

INTERNATIONAL PARIS CONFERENCE

14-15 October 1989

The Kurds : Human Rights and cultural Identity

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To Madame Danielle Mitterrand

EDITOR'S NOTE

On 14th and 15th October 1989, the Kurdish Institute of Paris, supported by the France-Libertés Foundation, organized an International Conference on the theme "The Kurds: human rights and cultural identity", at the Centre of International Conferences at Avenue Kléber. Two hundred and forty personalities and 85 journalists from 32 countries of Eastern and Western Europe, the States, the Near East, North Africa, Asia and Australia participated in this two day conference aimed at appraising the fate of the Kurdish people and considering together ways of heightening international public awareness of the issue.

Amongst the personalities present were: Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand, Elena Bonner, Ann Clwyd, British MP, member of Labour's shadow cabinet, Georgina Dufoix, former Minister of Social Affairs and Jeri Laber, director of Helsinki Watch, Mr. Bernard Kouchner, Secretary of State for Humanitarian Action, Hocine Ait-Ahmed, former Algerian Minister, Lord Avebury, President of the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, Clairborne Pell, President of the Foreign Affairs Commission of the American Senate, Peter Galbraith, Member of the same commission, William Eagleton, Ambassador of the U.S.A., Thomas Hammarberg, former President of Amnesty International and Director of the Save the Children Fund, Professors René-Jean Dupuy, Collège de France, as well as numerous writers, academics, MPs and representatives of human rights' defense organizations (cf. annex 1 list of participants). The former Austrian Chancellor, Bruno Kreisky and the Soviet academician Andrei Sakharov who, due to ill health, were unable to come to Paris, sent messages of solidarity. Mrs. Catherine Lalumière, Secretary-General of the European Committee, and Messrs Willy Brandt, Edward Kennedy, Giovanni Spadolini, President of the Italian Senate, joined in sending messages of sympathy to the conference.

As regards Kurds, as well as independent personalities, all the political factions of Kurdistan and the main organizations of the Diaspora were represented, mainly by their most senior members (cf. annex 1 list of participants). In defiance of their party, which had strictly forbidden them to come to Paris, 8 Kurdish MPs from Turkey came to attend the conference and one of them, Ibrahim Aksoy,

deputy of Malatya, presented the current situation of the Kurds in Turkey. Also, the USSR authorized, for the first time, a delegation of Soviet Kurds, led by the academician, Nadir Nadirov, to take part in a Pan-Kurdish meeting.

The gathering together in the same room of so many foreign personalities and Kurds from such diverse political and cultural horizons constituted a very important event in itself. It was the first time in Kurdish memory, that political leaders and intellectuals from all parts of Kurdistan had assembled to discuss an issue. For a large number of Kurds and observers, the essential fact was that, over and above divisions and divergences, the Kurds were capable of meeting to discuss problems which concerned them all: the defence of human rights and their threatened cultural identity. The presence of numerous foreign personalities showed that the wall of silence, which has enveloped the Kurdish drama for decades, was at last, in the process of being broken down and that the moment had come to take the Kurdish question out of the Near East ghetto and to internationalize it.

As well as a widespread media response, particularly welcome at a time when the Kurdish drama seemed to be fading into oblivion, the conference also had considerable political repercussions, during the course of several months, in countries such as Turkey and Iraq. It also constituted a major step towards the internationalization of the Kurdish issue, giving rise to a debate at the American Congress, a conference in Moscow and numerous other initiatives.

Having devoted a special 176 page issue of the Kurdish Institute's "Information and liaison bulletin" to the impact of this conference on public opinion and the media and to the reaction of the states and the Near Eastern press, we are publishing the proceedings of the conference in this volume. Save oral interventions during the debate, two talks whose authors do not wish them to be published and brief telegrams and messages of sympathy, all the contributions presented or addressed to the conference appear in the present collection.

We would like to express our gratitude to the France-Libertés Foundation, to the Secretary of State for Humanitarian Action and to the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, for the help and assistance which they kindly gave in the organization of this conference. We would also like to thank all the personalities who by their presence, their testimonies or their messages contributed to the radiance of the conference.

Kurdish Institute of Paris

**OPENING REMARKS
OF SESSION PRESIDENTS
AND MESSAGES**

Lord AVEBURY

Mme. Danielle MITTERRAND

Dr. Bernard KOUCHNER

Senator Claiborne PELL

Senator Edward M. KENNEDY

Chancellor Bruno KREISKY

Prof. Andreï SAKHAROV

ENSURING THE SURVIVAL OF THE KURDS

*Lord AVEBURY **

The theme of this conference is human rights and cultural identity. But the cultural identity of any people is determined by their political status. And all other human rights presuppose the right of self-determination; without self-determination, not only is cultural freedom denied, but many of the other rights enshrined in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights are flagrantly and persistently violated.

We see that truth exemplified today in the Baltic states annexed to the Soviet Union; in Eritrea, a former colonial territory which was handed over to the new imperialists in Addis Ababa by the UN; in Tibet, annexed by the People's Republic of China 30 years ago; in East Timor, still occupied by tens of thousands of Jakarta's troops; in Palestine, where Israeli repression fails to still the clamour for self-rule; in the Western Sahara and West Papua, both causes where the UN violated its own rules for decolonisation, and most tragically, in Kurdistan.

More than 70 years ago, President Woodrow Wilson set out his aims for the self-determination of nations in the celebrated Fourteen Points. Number twelve specifically mentioned the nationalities which were living under Ottoman rule, and in the Treaty of Sevres, an independent Kurdish state was foreshadowed.

The Western nations who devised these arrangements were really more concerned to dismember the Ottoman Empire than to promote the right of self-determination for the Kurds and the Armenians. But the fact remains that they pledged their word and then dishonoured it.

This places a huge moral responsibility on the present leaders of the United

* *Chairman of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group, UK.*

States, France and Great Britain. They fought two world wars ostensibly for the maintenance of the rule of law and the preservation of human rights including particularly the rights of self-determination, and they gave detailed and specific assurances to the Kurds. Today they can and do rely on the more limited formulations of the United Nations, which are concerned only with former colonies of the European powers. But is the right of a people to determine their own future to be confined to those former colonies, together with the states which had already achieved it ?

We need an extension of the formulas in General Assembly resolutions 1514 and 1541 of 1960, which set out the rules for self-determination. Surely it must be wrong that a people having distinct attributes of language, culture, ethnicity and religion should be denied that right merely because they had never been part of a separate political entity. In the case of the Kurds, the emirates of the 14th to early 19th century had all those attributes, but never developed into a nation state because of their feudal relationship with the Ottomans. This was neither better nor worse than European colonialism, or the Cho-Yon link between the Mongols and Tibet. All implied the political control of one people by another, and all ought to be just as unacceptable in an era of equality.

But the Kurdish people cannot wait for the slow process of international reforms. Throughout the whole of the Middle East, the Kurdish people are facing an emergency.

In Iraq, the government has embarked on a massive programme of forced relocation. Under the pretence that Kurds have to be moved from their historic territory because they could be in the path of Iranian aggression, the regime has systematically uprooted tens of thousands from their towns and villages, and compelled them to move as much as 100 kilometres away.

This policy, which aims at the destruction of the Kurds as a separate community - what Leo Kuper has termed "ethnocide" - follows a programme of extra-judicial execution of Kurds, and the use of chemical weapons to exterminate Kurdish men, women and children. The notorious poison gas attack on Halabja, which the Iraqi government brazenly attempted to deny, was the most infamous crime in the long list of atrocities committed by the Saddam Hussein regime.

In Iran, the Kurds suffered terrible losses during the Iran-Iraq war. Many Kurdish towns such as Sanandaj were bombed heavily. It seemed until recently that following the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini, there might have been an accomodation between Kurdish leaders and the new government in Tehran. However, the murder of the General Secretary of the Kurdish Democratic Party of

Iran in Vienna recently, by Iranian secret agents, shows that the Ayatollah's policy of crushing the Kurds has continued after his death.

In Turkey, as in Iraq, the authorities are trying to eradicate the Kurdish identity. Already, hundreds of thousands have been moved from their homes in Kara Maras and neighbouring areas. The army, ostensibly searching for guerrillas, force the whole of the population of a village out of their houses, beat them up, subject them to all sorts of indignities, and take the young men away to army camps, where they are detained and invariably tortured.

Turkey has applied to join the EEC. It is, of course, absolutely unthinkable that we should admit a country which is inflicting such barbaric treatment on a defenceless minority whose only crime is to be different. In Britain last weekend a Kurdish refugee burned himself to death rather than be sent back to his Turkish persecutors, and another lies seriously ill in hospital.

I do hope, that as we consider the human rights and cultural identity of the Kurds over the next two days, we shall recognise that the very survival of the Kurds as a people is threatened. It is not a matter of just a few cases, to be carefully documented and perhaps made the subject of a presentation at the UN Human Rights Subcommission in Geneva. It is a wicked conspiracy by the leaders of several states to destroy a people, because that people aspires to the self-government we offered them and then snatched away.

OPENING SPEECH

*Danielle MITTERRAND **

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Upon opening this session, as I have been honoured to do by the Chairman, I wish to express my pride.

- Proud, I am, because France-Libertés could not hope to express in a better way its reason for existing and at the same time, to carry out its self-elected mission.
- Proud, I say, because it is not a coincidence that for years we have been present along side our Kurdish friends, as they defend their identity and claim their cultural homeland.

Together, we have succeeded.

- Proud, also, because the Foundation kept its commitment to organise this meeting.

December 10th, 1988 marked the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man. France-Libertés presided over a committee where the right to speak was handed over to the young, those who together will make tomorrow and what will be the 21st century.

The testimony of a young Kurdish girl overwhelmed the auditorium. Her words later led me to the refugee camps in Turkey.

I will not dwell on this mission now. In a few days, before an audience in the American Congress, I will talk of this journey and its consequences.

* *President of the France-Libertés Foundation*

- Proud, I am also, because France has welcomed hundreds of refugees who have settled themselves in the towns here. They will take the time needed to install themselves. So our country has once again given the feeling and proof that it is a country of refuge.

Today, you will discuss the problems of cultural identity, and the respect of human rights for a population of 25 million people.

- Yes, proud, despite one regret, even a vexation. Hardly eleven months ago, as we announced the organisation of this conference, encouragements proliferated and there was no lack of propositions to support us.

I am forced to remark, like you, that the defections have been numerous. In this year in which human rights have so often been evoked, one was allowed to think that, in the name of the 1789 declaration, solemnly read and commented on in so many places, we would gather together here in so large a number. We are here to say that “relentlessly, without pause” the fight continues to live otherwise, to live in solidarity. Solidarity, yes, is an idea which is making its way.

“Relentlessly, without pause”, France-Libertés and its President will speak on behalf of those women, those children, packed in refugee camps, where the only crime is to be a Kurd.

“Relentlessly, without pause”, I will defend the right of expression, the right to unite, the right to propose. I hate weapons and violence because I am convinced that the strength of the righteous man lies in his power to tell, to witness, to convince and to organise in solidarity in reply to repression.

The session is open.

A MEETING LONG AWAITED

*Dr. Bernard KOUCHNER **

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I know that you come from 32 different countries, and I have never seen as many Kurds from various countries gathered in the same room to speak about culture and the defense of human rights. I am moved and proud that it is France which has hosted this Conference in this way. However, I am not the one to welcome you as it is the Kurdish Institute of Paris which has organised this meeting with the help of Danielle Mitterrand's France-Libertés Foundation. They are the ones to be thanked. If I speak for a few minutes and if, tomorrow, I officially chair one of the round table discussions there is something I would like to stress. The fact of our presence here is not a question of an attack against one government or another, or of interference in the internal affairs of any country, but of a hope concerning the defense of human rights and humanitarian actions. There is much to be done. Now, in a private capacity, I will tell you how much I have waited for this gathering. How, since the seventies, with Mustafa Barzani, with all the leaders I know, and with Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, we prepared this meeting. We spoke of this meeting over a year ago with our friend Abdul Rahman, and we even chose the title of these two days, with him.

I wish once again in a personal capacity for success in this work, that is, success for the Kurdish people and a lessening of their suffering. I remember two particular sentences of Ghassemlou, one which is often repeated: "the Kurds are not talked of enough because they haven't hijacked any planes and because they haven't taken any hostages". It was not a way of regretting, but of being proud of the Kurdish ways. It was because he had faith in democracy, as I hope you all do. It was because he was one of the greatest fighters for democracy and because it was along this path that he chose to guide the Kurdish people. The other sentence was: "You are perhaps the

* *State Secretary to Humanitarian Action*

denied, the Kurdish people have no other friends but their mountains". This must be contended, contended, forever contended. It is true that the problems are immense; 25 million people, 5 countries, claims of autonomy, enormous legal and political difficulties. Today, however, after many meetings, today perhaps more so than any other day, marks a hope on the road to democracy. The democracy to which my friend Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou aspired for the Kurdish people.

I ask you to take a minute's silence in memory of all the Kurdish fighters and civilians who fell and died under atrocious circumstances over the past few years. Also, in memory of the three men who were strangely assassinated in Vienna, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, Abdullah Ghaderi and Fazil Rassoul, who represented in their three different nationalities, the honour of the Kurdish people. I am sure that during these two days we will be taking the path they showed us.

Thank you.

THE FATE OF THE KURDS SHOULD BE AT THE TOP OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA

*Claiborne PELL **

At the outset I would like to congratulate Mme. Mitterrand, La Fondation France-Libertés, and the Kurdish Institute for serving as host to this conference. We live in a world of increased sensitivity to human rights. From the vantage point of Capitol Hill, I see this sensitivity not only in the concerns of Members of Congress and the Administration, but also in the reaction of ordinary Americans. From Cambodia to El Salvador, from South Africa to Tibet, Americans write or phone their representatives in support of strong governmental action on human rights. Some of these interventions reflect the work of organized groups, such as Amnesty International. Sometimes the outpouring is a spontaneous reaction to images brought home to Americans on television and through the newspapers. Such an outpouring occurred when Chinese troops slaughtered hundreds of students, almost live on television, in and around Tiananmen Square.

By contrast, Americans, and I think other Westerners, have shown relatively less interest in the fate of 17 million Kurds. This is not because the human rights problems of the Kurds are less severe than those of other peoples. In one country, the Kurdish people are denied the right to speak their own language outside the privacy of their home, to publish in their own language, or to send their children to schools where their native tongue is spoken. In another country where Kurds live, Kurdish leaders have been persecuted and many killed. The reach of that country's repressive apparatus apparently has extended to Europe where at least one assassination has been carried out. Finally, in Iraq the Kurds have seen their villages razed to the ground, their children tortured and killed, and their people massacred by weapons so horrible that they have been banned by international agreement for more than 60 years.

* *President of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee*

No, in terms of the severity of the problem, the Kurds should be near the top, not at the bottom, of our human rights agenda. One reason the Kurds have not received the priority they deserve is that so little attention has been paid to their plight. Another reason is that too many governments are too concerned about alienating the oil-rich or politically powerful nations where the Kurdish people reside.

This conference constitutes the most important international effort to focus attention of the Kurds in a very long period of time. I would again like to express my appreciation to Mme. Mitterrand and the other organizers for their effort. I am honored to be asked to participate in this endeavor.

Like most Americans, even those involved in foreign policy, I had not devoted much thought to Kurdish issues. But I was shocked last year by the sudden exodus of tens of thousands of Iraqi Kurds and by their reports of chemical weapon use.

I knew these reports to be true. A year before, I had commissioned a committee staff study of the Iran-Iraq War and a member of that team had been one of a few westerners able to visit Iraqi Kurdistan. That report described the destruction of hundreds of Kurdish villages. With the chemical weapons, the Iraqi Regime was escalating its anti-Kurdish policy to a new level of inhumanity.

On September 7, the Senate resumed session after its summer recess. On September 8, I introduced S2763, "The Prevention of Genocide Act of 1988" which would have imposed sweeping sanctions against Iraq. And on September 9 the Senate unanimously passed the bill.

For those of you familiar with our legislative process, you will appreciate how unusual it is for the Senate to act with such dispatch. The vote reflected the outrage of my colleagues and our concern about the consequences of world inattention to the use of chemical weapons.

The Iraq Sanctions bill passed the Senate three times and the House of Representatives twice. Unfortunately time ran out on the session before it could be enacted.

Like you, I was extremely disappointed. Our legislative system is extremely complex and, even in the best of circumstances, it is hard to get action. At the end of a Congress it is almost impossible to pass a bill from scratch.

However, the issue is not dead. Building on last year's effort, I introduced this year S. 195 "The Prevention of Chemical Warfare Act of 1989". This bill will impose a complete severance of economic relations between the United States and any country that uses chemical or biological weapons in violation of international law.

Ten days ago this bill was approved by a unanimous vote of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. We are building on the efforts of last year. We are also sending a message to the government of Iraq and that message is very simple: Never Again.

The United States is a major economic power and our action should deter potential users of chemical weapons. We are, however, no longer the preeminent economic power. Therefore if our approach of automatic sanctions against chemical weapon use is to be truly effective, it must be internationalized. It is an approach, therefore, which I commend to European and Japanese friends.

The chemical weapons issue provides a very important way to highlight the gross mistreatment of the Kurdish people. It should not, however, be our sole focus.

We must resolve to continually raise the problem of the Kurds - to hold the feet of the Iraqi dictatorship to the fire.

This year I have sponsored legislation requiring the President to evaluate Iraq's treatment of the Kurds against the standard as to whether such treatment "constitutes a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." If Iraq's conduct meets that standard, then it's subject to various penalties under U.S. law.

We must also raise the problem of the treatment of the Kurds in various international fora. I would hope our government, and others, would place the Kurds on the agenda of the U. N. Human Rights Commission.

This is the bicentennial year of the French Revolution. It is also a year when the values embodied in the French and American Revolutions - values of democracy and human rights - have seen an enormous triumph, particularly in Eastern Europe. Democratization also promises a new international cooperation as opposed to confrontation. We must use the opportunities so created to focus on the more difficult international problems. And in this context I hope the plight of the Kurdish people can be high on our agenda.

MESSAGE

*Edward M. KENNEDY **

I wish I could be with you today as you gather to advance the cause of human rights and cultural preservation of the Kurds.

Let me first commend one dedicated individual whose persistent efforts have made this important conference a reality - Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand. I am confident that the Kurdish Institute of Paris will serve as a beacon of hope to the millions of Kurds around the world who seek a brighter, and just future. I share with each of you here today your abiding commitment to advance the cause of the Kurdish people. We must join together in advancing the cause of justice and respect for human rights for the Kurdish people.

The Kurds are heir to one of the oldest, richest cultures in human history. Dating back to the Medes, their culture has given birth to writers, philosophers, great musicians and poets who have enriched many nations across the earth. Yet time and time again, this priceless culture has been threatened by forces much more powerful.

Far too often throughout history, the Kurds have been treated as pawns in regional conflicts, their people have been persecuted and their culture repressed. Earlier this year, the Iraqi Government began a massive campaign to relocate by force tens of thousands of Kurds in northern Iraq to other parts of the country. Last year, thousands of Kurds died from the poison gas attacks by Iraq and thousands more had to flee to Turkey, Iran and Syria.

The Kurdish people have suffered far too much for far too long. We must rededicate ourselves to ending the suffering the Kurdish people have endured, to ensuring the respect of human rights, and to raising global awareness of their plight - the Kurds must not be forgotten.

* U.S. Senator

MESSAGE

*Bruno KREISKY **

I was very touched by your invitation. If my health allows, I will gladly become involved in the Kurdish cause. Due to my interest in this courageous people, whose combat I have followed for many years I would like to assure you how much I appreciate your action.

Kind regards.

* *Former Austrian Chancellor*

MESSAGE

*Andrei SAKHAROV **

Moscow, October 13, 1989

I am very preoccupied by the plight of the Kurdish people, of their suffering, and their persecution. The tragic fight of the Kurdish people, which has lasted for such a long time, has its origins in the principle right of every population to auto-determination. This is why it is a righteous fight.

I call upon all governments, organisations and citizens of all countries as well as the international organisations to become aware; in their relations with the countries where Kurds live, they should become aware of the real politics conducted by the leaders of these countries and their politics concerning the Kurds. No manifestation of cruelty, no national or social injustice, no inpinging on human rights and no genocide should go unnoticed. Neither should it remain without consequence for those countries allowing these actions. In particular, we cannot forget that chemical weapons have been used, that there have been murders and tortures of children, women, and elderly people.

I feel that the Conference must address the General Assembly of United Nations, and propose a discussion of the Kurdish problem. To my mind, the result of this debate must be a resolution from the General Assembly. It should oblige the states, on which territories the Kurds live, to create autonomous, national Kurdish regions and to bestow on the Kurdish population the political, economic, religious and cultural independence which it deserves. All acts of cruelty and all illegalities committed in the past towards the Kurdish people must be condemned and appropriate measures taken to prevent their reoccurrence in the future.

In deep respect and hope.

* *Soviet Academician, Nobel Peace Prize*

CONTRIBUTIONS

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Thomas HAMMARBERG

The order of publication given to these contributions corresponds to that of their presentation at the Conference.

THE TRAGEDY OF THE KURDISH PEOPLE

*Mrs. Elena BONNER **

Fifteen years ago, my husband, the academician Andrei Sakharov, addressed the United Nations' Organization, the governments of different countries and the international community to call for the realization of justice for the Kurdish race. Fifteen years ago we received a letter from Mustafa Barzani, one of the most eminent representatives of the Kurds, in which he thanked us for our defence of the Kurdish race placed in justice and in the fight for it. This letter from Mustafa Barzani was written on the 7th of October 1974... I'm pleased to have been able to remember the name of this man for this conference today.

Around the time of my acquaintance with this man, about 14 years ago, I took part in the work of a humanitarian aid organization based in Iraq. I was working in Kurdistan. When, for the first time, I set off for the town of Suleymaniyé, it was dawn and pink birds were perched on the telegraph poles. I can remember this extraordinarily beautiful image. The sight of these birds seemed to me to be the symbol of happiness and well-being. It has to be said that the Republic of Iraq was still young at this time. The cruelties and genocides that we've witnessed in recent years didn't exist then. Nowadays, everything's deteriorated. There are almost a million Kurdish emigrants. Children, women and old people have suffered and been tortured. And these innocent victims call on humanity as a whole to cry out on their behalf for justice. However, it's very difficult to see justice established. I'm surprised that the international community is so ill-informed about the tragedy of the Kurdish race. I think that if we were to conduct a poll in our country, in the streets of Moscow, one person in 100 might know what the problems of the Kurdish race are and what's happening in Kurdistan.

In my opinion we're all to blame. People interested in the Kurdish problem have gathered together here. All of us here should talk about the Kurdish problem and put forward concrete solutions. But may God save us all from violence. The world

* *Wife of Academician Andrei Sakharov.*

cannot save itself from violence. There are many examples at present. Take, for example, the problem of Lebanon. The most important point is that using force to claim freedom doesn't help things. If we, people of the 20th century, on the brink of the 21st century, don't find another way to resolve this problem, it'll become everyone's problem. I could give examples in our country of tragic situations of races who, in Stalin's era, were moved away from their homes to other places. Even nowadays, although Stalin has been dead for a long time, these people are still unable to return to their region of origin. I could give you other examples. There are many issues, such as that of Karabagh, which remain unresolved, but I hope that sooner or later we will be able to resolve these problems. It concerns every one of us in the entire world, be we French, Russian, English... President Jefferson made the following statement: "The moment there is injustice somewhere in the world, the justice of the whole world is threatened". And if we remain indifferent to the whole world's problems, to the problems of whatever race, and particularly the Kurdish race, we'll all be condemned sooner or later to suffer problems of injustice in our countries as well.

I have brought an open letter from the academician Andrei Sakharov to this meeting.

I'm taking advantage of the fact that I'm amongst you today, that I'm attending this meeting and that I'm in contact with the human rights leagues, and my friends... I want this letter to be handed over to the United Nations' Assembly without fail! That's why I am handing it over to you. Thank you.

A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE KURDS

*Kendal NEZAN **

Brushing over a depiction of 25 centuries of history in half an hour is obviously a tough task. That means about one minute per century! In this quick skimming through I can limit myself to merely pointing out a few major landmarks and mentioning facts likely to help in the understanding of the present situation of the Kurds. I hope the specialists present here won't hold this approach of reducing and simplifying against me and, in response to questions raised during the discussion, I'd be happy to consider any aspect, which seems to you to have been insufficiently covered, in more depth.

The first question which comes to mind is that of the origins of the Kurds. Who are they? Where do they come from? Historians generally agree to consider them as belonging to the Iranian branch of the large family of Indo-European races. In prehistoric times, kingdoms called Mitanni, Kassites and Hourites reigned these mountainous areas, situated between the Iranian plateau and the Euphrates. In VII BC, the Medes, the Kurds' equivalent of the Gauls for the French, founded an empire which, in 612 BC, conquered the powerful Assyria and spread its domination through the whole of Iran as well as central Anatolia. The date 612, is moreover, considered by Kurdish nationalists as the beginning of the 1st Kurdish year; for them we are at present in 2601!

The political reign of the Medes was to end towards the end of 6 BC, but their religion and civilization were to dominate Iran until the time of Alexander the Great. From this date right until the advent of Islam, the fate of the Kurds, who geographers and Greek historians call Karduchoi, was to remain linked to that of the other populations of the empires which succeeded one another on the Iranian scene: Seljuks, Parthes and Sassanids.

Having put up fierce resistance to the Arabo-Muslim invasions, the Kurds ended up joining Islam, without, as a result, becoming Arabized. This resistance continued for

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about a century. The Kurdish tribes resisted the Arab tribes for social rather than religious reasons. All methods were used to coax the Kurds and convert them to Islam, even, for example, the matrimonial strategy, the mother of the last Omayyad caliph, Marwan Hakim, was Kurdish.

Due to the weakening of the caliphs' power, the Kurds, who already had a key role in the arts, history and philosophy fields, begin to assert, from the middle of the IXth century onwards, their own political power. In 837, a Kurdish lord, of the name Rozeguite, founds the town of Akhlut on the banks of Lake Van and makes it the capital of his principality, theoretically vassal of the caliph, but in actual fact virtually independent. In the second half of the Xth century Kurdistan is shared amongst 4 big Kurdish principalities. In the North, the Shaddadids, (951-1174), in the East, the Hasanwayhids (959-1015) and the Banu Annaz (990-1116) and in the West the Marwanids (990-1096) of Diyarbakir. One of these dynasties would have been able, during the decades, to impose its supremacy on the others and build a state incorporating the whole Kuridsh country if the course of history hadn't been disrupted by the massive invasions of tribes surging out of the steppes of Central Asia. Having conquered Iran and imposed their yoke on the caliph of Baghdad, the Seljuk Turks annexed the Kurdish principalities one by one. Around 1150, the sultan Sandjar, the last of the great Seljuk monarchs, created a province from Kurdistan.

Up until then the Kurds' lands were called the Media by Greek geographers, the "Djibal", which means the mountain for the Arabs. It's thus a Turkish sultan who, in homage to the distinctive personality of the Kurdish country, gives it the name Kurdistan. The province of Kurdistan, formed by Sandjar, had as its capital the village Bahâr (which means spring), near ancient Ecbatane, capital of the Medes. It included the vilayets of Sindjar and Shahrâzur to the west of the Zagros massif and those of Hamadan, Dinaver and Kermanshah to the east of this range. Thus, as a whole this designation only recovered a southern part of ethnic Kurdistan. A brilliant autochthonous civilization developed around the town of Divaver — today ruined — 75km North-East of Kermanshah, whose radiance was than partially replaced by that of Senna, 90km further North.

Only about twelve years after the disappearance of the last great Seljuk, a Kurdish dynasty, that of the Ayyubids (1169-1250), founded by the famous Saladin emerges and takes over the leadership of the muslim world for about a century, until the Turko-Mongolian invasions of the XIIIth century. The high-ranking figure of Saladin and his exploits against the crusaders are sufficiently well-known in Europe. His empire incorporated, as well as almost the whole of Kurdistan, all Syria, Egypt and Yemen. It was a bit like the Germanic Roman Empire claiming to reassemble peoples, kingdoms and principalities of Catholic Europe. It was the time of the

Crusades, of the hegemony of the religious on the political and the national. Saladin was, thus, no more of a Kurdish patriot than Saint Louis was a French nationalist.

With the emergence of Kurdistan as a recognized geographical entity, the supremacy of a Kurdish dynasty on the muslim world and the blossoming of an important written literature in the Kurdish language, the XIIth century is assuredly a rich period in the events of Kurdish history. It's also during the course of this century that the Nestorian church with its metropolitan centre in Kurdistan, develops with extraordinary rapidity, its missions spreading across the whole of Asia, as far as Tibet, Sin Kiang, Mongolia and Sumatra. The most spectacular success of these missions was the conversion of the great Mongolian Khan Guyuk in 1248. Also in 1253, Saint Louis sent Guillaume de Rubrouck, who played an important role in what was called the "Mongolian crusade" to him in Baghdad. In 1258, when the Mongolian Hulagu, influenced by these missions, takes Baghdad, he puts the caliph to death but sees to it that the palace is given to the Nestorian Catholics. At the end of the XIIIth century, Islam gains the upper hand over the Mongolians and the Nestorians are massacred. The centre of their patriarchate moves in the course of the centuries but still remains in Kurdistan.

In the second half of the XVth century the Kurdish country ends up by recovering from the effects of the Turko-Mongolian invasions and by taking the form of an autonomous entity, united by its language, culture and civilization, but politically split up into a series of principalities. However, at least amongst the well-read, there's a keen awareness of belonging to a single country. A XVIth century poet, Melaye Djaziri, from the principality of Bohtan, considered as the Kurdish Ronsard introduces himself in these terms:

*I am the rose of Eden of Bohtan.
I am the torch of the nights of Kurdistan.*

At the beginning of the XVIth century the Kurdish country becomes the main stake of the rivalties between the Ottoman and Persian empires. The new shah of Persia, who has imposed Shiisme as the state religion, tries to spread it across the neighbouring countries. The Ottomans, from their side, want to put a stop to the shah's expansionist aims and to assure their Iranian border in order to be able to embark on the conquest of the Arab countries. Caught in the pincer movement of the two giant powers, the Kurds, politically split, had no chance of surviving as an independent entity. In 1514, the Turkish sultan inflicted a bitter defeat on the shah of Persia. Fearing that his victory, would be short-lived, he looked for ways of assuring this difficult Iranian border permanently. At this point one of his most valued advisors, the Kurdish scholar, Idrissi Bitlissi, came up with the idea of recognizing all the former rights and privileges of the Kurdish princes in exchange

for a commitment from the latter to guard this border themselves and to fight at the side of the Ottomans in the case of a Persian-Ottoman conflict. The Turkish sultan Selim the 1st gives his support to the plan of his Kurdish advisor, who went to see the Kurdish princes and lords one by one to convince them that it was in the interest of the Kurds and the Ottomans to conclude this alliance.

Confronted with the choice of being annexed at some point by Persia or formally accepting the supremacy of the Ottoman sultan in exchange for a very wide autonomy, the Kurdish leaders opted for this second solution and thus Kurdistan, or more exactly its countless fiefs and principalities entered the Ottoman bosom by the path of diplomacy. Idrissi Bidlissi's mission was facilitated by the fact that he was a well-known and respected scholar and, above all, by the immense prestige of his father, the Sheikh Hussameddin who was a very influential sufi spiritual chief. Bidlissi is also the author of the first treaty of the General History of the Ottoman Empire.

