government received the KDP's memorandum.

The government deliberated these demands for about a month while arguments took place over the question of whether or not it should compromise. The military leaders, General Hardan al-Tikriti and General Salih Mahdi 'Ammash, respectively Ministers of Defence and Interior, were steadfastly against the idea of giving in to the Kurds, while the civilian faction, headed by Saddam Husain, favoured compromise and was keen to reach a settlement.¹⁰⁶ Husain was in fact in the process of consolidating his control over the country, and sponsored the achievement of a peaceful settlement of the Kurdish problem because it would weaken the position of the military. Yet it is difficult to say whether this month of deliberation over the Kurdish demands was merely a civilian tactic to win military support for the agreement,¹⁰⁷ or whether it was caused by the difficult situation in the country following the foiling of yet another military coup on 20 January 1970.

According to documents released by the Iraqi government immediately afterwards, this attempt was sponsored by the Iranian government and was led by rightist officers. This incident led the government to believe yet more strongly in the need for peace in Kurdistan. It was obvious that the civilians had emerged with greater strength after this was foiled and were now more able to convince all hard-liners of the necessity of peace to enable the government

to counter the Iranian threat effectively.

On 8 March Saddam Husain himself arrived in Kurdistan. He met Mulla Mustafa and the KDP leaders, and assured them that the government was ready to ratify all the agreements which had been reached in the initial talks in Baghdad. He stayed three days in Kurdistan while the details of the plan were worked out and the agreement was prepared for government endorsement before making it public. On 11 March it was promulgated over Baghdad Radio and TV by President al-Bakr.

A whole host of contingent political circumstances combine to explain the conclusion of this agreement. Apart from the fact that there was a general understanding that war would not solve the problem, and that the Army was not ready for a war in Kurdistan, there was the growing threat from Iran, which increased with the occurrence of regular border skirmishes. Finally, Iraq's desire to get on with its long term development and consolidation was another, if not perhaps the most significant, factor. As a tribute to his success in reaching the conclusion of this agreement Saddam Husain was appointed lead of the Supreme Committee for Northern Affairs, the body specially created to supervise the carrying out of the agreement.¹⁰⁸

Footnotes

- 1 See the First Declaration of the 17 July Revolution 1968. See also The Times, 18 July 1968.
- 2 In 1963-4 the Ba'th split into two factions, one to the left and one to the right. The ICP underwent a split in 1967, the first group continuing as the ICP, while the second came to be known as the Committee of Armed Struggle, under the leadership of 'Aziz al-Hajj, and Khalid Ahmad Zaki (who was on the Staff of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation). See Confino, M, and Shamir, S, (eds), The USSR and the Middle East, Jerusalem 1973; for 'Aziz al-Hajj see Kelidar, A, (ed) The Integration of Modern Iraq, London 1979, pp 183-192.
- 3 This revolt was crushed immediately by the joint efforts of the Air Force, Army and Police. Khalid A. Zaki was killed in these actions.
- 4 New York Times, 24 June 1968 and 8 July 1968.
- 5 In fact at one stage in July 1968, in a moment of despair, Yahya submitted his resignation. 'Arif refused to accept it, and asked Yahya to form another Cabinet at a time when Yahya's personal integrity was under heavy attack from all parties. See O'Ballance (1973), p 148.
- 6 Major General al-Bakr was a leading figure in the Ba'th Party and one of the Free Officers who toppled Qasim in 1963. He was Prime Minister during the first Ba'th government in February 1963.
- 7 See New York Times, 18 July 1968.
- 8 al-Thawra newspaper, 22 December 1969.
- 9 New York Times, 22 July 1968.
- 10 al-Na'if's attitudes were clearly demonstrated in

his attempt to close down the Iraqi National Oil Company, established in 1961, which was to take over all oil prospecting from the foreign companies.

- 11 Husain's strong position inside the Ba'th Party was a result of his own and President al-Bakr's success in reorganising the party after the 1963-64 split.
- 12 This group was known as Jama'at Nusrat al-Iraq, 'Committee to aid Iraq' which was formed to provide and encourage public support for the anti-British government of Rashid Ali. See Abu Jaber, p 12; Afaq Arabia, No 9, May 1976.
- 13 Ibid. See also Gordon H. Torrey, 'The Ba'th - Ideology and Practice', Middle East Journal, xxiii (1969) Pt 4, pp 445-470.
- 14 Abu Jaber (1966), p 168.
- 15 Torrey, (1969).
- 16 In fact the Arab Socialist Party was formed after the Ba'th, and drew its ideology from it. But its emphases were on the necessity for drastic socialist reforms in the Arab World. See Abu Jaber (1966), pp 34-35.
- 17 Cited in Torrey (1969), p 448.
- 18 See the Ba'th Constitution, Abu Jaber (1966), pp 167-170.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 See Nebez, J, Hawla al-Mas'ala al-Kurdia, published by National Union of Kurdish Students in Europe (NUKSE), 1969, pp 9-10.
- 21 Nebez, ibid. See also al-Yasin, N A, al-Mas'ala al-Kurdia, Ministry of Guidance publications, Baghdad, 1975, pp 8-9.

- 22 Dann (1969), p 141.
- 23 Nidhal al-Ba'th, (a documentary survey issued by the Party), Vol 7, pp 145-147, and pp 280-81. The Ba'thists' distrust for Mulla Mustafa's leadership continued to obstruct any attempt at rapprochement between themselves and the KDP until 1969.
- 24 Ibid, pp 281, 255-56, 221-22.
- 25 Ibid, pp 221 & 146.
- 26 Ibid, p 147.
- 27 See p 106 footnote 104.
- 28 Nidhal al-Ba'th, p 147.
- 29 At this stage the Kurdish Revolt did not state that its objective was to end Qasim's regime, and even when it did, it was obvious that the Revolt would stop had Qasim agreed to some Kurdish demands.
- 30 Ibid, pp 147, 221, 256.
- 31 Ibid.
- 32 Ibid, pp 281, 256-57.
- 33 It should also be noted that the Ba'th Party itself did not initiate any contact with the Kurdish leadership until January 1963 when the overthrow of Qasim was imminent.
- 34 See Ahmad's letter to Yahya and Chapter 4 above.
- 35 Nidal al-Ba'th, pp 221-222.
- 36 Ibid, p 281.
- 37 Ibid. Qasim's aim was described by the Ba'th Party as to exhaust the Army which he dreaded, while both Mulla Mustafa and the KDP were accused of aiming to separate the north of Iraq from the rest of the country.
- 38 See Chapter 4 above.

- 39 Although it is difficult to imagine the Kurdish leadership agreeing to any Ba'thist assurances, it is probable that after two years of fighting they realised that continuing the War would neither remove Qasim nor make him give way to their demands. This assumption exposed their dependence on Baghdad and forced them to accept the Ba'thists' verbal assurances.
- 40 See Chapter 5 above.
- 41 The Party leadership failed even to produce an objective study of the problem. At one stage the Regional Command prepared a superficial study and sent it to the National Command, but the latter did not even bother to answer it or recommend any solution, and in the end the matter was completely ignored. Interview with Sa'di.
- 42 See Chapter 5 above.
- 43 al-Mas'ala al-Kurdia, al-Nour publication, p 23.
- 44 Interview with M. 'Uthman.
- 45 'Abdullah Sallum al-Samarra'i in al-Nour, 12 October 1968. Apparently al-Samarra'i was the only prominent Ba'thist leader sincerely striving for the establishment of a new national front to include the ICP and other national parties. See Confino and Shamir (1973), p 393.
- 46 See below, p
- 47 From his position of strength Mulla Mustafa reserved for himself the right to decide which faction was anti-Kurd and which was not. The term 'anti-Kurd', in fact, was to indicate 'anti-Mulla Mustafa' since he never recommended people who did not defer to him to public office.

- 48 Mulla Mustafa's interview with al-Taakhi 25 August 1968. Mulla Mustafa maintained that his faction was equally unwilling to join al-Na'if's Cabinet, but was forced to do so after hearing the names of his two representatives included without their prior knowledge. 'As we did not want to put obstacles in the way of the new regime, we accepted reluctantly', Mulla Mustafa added. Ibid. See also Khabat, 25 December 1969. The KDP's declarations of 11 September 1968 and 10 November 1968.
- 49 al-Thawra, 22 December 1969.
- 50 Mulla Mustafa's interview in al-Taakhi, 25 August 1968.
- 51 The Communists were not expected to co-operate with the Ba'thists because of the sense of grievance they had had against them since 1963; See Le Monde, 11 October 1968. The KDP demanded the implementation of the June Declaration before the Kurds would join in any front with the government. See the KDP's declaration of 11 September 1968 and 10 November 1968.
- 52 Edmonds, C J, 'The Kurdish War in Iraq: The Constitutional background', The World Today, December 1968, p 519.
- 53 Le Monde, 13 August 1968 and 11 October 1968. The notorious prison at Nugrat Sulman was closed at the same time.
- 54 The establishment of this Bureau (and other bureaus of the same nature), although intended to show the government's increasing concern for the Kurdish question, was not expected to meet with Kurdish approval for two reasons. First its name was the Northern Affairs rather than

- the Kurdish Bureau, and secondly it included no Kurdish personality. See al-Nour, 8 July 1969.
- 55 Vanly (1970), p 274.
- 56 See al-Nour, No 1, 12 October 1968, for the doctrine, beliefs, and ideology of the Ahmad-Talabani group.
- 57 KDP declaration, 11 September 1968.
- 58 KDP declaration, 10 November 1968.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 The Times, 19 December 1968; also Financial Times, 6 December 1968.
- 61 See al-Nour, 8 February 1969; see also al-Thawra al-'Arabia, No 8, April 1969.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 KDP declaration, 15 May 1969.
- 66 KDP declarations of 15 June 1969 and 11 September 1969.
- 67 KDP declaration, 9 June 1969.
- 68 KDP declaration, 11 September 1969.
- 69 Sunday Times, 11 May 1969. See also Solomon, G, 'Peace with the Kurds', New Outlook, No 3, 1970.
- 70 Schulz, A T, 'A Leadership Role for Iran in the Persian Gulf', Current History, January 1972. See also Gaspard, J, 'The Eastern Arab Front: the dispute between Iraq and Iran and its impact on Kurdistan', The New Middle East, July 1969, p 23.
- 71 See al-Thawra al-'Arabia, No 8, April 1969.
- 72 At that time the Iraqi Army was dispersed over a wide area. A large contingent was in Syria and Jordan, and other units were in the Shatt al-'Arab area. See Financial Times, 22 April 1969.

- 73 See Husain, Saddam, *Ahadith fi al-Qadaia al-Rahina* (Speeches on Current Affairs), al-Thawra publications, Baghdad 1974, p 34.
- 74 See al-Thawra al-'Arabia, No 8, April 1969; also *Kaifa al-Sabil ila hall al-Mas'ala al-Kurdia*, (an approach to the solution of the Kurdish problem), al-Thawra publications, No 3.
- 75 al-Thawra al-'Arabia, No 9, May 1969.
- 76 In the same article, other Kurdish parties, especially KAJYK, were discredited because of their aspirations towards separation.
- 77 See 'Aflaq, M, *Nuqdat al-Bidayah* (The Starting Point), Beirut 1971.
- 78 al-Thawra al-'Arabia, No 12, October 1969.
- 79 Interview with Dr Mahmud 'Uthman, member of the KDP's politbureau, and spokesman of the Revolt.
- 80 Sharif's mission was so successful that he was appointed Minister of Justice on 31 December 1969.
- 81 The editor was Tariq 'Aziz, then a member of the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party, who later became Minister of Guidance.
- 82 al-Thawra, 17 December 1969. See also the pamphlet *Kaifa al-Sabil...*
- 83 *Kaifa al-Sabil...*
- 84 See Chapter 5 above.
- 85 Ibid.
- 86 *Kaifa al-Sabil ...*
- 87 See *Khabat*, 25 December 1969; al-Nour's elaboration appeared in the booklet *al-Mas'ala al-Kurdia*, al-Nour publications 1970. See also the ICP's elaboration in the pamphlet *al-Sabil ila Hall al-Mas'ala al-Kurdia: Radd 'ala ma nushira fi Jaridat al-Thawra fi 17 Dec 1969*,

(Towards a solution of the Kurdish problem; reply to the article published in al-Thawra on 17 December 1969), Baghdad, March 1970.

- 88 Khabat, *ibid.*
- 89 See Khabat, *ibid.*, and al-Mas'ala al-Kurdia, al-Nour publications.
- 90 Interview with 'Uthman.
- 91 An old Communist and a member of the KDP's politbureau, who later became the editor of the KDP's newspaper al-Taakhi.
- 92 The government delegation was headed by Major General Hamad Shahab, the Chief of Staff, and included Sa'dun Ghaidan, Officer Commanding, Baghdad forces, 'Abd al-Khaliq al-Samarra'i and Murtadha al-Hadithi, members of the Regional Command of the Ba'th Party, and 'Aziz Sharif. Fu'ad 'Arif, a former Kurdish minister, also joined them. Interview with 'Uthman.
- 93 The Kurdish delegation included two of Mulla Mustafa's sons, Idris and Mas'ud, and the KDP Politbureau.
- 94 Interview with 'Uthman.
- 95 Various senior ministers, like those of Defence and the Interior, were rotated to represent the Iraq government, while the KDP politbureau and some members of the Central Committee represented the Kurds.
- 96 This suggestion had previously been made by the Ba'thist government in 1963.
- 97 See the KDP's statement, al-Niqat al-Asasia allati ma zalat qa'id al-Dars fi al-Mufawdat (The Principal Issues remaining under scrutiny in the negotiations), (1970).

- 98 Ibid.
- 99 Kaifa al-Sabil..., p 50. In the meantime the government issued a decree in January 1970 by which the Turkomans, the majority inhabitants of Kirkuk, were allowed to enjoy their national and cultural rights. See Manh al-Huquq al-Thaqafia li'l-Muwatinin al-Turkoman wa al-Nadiqin b'il-Syrianiyah (Proclamation of cultural rights for (our) Turkomen and Syriac-speaking countrymen), Ministry of Guidance, Baghdad 1972.
- 100 Interview with 'Uthman.
- 101 Ibid, see also Kaifa al-Sabil..., pp 50,54.
- 102 Kaifa al-Sabil..., pp 38-40.
- 103 See the KDP statement al-Niqat al-Asasia...
- 104 Interview with 'Uthman.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 See Husain (1974), pp 33-34. See also Kelidar (1975), p 10.
- 107 Shortly after the signature of the agreement with the Kurds both Hardan al-Tikriti and Salih 'Ammash were relieved of their posts and appointed vice-Presidents of the Republic, while Saddam Husain was promoted to the vice-Chairmanship of the RCC.
- 108 The full text of the March Manifesto is given in Appendix C of Khadduri, M, Socialist Iraq: a study in Iraqi Politics since 1968, Washington DC, 1978, pp 231-240.