This particular status was to assure Kurdistan about three centuries of peace. The Ottomans controlled some strategic garrisons on the Kurdish territory, but the rest of the country was governed by the Kurdish lords and princes. As well as a string of modest hereditary seigniories, Kurdistan totalled 17 principalities of hukumets possessing a wide autonomy. Some of them for example those of: Ardalan, Hisn Kaif, Bohtan, and Rowanduz were endowed with attributes of independence. Despite interferences from time to time from the central power, this particular status, to the satisfaction of the Kurds and the Ottomans, functioned without any major hitch until the beginning of the XIXth century. The Ottomans, protected by the powerful Kurdish barrier against Iran, were able to concentrate their forces on other fronts. As for the Kurds, they were virtually independent in the management of their affairs. They lived in seclusion of course and their country was split amongst a series of principalities, but in this same era Germany totalled some 350 autonomous states and Italy was much more broken up than Kurdistan. Every Kurdish court was the centre of an important literary and artistic life. And as a whole, despite the political division, this period in fact constitutes the golden age of Kurdish literary, musical, historical and philosophical creation. In 1596, prince Sheref Khan finishes his monumental "Sherefnameh or splendours of the Kurdish nation". The theological schools of Cizre and Zakho are renowned in the entire muslim world, the town of Akhlat endowed with an observatory is known for its teaching of natural sciences, masters of sufiism like are revered even in Istanbul for their spiritual teaching and their musical genius. Certain ambitious Kurds such as the poets Nabi, Nefi, write in Turkish to win the favour of the sultan.

With the exception of some visionary spirits like the great XVII th century Kurdish poet, Ehmedê Khani, the well-read Kurds and Kurdish princes seem to believe that

their status is going to last eternally and feel no need to change it. In 1675, more than a century before the French Revolution, which spreads the idea of the nation and the state-nation in the West, the poet Khani, in his epic in verse "Mem-o-Zin", calls the Kurds to unite and create their own unified state. he'll scarcely be listened to by either the aristocracy or the population. On Islamic ground, like elsewhere at the same epoch of Christianity, the religious conscience generally prevails over the national conscience. Every prince is preoccupied by the interests of his dynasty, and family, clan or dynastic dynamics often count more than any other consideration. It wasn't rare to see the Kurdish dynasties reign over the non-Kurdish populations. In the XIth century, for example, Farsistan, a Persian province par excellence, was governed by a Kurdish dynasty; from 1242 to 1378 Khorassan an Iranian province in the North-East also had a Kurdish dynasty, and from 1747 to 1859 this was the case for distant Baluchistan, which is today part of Pakistan. So the fact that a certain proportion of the Kurdish territory is governed by foreign dynasties oughtn't seem unacceptable to contemporary people.

The idea of the nation-state and of nationalism is an avatar of the French Revolution. It quickly found a particularly prosperous ground in two divided countries and partly subjugated Germany and Italy. It's German thinkers such as Goerres, Brentano and Grimm who laid down the postulate in accordance with which the political, geographical and linguistic borders were to coincide. They dreamt of a Germany reassembling in one state the string of its small autonomous states. Pan-Germanism in turn inspired other nationalist movements such as pan-Slavism and pan-Turkism. These ideas were to find success rather later on, towards 1830, in Kurdistan where the Prince of Rowanduz, Mîr Mohammed, was to fight from 1830 to 1839 in the name of his ideas for the creation fo a unified Kurdistan.

In fact, up until then, since they hadn't been threatened in their privileges, the Kurdish princes contented themselves with administrating their domain, whilst, at the same time paying homage to the distant sultan-caliph of Constantinople. As a general rule, they weren't to rise up and attempt to create a unified Kurdistan until, at the beginning of the XIXth century, the Ottoman Empire interfered in their affairs and tried to bring an end to their autonomy.

Wars for the unification and independence of Kurdistan mark the first part of the XIXth century. In 1847, the last independent Kurdish principality, that of Bohtan, collapses. Sign of the times, the Ottoman forces, are advised and helped by European powers, in their fight against the Kurds. We notice, for example, the presence of Helmut von Moltke, at the time young captain and military advisor.

From 1847 to 1881, we observe new uprisings, under the leadership of the traditional chiefs, often religious, for the creation of a Kurdish state. This will be followed, up

until the First World War, by a whole series of sporadic and regional revolts against the central government, all of which will be harshly quelled.

The causes of the failure of these movements are multiple: breaking up of authority, feudal dispersal quarrels of supremacy between the princes and the feudal Kurds and interference of the major powers at the Ottoman's side.

Having annexed the Kurdish principalities one by one, the Turkish government applied itself to integrating the Kurdish aristocracy by distributing posts and payments fairly generously and by setting up so-called tribal schools, intended to instill in the children of Kurdish lords the principal of faithfulness to the sultan. This attempt to integrate à la Louis XIV was to an extent crowned with success. But it also furthered the emergence of elite Kurdish modernists. Under their leadership a modern phase in the political movement became apparent in Constantinople whilst charitable and patriotic associations and societies multiplied, trying to introduce the notion of organization and to set up a structured movement in the Kurdish population.

It's important to specify that at the end of the XIXth century the Ottoman Empire was prey to severe nationalist convulsions, each people aspired to the creation of its own nation state. Having tried in vain to keep this conglomeration alive by the ideology of pan-Ottomanism, then of pan-Islamism, the Turkish elite themselves became pan-Turkish and militated in favour of the creation of a Turkish empire going from the Balkans to Central Asia.

Kurdish society approached the First World War divided, decapitated, without a collective plan for its future. In 1915, the Franco-British agreements known as the Sykes-Picot forecast the dismemberment of their country. However the Kurds were in conflict over the destiny of their country. Some, very open to the "pan-Islamist" ideology of the sultan-caliph, saw the salvation of the Kurdish people in a status of cultural and administrative autonomy within the frame of the Ottoman Empire. Others, claiming to take inspiration from the principle of nationalities, from the ideas of the French Revolution and from President Wilson from the United States, fought for the total independence of Kurdistan.

The split became accentuated in the days following the Ottoman defeat by the Allied Powers, in 1918. The independantists formed a hurried delegation at the Conference of Versailles to present "the claims of the Kurdish nation".

Their action contributed to the taking into account by the International Community, of the Kurdish national question. The International Treaty of Sèvres, between the Allies: France, Great Britain and the United States, and the Ottoman Empire,

concluded on the 10th of August 1920, actually recommended, in section III (art. 62-64), the creation of a Kurdish state on part of the territory of Kurdistan. This treaty was to go unheeded, however, the balance of power on the terrain preventing its application.

For its part, the traditional wing of the Kurdish movement, which was well-established in Kurdish society and which was mainly dominated by religious leaders, tried to "avoid Christian peril in the East and West" and to create "a state of Turks and Kurds" in the muslim territories liberated from foreign occupation. The idea was generous and fraternal. An alliance was concluded with the Turkish nationalist leader, Mustafa Kemal, who came to Kurdistan to seek the help of the Kurdish leaders to liberate occupied Anatolia and the sultan-caliph, who was a virtual prisoner of the Christians. The first forces of Turkey's war of independence were in fact recruited from the Kurdish provinces.

Up until his definitive victory over the Greeks in 1922, Mustafa Kemal continued to promise the creation of a muslim state of Turks and Kurds. He was openly supported by the Soviets, and more discreetly by the French and Italians, displeased with the excessive appetites of British colonialism in the region. After the victory, the Turkish delegates were to affirm, at the peace conference at Lausanne, that they spoke in the name of the Kurdish and Turkish sister nations. On 24th July 1923, a new treaty was signed in this context between the Kemalist government of Ankara and the allied powers. It invalidated the Treaty of Sèvres and, without giving any guarantee, with regard to the respect of the Kurds' rights, gave the annexation of the major part of Kurdistan over to the new Turkish state. Beforehand, in accordance with the Franco-Turkish agreement of October 20, 1921, France had annexed the Kurdish provinces of Jazira and Kurd-Dagh to Syria, which were placed under its mandate. Iranian Kurdistan, a large part of which was controlled by the Kurdish leader Simko, lived in a state of near dissidence with regard to the Persian central government.

The fate of the Kurdish province of Mossul, very rich in petrol remained undecided. The Turks and the British claimed it, whilst its population, during a consultation organized by the Society of Nations, reached a decision, in a proportion of 7/8, in favour of an independent Kurdish state. Protesting that the Iraqi state wouldn't be able to survive without the agricultural and petroleum wealth of this province, Great Britain ended up obtaining the annexation of these Kurdish territories with Iraq placed under its mandate, from the League of Nations Council on December 16th, 1925. It nevertheless promised the setting up of an autonomous Kurdish government, a promise kept neither by the British, nor the Iraqi regime, which succeeded the British administration in 1932.

Thus at the end of 1925, the country of the Kurds, known since the XIIIth century by the name "Kurdistan", found itself divided between four states: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. And for the first time in its long history, it was even to be deprived of its cultural autonomy.

The former conquerors and empires contented themselves with certain economic, political and military advantages and privileges. None of them set about preventing the population from expressing its cultural identity or hindering the free practice of its spiritual life. None of them devised a plan to destroy the Kurdish personality or to depersonalize an entire race by cutting it off from its ancient cultural roots.

This was the project of the Turkish nationalists, who wanted to make Turkey, an eminently multicultural, multiracial and multinational society, into a uniform nation; this was later taken up again by Iraq and Iran. We can join Nehru in his surprise "that a defensive nationalism turns into an aggressive nationalism and that a struggle for freedom becomes a struggle to dominate others". Indeed, since these lines were written by Nehru from the depths of prison, the nationalist or messianic ideologies have caused other ravages under other skies, often in the name of progress, modernity, mission of civilization, even freedom. Victim of its geography, of history and also, undoubtedly of its own leaders' lack of clear-sightedness, the Kurdish people have undoubtedly been the population who have paid the heaviest tribute and who have suffered the most from the remodeling of the Near-Eastern map. To paraphrase a formula formerly used for Poland, I'll say that since the dividing up of Kurdistan, the Near-East has been a sinner against itself and this sin hasn't finished poisoning its relations.

TRADITIONAL KURDISH SOCIETY AND THE STATE

*Martin van BRUINESSEN **

The Kurds, as has often been remarked, are a nation without a state. Numbering somewhere between 15 and 20 millions, they must be the largest people not to have achieved statehood, in spite of more than a century's national struggle. To some observers, as well as to many Kurds, this is the essence of the Kurdish problem. Such a view seems to overlook the fact that for many centuries the Kurds have quite happily done without a state of their own. But something important changed in the early twentieth century, as a result of the impact of the European nationalisms. National aspirations became more widespread among the Kurds as well as among the other ethnic groups of the Middle East. More importantly, the political elites of the countries among which Kurdistan was divided since the First World War made concerted efforts to turn their countries into nation states. In each, there is one dominant ethnic group - Turks, Arabs or Persians - and the governments have carried out various policies aiming at the assimilation of the other ethnic groups to the dominant one, in order to forge "national unity". This has meant the suppression of other cultures and traditional ways of life, and their gradual replacement by a new "national" culture. The Kurds, being the largest or (in Iran) second largest of these other ethnic groups, have borne the brunt of these policies. The existence of a separate Kurdish identity, let alone a Kurdish national movement, is in all these states considered as a major threat - not just a security threat, but a threat to the state's self-defined identity.

Turkey has, among those states, always been the most radical in the attempts at "nation-building", and has most actively (and violently) attempted to destroy Kurdish national identity. The very name of "Kurd" became, and long remained, taboo. Speaking of the Kurds as a nation is, to this day, considered as an act of subversion and even among Turkey's intellectual elite it provokes highly emotional responses. In Iran and Iraq, there was at least some tolerance of Kurdish culture, though there too assimilation was aimed at. In the shah's Iran, Persian was the only

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language allowed in school, in the courts and in other official use. Publications in Kurdish were not allowed, and specifically Kurdish organizations and associations were banned. Iraq is the only country allowing the Kurds a certain cultural autonomy. But at the same time, it considers itself as an integral part of the wider Arab nation. Economically vital parts of Kurdistan have been “Arabized” by deporting Kurds and replacing them with Arabs from Southern Iraq. The intermarriage of Arab men with Kurdish women is highly encouraged as another means of Arabization of the country. And in the past years, a very radical transformation of the Kurdish countryside has been started, apparently aiming at the complete elimination of the traditional Kurdish village, one of the mainstays of Kurdish culture.

I do not wish to go into detail here about the violations of human rights by the various governments - we shall hear more about those in the following sessions of this conference. Instead, I shall make some general observations as to how the state has affected traditional Kurdish society, both before and after the advent of the would-be nation state. I shall also try to show its effects on the nature of Kurdish ethnic (cultural) identity.

From the sixteenth until the early twentieth century, Kurdistan was divided among the two great Middle Eastern states, the Ottoman and the Persian Empires. Both were multi-ethnic states, in which there was no clearly dominant ethnic group. There was certainly discrimination among different categories of citizens, but it was based on religion and education, not on ethnicity as such. Kurds could and did make political careers without shedding their Kurdish identity. This was especially so in the Sunni Ottoman Empire, since most of the Kurds were also Sunnis, but in Shi'i Iran, too, there were Kurds who rose to high positions. Kurdistan itself was also a multi-ethnic mosaic, peopled by Kurdish pastoral nomadic tribes as well as Kurdish speaking peasants; by Jews and Christian groups of many tongues and denominations, who were peasants, craftsmen or merchants; by Arabic and Turkish speaking minorities of various origins; by nomadic and sedentary gypsies, and by various other small Muslim minorities.

Due to its mountainous character, Kurdistan functioned as a buffer zone between the two empires; to both it was a peripheral area, over which they had no great desire to exert direct control. Instead, they left local Kurdish rulers in control of large areas, in exchange for taken obedience, very modest taxes, and military loyalty in case of wars. Only a few districts of great economic or strategic importance were placed under centrally appointed governors commanding regular army troops. In the rest of Kurdistan, a small number of Kurdish aristocratic families held away as the rulers of autonomous principalities. The courts of some of these principalities mirrored, though on a more modest scale, the splendour of the Ottoman and Persian courts,

and were centres where the arts and sciences flourished. The Kurdish literary tradition finds its origins at these courts in the late 16th and 17th centuries. Each principality consisted of a number of large tribes or tribal confederacies, which formed the backbone of its military sight. The ruler had to maintain his position by balancing these tribes against each other while at the same time keeping tribal feuds in check. This tribal military elite was superimposed upon a settled society of farmers, dependent peasants, serfs and various classes of townsmen.

The recognition of a Kurdish ruler by the central state gave him essential support against potential rivals. It therefore often happened that rivals or disaffected family members allied themselves with the neighbouring empire. Inter-Kurdish rivalries thus often became interlocked with conflicts between the two empires. In many battles between the Ottomans and Persians, there were on both sides Kurds taking part, at times even sections of the same tribe. They were fighting out their own conflicts, which happened to coincide with the larger one, or, having fled to the neighbouring empire, had no choice but fight for it or be expelled. This is a pattern that we see recurring in Kurdish history until the present day.

Movements of administrative reforms in the Ottoman Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries led to the gradual reduction of the Kurdish principalities and the concomitant expansion of a centralized bureaucracy into the Kurdish districts. By the mid-nineteenth century, the last principalities had been abolished by military force. Kurdish society thus came in more direct contact with the state - and not just with the Ottoman or Persian state. Two other empires, the Russian and the British, began to make their existence felt in Kurdistan, in the form of consuls, merchants, explorer, and... missionaries. Russian armies in fact occupied parts of Kurdistan during the Russo-Turkish wars of 1828-29 and 1877-78. There had been French and Italian Catholic missionaries working among the Christian minorities of Kurdistan as early as the mid-seventeenth century, but in the course of the nineteenth century the numbers of missions rapidly increased: British, American, German. Their presence changed the balance of power between Muslims and Christians in the region, for the missionaries could and did, through their embassies in Istanbul, put pressure on the central government on behalf of the local Christians. There was much resentment among the Kurdish elite (the princely families and the chieftains of large tribes) because of increasing interference in their traditional perks. It was widely believed (and correctly so) that the administrative reforms restricting the autonomy of the Kurdish regions were also inspired or even imposed upon the Empire by the Western powers.

The immediate result of the abolition of the Kurdish principalities was anarchy and chaos. Unlike the Kurdish rulers before them, the new administrators could not hold the tribes in check. Numerous feuds erupted, tribesmen raided settled villages, theft

and robbery increased. In order to be able to police the region, some of the administrators chieftains, thereby forcing these chieftains rivals into the roles of rebels and bandits and condoning their allies' oppression of the settled population. Under the reactionary Sultan Abdulhamid II, who ruled during the last quarter of the 19th century, and strongly resisted European pressures for reform, this was made into an official policy. Rather than strengthening his reform-minded bureaucracy and army, he had Kurdish tribes armed and made into militia forces, the so-called Hamidiye (after the sultan's name), to police the Eastern provinces. The Hamidiye have earned a bad reputation because of their apparent involvement in massacres of Armenian villagers in 1895. Their treatment of other Kurds was, however, often just as harsh and cruel. By endorsing selected chieftains, the sultan gave them a licence to expand their powers at the expenses of the less favoured rivals, and to squeeze out of the population whatever they could.

This too is a recurrent pattern in the history of Kurdistan (and of similar peripheral areas elsewhere). Even when the state could not exert direct influence over Kurdistan, its backing up of certain chieftains as against others greatly affected the local balance of power, and in many cases resulted in severe oppression of the local population at the hands of the selected chieftains and their thugs. The formation of the Hamidiye has, consciously or not, been imitated by later governments. The British, during their occupation of and mandate over Iraq, gave certain chieftains administrative powers and made their armed retinues into a sort of local police. The result was more than once, that important sections of the population suffered physical oppression and extortion against which there was no redress. It also forced other traditional leaders, who happened to be in conflict with the favoured chieftains, into the role of rebels against the state. Most recently, Turkey has founded and armed a similar type of Kurdish militia, the "village guards" (*köy korucuları*), to combat the guerrilla fighters of the radical separatist Workers' party of Kurdistan. Again, there are many reports of these "village guards" being used as local strongmen's thugs, coercing the villagers into obedience or terrorizing rivals and their dependents.

The violence surfacing in these cases is in a way an aspect of traditional society, closely related to its *tribal* character; but it is exacerbated precisely by the state's intervention. Rather than detribalizing and modernizing Kurdish society, as the governments' stated aims have been for most of the twentieth century, the state has, in at least some cases, only strengthened the worst aspects of tribal society. There is little reason to see here evil intent on the part of the states concerned; the Kurdish movement in Iraq has not been much more successful in diminishing tribalism itself, during the last thirty years. It has often faced similar undesired consequences of its enlisting tribal support. Conflicts and feuds are endemic in tribal society; every tribal chieftain has his rivals and enemies. Once a chieftain had joined the Kurdish

movement, it became almost inconceivable for his important rivals to do so too. They had the choice between remaining neutral or opposing it. Often the government did not even leave them that choice. Similarly, for each tribe co-operating with the central government, there were rivals who turned to the Kurdish movement - not out of political conviction but because of tribal conflicts. Many of the urbanized Kurdish politicians and intellectuals abhor tribalism and tribal politics, but the Kurdish movement has so far not been able to do without the tribes. The really tribal Kurds may be a minority now, but in times of guerrilla war the hardy tribesmen, who knew the mountains best, were always at an advantage, and they put a heavy stamp on the movement.

Speaking of "tribes" and "tribalism", as I do here, might easily give a wrong impression of Kurdish society. Romantic images of the Kurds as nomadic shepherds are largely mistaken. Although there were in the past many more full nomads than now, they probably never made up even as much as half of Kurdish society. Many of the large nomadic tribes have been forced to settle since the 1920's because the new borders between Turkey and its Southern neighbours cut through their traditional migration routes. They gradually settled near either the warm winter pastures in the Mesopotamian plain or the lush mountain pastures of Turkish Kurdistan. After the rebellions of the 1920's and 1930's in Turkish Kurdistan, many tribesmen were deported in Western Turkey. In Iran, Reza Shah carried out forced settlement of nomadic tribes, and sent many chieftains into distant exile. There are still a few fully nomadic tribes, but these represent only a small proportion of the total Kurdish population. It is more common for the tribes now to combine shepherding with some farming, and to live in a village, although in summer many follow their flocks to the mountain pastures, where they still live in tents. And there are also tribes that hardly practice any shepherding at all but consist of full-time farmers (and of townsmen). This does not mean that all Kurds belong to some tribe or other; there have always been many who do not. The largest group of those non-tribal Kurds were peasants, often subjected to a tribe or a rich land-owning family. Many of the Kurdish families, that have for generations lived in towns or cities, have also gradually lost their tribal ties.

It is not nomadism or shepherding that distinguishes the tribes from the non-tribal Kurds, but rather the strong group loyalties between the members of a tribe. A tribe is like a very large family (some tribes comprise thousands of households), demanding from its members the same loyalties and offering them the same type of protection and security. Most tribes claim to be descended from a common ancestor, which certainly strengthens the members' solidarity, although it may not be literally true. Each tribe is also associated with a specific territory, where in theory only members of the tribe and their dependents are allowed to own land. Tribal solidarity is expressed in strict obedience to the tribal chieftain. The almost unquestioning

loyalty of tribesmen to the chieftain is perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of tribalism, at once its strength and its weakness. In almost any situation, tribesmen will listen to their chieftain first, and follow him in any decision. Whether they do the bidding of the government or take part in a rising against it, depends almost entirely on the chieftain. Even members of the tribe who have left their tribal area and moved to a town, remain tied by the obligation of loyalty and obedience towards their chieftain.

Central government officials in Kurdish districts have therefore often seen themselves obliged to appease the chieftains if they wish to get anything done at all. Thereby they have strengthened the powers of these chieftains over the rest of the population, and contributed to the social and economic polarization of Kurdish society. Many chieftains have, for instance, succeeded in registering as their private property land that was previously held in common by the tribe. Or they could simply take land and other property away from others who were less well-connected, and have themselves recognized as the legitimate owners. Certain chiefly families came to extend their authority over such larger populations than their own tribe, due to not only the force of their own armed men but also to their clever cooperation with government officials. In several parts of Kurdistan, the interests of the military and the civilian bureaucracy have become so much interwoven with those of the chieftains, that they almost seem to have become part of the tribal organization.

Turkey is the only of the countries concerned that has a proper parliamentary system with general elections; each province elects a certain number of representatives. In the Kurdish provinces, the contending parties simply have to pose candidates with strong tribal backing, if they wish to stand any chance of winning. Chieftains thus became affiliated with political parties, although hardly affected by their ideologies. Where there were two rival chieftains, one would join the right-wing, the other the left-wing party; in a following election year, the affiliations could as well be reversed. The election campaign reflected local tribal rivalries rather than national-level issues. Tribal conflicts would always increase towards election time, for the stakes are generally quite high. Taking part in state-level politics gives a chieftain the opportunity to do much for his followers: he can have influence on the distribution of government spending in the region, and offer various other foras of patronage: contracts, licences, education, jobs.

Contact with modern political institutions such as the state bureaucracy and political parties thus does not abolish tribal structure but rather modifies and perhaps even strengthens it. We may even say that to some extent, the bureaucracy and the parties have become tribalized in their way of operating in Kurdistan. This is regretted by both the central government's proponents of "modernization" and integration, and most educated Kurds as well. The most radical Kurdish nationalists

see this as a typical “colonial” phenomenon, and accuse the tribal elite of being collaborators enabling the continued “colonial exploitation” of Kurdistan by “the Turkish, Arab and Persian bourgeoisie”. Although this is an extremely simplistic view, it cannot be denied that there are similarities with the situation that existed in Europe’s Asian and African colonies.

Among the most drastic social changes brought about by the economic and political developments of this century is the large-scale migration of Kurds away from Kurdistan. The first to go were either the very poor or members of the elite, the latter in search of education or political careers, the former seeking employment. By the turn of the century, most of the porters in Istanbul were Kurds, and there were many more Kurds working in other lower-class jobs. The same was probably true of Tehran and Baghdad. Besides, there were in these cities members of the traditional Kurdish elite who had acquired positions in the military or civilian bureaucracy, and younger members of aristocratic families studying at the first colleges.

In the 1920’s and 1930’s, tens of thousands of Kurds were deported to Western Turkey or Central and Eastern Iran, by the modernizing regimes of these states. In Iraq, large-scale deportations started in the 1960’s and continue until now. The largest volume of population movement, however, is probably labour migration. The mechanization of agriculture, although coming late to Kurdistan, caused much open and hidden unemployment in the villages. People started moving elsewhere in search of employment. In Turkey to the cotton plantations of the Mediterranean and Aegean coasts, to the large cities of the West, and soon also abroad, to Western Europe or Libya; in Iran to Tehran, of course, which in the 1970’s had a booming construction sector, or to the oil fields in the South or in neighbouring Kuwait; in Iraq to Baghdad and other cities, where the oil boom created such employment. The numbers of these “economic migrants” were reinforced by tens of thousands of students seeking education at the universities in the major cities, and later by many internal refugees. The Kurdish war in Iraq (1961-70, 1974-75, and again since 1976), the Gulf War, violent political conflicts in Turkey during the 1970’s, heavy military repression and a low-scale guerrilla war since 1984, have forced many Kurds to leave their villages for reasons of safety and security. Most of them also want to the large cities. As a result of all these population movements, a very large number of Kurds now live outside Kurdistan, although most still have relatives there and, if possible, regularly go back. There are no reliable statistics, but by a rough estimate at least a quarter to a third of all Kurds now live outside Kurdistan proper. Vast districts of Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Damascus, Baghdad and Tehran now are virtually Kurdish. This obviously must have important consequences for the political relations in these countries as well as for the nature of the Kurdish movement.

During the past half century, the Kurds of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria have very clearly become more integrated into the economic, political, social and cultural life of these countries -although not always on equal terms with the dominant ethnic groups. Compulsory education, military service, and the mass media, to a large extent state-controlled, have exposed them to the same influences as the other citizens of these states. The available infrastructure gives the Kurds of Turkey, for instance, such better links with Western Turkey than with the Kurds in neighbouring countries. Due to the very different political, economic and cultural climates in the countries, the Kurds there developed different tastes and attitudes. Iraqi Kurds are Iraqi as such as they are Kurds, and they differ in various respects (and are aware of differing) from the Kurds of Turkey or Iran. To this we may add the effects of forced assimilation, which in Turkey until the 1960's seemed rather successful.

The mass migration from the countryside to the supposed melting-pots of the big cities was at first also expected to make the Kurds gradually lose their distinctive Kurdishness. Now this is precisely what did not happen. Although the Kurds continued to be further integrated into the economies of the countries where they lived, the increased contacts with other ethnic groups made them also more aware of their own separate ethnic identity. As a reaction against the discrimination that many suffered at school or in finding jobs (Kurds used to be considered as backward, stupid, and uncultured, while in Turkey there was also much discrimination for political reasons), many began to search for things in Kurdish history and culture that they could take pride in. Kurdish cultural associations were founded precisely in the big cities, and cultural journals were published there rather than in Kurdistan itself. Even children of parents, who had been successfully assimilated, rediscovered their Kurdish roots and started learning Kurdish again. It is probably because of the migration from Kurdistan to the big cities outside, that Kurdish national awareness and pride in Kurdish culture became mass phenomenon.

This trend is unlikely to be reversed by any amount of repression. The Kurds of Iran and Iraq have during the past decade suffered more violent physical repression than ever before, but this has only strengthened their national awareness. The most remarkable case, perhaps, is that of Turkey. The government's repression of all expressions of Kurdish culture is as fierce as ever, and this has forced numerous Kurdish artists and intellectuals into exile in Western Europe. They have become surprisingly active there, publishing a wide range of books and journals in Kurdish. They found a ready audience among the hundreds of thousands of Kurdish immigrant workers, and through these they also reach Kurdish audiences in Turkey itself. Their exile has made a reflowering of Kurdish culture possible, that can only reinvigorate Kurdish ethnic identity.

THE KURDISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

*Joyce BLAU **

Kurdish is the language of more than twenty million Kurds living in a vast unbroken territory.

Kurdish belongs to the family of Indo-European languages and to the Irano-Aryan group of this family.

The Iranophone tribes and peoples of Central Asia and of the bordering territories begin moving towards the Iranian plateau and the littoral steppes of the Black sea at the turning point of the second and first millennium B.C.

As these tribes and peoples invade the area, they assimilate and give their language and their name to other Irano-aryan peoples already present on the land. Some refuse total assimilation. Even today there are fairly large pockets of non-Kurdophone Kurds living in Kurdistan of Turkey, of Iran of and of Iraq.

Kurdish, the language of the Kurds, which belongs to the north-western group of Irano-Aryan languages has never had the opportunity to become unified and its dialects are generally separated into three groups with distinct similarities between them.

The biggest group, as regards the number of people who speak it, is the northern Kurdish, commonly called "Kurmanji", spoken by the Kurds living in Turkey, Syria, the USSR and by some of the Kurd's living in Iran and Iraq. This language is also spoken by 200,000 Kurdophones settled around Kabul, in Afghanistan.

This group gave birth to a literary language.

The central group includes the Kurdish spoken in the north-east of Iraq, where it's

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called “Sorani” and the dialects of the neighbouring areas, beyond the Zagros, in Kurdistan of Iran. This group also gave birth to a literary language.

There has always been an intellectual elite amongst the Kurds who, for centuries, expressed themselves in the conqueror’s language. Numerous Kurdish intellectuals wrote just as easily in Arabic and in Persian as in Turkish. This is shown in the XIIIth century by the Kurdish historian and biographer, Ibn al-Assir, who wrote in Arabic, whilst Idris Bitlisi, a high Ottoman dignitary, of Kurdish Origin, wrote the *Hesht Behesht* (The Eight Paradises) in 1501, which recounts the first story of the eight first Ottoman sultans, in Persian. The Prince Sharaf Khan, sovereign of the Kurdish principality of Bitlis, also wrote his “History of the Kurdish nation”, at the end of the XVIth century, a brilliant medieval source on the history of the Kurds, in Persian.

It’s difficult to date the origin of Kurdish literature. Nothing is known about the pre-Islamic culture of the Kurds. Moreover, only some of the texts have been published and it’s not known how many disappeared in the torment of endless conflicts which have been occurring on Kurdish territory for several centuries.

The first well-known Kurdish poet is Elî Herîrî, who was born in 1425 in the Hakkari region and who died around 1495. His favorite subjects are already those which his compatriots will treat most often: love of the fatherland, its natural beauties and the charm of its girls.

Kurdistan, in the XVIth century is a battlefield between the Persians and the Turks. The Ottoman and Persian Empires are permanently formed and, at the beginning of the second half of the century, stabilize their borders, in other words they share the territory of the Kurds, Kurdistan.

The first famous literary Kurdish monuments date from this epoch. They are born at the same and in opposition to the consolidation of Ottoman and Persian neighbors.

The most famous poet from the end of the XVIth and beginning of the XVIIth century is the sheik Ehmede Nishani, known as Melaye Jeziri.

He was born in Jezire Bohtan, and like many well read people of the time, he knew Arabic, Persian, and Turkish well. He was also influenced by Arabo-Persian literary culture. His poetic work of more than 2,000 verses, has remained popular and is still republished regularly.

He travelled a lot and made numerous disciples, who tried to imitate their master by adopting his language, which from then on became the literary language.

Gradually the feeling of belonging to the same entity develops amongst the Kurds. This epoch will see the birth of the poet Ehmedi Khani, native of the Bayazid, who defines in his *Mem-o-Zin*, a long poem of more than 2,650 distiches, the elements of Kurdish independence.

In the XIXth century, following the general expansion of national liberation movements at the heart of the Ottoman empire, and although strongly tinged with tribalism, a Kurdish national movement will slowly develop. A new literature blossoms with a certain delay due to distance and isolation. The authors who had received a classical education during their youth, given at a high level in the 'medrese', the Koranic schools, know Arabic and Persian well. The themes and images of their poetry is inspired, to a large extent by the Persian tradition, but the poets display great imagination in the renewal of symbols and the musicality of verse.

This poetry has firstly a religious tonality, - this is the epoch of the blossoming of mystic brotherhoods - but it is the patriotic and lyrical poets who have the most success. Mela Khidri Ehmedi Shaweyi Mikhayilî, better known as Nali is the first great poet to write his poetry mainly in central Kurdistan.

The birth of the press accompanies the progress of the Kurdish national movement and the first review, with the significant name "Kurdistan" appears in Cairo, in Egypt, in 1898. In the XXth century, despite being the object of persecutions, the Kurdish national movement doesn't stop developing. The outbreak of the First World War and its consequences radically change the situation of the Kurds.

The Kurds had lived up until then in multi-cultural and multi-lingual societies. At the end of this war the Kurds find themselves divided between four states: Turkey, Persia, Iraq and Syria, legally sovereigns but politically subordinated to the world game of superpowers. These states very quickly found themselves confronted with the problems of the diversity of languages. The literary production of the Kurds and the development of the language will from now on be dependent on the freedoms they acquire in each of the states, which share their territory.

Iraq, under British mandate, recognizes a minimum of cultural rights to its Kurdish minority. Although the latter only comprises 18% of the total Kurdish population, the center of the Kurdish cultural life is transported to Iraq, where production will develop from the second half of the 1920s. The Kurds come out of isolation and contact with the West - translation of Pushkin, Schiller, Byron and particularly Lamartine - completely changed the basic ideas in the poetic field.

The beginning of modernity distances poetry from its traditional paths and if, in the first stage, the poems keep their classical form, innovation lies in their content, the

expression of feelings of love, of despair, of anger or the evocation of the beauty of nature in traditional poetry is enriched by the author's relationship with the inner world. The effort of "Kurdization" of the Kurdish language, by ridding it of its lexical and formal loanwords from the dominant languages, should be credited to the authors of this epoch.

In the second stage, whilst numerous new genres are adopted (lyrico-epic drama and dramatic poetry), which enable the Kurdish people's fights to be depicted in a lively manner, the framework of traditional poetry collapses. The incomparable Goran was definitely the greatest artisan of the break with tradition. In the 1930s, syllabic verses, similar to popular poetry, poems in prose and free verse enter the world of poetry. The social tone is established and gives poems a militant character.

Prose develops at the time of the blossoming of reviews and magazines, which serve as a vehicle for the first poetic and narrative essays, short stories and historico-legendary short stories which confirm Kurdish vitality in a striking way. The romantic trend is reinforced and themes are thus distinguished by a more dynamic development of the subject. Authors depict social problems and problems relating to women, education and the family, whilst others turn towards the portrayal of the injustice and exploitation of the peasants. One of the most brilliant representatives of this trend is Ibrahim Ahmed who publishes *Korawari* (Misery) in 1959, a collection of realist short stories, and most notably, *Jani Gal* (The suffering of the people) which comes out in Bagdad in 1973, the first novel written in central Kurdistan.

In the USSR, despite their small number, they comprise less than 20% of the total Kurdish population, the Kurds are recognized as a nationality. Although their autonomy is not attributed, their language is recognized. Thus, their community benefits from the government's encouragement and possesses schools, presses and publishing. An elite blossoms there. The collections of poems by Jasime Jalil, born in 1908, come out in the days following in the Second World War. Arab Shamo, the most prolific novelist, publishes his works in 1935.

In Syria under French mandate, the interwar years mark the blossoming of Kurdish literature. Brilliant Kurdish and French intellectuals, such as the Orientalist Roger Lescot, gathered in Damas around Prince Jeladet Bedir Khan and his brother Kamuran. They become the main artisans of the renaissance of northern literature. They perfect a latin alphabet which they popularise in the *Hawar* review around which intense work is carried out, revealing the possibilities of northern Kurdish as a modern literary language.

After the Second World War, the Kurds in newly independent Syria, 4% of the total

Kurdish population - lost their freedom and production dries up. They are forced to publish their works abroad or to go into exile.

In Turkey, after the military success of Mustafa Kemal against Greece, a new treaty signed at Lausanne in 1923, confirmed Turkish sovereignty over a large part of the Kurdish territory and over more than 52% of the total Kurdish population. This treaty guaranteed "non-Turks" the use of their language. A few months later, in the name of State unity, Mustafa Kemal violated this clause by banning the teaching of Kurdish and its public use. He deported most of the intellectuals. The Kurds became the "mountain Turks", living in "Eastern Anatolia" or in the "East". All the traditions, even the dress, all the groups, even the song and dance were abolished in 1932. After the Second World War, the Turkish regime between 1950 and 1971 gave itself a tinge of bourgeois democracy and use of the Kurdish language was authorized again. A new Kurdish intelligentsia formed. The military coups d'etat of 1971 and 1980 restored the policy of repression and massive deportations towards the west of Turkey. The teaching of Kurdish and publications in this language are strictly forbidden today.

In Iran, where more than a quarter of the Kurdish population live, the authorities conduct a harsh policy of assimilation of their Kurdish minority. All Kurdish publications and teaching of the language are absolutely forbidden.

The great period of Kurdish literature in this area is that of the Republic of Kurdistan which only last eleven months at the end of the Second World War. Despite its brevity, it provokes a remarkable development in Kurdish literature. Numerous poets emerge, such as the poets Hejar and Hemin. The repression which follows the fall of the Republic forces the intellectuals to go into exile, mostly in Iraq. In February 1979, a revolution of the people expels the monarchial regime but the Islamic government which replaces it is also unwilling to accord national rights to its Kurdish minority.

Under pressure from Kurdish revolutionaries gathered around the much missed Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, whose memory is engraved in the depths of our hearts, who demand incessantly the recognition of their language and their culture, the Iranian authorities are forced to tolerate the publication of various Kurdish works. If all literary creation remains forbidden, censorship authorizes the publication of monuments from the Kurdish literature of the XIXth century, some of which will be translated into Persian. Manuscripts depicting the history of Kurdish dynasties are finally published and dictionaries, grammar books and encyclopedias by Kurdish personalities who marked their epoch, religious or not, appear in Kurdish and Persian.

The Kurdish literary life in Iraq suffered the repercussions of the failure of the long Kurdish insurrection and the pitiless war between Iran and the Iraq.

The Kurdish intellectuals choose the path of exile and take refuge in most of the Western countries and, remarkably, they will be at the source of a real renaissance of the "Kurmanji" literature, strictly forbidden in Turkey and Syria. Supported by several hundred thousand Kurdish emigrant workers, the Kurdish intellectuals gather together and make every effort to promote their language. Poets and writers print their works firstly in the reviews published by the Kurdish publishing houses in Sweden. The Swedish authorities, in fact, which favour the cultural development of emigrant communities, allocate the Kurds - they are 12,000 - a relatively large publication budget. Around twenty newspapers, magazines, and reviews come out from the end of the 1970s. Children's books, alphabet primers and translations of historical works on the Kurds...come out. Literary creation is encouraged. M. Emin Bozarslan brings out charming children's stories and Rojen Barnas collections of poems, whilst the journalist Mahmut Baksi, member of the Swedish Writers' Union, publishes a novel and stories for children in Kurdish, Turkish and Swedish, Mehmet Uzun brings out two realist novels.

Two hundred titles have appeared in ten years. It's the biggest Kurdish literary production, outside Iraq. But it's in France, in Paris, that a dozen courageous, dynamic and very nice Kurdish intellectuals, in February 1983, create the first Kurdish scientific institute in the West. Six years later, more than three hundred Kurdish intellectuals, living in various European countries, and in America and Australia, have joined the Institute to help carry out its action of safeguarding and renewing their language and their culture.

The Institute publishes reviews in Kurdish, Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and French. A "Bulletin mensuel de liaison et information" (Monthly Bulletin of Contact and Information) publishes a press review about the Kurdish issue and gives information about the activities and projects of the Institute. It's to the credit of the Institute that they were the first to encourage the development of the "Zaza/ Dimili" dialect, spoken by about three million Kurds in Turkey. Finally, the Institute gathers together Kurdish writers, linguists, and journalists from the diaspora, twice a year to study together the problems of modern terminology.

This new blossoming of Kurdish intellectuals, poets and writers illustrates in a most striking way the parallelism between cultural freedom and development.

THE KURDS IN TURKEY

*Ibrahim AKSOY **

The Kurdish problem represents more than a simple violation of human rights. The cause of a people of 25 million, who live in an area as big as France, who have been confronted, for centuries now, with severe repressions and terror, is in question. It would be useful to give some information concerning the past of this problem. As you know, Kurdistan was divided between the Ottoman and Persian Empires in 1639, following the Qasr-i-Shirin Treaty.

Later, from the 19th century onwards, Kurdistan, like other parts of the world, experienced revolts of a nationalist nature. But these ended in failure, due to internal reasons, the collaboration between the Ottoman and Persian states and also interventions of western states, anxious to establish themselves in the area.

New revolts broke out after the First World War, despite the peace treaty signed at Sèvres, which recognized the Kurds' right to have their own state.

In 1923, the Treaty of Lausanne was signed. During the conference of Lausanne, the Kurdish problem was discussed a great deal, but the Kurds were not represented there by their own delegates. As for the Turkish delegation, it emphasized the fact, all through the conference, that the Kurds and Turks possessed equal rights in the newly-born state. The Ankara government put itself forward as the government of the Kurds and the Turks. However, the legitimate rights of the Kurdish people were not guaranteed. The Turkish government only committed itself to paragraph 38 of this treaty, which stipulates:

“The Turkish government commits itself to protect wholeheartedly and fully the life and freedom of all the inhabitants of Turkey, without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race or religion.

“All the inhabitants of Turkey will have the right to practise freely, both publicly

* *Deputy for Malatya*

and privately, any faith, religion or belief whose practice is not incompatible with public order and good morals.

“The non-Muslim minorities will have complete freedom to travel and emigrate, under reserve of the conditions which apply, to the whole or to a part of the territory. All Turkish nationals may be recruited by the Turkish government for national defence or for the maintenance of public order”.

Immediately after the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, the alliance between the two peoples gave way to a political hostility towards the Kurds. Later, the successive coups d'état of 27th May 1960, 12th March 1971 and 12th September 1980 intensified the repression against the Kurdish people. The law, promulgated by the regime on 12th September 1980 (n 2932) forbids the use of all languages, other than Turkish, even though about 35 languages are currently spoken in Turkey. Istanbul's daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet* of 27th September 1989 reports that the republic state prosecutor called for a 3 year prison sentence for the singer, Rahmi Saltuk, guilty of having sung a song, entitled “Hoy Nare”, in Kurdish. The 1st magistrate's court of Yeni Mahelle judged, still in 1989, a certain Mehmet Celaladdin Yildiz, of Agri M. Yildiz, guilty of having named his daughter “Berfin” (Snowy). Here is the verdict: “(the court) decided to nullify the name Berfin, given to Berfin Yildiz, born on 11th February 1988, registered at the civil state of the district of Leyled.”

The same newspaper reports in its edition of 28th September 1989, that Dr. Nuray Özkan, delegate of Diyarbakir in the Women's Congress, was handed over to the law for having intervened in the problems of Kurdish women and having proposed solutions. Following the publication of this intervention in the review *Özgürlük Gelecek*, the state prosecutor for the state security court, conforming to the Turkish republic's penal code (art. 142/3 and 6), called for her to serve a prison sentence of 8 to 15 years. She was arrested, whilst seven months pregnant, at the same time as three writers from the previously mentioned review: Mehmet Bayrak, G. Celal Gül and Behiç Esen. At present they are free, but still risk heavy sentences. I do not think Mrs. Özkan would have come up against such difficulties had she spoken out about French and German women's problems.

These few examples give a clear idea of the price to pay when one uses the terms “Kurd” and “Kurdistan” in Turkey. Torture has become, after the military coup d'état of 12th September 1980, the folklore of justice. I cannot refrain from quoting, with regard to this, an anecdote recently popular in Turkey:

“The organisms of the member states of NATO are running a competition, which involves setting a rabbit loose in the African forests and then going to find it. When it is the Turkish police's turn, their colleagues states anxiously that once in the forest

they will not return again, so they set off to look for them. They find them hitting a zebra, which is tied up to a tree. They are shouting at the tops of their voices: "Admit it! You are not a zebra, but a rabbit". Yes, this story faithfully describes the period following 12th September in Turkey, during which the guilty were not pursued, but men were arrested and crimes pinned on them. Armed officials of the state were unleashed on unarmed citizens. At the beginning, all arms were taken away from the population; then, under the absurd pretext that the Kurds really like arms, the state distributed 50,000 guns and rifles to them, together with permits. Where did they manage to find so many arms? The answer still escapes us. Seventeen thousand peasants, fathers of families of 7-8 children, confronted with an acute economic crisis, found themselves equipped with arms and promoted to the position of village protector by the state, which also provided them with a salary. The peasants were to be used to back up the security forces in denouncement and repression, in other words, they were to become props for torture. Today, state terror reigns in the east. Anyone who rebels against this terror is treated as a state enemy. At the beginning of this year a scandal shook Turkey: the villagers of "Cinebir" (or according to the official Turkish name, Yesilyurt) were forced, after torture, to eat human excrement. On 17th July 1989, police opened fire on villagers, who were cutting grass at Hanibas (Yoncak, according to the official Turkish name), near Hakkari. The intervention of the mukhtar (head of the village), who explained that they were their villagers, produced no result. Five of them were killed. In September, various inhabitants of the village of Dambasi were arrested by special units of security forces, even though they were returning to their winter abode, six of them were arrested and shot. The SHP (the Populist Social Democratic Party) delegation, headed by Adnan Ekmen, who is with us today, as well as the ANAP (the Motherland Party) delegation, headed by Kemal Birluk, came to the conclusion that these villagers were quite simply shot by the police. This is also the conviction of the villagers and of numerous journalists.

Two weeks ago, two brothers were shot on their doorstep, right in front of their mother. It is impossible to give figures concerning missing people. Eight corpses were found in three days in the marshes of Kasaplar (in the province of Siirt). Investigations were temporarily stopped. We can add to these facts the threats issued by general Attay Tokat, military commander of the region. During an interview given to the newspaper *Milliyet* of 13th August 1989, the general said:

"The state applies the same law in Istanbul as here. In my system, we can destroy them quickly. If my system, was applied, not only human beings, but even the grass would no longer grow here. Our southern neighbour (Iraq) destroyed, in a single action, men, who had fought against it for 50 years. If we want we can do the same".

Imagine that the person making such remarks is a military authority, officially in

charge of establishing order and security in the region. He has the state's support. Hayri Kozakçioğlu, regional prefect, tried to minimize the importance of this affair, by saying: "One must not exaggerate the significance of this friend's words". Turkey continues, whilst trampling international treaties underfoot, to ban the Kurdish language and culture. Kurdish children are deprived of the right to speak, read or write their mother language. In Turkey, where there are 17 million Kurds, no school provides education in Kurdish.

Thousands of Kurdish names have been changed since 1923. In the East even nature has not been spared from the consequences of war: forests have been burnt and caves blown up with dynamite. All the works, concerning the history of the Kurds, written or architectural, have been destroyed.

Honorable delegates!

As you know tens of thousands of Kurds have taken refuge in Turkey, following the use of chemical arms by the regime of Saddam in Kurdistan of Iraq. Today these refugees are trying to survive in camps, surrounded by barbed wire, situated in Mus, Diyarbakir and Kiziltepe, which resemble concentration camps. Amnesty International reports that 4,000 refugees have been sent back to Iraq and that 40 of them have been shot. I hope that this information is false! - because the execution of people who have, however, entered under the protection of a third country, is a disgrace for the whole of humanity. The daily newspaper *Cumhuriyet* of 3rd October 1989 reports that refugees crammed into these camps had attempted to educate their children by their own means. But the classrooms created by Kurdish teachers are surrounded by police. Even the Populist Social Democratic Party, which is the main opposition formation, approved this measure by its silence. Moreover, also around the same time, Veli Çaglayan of Izmir, aged 15, condemned to the sentence of deportation, explained in the daily newspaper *Hürriyet* of 9th October 1989, his hope that the SHP would intervene at the National Assembly and prevent his sentence from being executed. In 11th October 1989's edition of *Hürriyet* we read that he has been acquitted.

We can only rejoice at the solidarity for Veli Çaglayan. But we also want the SHP to abandon its racist and chauvinistic attitude and, in addition, to intervene, so that the Kurdish children in these camps may be educated in their own language. Non-intervention (in such a case) constitutes a crime against humanity in itself. Not only the SHP, but every human being who is similarly designated, ought to feel guilty for not intervening, so that, in this XXth century, schools are not closed down and men are not deprived of education.

Once again the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* reports to us, in its edition of 27th July 1989, that an explosive from Czechoslovakia was at the root of the French company UTAs

DC10 plane, in the Sahara Desert. Science can, therefore, determine the origin of a device, which explodes at an altitude of 10,000 meters. But we still do not know the nature of the arms used in spring 1988, in the extermination of the Kurdish people. Those people who sold, produced and tolerated the exportation of those arms used in the extermination of the Kurdish people are Saddam's accomplices.

If European countries are informed of some danger threatening a whale in the North sea, they immediately rally to save it thereby improving their public image. But it will not even occur to them to run to the assistance of people threatened with extermination by use of chemical arms, because, in this instance it merely concerns human beings and human children. Turkey opens its doors to Turkish refugees from Bulgaria, but when two of my friends and I registered a request, with the Minister for the Interior, for the setting up of a support committee for the Kurdish refugees, we received a reply in the negative. I do not mean by this that we should not help the Turkish refugees of Bulgaria, I am simply asking for consistency. All I want is for the SHP, who intervene to prevent a deportation, to do the same for the Kurdish deportees.

Turkey is a member of the UN and of the European Committee. Its signature is under the Human Rights' Universal Declaration, the European Convention against torture, the final Act of Helsinki, etc. I do not want to linger at this point, over the precise content of the texts concerning human rights. I would like, on the contrary, to specify that there are numerous reports from international institutions on the violation of human rights in Turkey. It is unfortunate that international public opinion has not reacted sufficiently against the brutal terror inflicted on the Kurdish people and against attempts aimed at ending its existence. These inconsistent policies of silence encourage Turkey. In regard to this, I would like, with your permission to talk about a personal experience.

Whilst I was MP for the SHP, I took part in the meeting of the commission responsible for discussing Turkey at the European Parliament. Our parliamentary colleague, who headed the meeting, is amongst us today.

I spoke, during the meeting of 19th January 1989, about human rights in Turkey and about democracy. I also raised the Kurdish problem and criticized Turkey's official Kurdish policies; I called for the recognition of this people's cultural rights. I made this intervention in Strasbourg, right in the heart of Europe. My party's reaction to this intervention was to suspend my membership and then to expel me. It is unfortunate that neither the mixed commission, nor the European Parliament reacted against the sanction, which was worth the fact that I had expressed my opinion and spoken about the situation of the Kurdish people. They approved this sanction, by their very silence. Afterwards the European socialist parties rewarded

the SHP by accepting it amongst them, during their Stockholm congress in 1989, as a full member of the international socialist. Perhaps they were right to accept a party as a full member, which refuses to send any observers to the Paris conference, because, after all, it is important to them to increase their membership. Should we congratulate them on having welcomed a new member, who refuses the existence of a people of 17 million? We cannot, however, fail to notice that the SHP forbid its deputies to participate in this conference; despite this ban, seven of these same deputies are amongst us. The SHP would rather send representatives, who deny the existence of the Kurdish problem, to international meetings.

The daily newspaper *Tercüman*, which is, however, conservative, published the results of an opinion poll in its edition of 9th November 1989. According to this poll, 75.43% of people questioned admitted the existence of the Kurdish problem in Turkey, 21.80% denied the existence of the problem and 2.77% said they had no opinion. This problem shows that the two peoples want to live fraternally in Turkey and resolve this problem without bloodshed. As for the present leaders of the SHP, they do not want the "Kurdish taboo", to which they owe their existence, to be broken. Who is it who denies the existence of the Kurdish problem in Turkey? A handful of politicians, who have based their existence on taboos, as well as supposed intellectuals, and also unfortunately a few deputies of Kurdish origin.

It is clear that international authorities, particularly the UN and its member states, are responsible because of their silence, for the policies followed concerning the Kurdish people. I would like to emphasize, at this point, more specifically, the responsibility of NATO and its member states, which give not inconsiderable economic and political support to Turkey, especially the United States, England, France and the GDR.

The same attitude of indifference and silence concerning the Kurdish problem is adopted by socialist parties as well, particularly by the USSR. This attitude creates a worry and reaction amongst our people. Right now, whilst Mr. Gorbachov is taking part in discussions concerning the ban on chemical arms, these are being used against our people.

The Kurdish people are fighting for a just cause. All they want is to guarantee their existence and to possess equal rights in their own country. I should also add that so long as the Kurdish problem is not solved justly and democratically, there will be no peace in the Middle East. So long as such a settlement is not found, the nations which oppress the Kurdish people and the other peoples of the region cannot share a humane and democratic existence either. It is for this very reason that the setting up of a democratic regime, respecting human rights in Turkey, is only possible if the Kurdish problem is settled justly.

The Kurdish people need the help of peace and humanist forces and of human rights' defenders from the whole world, in order to avoid any more threats of deportation.

It is no longer enough today to recognize the existence of this problem. It is time to find a humane solution and to make steps towards democracy. The UN, the European Committee, member states of the EC, which Turkey wants to join, the European Parliament, the signatories of the final Act of Helsinki and all the pacifist and democratic circles must react immediately. They must convince Turkey to honour its commitments, to which its signature on the international documents binds it.

We must start sanctions against Turkey and immediately stop all military and economic aid given to this country. I am calling out to the whole world, to all the institutions to accomplish their humanitarian and democratic duties, before even worse catastrophes occur, at the end of the 20th century, to one of the oldest peoples in the Middle East. As a first step, I suggest that we make efforts aimed at:

- abolishing the special state governing, which covers the majority of regions inhabited by Kurds,
- ending military operations, attacks on villages and towns and collective arrests and torture,
- ending the state of war of security forces in the area and withdrawing them,
- guaranteeing the return of the villagers, who, following depopulation and repression, left their villages and paying them compensation,
- ending practices incompatible with human dignity in prison, decreeing a general amnesty without delay,
- ending the repression on the Kurdish language and music,
- creating opportunities for Kurdish children to be able to study in their mother tongue,
- taking measures to end the state of extreme poverty and unemployment, from which the Kurdish people suffer,
- using, to this end, funds reserved for the construction of military stations and operations, and prisons,
- abolishing the system of village guardians, which was brought into action, to force the Kurdish people to kill each other,
- ending attempts, such as "territorial defence", which involve new waves of terror and intimidation for the Kurdish people,
- ending policies, which consist of drowning the most basic national and democratic rights of the Kurdish people in blood,
- officially recognizing the existence of the Kurdish people and destroying the taboo, which surrounds the problem,
- creating a situation of free discussion so as to find a peaceful settlement,

- immediately ending Turkish government actions, which also threaten nature,
- opening up care and rehabilitation centres in Turkey, without delay, for those who have suffered torture.

THE KURDS IN IRAN

*Hélène GHASSEMLOU **

Mrs. President,

Ladies, Gentlemen, my friends,

I have just returned from Vienna, where on 13th July last, three Kurds were assassinated: our friend, the representative of the PDKI abroad, Abdullah Gaderi-Azar; the doctor Fadhil Rassoul, who had offered his loyal services to peace negotiations, and Abdul Rahman GhassemLou, Secretary-General of the PDKI.

The latter, after 44 years of struggle against the oppression of the Shah of Iran and after 10 years of war against the Ayatollah's regime, had accepted the proposals of the Iranian regime to negotiate peace as well as the autonomy of Kurdistan of Iran, with the hope that those negotiations would finish in an agreement, which would allow the Kurdish people in Iran to lead a normal life again, without war and to begin to live in conditions of autonomy, which would enable it to leave its backwardness of a subjugated people behind.

The Austrian government is in no hurry to make the truth of this crime public or to satisfy justice. Is it possible that there as well, in a democratic country in the centre of Europe, the Kurdish people cannot aspire to its rights? I really want to believe that these victims will be avenged, that justice will be done. Nevertheless, to help justice, we have to make an effort, raise our voices, act. Otherwise, state terrorism will spread still further and justice, truth and humanity will, in general, lose their meaning, particularly for the Kurds.

If the criminal act of 13th July had not taken place, Abdul Rahman would have been able to be amongst us, here, talking to you about his country and his people — with his striking knowledge and logic. The crime of Vienna was not a nightmare and we are not going to wake up with a big sigh of relief. The life of Abdul Rahman witnesses his great respect for humanity and human rights. Due to this respect, he is no longer.

* *Widow of Dr. Abdul Rahman GhassemLou, Secretary General of the Democratic party of Kurdistan of Iran*

I am privileged to have been one of the last people with whom Abdul Rahman discussed his ideas and opinions and today I would like to share them with you.

In the history of the Kurds, one notices a general silence surrounding them, which is not the case with other nations. This silence only started to be broken a few years ago, thanks to the activities of different Kurdish movements in various countries, thanks to the vigorous work of the PDKI, of which Abdul Rahman was the representative and the dedicated and respected spokesman, and "last but not least", thanks to the courageous efforts of the Kurdish Institute of Paris.

And also, if it can be said, due to the unyielding and anti-humane policies of the governments of the countries which lodge the Kurds, the apogee of these arrogant policies being the use of chemical arms against innocent children, women and old people, the Kurdish fate is beginning to emerge from silence.

With regard to Iran and Kurdistan, since the signing of the cease-fire between Iran and Iraq, certain changes can be noticed there. The crisis - characteristic of the Ayatollah's regime — accentuated by the ten year war in Kurdistan and by the eight year war against Iraq, has become more obvious. The Islamic regime is confronted by enormous problems in the country. So far, there has been no coherent program to solve them. And even if there had been, it would have been impossible to get out of the deadend, within the framework of the existing regime. These problems cause repercussions in the whole of the administrative system and add to the divergences in the ruling class.

The war of succession had begun well before the death of Khomeiny and when it drew to a close, the preparations for the period which followed accelerated. It was at this time and in this context, that Montagari was refused as Khomeiny's successor and the latter died, without having left a successor to follow in his footsteps. The internal contradictions, for the moment overshadowed, are far from being resolved.

Hashimi Rafsandjani concentrated the power at the president's disposal, which he subsequently became. He controls all the political administration of the country. It is difficult to foresee the future, but two possible scenarios can be imagined.

The first would be a certain economic and political, indeed social liberalization; only of course within the framework of the Islamic republic's system. The elimination of some excessive measures taken by Khomeiny could be expected. For example: legalizing some political parties and groups; attaching more importance to the private sector, facilitating trips abroad, invalidating the compulsory wearing of the "hejab" in women's customary clothing and, at the same time, opening the door in

the direction of western countries. This is what could keep the Islamic republic in power for a while longer.

The man capable of following these policies is H. Rafsandjani. In the past, three obstacles hindered him :

- Khomeiny — this obstacle has disappeared;
- opposition in the camp of the Ayatollahs, as well as in other institutions of the country;
- the Kurdish autonomist movement which was becoming better and better organized. He imagined that decapitating the movement, by assassinating the leader, would rid him of this very short lived movement. Another proof of his short sighted policies.

The second obstacle is still present. And Rafsandjani has to eliminate it if he wants to stay in power. This scenario would be the result of a certain liberalization. Now, the more the liberalization of the country progressed, the more the so-called Islamic content of the regime would vanish, until it only remained in name. Every step towards freedom would create another step.

The second scenario foresees conflicts within the class in power, conflicts which would increase and might lead to an open struggle, where one group would try to impose itself on other groups, which would finish in a dictatorship. If this group failed, the situation could degenerate into civil war on an unpredictable scale. This scenario should not be discounted, but it is unlikely.

Despite what the Mujaheddin of Masud Rajavi backed, the regime after the death of Khomeiny did not collapse, nor is its collapse now imminent. The Mujaheddin, who, at the time, were strong enough to represent an easing in the regime, have missed their chance. This regime has definitely been weakened and it is in a severe crisis. But it is also true that there is no valid opposition, in Teheran, or anywhere else in Iran, strong enough to constitute an alternative to this government.

The strongest political organization in Iran is the PDKI. It possesses military resources; it has an entire people at its side; it is capable of weakening the regime. Nevertheless, Iranian Kurdistan only represents 7% of the Iranian territory and 17% of Iran's population. Thus the Kurds alone cannot represent this alternative. A union of all the democratic forces of the country is necessary to create one. This country, which the Kurds are part of, longs for peace, freedom and security. If all the Iranians who long for these three words of order join together to introduce them in Iran, then a democratic alternative will gradually come into being. The Vienna assassination showed us clearly that without this democratic alternative, there will not really be autonomy for the Kurds.

By speaking about the union of opposition, which is so badly required, I do not want there to be any misunderstanding. I know that all of you, who are gathered here today, would like to see the Kurds unite, not only with one another but with the opposition of their respective countries, to free themselves. And I can hear voices saying that it is necessary to unite with any opposition, without distinction. Is this possible? If we call ourselves democrats, defenders of human rights, we are above all, tolerant and understanding of our compatriots with different credos.

But having said this, a democrat does not join forces with those whose aims have nothing to do with democracy. The end does not justify the means. Here are two examples:

- The Mujaheddin of the people claim to respect the principles of democracy. Now, four years of the PDKI's collaboration with this organization within the resistance committee, have proved that the Mujaheddin are not capable of tolerating any opposition or any opinion which differs from theirs. They have declared on many occasions that they are only responsible for their actions before God. A close look at their activities is enough to realize that their policies hardly differ from those of the Islamic republic. Collaborating with them and helping them would have disastrous consequences.
- As regards the monarchists, the son of the deposed Shah is calling once again for a constitutional monarchy. They only have a very weak political base in Iran. The army constitutes their main force, but the events of these last ten years have left virtually nothing of it. A monarchy in Iran would be of a totally different substance and character from those of Great Britain or Sweden, for example. Monarchy in Iran always degenerates into dictatorship. As a dictator does not have popular bases, he automatically becomes dependent on foreign governments. Modern history shows the Shahs of Iran bound either to Great Russia, England or the United States. The return to the monarchy would contradict freedom and independence. What's more, the autonomist Kurds have another motive for opposing the return of the Shah. Monarchy in Iran is called "shah-in-shahi" which means the empire, thus the concentration of power in Teheran. Autonomy means decentralization and participation in the government.