CHAPTER NINE

The international community and the Kurdish national movement

In broad terms, the Kurdish problem and the Kurds' discontent with Baghdad have been a constant source of weakness for successive Iraqi governments. Furthermore, Iraq's rivals and enemies have welcomed the opportunity to exploit this apparently perennial problem in order to exert pressure on her. Thus the Kurdish national movement has been supported both materially and morally by various countries and organisations which have felt that success for the Kurds would help to achieve their aim of weakening Iraq. On the other hand the failure of successive Iraqi regimes to find a solution to the problem has enhanced the position of the Kurdish national movement, to the extent that rather than being considered a regional problem concerning only those states with Kurdish minorities, it has acquired an international status. Iraq's claim that the Kurdish issue was purely an internal one began to appear unconvincing especially when news of the Revolt and the Kurds' demands made headlines in the world press. 1963 was the year in which the Kurdish question was

fully internationalised, when the government first approached a third party, President Nasser, to mediate between the Kurds and themselves. In the same year the Republic of Mongolia, instigated by the USSR, demanded the inclusion of the Kurdish question on the UN agenda. After all this publicity the Kurdish war continued to rage, providing the world community with more justification for internationalising the question. Thus Iraq's involvement in the war in Kurdistan affected its role inside the Arab world, its relations with its neighbours, and its attitude towards non-Arab countries.

The Arab World and the Kurdish question

Until the later 1950s the Arab world paid little, if any, attention to the Kurdish problem, let alone to the idea of using it as a factor in inter-Arab disputes. The various Arab leaders always regarded it as an internal Iraqi problem, and had generally refrained from interfering, since most of them were attempting to solve the post-independence problems of their own countries, and the inter-Arab struggle was not yet so acute as to drive an Arab country to use a national minority against a fellow Arab regime. The Kurdish problem assumed greater importance after the success of the Egyptian Revolution and the accession of Nasser to power, which intensified the struggle between Iraq and Egypt for leadership of the Arab world. It was then that the Kurdish national movement began to be considered a factor in this struggle, and Egypt under Nasser was the first country to show interest in the question. Late in the 1950s Nasser set out to exploit the

Kurdish national movement in order to embarrass his arch-rival, Nuri al-Sa'id. Nasser's determination to use the Kurds as an element in his favour was strengthened by the fact that Iraq's allies, and co-members of the Baghdad Pact - Turkey and Iran - both had Kurdish minorities. Since there was no active national movement in Kurdistan, Nasser planned to encourage national feeling hoping to be able to instigate rebellions against the three regimes. Accordingly, at the beginning of 1958, Sawt al-'Arab began transmissions in Kurdish directed to Kurdistan. He explained this essentially tactical move to Ibrahim Ahmad, the Secretary General of the KDP, whom he met in Cairo after the Iraqi Revolution of 1958.¹ He told Ahmad that he had no objection to the Iranian and Turkish Kurds having independence, but thought that no such right should be accorded to the Iraqi Kurds.² Either - like most Arab nationalists - he did not regard Iraqi Kurdistan as part of Kurdistan at all, or he must have feared that the recognition of the rights of the Iraqi Kurds might ignite the problem of minorities all over the Arab world in general, and the Kurds of Syria in particular, which would make him appear to be trying to divide rather than unite the Arab world. However, he adhered to his decision to continue the Kurdish radio service despite protests from Iran and Turkey.³ Nasser's attempt to use the Kurds as a factor in his favour in the inter-Arab struggle might well have been a great success had it not been for the July 1958 Revolution in Iraq. Since taking over in Egypt Nasser's standing amongst the Kurds had continued to rise; like all nationalists, the Kurds regarded him

as the leader who embodied their own national hopes and as the symbol of all national liberation movements in the third world. The KDP was keen to establish direct relations with Nasser's regime but only managed to do so indirectly in 1957, when they established links with the leaders of the Syrian Ba'th who were pro-Egypt. Another attempt by the KDP early in 1958 to establish direct contact with Nasser himself was foiled by the pre-revolution government's refusal to grant travelling permission to the KDP's representative and by the eruption of the Revolution shortly afterwards.⁴

Nasser's chances of influencing and winning over the Kurds improved after the establishment of the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria in February 1958, since his control over Syria brought his propaganda within reach of the Kurds. However Nasser seems not to have been ready to go that far; he probably feared that increasing pro-Kurdish propaganda might well backfire on him, since the Kurdish minority in Syria, although not negligible was as yet not active politically.⁵ Furthermore, since he was already working to overthrow the Iraqi monarchy, he probably did not want to have a Kurdish problem brewing in Iraq.

Things began to change after the formation of the Republic since the Kurds' hopes were now directed towards the new regime and to Qasim in particular, since he gave a vital boost to the national aspirations of the whole Iraqi people, especially the minorities, and overwhelmed them with promises. In contrast, Nasser's standing with the Kurds began to decline with the appearance of his differences with

Qasim over the unification of Iraq with the UAR. Nasser could no longer represent their hopes, because they feared the overwhelming Arab majority which would result from Arab unity, and he himself realized that he had lost their support to Qasim. Relations between Nasser and the Kurds reached their lowest ebb when he broke off relations with Qasim. They supported Qasim and denounced Nasser, and assisted Qasim in his early attacks on the Nasserites and nationalists. For his part Nasser accused the Kurds of assisting Qasim in his attempts to divide the Iraqi people and to alienate Iraq from the pan-Arab camp.

Although the outbreak of the Kurdish Revolt in 1961 gave Nasser the chance to attack Qasim by giving the Revolt military support, he hesitated to do so, fearing that he would be accused of backing a separatist movement at a time when he was himself accusing Qasim of following an anti-Arab-unity path. However he seems also to have been doubtful of the wisdom of making any approaches to the Kurds because of the friction which had arisen between himself and the Kurdish leadership in 1958 and 1959. However, unlike other Arab nationalists he left himself room for manoeuvre by refraining from denouncing the Kurdish Revolt. Instead, he accepted a Kurdish representative, Shawkat 'Aqrawi, in Cairo in 1961.⁶ Moreover he asked various exiled Iraqi Arab nationalists in Cairo to prepare separate studies of the Kurdish question.⁷

Nasser's unwillingness to denounce the Kurdish Revolt was again due to Iraqi-Egyptian rivalry, which reached its height in the same year, 1961. In June

Qasim claimed Kuwait, and for a while seemed capable of taking over; his position in the Arab world received another boost in September when Syria withdrew from the UAR and took a more pro-Qasim stance. Nasser, who now seemed to be on the losing side, had no alternative but to support any opposition to Qasim, yet he was restricted in his actions with regard to the Kurdish national movement by Arab nationalist suspicions of the KDP, Mulla Mustafa, and the Revolt itself. Thus, his support was tacit, but he was naturally glad to see the Revolt gathering strength and weakening Qasim. On the other hand the Kurds began to look once more to Nasser and Egypt, since Nasser's comparatively moderate views towards their movement and the fact that he did not denounce their Revolt attracted their interest. In February 1963 Qasim was overthrown, and Nasser's position strengthened by the accession to power of Ba'thist-nationalist coalitions in both Iraq and Syria. At the same time, he became directly involved in the Kurdish problem as a result of a request from two Iraqi ministers, al-Sa'di and 'Ammash,⁸ who sought his personal intervention. He was asked to talk to the Kurdish delegation, headed by Talabani, which accompanied the official Iraqi delegation,⁹ in order to try to effect a reconciliation between them and the Iraq government. Nasser agreed and met Talabani and his Kurdish colleagues.¹⁰ This episode suggested to Nasser that he had a potentially important role to play in the Kurdish national movement, and it also appeared that Talabani in particular had convinced him that the Kurds' proposals were essentially reasonable. He saw nothing excessive in

Talabani's demands and advised the Iraqis to try to accommodate them and to be more generally sympathetic towards the Kurds.¹¹ He argued that since the Iraq government had already recognised the existence of the Kurds as a people in the Constitution there could be no reason why it should hesitate to grant them the rights which should naturally follow from this.¹² He was convinced that the Kurds were not seeking separation in the short term and believed that the Arab national movement could win over the support of the Kurdish national movement by giving them some definite assurances. It is also highly probable that during his meetings with Talabani and the other Kurdish personalities Nasser became aware of the deep ideological divisions existing between the Kurds.¹³

Although he did not believe in autonomy, Nasser thought that some form of decentralization would be sufficient to satisfy the Kurds, and proposed that the Iraqis should study the legal arrangements of the Egyptian provinces, which gave each district a certain limited freedom of action. He also consistently emphasized that every effort should be made to avoid total war.¹⁴ He probably realised that a military solution would be difficult, and that if further force were used his own army might well become directly involved, since the new Iraqi leadership was endeavouring to bring about a union between Iraq and Egypt under his presidency. The prospect of involvement became even more dangerously likely after the conclusion of the tripartite union between Iraq, Egypt and Syria in April 1963. Apart from the fact that he did not want to be involved militarily,

Nasser denounced war as a solution for a number of reasons. In the first place he wanted the Iraqi Army to be free to be stationed on the Syrian-Israeli front; secondly he was worried that the Iraq government's insistence on force might lead to a conflict between Iraq and the USSR¹⁵ which would compel him to take sides; thirdly, his experience in the Yemen made him wish to avoid seeing the Iraqi Army similarly placed; and finally he was anxious not to let other foreign powers, especially Iran, take advantage of the conflict.¹⁶ However, the most overriding factor was his fear that support for the Kurds would give him the reputation of supporting separatist movements. It was therefore no accident that whenever he discussed the Kurdish question he began by stating that he would resist all secessionist movements wherever and whenever they took place in the Arab world; he made this clear to Talabani and asked him in turn to emphasise that the Kurds were not separatists.¹⁷ While Nasser represented the 'liberal' Arab attitude towards the Kurdish movement which was also held by Ben Bella of Algeria, other states supported Iraq in its efforts to crush the Kurdish Revolt, which they denounced as a separatist movement. This group even went so far as to detect similarities between the claims of the Kurds and those of Israel. In 1963 this camp was mainly represented by Syria, which not only accused Nasser of backing separatism, but even sent a contingent to fight alongside the Iraqi Army in Kurdistan.¹⁸ Despite the reasons it gave for the despatch of this army, the fact remains that the Syrians were primarily motivated by the fear that success for the Iraqi Kurds would encourage the

small Syrian Kurdish minority to rise against the regime. Furthermore, the same party, the Ba'th, was ruling in both Iraq and Syria.

A third group composed generally of small, ineffectual and uninvolved Arab states were of the view that Iraq as a sister state should be supported in any action it pursued. Hence Kurdish unrest in Iraq always led these states to compare the position of the Iraqi Kurds to that of the Kurds living in Iran and Turkey and to conclude that those in Iraq were far better off. This attitude was represented by such a state as Yemen which declared in 1963 its intention to send military help¹⁹ while Algeria also reverted to approving the Iraq government's military action against the Kurds in June 1963,²⁰ in spite of Ben Bella's earlier contacts with Talabani. Whatever the attitude of particular Arab countries, the fact nevertheless remained that their policy towards the Kurds remained generally 'neutral' and opportunist, although ultimately likely to be on the side of the Iraq government. Even when some Arab leaders advised Iraq not to go to war against the Kurds this was because they wanted Iraq to conserve its strength rather than because they believed in the fulfillment of Kurdish demands. Autonomy was always regarded as a step towards separation by the Arab nationalists and some of the Arab states. Mulla Mustafa's good relations with and dependence upon countries apparently hostile to the Arab cause only helped to strengthen the opposition of these states to the Kurdish national movement. Again, many Arab countries seem to have associated and identified the Kurdish national movement with Communism. Mulla

Mustafa's sojourn in the USSR, the government's accusation that he was a 'Red Mulla', and the USSR's support for the Kurds were all adduced as 'evidence' for this, although Mulla Mustafa's personal hostility to Communism was scarcely open to serious question. As successive Iraqi regimes continued to be unable to solve the Kurdish problem between 1963 and 1968, and as inter-Arab relations deteriorated generally, the Kurdish question began to play a new role. Nasser's break with the Ba'thists in the summer of 1963 led him to increase his moral support for the Kurds. Apart from giving 'Aqrawi, the Kurdish representative, a free hand to state the Kurdish case in Cairo, the Egyptian newspapers gave prominence to the Kurdish version of affairs in Kurdistan.²¹ Thus, as Schmidt remarks, 'for the first time sections of the Arab press showed the Kurds some sympathy'.²² Nasser had not failed to notice the increasing importance of Kurdish affairs in Iraqi politics and set out to take advantage of it. He feared that Iraq's failure to solve the problem was enabling Iran, his rival in the Gulf, to win the Kurds over to providing them with arms and free access to attack the Iraqi units. However, he was at a clear disadvantage, for he could neither persuade the Iraq government to give in to the Kurds, nor give the Kurds a clear pledge that their desire for autonomy would be supported. In the end, especially during the Arab Summit meetings in 1964-65 and after the June war in 1967, Nasser realised that he could not afford to lose the support of Iraq simply for the sake of the Kurds. Thus while advising both 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif and Mulla Mustafa to seek a

peaceful settlement in 1964, Nasser dispatched some Egyptian troops to Baghdad in order to show the Kurds that Iraq was not negotiating from a position of weakness. In October 1965 Nasser's strategy became more clear when he agreed to expel Shawkat 'Aqrawi from Cairo after assurances from al-Bazzaz that his government would find a solution to the Kurdish problem.²³ From then on the Kurdish case was deprived of any official Arab support and was given only superficial discussion in the Arab press except in the Lebanese newspapers. In the end the June 1966 Declaration left the Kurdish question in abeyance, while the Arab-Israeli war the following year ensured that the issue was completely overshadowed.

However, Kurdish discontent was a factor which could be exploited against any Iraqi regime at a time of inter-Arab struggle. This became clear after the accession of the Ba'ath Party to power in 1968, when the Party's ambition to build a strong Iraq and to challenge the other states for the leadership of the Arab World gave renewed importance to the Kurdish question. A strong and ambitious Iraq was particularly feared by Syria,²⁴ which was anxious not to see Iraq's strength grow to the point where she could be challenged. Equally, the conservative Arab states in the Gulf and the Peninsula feared that a strong Iraq might well dominate them. These states were not in a position to challenge Iraq or antagonise it by providing the Kurds with material support, such as arms and ammunition, so that their support took the form of secret gifts of money. It remains unclear how much support was actually given to the

Kurds, but it can be seen how dangerous the Kurdish question could be for Iraq.