It is obvious that those who aspire to democracy in Iran cannot cooperate with the Mujaheddin or the monarchists. And yet, the PDKI has even made efforts to do this. Respecting democracy and everything that this word implies, the PDKI exert it within the party and call for political pluralism in the country. Very logically, it disapproves of terrorism on principal. It shows this by contributing to the release of hostages from several countries: France, Italy, Great Britain and Japan. At the time when the regime had taken the personnel of the United States' embassy hostage in

Teheran, in 1979, the PDKI published its point of view, when it said “we strongly condemn the occupation of the United States’ embassy and the hostage taking of its personnel, as an action contrary to both international laws and customs and to the best traditions of our people”. The PDKI refuses terrorism on principle, because it undermines human freedom and dignity; because, long term, it destroys the prestige of the movement externally and ruins it internally. Terrorism distances the movement from its human and noble goal.

Also on principle, the PDKI, by its vision of human rights, supports all the liberation movements in the world, but first and foremost those of Kurdistan of Turkey, of Iraq and of Syria. It considers this to be not only its right, but its duty. The Kurds love peace and if anyone says the contrary he is wrong. The war against the regime has been imposed on them. They have never preached war and they are still its enemy. They have known, since the beginning of this war, that their problems would not be resolved by arms, but by a settlement which must be negotiated. They went to Vienna to negotiate it. The regime massacred the negotiators of peace.

And yet their demands are correct and, above all, attainable! They do not involve the whole territory of the country, its external policies or its independence. They are in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations, as well as with the Declaration of Human Rights. These two documents have been signed by the governments of the countries where the Kurds reside.

If the defence of human rights is universal, then the demand for autonomy cannot be considered as an internal affair of a country. Defending autonomy means defending human rights. Human rights are indivisible. They exclude all discrimination. Defending human rights in one country and ignoring them in another, is an unacceptable contradiction. A very real contradiction in the case of the Kurds. And yet, there is not a single government in this world prepared to defend them, raise their voice and take the risk! The “reason of state” — and other factors — mean that only a few democratic and non-governmental organizations and personalities are ready to recognize them.

One of the oldest peoples of the world, totalling 25 million inhabitants, is still deprived of the most basic human rights! The Kurds need to draw public opinion’s attention to the problem much more, to have access to the mass-media and to obtain the support of MPs, organizations, as well as personalities. This political and moral support is vital to them, in order to oblige the governments of the states, in which they live, to recognize and respect their national and human rights.

If their fight within the country constitutes the decisive factor for achieving their goal then the international factor is no less important, at the end of this XXth

century. The defence of human rights, of the rights of the Kurds is an urgent matter. There is a great danger of conflicts and of permanent war, which will threaten the region, if no solution is found for them. It is not only the survival of the Kurdish people that is in danger, peace in the Middle-East and the world are also at stake.

Thank you for your attention.

THE KURDS IN IRAQ

*Dr. Mamoud OTHMAN **

Madame President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the name of the Iraqi Kurdistan Front and the Kurdish people of Irak, I express gratitude to the Kurdish Institute of Paris and the France-Libertés Organization, under the presidency of Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand, for their efforts to prepare this Conference which offers a good opportunity to talk about some important aspects of the Kurdish problem. I also express my appreciation to our personality friends who attend this gathering.

It is very unfortunate and sad when we meet here without the presence of Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, general secretary of the the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran who was savagely assassinated along with Abdullah Ghaderi and Dr. Fadhil Rassul on the 13th of July in Vienna. Dr. Ghassemlou played a role in preparing this Conference and was supposed to address it.

Iraqi Kurdistan (known then as the Mosul vilayet) was annexed to Irak after First World War without referendum, according to British, Turkish and other Allies interests. According to numerous declarations and Treaties, the Kurds in Iraq were promised a guarantee for their national, cultural and political rights.

Among the main ones, let us recall:

- British-Iraqi joint declaration in 1921.
- British-Iraqi Christmas declaration in 1922.
- Declaration by the League of Nations 1925, on the return of the fact finding mission from Kurdistan.
- 1930 when the first Iraqi-British Treaty was signed.
- 1931 when "the local language law" was issued.
- 1932: when Iraq officially joined the League of Nations.

** Representative of the Iraqi-Kurdistan Front, which regroups the principal Kurdish organisations of this country.*

Those promises, along with art. 3 of the Iraqi temporary Constitution after the July 14, 1958, Revolution which stated that Arabs and Kurds are partners in Iraq, and the Constitution guarantees their rights, were not fulfilled.

Instead, a policy of discrimination and oppression was pursued in Kurdistan. It was based on two main pillars:

- First, oppression inside against the Kurds being regarded as second degree citizens.
- Second, cooperation through accords with the neighbouring states to control what they call "Kurdish mutiny and threat".

We recall:

- The border Treaties with Turkey, backed by England in 1923 and in 1926.
- The Saadabad Treaty between Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, in 1937.
- The "Bon voisinage" Treaty with Turkey in 1946.
- The Baghdad Pact of 1955.
- The Algiers agreement of 1975.
- The many security and military border agreements with Turkey, in the last years, according to which joint military operations were launched against the Kurds.

As a consequence, and when peaceful efforts did not work, the Kurdish struggle went on by all means including uprisings and revolutions.

Instead of meeting the Kurdish legitimate demands, the Iraqi regimes fought those moves with every weapon and means they could get, including chemical and most sophisticated weapons obtained from Western and Eastern countries. The pretext for using those measures against the Kurds is that the Kurdish Movement threatens Iraqi and Arab national security!!! A groundless allegation. Kurds have no aims against Arab people. On the contrary they support their legitimate struggle and aspirations, and more particularly the struggle of the Palestinian people for self determination.

This policy of oppression, war and assimilation that has prevailed under the different Iraqi dictatorships was escalated by the present regime. It is necessary here to underline some of its main aspects.

Unfortunately, to-day the main issue in Iraqi Kurdistan is not only human and cultural rights' violations, but a policy that threatens our existence as a nation and as individuals.

Yet we find it useful to speak briefly of some flagrant violations in the fields of the

cultural, human rights and freedoms. We shall also speak about the massive use of chemical and other prohibited weapons.

Cultural rights and freedoms.

These are gravely violated. Here are some examples:

The level of education and the number of schools are proportionally much lower in Kurdistan than in the rest of Iraq. Illiteracy is far more widely spread.

The University of Sulaimania that was supposed to be a scientific and Kurdish center has been displaced to Erbil. Its programmes and organisations radically changed removing thus its Kurdish features. The large majority of the students are of Arab origin.

Kurds are not accepted in military colleges. Neither are they accepted in Schools of Political Science unless the student is a member of the ruling Party. The number of Kurdish students is decreasing.

The Kurdish language is not official in schools and local administration in Kurdistan. Arabisation of the school programs is in accord with the ruling party ideology.

For the first time pro-Iraqi newspapers, such as *al-Watan al-'Arabi*, publish articles to prove that the Kurds are originally Arabs.

Many Kurdish poets, writers, journalists were killed, others have been imprisoned and others were compelled to go into exile.

What is worse still is the destruction of schools, hospitals, mosques, churches along with thousands of villages and small towns in Kurdistan. Tens of thousands of schoolboys and girls had to flee the country. If they have a chance of studying it will be in Turkish, or in Persian or in another foreign language. Illiteracy is becoming frightening and overwhelming in Kurdistan.

Human rights

During the war, mass killings took place in Kurdistan on the spot without even an alleged pretext.

On the 9th of June 1963, 123 citizens were fired at, and buried in collective graves in the city of Sulaimania.

On August 1969, two villages: Soria, a Christian village and Dakan, in Dohuk Province, were surrounded by troops who massacred the whole population of these villages.

On April 1974, more than 50 citizens were shot in the streets in the cities of Sulaimania, Erbil and Duhok for the purpose of terrorising the whole population.

On April 24, 1974, 131 university students, teachers, and simple citizens were killed in an air-raid on Qala-Dize town.

On April 1974, 90 civilians were killed during two air-raids on Galala and Choman.

On April 1974, 42 civilians killed during an air-raid on Halabja.

On May 1974, 63 civilians killed in the town of Zakho by the troops.

In early August 1983, thousands of Kurds from Barzan were detained in deportees' camps near the city of Erbil. All males from the age of 12 were taken away. Since then, all traces have been lost.

In June 1985, in an Iraqi air-raid 130 refugees were killed in Zewa camp, in Iran, near the Iraqi border and a few hundreds were wounded.

In September 1987, the Cheman village in the province of Kirkuk was bulldozered. A hundred inhabitants were killed under the wreckage.

In June 1988 about 600 deported Kurdish villagers from Kirkuk were shot near Ramadi, southwest of Baghdad. One wounded man was set free and ordered to go to Kurdistan to tell the story.

Executions without trial and death under torture.

Imprisonment, taking whole families as hostages, tortures to death, executions without trial of people of all ages, even under 18, are usual practice in Iraq. One recent example:

The execution of the 300 Kurds (a great number were under 18): on the eve of the new year 1988, their bodies were handed over to their families in Sulaimania, Erbil, and Duhok only against the payment of a sum of money. These people had been tortured to death, some had organs taken away. They were part of 700 people executed all over the country.

Killing without trial is practiced mainly in Kurdistan, but not only, also against Iraqi opposition, sometimes also against Iraqi army officers and soldiers, and against ruling Party members.

These are all indications that State terrorism is very intense.

More than 4,500 villages and small towns have been destroyed or burnt, the inhabitants deported to camps inside Kurdistan, or to a desert in the Southern part of the country.

This racial campaign has depopulated an area of about 45,000 km², good for agriculture and cattle breeding. It has created a human, social and economic tragedy. Sanitary, nutrition, housing conditions in the camps are appalling.

The government pressured by a world wide campaign admitted that they did destroy and deport, but only within a depth of 30 km. The aim was "to protect the inhabitants from the dangers of war and give them a better life".

We reject these allegations:

In many areas the depth of destruction is far beyond 30 km.

There has been no war with Turkey, and there are no indications of having one. Why then were the Duhok province areas neighbouring Turkey so deeply destroyed?

In the big cities, tens of thousands of houses were destroyed for alleged security reasons.

On the other hand, the Government is spending hundreds of millions of dollars for the reconstruction of towns on, or very near, the borders, like the towns of Basra and Fao.

Ousting hundreds of thousands of Kurds beyond the Iraqi borders, to Iran and Turkey, where they are living in most miserable conditions, a great number of infants, children, women and old people have already died from disease, malnutrition, and cold. This tragedy still goes on. In addition, Kurds from other regions of Kurdistan have been refused the right to help these refugees. All of our efforts to obtain an international monitoring by the ICRC or the HCR, of the repatriation of the refugees in Iraq have been in vain. One year ago we contacted the ICRC to this end and asked just for the protection of those who would return and that they be settled in their original zones. The Iraqi regime rejected the ICRC's request by saying that the problem is purely internal and that they would not accept any external intervention. The ICRC released the message that they could guarantee nothing from the Iraqi side.

An arabisation policy mainly in the oil-rich areas which comprise about 35% of Kurdistan. They oust Kurds by force and settle pro-government Arabs and Egyptians in their stead. The government gives them land, money, arms and privileges. Radical administrative changes have been made in these areas for the same purpose.

The use of poisons, like thalium, arsenic, mercury and lead to kill opponents. Many have been killed in this way mainly in Kurdistan.

The destruction of economic and social life of groups and individuals: scorch earth policy, economic blockade, unemployment and lack of production. Wide spread separation of family members by deportation or the ousting of Iraqi Kurds by the tens of thousands after having deprived them of their citizenship along with hundreds of thousands of other expelled Iraklis.

To show how easily the death penalty is given in our country, we shall quote a few decrees and orders from the regime:

- Depopulated Kurdish area is a Free Fire Zone and any creature moving in this area is to be shot on the spot (S.F. 1725. 21.6.1987).
- Death penalty to any Iraqi who insults the President, or the Command Council, the Government or the National Assembly (S.F. 1140. 26.8.1981).
- Death penalty to whoever deserts the army or mixes with parties or politics other than the ruling Party. (S.F. 1257. 10.11.1971).
- Death penalty to any member of the Baath Party who has contacts or is involved in the activities of another party (N° 1344. 20.11.1976).

The use of chemical weapons

An escalation in the war in Kurdistan. To napalm, phosphoric and other bombs have been added since April 1987, chemical weapons: mustard, nerve gases and cyanide.

Of the long list of chemical bombings by means of air, artillery and Katiucha, we shall only mention:

- Balisan area (Erbil), April 1987: 500 victims.
- Dokan area (Sulaimania), many times, mainly: April 1987 and February 1988: not less than 400 victims.
- 16, 17 and 18 of March 1988, the notorious massacre in Halabja: about 12,000 victims.
- Karadagh area (Sulaimania), 28, 29, 30 March 1988: about 600 victims.
- Chanaksey mawat, March 1988: more than 400 victims.
- Chiwan and Chaikh Bizeni areas (north of Kirkuk), 2nd and 3rd of May 1988: about 1,200 victims.
- Koysanjak and Erbil plains: on many occasions in Spring 1988: a few hundred victims.
- Amadia district villages, June 1987: more than 150 victims.
- The triangle Iran-Iraq and Turkey: Khwarkurk area, July and August 1988: around 160 victims.

- Bahdinan (Duhok province), a vast area bombed just after the ceasefire in the Gulf War: 25-31st August 1988. Thousands were victims.
- Besides, many chemical air-raids were made on refugee camps in Iran.

From the very few victims who could walk to reach the Turkish borders, and who were not killed on the way by the troops, there were, besides mild cases of chemical wounds in refugee camps, 21 clear cut cases which were immediately isolated by the Turkish authorities. We still have no news from them.

In spite of the world wide conviction and condemnation of the use of chemical weapons, and the Iraqi refusal to let U.N. experts in to check, no action was taken by the international community to stop and sanction the regime. Even the Paris Conference held from 7 to 11 January 1989 was a great disappointment for us. It did not listen to the Kurdish victims, it did not put on the agenda of the Conference the use of chemical weapons by Iraq. On the contrary, efforts started weeks before the Conference to save Baghdad from sanctions. In order to avoid its being accused or sanctioned, the case of Baghdad was mixed up with a dozen of other countries that possess chemical weapons or are in the process of obtaining them.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The war in Kurdistan is not only a matter of violations or an internal conflict. It is a genocide and a policy of forced assimilation.

It is a grave violation of the U.N. Charter (art. 55); of the Geneva Conventions; of the Human Rights Declaration (mainly art. 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 19, 20, 26, 27); of all other international pacts signed by Iraq, namely: International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights including self-determination; Convention on prevention and punishment of genocide crime; International Law on ending all sorts of racial discrimination and punishment to it; U. N. declaration on protecting all humans from torture and any action that hurts freedom and dignity.

The War in Kurdistan threatens peace and security in the region. It has never been limited within borders.

The Kurdish people of Irak asks the International community to:

- send fact finding missions to Kurdistan, to the deportee and refugee camps, to check the tragic situation of our people. We need direct help and supervision from UNHCR and International Committee of Red Cross for our refugees.
- protect the Kurdish people from genocide and forced assimilation.
- put the Kurdish problem on the agenda of international organisations and on that of the Geneva negotiations between Iran and Irak so that the problem may

be treated in the same way as similar conflicts in Latin America, Angola, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Ethiopia which are on the agenda of the International Community and the Permanent Members of the Security Council.

The Iraqi Kurdistan Front affirms that the Kurdish people of Iraq will continue by all means to defend their existence and their rights and to struggle for the attainment of their goals, co-operating with other Kurdish movements in other regions of Kurdistan on the one hand and Iraqi patriotic forces on the other. But at the same time the IKF believes that it is the duty of the international community to help find a peaceful solution to the Kurdish problem, to defeat vetos in UN discussions and in official circles. Put an end to genocide and respect human rights fundamental to all of Kurdistan. If not the community will be held responsible for all consequences which could result and for the fate of millions of Kurds.

We believe that it would be very useful for the honorable friends of the Kurds who attend this conference to work in such a way as they judge possible in order to draw interest to our cause in their respective countries and in the world. We are grateful for all they have done to help the Kurds. But we ask even more. Our situation is tragic. It has to do with genocide. This requires real efforts and struggle against the vetos and interests which, strangely, permit the silent death of a nation. Something must be done before biological weapons are used in Kurdistan. It is neither just nor honest to allow Kurdistan to become a laboratory of experimentation for all kinds of terrible weapons. Will we be the guinea pigs of the end of the 20th century? And how many thousands of Kurds must still die from chemical weapons, poison, execution, massacres...before action is taken!

We thank the French people, their President and their government for having organised this conference in Paris and appeal to them to bring even more understanding to our suffering and to use their weight and important international influence in their relations with Iraq and the other governments concerned in order to support the Kurdish people's right to live in peace and to realize their legitimate aspirations.

In this era of peace, of dialogue, of openness and deep concern with the Human Rights it would be fair that the Kurdish people's case be dealt with with all the care it deserves.

I thank you deeply for your very kind attention.

THE KURDS IN SYRIA AND LEBANON

*Ismet Chériff VANLY **

Mrs. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear compatriots,

I have been called on to talk to you about the Kurds of Syria and Lebanon. I had the privilege of teaching the Kurdish civilization from 1959 to 1962, at the Sorbonne, in this city of lights. After this Mustafa Barzani assigned me to other services for the Kurdish people. I will, if I may, describe this civilization a little and recall and speak about a few very simple but essential facts, before discussing the subject of the Kurds of Lebanon and Syria.

The Kurds, whose country has been shared amongst several states, are one and the same people. The proof is that you are here all together, from diverse parts of Kurdistan. The Kurdish people's feeling of unity is based on a shared history, a community of language and territory, an aspiration to the same destiny; an Indo-European language, a territory of some 500,000 square kilometres, all in one piece, but which has been divided between Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, without the Kurdish people even having been consulted. And this is without, of course, mentioning our compatriots, the Soviet Kurds and the Kurds of the diaspora.

This people, which is only described nowadays in terms of pity and is only seen as consisting of unrepentant rebels or weeping victims, naturally possesses, contrary to the tendentious and even slanderous assertions of its oppressors, like all other peoples, a culture and a history, a language, arts, an oral and written literature, both ancient and modern, a legacy from the past, which must be preserved and a history which it is denied and which is stolen from it. It has been said that the Kurds are a people of nomadic and uneducated tribes, a people which would always have lived isolated in its mountains, cut off from civilization in a state of semi-barbarism. This is a misrepresentation of history which goes hand in hand with the national oppression, like the neighbouring peoples, this people participated in the creation of civilization and in its development in Western Asia, long before the arrival of the

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Turks in the region. In the Xth and XIth centuries, the Kurds formed themselves into four Kurdo-Muslim states, known by the names of their dynasties, after the fashion of the Carolingians and Merovingians in the history of France. These dynasties were: the Hasanwayhids in Iranian Kurdistan, the Marwanids in present Kurdistan of Turkey, because the Turks were not there yet, and, as Kendal said this morning, the Sedadits in Transcaucasia and the Rawandits in Azerbaijan. Thus, no-one should say that the Kurds have never had a state, because the states that I have mentioned possess all the attributes of a sovereign state — according to the criterias of the period — but I do not want to elaborate at this point. These states were similar to the Bouyyids states in Persia, the Hamdani states in Aleppe or, a bit later, the Tazinguids in Mossoul. Of course, the Kurdish dynasties, which I have spoken about were each governed in a part of Kurdistan, in the sense that Kurdistan was not unified. But have France and Great Britain always been unified? Are the Arab countries still unified now? Weren't German and Italian unities achieved in the XIXth century?

The Kurdish people even found themselves in the procenium of modern history in the XIth and XIIIth centuries, thanks to the Ayyubid dynasty, with its kings, sultans, generals, soldiers, without forgetting the scholars, who were at the head of the muslim East against a Europe of crusaders. From the XIVth century to the XVIIIth, even XIXth century, in some cases, the Kurdish country was composed of about thirty or forty independent or semi-independent principalities with hereditary dynasties; with courts like, for example, at Ardalan and Bitlis, where arts, sciences and literature often thrived and a powerful governing nobility, who lived in the hundreds of fortified castles, some of which still remain in a neglected state; with an active urban bourgeoisie, who were either tradesmen, craftsmen or administrators, a sedentary and hard-working peasantry and a thriving countryside at the side of the semi-nomadic tribes, who were mainly concerned with breeding. This medieval society has been destroyed little by little by the Ottoman and Persian Empires, which have reduced the principalities to provinces. On the brink of the XXth century, the Kurdish people found themselves decapitated of their governing aristocracy, ruined by the wars, between the two empires, for which their country was continually the stage with a peasantry reduced to a state of mere survival, decimated breeders and an urban bourgeoisie which, instead of continuing its rapid expansion and bringing about development of the modern working classes, kept deteriorating until it was almost criminalised. Thankfully we have received precious accounts on the original civilization of this medieval Kurdistan, thanks particularly to: the historical work of Sharaf Khan, a Kurdish prince reigning in Bitlis at the end of the XVIth century (his work was, furthermore, translated into French at Saint Petersburg in the last century) and also the travel journal of a famous Turkish traveller, Evliya Çelebi, from the XVIIth century.

Allow me to say something else which seems to me essential. Just as every man has the right to life, so then every people, who recognize themselves as such, has the right to take its fate into its own hands, by the very fact that it exists. This is the "collective will to live" of Hauzer. The Kurdish people possess and will continue to possess this right, even if it cannot exert it. It is an imprescribable and inalienable right established by international conventions. No authority, law, state, national or international organization or chauvinism can abolish the right of the Kurdish people to freely decide its own fate. A declaration of the rights of the Kurdish people, currently being studied by Kurdish lawyers, is going to be published in the near future. Free practice of this right, which is currently impossible, is, of course, a question for the future. This practice entails choices, which it is up to the Kurds and the Kurds alone to make. Only they can decide whether they want to live independently or united, in one way or another with the neighbouring peoples. No union can be conceived of long-term, unless it is based on legality, freedom and sovereignty and the interest of each and every one and this, only once the right to self-determination has been established, and the present relationships of domination have been abolished.

The Kurds of Syria and Lebanon are spoken about a lot less than their compatriots living in Turkey, Iran or Iraq. And yet the Kurds of Syria total a million people, or about a tenth of the Syrian Republic's population. They constitute, moreover, the only big national or ethnic minority on a territorial basis in Syria. There are three Kurdish regions in the North of Syria which are separated from one another, in Syrian territory, but which all border on Kurdistan of Turkey, where they make up a kind of extension towards the South. The Turko-Syrian border is traced according to the Franco-Turkish agreements of 21st March 1921. France was, at the time, a mandatory power of Syria, in the sense that this border does not follow the Arabo-Turkish demarcation line and leaves Kurds at the south of the border and of the Arab pockets in the North, like that of Harran, and the pocket near Jarablos, without mentioning Saint Jacques of Alexandretta, which was of an Arab majority until Turkey forcibly annexed it in 1938.

The Kurdish habitation of Syria dates back to the beginning of time. In pre-Islamic times, Kurdish tribes came down from the mountains of Mossoul and Mardin to winter in the steppes of what is now Syrian Jazira. In 1764, a German author, Karlsten Libourg, born in Holstein, at the time a Danish concession — thus he was a Danish national — who was a scholar, was appointed by the king of Denmark, to carry out an information assignment in the Near-East countries. This author, Libourg, left us a book in German, which has been translated into French. He went through Syrian Jazira and he drew up a map for us, using German names. This was in the middle of the XVIIth century. He mentions five Kurdish tribes of the time in Syrian Jazira: the Kiki, Chachani, Meli, Assyti and just one Arabic tribe, the Taiï,

which he says was admittedly large. Today, two centuries after the travels of the Germanic author, the same tribes can be found in Syrian Jazira, with the difference that the Kurdish tribes, who were at the time semi-nomadic, have settled and have transformed Syria into a corn and cotton basket.

The loyalty of the Kurds to the Syrian government has always been exemplary. But the Kurds of Syria were Kurds at heart due to all the struggles of their people. In 1927, the Hoyboon independentist organization of Kurdistan of Turkey came into existence amongst the Kurds of Syria. In the 1930s and during the first years of the First World War, when the suffering of Kurdish people in Kurdistan of Turkey had reached its peak, the Kurds of Syria, amongst whom were some Kurdish emigrants of Turkey such as Djeladet Bedir-Khan, Kamuran Bedir-Khan and their elder brother Sureya Bedir-Khan, took over, as it were, in a Kurdish cultural movement. Kurdish writers and poets like Cegerxwîn, Osman Sabri, Nureddin Zaza, Khadijan and Djeladet Bey, who published (as Kendal mentioned this morning) the Hawar review in Latin characters. and his brother, Bedir-Khan published the Roja Nu review, which means "New Day", in Beirut, using Latin characters, which became popularized amongst the Kurds of Turkey and, little by little, amongst the other Kurds.

When the battle for autonomy, led by Mulla Mustafa Barzani and the Democratic Kurdish Party, broke out in Iraq in 1961, the Kurds of Syria naturally backed the movement sparked by this in Kurdistan of Iraq. And it's no mere coincidence that the oppression of the Kurds of Syria started in 1961, possibly in reaction to the entirely natural solidarity of the Kurds of Syria with the Kurds of Iraq. In 1962, the Syrian government conducted a population census, in all the departments and all the provinces. This Syrian census, implemented in accordance with decree number 93, of 23rd August of the same year, and which was published in the official newspaper, only concerned the Kurds of Djezireh, and in accordance with this census, it was announced that about 120,000 Kurds of Jazira, who were Syrian nationals, were not Syrians but people who had infiltrated Syria illegally. They were asked, using a simple administrative subterfuge, to hand in their identity cards so that new ones could be made, but these new identity cards were never given to them, meaning that the Kurds, totalling 120,000 at the time, found themselves stateless people in their own country. What was called the Arab belt, Al Hizam Al Arabi, was created in 1963, and because of this the Kurdish region of Djezireh, along the Turkish border, which is 280 kms in length and about 15 kms in depth, and was made up of 332 villages, had to be evacuated. Instead of these villages, state farms, called "models", were created, built, constructed and reserved for the Arabs, Arabs who were brought there furthermore, to replace the Kurds.

These policies, which had begun to be carried out, resulted in the Kurds being

dispossessed of the steppes and lands they possessed and which had been steppes but which they had exploited for the benefit of Syria. Thus national oppression started then. Like in Turkey, a progressive arabization of the Kurdish toponymy of the region, a toponymy which was partly Aramaic in this region, and thus very old, took place.

Arresting the leaders of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria, including Mr. Osman Sabri and Dr. Nureddin Zaza and prosecuting others and throwing them in prison, were amongst the measures of oppression. I myself was singled out, let me tell you, by a sentencing of capital punishment, in my absence as I was not in Syria, and by the impoundment of my possessions. This judgement for a crime whose essence is still unknown to me, was published in the official newspaper of the Arab Syrian Republic of the 4th July 1965. What did I do? I have no idea. I presume, however, that it was due to the help I had given internationally to the cause of the oppressed Kurdish people, and because general Mustafa Barzani had asked me to be his spokesman abroad for the cause of this people.

The instigator of these national policies of oppression is called Mr. Mohamad Talab Jilal. He had had the post of officer of the secret political police in Jazira, at the beginning of the 1960s, and had written a book in Arabic, entitled "study on the province of Jazira, on the ethnic, social and political plane", which is completely devoted to what is called the Kurdish danger and is simply an invitation to genocide, similar to "Mein Kampf". This work is a secret document of the state. It is not in the library in Syria. Just one copy has fallen into the hands of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria and it was sent to me. I have made use of it to publish some studies in French and English and other languages, on the Kurdish issue in Syria and the persecution of this people.

It should be noted that since the advent of President Hafiz al-Hassad, in 1972, the racist measures concerning the Kurds, have eased noticeably. The autonomist parties of Iraqi Kurdistan run a prosperous business in Damascus, nevertheless the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria is still banned itself, as are all publications in the Kurdish language and there is no teaching for the Kurds, who, it should not be forgotten, total a million people.

I hope, with the president's grace, that I might add a few words to finish this talk and to speak a little about the Kurds of Lebanon.

A terrible economic crisis is rife in Syria, from which the Kurds of Syria, in Jazira or even Haffin, a formerly thriving region, due to its corn, wood and olive oil production, are, in particular, suffering. In the Kurdish regions, as elsewhere in the countryside of Kurdistan of Turkey, there happens to be a peasant exodus towards

the big inland towns and to Damascus. There are more and more inactive and jobless amongst the Kurdish youths of Syria and many opt for exile. There are tens of thousands of them in the Federal Republic of Germany and many in other European countries including France. The Syrian regime, which had deprived the Kurds of Jazira of their Syrian nationality, forced, however, these "non Syrian" Kurds to do their military service. They are forced to do military service, whilst for want of a identity card, as it were, they do not have the right to get married in a registry office; they cannot go to a public hospital when they are ill and they cannot even be buried according to the law, and yet, they total today, including their offspring, 300,000 people. The young inactive Kurds are recruited with Alawites, not only into the actual Syrian army, but also into the top-ranking units of the Syrian forces and the special forces, which strongly resemble the praetorian guard of the regime. The Kurds and Alawites are placed in special detachments, which serve, in a way, as repression against the other Syrians and as protection for the regime. These Alawites and Kurdish units have been used in the repression of the Arab Islamizing movement, in 1980, and, if I can say so, they gored the town of Hama in spring 1982.

The result is that the majority of the sunnite Arabs feel resentment, not only towards the Alawites but also towards the Kurds, considered as a minority, used by the regime, against the sunnite majority. For the Kurds, it is a fool's deal, because, whilst being taken advantage of, they are deprived of all rights and their national identity in Syria is threatened in the medium or long-term, by disappearance and departure: only the old generations remain in the Kurdish regions, whilst more and more young people leave their place of birth.

I will be much briefer about the Kurds in Lebanon. We can no longer talk about Kurdistan for the Kurds in Lebanon. They have been in Lebanon, since fairly ancient times, since Ayyubid period, a few Kurdish establishments of feudal and seigniorial character in the Lebanese mountains. A renowned example is the family of Jumblat which was of Kurdish origin and whose original name was Jambulāt, Jambulāt-Jumblāt — this is the Lebanonization of the name. Jumblāt in Kurdish means crown court (or court of steel). They were the Kurdish lords of western Kurdistan, who had rebelled against the sultan, had settled in Lebanon and are, today, head of the Druze community. But there is a new Kurdish community in Lebanon, constituted from the 1930s onwards, by emigrants from Kurdistan of Turkey and Syria. It currently totals about 100,000 people, mainly concentrated in Beirut. This community has had a nationality problem. The government in Beirut, led mainly, up until now anyway, by the Maronite element, were not keen to grant Lebanese nationality to these Kurds who are Sunni Muslim. But apart from that the Kurds had freedoms, in accordance with the normal traditions of Lebanon, vis-à-vis freedom of association and freedom of expression. A democratic Kurdish party in Lebanon and Kurdish sports, cultural and social clubs were set up legally, but

unfortunately there was a drama in Lebanon — the civil war, which I do not need to dwell on — which the Lebanese Kurds and the Kurds of Beirut participated in, within their militia, supporting the Druze and Sunni militia, thus in both cases on the side of the Muslims. It suffered many losses.

The issue of the Kurds of Lebanon has many facts. Firstly, it is part of the issue of the Lebanese themselves, whatever their denomination. Peace must be re-established between the Lebanese, including the Kurds. But there is a specific problem for the Kurds of Lebanon. They have to be able to attain Lebanese nationality, to be Lebanese, which they are in practice, while still remaining Kurdish and conserving their language and culture. Perhaps Lebanon, which has always been a community, which is a kind of juxtaposition of communities which has always been able to live in peace in cooperation, will change back into this Lebanon one day and will find the solution to this question.

Mrs. President, I do not want to finish without telling you how touched I am, like all my Kurdish friends, by the presence of so many personalities, from such diverse horizons and countries, who have come to display their solidarity for the Kurdish people in the terrible hardships they are currently undergoing, in particular in Kurdistan of Iraq. Thank you Mrs. President. I am thanking you, not just because of your presidential quality, but I am thanking you, Danielle Mitterrand, for everything. Thanks also to France for the Kurdish Insitute of Paris, to Paris for having facilitated this conference, which I believe is important, and I hope it will be the first step in a move to internationalize the Kurdish problem on a humanitarian plane.

Thanks also to my friends for their patience.

Thank you very much.

THE LIFE OF A KURD IN THE USSR

*Nadir NADIROV **

We the Soviet Kurds, are very pleased and happy today to state that Kurds from various countries, including the Soviet Union are holding a public conference and that this is taking place in the very heart of Europe. I would like to express my gratitude to Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand, in the name of the Kurds. The Kurds, whatever their country, will not forget this support and will remain eternally grateful to her. She, at the expense of a great deal of fatigue, effort and worry, made the Kurdish cause known. We are also very grateful to the Kurdish Institute which has made so much effort, and has succeeded, under the chairmanship of our brother Kendal to unite us, enabling us to share our joy and sorrow and to update one another on our evolution and ideas.

The path of the Soviet Kurds has not been linear: it has by no means been limited to either progress or repression; with the moments of joy have also come obstacles and mourning. In 1917, when the October Revolution took place, every nationality found freedom. The rights of the Kurds were guaranteed by the Soviet Constitution, as were those of all the other nations. Kurdish, like all the other languages, was to be developed. In 1923, a Soviet Kurdistan was created in Azerbaijan at Lenin's command. A Kurdish language school, newspaper and theater were set up in the very heart of this country, in the town of Lacin. Kurdish writers published in their own language. The Soviet Kurds were overwhelmed with happiness. However, their joy was short lived. The Kurdish language schools were closed down from 1929 onwards. It is true that a Kurdish newspaper, Riya Tezé, which the majority of you are familiar with, either from having heard about it or read it, has been published ever since in Yerevan. It is also true that there is a section of Kurdish writers in this town, within the Armenian Republic Writers' Union, as well as Kurdish language schools and radio broadcasts in Kurdish. The fact remains that the Soviet Kurds experienced the worst misfortunes of their existence between 1937 and 1944. During this period, some of the Caucasian Kurds were deported to Central Asia, to the Republic of

** Member and former Secretary-General of the Science Academy of the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan, Professor of Petrochemistry*

Kazakhstan in particular. The deportees were not authorized to regroup in any one place. Every family was reinstalled in a separate village. I myself was amongst these deportees. My father had passed away in 1936; my mother had 9 children to look after. One night in 1937, militiamen arrived in our village, Ghightch, situated in the Nakhitchevan region in Azerbaijan. They knocked at our door and ordered us to prepare ourselves immediately for a long journey. "Tomorrow you are going to be deported", they called out — end of explanation. Where to? What route were we taking? What sufferings lay in store for us? What fate were we heading for? We knew nothing.

The following day, at dawn, my family and others were loaded into army trucks and driven to the nearest station. There, crammed together in carriages, we were sent off to an unknown destination. Forty five days later, we were unloaded and regrouped in an unknown plain. According to the government agents, this place was called Ghachga-Bulagh, situated in the "Djanbul" area in Kazakhstan. They informed us that from now on we were going to live here.

A few days later, the government people came back and took the heads of the families with them. My eldest brother, Abdullah, was amongst them. There has been no trace of them since.

After that, for a period of 7 months, the time needed to build new housing for us, we stayed in tents provided by the Red Army. Every village built like this had its own school. However, the Kurdish language was no longer used for education. It was replaced by Kazakh and I had to study in this language.

Having finished college in this new village, I decided to go and continue my studies elsewhere. But, as we were forbidden to leave the place we had been deported to, I had to consult the village's military commander to request permission. It was immediately refused.

I had, therefore, to write directly to Stalin. I received the following reply: "with the exception of the capitals of the republics, you are allowed to go to any other town to pursue your studies". Due to this, I gave up my medical studies, because at the time the only medicine departments were in the capitals of the republics. This is why I enrolled in Chemistry at the Pedagogical Institute of Ghizil-Orda. Having got my Chemistry degree, I returned to my village, where I continued to teach at the school.

It was not until 1956, with the arrival of Kruschov, that we were once again free to travel to other parts of the country, which enabled me to go to Moscow and enroll at Lenin's Pedagogical Institute to do a doctorate in Chemistry. Having obtained my doctorate, I was taken on by the Pedagogical Institute of Khabarovsk, where I

worked for 9 years and where I was awarded my professorship. After that, I was sent to the Technological Institute of Tchimbant as the head of the Petrochemistry department. Next, I took up the post of vice rector at the Scientific Institute of Ghanriev. Finally, I was elected member of the Science Academy of Kazakhstan and later Secretary-General of the same academy.

The situation of the Kurds in the USSR has distinctly deteriorated since Gorbachov came to power. Although the central government promised to give particular attention to the problem of deported people, in actual fact nothing has been done as yet. As far as the Kurds are concerned, the mounting tensions in the Republics of Azerbaijan, Armenia and Kirgizia has further aggravated their plight. Fearing massacres and pogroms, they were forced to leave these republics and to go and take refuge in other republics, such as Russia where they do not even have the right to living accomodation or jobs. People with specific cultural rights, scattered across 9 republics, the Kurds are, at the moment, caught up in the cross fire of nationalist conflicts in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Both their survival and their separate identity are currently in danger.

KURDISH REFUGEES IN TURKEY

*Mehmet Ali ASLAN **

Mrs. President and dear guests,

We are living at a time when disarmament and world peace initiatives are making progress. But it is hardly possible to achieve world peace without putting an end to regional conflicts and without, in particular, eliminating the reasons for them. Nowadays, the region whose situation is threatening world peace most is the Near East. The equilibrium, formerly set up by imperialism, with a view to securing its own interests, has today been turned upside down and the Near East has ended up bogged down in the bloody settling of scores. The Near Eastern peoples, from Lebanon to Palestine and from Iraq to Iran, are living, through a great tragedy.

Victims among victims, the Kurds endure the most terrible plight of all. Their situation continues to be worsened by the oblivion and isolation on account of which they suffer. Thus, certain countries, not fearing the indignant reaction of world public opinion in the slightest, dare to try to exterminate the Kurds by blasting them with chemical bombs.

A people should not be overcome by a feeling of abandonment and isolation. We should not let it sink into such a state of mind. Hope for peaceful and democratic solution of the problems should remain. Because those whose lives and for whom life turns into a Gehenna, are capable of making life the same for others. If we hope for world peace and if we want to protect our humane and democratic values from the destructive effects of violence, then it is our responsibility to prevent every people and not only the Kurds, from sinking into such distress.

We need to find a democratic and peaceful solution to the Kurdish question in order, not only to resolve the problem of the Near East, but also to help the progress of world peace and to protect western democracies from any threat of violence. To do this, the Kurdish question must be put on the agenda of fora and international conferences and the essence of both the bilateral and multilateral relations of the

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states, as well, as of international institutions, discussed. The Kurds are to be able to use all their force to achieve a pluralistic democracy of participation, based on human rights and humanity's universal values, a democracy built by common effort, and shared equally with the brother peoples that they rub shoulders with, then it is essential that they do not become bogged down by a feeling of abandonment and isolation, it is crucial that they do not give up hope of the possibility of a peaceful and democratic solution.

Such is the importance of this conference which unites us. The Kurds are happy to see so many distinguished personalities from such diverse origins, turn their attention to their problem and unite to discuss it and to try to find solutions.

This is why it is our duty to thank Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand, president of France-Libertés, and Kendal Nezan, president of the Kurdish Institute.

Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand is, from now on, one of us. Our people already mention her as being one of the noteworthy figures in our history. She is in all of our hearts, from the depths of the villages, the heart of the big towns.

A few months ago, Mrs. Mitterrand was our guest in Turkey. We invited her to the beautiful banks of Lake Van to a modest meal, the frugality of which reflected both our poverty and our sincerity. A young man, who had travelled to meet her, completely elated as he was, showed a photo to everyone in sight, of which he would not let go. It was possibly the happiest day of his life. He showed me this photo too, which was of him kissing Mrs. Mitterrand's hand. "Just look", he said to me, "a photo taken whilst I was kissing mother's hand. Don't you think she is beautiful?" This young man was merely expressing the feelings of an entire people.

The only experience that the Kurds and other peoples of the Near East had had up until then of the West, which had split them up in order to push them together and which finished, using the expedient of a handful of collaborators, by exploiting and oppressing them, had been of its hideous imperialist face. In Mrs. Mitterrand the Kurds have, for the first time, glimpsed the beautiful and friendly face of a western country, faithful to human rights and humanity's universal values. This is the reason for the young man's enthusiasm and happiness.

Mrs. Mitterrand came to Turkey to find out for herself about the situation of the Kurdish refugees who fled Kurdistan of Iraq. Why did these human beings have to tear themselves away from their homeland and go to live elsewhere, in conditions pitiful enough to capture the whole world's attention?

At the time of the war between Iran and Iraq, world powers gave more support to

the latter than the former. They allowed it to build a factory to manufacture chemical arms, which were banned by the Geneva Convention of 1925, and to stock up on material and techniques. Thus, Iraq has equipped itself with the atomic bomb of the poor.

On 17th March 1988, the Iraqi forces dropped its chemical bombs on Halabja and the surrounding small towns, inhabited by Kurds. The civil population did not have time to understand what was happening. People were unable to flee or shelter. Children collapsed as they were strewn with corpses. Women, children, the young and old... No survivors. The toll was 5,000 deaths.

This act of Saddam's regime could, therefore, be called Hiroshima 88. What difference can one make between this and the Nazi crimes committed in the concentration camps? It is a war crime. It involved those same chemical arms banned by the Geneva Convention of 1925. It is a genocide. The Kurds from Halabja and the surrounding area were exterminated without any distinction between individuals whatsoever.

After the ceasefire between Iran and Iraq came into effect, the government of Baghdad, at last able to withdraw its troops from the Iranian front, redeployed them and launched a large scale offensive against the Kurds. Having confidence in their chemical arms and their napalm, the Iraqi troops targeted densely populated areas. The civil population, who were still in shock from the savagery of the Halabja massacre, started to abandon their villages and land and withdraw to the Turkish border. The number of women and children who died en route, due to the toxic effects of mustard gas, was considerable.

The aim of the government of Baghdad was to wipe out its Kurdish population. Furthermore, it stopped at nothing and resorted to the massacre of an entire population, making no distinction between sex or age, by use of chemical bombs and napalm. The flight of the survivors stopped at the Turkish border and the escapees around a hundred thousand, the majority of whom were women and children, thus asked for the right to asylum in Turkey.

After a few days of deliberation, the government in Ankara authorized them to cross the demarcation line. Thus, a massacre even worse than the one that had just occurred, was able to be prevented. This decision by Turkey was, without doubt, commendable. But it is difficult to be as appreciative of the Turkish authorities for their part in the events that followed.

Article 14 of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights, stipulates the right to asylum. As for the legal situation of the refugees, it is controlled by the Geneva

Convention of 28th July 1951 which deals with the legal status of the refugees. When signing this convention, Turkey voiced a specific reservation, which limited its commitment solely to the cases of people seeking refuge because of events arising in Europe. It was in accordance with this reserve, which dates back a long time, that the government refused to recognize the refugee status, as laid down in the Geneva Convention, of the Kurds, who had come in search of asylum, due to the events which had arisen in Iraq.

Is this position of the government justified? Definitely not.

- 1) The reservation voiced by Turkey, when signing the Geneva Convention of 1951, cannot prevent refugee status from being granted to those who request asylum and whose situation is dependent on extra-European circumstances. This is proven by the protocol of 4th October 1967, which eliminated all geographical restrictions and introduced an amendment with the express desire of abolishing any previous reservations.

In accepting these Kurds from Iraq, Ankara, though only for this very specific case, would go against, in practice, its own reservation concerning geographical restrictions. In the future, the only subsidiary question will be to find out if all the other conditions of the refugee status are well and truly met. In this sense, the Kurdish refugees from Iraq fulfill all the conditions required.

- 2) The principal of equality is one of the foundations of the law. In this respect, Turkey has already accepted the asylum of numerous Iranian nationals, who have come in search of refuge in Turkey, due to events in their country, which is far from being situated in the geographical confines of Europe, just as some 4,500 families of Turkish origin who, having left Afghanistan, first asked Pakistan for asylum.

Anyway, in accordance with article 3 of the convention, the signatories are not obliged in any way to discriminate between refugees on account of race, denomination or country of origin.

For all these reasons, it is impossible to acknowledge the slightest validity in the reservation which introduces a geographical restriction on the refugee status. The Kurdish refugees in Turkey were put in camps surrounded by barbed wire. Their most elementary needs, regarding food, clothing and health, were met in the crudest, if not to say indigent terms. They were unable to obtain work permits. Also, any aid from the population or from any institution at all was prevented. Children were unable to attend school.

In fact, not only the Kurds, but also the Turkish population, wanted to help these men and women and wished that they could again dignified living conditions. A lost cause. Law 2860, dealing with popular aid, states that the organization of all aid action is dependent on the authorization of the Minister for the Interior, prefects and vice-prefects. And no representative from the administrative authority has granted its authorization to the deputies to do this likewise came up against the Minister for the Interior.

As regards possible exterior aid, it has been impossible to carry out, on the one hand because of the previously mentioned law, and, on the other, due to the non-recognition of the refugee status of the Kurds from Iraq, who have come from Turkey. The UNHCR is, in fact, only in a position to give help to those in possession of the previously mentioned status.

Around 100,000 people crossed the Turkish border. Some of them immediately headed for Iran and others were forced to go there. At first, some 65,000 remained in Turkey. A second partial exodus to Iran further reduced their number. They were 36,000 at the time of Mrs. Mitterrand's arrival; today their number only totals about 30,000.

The urgently needed solution is the recognition, from Ankara of refugee status for these people. If this status was ever recognized, then the UNHCR, followed by the states involved as well as the most diverse institutions, would be able to give the necessary aid. Not only would the Kurds obtain better conditions of life, but it would also put an end to an iniquitous situation, which goes so strongly against the Kurds of Turkey's sense of justice, as well as that of the Turkish population itself.

The truly radical solution would obviously be the achievement of conditions, allowing the Kurdish refugees to return freely to the country of their ancestors and to reorganize their life there without fear of oppression. These men and women love their homeland. The fact that they risked their lives for the love of it and still continue to fight for it, is the proof.

Nowadays, there are about 16 million refugees in the world. More than 90% of them are received by under-developed countries, themselves impoverished. These refugees, who struggle to survive in extremely difficult conditions, further exacerbate the state of poverty and the problems of these countries who receive them. The vast majority of refugees live in permanent and extreme anxiety. Their psychological problems influence their way of thinking and their behaviour. And this consequently comes out in social and political problems.

THE KURDISH DIASPORA IN EUROPE

*Lars-Gunnar ERIKSONN **

The title that has been given to my speech indicates that there is a kind of permanence to the problem, something that also has been underlined by the previous lectures today.

We are generally facing a situation where the number of refugees in the world seems to be on the increase - or at least it is not decreasing. We count today some 15 million refugees and a further almost 15 million displaced persons or so called internal refugees.

The Kurdish part of these two figures has increased during the last couple of years. In regard to the refugees - i.e. those that have actually crossed a national frontier - the number in Western Europe has been increasing. This is partly due to the increase in intensity of the conflict between the Kurdish people and the central governments in three of their formal countries of origin: Iraq, Iran and Turkey. But I also believe that when we talk about individual refugees as opposed to mass exoduses - it also has something to do with the fact that the Kurdish question has become more known in different Western European countries and that in the Western European countries it is possible to work politically for the Kurdish question in a way that is impossible in those countries in the Middle East that receive refugees. In other words more Kurds who have had the possibility of influencing the direction of their flight have sought to reach Western European countries. In its turn this has meant that the Kurdish question has become more alive abroad than within Kurdistan and the nearby territories. This has led to a greater interest and more of an active engagement on side of the different groups to also do something for those many Kurdish refugees who have not managed to reach relative safety in western Europe. Having said that we must also recognise that there is a great lack of information and firsthand knowledge about the Kurdish refugees and about the situation of the Kurds in the so-called diaspora.

* *Advisor to the Swedish Minister of Immigration*

At the outset it is perhaps also important to note that not all Kurds that are outside of their countries of origin are refugees. During the 1960's and in the beginning of the seventies many Turkish guest-workers came to different European countries among which are western Germany, France, Holland and Sweden. Among those so called guest-workers from Turkey was a fairly large percentage of Kurds, even if they normally did not insist upon or even show their cultural heritage. Later on politically conscious Kurdish refugees started to arrive which in its turn led to the formation of Kurdish cultural organisations, the establishment of the offices of Kurdish political organisations in various countries etc. This has led to a conscientisation of the guest-workers of Kurdish origin - or to put it in a different way: they have been Kurdified.

As a result many of them would have problems returning to their countries of origin today - be it for political or cultural reasons. In turn both the guest workers and the political refugees have engineered a secondary migration formed by their relatives.

In the same way as there is no objective figure as to the actual numbers of the Kurdish people in their home territories there is no assertable figure of the number of Kurds in exile - be they persons who have left voluntarily or involuntarily. In virtually all countries the Kurds are not registered as such but are registered on the basis of the nationality of the country of origin - which needless to say is never entitled KURDISTAN.

The estimate of the number of Kurds in western Europe normally used is some 500,000 most of whom are to be found in western Germany. Terminology is especially difficult when dealing with this question. Turkey can either be counted as part of Asia or part of Europe - or both. It is also a country which both receives - and in substantial numbers, as we no doubt soon will hear - and "produces" refugees. For the purpose of my speech, which has been limited to Europe, I choose to regard Turkey as a sender rather than a receiving country. Others have or will talk of Turkey as a receiving country of Kurdish refugees.

Of the half a million plus Kurdish refugees in Western Europe the first group(s) came, as mentioned, as guest-workers. They were followed by families, then the political refugees started to arrive and they have been and still are followed by their family members. And, as I said earlier, the political refugees have had a Kurdifying effect on the early guest workers. I am repeating this in order to underline that the Kurds have been able to establish quite effective social networks and to develop their own organisations in most of these countries.

During later years there have been occasions where Kurdish asylum seekers have been wrongly returned but there have also been cases where non-refugees have

managed to acquire residence permits in different European countries through falsely posing as Kurdish political activists. I am mentioning this only to demonstrate the complexity of the situation, which is used against the Kurdish minority by various groups and interests.

During the last decade and a half the Kurdish question, largely thanks to the immigration of refugees into many countries, has become much more recognised than ever before. In most countries the situation of the Kurds has been met with understanding and sympathy - even if not always to the full extent one might have wished. In several countries there are cultural institutes, like in France, there exist a large number of Kurdish organisations and groups - apart from the actual political organisations - which all are actively involved in developing and safeguarding Kurdish culture in the widest sense of the word.

In a number of the western European countries the Kurds are also allowed to openly carry on political activities and agitation. All signs are that the Kurds will continue to be one of the most active among immigrant groups - refugees or not - in western Europe and that they perhaps more than most manage to use this situation in their own interests in terms of safeguarding their cultural development - at the same time as contributing to the development of truly multicultural societies.

At the same time it must be recognised that on occasions - not least in my own country - serious conflicts between the Kurds and the host country have developed. On occasion the notion of the Kurdish people as particularly violent has been developed. One of the problems in this regard that the Kurds themselves could do something about, relates to the lack of unity - both in political and in cultural terms. The Kurds have all to gain from working towards greater unity around a number of smallest common denominators and all to lose on the opposite.

Stronger and more related exile organisations who could present and maintain realistic demands on governments, authorities and voluntary agencies as well as the media in the countries of immigration and exile would most probably make positive use of what I believe to be a basically positive climate for the Kurdish question - more positively, I think, than ever before.

To conclude, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the Kurdish situation in many ways is similar to that of the Palestinian people. The Kurdish people is, like the Palestinian, denied the right to its own country. In both areas we also see continuous wars and violence. There is, however, in spite of the positive things I have said about the Kurdish question being more recognised and widely supported, still too many interests collectively working against the Kurds to bring the question to the political level of that of the Palestinians today. The Kurds in the diaspora have done a lot to

bring that question further, but a lot remains to be done. In seeing the acts of violence - collective as well as individual - against the Kurdish people and their leaders during the last year only I believe that there is on the one hand an onus on Western governments to more firmly and openly deal with the Kurdish question. On the Kurds is the onus to use their strong positions in many countries in a more constructive and unified way. On the side of voluntary organisations, human rights groups and media is the onus to find ways of working with the Kurdish people to put pressure, and to provide objective and speedy information to achieve real change.

THE IFHR'S ACTION IN FAVOUR OF THE KURDS

*Patrick BAUDOIN **

In 1974, I discovered the Kurdish problem, whilst traveling in Iraqi Kurdistan, as a militant of the International Federation of Human Rights. At the time the Kurdish troops commanded by General Barzani, were already, and had been for a long time, fighting against the Iraqi government.

During this period I came across the vivacity of the Kurdish national feeling, the courage of this people, and on the other hand, alas, its isolation and the international community's great indifference towards these forgotten people. Since then, what atrocities haven't been committed against the Kurds, be it in Iran, Iraq, Turkey, wherever they are? And it's true that sometimes we ourselves, the international organizations, can become subject to a certain despondency. How can so much fighting bring so few results? But you know, it's often said that when there's a problem, either it's resolved or it's not resolved. And this is the grounds for many not to act, because if it must resolve itself, why intervene? And if it can't resolve itself, all the more reason not to do anything. Well, I believe that it's the honour of the international human rights' defence organizations to avoid this very failing and to always want to intervene and to always help where people are victims of the violations of human rights. And I'd even say that it's a satisfaction, with regard to Kurdistan, and there aren't many who are able to say to themselves, when an international human rights defence organization intervenes, that they are going to shake up, upset, annoy not only one country, but three, four countries, and the countries where there are people of the Kurdish minority: Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria. And why not, alas, I'm afraid to say, sometimes question our western opinions as well, which content themselves with this silence and forgetfulness and which don't always like to be troubled?

So how can we not be delighted today that a conference uniting so many personalities, and which we hope will have the deserved impact, is able to take place on this cause, on this problem of the Kurds? I should add, because I believe that this point is

* *Lawyer, secretary-general of the International Federation of Human Rights.*

important, that besides the legitimate combat of the Kurds, of this oppressed minority, how can one not also be struck by the desire for democracy as well, which is shared by numerous Kurdish militants? And as evidence I'd like to take the personality of Dr.Ghassemlou, who was both a fierce fighter, but also a calm and moderate man, as Kurds often are; and who had succeeded in a region where there is alas, as you know, little democracy, to create a real little laboratory, a real little pocket of democracy. And we all wish ardently for the torch to be taken up again, for the others, to follow the path shown by Dr.Ghassemlou, and that in this region once again subject to so many storms, the time will come at last when the Kurds will be able to satisfy their legitimate claims and will cease to be these forgotten people that we come across too frequently today. So I'll finish, since quite rightly we've been asked to be brief, due to the amount of testimony, by saying that the Kurds are assured that the international human rights' defence organizations won't stop helping them and militating in favour of the recognition of these legitimate rights, which we regret still today haven't been recognized and which, it has to be said, we know will be difficult to obtain. But take heart! The Kurdish people will be recognized, because it deserves all these legitimate rights.

THE KURDISH PROBLEM AND THE MEDIA

*Gérard CHALIAND **

The Kurds are going through, once again, one of the tragic periods of their history. They were struck down, between the two wars, in 1925, 1930 and 1936, in Turkey, where they suffered massacres and deportations. In Iraq, their insurrections were also crushed several times. In the days following the Second World War, the Kurds were severely repressed in Iran after the collapse of the brief "Mahabad Republic". In Turkey, the eastern provinces peopled by "mountain Turks", as the Kurds were named, were more often than not put under a state of siege and remained forbidden zones. After about fifteen years of fighting for autonomy, the movement led by Mustafa Barzani in Iraq collapsed, as a result of the reconciliation between Iraq and Iran.

Today, the end of the state of belligerence between these two same states produces the same consequences but much more terrible effects in Iraq, where cultural rights for Kurds and an autonomy under strict surveillance go side by side with regrouping of populations, deportations, not to mention the use of terror by chemical arms. The acknowledgement that we live in a world where the states alone have the rights and means to assert themselves, has been made many a time. It's a fact that no international authority, and particularly not the U.N., can intervene in favour of a minority, which is oppressed or repressed by a state, hiding behind the sacred character of its interior affairs, even if it's a question of blatant violation of the principles adopted by the United Nations.

In this situation, public opinion and the media play or can play a very important role. This confers a particular responsibility on those who contribute to informing or alerting opinion. Indeed only the indirect pressure, which public opinion can at times exert, forces, to a certain extent, the non-democratic states not to excessively exceed the limit of measures violating the rights of people like the minorities, at least such as they are recognized in the international charters, which these states have themselves signed.

* *Writer.*

Nothing, to be honest, is more difficult than to make the collective human rights of minorities be respected in the states which aren't democratic. And it's an understatement to say that none of the states in the east where the Kurds live are entirely democratic. It's high time that the democratic states condemn without ambiguity or exception the states which violate human rights in such a blatant manner. The logical corollary of such a position implies that we stop, furthermore, asking the states who defend human rights to accompany this condemnation with economic sanctions. We know only too well that when all is said and done economic considerations always prevail over moral positions. A clear separation must be marked out, taking into account the realities, between moral condemnations without ambiguity and economic interests, for fear of the latter always prevailing over the former.

The moral condemnation of Turkey by the European community in 1986, concerning the recognition of the genocide of the Armenians and the status of Kurds in Turkey, didn't need to be accompanied with sanctions, as was shown, to make the Turkish state react. However insufficient a strictly moral condemnation might seem, in the eyes of the victims, this condemnation doesn't affect any less the image that every state wishes to give of itself. In the age of popular suffrage and the media, a pressure of this kind is not without effect. It is, in any case, the minimum solidarity that we are duty bound to give to those whose basic rights are held up to ridicule

THE FRENCH DOCTORS IN KURDISTAN

- I -

*Dr. Florence VEBER **

Mme. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We're here in the name of all the French doctors who've gone to Kurdistan in recent years. More than two hundred doctors, surgeons, and nurses have set off for the Kurdish people's bedsides. In reply to the call from Iranian Kurdistan's Democratic Party, first of all International Medical Aid, then four years later, Médecins du Monde, have regularly been sending teams of voluntary medical workers. These two associations are non-governmental associations who are only answerable to their own ethic of treating those in need everywhere, beyond closed borders and sometimes conspiracies of silence. In Kurdistan, in the last ten years no other medical organisation, French or otherwise, has worked regularly with the Kurds. As you know, the International Red Cross has always refused to become directly involved with the Kurdish population.

We wanted today to make a testimony as life-like as possible we are, therefore going to show you a brief documentary made from slides, which were all taken by the doctors themselves. Through these images we hope to account for the double specificity for us of the medical testimony. We can call this specificity; the action in the long-term and the insight into daily life. The action of the doctors has indeed been long-term: almost ten years of work and shared difficulties already. Various doctors have stayed out there for many months. After all, the doctors' insight is rarely limited to the event. Instead they try to discover and come into contact with a bit of the soul of the people, through a daily life which we take part in.

We went off there in order to assure the only medical presence. Eight years of conflicts, fighting and suffering for the Kurds and eight years of work for us.

The story of the French doctors in Kurdistan is also the story of this fighting. In this area, hospitals were built, then bombed, then rebuilt numerous times. Following the

* *Honorary President of International Medical Aid*

Iranian-Kurdish resistance movement eight hospitals were successively constructed and then abandoned. Alone the courage and will of the Kurds enabled them to start again each time. Also these years were marked by successive moves. In often difficult conditions the wounded and the doctors left together for the mountains. In tents, in precarious shelters, they had to flee several bombardments. In 1987, whilst one of the hospitals was being bombarded by the Iranian artillery, another hospital, a few kilometers further south, was being bombarded by the Iraqi artillery. However, the morale of the Kurdish nurses, who work with us, was never shaken. And each time the hospital was built, more functional, better adapted and superior in performance.

In war-time, and as you know, it really is a question of war, the first necessity is surgery. The present hospital, where as we speak a team is working, has no reason to envy various French hospitals. Alongside the essential surgical and medical care, we have always privileged the training of nurses. Teaching has continued during the course of all these years, covering numerous domains: first aid courses, women's education, and even French courses for the Kurds and Kurdish courses for the French. Most of the medical jobs at the hospital are currently held by Kurds, who have been trained in anesthesia, radiology and physiotherapy.

But more than anything time has brought with it confidence. The confidence of these women, who have come to talk to us about their worries, their fears, their tiredness and their refusal to have children who will go off in this unending war. This confidence has been established during consultations, which are always so full, and it's thanks to them that despite tension and difficulties, the French doctors continue.

THE FRENCH DOCTORS IN KURDISTAN - I -

*Dr. Bernard GRANDJON **

Time allows us to penetrate the intimacy of beings. And intimacy in Kurdistan is firstly apprehension of this dimension of suffering and death. It expresses itself everywhere, in the fighting, which occurs of course daily, in the sinister lists broadcast by the KDP of Iran's radio, in the perception, the sight of these men often permanently mutilated and beyond the possibilities of our poor medicine. In the first names given, which are sometimes names charged with total despair, as is the look of this child, more eloquent than all our poor words and this cemetery's inscriptions where the dead are worshipped daily.

But this intimacy is also people's daily lives, their very simple way of carrying out all life's gestures, which is always stronger than death and which despite all the suffering and despair manages to clear a path forward. These children, who represent the future, and who are there at dances and weddings, show that despite all this suffering, Kurdistan is a country of the future.

It's also seeing how these people live, how they respect human rights, and the Kurds who we've seen even respect human rights from prison. I remember a fairly unusual reflection which we noted down in 1984. Bernard Kouchner and myself were visiting a Kurdish prison and one of the prisoners said "Don't by any means free us, we don't want to experience this war again." This is to say that we feel we have satisfied all our humanitarian demands or at least some of them. And in addition to the hundreds of surgical operations and the thousands of consultations, vaccinations and educational courses, to have contributed somewhere to being a part of the world's conscience, a part of the remorse of the leading nations, who, entangled in their relations between Iraq and Iran, have sometimes forgotten the Kurdish people to an extent, as well as their legitimate demands for a certain autonomy, for recognition, for its freedom and dignity. And more than ever, we other doctors, in joining up with the superpowers to look into these problems, are aware that this freedom, this independence and this dignity are also our own.