The attitude of Turkey and Iran

Since Turkey and Iran shared almost all the rest of Greater Kurdistan, and contained, with Iraq, the vast majority of the Kurdish population, they were the states most directly concerned with the Kurdish issue. Both countries had also felt the effect of Kurdish national movements, and had seen how a revolt by Kurds in any one country would stimulate action among their counterparts in the other two. In fact the three Kurdish communities actually lived side by side, separated only by artificial national borders. Their inevitable involvement therefore necessitated a form of tacit or unofficial co-operation between the three states to counter a possible joint Kurdish national revolt. However, the interests of these countries were not always identical and their long-standing differences sometimes encouraged them to use Kurds against one another. Historically, the Ottoman and Safavid Empires had each used the Kurds as border guards to ward off the other's threat to its frontiers. Following the establishment of Iraq after World War I Turkey tried to make use of the Kurds in Iraq to restore the Mosul Wilayet to Turkish sovereignty.

The eruption of Kurdish revolts in Turkey in the 1920s and the Iraqi Kurds' aspirations for independence made the Turks realise that the Kurds' ambitions might be difficult to contain. Hence co-operation between the three countries was manifested during the Kurdish revolts in Turkey and Iraq in the 1930s.²⁵

Apart from their common fear of concerted Kurdish activities, Turkey, Iraq and Iran were all suspicious of Communist infiltration, since national minorities were regarded as obvious avenues for Communist influence. Thus the states concerned had another pretext for persecuting the Kurds, and they gradually came to overlook their differences, co-operating to seal any gaps through which Communist and Soviet influence might possibly penetrate. Thus in 1937 the three countries signed the Sa'dabad Treaty, under which they agreed to co-operate against any subversive activities that would take place in any of their countries. Although the Kurds justifiably believed that this Treaty was directed against them, it was in fact mainly prompted by fear of Soviet intentions which later seemed to be confirmed by the Soviet occupation of northern Iran and the establishment of quasi-independent states in Azerbaijan and Mahabad in 1946.

Turkish and Iranian involvement in the Kurdish question in Iraq may broadly be divided into two periods, before and after 1958. Before 1958, the interests of the three countries with regard to the Kurds were nearly identical. When they all became signatories of the Baghdad Pact in 1955 the Kurds denounced the Pact as yet another instrument to suppress their national movement, although its major objective was clearly collective defence against the Soviet Union. However, the three countries differed in their treatment of the Kurds. In Turkey, where the majority of the Kurds lived, tough measures were taken to assimilate them.²⁶ After the revolts of 1929 and 1930 the Turkish government

deported most of the Kurds from their homes in the mountains of eastern Turkey to the plains in the west. They were forbidden to maintain their national identity and were classified as 'mountain Turks who have forgotten their native language'. The use of the Kurdish language was forbidden and any form of political activity was likely to be punished with long imprisonment. The Turkish government was particularly anxious to ensure that a Kurdish national movement did not revive. This attitude was reminiscent of the traditional Ottoman treatment of minorities and was also influenced by the belief that Kurdish nationalism and Communism were somehow similar.²⁷ Deportation and suppression were successful to the extent that Turkish Kurdistan remained comparatively trouble-free.

In Iran, the fortunes of the Kurds were more chequered.²⁸ While the Iranian state was going through a period of upheaval between the world wars, the Kurds had considerable freedom of action. However this disappeared when Reza Shah tightened his grip over the quasi-independent party of Iran, and the Kurds were eventually persecuted in the same way as their counterparts in Turkey. The use of the Kurdish language and the wearing of Kurdish costume were banned, and influential Kurdish leaders were deported to Teheran as hostages for the good behaviour of their followers. Moreover, the Shah declared that the Kurds were Persians, and consequently Iranians, since they belonged to the Aryan race and also spoke an Indo-European language. This theory was also upheld by his son, who gave himself the title Arya-Mehr, 'the seal of the Aryans'. However,

during World War II Iran was occupied by the British in the south and the Soviets in the north, and Reza Shah was deposed and replaced by his son, then a comparatively young man. With the support of the Soviet Army, two 'autonomous' republics were formed in Mahabad and Azerbaijan at the end of 1945, but these were crushed by the Iranian Army and the Soviets withdrew. After establishing his firm grip over the country, Muhammad Reza was careful to propitiate the Kurds by relaxing some of the restrictions imposed by his father upon them, especially the wearing of national costumes.²⁹

Hence it was only in Iraq that the Kurds lived in comparative freedom and were allowed to maintain their identity. Turkey and Iran were not afraid that this 'freedom' would encourage pan-Kurdish feeling, since Iraq was tacitly expected to prevent Kurdish national activities from exceeding certain limits. The harmonious policy pursued by the three countries, largely shaped by Nuri al-Sa'id, effectively reassured both Turkey and Iran, and also prevented them from interfering in Iraq's affairs or taking advantage of any Kurdish discontent with the Iraqi monarchy for their own ends. In fact, both Turkey and Iran were only too pleased to see the regime of Nuri al-Sa'id remain in power and hold its own in the face of Nasser and increasing Communist influence. Naturally, the Revolution of July 1958 transformed the political balance of the area. It resulted in Iraq's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact and a major shift in its foreign policy. The Iraqi Kurds were more than encouraged by the Revolution as their national movement enjoyed unprecedented freedom.

What was more alarming to both Turkey and Iran was the influence apparently exerted by the Iraqi Communists and the Soviet Union under the new regime. Kurdish activities in Iraq immediately after the Revolution, and their call to the Kurds of Turkey and Iran to struggle for their freedom further aroused the fears of the governments of both countries. The very fact of the destruction of the monarchy in Iraq, which had been the centre of the Western alliance in the area, naturally put its former allies in a critical position.

At this stage Turkey and Iran regarded themselves as the leaders of the movement against the 'Communist threat' presented by the new regime. At the same time the unwelcome success of the July Revolution made increasingly attractive the idea of using the Kurds against the new regime, especially the tribes, who had been staunch allies of the Iraqi monarchy. Thus those Kurds who fled from Iraq after the Revolution were provided with arms and money by Iran and were encouraged to go back to cause disruption in Iraq.³⁰ They were also promised assistance from Iran if they were to revolt against the new Republic, a promise which was implicit in the declaration that Iran would seriously consider any appeal from the Iraqi Kurds to unite with their Iranian brothers.³¹ Iranian officials also repeatedly asserted that they regarded the Kurds as partners in the Iranian, or Persian, Empire.³² Turkey had no fears of a revived Kurdish national movement and turned a blind eye to the Kurds' movement across its border. Indeed, at this time both Iran and Turkey to a lesser extent took several pro-Kurd measures to counter-balance the encouraging

impact of the Iraqi Revolution and of Qasim. The Iranian government began a Kurdish broadcasting service and sponsored a newspaper called Kurdistan, while Turkey permitted the teaching of the Qur'an in eastern Turkey, and removed some restrictions on the use of Kurdish. However, all these measures, especially in Turkey, were short-lived, and as soon as the possibility of a Communist takeover in Iraq began to recede both countries began to clamp down on the Kurds once more. In 1960 several important Kurdish personalities in Turkey were charged with forming Kurdish separatist organisations and attempting to revive the use of the Kurdish language.³³ As we have already seen, the good relations between Qasim and the Kurds did not last, and the eruption of the Kurdish Revolt in 1961 brought further changes in the Kurdish policies of Turkey and Iran. The two countries were once more faced with the proof that Kurdish nationalism was still very much alive and that continuing to support it, or failing to control or stop it, might mean the shift of Kurdish activity into other parts of Kurdistan.

At this stage Turkey and Iran differed in their approach to the Kurdish question in Iraq. In assessing the relative importance of weakening the Iraqi Republic and of keeping the Kurds quiet the Turkish government seems to have given higher priority to the Kurdish threat, particularly after Qasim's cold-shouldering of the ICP had showed that Iraq would not in fact turn Communist. Thus when the Kurdish Revolt broke out Turkey sealed its borders with Iraq and refused the Kurds any sort of support. It maintained this policy throughout the 1960s and was

often commended by Iraq for doing so very effectively.³⁴ Nevertheless, this action did not mean that the Kurds of Turkey were cut off from the struggle of their fellow nationals in Iraq; they lent assistance by smuggling arms and money into Iraq, and were particularly helpful in smuggling arms and ammunition secretly purchased from Eastern Europe which had to be transported through Turkey to the Peshmerga.³⁵

In 1963 the Turkish government was relieved to see the departure of Qasim and the persecution of the Communists, a development which encouraged Turkey to collaborate more positively with Iraq in repressing the Revolt. During the second round of fighting between June 1963 and February 1964, Turkish liaison officers allegedly co-operated with Iraqi advance troops,³⁶ and the authorities were lenient in dealing with the Air Force's violation of Turkish airspace when in pursuit of the Peshmerga.³⁷ The Turks' strict measures against the Kurds were intensified as the Kurdish Revolt progressed and successive Iraqi governments failed to put an end to it. None of these measures succeeded in curbing the influence of the Iraqi Kurds over those living in Turkey, which was apparent from the formation of a KDP branch in Turkey in 1967 and the circulation of Kurdish nationalist publications in Turkish Kurdistan.³⁸ The increasing Kurdish activity in Turkey attracted the support of leftist organisations such as the Turkish Labour (Workers) Party, the first Turkish party to admit the existence of the Kurdish people. Eventually the government decided that Kurdish activity within its borders was

becoming a real threat and Turkish Kurdistan was one of the areas put under martial law in 1970.³⁹ Thus in its official attitude towards the Kurds and the Kurdish question in Iraq, Turkey has tended to remain on the side of the Iraq government. Apart from the fact that there is at present no real conflict between the two countries, Turkey is likely to assist Iraq partly out of fear of a Kurdish movement developing in Turkey, and partly because of the growing economic and commercial ties between itself and Iraq.

In contrast, Iranian attitudes were generally hostile to Iraq, for a number of fairly long standing historical reasons. Apart from the basic sectarian distrust felt by a Shi'i regime towards a Sunni regime, Iran was alarmed and disturbed at the possible political implications of the rise of Arab nationalism in general and the growth of the influence of Nasser in particular.⁴⁰ Thus Iran was by no means relieved to see Qasim ousted by Arab nationalists in February 1963, fearing that this would act as a great boost to Nasser's position. What Iran dreaded was that Arab irredentism might now be directed towards Arabistan (Khuzistan), and that Nasser would be encouraged to try to extend his influence in the Gulf. Iran therefore chose to support the Kurds in order to use them to combat the growing tide of Arabism after Qasim's fall. However, when the Ba'thist government broke with Nasser in 1963, Iran showed willingness to co-operate with Iraq and Turkey in suppressing the Kurdish Revolt, and indeed both Iranian and Turkish liaison officers are alleged to have helped the Iraqi Army

during the second round of fighting between June 1963 and February 1964. This attitude soon changed after 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif ousted the Ba'th Party in November 1963 and subsequently allied himself completely with Nasser. 'Arif further antagonised the Shah by insulting him on several occasions for his opposition to Arab nationalism.⁴¹

By this time Iraq's increasing instability put her at a disadvantage with regard to Iran, and the Iraqi regime's failure to find a solution to the Kurdish problem and the renewal of the Kurdish war in 1965 made Iran feel able to revive its long-standing disputes with Iraq, particularly the amendment of the 1937 Treaty concerning the Shatt al-'Arab and the demarcation of the borders between the two countries. As Iraq refused to consider any amendments and pressed on with its attempts to unite Iraq with Egypt, Iran stepped up its support of the Kurds by providing the Peshmerga with heavy weapons, advice and training, and by allowing them to use Iranian territory in their attack on the Iraqi Army.⁴² In addition the Kurds were also able to receive all sorts of aid through Iran from their supporters and allies all over the world.

Gradually the rulers of Iraq began to accept that the Kurdish Revolt could never be put down completely if the Iranians continued to assist the Peshmerga, and did not seal their borders to prevent aid reaching them, which was highly unlikely unless a complete rapprochement was achieved. The Iraqis attempted to do this but failed because the price asked by the Iranians was too high for a weak government to pay. For example, when Iraq asked

Iran to stop its military support of the Kurds in 1965, the Shah asked that Iraq give a firm commitment in return to disassociate itself from the pro-Nasser and Arab unity camp.⁴³ Yet after 1966, when the prospect of any Arab union under Nasser looked remote, the Shah asked instead for the amendment of the 1937 Treaty.⁴⁴ Of course, while supporting the Iraqi Kurds, the Shah had to ensure that their Revolt and national activity would not spread to Iran. Mulla Mustafa's promise that the KDP would refrain from instigating or encouraging Kurdish national activity in Iranian Kurdistan seems to have satisfied the Shah, and in fact it was kept. In 1964 and 1968, as tokens of goodwill, Mulla Mustafa handed over to the Iranian authorities some Iranian Communist and anti-Shah refugees who had sought asylum in Iraqi Kurdistan.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, the Iranian security services kept a watchful eye on all Kurdish activities over the borders. The Peshmerga, for example, were prevented from entering Iran with arms or propaganda literature.⁴⁶ Eventually, the Iranian influence on the Kurdish Revolt, both militarily and economically, became so overwhelming that its future was more or less entirely in the hands of the Shah; after 1966 the economy of Iraqi Kurdistan was almost completely integrated with that of Iran. Since Iraqi Kurdistan was blockaded by the government, Kurdish agricultural and manufacturing surpluses were taken to Iran, and Iranian products were flooding the market in Iraqi Kurdistan. Furthermore, Kurdish merchants and go-betweens made fortunes by supplying Iraq on the black market with merchandise that was no longer imported because of

the various austerity measures taken after the 1967 war. In fact, Iraq's heavy involvement in the Kurdish war and the Arab-Israeli conflict enabled the Iranian government to ignore the clauses of the 1937 Treaty. In spite of Iraqi protests, Iran had its own way in the Shatt al-'Arab waterway. The accession of the Ba'th Party to power in July 1968, and their determination to establish a strong government set the scene for a clash between Iraq and Iran. At this stage, taking advantage of the instability that followed the 17 July Revolution, Iran began to voice the need for a formal amendment of the 1937 Treaty. Iraq refused, but Iran was determined, and in order to make sure that Iraq would not be able to retaliate, further increased its assistance to the Kurds, providing the Peshmerga with sophisticated artillery which enabled them to attack the oil installations in Kirkuk.⁴⁷ When hostilities between the Peshmerga and the Iraq government escalated as a result, Iran seized the opportunity to declare the abrogation of the Treaty in May 1969. Iran's increasing involvement in the Kurdish question, and its use of the problem to achieve such objectives as the abrogation of the 1937 Treaty and the increase of its influence in the Gulf, put two alternatives before the Iraq government: either they could give way to the Kurds or they could give in to Iran. In 1970 Iraq chose the first alternative and signed the March Manifesto with the KDP. Nevertheless Iran did not stop its assistance to the Kurds, who in turn began to believe that Iran's support had been the chief factor in forcing Iraq to accept their demands. Indeed, once the Manifesto was signed,

Iranian support for the Kurds increased considerably. The Iranians took advantage of the differences that had arisen between the Iraqis and the Kurdish leadership over the implementation of some clauses in the Manifesto and managed to win the Kurds over again. Hence five years later, in 1975, the Iraqis decided to opt for the second alternative, and gave in to the Iranians in order to end the Kurdish Revolt. This policy was successful in the sense that Iran withdrew support from the Kurds after the Algiers Agreement in 1975, and the Kurdish revolt was crushed.