**Vice-President of Médecins du Monde*

THIRTY-FIVE YEARS OF FRIENDSHIP WITH THE KURDS

*William EAGLETON **

It's a great pleasure to be here with so many old friends and new ones. It's hard to know what one can say as testimony in eight minutes to summarize what has been thirty-five years of off and on association with Kurdish friends. But I thought I might be able to put some things in a different perspective from some of the other presentations you've heard, by recalling what it was like thirty-five years ago for a westerner, someone from the outside, who wanted to learn about the Kurds, how it was done, and what happened when I got out there to Kirkuk in 1954.

Well first of all, there were virtually no books about the Kurds at that time. Basil Niketine had written a book in French. One had to go back to travel documents of the nineteenth century or early twentieth century to find out much about the Kurds. But on my way out, I did discover that there was a gentleman in Paris, Mr. Kamuran Bedir Khan, and he received me in his modest apartment, and sent me on my way to Kirkuk, with the name of a friend, someone he had met in Iraq, Hamid Begjaf of Halabja. So when I got to Kirkuk at this time, a representative of the United States government was running a cultural center, a small cultural center, which, with the permission of the authorities in Bagdad, was publishing a bulletin in Kurdish.

One of the first trips that I made out of Kirkuk was of course to Halabja. and thereafter Halabja remained the town that gave the greatest hospitality to me and my family, and where I have the most pleasant memories of hunting, of associating with the many friends there, some of them coming over from Senna in Iran. Nearby, the sheiks of Biarra, the Naqshbandi sheiks of Biarra, who were well known at the time. They still remembered a British traveller, E.B. Soane, who wrote the book *Through Mesopotamia and Kurdistan in Disguise*, a remarkable man who was in Halabja as the Persian scribe of the Lady Adela Khanum, head of the tribe at that time, of the Jaff tribe. One of the friends there said that he was the one who penetrated the disguise, by noticing that at one point Mr. and later Major Soane used the word "no"

* Former American Ambassador to Bagdad and Damas

instead of “na”. It wasn’t clear whether he carried out his disguise completely, but he certainly wrote one of the great classic books of the period.

From Kirkuk, in those days the only hard roads in Iraq were in the north. You had to go from Bagdad to Kirkuk either by railroad or over a dirt trail. But once you were in the north, for various reasons that you can imagine, the roads improved. We were in the oil country and many trips up to Erbil, to the Rawanduz Gorge, Galawej, up to Hadj Omran — these are all memories, and pleasant memories. I don’t have the same kind of testimony as some of the people who have travelled more recently. In those days it was relatively easy for an outsider to travel, in Iraqi Kurdistan at least. This was not the case north of the border in Turkey. However, later, when I returned in the 1980’s, this had reversed; the travel was much more difficult in Iraq and much more easy in Turkey. In any case, I retained only the best memories of many trips up the Gorge of Batas, up to Barzan, where some of the tribesmen and women had been allowed to return from the south — not all of them. It was understood that a person that the press referred to as the “Red Molla” was living in the Soviet Union. Of course, we later found that he was neither a molla, that was his name not his title, nor was he very red. You know who I refer to. At that time, I was just reminiscing with Mr. Ibrahim Ahmed this morning, Nuri Saïd had come into power and the big question that everybody was asking was “where is Ibrahim Ahmed?” He had decided that it was prudent to go into hiding.

I’m sorry to put so much nostalgia into all of this, but those were good days relative to what happened later. I did go back to Kurdistan in 1959-60-61 on the other side of the border. This was after the revolution in Iraq. It was not possible for me to travel from Iran back into Iraq to see my many friends there. But I was able, from time to time, to send messages back and forth. Iran was a somewhat different atmosphere, but one was still at home with people whom one had been accustomed to knowing well, that is the Kurds of Iran being very closely connected to those of Iraq. At that time, things were stirring up in Iraq, and it was just a few days before I left Tabriz for another assignment that a word came through, from someone in Mahabad, that Molla Mustafa Barzani was intending to make a move against the government. Now, let me emphasize that during all this time I was a representative of a government which had tolerable or even good relations with the various countries in the area. And this meant, that as Dr. Kouchner was referring to other relationships at present, this meant a certain discretion on the part of the American representative. This did not prevent forming very deep friendships. But in all honesty to our Kurdish friends, as a representative of the American government, I had to make it clear that the United States could not support certain types of national aspirations beyond a certain point. We were prepared to encourage cultural growth in publishing a document or a bulletin in Kurdish — I think we were contributing to that. We sent

films around the area in the film vans before television. This was entertainment. Some of it was in Kurdish, some of it was in Arabic.

That was the situation then, and I can only say that much changed during the next twenty years. But one thing didn't change. During the many years that I was away from Kurdistan, in North Africa in other diplomatic posts, I found that the Kurds could find me. If I didn't find them, they would locate me and we never lost touch. When I went back to Bagdad in 1980, the war began within weeks, and this made it even more difficult to renew and maintain the friendships. Of course, we were all older. Many of the people that I had known had passed on and I found that I could distribute photographs I had taken in 1954, which were documents for the families, the only documents they had of their departed relatives. So I did do a certain amount of photographic distribution before the war reached the stage where it became very difficult to go north. The authorities in Bagdad did not permit diplomatic travel for one whole year. Even to Erbil . But we did maintain contacts and some of these continued on into the four years most recently spent in Syria. We have heard some very interesting presentations here at this meeting. I think it is an important gathering. I think there will be more today. But I would like to note that we heard about the diaspora, how many Kurds are now living outside of the area. This is very important because when we went to Kurdistan in the fifties, this was not the case. The Kurds were virtually unknown. The cultural situation is not hopeless in some of the areas. In Iraq the television in the north is still in Kurdish. Schools are teaching in Kurdish. I'm sure that there are many negative factors, and many of these have been sited. But I'm encouraged by the fact that democracy is now moving ahead in many parts of the world. Where there is a democratic government and the Kurds are living, they will have a vote, and with a vote they will have influence. I was particularly moved by the words of Professor Nadirov of the Soviet Union, who had spent years far removed from the center of Kurdistan. The moving of Kurds from one place to another is not new. We recall that in the 16th century the shah of Persia moved detachments of Kurds to his eastern frontier. They are still there near Quchan, speaking Kurdish. Professor Nadirov had moved to the east and he's still speaking Kurdish. I would say that he gave us a lesson in cultural survival. To all of us. And I think that that is very important. The Kurds are adaptable and they will endure.

Thank you.

THE TRAGEDY OF IRAQI KURDISTAN : THE DESTRUCTION OF A PEOPLE AND A CULTURE

*Peter GALBRAITH **

I will confine my remarks to the plight of the Iraqi Kurds. In connection with Senate Foreign Relations Committee assessments of the Iran-Iraq war, I twice had occasion to visit Iraqi Kurdistan, in 1984 and 1987. Between those visits I was able to witness the sharp deterioration in the treatment of the Kurdish population by the Iraqi government.

In 1988 the plight of the Iraqi Kurds burst onto the international consciousness, first with the graphic reports of a poison gas attack on the Kurdish city of Halabja and then with the massive outflow of refugees from northern Iraq in September, bringing with them tales of a broad chemical weapons offensive by the Iraqi army.

In connection with legislation that Senator Pell introduced to sanction Iraq for this use of chemical weapons against the Kurds, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee asked me to lead a mission to report on and document the use of chemical weapons. I shall summarize the findings of that mission, then discuss last year's sanctions legislation which was not enacted, and finally offer some thoughts on the future of chemical weapons legislation and what might be done to ameliorate the conditions of the Iraqi Kurds.

First, to restate the principal conclusions of our fact-finding mission, we found overwhelming evidence that Iraq did use chemical weapons on Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq in a major offensive that began August 25, 1988. The offensive was intended to break the Kurdish insurgency and accomplished that objective.

These chemical weapons attacks were part of an Iraqi military policy intended to depopulate large parts of Iraqi Kurdistan. Elements of the policy include: (1) the destruction of villages and towns throughout Kurdistan; (2) the relocation of the Kurdish population into concentrated new settlements where military control can be exercised; (3) the deportation of Kurds to areas outside of Kurdistan; and (4) the

** Professional Staff Member of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee*

use of terror tactics, including lethal poison gas to drive civilians out of the areas to be depopulated.

The end result of this policy could be the destruction of the Kurdish identity, Kurdish culture, and a way of life that has endured for centuries.

The policy has been carried out with great brutality and with a cynical disregard for world opinion and international law. Our fact-finding mission documented chemical weapons attacks on 49 villages; we believe the actual total to be much higher. The chemical weapons attacks were followed by military operations in which many survivors who chose to remain in Iraq (or could not reach Turkish sanctuary) were massacred. Drawing on interviews, we estimated that the total cumulative civilian casualties from the chemical weapons attacks and the follow-up military operations were in the thousands. However, our information comes from only that part of Iraq where Kurds had access to refuge in Turkey. If the same kinds of military operations took place deeper in Iraqi Kurdistan as took place in the border areas, the Kurdish death toll could have been in the tens or hundreds of thousands.

We do not know the total casualties. We do not know with any degree of certainty what has happened in Iraqi Kurdistan over the last year. Ever since Iraqi soldiers sealed the border with Turkey at the beginning of September 1988, a deadly silence has descended on Iraqi Kurdistan.

Because the Iraqis questioned the evidence of poison gas use, let me also restate what the evidence was. In the last week of August and the first week of September, 1988, some 65 thousand people came unexpectedly across the Iraq-Turkey border. Although they came from many different villages spread over a very mountainous terrain, they reported essentially the same set of facts.

Beginning around dawn on August 25, Iraqi warplanes and helicopters dropped bombs containing chemical weapons on villages in the Duhok, Zakho and Amadiyah regions of Iraq. Generally, each aircraft dropped three or four bombs. These bombs made only a weak sound and then a cloud spread out from the center of the explosion. The air smelled of bad garlic, rotten onions, or bad apples. Many of those exposed to the gas dropped dead instantly or very quickly. The bodies, according to some, appeared frozen. The livestock died and birds fell out of the sky. These attacks continued until August 28. Thereafter troops wearing protective clothes entered the villages. In some places, such as the village of Baze, Iraqi forces opened fire with machine guns on the survivors and then bulldozed the bodies into mass graves.

This account is drawn on interviews conducted by my team with several hundred refugees from all the major Kurdish refugee camps and gathering areas. These

interviews were conducted in the second week of September, just after the events described took place. We interviewed all kinds of people: Pesh Merga, civilian men, women, and children. And, we had no trouble finding witnesses; indeed, I would estimate that one-half to three-fourths of the refugee population were eye-witnesses to the events I described.

Some have argued that there was no “real” or physical evidence of the attacks. This is not entirely true, of course. A British television crew entered Iraq and unearthed bomb fragments that contained traces of chemical weapons. According to press reports, Secretary Shultz relied in part on technical evidence when he charged Iraq with the use of chemical weapons on September 8. However, in my judgement, the conclusive evidence came from the victims themselves. Under Anglo-Saxon law — and I think this is a pretty good standard — the greatest weight in a criminal trial is eye-witness evidence. The accounts of Iraq’s use of chemical weapons were corroborated by thousands of eye-witnesses.

These eye-witnesses accounts also fit with known Iraqi behavior. Eight different United Nations investigative teams found and documented Iraqi use of chemical weapons against Iran in violation of international law. Iraq’s Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Tariq Aziz, admitted to use of chemical weapons against Iran.

With regard to the Kurds, Iraq’s brutality is equally undeniable and undenied. During my September 1987 trip, on the road from Baghdad to Jalawla to Darbandikhan to Sulamanyeh to Kirkuk, I counted more than forty Kurdish villages that had been destroyed recently. These villages were not in remote areas. They were on the principal roads of Iraqi Kurdistan. A regime that would callously destroy hundreds of villages that had been in place for centuries, that would make the first large-scale use of chemical weapons in international conflict since World War I, is certainly a regime capable of using chemical weapons against its own people.

Iraq’s attacks on its Kurdish population began on August 25, 1988 — that is to say, five days *after* a ceasefire went into effect in the Iran-Iraq war. In the case of the Kurds, chemical weapons were used against unarmed civilians and against insurgents without aircraft, without heavy artillery, and without any means of threatening the Arab-Iraqi homeland or the regime of President Saddam Hussein. While international law allows no defense of necessity so as to permit the use of chemical weapons, Iraq claims the use was justified by the life-or-death nature of the war with Iran. No such compulsion existed in the case of the Kurds. Indeed, the destruction of the Kurdish insurgency could have been accomplished as effectively by Iraq’s battle-tested troops without resorting to chemical weapons and without massacring innocent civilians.

Why then did Iraq choose to use chemical weapons on its Kurdish population? Because Saddam Hussein's government thought it could get away with it. They believed the world did not care about chemical weapons and that the world did not care about the Kurds.

Partly, they were wrong. The reports of chemical weapons use reached the United States over the Labor Day weekend, that is in early September. On September 7, the Senate came back into session. On September 8, Senator Pell introduced "The Prevention of Genocide Act of 1988" which imposed stiff sanctions against Iraq for its use of chemical weapons and for its policy of destroying Iraq's Kurdish population. On September 9, the Senate unanimously adopted the sanctions legislation. Two further times the Senate approved sanctions and twice the House of Representatives passes a milder version of the sanctions. While the two Houses did agree on a common version, parliamentary squabbles — and the firm opposition of the Reagan Administration — prevented the final enactment of the sanctions bill.

This was a tragedy. Iraq in the end paid no price for its use of chemical weapons. But I think our effort accomplished something. First, it caught Iraq's attention. Passage of sanctions produced the largest anti-American demonstration in Baghdad in 20 years. Some in the executive branch expressed concern about the damage done to U.S.-Iraqi relations; I considered the demonstration a compliment to the Senate stand. Most important, however, Iraqi stopped using chemical weapons.

Now the Foreign Relations Committee has approved a new sanctions bill. It will not reach back and punish Iraq for its past action. It will, however, impose a complete severance of economic relations between the U.S. and any country that uses chemical weapons in violation of international law or against its own citizens. I believe there is an excellent chance this measure will become law and, if so, this will be one positive product of last year's initiative.

A unilateral U.S. action will not of course be as effective as concerted action by the Western nations. I would therefore hope our sanctions approach might be considered by the major Western economic powers. A united front on our part will defeat any effort by an economically powerful state such as Iraq to circumvent the effectiveness of sanctions.

In our concern about the use of chemical weapons, we must not lose sight of the underlying human rights problem of the Iraqi Kurds. As I noted above, Iraq could have used conventional means to accomplish the same ends for which it used chemical weapons. For Iraq, the use of chemical weapons was merely a matter of speed and economy. From the point of view of the Kurds, we will have accomplished little if we stop the use of poison gas but if villages continue to be destroyed, if people

are moved to inhospitable environments, if children continue to be kidnapped and murdered.

The community of civilized nations should use every forum to raise concerns about the plight of the Iraqi Kurds. It is unrealistic to expect that the Kurds will become the sine qua non of Western relations with Iraq. But certainly we should expect democratic nations to take some action in support of values that are fundamental to our political systems.

No one can encounter a tragedy of the magnitude of that which occurred last September and remain unmoved. I have many images of the five days I spent along the Iraq-Turkey border: in a high mountain valley a woman seated atop a small bundle constituting all her possessions waiting for a very uncertain future; donkeys with gaily woven saddlebags wandering aimlessly after being abandoned by their refugee owners; an old man crying as he told of the deaths of his children and grandchildren. These are images that will remain with me as long as I live. I hope this conference, and what follows from it, might do something to make sure this tragedy is not repeated.

THE CATASTROPHE OF HALABJA

*Aubin HEYNDRICKS **

This conference is an opportunity for me to talk again about the catastrophe which occurred at Halabja and about the other murders we have seen and which I call genocide. I am also very pleased by the report of the journalist, Gwynne Roberts, which confirms the result that we published more than five years ago. For the first time in 1984, we were requested by the United Nations not to go there, for the good reason that it is Iraqi territory and that there was a veto from Iraq.

With regard to the Red Cross, which our president has spoken about, I can also tell you, being a former political prisoner of the concentration camps, where we worked together with France during the resistance, that when we used to receive the little Red Cross parcels from Geneva, the SS gave them to us. But there was nothing left inside. We had to eat the cardboard or else we were hung. And after the war there was a whole list confirming that we had received the little parcels from the Red Cross. This thus means that the Red Cross is no longer of any use and that, with regard to human rights and the misery of everything that goes on in the world, people keep quiet.

It is the same problem with Iraq. The ambassador of Iraq, who was received by our Belgian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Monsieur Feldman, said that Iraq did not use chemical products. And I can continue on like this. Unfortunately this still happens now whilst his Excellency Mr. Mitterrand was organizing a conference on the ban of chemical arms in January 1989, the chemical war was continuing in Angola with a new gas. It is of Russian origin, we have identified it now, and is used by the Cubans and the MPLA against women etc. The last attack took place five weeks ago.

This is by means of telling you that this hypocrisy continues even today and that the United Nations do nothing. Why? Because none of the minorities have a voice at the United Nations or can make themselves heard. It is an organization like this one, France-Libertés to which I pay homage, the first country in Europe that claims to be

** Professor of Toxicology (Belgium).*

very democratic, which has the courage to organize this meeting in Europe. And I also pay homage to Médecins du Monde because these doctors took poisoned Kurds away from Iraq. I received Dr. Bernard Benedetti, who had the necessary samples, at my laboratory. We examined them. I telephoned the Turkish ambassador in Brussels, who told me "we do not have anyone poisoned by chemical gases here. Everything said is a falsification of reality". This is to tell you what domain we are in and how everything happens.

Where do all these products come from? Unfortunately mainly from European technology which has been exported, a large part of which is chemical products from my country, Belgium, from the ports of Anvers and Zeebrugge. We know very well that they are stocked now either in Iraq, or in Libya in the factory of Rafsat. In other words with the hundreds of tons of products which have left our countries, we could gas the whole of the Middle-East.

What has happened now with the Kurds? When we were asked to go off there, to Halabja, Mr. Perez de Cuellar did not want to send the team which I was a member of, why? Because of Iraq's veto. So we left from Iran and I would like to thank, at this point, in all honesty and objectivity, the Iranians in charge of the helicopters, which they put at our disposal to go to in Halabja.

When we arrived there, they were not all dead. They were also clinician members amongst us, who are very familiar with these problems. And we began to count the dead. There were at least 3,500, probably a lot more, and we certified that it was due to the bombs. The Iraqis used a mixture of three different chemical gases and it was after this explosion that we noted that this mixture is extremely toxic. We saw them on the spot. I will show you the corpses and I will show you the dying and you will see from their state what kind of gases they were. Cyanide can kill immediately. It kills in a car, you do not have time to start up the engine. Organo-phosphorous gases, that is to say the nerve gases, which the Germans developed during the last world war, and which they know very well, because they conducted tests in my concentration camp on political prisoners, generally kill in eight to ten minutes. And we have yperite, the gas from 1914-1918, which were used, once again by the Germans whence the name, to kill so many French and Belgian soldiers, in Belgium during the first attacks.

This mixture of gases is devastating. Why? Because any toxicologist knows that if gases are mixed, their toxicity is much greater and the danger due to contamination is much greater. This is the reason why we were able to identify these gases very easily. I repeat, they have been used by Iraq, in the countries of the Middle East, since 1984. We treated some groups who arrived at the university hospital of Ganz. There were, amongst others, children and mothers of families. Some were able to be saved, others not. This, therefore, is the formal proof.

All these reports have been sent to the United Nations, to Mr. Perez de Cuellar and to Geneva. I want to clarify straight away the fact that Iraq has never been condemned for the genocide of the Kurds in Halabja. I also want to add that we flew over the area in a helicopter and Halabja was not the only village affected. In the other villages that we flew over there was no longer any life at all. We did not take any petrol with us, because there were Iraqi attacks even against the helicopter. Thus eventually we had to go back. What happened at Halabja? Why did this mixture kill so many people? The majority were transported by bus to Iran. This journey took 24 hours and about half of those in the bus were dead when they arrived.

At that time, we did not have any pharmaceutical product, or methods of decontamination because there were at least 10,000 to treat. No organization knows how to do this, because the treatment is very difficult and products are lacking. This is to tell you that your people, the Kurds, were killed, including civilians — 60% of those we saw were children, plus mothers or families, as I have just said.

My conclusion on this catastrophe is that I would like to come back to the international hypocrisy and to the lack of courage of many governments. This is why after the last world war we had the Nuremberg trials and everyone condemned Hitler and his regime for everything that happened during the second World War and the genocide of the Tziganes, the Jews etc. It was necessary. But nowadays genocides are no longer spoken about. People can kill and gas others, without being condemned. It is a great drama for us. This is why I congratulate France-Libertés.

A BRITISH TESTIMONY

*Gwynne ROBERTS **

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am a British television journalist and have been involved with the Kurdish question since 1974.

I visited Iraqi Kurdistan on four occasions in 1974 - 75; I traversed the region starting from Syria in 1981; four years later, I spent 10 weeks inside northern Iraq with the Pesh Merga; and then in November last year, I entered the same region on perhaps the most emotionally exhausting journey I have ever undertaken.

The purpose was to find conclusive proof that Iraq had indeed used poison gas against the Kurds. The assignment was successful. The samples I brought back to Britain were tested by two laboratories - one a commercial laboratory in Birmingham, the other Britain's Chemical Defence Establishment at Porton Down.

With one exception, all the samples of earth and sheep's wool were contaminated with mustard gas.

Iraq denied the evidence and mounted a diplomatic offensive involving other Arab countries to discredit it.

Just before my visit to Iraqi Kurdistan late last year, I'd been in Angola where Unita was claiming nerve gases had been used against its troops by the Cubans and Government forces.

I talked to numerous soldiers who said their injuries - all of them seemed to be suffering from some form of paraplegia - were caused by poison gas.

* *British journalist. Director of the documentary film "The Winds of Death".*

Their descriptions were so vague that I began to doubt the veracity of their claims. Something had evidently affected them but poison gas was in my opinion not to blame.

By contrast, the accounts of gas attacks given me just a month or so later in Kurdistan were graphic and detailed.

They came from isolated communities all over the Badinan region of northern Iraq, and despite this were remarkably similar. It would have been impossible, I judged, for the people concerned to have invented the stories and then co-ordinated the details with each other.

Some of the most terrifying accounts came from a small group of people who said they had witnessed a massacre of several thousand Kurdish civilians attempting to flee to Turkey.

This happened in late August in the Bassay Gorge some 25 miles south of the Turkish frontier. All the civilians had sought refuge there after finding their route northwards blocked by Iraqi troops.

Let me just relate to you one of the eye-witness accounts so you can judge for yourselves.

Ramazan Mohammad who comes from Mangesh near Dihok in Iraqi Kurdistan was only 19 when he experienced something which is almost beyond comprehension. He told me this: "There were over 5,000 people in the gorge, mostly women and children. The planes dropped their bombs and my first sensation was the smell. It was like burnt polythene or plastic or sponge. Then, there was yellowish smoke. The women and the children were mostly on the floor of the gorge, in caves or on ledges. The Pesh Merga were guarding the heights.

" Five or ten minutes after the bombs fell, I noticed people dropping. I was in the mountain heights and the ones I saw dying were about 100 to 200 meters away from me.

" They would first cover their eyes with their hands and then shake uncontrollably. They screamed extremely loudly. Soon afterwards they would drop. All their bodies began to tremble violently and then they went still.

" The bombing lasted for about an hour. Then the Iraqis started to shell the area for another hour. I wasn't sure whether the shells were chemical or not. Then everything went still. Four or five hours later, we went down amongst the people.

“ In the gorge, it smelt like burnt onions. All the trees and all the bushes seemed to have dried out. There must have been some 3,000 bodies there and thousands of animal corpses.

“ There was a film over their eyes and horrible slime coming out of their noses and sides of their mouths. The skin was peeling and bubbling up.

“ Some children who were still alive sobbed. They were terribly disfigured. I'm sorry I didn't dare go nearer than 30 meters. They were all lying down. We shouted to some of them to move - to try to stand up and follow us. There was no response, they couldn't move. They couldn't speak, just coughed and scratched their eyes.”

“ We stayed there for about an hour and then went back to the heights. We waited for nightfall. I had a cough and breathing was difficult. My eyes were itching and my nose was running.”

“ In the darkness, I was filled with fear and terror. I've been taught as a religious person that there is hell in the afterlife. It can't be worse than what I saw in the gorge. The screams, in particular of the children, still ring in my ears.”

“ The place was surrounded by soldiers and early the next day they advanced into the gorge. They were all wearing gas masks and gloves, and they started collecting the bodies. There were survivors amongst them. They dragged them by their feet into piles and set light to them.....”

I ran this and other similar accounts past a number of chemical warfare specialists after I returned home. For them, these descriptions were all too authentic and there was no way simple Kurdish people could have known the effect of nerve gas.

There was no doubt in their minds or in mine that this massacre actually happened. Iraq refused to allow in United Nations observers to investigate, thereby underlining its guilt.

This particular horror story didn't end there, however.

On June 8th, this year, some 2,000 Kurds fell suddenly and mysteriously ill at an Iraqi Kurdish refugee camp in southeastern Turkey, near Mardin.

Victims suffered from acute abdominal pain, paralysis, convulsions, vomiting and diarrhoea.

Refugees from this particular camp had all fled across the border in August 1988

from the chemical holocaust against their homes. The Turkish authorities said the sickness was a simple case of food poisoning and refused most of them treatment at the local hospital.

The Kurds, themselves, were convinced they were victims of another mass poisoning by the Iraqis.

I travelled to the region with Dr. John Foran, head of a London based charity, and we brought back samples for analysis within days of the poison outbreak.

What we eventually found has frightening implications, not only for the Kurds but for an international community supposedly deeply concerned by terrorism.

I eventually involved four laboratories in the search, among them Britain's highly respected National Poisons Unit, and the Universities of Southampton and Surrey. The latest mass spectrometry and gas chromatography techniques were employed.

Thousands of possibilities were investigated ranging from the rat poison thalium to the microtoxin known as "yellow rain". After six weeks of work, nothing had been found - neither in the camp bread nor in the blood samples.

Then, as a last resort, I asked the National Poisons Unit to test the blood samples for organophosphates, nerve agents common to pesticides and poison gas.

These substances attack the body in a very specific way.

Normally, certain chemicals in the blood help transmit messages between nerves and muscles.

One tells the muscles to contract, the others to relax.

Organophosphates - the nerve agents - block this communications system by attacking the relaxant chemical, and as a result the muscles go into spasm.

Scientists can tell if this has happened by the low level of relaxant chemical in the blood.

This turned out to be the case.

Because of the severity of the poisoning, scientists have ruled out the pesticides as a root cause.

Apparently, commercially available pesticides were regarded as an improbable source for the following reasons: they have a relatively low toxicity, they have a foul smell, and the taste is also not particularly pleasant. Anyone consuming enough to cause this level of toxicity would have to drink enormous quantities. Also, the breakdown products of these pesticides are relatively easy to detect in the laboratory. None were found.

What we are talking about here is a “highly potent nerve agent”. That was the judgement of the analyst who carried out the search. Quite possibly, we’re talking about a superlethal nerve gas or an organophosphate which is equally toxic.

This is not the sort of poison that is commercially available.

On the available evidence, there can be little doubt we are talking about a deliberate case of poisoning by persons unknown.

We are talking about a laboratory being involved which was sophisticated enough to handle an ultra poisonous substance such as the one which caused the poisoning.

We will almost certainly never be able to finally identify the substance which caused this. But in view of certain chemical reactions during the testing procedures, one of the nerve gases is suspected, and this is Sarin - it’s a highly volatile chemical warfare agent which the Iraqis are reported to have developed for their poison gas arsenal.

Within a very short time, this substance would have evaporated, making it extremely difficult - even for well equipped laboratories - to find an identifiable trace.

Whatever supertoxic organophosphate was involved, however, it seems to me there is one inescapable conclusion - yet again the Kurds have been victims of a deliberate and terrifying mass poisoning attempt.

The rest of the world can ignore this alarming development, at its peril.

Thank You.

HELSINKI WATCH'S ACTION IN DEFENSE OF THE KURDS

*Jeri LABER **

Before coming to Paris for this meeting, I told Kendal Nezan that I did not want to speak at the meeting - I was coming to listen and to learn from people who have had much more direct experience with the Kurdish issue than I have. But yesterday, listening to what transpired, I was tremendously moved. I changed my mind because somehow I'd like to be registered as part of this meeting.

I was moved by the tragedy of the people of Kurdistan, and the list of staggering human rights abuses that came from the various testimonies we had yesterday: arrests, torture, murder, assassination, poisoning, chemical warfare, mass deportations, expulsions, abysmal conditions in prison and refugee camps; the refusal of political asylum by western governments; the denial of ethnic rights to language, literature, customs, music; the destruction of villages, towns, cities.

I was also very moved by this meeting itself. I, personally, have never seen so many Kurds from so many different countries together under one roof. I'm impressed by the French government's support and hospitality in arranging such a meeting, and I think that all of this is a reason for hope, and it indicates that the issue of the destruction of the Kurds is much more prominent today than it has been before now. I think that there are several reasons for this; I think that the issue of self-determination, in general, has become one of the most burning issues in the world today. And, I think that the fact that there are now so many Kurds abroad able to publicize their own issue has contributed greatly to making this become something that is more familiar to people outside of the countries involved.

My own organization, The US Helsinki Watch Committee, is a human rights organization. We do not become involved directly in any issues involving national self-determination, nor how these issues should be resolved. What we do is send missions to countries where there are human rights problems. We issue reports and

* *Executive Director, The US Helsinki Watch Committee*

articles on the subject. We testify at congressional hearings in our own country. We try to publicize these issues throughout the world, and to engage our government and the offending governments in a dialogue that attempts to correct the problems that we uncover.

Now, so far, our Helsinki Watch has concerned itself mainly with the problems of the Kurds in eastern Turkey. We have a geographical mandate which involves the countries that signed the Helsinki Accords, and as far as the Kurds are concerned, that would involve the Kurds in Turkey and now, I think, in the Soviet Union which is another Helsinki signatory country, and has just recently become open to this kind of investigation.

But we are now forming a Middle East Watch, a related sister organization, and our Middle East Watch is already preparing a report on the situation in Iraq which will have a long section on the situation of the Kurds in Iraq. I hope that within a very short time we will also be reporting on Iran, on Syria, and that these reports will continue and we will continue to both to expand the area that we cover and the depth in which we cover human rights issues that involve the Kurdish people.

Finally, I would just want to say that we should not lose sight of the fact that within this meeting we have committed people who are speaking to committed people. As important as it is, we are not convincing anyone who was not already pretty much convinced before they came here.

So I hope very much that the meeting will concentrate, sometime during the course of the day, on actions that can be taken to move the situation forward, to get it outside the confines of this room. I think it is important to get the facts out, to engage world attention, to make certain that the Kurds will no longer be a forgotten people, because governments and people throughout the world in general will not be able to use, as an excuse for inaction, the fact that they are ignorant of the facts.

Thank you very much.

THE ARAB WORLD AND THE KURDISH QUESTION

*Selim D. FAKHRI **

Madame President,
Mr. Chairman,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before starting allow me to correct a description given to me in the listing. I am not a former minister in the Iraq government nor do I aspire to be one at any time. I am a human rights campaigner, a democrat and an Arab nationalist activist.