However, this did not mean that Iranian involvement in or exploitation of the Kurdish question was over. The rapprochement did not put an end to all the disputes between the two countries, and Kurdish discontent with the Iraqi government could always be used to Iran's advantage. Furthermore, in spite of Mulla Mustafa's pledge to the Shah, the effect of the Kurdish Revolt on the Iranian Kurds was positive. Encouraged by the success of the Iraqi Kurds, the Kurds of Iran made various attempts to revolt, the last taking place in 1969. The Iranian authorities crushed it brutally, hanging its leaders and displaying their bodies in public.⁴⁸ Nevertheless the ending of the Kurdish Revolt in Iraq in 1975 had an immediate impact in Iran. Apart from the fact that the most active Iraqi Kurdish leaders went into exile in Iran, there was an increase in black market sales of small arms to the Iranian urban guerilla movements. Those Peshmerga who fled to Iran had either to hand in their arms to the Iranian authorities or to hide them, and it seems that the difficulty of hiding arms

in a foreign country and the need for money impelled them to sell their arms to the anti-Shah organisations.⁴⁹

Israel and the Kurdish question

Like other opponents and rivals of Iraq, Israel has shown an increasing interest in the Kurdish problem, and has sought to take advantage of the failure to solve it. A major reason for this is the radical line Iraq has always taken towards the existence of Israel. Although not a front-line state, Iraq participated in all the wars with Israel, and generally took the view that war should be continued until Israel's destruction,⁵⁰ a factor which had to be taken into consideration by Israel, because Iraqi military and economic potential might prove decisive.

Israeli interest in the Kurdish Revolt began to take shape in 1962-63, when it became a decisive factor in Iraqi politics. A few years later another Arab-Israeli war looked imminent, and in order to neutralise or at least reduce the Iraqi role in the Arab world in general and in any Arab-Israeli war in particular Israel apparently attempted to open a second front against the Iraqi Army.⁵¹ The idea was to keep it entangled in a protracted conflict which would keep any Iraqi participation against Israel symbolic.⁵²

At the beginning Israeli assistance to the Kurds was only moral. Most leading Israeli politicians spoke favourably of the Kurds' 'struggle against the Iraqi government to achieve their national rights'.⁵³ Although never confirmed officially, Israeli assistance to the Kurds was gradually increasing. It began

in the form of providing the Kurds with small arms and ammunition, but in 1964 it was extended to providing the Kurds with training and advice, a development which necessitated the stationing of Israeli personnel in Kurdistan itself.⁵⁴ Hence Iraqi Kurdistan came to be regarded by the Israelis as 'another Israel', or at least 'an ally'.⁵⁵ Furthermore the Israeli government was urged on by three sections of Israeli public opinion to defend and help the Kurds. One section claimed that the Kurds should be supported against what they described as the genocidal policies of the Iraq government. Another section, mainly leftist, supported the Kurds' right to self-determination, while a third group urged that the government should defend the Jewish community in Kurdistan.⁵⁶

Contrary to popular expectation, Israeli co-operation with the Kurds did not encounter any major disapproval from the Kurds as a whole. Many Kurds shared the attitude of the Arabs towards Palestine and Jerusalem and Kurdish soldiers in the Iraqi Army fought Israel with the same zeal as their fellow Arabs, yet despite this the Israeli presence in Kurdistan was tacitly welcomed,⁵⁷ probably because of Mulla Mustafa's strong position in the national movement. As he himself fostered the idea of co-operating with the Israelis, he was in the end able to overcome any public protest.⁵⁸ He believed that the Kurds should depend more heavily on the West in order to achieve their demands, correctly estimating that such assistance would be more consistent than help from the Communist bloc, and that it would force weak Iraqi regimes to give further concessions.⁵⁹ In order to

woo the Israelis, Mulla Mustafa presented himself as a trustworthy man who had no grudge against Israel unlike the Arabs and did not differentiate between 'Kurds, Arabs, Jews and Christians'.⁶⁰ Moreover, while re-organising the KDP in 1964, Mulla Mustafa appointed a Jew to the new Central Committee. It was also alleged that he indicated his readiness to recognise the existence of Israel.⁶¹

Another factor which helped the Israelis was the uncompromising animosity between the Shah of Iran and the pro-Nasser Arab nationalists who dominated Iraqi politics during the regimes of the 'Arif brothers between 1963 and 1968. Hence Israeli and Iranian objectives coincided, enabling Israeli assistance to reach the Iraqi Kurds more easily. Another factor that played into the hands of the Israelis was the nationalists' tactless and mistaken comparison of the Kurds to the Israelis, and constant accusation that they were attempting to create another Israel in the north of Iraq, when there was never any doubt that the Kurds were the indigenous population of the area. The comparison suggested to the Kurds that they were not only being refused their basic national rights but were also regarded as foreigners in their own land.

However, both the Kurdish leadership and its organizations were cautious not to let the link with Israel turn public opinion in Iraq against them. The Kurds always denied the existence of any connection between their movement and Israel, attributing this to 'Iraqi propaganda aiming at smearing their national campaign'.⁶² Yet the Kurdish leadership had a justification ready in reserve for such co-operation.

Apart from the argument that, with their backs to the wall the Kurds were in need of all the assistance they could get, Israel was presented as an example of a state that had survived first on defiance and secondly on dependence on the West. In the end the intensity of the war in Kurdistan developed a sense of indifference among the Kurds, especially those living in Kurdistan, to their more or less open co-operation with Israel. Although they disliked this co-operation the Kurdish élite in the towns excused it on the grounds that successive Iraqi governments had used brutal methods in their war in Kurdistan, while at the same time blaming the KDP for failing to impress the iniquity of the Israeli connection upon its members.

It is difficult to assess the extent of the material assistance given by the Israelis to the Kurdish Revolt, but it is an open secret that they sent some sophisticated weapons through Iran, particularly anti-tank and anti-aircraft equipment, accompanied by instructors. It is also known that some Kurds had military training in Israel⁶³ while several KDP leaders made visits to Israel and high-ranking Israeli officials to Kurdistan.⁶⁴

The superpowers and the Kurdish question

With the decline of British and French influence in the Middle East after 1945, the United States and the Soviet Union began to take a serious interest in the area. The importance of Turkey, Iran and Iraq was enhanced for the United States because of their proximity to the Soviet Union. The United States sponsored and protected the three states, regarding

them as the first line of defence in the face of what it saw as a mounting Soviet threat. Similarly the Soviet Union was keen to win these states over or at least neutralise them in order to secure its southern borders. However, the United States policy-makers had an easier task than their Soviet counterparts for two reasons: first, the affiliation of the rulers of these states was already pro-West, and secondly the Soviet Union under Stalin refrained from assisting the national movements of these states, which forfeited it much public support.⁶⁵ In fact Stalin was well aware of the minorities' dissatisfaction with the regimes they lived under, and concentrated on spreading Communism among them which only served to alienate his country further from the Iraq, Turkish and Iranian regimes.

The United States' influence in Iraq reached its peak in 1955 when Nuri al-Sa'id and the Turkish Prime Minister formed the Baghdad Pact, and were soon joined by Iran. In the same year Iraq severed diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union.⁶⁶ However when Khrushchev assumed power in 1956 he took a number of steps which helped to boost the position of the Soviet Union in the area, particularly the support it now extended to nationalist movements. Khrushchev rightly judged that these movements, if helped, would come out in support of the Soviet Union. Under Nuri al-Sa'id, however, the Iraq government assumed a more and more pro-Western line. In 1957 Nuri gave a warm welcome to the Eisenhower Doctrine, while the Soviet Union hoped for changes in its favour in the region. In fact the Soviet leaders were aware that they had a considerable

potential advantage over the United States in winning popular support in Iraq, to which they always attached a high priority in their foreign policy. Apart from the importance of its oil, Iraq was the nearest Arab country to the Soviet Union, being only 180 miles away. Two groups, the Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurds were the Soviet Union's main hopes in Iraq. The Iraqi Kurds who had come to the Soviet Union after the collapse of the Mahabad Republic in 1947 were regarded as the liaison between the Soviet Union and their compatriots. Through the Russian education given to these Kurds, and Mulla Mustafa's broadcasts on Radio Yerevan proclaiming that the Kurdish movement was a struggle for national liberation, the Soviet Union gained much credit among the Kurds. Moreover, the ICP's influence among the Kurds was increasing because of the party's generally positive attitude towards the Kurdish question,⁶⁷ and also because many senior Party members were of Kurdish origin.⁶⁸ Soviet influence in the area was greatly boosted by the success of the 1958 Revolution, the restoration of diplomatic relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union and certain other East European countries, and Iraq's withdrawal from the Baghdad Pact. This grew even greater as the ICP and the Kurds secured a major although very temporary position of importance within the new regime. At the same time, a number of military and economic agreements were concluded between Iraq and the Soviet Union, and Iraq gradually began to supersede Egypt in Soviet circles. The importance the Soviet leaders attached to Iraq was demonstrated when Khrushchev sided with Qasim during his dispute

with Nasser, a move that naturally angered Nasser and soured Soviet-Egyptian relations for a while. The Kurds too found that their position from the Soviet point of view was becoming more important under the Republic. Apart from being regarded as staunch supporters of the new regime, they were expected to be the rallying point for their compatriots living in Turkey and Iran.

The Soviet Union demonstrated its continuing interest in the Iraqi Kurds through visits of special correspondents of Tass and Izvestia to Kurdistan,⁶⁹ even though it was mainly concerned with the Iraq government. The Kurds were cultivated largely because they would provide an alternative in case the situation changed. Hence when they broke with Qasim the Soviet Union was put into the unwelcome position of being forced to decide whether to side with Qasim and maintain her influence in Iraq, or to support the Kurds' demand for autonomy and show her faithfulness to Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Apparently Mulla Mustafa tried to force the Soviet leaders to take such a decision before his final break with Qasim in 1961. In the course of a long visit to the Soviet Union in November 1960, ostensibly to participate in the celebration of the anniversary of the October Revolution, Mulla Mustafa probably expressed the Kurds' dissatisfaction with Qasim, and perhaps even his own desire to remain in the Soviet Union because of the Kremlin's unwillingness to bring pressure to bear on the Iraq government. After four months' stay, however, he returned to Iraq empty-handed to settle permanently in Kurdistan. At this stage it became clear that regardless of its ideological notions

about the rights of national minorities the Soviet Union was not prepared to lose Iraq for the sake of the Kurds, and it not only remained aloof, but also prevented the ICP from participating in the Revolt. Hence the ICP's only course was to bombard Qasim and the KDP with memoranda and letters asking them to stop fighting and reconcile their differences. These documents also showed the ICP's attitude towards the Kurdish problem and their desire for a solution, which could only be achieved by granting autonomy for Kurdistan. The party leaders tried to convince Qasim to no avail that autonomy would strengthen Iraq both internally and internationally, and would also strengthen Kurdish-Arab brotherhood.⁷⁰ The party also criticised the KDP for going to war against a progressive regime, and turned down the KDP's call to join in the fight against Qasim.⁷¹

While the Soviet Union's good relations with Qasim had led to its neglecting the Kurdish cause, the United States was also hindered from assisting the Kurds against Qasim, who was beginning to present a threat to American oil interests in Iraq, because it feared that such assistance would anger its allies Turkey and Iran. Naturally, the whole picture was completely changed after the fall of Qasim and the persecution of the Communists in 1963. Those Iraqi Communists who managed to escape to Kurdistan denounced the new regime, and urged both Kurds and Party members to fight it. However, their call did not meet with any positive response from the Kurdish leadership which was busy trying to find common ground with the new government.

After a few days of hesitation the Soviet Union began

to voice its denunciation of the anti-Communist campaign.⁷² An article in Pravda in April made clear the Soviet Union's support for the Kurdish national movement, even going so far as to denounce Qasim's anti-Kurd policy.⁷³ Even earlier a radio transmission 'The Voice of the Iraqi People', in Arabic and Kurdish began transmissions from the German Democratic Republic.⁷⁴ Realizing the setback the Soviet Union had suffered the United States urged both the Kurds and the Iraq government to find a peaceful settlement to the Kurdish problem, fearing that a war in Kurdistan would 'only serve Communist designs'.⁷⁵

The resumption of the war in June 1963 provided the ICP and the Soviet Union with the opportunity to intensify their attacks on the Iraqi regime. The Soviet Union condemned the war, describing it as a 'massacre', and called upon the Kurds to stand firm in defying it.⁷⁶ While official Soviet support remained no more than moral, the ICP actively joined in the fighting. The Party declared that it fully supported the Kurdish struggle, and its organisations in Kurdistan were playing an active role in the fighting.⁷⁷ As well as advising and training the Kurds the ICP managed to form a fighting force of around 500 men.

The Soviet Union stuck to its political offensive, and intensified its campaign against Iraq in July 1963. Apart from attacks in Pravda and in Soviet leaders' speeches reported in Tass, the Republic of Mongolia asked the UN Secretary-General, U Thant, to place the question of the war in Kurdistan on the agenda of the General Assembly.⁷⁸ Iraq was quick to

protest and break off diplomatic relations with Mongolia, but as the fighting went on the Soviet Union began to show even greater concern, especially when it became clear that Turkey, Iran and Syria were actively participating. In a statement addressed to Iraq the Soviet Union condemned the war and drew Iraq's attention to 'the threat that has arisen because of the interference of other states'. A similar statement was addressed to the governments of Turkey, Iran and Syria; they were told that the Kurdish issue had ceased to be a local one, and were warned against the consequences of actively participating in the war. Apart from defending the 'Kurds' national and human rights' the note expressed anxiety over 'the involvement in the conflict of other forces and other states, and the placing at the disposal of alien forces connected with aggressive military-political blocs (CENTO) of bridgeheads near the Soviet borders'. This, the note continued, would create a threat to the security of the Soviet Union.⁷⁹ However, although it suspended military aid to Iraq, the Soviet Union's support of the Kurds did not go as far as providing arms either for the Kurds or the Communists. If the Communists privately deplored the Soviet Union's apparent indifference to their fate, it was not surprising that the Kurds also voiced their disappointment.⁸⁰ However, these criticisms failed to change the Soviet attitude over material support, and they were content to bring the subject before the Economic and Social Council of the UN in 1963. With the general instability of the regimes in Iraq between 1963 and 1968 the Soviet Union strengthened its ties with the Kurds through the medium of the ICP, while leaving the door open to any official rapprochement with the

government. In 1964 the Iraqi Communist Party declared its new attitude towards the Kurdish Revolt. In the first place it was designated as a national movement, representing the entire democratic cause against reactionaries and imperialists and secondly it was the result of national oppression rather than the outcome of foreign intrigues. The party also called for the establishment of a joint front between itself and the KDP.⁸¹ However the Soviet government was quick to express its satisfaction with 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif when he ousted the Ba'th in November 1963, and saw some hope of solving the Kurdish problem when Mulla Mustafa signed an agreement with him in February 1964. Soviet keenness to see a stable government in Iraq with which they could resume friendly relations was demonstrated by their denunciation of the Ahmad-Talabani group, which was regarded as leftist, for its refusal to accept the promises given by 'Arif.⁸² The strained relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union were given some respite in 1964 through President Nasser's mediation when 'Arif and Khrushchev met in Cairo, after which the Soviet Union returned to its policy of advising both sides to find a peaceful solution, resumed its military supplies to the Iraq Army, but continued to refer sympathetically to Kurdish national rights. The Soviet Union welcomed any move for peace or any accord signed between the government and the Kurds, and denounced the frequent outbreaks of fighting. The Soviet Union continued its military supplies to Iraq in spite of the fact that the Communist Party was fighting on the Kurdish side. This seemed to justify the belief that 'the

Soviet Union was ready to sign off the Kurds if it were to have enough guarantees from the government⁸³. Partly because the Kurdish Revolt stopped after June 1966, the Soviet Union's relations with Iraq improved. In 1967 Iraq broke off its diplomatic relations with the United States, Britain and West Germany, who were accused of encouraging and supporting Israeli aggression against the Arab countries. Gradually, the Soviet Union became the Arab's only ally, and reaped the benefits of their apparently increasingly anti-Western attitude. Closer military and economic ties between Iraq, Egypt, Syria and Algeria also encouraged a more favourable Soviet policy towards Iraq. In July 1967 President Podgorny visited Iraq to demonstrate the improvement in relations, and in the following year the East Berlin-based 'Voice of the Iraqi People' ceased its radio transmissions.⁸⁴ With the advent of the Ba'th Party to power in 1968, Iraq's relations with the Soviet Union stood a still greater chance of improvement because of the Party's stated commitment to a peaceful solution of the Kurdish problem, and its intention to establish a national front to include the ICP.⁸⁵ Another important factor was the relative imminence of Britain's departure from the Gulf, since a friendly Iraq could do much to enhance Soviet influence. In this connection, Iraq was obliged to lean heavily on the Soviet Union for arms in order to balance Iranian designs in the same area. The growth of strong relations between Iraq and the Soviet Union brought the United States back into the picture. In co-operation with Iran, and on the pretext of fighting Soviet influence in the area, the

United States made approaches to the Kurds. This time it knew that a link with the Iraqi Kurds would not anger the Iranians, because the latter were equally keen to fight both the Soviet threat and a radical Arab nationalist regime. Nor would Turkey object to any strengthening of Mulla Mustafa's forces, since he had kept his promise not to interfere in the affairs of his neighbouring Kurds. Apparently Mulla Mustafa concluded an agreement with an American delegation which came to visit him in Kurdistan in 1969, according to which the Kurds were to receive money and arms from the United States through Iran.⁸⁶ However, whatever the truth of this it was obvious that the United States was growing restive at the strong links between Iraq and the Soviet Union. This, coupled with Mulla Mustafa's readiness to get any assistance from any quarter and the Iranians' desire to make difficulties for the Ba'thist regime, linked their interests closely with the United States. Hence the conclusion of the March 1970 agreement, which was said to have been reached with Soviet encouragement, did not put an end to the co-operation between Iran, the United States, and the Kurdish leadership of Mulla Mustafa. In 1972 Nixon and Kissinger authorised a secret deal by which the Kurds were supplied with money and Soviet and Chinese arms.⁸⁷ At this stage the Soviet Union felt justified in breaking all links with Mulla Mustafa, and sided entirely with the Iraqi government.

Footnotes

- 1 See Chapter 2 above.
- 2 Interview with Ahmad.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Talabani (1971), pp 171-72.
- 5 See Viennot (1969), Vol II, p 89, who says that the Kurdish minority in Syria totalled 50,000. For more details about this small minority see Vanly, I, The Kurdish Problem in Syria, London 1968. See also M. Nazdar in Chaliand (1980), who gives a figure of 825,000. Although this may be inflated, 50,000 seems absurdly low.
- 6 al-Durra (1966), p 408.
- 7 Interview with Hilal Naji. Naji was one of the exiles who wrote a report on the Kurdish problem. The others were Fa'iq al-Samarra'i, Ahmad Fawzi, 'Adnan al-Rawi and Mahmud al-Durra.. These studies varied according to the writers' attitude to the Kurdish question, although most were of the view that the Kurds had no right to revolt. Only Naji believed that the Kurds should be given the right of self-determination. See al-Durra (1966), p 409. Talabani (1971), pp 311, 334.
- 8 See Viennot (1969), Vol II, p 90.
- 9 See Chapter 4 above.
- 10 Viennot (1969), loc.cit., Talabani (1971), pp 340-41.
- 11 Talabani, *ibid*; Vanly (1970, p 183; Viennot (1969), Vol II, p 87.
- 12 Vanly, *ibid*; Viennot, *ibid*.
- 13 See Viennot (1969), Vol II, pp 90-91. Talabani

- (1971), pp 339-40.
- 14 *ibid.*
 - 15 See Viennot (1969), Vol II, p 93.
 - 16 See Talabani (1971), *loc.cit.*
 - 17 See Talabani (1971), p 341.
 - 18 Vernier, B, 'La question Kurde', *Revue de Défense Nationale*, January 1965, p 114.
 - 19 Kinnane (1964), p 75.
 - 20 See al-Durra, pp 411-13. *Le Monde*, 25 June 1963. This attitude was also expressed in various Arabic publications representing the political views of their governments. See for example al-Watha'iq al 'Arabia, 1965, p 328, and al-Khatib, No 50, May 1965, pp 21-22.
 - 21 See al-Durra (1966), p 408.
 - 22 Schmidt (1964), p 264.
 - 23 *The Observer*, 31 October 1965.
 - 24 Although also governed by the Ba'th Party, Syria had long been in bitter ideological conflict with Iraq. Hence Syria supported the Kurds during the last round of fighting (1974-75) against the Iraq government, even going as far as to provide them with sophisticated arms.
 - 25 It should be noted that co-operation between these states never took the form of joint military action against the Kurds; it was manifested in the sealing of borders against rebel Kurds to enable the army of the state concerned to crush the rebellion. Sometimes the borders were opened for units of the army of one state to pass through in order to attack the Kurds from the rear. These states also co-operated by handing over Kurdish leaders seeking refuge in

- one of the countries. See BAHOZ, Kurdistan and the National Liberation Struggle of the Kurds, Stockholm 1972, p 18.
- 26 For further details of the Kurds in Turkey, see Chaliand (1980), pp 47-106; the author gives the Kurdish population as six million.
- 27 BAHOZ, p 21. See also Viennot, p 201.
- 28 For the Kurds in Iran, see Chaliand (1980), pp 107-134, and Glassemou, A R, Kurdistan and the Kurds, Prague and London, 1965. The Iranian Kurdish population is estimated as 5.2 million.
- 29 Arfa (1966), pp 159, 102-104.
- 30 Interview with Ahmad. See Chapter 2 above.
- 31 See Ramazani, R K, Iran's Foreign Policy 1941-73, Charlottesville, Virginia 1975, pp 400-401.
- 32 See al-Durra (1966), p 404.
- 33 BAHOZ (1972), pp 20-21.
- 34 See for example al-Watha'iq al-'Arabia, 1966, pp 296-97.
- 35 New York Times, 25 January 1966 and 1 February 1966.
- 36 al-Durra (1966), p 406; Viennot (1969), Vol II, pp 94-95.
- 37 Anonymous interview.
- 38 See Viennot, 'Kurdistan: nation déchirée', Le Monde Diplomatique, 2 August 1971. See also BAHOZ, p 22. Although not pro-Mulla Mustafa, the Turkish KDP was able to gather support because of the success of the Kurdish Revolt in Iraq, as its very formation indicated.
- 39 Viennot (1971); BAHOZ (1972).
- 40 Egypt severed diplomatic relations with Iran in 1960 when Iran established diplomatic relations

with Israel.

- 41 Interview with H. Khammas.
- 42 See al-Durra (1966), pp 388-390.
- 43 The Observer, 2 January 1966.
- 44 See al-Bazzaz's TV interview on 16 June 1966 in al-Watha'iq al-'Arabia, 1966, pp 364-65.
- 45 al-Nour, 16 April 1969.
- 46 Interview with Ahmad and 'Uthman.
- 47 See Chapter 8 above.
- 48 BAHUZ (1972), p 25.
- 49 See the Financial Times, 21 May 1976.
- 50 Later, in 1973, following the October war, Iraq split with Syria and Egypt and headed what came to be known as the Rejection Front which opposed any settlement or negotiations with Israel.
- 51 Viennot (1969), Vol II, p 130.
- 52 The success of this policy was apparent during the 1967 June war when the Iraqi Army was unable to participate fully, although other factors also played an important role.
- 53 eg, Moshe Dayan, cited in Vanly (1970), p 290.
- 54 Larteguy, J, Les Maurailles d'Israel, Paris 1968, p 92. These advisers were usually lodged incognito in Mulla Mustafa's headquarters. See al-Nour, 17 February 1969.
- 55 Ibid, observers used to draw a 'striking coincidence' between the decision of some Iraqi governments to send part of the Iraqi Army to bolster up the Jordanian and Syrian fronts and the eruption of Kurdish resistance. See The New Middle East, May 1969, p 44.
- 56 See Viennot (1969), Vol II, p 131. See also New Outlook, July-August 1963, p 8.

- 57 Only Talabani and some of his followers condemned this co-operation.
- 58 In fact the KDP under Ahmad established contact with the Israelis in 1963. At the end of that year he received two Israeli agents disguised as German journalists in KDP headquarters. Interview with Anonymous.
- 59 This happened during the regime of 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif when Israeli involvement in the Kurdish question became an open secret, and the Ahmad-Talabani group started to uncover the Israeli connections with Mulla Mustafa's leadership after breaking off relations with him. Instead of exposing the connection publicly to strengthen its position vis-a-vis Mulla Mustafa, the regime reverted to the policy of giving more concessions to Mulla Mustafa in the hope of dissuading him from strengthening his ties with the Israelis. See al-Nour, 21 January 1969. Apparently Mulla Mustafa made the government aware of the Israeli presence in Kurdistan in 1965 when he allowed an Israeli officer to reveal his identity and speak to an official Iraqi delegation about his belief in Kurdish national rights, and how he had come to help to achieve them under the leadership of Mulla Mustafa. See al-Nour, *ibid.*
- 60 Le Monde, 8 March 1963.
- 61 See al-Nour, 13 October 1968.
- 62 Interview with H. Karim.
- 63 See Larteguy, J, (1968).
- 64 Cited in Mulla Mustafa Barzani: Agent of the CIA, Ministry of Information, Baghdad 1976.

- 65 Another important reason for the Soviet Union's losing the support of the Arab nationalists was Stalin's hasty recognition of Israel.
- 66 Lenczowski, G, *Soviet Advances in the Middle East*, Washington 1972, p 128.
- 67 The ICP's attitude towards the Kurdish question went through three stages. Between 1945 and 1952 their attitude was paradoxical. Although the Secretary-General of the party urged the Kurds to form popular organisations with the assistance and support of his party, the Kurds were dissatisfied with the ICP's first charter, arguing that it did not regard them as a separate national entity entitled to self-determination. In their second charter in 1952, the Kurds were recognised as a separate nation. The charter's main emphasis was on Arab-Kurdish brotherhood and the joint struggle to liberate Iraq, yet the Kurds' right to self-determination was also stated. The third charter, published in 1956, concluded that separation from Iraq, although legitimate, was against the interest of the Kurdish masses. It maintained that because the Kurdish areas were still occupied indirectly by imperialist forces the gap between the various Kurdish communities in terms of language, habits, and social advance had widened. In order to achieve a united Kurdish nation the Kurdish national movement should work with the Arab national movement to liberate Iraq, and then liberate the other parts of Kurdistan. See the ICP, *Siyasatuna wa Tariquna li Hall al-Mas'ala al-Qawmia al-Kurdia fi al-Iraq Hallan Dimokratian*

'Adilan. (Our policy and programme for the solution of the Kurdish National Question in Iraq in a Just and Democratic Fashion). However the ICP was very active in Kurdistan, and the KDP was always regarded as an ally of the ICP.

- 68 See Batatu (1978), pp 699-705.
- 69 See Edmonds, 'The Kurds and the Revolution in Iraq', p 4.
- 70 See the ICP, *Siyasatuna wa Tariqana li Hall al-Mas'ala al-Qawmia al-Kurdia ...*
- 71 See Chapter 3 above.
- 72 See Yodfat, A, Arab politics in the Soviet Mirror, Jerusalem 1973, pp 165-67, for the Soviet Union's attitude towards the new regime.
- 73 Ben-Tzur, A, 'The Kurds Fight for Autonomy', *New Outlook*, Vol 6, No 5, July-August 1963.
- 74 See Wheeler, G, 'Soviet interests in Iran, Iraq and Turkey', *The World Today*, May 1968, p 200.
- 75 See Schmidt (1964), pp 272-3 for the American approach to Mulla Mustafa, and Dean Rusk's letter to the Iraqi leaders.
- 76 See Mairakov, H, 'Stop the Atrocities Against the Kurds!', *International Affairs*, Moscow, August 1963, p 58.
- 77 *World Marxist Review*, November 1964.
- 78 Mairakov (1973), p 59.
- 79 *Ibid.* See also Vanly (1970), pp 210-16.
- 80 The Kurds' disillusionment with the Soviet Union was expressed by one Kurdish leader who declared that 'the Russians now support us because our fighting is convenient to their own selfish aims'. Cited in N Rejwan, 'Iraq's Kurdish problem', *Midstream*, Vol IX, September 1963, p 74.