I have been so elated and felt myself in my element seeing so many friends and comrades in arms gathered in this place. However, listening to the reminiscing and the statements of the panel on the misery and current conditions in Kurdistan filled me with sorrow and shame of what has been and is being done in the name of the Arabs against our compatriots, the Kurds. This puts a burden on all Arabs especially the democratic and intellectual activists to atone for what has been done and strive relentlessly to end the dictatorship in Iraq and make good any damage that has been done.

The paper given yesterday by Dr. Mahmoud Othman makes it unnecessary for me to talk in detail about the plight of the Kurdish people in Iraq, and it is in Iraq that the Arabs come into actual and daily contact with the Kurds and the Kurdish problem. It is also in Iraq more than any other country in the Middle East that the Kurdish problem has become the central issue of government and people, Kurds and Arabs alike. The rest of the Arab world, except Syria, has limited knowledge of and little interest in the problem, although there is a tendency, particularly on the level of Arab governments, driven by the misguided principle of my brother right or wrong, to support the Iraq government in its policies whatever it does to its people whether they are Arabs or Kurds.

The number of Kurds in Iraq, according to the latest estimate of the Encyclopaedia Britannica is at least 3 million of a total population of slightly over 16 milion, but

* Former director of Iraqi radio-television, member of the group of officers which, in July 1958, overthrew the Iraqi monarchy.

a more realistic figure would be 4 million. They are a majority in their own lands, and they are fully justified in their national demands.

The present tyrannous regime in Iraq is abusing power and spreading terror to both Arabs and Kurds. Since the arrival of this regime in 1968 hundreds of thousands of Shia Arabs have been expelled from the country under the pretext that they are Iranian subjects under a strange Iraqi nationality law which divides the citizens into category "A" and category "B". If you are classified under category "B" you are branded as of Iranian origin and you can never convert into category "A" whatever you do, military service or death in action for the country notwithstanding. Indeed even the fact that your great grandfather might have been born in Iraq does nothing to help you.

One Arab family of mostly clerical men, the Hakim of Najaf, lost 22 members ranging in age from 7 years to 70 at the hands of the regime's executioner.

Having said this though, I must stress that the suffering of the Kurds under this and the previous regimes of Iraq has been be far the worst.

I, myself, am an Arab. I am an Arab nationalist and a democrat. I am a pan-Arabist and I believe in a United Federal Republic for the Arabs. I hope this will come one day when the Arab peoples achieve real democratic, representative and responsible governments that truly reflect the interests and will of the people.

For this reason and not in spite of it, I also fully support the national aspirations of the Kurds in Iraq and the other countries of the Middle East. I believe the Kurds are fully entitled to the right of self-determination as set out in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I also believe that, for the foreseeable future, and for practical reasons of present day power politics, it is in the interest of both Arabs and Kurds in Iraq to join together in a voluntary federal democratic system, which would give the Kurds a fair share in the central government and wide powers to the elective local governments in the country and thus safeguard for the Kurds a free existence in their homeland.

My reasons for supporting the Kurdish rights are simple and straightforward. I feel, as an Arab who is totally dedicated to democracy, self-determination and unity for the Arabs wherever they are, particularly for the Palestinian Arabs under Israeli occupation, that I would not be honest with myself if I denied these rights to the Kurds, the people nearest to me. Furthermore, if these legitimate rights are denied what will follow would be an inevitable mutually consuming strife that would ruin the prospects of both Arabs and Kurds. This fortunately has been the case since the

establishment of the government of Iraq, and particularly since the beginning of the military campaigns in 1961, and more particularly under the present dictatorship under which it has taken the form of genocide of the Kurdish people.

The Middle East is the cradle of human civilization. In it arose the three main religions of the world that between them now account for almost two billion. In it there are several nationalities, ethnic groups, religions and sects, all living side by side and interlocked with each other. With the recent pace of economic and social development these societies have become mobile and dynamic and their members need to move from one place to another. This new situation makes the idea of a nation based on purity of blood, and any notion of superiority of any given culture over the other completely out of date and absurd. Therefore talk about an Arab-Kurdish conflict, or for that matter of an eternal Arab-Persian conflict is absolute nonsense and only exists in the minds of those chauvinistic and narrow-minded rulers or writers who wish to believe in it for their own purposes.

The Arab democrats believe that in place of conflict, antagonism and strife, there is community of interest and room for understanding and cooperation for national economic, cultural and social development of Arabs, Kurds, Iranians and Turks in the Middle East.

Take a look at the map of Iraq. It is a land-locked country having only a very narrow access to the sea at Um Qasr and through Shatt Al Arab. The Kurds are also completely cut off from any access to the sea. On the other hand, the unfortunate and unnecessary war between Iran and Iraq has shown how easily Iraq's access to the sea could be blocked. Iraq also has been at loggerheads with Arab Syria, which in turn cut it off from the Mediterranean. Where can this situation, resulting from out-dated ideas of chauvinism and conflict, lead?

We believe that dictatorship and tyranny is the root of all evil in Iraq and elsewhere. We believe that the establishment of democratic, elective, parliamentary, pluralistic and responsible government can bring a solution to most of the problems of Iraq in general and the Kurdish problem in particular. Such government must be bound by law and have full respect for human rights as set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ensuing protocols and conventions.

We also believe that a democratic and pluralistic Iraq can have a dual role: an Arab national role, aiming at Arab unity and development, and a Kurdish national role based on full enjoyment by the Kurds of their rights in their homeland and aiming at fulfillment of national Kurdish aspirations on the international scene.

The present regime of Iraq, which is widely known to be one of the most brutal and

oppressive in the world and has one of the worst human rights records, is based on the personality cult of President Saddam Hussein. It is a ruthless and uniquely totalitarian police system. Its use of chemical weapons against Halabja in March and in Bahdinan in August 1988 are slurs on its history which shall never be forgotten or forgiven.

Yet this regime is trying to improve its tarnished image. It is now trying to show with great razzmatazz that it is bringing about a new mode of people's democracy that far transcends what they describe as the decadent liberalism of the West. But can the leopard change its spots? Since autumn of last year a number of general amnesties have been declared. But the few people who believed in them and returned from exile have never been heard of again. There are reports of many having been executed.

In the meantime destruction of the Kurdish countryside and forcible relocation of the population into army controlled hamlets has been going on incessantly. Under the pretext of a security belt with Iran large areas including major townships have been destroyed, including Halabja, Penjwin, Zakho, Amadia, Qala Diza and several other centres. Whilst doing this, however, the government of President Saddam contradicts itself by boasting of the rebuilding of Fao in the South which is within rifle range, and Basrah which is within artillery range, from Iran.

Another cynical charade is the general parliamentary elections which took place in March this year and the elections of the so-called autonomous region, which took place in September. I can here give you an idea of these elections. The government controlled press published lists of candidates for the general parliamentary elections. Here is an issue of *Al Jumhuriya* of 21 March. It carries mug photographs and CVs of 64 candidates to the National Assembly, and they are for the Kurdish areas. Of these 3 are illiterate, 24 only have primary school education, and only 18 are university graduates. Seventeen are serving with the mercenary so-called defence battalions and twenty-three are civil servants. All of them are vetted and cleared by Baath Party and security police. The only merit for any of them is having served in Qadisiyat Saddam, i.e. Saddam's war against Iran. It can be assumed that candidates for the other parts of Iraq were not very different. There were no programmes, no campaigning, no opposition parties nor any free press.

Elections for the so-called autonomous region were no better. In his statement the chief returning officer, who was the vice president of the Revolutionary Command Council, announcing the winning members on 12 September, wished them luck and success in serving in accordance with the principles of the Baath Party under the leadership of Saddam Hussein.

Neither assembly has any real power. Iraq has no declared budget. All spending and decision making is virtually in the hands of Saddam Hussein. One of the first items discussed by the National Assembly in April was the use of the eyes of the executed for grafting operations. For this purpose a committee of Mullahs in the Assembly researched the holy books and gave the religious sanction.

The task ahead of us is not easy and there is no short cut to get Iraq out of this situation. There is no way before the Kurdish national movement or the Iraqi opposition in general other than to pursue their efforts to end the dictatorship. The way to do that is for the Arabs and Kurds to sit together and try to better understand each other. Up till now each side has been following a separate path of its own. There have been contacts, but mutual suspicion has dominated. I believe now is the time to review the whole track record of the past 25 years at least. Let politicians on both sides learn from their people. There is no real conflict between Arabs and Kurds. There is no single case reported of any clash between Arabs and Kurds on national grounds. Kurds walked tall and proud in their national dress in every Arab town during the worst times of military campaigns without being molested. So did Arabs in Kurdistan. The chemical attack on Halabja and Bahdinan inflicted a deep wound in the hearts of most Arabs.

The problems of Iraq can and should be solved by the Iraqis themselves. Arabs and Kurds should work jointly. Kurds should take interest and more active part in general in Iraq and Arab affairs. It should be clear that the Kurdish problem cannot be solved separately and without the establishment of a democratic government in the whole of Iraq, for a man who rules in Baghdad and kills the Arabs has no reason not to kill the Kurds.

At the risk of sounding idealistic and unrealistic, I would like to say before concluding that we should not be discouraged by what has happened in Kurdistan. Power corrupts. The problems facing the dictatorship are massive and will rankle. People's resistance will rise again. Given the right leadership victory may not be very far away. But the leaders of both peoples should sit together and hammer out a programme to rid the country of the dictatorship. If one side dithers the other should carry on regardless and draw a comprehensive programme for the whole of the country. The people will certainly respond and the other side will have to join later. Up to now Arabs and Kurds have been reluctant to mix together politically. This should end. Kurds must get involved in the politics of the whole of Iraq. It is theirs as much as it is the Arabs'. They should also take more interest in Arab world affairs.

In return, Arabs must take far greater interest than they have so far done in understanding Kurdish history and Kurdish problems. In particular, Arab democrats all over the Arab world should adopt Kurdish aspirations as their own. Kurdish

national rights should go deep into the Arab conscience and be treated as part of the Arab quest for freedom and democracy. This is the only way to eradicate any barriers of suspicion on both sides and to gain for us Arabs a valiant ally that has stood us in good stead in the darkest days of our history.

Our motto should be those words uttered on that memorable day of 4 July 1776 on the signing of the declaration of American independence: "We must indeed hang together or, most assuredly, we shall all hang separately".

Thank you.

PALESTINIANS SYMPATHIZE WITH KURDS

*Dr. Habib BULUS **

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear Kurdish brothers,

I was happy when the Arab Writers Union in our country granted me the honor of being its representative to this conference. I'm delighted to convey to you the greetings of your brothers, the Arab Palestinian writers, who have been struggling in a fierce conflict against the forces of occupation, repression and racial prejudice, which the Zionist Israeli authorities have inflicted upon them in violent acts of aggression against freedom, democracy and against the inalienable right of the Arab Palestinian people to self-determination. These people, who in their evolution have been making history and contributing to the struggle of all nations against injustice and tyranny, for freedom, progress and peace.

Dear brothers, it is not a secret that we, the Palestinian Arabs, have some special feelings of love, respect and appreciation for the brotherly Kurdish people who donated to both Arabs and Muslims one of the greatest leaders and fighters who is admired by our people and so dear to Jerusalem, Salahaddin Al-Ayubi. He has been eternalized in our history, and his name was given to two main streets in both Jerusalem and Eker. Our brotherly Kurdish people have always sacrificed in defending the Arab and Islamic countries, and have always contributed in enriching the Arab-Islamic culture in various and ingenious aspects, that test their maturity and ingenuity.

We are aware of the calamities and disasters that have befallen the Kurdish people, together with all the peoples of our region. We, the Arab Palestinians, have also been the victims of those disasters. It is our right and our duty to declare that our happiness, which we are entitled to, will never be achieved unless all the people of our countries, including your dear and beloved people, secure and guarantee freedom and dignity in our loved homelands.

** Representative of the Union of Arab Writers*

Dear brothers, with heavy hearts and tense nerves, we watch closely the calamities of the brutal war which caused heavy loses and destruction to both the Iraqi and Iranian peoples, and which aimed against the interests of both peoples. We hope peace will prevail between the two brotherly and neighboring nations who also share in one great civilization in history. Under peaceful circumstances, unlimited possibilities will inevitably emerge to set things right and to offer mature rights in such a way that will ensure, for both the Arab and Islamic worlds possibilities of cultural, financial and spiritual revival to enable us to build up the future that will become the past of our future generations.

Dear brothers, be you confident. We are with you in mind and spirit, wishing success to your conference in fulfilling all the tasks that you have set before you. You will always see our hands reaching out for you, for friendship, brotherhood, to build together our common fate and destiny, based on truth, freedom, justice, peace and creativity.

Again, thank you for your generous invitation. Thank you for listening. We are looking forward to meeting you again and in hopefully happier circumstances. Thank you.

CONVENING A SPECIAL SESSION OF THE U.N.

*Hocine AIT-AHMED **

Mr. President,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I've come here in a gesture of solidarity regarding the Kurdish people's right to self-determination. I should make it clear that I'm obviously here as a Berber, as a Kabyle, who'd like to see our right to difference recognized. I wouldn't perhaps have allowed myself to refer to this, were it not for the fact that yesterday one of the speakers said that the origins of the Kurds went back to the Medes. Now one of the greatest monarchs of Maghreb, Juba II, traced back the Berbers, who weren't called Berbers - I detest this word - the Imazirin. I've come, therefore as a cryto-Kurd or para-Kurd, or Kurdo-ite, but, believe me, I'm not ethnicist, I've come as an Algerian, as an Algerian democrat, who hopes that Algeria, the Maghreb will regain its cohesion and will be a real center for democracy and tolerance. I think that the world needs this at the present time.

I'm going to be very brief. I think everything's been said about the misfortunes of the Kurdish people, about their long martyrdom, the deportations, gas experimentation, arrests and discriminations. This is precisely because we know that we don't have the right to sit around idly. Nobody can claim to be unaware, as was the case during the second world war, of numerous tragedies. We know what's happening. We know, more particularly, after all you've said that all that the world offers millions of young Kurdish children is horrifying insecurity on the physical, economic, legal and identity level. I think that our duty today is perhaps to see where the pain lies and to try and provide a remedy for it.

I'd like, in this context, to recall that in Camus' Plague, the greatest remedy is firstly a remedy of assistance for the endangered individuals, for the endangered people. I believe that it's my duty to pay homage to all those men and women, who didn't wait for public opinion to mobilize, before giving the help that their means allowed, to the Kurdish populations.

**Former Algerian minister*

Why have the Kurdish populations ended up here? I think that there have very quickly been two drifts: there's been the drift of international institutions and after this the drift of decolonization. We've forgotten that the international institutions were created after the holocaust, after Nazism and Hitlerism, precisely so that this didn't happen again, in order to build a world based on the respect and promotion of human rights, in order to create international relations and a new order, not based on a pan-state, as Hitler wanted to do in Europe, but based on the respect of human rights. Someone who spoke yesterday quite rightly quoted Abbot Grégoire, who, during the Revolution, said that an injustice committed in one country is an injustice committed against all peoples. Now all the international documents since the end of the war have brought to the fore the fact that an interior violation of human rights, on a national scale, also constitutes a violation of human rights on an international scale, and that we can't remain indifferent to such violations under the pretext of respecting sovereignty, under the pretext of article 2, paragraph 7 of this clause of competence, which prevents the international community from intervening and putting a stop to these violations.

I thus say that there's a drift of international institutions. I think that you've brought to the fore the fact that from this point of view, the superpowers have played a devastating role in the Middle-East. The only interests of the imperialists and post-imperialists were petrol and strategic positions. But I'd say that already after the end of the Second World War, Franco was accepted, Salazar was accepted, they were accepted for years by Realpolitik. And I think that all this wasn't without consequence. I'm coming to this drift of decolonisation. Because, when all is said and done, this decolonisation was carried out in the name of human rights ! I was lucky enough to represent my country at Bandung. It was an opportunity to really ensure the historicisation of the whole of humanity, by respect and by the universalisation of human rights. This drift, to sum up, is symbolised by the eruption of authoritarian governments in the Third World, by the fact that state sovereignty has killed the sovereignty of the peoples and of the individuals. And it's this that's serious. We could say "Tell me how you treat your minority and I'll tell you how you treat your majority". In the same way, when the Nazis started to look for scapegoats and to attack the minorities, most of the non-minority citizens were indifferent, thinking that, at the end of the day, it would be the scapegoats who were in danger. The follow-up of the evolution shows with certitude that we can't accept injustice and discrimination with impunity. The majorities were also ultimately victims of the Fascist and Nazi regimes.

One would have expected the Third World countries to provide a plus of authenticity to provide a plus, considering their spiritual value, not a minus. Authenticity can only benefit humanity if there is modernity, if it comes within the framework of democratization. I think that most religions are less preoccupied with the beyond,

than with the poor, the oppressed, the widows and the foreigners. We forget this. We forget what the prophet said... "The greatest djihad is to state the injustice in the face of a tyrannical despot" and "Look for science all the way to China". We don't even need to go to China, there are the Kurds. There's their difference which is enriching. I think that instead of taking the best from our spiritual patrimony, from the Arabity, from Islam, in an attempt to leave the past, to go in the direction of a real internationalism, in certain countries, unfortunately, it's a bit like the Koran says "They're destroying their houses with their own hands". This is what regimes of dictatorship have led to.

I'd say that there's nothing fatal, despite everything, in all this. There's nothing fatal but the implacable logic of oppression and repression and the logic of the "mektub" policies, of the Realpolitik. I think, Mr. President, that this conference is a real conference. That's to say, after it we won't be able to think in one way and act in another, as regards the Kurdish problem. I'd like before finishing, to make a suggestion. Having been at Bandoung, knowing the blast of and also the necessity for efficiency, I suggest that democratic governments rally together to convene a special session at the General Assembly. Such a convening would be a deadline for mobilising opinion, a deadline simply for applying international instruments concerning self-determination. And I'd like this conference to gather not only to conduct a trial, it's true that Nuremberg was nevertheless the defence of principles. History and our young people musn't say that Nuremberg was vengeance...

I'd say that this general assembly doesn't have a trial to conduct. On the contrary, we need to mobilize the opinion of all the governments concerned, of the five governments concerned so that they take institutional and political steps, so that afterwards this discussion is instituted in a positive way and so that we leave this nightmare behind. I'd also like to add that it might be a good idea for this special general assembly to take place in Vienna, because it was in Vienna that Ghassemlou and his two collaborators were assassinated. It's also a way to distance the reason of state which might come up in the syndrome of Munich.

Thank you.

THE KURDISH PROBLEM AND DEMOCRACY IN TURKEY

*Server TANILLI **

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I'm very happy to take part in this international conference on human rights and the cultural identity of the Kurds and to be with you. I'd like to thank from the bottom of my heart the France-Libertés Foundation, chaired by President Danielle Mitterrand, and the Kurdish Institute, who have given me this joy.

Freedom of expression and association has for a long time been considered by the ruling class in Turkey as a limited freedom; as for considering and discussing "the Kurdish issue", it's absolutely forbidden. To illustrate this point, I'd like to tell you about what happened to me.

In Turkey, after the military coup d'etat of September 12, 1980, fascism, by refuting the acquisitions of our movement of Lights - which is more than 150 years old - also destroyed democratic freedoms which are an integral part of this movement. In doing this it subjected the people and intellectuals to a succession of suffering, anxiety, humiliations and fear. However, not long after this it came up against a resistance by the intellectuals. It was in order to acquaint the obscurantist forces with the freedoms of man and of democracy.

It's in this context that I, a scientist working in the field of the social sciences, wanted to write a book, so as to emphasize once again these principles of democracy, which are time and time again held up to ridicule and, thus, to hinder the manoeuvre of the ruling class, who pretended to accept the democratic claims, whilst at the same time trying to model them according to its own conception. Starting with criticisms of the sad reality, into which the country had plunged, criticisms made in the light of contemporary data, I then tried to show how an ideal Turkey should be. The title of this book, published on September 1, 1987, was "What kind of democracy are we asking for?". Amongst other important subjects, I touched on the Kurdish problem, in a chapter entitled "Understanding the Kurdish problem". I knew that whilst

** Professor at the University of Strasbourg*

writing a book on democracy in Turkey it wouldn't be honest to ignore this problem; furthermore as it wasn't good for a scientist, who should analyse facts objectively and dispassionately, to keep various truths to himself, I opened a special chapter on the Kurdish problem.

What were my observations on this subject? I disclosed the following facts: despite the fact that the Kurds are a people living for the most part in the south-east of Turkey, comprising more than ten million individuals with their own history, language and culture, the official philosophy had denied the existence of this people for years, saying "there are no Kurds only Turks". Significantly all the political powers in Turkey had applied "a two-faced policy" to the Kurds by denying their existence on a political level and by admitting it, on the contrary, in practice. Kurdish citizens had always been presented as being enemies of national entity and because of this were regarded with suspicion and distrust. This attitude marked all the economic, military, cultural, educational and security policies applied in this region. There were several examples of this. All the laws, led by the constitution, even if they were general, were interpreted and applied in the Kurd's region, in a way different to the rest of Turkey. Amongst the Kurds, only the feudal lords and aghas had free possession of civil and civic rights, whilst the large masses of peasants were deprived of them. The Kurdish man could neither give the name he wanted to his child, nor benefit from other public freedoms. These regions, despite the richness of their natural resources, were abandoned as "areas of deprivation". Finally, the Kurds were banned from speaking, writing and publishing their language freely. To sum up, the Kurds who were without fundamental human rights, didn't have national democratic rights either. The identity of a whole people was victim to a very serious attack. From these observations I saw that the real separatists in Turkey weren't the Kurds, but the ruling class with its governments. This class carried out hypocritical policies and then, without any shame whatsoever, loaded the consequences onto the Kurds.

I hurled this hypocrisy like a slap in the face at the bourgeoisie. My second observation was that, in actual fact, the main aim was hidden behind this very hypocrisy. The accusation of separatism and the fomenting of a perpetually hostile climate towards the Kurds weren't merely geared to justifying the pressures brought upon them. Alongside this, the primordial aim, even if it seems secondary, was to restrict political life in Turkey, by holding it under threat. The Kurdish problem was in reality the sword of Damocles in the hands of the ruling classes, enemies of democracy.

The Turkish bourgeoisie actually always resorted to two methods to impose its brutality in attacking democracy: hostility to communism and hostility to the Kurds. The economic, political and social claims and businesses under the organization of

the working-class were hindered using the accusation of communism, as were the national democratic claims of the Kurds, using the accusation of separatism. Thus, the ruling class, in order to stand in the way of the working-class, used two arms at the same time. It's natural that the Kurdish people and its intellectuals, suffered from this. If we leave aside, for the time being, the period before 1960, we can see that it's from this date onwards that the manoeuvre enjoyed success in this area.

After this observation, I drew the conclusion that the working-class' political movement in Turkey and the Kurdish national democratic movement had become the two allies of democracy in Turkey, which would be, in its real sense, the creation of this alliance.

This was the common truth of Kurdish and Turkish democrats.

In my book I denounced the socio-democrats' dubious and two-faced attitude and I criticised the new attack on the Kurds by exposing the practice of "regional prefects". Towards the end of this chapter, I expressed the sincere wish: "Now it's the important duty of progressive, democratic, revolutionary and patriotic forces to thwart the plans organized by the regime against the Kurdish people. We can't stay silent in the face of this despotism, which sets itself fiercely against the Kurdish people, we musn't stay silent. It isn't the prerogative for the Kurdish intellectuals to make national democratic rights known, but rather that of the Turkish intellectuals. Let us not forget that if a union between the Kurdish and Turkish people is established - it's possible in my opinion and I wish it - this union will be agreed to freely, based on respect, equality and fraternity.

State terrorism won't provide anything positive, it hasn't provided anything up until now and couldn't do so!

I summarized the Kurdish problem in my book. As soon as it came out it created a considerable stir. Two months later, following the second edition, it was submitted by the state prosecutor to the state security court in Istanbul and was the object of a lawsuit in March 1988, under the accusation of "creating propaganda with the aim of weakening and annihilating national feelings", as an article in the Turkish Penal states. After lengthy proceedings, my book was cleared in June 1989.

That's what happened to me because of the Kurdish problem!

I'd like to add immediately that the misfortune of my book, which expresses truths that can be stated in a democracy, was the proof that real freedom of thought and expression didn't exist in Turkey. But the result of this lawsuit doesn't mean either that this freedom has been established. If the taboo around the "Kurdish problem"

has been destroyed in the intellectual milieu, it still exists on an official level; it looks as though this ban is going to be maintained, as well as its outdated consequences.

But I, as a Turkish intellectual, say no to all that. I'm against this systematic attack on the national identity and national democratic rights of the Kurdish people, a sister people, with whom we've so many things in common: I'll support this fight until the attack ends. My place on this point is alongside the Kurdish people and its intellectuals, against the reactionary powers in Turkey. I should add that many Turkish intellectuals are of the same opinion on this subject.

Before concluding, I'd like to emphasize another important point. Today, the monopolist capital and its government wanting at any price to maintain an idiocy and blindness borrowed from the past, in the Kurdish regions in Turkey conduct an exceptional regime and inflict suffering on the civilians; murders, exiles, imprisonments, tortures, in a word, suppression of the possibility for a great working people to live in peace. By refusing today also to recognize the mistakes made at the beginning of the affair, it thereby crushes democracy and fundamental human rights by saying "I'm fighting against terrorists!"

But the same government is doing something else at the moment: two leaders who came to Turkey to legally found the communist party - something quite natural in western democracy - have ended up in prison for two years and have been judged according to the archaic articles of a law. Alongside them, the prisons in Turkey are today, full of revolutionaries - Kurdish and Turkish - who believe in the working-class ideology. Amongst these prisoners are young people sentenced by military courts, by the orders of the local governments, to death, to life imprisonment because of their ideas. It's impossible for such a state of affairs to exist in a real democratic regime, but unfortunately in Turkey it exists.

I'd like to repeat myself, so as not to lose sight of the main point of my subject: as my two earlier examples expressly indicate, we can't say that in Turkey democracy and human rights are only snatched from the Kurds. Yes, for them there's nothing, but with them the working-class, made up of Kurds and Turks, experiences the same despoilment. Outdated bans don't only hit the Kurdish but, at the same time, the working-class in Turkey. This simultaneous blow isn't chance, on the contrary, it's part of an entity. Let's not lose sight of this entity, as we fight!

I emphasized, at a certain point in my intervention, this truth: the political movement of Turkey's working-class and the Kurdish national democratic movement have become two fundamental allies of democracy in Turkey. The two are inextricably bound together. This truth was valid yesterday, and today is much more so; events prove this to us. As Kurdish and Turkish democrats let's not forget this point.

I'd like to remind you that I consider the Kurdish problem as an entity of course, alongside this, I consider the Kurdish problem in Turkey in this entity, as I mentioned earlier. The problem is very serious; we'll commit irreparable mistakes if we don't take it in its entity. In saying this, I'm not trying to postpone a solution. But there are measures to be taken immediately. This is necessary because blood is being spilt and people are suffering terribly. Our friend Ibrahim Aksoy summed up perfectly here, yesterday afternoon, what we should do right away about this. I share his ideas and we must share them! We can make beautiful tomorrows in the future by suppressing present injustices. Maybe there are people who'll consider these ideas as reformism, even submission. I myself consider them as being part of a democratic and revolutionary attitude; let's consider them like this. Those people who create these tomorrows, this happier future, will be, firstly, of course, the Kurdish and Turkish progressive, democratic and revolutionary forces. But I'm counting on the solidarity of the world's progressive, democratic and revolutionary forces; we must count on them!

THE TURKISH LEGAL SYSTEM AND THE KURDS

*Kemal BURKAY **

First of all I would like to thank the Kurdish Institute of Paris, as well as the France Libertés Foundation, for having organized this conference and thus, for having given me the opportunity to address you. I have been asked to speak about the Kurdish situation in the Turkish legal system, which I will try to do as far as time allows.

In Turkey, the policies followed, with regard to the Kurds, exert a strong influence on the Turkish legal system. These policies correspond neither to science nor reality, nor, in a general way, to any general principles of law. They are policies of terror and repudiation. The Ottoman Empire is constituted of several nations. The present Turkish state, which is founded on the ruins of this empire, therefore includes several peoples. Since its beginnings, the republic has been built on chauvinistic and nationalist principles. The idea of building relations between peoples on just and democratic bases has been set aside. Administratively, everyone was considered as Turkish and the other peoples were deprived of their cultural and national rights. Since the period of the First World War, the Armenians have been massacred and deported. This was followed by the deportation of the Greek people. The Tcherkesses and the Albanians, as well as other ethnic groups, were assimilated, under a systematic policy. However, this policy, which set out to Turkify Anatolia, did not produce the same results as regards the Kurds. The Turkish state, despite genocides, despite its policies of oppression and assimilation, did not succeed in assimilating the Kurdish people as a whole. It did not succeed in changing the ethnic composition of Kurdistan, as it would have liked. This can be explained by the fact that the Turkish part of Kurdistan is still the largest, and also because the Kurdish people fiercely resisted this policy of national oppression.

The Treaty of Sèvres of 10th August 1920, planned to create a Kurdish state, although this did not include the whole of Kurdistan. However, this treaty was never implemented. During the Lausanne conference, a long time was spent discussing the

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Kurdish issue. The attitude of the Turkish representatives was not to defend the illogical situation, which would have amounted to denying the existence of the Kurdish people; this would not have been taken seriously considering the circumstances at the time. They claimed that it was not necessary to create a separate Kurdish state, that the Turkish Great National Assembly represented Turks and Kurds alike and that these two peoples had chosen to live together. Ismet Pasha (Inönü), head of the Turkish delegation, said that even autonomy would be too much and unsatisfactory for the Kurdish people and claimed that the Kurds had just the same rights as the Turks in the newly-created Turkish state. In actual fact, far from having acquired autonomy, the words "Kurds" and "Kurdistan" themselves have been banned. The justifiable reaction of the Kurdish people to this policy was crushed by terror in bloodshed.

Whilst the Turkish state voiced a reservation concerning the application of article 39 of the Lausanne Treaty to the Kurds, which recognized free use of their language for all citizens, including the press, it attempted, at the same time, to justify itself by claiming that the Kurds were not considered as a minority.

This illogical claim is not acceptable for two reasons: firstly, because this clause in the treaty does not concern a minority, but is addressed to all citizens and secondly, which did not consider the Kurds as a minority, but as something more. It admitted that the Kurds were a nation and thus, an essential component of the country. And now, it is trying, by a kind of eastern malice, to deny historical truths and neglect its responsibilities. As regards the constitution of the Turkish Republic, it repeats the principle of equality between citizens before the law, like all other constitutions.

But these very laws, at the summit of which is the constitution of 1982, contradict and forbid this equality. The preamble of the constitution of 1982, which was imposed on the masses by force of bayonets, is the best example. It specifies that no thought or action, which goes against Turkish acts, national interests, historical values or Turkish morals, will be protected. Thus, the constitution functions on a basis of chauvinistic principals. Firstly, it excludes the non-Turkish. It forbids everything that goes against Turkish nationalism and its national and moral values. Saying that one's Kurdish, speaking about the existence of the Kurds in Turkey and opposing oppression fall within the framework of these forbidden schemes and thoughts, and constitutes an infraction of national unity and an attempt to divide the people.

The constitution of the Turkish Republic supposedly recognizes some fundamental rights and freedoms of its citizens. But this same constitution has been amended in such a way that this recognition only exists on paper. In reality, those who benefit from these rights and freedoms only constitute a privileged minority. For the

majority of the population and for the Kurds, “the exceptions” cited prevent them from benefiting.