- 81 See World Marxist Review, April 1966.
- 82 Yodfat (1973), p 188.
- 83 Carrère d'Encausse, H, La Politique Soviétique au Moyen Orient 1955-1975, Paris 1975, p 240.
- 84 See Mizan, No 2, 1968, p 54.
- 85 See Mizan, 'Soviet thoughts on the new regime in Iraq', No 5, 1968.
- 86 Cited in the government's booklet Mulla Mustafa Barzani: Agent of the CIA, Baghdad 1976.
- 87 See extracts from the report by the US House of Representatives Intelligence Committee, Sunday Times, 15 February 1976.

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CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion

The Kurds form a distinct part of the indigenous population of the area which they inhabit. They have been divided and redivided against their will many times in their history, most recently under the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Owing to the general remoteness and isolation of Kurdistan feudalism, tribalism and religion have long remained stronger forces than national feeling amongst the vast majority of the Kurdish population. Thus the nationalism which swept other parts of the Middle East at the end of the nineteenth century made relatively slow headway in Kurdistan, and those who were attracted to this new ideology were an idealistic elite, a small minority with relatively little influence. Although generally more advanced than other parts of Kurdistan, Iraqi Kurdistan was also dominated by tribal elements. Shaikh Mahmud of Sulaimaniya, a traditional tribal leader, was to represent his generation of tribal and feudal leaders, who had little genuine sympathy for nationalism and were more interested in regaining the sort of autonomy they had enjoyed during the

final years of the Ottoman Empire. In the 1920s and 1930s these tribal leaders were prompted to revolt by the growing influence and encroachment of central government. Even the revolt in Sulaimaniya against the Treaty of 1930, which was inspired by students and the very small intelligentsia, was soon dominated by Shaikh Mahmud and the tribes. Two factors helped tribal domination to continue: first, slow establishment of education in the area, and secondly British policy under the mandate and monarchy depended on tribal and feudal support for the regime Britain had created in Iraq.

Before and during World War II Kurdish hopes for independence were revived, modern political parties were established and nationalist publications circulated. But the leaders of these 'intellectual' movements had always had a sense of inferiority with regard to the tribal leaders, which led them ultimately to surrender their leadership to the tribes. This sense of inferiority resulted from the fact that only these tribal leaders, with their traditional followers, could present a truly effective opposition to central government. Furthermore, as they lived in the cities, the intelligentsia were always vulnerable to repressive measures from the government, which forced them to seek tribal protection. The way in which the tribal leaders dominated the Republic of Mahabad, the Héwa party, and the KDP at the time of its establishment are clear examples of the powerlessness of the intellectuals.

Apart from putting an end to the Kurds' hope for independence the failure of the Mahabad experiment

in 1947 caused many splits among the Kurdish rank and file. More importantly it undermined the self-confidence of the Kurds, and their faith in the movement's ability to achieve national objectives. As a result, the majority of active Kurds began to join larger political parties such as the ICP, and thus indirectly subordinated their own national movement to the wider national movement. In the late 1940s, the Kurdish nationalists seem to have come to the conclusion that Kurdish independence was difficult if not impossible to achieve. They therefore considered it more expedient to co-operate with the rest of the national movement, which stood some chance of gaining control. They believed that only through such co-operation would the Kurds be able to get what they had begun to work for, the preservation of their distinct national identity in the form of autonomy or local rule. Yet the wider national movement, although realising the growing importance of the Kurdish national movement in the country, refrained from admitting that it was an independent entity, and continued to treat it as a subordinate ally. This could be clearly seen in the admission by the major political parties that the Kurds were simply another nationality in the country, and the exclusion of the KDP from the UNF in 1957.

Despite these obstacles, Kurdish national activities were revived and made progress at the beginning of the 1950s. Reorganised under an intellectual leadership, the KDP was able to play a vital role among the Kurdish intelligentsia by the mid 1950s, and managed to challenge the position of other parties, such as the ICP, amongst the Kurdish people. A new

and more progressive programme was produced by this leadership in 1952-53, and the feudal and tribal elements were left out. In fact those elements had begun to leave the party when it first produced a programme calling for agrarian and social reform, which had brought the accusation that the KDP was a Communist party. However, the biggest mistake made by the KDP's leadership was their neglect of the Kurdish peasants and tribesmen and its concentration on a few intellectuals living in Baghdad and Sulaimaniya. The great majority of the Kurdish population were never effectively politicised and remained under tribal and feudal domination, which partly explains the party's ideological failure, and the phenomenon of Kurdish peasants fighting with their landlords against social and agrarian reforms enacted for their benefit after 1958.

The next and probably most important stage of Kurdish history was under the first Republic. The establishment of the post-revolutionary regime presented the Kurds with the golden opportunity to rise as an independent political movement, as well as an effective pressure group. This was of course due to the divisions within the Iraqi national movement rather than any organisational skill on the Kurds' part. As in many other nationalist movements, the major objective of abolishing the monarchy and ending the connection with Britain had led the national movement in general and the Free Officers in particular to neglect any discussion of what they would do if the Revolution actually succeeded, so that no detailed plan for the future had been worked out. As soon as the common enemy

had been destroyed, all the latent differences between the various factions emerged, and a few weeks after the Revolution they were all entangled in bitter ideological and political struggles. In the first four months of the Republic this struggle was polarised in the two personalities of Qasim and 'Arif, ostensibly over the issue of unity with the UAR, but in fact over how radical the Revolution should be. Without any consideration of the ethnical divisions within Iraq, and before reassuring the Kurds that Arab unity would not necessarily mean Kurdish assimilation, 'Arif and the Arab nationalists insisted on total and immediate unity with the UAR. Qasim, who was naturally unwilling to defer to Nasser, seized on Kurdish and Communist lukewarmness to this project and resisted the nationalist pressure. Recognising that the Kurds would be an effective ally in the face of both the powerful nationalist current and the Communists, Qasim took an increasingly pro-Kurdish stance. His encouragement to the Kurds, which began by allowing Mulla Mustafa and the Barzanis to return to their homeland, expanded to give him and the KDP under his leadership a free hand to exercise their political and national activities. As they were all of the generation that had fought Mulla Mustafa in the 1940s as a Kurdish separatist, Qasim's own military colleagues were naturally opposed to his policy. Furthermore, as both Mulla Mustafa and the KDP were by that time identified with the Communist movement, the Arab nationalists were worried that a well organised Kurdish national movement would strengthen the position of the ICP and Qasim, and consequently increase opposition to unity.

Their fears were confirmed when the KDP announced its opposition to any unity with the UAR and its commitment to autonomy for Kurdistan.

However, for a time Qasim was able to curtail the Arab nationalists' influence with the support of the Kurds and Communists, although this success was to augur ill for his future. Politically naive, Qasim had come to power with the sincere intention of building a free and democratic Iraq. He genuinely believed in equality and raising standards of living but his hopes were not matched by his policies, which gradually led to a scarcely disguised dictatorship. His success against the Arab nationalists made him think that he could follow the same tactics, of relying on one group to clamp down on others, against any faction that opposed him, which prevented him from taking the very important step of establishing a political party to provide organised popular support and an ideological base for his policies. Instead he depended, for example, on the Kurds to curb the influence of the Communists. It was obvious that the Kurds, who had no immediately threatening objectives, suited his designs at the time, and their co-operation with him through either Mulla Mustafa or the KDP led Qasim to the mistaken belief that the Kurdish national movement would always be a faithful and undemanding ally. But this alliance did not last long, because as soon as Communist influence was curtailed the Kurds began to consider themselves the only pressure group that counted in Iraqi politics. It was then that Qasim realised how high Kurdish hopes were rising, and how unable and unwilling he was to

satisfy them. Thus without fully exploring the issue he decided to curb their influence, failing to realise that, unlike most other political forces in the country, the Kurds had the ability to defy the regime militarily, since they were protected by the Kurdish mountains and the arms that he himself had bestowed on them. He also failed to realise that by the end of 1960 he had ensured that he had scant support left within the Army and that he enjoyed the support of no political party. His own officers were plotting against him, while most of the political parties were ready to co-operate with any group that could remove him from power. This overwhelming sense of opposition to Qasim's rule meant that none of the parties in the Iraqi national movement was able to heed the explosive situation in Kurdistan. Thus when the Revolt broke out all the anti-Qasim elements viewed it simply as another indication of the failure of his policy and pressed for his removal. Nothing was said about the actual demands which Qasim had refused to meet.

The bankruptcy of Qasim's policy was apparent not only in his failure to avoid war in Kurdistan, but also in his inability to find a solution, for apart from promising to rebuild the bombed areas and declare a general amnesty, Qasim had no serious plans for a settlement. Without using the full potential of the Army, he insisted on total and unconditional surrender, presumably hoping that the Kurds would find defiance useless, and that they would concede defeat in the end. Indeed, he might even have believed his own claim that the Revolt was defeated and that the Army was only 'clearing

out some pockets of resistance'. Perhaps more dangerous was his failure to see the national substance of the Revolt, especially after the KDP had joined in. Here of course he was not alone; all his successors pursued similar methods, although they tended to make greater use of arms against the Kurdish national movement. In fact the eruption of the Revolt, and the reaction of the major political groups, particularly the Army leaders, exposed the fact that despite the fundamental changes brought about by the Revolution the general attitude towards the Kurdish national movement had remained the same as it had been under the monarchy. Thus although there was no discrimination against individual Kurds, their movement was denied any basic national and cultural rights, even the right to campaign for these demands. Army officers as well as political parties regarded the establishment of the Republic as an end in itself and criticised the KDP and Mulla Mustafa for their rebellion against it. This led Qasim and his successors to deal with the symptoms rather than the causes of the Kurdish national movement.

The officers who dominated Iraqi politics up to 1968 were the main supporters of this policy, believing that an all out offensive would finish off the Kurdish problem once and for all. Like Qasim, they refused to accept the Kurds' demand for autonomy which they regarded as a step towards separation and denounced any attempts at negotiations with the Kurdish leadership.

The second Republic underlined the contrast between the officers' desire to enforce a military solution

and growing civilian aspirations towards a negotiated settlement. As the power that could defend or topple any regime, the officers managed to have their own way. Thus the country was involved in a useless and needless war, which made successive governments weaker, the officers more dominant, and the country more vulnerable, although the officers naturally refused to admit that their own attempts to enforce a futile military solution had made the country unstable. They blamed the deteriorating situation on the Kurdish Revolt and on what they considered as attempts to give in to the Kurds. Their only alternative was to escalate the war. Depending on the tribal support from anti-Mulla Mustafa factions, they justified a military solution by denying that Mulla Mustafa had any support among the Kurdish people, and refused to regard the KDP as in any way representative. They failed to understand that, tribal leader or not, Mulla Mustafa had succeeded in rallying the vast majority of the Kurdish people behind him; he now dominated the Kurdish national movement and was able to withstand any attempt to weaken his position. More importantly, he had succeeded in surviving all Iraqi regimes between 1958 and 1968. Against this, successive Iraqi governments failed to provide a leadership to replace Mulla Mustafa or gain the confidence of his people.

The continuing failure of the military to govern the country effectively gave greater credence to the civilians' demand for a return to civil rule, but although a number of civilians held government office their posts carried little power. A majority were

against the idea of solving the Kurdish problem by force, and the relative strength of this faction increased for as long as the military solution proved futile. Fortunately the growing influence of the civilians coincided with a growing belief among some of the military, particularly 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif, between 1963 and 1966, that the civilians should have a greater share in Iraqi politics. 'Arif and his associates thought that this would help to stabilise the regime, but they made a clear distinction between restoring civilian rule and dealing with the Kurdish Revolt which they regarded as an exclusively military duty. 'Arif tried to restore civil rule in the person of al-Bazzaz but under the aegis of military supervision. Thus the second year of his regime saw the military and civilian factions together inside the government.

In 1966 the military suffered a double blow. In April 'Arif died and the Army suffered a major defeat in Kurdistan in June. Stunned by these two events, the officers could not put up effective resistance to al-Bazzaz's drive to reach a peaceful settlement, the Declaration of June 1966. Overlooking the fact that his position still depended on the officers' approval al-Bazzaz mistakenly thought that their failure to react immediately was a sign of their complete defeat. He did not realise that under the leadership of the weak 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif, himself an officer, the military were wielding more influence than ever before. This influence was soon demonstrated by the quick removal of al-Bazzaz from office and the appointment of another officer in his place. His experiment failed because his civilian faction did not have a popular base; he could only depend on

his own personality and on that of his cabinet ministers. For example, his weak position prevented him from making public his approval of what he considered rightful Kurdish demands, which meant that he was obliged to include some secret articles in the June Declaration. His other mistake was to press rather unwisely for a premature confrontation with the officers. However his successors were neither willing to implement the Declaration nor ready to resume military activities in Kurdistan. In 1967-68 the Arab-Israeli conflict overshadowed all other problems in the Arab world, and the Peshmerga were left unchallenged.

In July 1968 the Ba'th Party made a successful comeback to power. Armed with the support of cadres and realizing that with the Kurdish problem smouldering the regime would always remain weak, the Party declared its intention to find a permanent solution to the Kurdish problem. This intention, however, met with all the familiar obstacles; the increasing confidence of the Kurdish leadership of Mulla Mustafa, the problem of convincing public opinion in Iraq and the Arab world that autonomy was not equivalent to separation, and the continuing military opposition to peaceful settlement. The Ba'thist leadership seems to have given full consideration to the Kurdish problem in the period before coming to power, and as soon as they took over in 1968 they immediately launched a policy which combined diplomacy with the use of force, emphasising their own preference for conciliation whenever the Kurds showed a readiness to talk.

Here the achievement of a peaceful settlement was

greatly helped by the gradual replacement of military by civilian influence. In March 1970 an agreement was reached between the government and the Kurds despite both military opposition and the fact that both sides had shown a great deal of inflexibility during the negotiations. Unexpectedly, the March Manifesto actually dealt with fundamental Kurdish demands which no other government had dared to talk about. Thus a strong government succeeded where weaker ones had failed: the March Manifesto was a comprehensive agreement that included no secret clauses. In fact it was so far-reaching that there were fears, later justified, that its implementation would be beyond the level of the political maturity of those entrusted to carry it out. This made the need for a programme to explain the Manifesto imperative, to convince both the Iraqi bureaucracy and the Kurdish cadres concerned with its fulfilment. As for the Kurdish national movement itself, the Revolt exposed its inherent internal problems of division, disorganisation and the lack of common objectives. Perhaps the long years of rule from Baghdad and of taking their cue from the Iraqi national movement as a whole had deprived the Kurds of their ability to act independently. For example, both Mulla Mustafa and the KDP were dependent on the good will of Qasim to achieve their national demands, although these were left ambiguous until the KDP joined the Revolt in 1962. When Qasim proved unwilling to live up to their expectations, the different factions of the national movement failed to present the necessary organised, united or peaceful opposition; instead they indulged in inter-

factional and tribal vendettas, taking advantage of the government's other preoccupations. The tribal and feudal elements stood out against the progressive aspects of Qasim's rule, such as Agrarian Reform; during the feudal rebellion of June-September 1961, both the Barzani tribe under Mulla Mustafa and the KDP remained aloof. In fact the Party was quick to denounce the rebellion, while Mulla Mustafa was hoping for a call from Qasim to crush it. The KDP leaders were also apparently ready to co-operate with the government against the tribal rebellion had Qasim made the right approach to them. Instead, he ordered the bombing of Barzan and declared the KDP illegal two weeks later. Thus he not only pushed Mulla Mustafa into joining the rebellion but encouraged the KDP to bury its differences with him so that in December 1961 they too decided to join in. Thus the two factions were united only in their opposition to and rancour against Qasim. They had no trust in each other, and were very ready to turn against each other when the time was ripe.

From the time the party came into the open in 1958 until it decided to join the Revolt in 1961 the behaviour of the KDP reflected all the disorganisation, indiscipline, and ideological confusion of the Kurdish national movement as a whole. Neglecting the lessons of the 1940s, when the Mahabad Republic had collapsed because of tribal unwillingness to support the larger cause, the leaders of the KDP allowed history to repeat itself by accepting Mulla Mustafa's presidency as soon as he returned from exile. Although he had no affiliation to the party's ideology and doctrine, Mulla Mustafa was hailed by the

party as the Kurdish hero of his time, which greatly enhanced his image. What was more dangerous was Mulla Mustafa's success in dominating the party, encouraged by the sharp divisions that existed within it. Instead of following democratic procedures, the different factions inside the KDP flirted with Mulla Mustafa in turn in order to make use of his tribal followers to oust each other. Thus it did not take him long to realize that he and his tribe actually held the balance inside the Kurdish national movement.

Another example of the Party's faults was the way in which Qasim amended its programme and enforced it on the leadership, although its hasty participation in the Revolt was perhaps even more indicative of its ineptitude. When Mulla Mustafa decided to join and foster the tribal rebellion in protest against the treatment he received from Qasim he was followed by an increasing number of Party members, despite Ahmad's clear orders to the contrary. This episode, which should have revealed the two major problems of lack of discipline in the Party, and the fact that most members were tribally motivated, in fact led the leadership to the wrong conclusions. They thought that they were going to lose their members to Mulla Mustafa and decided to contain the crisis by joining and fostering the Revolt, claiming the leadership of the rebellion for themselves and giving it a progressive objective. They failed to realize that they had thus endorsed Mulla Mustafa's leadership among the Kurds, overlooking the fact that they had neither the power nor the base among the tribes to support their own claim while Mulla Mustafa, who

had both factors in his favour, was already dominant. A further mistake was to enlist a number of tribal forces with no affiliation to the Party to fight under the Party's banner. Hence, in spite of their attempts to keep away from Mulla Mustafa's area of influence, it was bound to embrace the Party sooner or later, and by 1964 he had no difficulty in forcing the removal of the original KDP leadership. Most Party members responded positively and turned against the old politbureau. The divisions and disorganisation were further demonstrated by the failure of the different factions of the Kurdish national movement to form a common platform. They failed to agree even on essentials such as the objectives of the Kurdish Revolt. They had different ideas on autonomy for Kurdistan, and often took advantage of the weakness of the government to expand this objective to make it look almost like independence.

As a revolution, a movement that would bring about major socio-economic changes, the Kurdish Revolt was a complete failure. The result of years of fighting was the strengthening of the feudal and tribal elements because of the vital role of their armed followers. Those affected by the Agrarian Reform of 1958-61 soon regained control of their expropriated lands, and the authority of the deposed shaikhs was restored. Moreover, a new wealthy class began to appear, consisting of senior Peshmerga leaders and their followers and those who had made fortunes out of the war.

Another major error on the part of the Kurdish leadership, both the Ahmad-Talabani group and Mulla Mustafa, was their failure to establish meaningful contacts

with the Iraqi national movement as a whole, although here the major parties must also share the blame. After going into revolt and managing to oppose successive Iraqi regimes, the Kurds made the mistake of refusing to Iraqify their Revolt, and paid no attention to Iraqi public opinion. Their essential demands remained purely Kurdish, and they were always ready to brush aside any with an Iraqi flavour. Their demand for democracy for Iraq could not have been expected to gather support for the Kurdish national movement from the rest of the Iraqi people for two main reasons. In the first place, by waging a continuous war against all governments the Kurds had helped to establish military rule in the country, and secondly, when given the opportunity to co-operate with the national movement to oppose a dictatorial regime, the Kurdish leadership chose either to make an alliance with such regimes or to refuse to make Kurdistan or the Kurdish Revolt a base for a wider national movement. Moreover Mulla Mustafa's lack of respect for Iraqi and Arab national objectives, shown in his links with countries hostile to Iraq and the Arab nationalist movement further alienated the majority of Iraqis from the Kurdish cause. Yet the Kurdish movement itself failed to set an example for democratic rule. Mulla Mustafa's domination of the movement and his continuing belief in the physical liquidation of his rivals, coupled with the reluctance of the KDP to come to terms with any other ideology, served to justify the general apathy felt in Iraq towards the Revolt.

Looking at the Kurdish Revolt in its international context, one can only conclude that, apart from the

boost it gave to the cause outside Iraq, it had the effect of making the Kurdish national movement a prey to foreign intervention and led to foreign interference in the internal affairs of Iraq. This intervention did nothing constructive to help the Kurds achieve their national aims, since most foreign powers were motivated only by their animosity towards Iraq. It is clear therefore that in the present international setting the national interests of the Iraqi Kurds lie mainly in co-operating with the various progressive elements in the country.

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APPENDIX

Programme of the Kurdistan Democratic Party¹

- Art 1 The name of the party is the Kurdish Democratic Party.
- Art 2 Our party is democratic, revolutionary, and the vanguard representing the interests of workers, peasants, those receiving salaries, artisans and revolutionary intellectuals of Iraqi Kurdistan.
- Art 3 We struggle for the liberation of, and the achievement of autonomy for, Iraqi Kurdistan within the Iraqi Republic.
- Art 4 If the Republic of Iraq shall unite with any other Arab country the Kurdish people shall decide on its own future.
- Art 5 In its political struggle and social analysis, the party relies upon progressive scientific doctrines which correspond to the actual situation of the Kurdish people.
- Art 6 We struggle for the establishment of a democratic and parliamentary system in Iraq, for the re-establishment of the freedom of religion, opinion, belief, press, publication, trade unions and parties, for all citizens.
- Art 7 a - We struggle to consolidate the ties of fraternity between the two sister nations, both Arab and Kurdish.
b - On the Iraqi level, we struggle to reinforce Arab-Kurdish fraternity and to consolidate Iraqi national unity.

¹ Vanly (1970).

c - We struggle to consolidate the ties of friendship between our Kurdish people and all the peoples of the world.

d - We struggle for the recognition of the national rights of the minorities living within Kurdistan.

- Art 8 a - We struggle to preserve world peace and to decrease international tension; we respect the Charter of the United Nations, the resolutions of the Bandung Conference, and the principles of peaceful co-existence, supporting the banning of thermo-nuclear weapons and tests.
- b - We continue to pursue a national anti-imperialist policy, imperialism being a danger which menaces the nations; to reinforce the ties of friendship with all the peoples of the world on the basis of mutual interest, to support the national liberation movements of all peoples struggling for their independence and their right to decide their own future.
- Art 9 We work to reinforce the ties of friendship and co-operation between our party and all Iraqi parties and organisations which believe in the just cause of the Kurds and support it; to consolidate the ties of fraternity between our party and democratic parties and organisations throughout Kurdistan; to consolidate our party's relations with all democratic parties and organisations in the world.

- Art 10 We struggle for the development of our national economy and to raise the standard of living of the population in all areas, following the principles of modern planning based on a detailed study of all aspects of our economic life, on the elaboration of long and short term projects, and on the provision and training of the necessary administrative and technical staffs.
- Art 11 Our party is of the opinion that heavy industry is the basis of economic and political independence. That is why we work to establish both light and heavy industry in the country in accordance with surveys of our country's mineral resources; that is why we are interested in the oil and sulphur industries, and seek to bring electrification to the country, to adopt all measures leading to the prosperity of our national industry, and to protect it from foreign competition. We encourage the investment of national capital in industry while considering the interest of the consumer; we encourage the development of our national industries, such as those of sugar, paper, dairy products, tinned food, tanning, cement, cigarettes and others. We believe that customs duties paid on machine-tools and equipment needed for our national industry should be waived.
- Art 12 We struggle for the total elimination of unemployment through the promulgation of progressive laws guaranteeing the interests of workers and employees. These laws must fix

minimum salaries to ensure the worker and his family a decent life, reduce the working hours and prohibit the employment of those under age. Likewise, progressive laws must be promulgated providing for retirement and social security covering all risks and guaranteeing the liberty of trade unions to safeguard the interests of the workers and employees. This legislation must also provide for sending workers' delegations abroad and set up new professional schools to raise the level of the technical skill of the workers.

Art 13 We struggle to increase the revenues derived from the national oil industry and to allocate part of them to develop the industry and agriculture of Kurdistan in a proportion equal to that of the Kurdish population. We struggle to guarantee the implementation of the agreements concluded in this field, the level of production and of prices; we struggle for the execution of Law 80 of 1961 to consolidate the Iraq National Oil Company and to prevent foreign oil companies from interfering in the internal affairs of Iraq. In the oil-producing areas state industries to treat petroleum products must be created according to regional circumstances and because of the need to train technical and administrative staffs to ensure the nationalization of oil in the future.

Art 14 As the agrarian problem in Kurdistan is of a particular nature which the present Agrarian Reform Law does not take into account, we

struggle to modify this law so as to ensure to all Kurdish peasants, on the one hand a minimum plot of land, and on the other the abolition of the feudal system. With the aim of improving the condition of the peasants and of increasing their income, our party endeavours to achieve the following objectives :

- 1 - a) To reclaim and irrigate unexploited lands and to distribute them between peasants who do not possess land or who possess less than the legal minimum.
- b) To find solutions to irrigation problems by digging canals, drilling artesian wells, and building dams and reservoirs on the rivers in order to irrigate the cultivable land and to enable peasants to profit from government irrigation plans.
- c) To distribute seed, chemical fertilisers and agricultural machinery to peasants so that they can improve their cultivation and diversify their crops; to grant them long term loans as low an interest rate as possible so that they can escape the grasp of money lenders.
- d) To found peasant co-operatives to sell agricultural products and to buy consumer and production goods needed by peasants.

- e) To utilise modern agricultural machines and methods on a larger scale and to encourage co-operative collective working (herewez) between the peasants in the farming regions.
 - f) To foster professional skills to raise the technical levels of agriculture and to send peasant delegations from Kurdistan to foreign countries.
- 2 - The raising of cattle is one of the two main forms of rural production in Kurdistan and the basis of a large part of farming incomes. This is why we are striving for :
- a) the abrogation of all obstacles, privileges and 'special connections' existing in cattle and sheep raising such as the right of pasturage, deeds of gift and other feudal impositions;
 - b) the settlement of nomadic tribes, taking into consideration their conditions of production by distributing land to them and assuring them pasturage for their cattle;
 - c) the development of preventative and curative veterinary centres, the selection of breeding stock and the improvement of animal products following the most modern scientific and hygienic methods.
- 3 - We claim :
- a) the amendment of the law of the

- tobacco monopoly to reconcile the interests of the farmers with improvements in the quality of production. These amendments must have a bearing on the restrictions imposed on the cultivation of tobacco, on the classification of its differing qualities and their prices;
- b) greater flexibility in loans of money and seed to tobacco cultivators so that they can begin cultivation at the start of the season;
 - c) the development of a body of experts and advisors charged with supervising the improvement of the tobacco crop and the construction of modern storage facilities;
 - d) the improvement and extension of the manufacture of cigarettes and tobacco by building factories and laboratories in the producing regions so that Iraq becomes an exporting country.
- 4 - We request :
- a) the protection of forests by adequate laws in the interest of the national economy;
 - b) a policy of re-afforestation and grafting of trees; the development of fruit-growing in the framework of re-afforestation plans for the mountain regions in order to make immediate economic gains.

Art 15 Internal and external trade must be

reorganised and national traders encouraged allowing for the demands of the public and private sectors and in the national interest. Monopolies, unfair competition and the abuses which are now prevalent in supplying the population must be attacked. Our trading relations with other countries must be founded on reciprocal interests, the encouragement of exports, and the limitation of imports to goods which are absolutely necessary.

- Art 16 a) Finances must be managed so as to economise in expenditure and to invest the necessary sums of money in productive projects, whilst ensuring a balance between receipts and expenditure;
- b) taxation must be fair and based on direct, progressive taxes on incomes and inheritance and on a reduction of those indirect taxes which bear most heavily on the working class;
- c) the national (private) banks must be encouraged by increasing their capital, opening a sufficient number of branches and fixing differing rates of interest on deposits so that they can play their part in the expansion of the national economy;
- d) the Iraqi Central Bank will be strengthened so that it can adopt all necessary measures to combat the flight of foreign currency and gold and to back Iraqi money by sufficient gold and foreign currency reserves;

- e) customs laws must be evolved to guarantee the interests of the people and to protect the national industry and economy.

- Art 17 a) Communications in Iraqi Kurdistan must be developed by widening, constructing and surfacing modern roads and building a railway network. Oil tankers must be obtained for the export of Iraqi oil and a national administration for merchant shipping must be set up. Land, air, river and telephone communications with other countries must be developed according to the national interest.
- b) Summer holiday resorts must be enlarged and equipped in a modern fashion, each linked with the others by the construction of roads from Sulaimaniya to Zakho and to other regions of Iraq.

Art 18 Until the Kurdish question is decided in a democratic and just way, we estimate that it is necessary to maintain the Peshmerga force, to raise its cultural, sanitary, and living standards and to educate its members in the spirit of true democracy and patriotism. The families of the martyrs killed and injured in the Kurdish revolution must be aided as well as those who have suffered economically through their participation.

Art 19 Staffs qualified in public health must be created by opening specialised colleges and schools and by sending missions abroad. The condition of public health must be improved by a detailed plan for preventive and

eradicated methods for current and endemic diseases, by reinforcing public health facilities and by advising the population by means of the press and radio.

Drinking water supplies and free medical treatment must be assured for the population of all Kurdistan. Care must be taken to increase the numbers of hospitals and dispensaries in Kurdistan, to establish medical services in remote regions and villages and to make plans to acquire medicines, to create and develop a local pharmaceutical industry, to obtain modern technical equipment and to charge reasonable prices for medicines.

Art 20 Direct democratic suffrage must be adopted for the election of presidents of municipalities, of municipal councils and the executives of communes. Local councils must draw up plans for the creation of public parks and gardens and for the construction of streets, squares and stadiums in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Art 21 We must work towards the full enjoyment of political, economic and social rights for women and towards the implementation of laws protecting these rights, especially in the field of work before, during and after maternity, and the protection of mothers and children.

Art 22 We are striving to :

- a) guarantee the rights of Kurdish students, to eradicate illiteracy and ignorance, to give education and teaching a practical

democratic orientation, to fight fascist racialist reactionary programmes and tendencies and to harmonise practice with theory;

- b) revive Kurdish literature, history and art, to enrich them with the cultural heritage of other nations and to preserve and maintain Kurdistan's historical monuments;
- c) create an official independent university in Kurdistan which will co-operate with other Iraqi universities and which would become an important centre for research;
- d) teach Kurdish history, literature and language in Iraqi universities, to make the teaching of Kurdish widespread throughout Iraq, to found a Kurdish scientific linguistic academy and to build a broadcasting and television station in Kurdistan;
- e) make primary education obligatory for both sexes, to start evening courses for all workers and peasants, to increase the number of public libraries, science laboratories, cultural and sporting associations, to organise public lectures and discussions to raise the cultural level of the population;
- f) develop Kurdish literature and art, putting their revolutionary fervour to the service of humanity in general, in the service of the Kurdish people and their legitimate interests and objectives in particular, to encourage literacy and

artistic activity, to increase the number of scholarships and student visits to foreign countries, to develop the construction of theatres, film production and exchanges of theatrical and musical troupes.

Art 23 We uphold the struggle of the Kurdish people throughout Kurdistan for freedom and to obtain their legitimate national rights.

Art 24 We strive for Iraqi nationality to be granted to all Kurds who are resident in Iraq and have possessed residence permits for at least five years. This refers to Fai'ili, Goyan, 'Umariyan Kurds and others.

Institut kurde de Paris

Interviews and Bibliography

- I. Note on Sources
- II. Interviews
- III. Bibliography
 - A. Primary source material
 - a) Archives and Manuscripts
 - b) Government and Party Political Publications
 - i) Iraq Government
 - ii) Arab Ba'th Socialist Party
 - iii) Iraqi Communist Party
 - iv) Kurdistan Democratic Party
 - v) Miscellaneous
 - c) Theses
 - d) Newspapers and magazines
 - B. Secondary source material
 - a) Books
 - b) Articles

I. Note on Sources

As already mentioned in the Preface, this book is based largely upon interviews and the official publications of the Iraq government and the various political parties. Little or no direct diplomatic evidence is available to document the various negotiations of the Republican period. The Preface also contains a discussion and evaluation of the principal secondary works cited.

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- Abbas Mamend
79, 101n, 170
- 'Abd al-'Aziz al-'Uqaili
180, 193, 194, 195, 197,
215n, 216n
- 'Abd al-Karim Qasim
36-144, 154, 155, 172,
187n, 230-235, 263,
270n, 271n, 280-282,
293, 295, 304-306,
324-327, 330-332
- 'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif
191-226, 268n, 316n
- 'Abd al-Rahman al-
Bazzaz
180, 191-204, 208, 215n,
216n, 217n, 225, 329-330
- 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Na'if
224-226, 242, 272n
- 'Abd al-Salam 'Arif
37-42, 55n, 59n, 70,
112, 117, 123, 129n,
153-191, 203, 214,
225, 286-287, 296,
309, 324, 329
- 'Arif, see
'Abd al-Rahman 'Arif
'Abd al-Salam 'Arif
'Arif 'Abd al-Razzaq
Fu'ad 'Arif
- 'Abdullah Sallum al-
Sammarra'i
237, 238, 271n
- 'Aflaq, Michel
227, 253-254
- Agrarian reform
48, 53, 76-79, 84, 101n,
103n, 264, 323, 332, 334
- Ahmad
see Ibrahim Ahmad
- Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr
112, 153, 224, 226, 237,
239, 242, 260, 267, 269n
- Ako (Kurdish tribe)
79, 170
- Algeria, Algiers
120, 130, 145, 284, 285,
310
- 'Ali Salih al-Sa'di
110-112, 130-131,
137-138, 143-144, 149n,
152n, 155, 182n,
235-237, 282-283
- Arab-Israeli War of 1967
209, 211, 220n, 222, 223,
224, 286, 287, 298
- Arab nationalists in
Iraq (= Nasserists),
38-45, 50, 56n, 57n, 63,
86, 89-90, 107-108,
111-121, 125n, 143, 152n,
153, 174-175, 223-224,
229, 295, 297, 301
- Arbil
2, 163

- 'Arif 'Abd al-Razzaq
191-193, 203-204, 215n
- Armenia
5, 6
- 'Awni Yusuf
59n, 60n, 97n
- 'Aziz Sharif
254-255, 262, 265, 274n,
275n
- Baba 'Ali (son of Shaikh
Mahmud Barzinji)
12, 38, 112, 156
- Bakr Sidqi
13
- Baradost (Kurdish tribe)
80
- Barzan
Shaikh Ahmad of,
see Shaikh Ahmad of Barzan
- Barzani
= Mulla Mustafa Barzani,
passim
- Ba'th Party
57n, 68, 70, 90, 98n, 107-112,
125n, 129n, 130, 135, 138,
141-148, 151n, 152n,
153-156, 182n, 187n,
222-276, 295-298, 310,
330,
origins and doctrines of,
227, 229
- Britain, in Iraq
6-12, 15-16, 32n-33n,
78, 101n, 118-119
- Churchill, W S
28n
- Committee of Union and
Progress
5, 28n
- Cornwallis, Sir Kinahan
15, 16, 33n
- Da'ud al-Sayigh
61n
- Democratic Party of
Kurdistan (DPK-Iran)
18, 20
- Dohuk
2, 15, 31n, 202, 254
- Faisal I, King of Iraq,
1921-33
7-8, 9, 29n, 30n, 116
- Free Officers Movement
24, 36-37
- Fu'ad 'Arif
110-112, 209, 219n, 220n,
275n
- al-Fursan (government-
sponsored Kurdish forces)
53, 62n, 103n, 147, 201,
205, 206, 264

- Ghazi, King of Iraq,
1933-39
10
230-231, 235, 257, 259,
262, 271n, 272n, 292-293,
304-309, 317n, 318n,
322-326
- Hamza 'Abdullah
18-20, 21, 33n, 44, 45,
46, 58n, 59n, 60n, 71
Iran, Kurds in,
1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 11, 16, 17-18,
40, 47, 56n, 57n, 80, 100n,
101n, 102n, 117, 172,
187n, 232, 279, 285, 314n,
policy of government
towards Iraqi Kurds etc.
172, 179, 199-200, 208,
211-214, 216n, 250, 251,
253, 266, 288-299, 301,
311
- Herki (Kurdish tribe)
53, 69, 80, 96n
Héwa (Kurdish Party)
13-14, 15, 17, 20, 92,
105n, 321
Israel
105, 209-211, 253, 284,
310, 315n, 316n
and the Iraqi Kurds
299-302
- Ibrahim Ahmad
20-22, 33n, 37-40,
44-50, 58n, 59n, 60n,
61n, 70-74, 80, 82, 96n,
99n, 101n, 102n, 104n,
108-110, 118, 124n, 127n,
128n, 159-173, 176, 179,
183n, 185n, 186n, 188n,
189n, 190n, 198, 205, 210,
212, 218n, 219n, 225, 238,
240-246, 249, 259, 279,
309, 316n, 334
Istiqlal Party
23, 41, 57n, 110, 125n
- Iraqi Communist Party
(ICP)
13, 17, 23, 34n, 41-48,
51, 52, 57n, 58n, 60-67,
71, 73, 86-91, 96n, 100n,
103n, 104n, 106n, 107,
113, 114, 135, 144, 147,
151n, 172, 187n, 223,
Jalal Talabani
46, 47, 60n, 74, 80-81,
111, 114-115, 121, 126n,
128n, 130-132, 138-142,
145-146, 152n, 159-173,
176, 179, 183-190, 198,
205, 210, 212, 218n, 219n,
225, 238, 240-249, 259,
282-285, 309, 316n, 334
Jama'at al-Ahali
13

- 'June Declaration'
(1966)
199-202, 206-208, 212,
224, 240, 242, 245, 246,
248-249, 253, 254, 330
- Kajyk party
54, 62n, 105n, 106n,
274n
- Karim Qarani
108, 124n
- Kemal, Mustafa
6
- Khabat (Kurdish
newspaper)
72, 74, 85, 99n, 118,
120, 183n, 188n, 190n,
218n, 244, 275n
- Kirkuk
66, 82, 134, 136, 140,
146, 176, 246, 250,
260-262,
events of 1959 in,
43-44, 57n, 58n, 90
- Kurdish Democratic
Party
1. PDK-Iraq 1946-1951
17, 19, 20, 21
2. KDP, 1951 f, passim
- Kuwait, Qasim's claim to
78, 107, 124n, 282
- Lausanne, Treaty of (1923)
6, 9, 320
- League of Nations
9, 10, 11, 31n
- Lolan rebellion (1959)
66
- Mahabad
1, 18, 21, 22, 33n, 92, 289,
291, 304, 321-322, 332
- Mahmud
see Shaikh Mahmud
- Barzinji
Majid Mustafa
15, 17
- Mosul, Mosul wilayet
6-10, 31n, 116, 119, 134,
140,
events of 1959 in,
42-43, 46, 90, 118, 124n,
126n, 230
- Mulla Mustafa Barzani
passim
- Naji Talib
55n, 139, 141, 150n,
204-209, 219n
- Nasser and the Kurds
45, 115-117, 118, 121,
128n, 146, 152n, 156, 171,
175, 182n, 216n, 278-288,
295

- National Democratic Party 261, 264, 294, 296-298, 334
 23, 41, 42, 43, 46, 61n, 70, 73, 89, 107
- National Guard (= Ba'th paramilitary forces) 114, 143, 155
- Nuri al-Sa'id 15, 16, 40, 218n, 279, 291, 303-304
- Nuri Shawiz 164, 170
- Nuri Taha 81
- Oil 2, 134-136, 140, 149n, 176, 219n, 246, 250, 269n, 306
- Ottoman Empire, Kurdish policies of, 3, 4, 5, 6, 288, 290
- Parti Democrati Kurdistan (1951f) see Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP)
- Peshmerga 51, 82, 126n, 131, 134-135, 141, 146, 164-168, 170-181, 190n, 197, 205, 209-212, 225, 236, 246, 250-251,
- 261, 264, 294, 296-298, 334
- 'Popular Delegation' (from the government to the Kurds, March 1963) 135-137, 139, 149n, 150n
- Qadhi Muhammad (of Mahabad) 18, 33n
- Qalat Diza 166, 167, 171, 173, 176
- Qasim, see 'Abd al-Karim Qasim
- Rashid 'Ali al-Gailani 15, 269n
- Rizgari (Kurdish party & newspaper) 17, 19, 20, 23, 34n, 92, 105n
- Saddam Husain 226, 237, 238, 259-260, 266, 267, 269n, 276n
- al-Sa'di see 'Ali Salih al-Sa'di
- al-Sa'dun, 'Abd al-Muhsin 9
- Safavid Empire 3, 288
- Salih 'Ammash 139, 237, 266, 276n, 282-283

- Salih al-Yusufi
99n, 110, 114, 125n,
126n, 131, 156,
185n-186n, 188n,
213, 217n, 220n,
221n
- Sam Remo, Treaty of
(1920)
7
- Sèvres, Treaty of
(1920)
6
- Shaikh Ahmad of
Barzan
11, 12, 14, 22, 31n, 38,
77, 81, 92, 147, 156
- Shaikh Mahmud
Barzinji
7-10, 12, 14, 29n,
30n, 92, 156, 320
321
- Shaikh 'Ubaidullah,
revolt of (1880)
4-5, 27n, 28n
- Shawkat 'Aqrawi
110, 111, 281,
286-288
- Sherif Pasha,
General
6
- Shoresh (Kurdish
Communist Party)
17-20, 34n, 100n
- Shoresh (Kurdish
landlords' party)
77
- Sidiq Miran
74, 76, 96n, 99n
- Soviet Union, Kurds in
1-2, 6,
policy of, towards
Iraq government
155, 175, 284, 289, 292,
302-311
policy of, towards Iraqi
Kurds
286, 302-311, 318n
- Surchi (Kurdish tribe)
69
- Sulaimaniya
1, 2, 6, 7, 8, 10-12, 14, 15,
29n, 30n, 32n, 33n, 37, 82,
100n, 124n, 146, 147,
152n, 156, 162, 163, 242,
320, 321, 323
- Syria, Kurds in
1, 2, 6, 57n, 117, 118, 127n,
279, 280, 284-285, 312n,
313n
- al-Taakhi (Kurdish
newspaper)
208, 211, 213, 243, 275n
- Tahir Yahya
108-112, 124, 132-133, 169,
177, 186n, 191, 209-213,
222-224, 268n

- Talabani
 see Jalal Talabani
- Tanzimat reforms
 4
- Tawfiq al-Suwaidi
 22
- Turkey, Kurds in
 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 11, 16,
 40, 47, 56n, 57n,
 102n, 117, 232, 279,
 285, 288-291, 314n
 policy of government
 of, towards Iraqi
 Kurds etc.
 288-299
- 'Umar Mustafa
 81, 82
- United Arab
 Republic, desire by
 nationalists for
 merger with
 31, 41, 45, 115, 117,
 121-122, 139,
 174-177, 229,
 278-288, 324
- United National
 Front (1957)
 23-24, 38, 41, 44,
 58n, 229, 322
- United States, and
 Iraqi Kurds
 302, 311
- Wilson, President Woodrow
 5-6, 28n
- Yahya
 see Tahir Yahya
- Young Turks
 5
- Zibari (Kurdish tribe)
 32n, 53, 68, 69, 80, 96n,
 97n

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