Article 14 of the constitution stipulates: “none of the rights and freedoms granted by the constitution may be used with the aim of undermining the unity of the state and the nation (...) or of creating distinctions of language, race, religion and denomination”. Yet we know that it is the state and constitution themselves which create distinctions of language and race. The state denies the existence (within the Turkish Republic’s borders) of the Kurdish community of 15 million and bans its language and culture. Speaking it, is considered as a way of “undermining the unity of the state and the nation”. In a situation like this, I ask you who is it who is making a distinction of language and race? It is obvious that it is a question of being both judge and judged. Articles 141 and 142 of the Turkish penal code have had a worldwide reputation for a long time. These articles, borrowed from Mussolini’s penal code, were modified several times, in order to better repress, above all, left-wing thinking and Kurdish people. The government sets about silencing any discordant voice, through the intermediary of these articles.

So far, hundreds of artists, writers and politicians have been imprisoned and sentenced in accordance with these articles. Democratic organizations, unions and cultural institutions, some of which are more involved than others, are periodically hit by these articles. Considered as clandestine organizations, prison sentences for their leaders may be as long as fifteen years. Recently, after the coup d’Etat of 12th September, hundreds of thousands of people were brought before the court, imprisoned and tortured as a result of these articles.

The 4th paragraph of article 141 and the 3rd paragraph of article 142 are applied to the Kurds. The previously mentioned paragraphs concern “the suppression of rights due to distinction of race, propaganda or the creation of an organization destined to weaken national feelings”. It is interesting to note that it is the Turkish state which denies the existence of such a sizeable people, makes them suffer oppression and exploitation and denies its language and culture. And this same state accuses the Kurds of racism when the latter rebel against these articles. A book or review which speaks about the Kurds, an article which speaks about the history of the Kurds or a speech which mentions the oppression of the Kurds, are all baned by these articles. A mere remark in a speech or an account is enough to incriminate oneself. A Kurdish song is an offence. Several personalities from the media, Kurdish patriots and intellectuals have actually been charged with having committed these crimes of propaganda.

A Turkish scientist, Ismail Besikci, spent ten years in jail for his research on the Kurds. Aziz Nesin, president of Turkey’s writers’ union, was tried two years ago, for

having mentioned the existence of the Kurds. Last year, the artists of the musical group “Yorum” were thrown into prison for having sung Kurdish songs. Amongst them were the well-known signers Rahmi Saltuk and Ferhat Tunç, who were also charged. Two years ago, the singer Ibrahim Tatlıses did a tour in Europe. On his return he was charged as well, for having, at the express request of enthusiastic members of the audience, sung some songs in Kurdish at a show in Paris.

Publications which, in one way or another, criticize the government’s policy on this issue are followed up. One of the most recent examples is that of the *Özgür Gelecek* (the Free Future) review. This review, which is published in Ankara, has so far published out eight issues. Each one has been removed from the market. It’s founder, as well as the head of the publication, were imprisoned twice and tortured. Recently, Mehmet Bayrak, founder of the review and a well-known researcher, and writer, Bekir Kesen, head of the review, were arrested and kept in custody for three months. They were released again, only a few days ago, thanks, in part, to the action of foreign public opinion. After a mention in the review, Mrs. Nuray Özkan, a doctor, was imprisoned, even though she was seven months pregnant, for having spoken about the condition of the Kurdish woman at the women’s committee. She was charged with setting up a secret organization.

It is not only these articles which are applied to the Kurds in the Turkish penal legislation. There are articles particularly aimed at the Kurds. For example, article 125, concerns the creation of an organization, with a view to preparing the secession of part of the Turkish territory. It is obvious that this article is aimed at a powerful organization equipped with an armed force, but, in practice, this article is applied arbitrarily. The Kurdish patriots, who have absolutely no link with any secret organization, are questioned and sometimes tried, in accordance with this article. The sentence laid down in this article is capital punishment. The judges prefer to sentence in accordance with this article, for the very reason that the sentences laid down in articles 141 and 142 — eight to fifteen years of detention — seem to them to be too light. The question of whether the acts tried come under this law or not, is not taken into account at all. The government and police, who maintain the government’s law and order, invent scenarios of disinformation, when they think it opportune, by creating dangerous imaginary organizations. It is a common method, often resorted to in Turkey. In 1959, this article was used to charge, and imprison for many years, 49 intellectuals from diverse regions of Kurdistan.

If the elements constituting the offence are insufficient to be punishable under article 125 of the penal code, article 171 is resorted to. An example: this article was frequently applied during the period following the coup d’Etat of 12th September 1980. Cultural associations and legal publications, founded by intellectuals and Kurdish youths, broken up by force and torture, will be considered under article 171,

as illegal and punishable organizations. Thus, heavy sentences, of fifteen years imprisonment, will be applied.

If necessary, there are numerous articles of the Turkish legislation, which are applicable to Kurdish patriots, the left and Turkish intellectuals. This is why the deletion of articles 141 and 142, which is currently under discussion, will not be enough to do away with Damocles sword. Turkish law mentions that: "No-one should torture or ill-treat others". But torture and ill-treatment are conducted systematically in police stations and prisons. It is an exception if they are not. The Turkish state has signed the convention of the European Committee, which forbids the practice of torture. But nothing has changed. From now on, in order to throw dust in the eyes of the Europeans, the Turkish State will parade a willingness to prevent torture, but in reality it will continue doing as it pleases.

For this reason, written texts are not of foremost importance. The balance of forces for democracy and human rights is most important. So long as the dominant forces do not assimilate rights and freedoms, whatever the content of the law might be, Turkey will remain a country, where torture, arbitrariness and repression are common practices.

The Turkish state fills "certain gaps in legislation" in order to obliterate supporters of more democracy and human rights, which are growing stronger and stronger every year. An example: despite massacres, deportations and oppressions without precedent in the history of the Kurds, the Kurdish people have not given in. The struggle for its freedom has not stopped. Despite such severe oppression and threats from the Turkish state, Kurdish intellectuals update and discuss the Kurdish issue. Despite the threat and the heavy sentences incurred, the Kurdish intellectuals allow the Kurdish language and culture to live on. Despite police persecutions, they continue to bring out publications. This is why the constitution was amended. The constitution of 1982 invented the concept of a "forbidden language", which is an unprecedented act in history. In article 26 of the constitution, it says: "A language, whatever it may be, cannot be used when it is forbidden by the law to use it to develop or clarify an idea, "written and printed matter, records, tapes, films and other means of expression, which do not conform to the law, may be confiscated, either by order of the judge, or by simple order of a competent authority, in order to avoid an adjournment which could be dangerous".

In article 26 of the constitution, it is stipulated: "the press is free" and it is immediately added: "It is forbidden to bring out a publication in a language banned by the law".

The articles above are aimed, without doubt, at the Kurdish language. The Turkish

State was not pushed into this farce, in the name of the law, by ancient Babylon or the Latins. Law 2932 was carefully worked out, after the promulgation of the constitution. Without actually naming it, the Kurdish language was strictly prohibited. According to this "law", any language, which is not the first official language of the states recognized by Ankara, is prohibited in Turkey.

If you are wondering what the "first" or "second" official language is and if one could not simply say the official language, then let me make it clear that this distinction is a pure product of the imagination and cleverness of those who make the Turkish law; it reflects their "long experience". In actual fact, in Iraq, Kurdish is an official language like Arabic. In the USSR, Kurdish is used without constraint in schools, the media and state radio stations. Is this why the law classifies official languages? Article 31 of the constitution allows printing houses, which circulate such publications, to be taken over. These are not the only traps, carefully worked out by the constitution for the Kurdish people. There are other articles which are even more dangerous. An example: according to articles 119 and 122, which define the state of exception, fundamental rights and freedoms can be suspended. Article 23 allows the deportation of individuals or groups. Nowadays, the articles are frequently applied in Kurdistan. In eleven departments (vilayets) of Kurdistan, the state of exception has been in force for more than two years. In certain cases the population is deported en mass. In other cases, in order to flee from the terror of the state, populations in their masses decide themselves to leave the region.

After the coup d'état of 12th March 1971, Turkey's Workers' Party was banned, because of a resolution which it had adopted on the Kurdish issue. Shortly after this, in order to fill in a weakness in the Turkish legislation's material, a new precautionary step (article 81) was added to the law on political parties, which stipulated that any political party which affirmed the existence of an ethnic group other than the Turkish people, or a different culture in Turkey would immediately be banned. A new sword of Damocles, together with the others, was thus to weigh down on the political parties.

As is clear, the policy of denial and terror against the Kurdish people is a deciding factor in influencing the anti-democratic character of the Turkish State's right-wing system. The repression imposed on the Kurdish people stifles the intellectual life of the country and slows down any substantial progression towards democracy. Thus, one of the major causes of the periodical military interventions, from which the country suffers, is the Kurdish issue.

This policy of denial and terror also puts Turkey in a conspicuous position as regards international law. By its repressive policies against the Kurdish people, the Turkish state not only holds up to ridicule the universal principles of human rights, as

promulgated by the United Nations, but also breaks the clauses, laid down with regard to this by the convention of Rome, the European committee, the final Act of Helsinki and many others. Also, the Turkish state is undermining, international law in an unremitting and serious manner.

It would only be able to amend itself, in this respect, by abandoning its negative policies against the Kurdish people and adopting more humane, fair and democratic practices and, in doing so, opting for a new general policy which respects human rights and freedoms. Otherwise, the outcome of the policy, which it has adopted up until now, cannot be positive. The only solution is to admit the existence of the Kurdish people and recognize their legitimate rights. Because of the current policies the interests of the two peoples are in conflict, and both the economic and cultural development of the whole country is signed away.

We are not concerned here with an issue involving a minority enclosed in the territory of some state, but with a nation of 25 million, whose territory has been carved up by others. The right of the Kurdish people, following the example of all other peoples, is to live freely in their lands, in their own country and to plan their future freely, and this is what international law demands.

THE SITUATION IN TURKISH PRISONS

*Ali AKBABA **

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Kurdish Institute of Paris, under the patronage of Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand and with the help of the France-Libertés Foundation, has organized this International Conference on the theme "The Kurds human rights and cultural identity".

It's a great honour for the people of Kurdistan to see high-ranking personalities, evoking the Kurdish drama, gather together for the first time here in Paris. Allow me, in the name of all the political prisoners, to thank you for your attention and participation.

As you know, the prisons in Turkey total 635, half of which are situated in Kurdistan. This is the reason why we want to bring to the fore the reasons and causes for the inhumane policies of the colonialist Turkish state, which systematically puts all forms of torture into practice in the prisons.

The resistance of the Kurdish political prisoners against these oppressive policies in the prisons of Diyarbakir, require us to call up its history. Since the coup d'Etat of 12th September 1980, the Machiavellian policies of the Turkish State have been based on the following principal: "the end justifies all the means". In the face of this escalation of state terror of a fascist nature, Mazlum Dogan, the hero of the Kurdish people, started off the heroic resistance of our people in the prison of Diyarbakir, during the Newroz festival of 1982. This first resistance was the first historical milestone. During the same year, the resistance spread to all the prisons of Kurdistan through the intermediary of other heroes such as: Ferhat Kurtay, Necmi Oren, Mahmut Zengin and Esref Anyak who fell martyr in the name of this cause.

It's true that the Turkish state has transformed Turkey into a peoples' prison and that

* *Lawyer, Organiser of Kurdish Committees*

the Kurdish people are the first of the victims of the repressive policies of the Turkish state, which is currently holding more than ten thousand Kurdish patriots prisoner. The majority of these prisoners are members and sympathizers of the Kurdistan's Workers' Party. This party defends a precise cause, that of the independence of the people of Kurdistan. According to the PKK, the Kurdish question is neither a simple question of political prisoners, nor of human rights.

Nevertheless, it's the question of 25 million souls who are fighting for the recognition of their national, territorial and cultural identity. That's why, it's thought necessary, during a conference like this, to put the Kurdish question within the context of the charter of the United Nations, which guarantees peoples the right to self-determination. In conformity with this, the Kurdish people as well as patriots who are imprisoned, attempt to obtain independence and freedom. Because this nation so long as it is persecuted, is on the path to annihilation. Trying to resolve its cultural identity is a vain resolution, before even recognizing its national and territorial existence. Thus, it's primordial that the friends of the Kurdish people support its will for self-determination and don't reduce the real problem to a semblance of cultural autonomy.

Today, the Kurdish people, in order to obtain the right to live with dignity and to acquire their national rights, are leading a legitimate struggle. Certain allies of Kurdistan's colonizing regimes don't of course like the armed nature of this struggle. This is why Federal Germany, which has been holding 17 Kurdish militants for more than 23 months, without any judgement, is trying more and more to charge them as a "terrorist" group and is carrying out searches of Kurdish families' houses. The same practice is also being repeated in France against the Kurds by the French police. It's obvious that any oppressed people, in order to free itself, must use a certain number of means. This is why the Kurdish people are obliged to resort to the methods that its enemy imposes on it.

Given the current upsurge of the struggle of Kurdistan's National Liberation Front under the direction of the Kurdistan's Workers' Party, which is threatening the existence of the Turkish state, the western countries, despite their considerable help to save the latter, since the Turkish coup d'état in 1980, haven't been able to put an end to the Kurdish problem. This time, they are attempting to pass theses such as "the illegitimacy of the armed struggle", "autonomy" and "cultural rights". Such concessions for the Kurdish people who are claiming their self-determination, are intolerable and are opposed to their will.

Because of this, friends of the Kurdish people gathered here, we hope we're going to

lead our discussion, for the most part, on the question of the Kurdish people's self-determination.

We thank the friends of the Kurdish people who have allowed us to express our point of view at this conference.

THE PACIFISM OF THE KURDISH PEOPLE IN THE FACE OF THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S BELLICOSITY

*Hassan SHARAFI **

Like all the other peoples of Iran, the eight million Kurds from this country participated actively in the historical events of 1979 which brought the fall of the Iranian monarchy. Each paid a heavy price to achieve this victory, the Kurdish people can bear witness to this. The active participation of the Kurds in these events is only the consequence of a fight, begun several decades ago, to institute democratic freedoms and respect of the national rights of oppressed peoples in Iran, all of which could only be achieved by replacing the tyrannical monarchy with a humane regime.

Thus, after the fall of the Shah, the Kurdish people expected to eventually see their aspirations realized, by the founding of democracy in Iran and of autonomy in Iranian Kurdistan. Unfortunately, the Iranian revolution was quickly confiscated by the Mollahs. They deceived the people of the country by a referendum, which gave a choice between the unaccepted (the monarchy) and the unacceptable (a theocratic system) and by way of this hoax, they imposed their own system. As for the Kurds, they weren't taken in, because, realizing that the nature of the two systems proposed allowed neither democracy nor autonomy, they decided to boycott the referendum.

Nevertheless, the majority of Iranians having decided in favour of the institution of an Islamic Republic, the Kurds submitted to this choice in accordance with their attachment to democratic principles.

In the course of discussions with the leading authorities of the Islamic Republic, the representatives of the Kurdish populations showed that a popular and democratic regime couldn't be conceived without resolving the major problem of nationalities. The reply given by Khomeiny and his entourage was the following: "The demands of the Kurdish people are logical and aren't contrary to the principles of Islam, which don't make a distinction between peoples. However, it is premature to evoke such

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demands, because they might delay the time of the final victory". The serious analysis of the problem was avoided, by using this phrase at every meeting.

After many a meeting, the representatives of the Islamic Republic and of the Bazargan government, finally agreed to study the project proposed by the Kurdish emissaries. Future events proved that this new attitude of the Iranian authorities only had one goal: that of gaining time to re-form the army. Thus, the project presented by the Kurds went unheeded, and at the beginning of the summer of that same year, after a slander campaign had been conducted by the regime against Kurdish political representatives and organisations, government forces were sent to Kurdistan. The "Holy War" had just been declared by Khomeiny to a population of 90% muslims (!) and the Democratic Party of Kurdistan had just been banned.

The bloody war (called the 3 month war) imposed on the Kurdish people, which followed, was such a failure for the regime, as much on a military as on a political front that in October 1980 Khomeiny himself was forced to speak, making it clear that he wanted peace again in Kurdistan and the realisation of the aspirations of the Kurdish people. Despite the Kurds' ground victory, they reacted in favour of this initiative, rejoicing ahead of time over the end of the war. Discussions between Kurdish and government representatives resumed but, once again the regime was very careful not to tackle the problems in depth, discussions always getting stuck on issues of secondary importance. Then, at the beginning of December 1980, the Ayatollah Montazeri, at a Friday prayertime, spoke out for a new slander campaign by Teheran against the Kurdish leaders. The population was unable to hide its indignation. The Kurdish political officials displayed their reprobation by a letter addressed to Khomeiny, whom they asked before it was too late, to stop a process which would lead irremediably to another war. They asked him, moreover, to make sure that the military didn't create a state of war in Kurdistan, because in the negative, the Kurds were prepared to defend their freedom and their existence fiercely. The Kurdish leaders also reminded Khomeiny that his declaration in October had given the Kurds the hope of seeing their demands realised peacefully, that they'd replied favorably to negotiation proposals, declaring from then on a ceasefire. The Islamic Republic replied with firing and blood. The position of the leadership of the Kurdish movement of Iran (PPKI) was without ambiguity from the beginning of the Iran-Iraq conflict, because if the Islamic Republic had accepted the legitimate demands of the Kurdish people, it would have been ready as a whole to defend every last bit of Iranian territory. Once again, the reply was violence.

From then on, Kurdistan was faced with violent military attacks on a large-scale and with a total economic blockade. Towns became the target of the regime's bombers and cannons. Hundreds of thousands of defenseless women, children and elderly people were killed. The material damage was considerable. With the aim of sparing

the civil populations, and in order to continue its resistance, the leadership of the Kurdish movement ordered its fighters to leave the towns and to take to the bush. Thus, the only response that all the efforts, all the meetings of the delegation of the Kurdish people and all the peace messages of the leadership of the Kurdish movement, in favour of a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish issue received were attacks by the Pasdarans and the regime's other armed forces. Faced with this situation, the Iranian Kurds were, thus, forced to decide between yielding to the black despotism of the ayatollahs, by renouncing their demands, or defending the assets of the revolution and their existence. The Kurdish people and their leaders opted for the defence of their existence.

Despite all this, the leadership of the Kurdish movement tried again, in April 1981, to renew negotiations with the regime. A letter was addressed to Khomeiny, asking him to put an end to the civil massacres - failure to do so would make the responsibility of this fratricidal war incumbent on him. The reply came immediately, because the attack of the regime's forces intensified since, the war has never stopped. The Kurds have been called "agents from the East", "agents from the West", "the U.N.'s hirelings", "separatists"....Iranian Kurdistan is completely militarized with more than 200,000 soldiers permanently stationed on its land and divided amongst 3000 bases. Nevertheless, the fight of the Kurdish people has never stopped. However, we've also said that the Kurdish issue doesn't have a military solution. Evidence of this is the fact that, on the one hand, the regime can't exterminate eight million individuals, and on the other, the Kurdish people can't overthrow the regime alone, all the more so since no movement large enough exists in the other parts of Iran. This is why negotiation is indissociable from the fight.

Discussions between the Islamic Republic and the Kurdish people were interrupted for 7 years from 1981 to 1988. In 1988, the Iranian regime mentioned the possibility of starting discussions, with a view to negotiating a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. The Democratic Party of Kurdistan of Iran accepted the central government's proposal. A first series of meetings took place in Austria in December 1988 and January 1989, between emissaries sent by Teheran and representatives from the PDKI. A third party, undertaking the organisation of these meetings, attended the discussions. These first discussions gave our representatives the opportunity to clearly expound the demands of the Kurdish people of Iran. At the end of this first series of meetings, the central government's emissaries indicated that they would convey the PDKI's position to the Iranian authorities. They were supposed to renew contact, as soon as possible, with the representatives, again by the intermediary of a third party, in order to fix the form of further meetings. A few months later, again by the same intermediary, the Iranian government made it known to the PDKI that it didn't intend to pursue discussions, without justifying this change in attitude. The

leadership of the Kurdish movement, as one of the most determined forces of opposition to the regime, didn't however shut the door on negotiations.

Dr. Ghassemlou, Secretary General of the PDKI, came to Europe at the end of May 1989, because of his invitation to the Congress of International Socialism. The Islamic Republic which a few months previously had broken off the discussions which were underway, made it known to Dr. Ghassemlou that it was once again ready to renew negotiations, but, this time in total secret and with no other intermediary except the one of its choice. Due to his pacifist position, Dr. Ghassemlou agreed to meet the emissaries of Teheran who, apparently, seemed ready to look for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish issue. They met, therefore, on the 12th and 13th of July, 1989, in Vienna, but on the evening of the 13th, Dr. Ghassemlou, his collaborator Abdullah Ghaderi-Azar and another Kurdish personality, Dr. Fadhil Rasul, were assassinated by those people with whom they'd come to talk about peace. This dramatic event proves that the Islamic Republic doesn't recognize democratic freedoms. It is solely to defend itself against such acts and to impose peace in the Islamic Republic, that the Kurdish people resort to an armed fight. On the contrary, the Iranian regime has never envisaged any other solution to the Kurdish problem except the pure and simple extermination of this people. If, at certain moments, the central government seemed inclined to negotiate, history has proved, each time, that it was plotting or was trying to win time.

I'd like to express the wish that the personalities at this conference support the peaceful position and the legitimate demands of the Kurdish people of Iran and have the courage to stand up to Iran's Islamic Regime, which holds human rights up to ridicule and conducts bellicose policies.

It would also be proper to protest against the Austrian choice, which is to favour short-term economic-political considerations to the detriment of justice and democracy, especially since this choice favours a regime which conducts state terrorism by assassinating Dr. Ghassemlou, representative of the Kurdish people of Iran, at a negotiations table.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Iran's Kurdish issue isn't an internal problem of the country. It's a question of the most basic human and national rights of a people of eight million individuals being held up to ridicule. You must act to preserve the right of existence of one of the region's oldest peoples.

Your presence here proves your attachment to freedom, to human rights and to democracy. Thank you in the name of the Kurdish people of Iran.

SEVRES, LAUSANNE, PARIS

*Mikhail S. LAZAREV **

It's a great honor for me to be here with you today at this remarkable conference; it's not just an honor for me, but also for all those amongst us who come from the USSR. When I was given the programme of this conference yesterday, I couldn't refuse to take part; it wasn't planned and so this is going to be an extempore intervention. Although I'm playing for heavy states in doing so, I'm going ahead and submitting my intervention to your attention.

The conference is dedicated to human rights, purely to "human" rights. As Aristotle said in ancient times: "man is a political animal", this is why we have here a profoundly political problem and this event is thus political. During the last 60-70 years, the Kurdish problem has developed constantly. When the Peace Treaty of Sevres, which put an end to the existence of the Ottoman Empire, was concluded, the eventuality of independence for Kurdistan was raised. This political eventuality wasn't emphasized for very long, and very soon attention turned away from it to other matters, and this project of creating an independent Kurdistan very quickly came up against international failure which means that today in 1989, in Paris, Sèvres is the hope, Lausanne the failure and Paris the revived hope. It isn't difficult to notice that these three events: Sèvres, Lausanne and Paris are intimately linked to France. It isn't by chance that the Kurds are particularly and for the most part discussed in France. France has been the light of freedom and hope for us over the last two centuries. In fact, this year's bicentennial of the French Revolution with the spark that you know, these remarkable slogans, these ideological words of order, hasn't been totally achieved anywhere in the world, including the USSR, until now; so the problem of this application which is still very partial to these words of order and these slogans mainly concerns the peoples from the East in general, particularly from the Near and Middle-East.

We speak of freedom, the Kurdish people don't have any freedom; we speak of equality, nowhere do the Kurds have rights equal to people living in the same region,

** Professor, director of the Kurdish section of Moscow's Institute of Orientalism*

who are not Kurdish; we speak of fraternity, nowhere do the Kurds have basic human rights. Thus the contrast between these words of the order of the French Revolution and the current position of the Kurdish people speaks for itself.

And our delegation from the USSR hopes that the issue of the Kurdish people will be examined as soon as possible at the United Nations' plenary session. Our 1917 Revolution is reflected in the continuation of the French Revolution.

We'd like to add that perfect equality should be instituted between peoples, a perfect fraternity as far as relations between the people themselves are concerned and not only the peoples. We feel a profound sympathy for the Kurdish people and their destiny, in our country, we take a real interest in its problems and we'll help as much as possible in its fight for the recognition of its rights.

I'm not going to talk to you today about our own problems. We have ourselves, in our country, a number of problems concerning relations between peoples, but one of the main elements of perestroika consists in the promotion of peoples' self-determination and the possibility for all of them to choose their destiny themselves.

To conclude, I'll simply say that the most current problem which we face at the moment in the context of this conference is the self-determination and the independence of the Kurdish people. It's an extremely important issue from a political point of view. I'll finish speaking about this problem quickly by saying simply that evolution must undergo a graduation. We must build a solid foundation. The total political independence of a contemporary nation represents the ultimate stage. We must start with the recognition of a human being's basic rights, cultural rights, the right of free economic development, of political autonomy and avoid any kind of path forward which could lead up to a catastrophic situation contrary to the desired goal. Great caution is necessary in the evolution and treatment of this issue. We must begin the fight for self-determination by operating in an unremitting manner and by leaning on all the human strengths.

Thank you.

THE KURDS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

*René-Jean DUPUY **

Ladies, Gentlemen,

I don't want to seem too academic in this talk on the chances given to the Kurdish cause by international law, but I would simply like to touch upon two aspects here. A fairly negative aspect since I have been asked to take a census of the promises that we have been given. But fortunately a frankly much more positive aspect, for the simple reason that at the moment we're living through a transformation in the heart of the international community and of the dominant ideas which are at work there.

The negative aspect is all the disappointments the Kurds have suffered in the international field. There is no need for me to dwell at this point on the distant past and on the promises of the Treaty of Sèvres concluded with the Ottoman Empire, which declared an independence and the negation brought into effect three years afterwards in 1923, by the Treaty of Lausanne, which reduced these hopes to nothing.

Neither need I to dwell on the attempts made, within the framework of the Society of Nations, to protect the minorities because, at the time, people spoke more about minorities than human rights. Whether or not these attempts were well inspired, the effectiveness of procedures was still insufficient and naive, and in these conditions the action of the Society of Nations ended in failure.

After the Second World War it could have been hoped, on the contrary, that things would change. But once again there were disappointments for all the groups, which weren't states. The charter of the United Nations does not actually use the word "minority", a serious deficiency, need I say? Elsewhere, however, the African states themselves, by their own movement and by common agreement, decided to conserve the administrative districts laid down on these territories by the colonizer, as the borders of these new states. In other words, it was the territories rather than the populations or the ethnic groups which were taken into account.

** Professor at the Collège de France*

All these steps should further have been confirmed by certain conflicts and I am thinking in particular, about the conflict of Biafra which Bernard Kouchner is very familiar with, and he remembers better than anyone, that the Secretary General of the United Nations, U. Than, who was, however, widely recognized as a strong and virtuous man, and as a very inspired Buddhist in the spiritual field, said, all the same, that the United Nations could do nothing for the Biafra people and that the United Nations had not been set up to request the unity of its members' states. In fact afterwards, when in 1977, within the framework of these same United Nations, protocols of humanitarian law were set up, a fairly favourable regime was adopted for those who found themselves in a colonial war of liberation, but not for those who were attempting to defend their own identity within the country. I remember that only recently on a French television programme by Mr. Frédéric Mitterrand, a programme devoted to the Kurds and their vocation, an excellent programme I must say, which extremely well-informed Kurdish and French personalities took part in, Gérard Chaliand said I think, or at least if it was not him it was one of his friends, that there was actually a sort of confiscation by the colonized peoples, by the western states, of the right of peoples to self-determination and that the right of peoples to self-determination had not been used as it should have been with regard to other states and other phenomena of domination.

Nevertheless, even though the Charter of the United Nations does not leave room for any other entities apart from its member states, or state entities recognized as such, it must be said that neither the Security Council, nor the General Assembly, and even less the International Court of Justice of the Hague can offer any direct opportunities to a group which is not of state control. They can offer these opportunities if other states of the International Court take on the cause for these groups and take action to support them and take their cause into account and, as I wanted to say earlier when beginning, we are at a moment of change, a moment of evolution, of extreme transformation and that international law, which I have just described and which has been fairly disappointing has been a law according to which every state has acted for itself and without thinking of its interests.

This is of course still the case, this has not changed. I'm not naive about this. But we are witnessing the emergence of a new trend of thought, which is rousing the United Nations' community and which many of the states themselves are becoming more and more sensitive to. Firstly I would like to say, in connection to my objective, with regard to the positive aspect, that peoples' right to self-determination, even if it is not generally exercised is, all the same, in the positive law recognized as a universal law and it is thus invocable by all the human groups, and the resolution of Nations of 1952 actually declares, in respect to this, that all states with a minority on its territory, are obliged to contribute to the full and entire practice of its rights. On the other hand I must also mention the fact that peoples' right to self-

determination is recognized by the United Nations' two pacts on human rights, voted in 1966 by the General Assembly. Finally, we should recall the numerous declarations, which have been voted by the General Assembly, declarations on the elimination of all forms of racial, religious or other discrimination. Declarations of great value, because they end up being taken up again almost constantly by the United Nations, by shaking up consciences, by making ideas evolve and by arousing those people's guilty conscience, who take advantage of the state of affairs at the expense of justice, and in these conditions we therefore see a whole operation, which could be called a sort of prophetic operation, which is carried out and which thus comes to evoke new principals.

With regard to this, I could say that if we examine the situation offered at present by international law, I will describe all in passing, simply in a regional context, in the European context, since one of the interested states, Turkey, is part of the European committee, the European Convention of human rights of 25th November 1950, the government of Ankara made it known recently that it recognized the competence of the European court of justice of human rights, based in Strasbourg and it may have possibilities of evolution in this direction. Whether or not in the United Nations organization multiple procedures exist, procedures, furthermore, brought into play by the famous pacts of 1966, to which the states concerned did not give their ratification, the fact still remains that we are witnessing the development of a more and more generalized action in the human rights' fields, action of good-willed states who are acting, who are intervening in other governments who refer to the old relationship that they have with them, the friendship they sealed in the past, to attract their attention to various unjust situations which they are covering up on their own territory.

This is obviously something which was unthinkable about twenty years ago, because in the past one would have said "but you are interfering in my interior affairs by asking me for explanations, me, the minister for foreign affairs, me the prime minister of such and such a government, you are interfering in my affairs. I don't have to answer to you".

Today the states are more and more embarrassed to reply like this. This subtle but pressing diplomatic intervention is an act of various states and it is also an act of France. May I remind you that President François Mitterrand stated that non-interference stopped where the risk of non-assistance appeared. It is a very important statement, because it expresses this new trend which I am explaining and which other countries in turn are also adopting.

During an intervention at the United Nations, Mr. Claude Cheysson, who was at the time France's Minister for Exterior Relations, said that the defence of human

rights ought to be founded on the existence of the international community. This speech caused surprise at the time. In reality this recent speech, which goes back 6 or 7 years has stayed with us ever since. Recently, last September the Institute of International Law, which is the highest ranking scientific establishment, which gathers lawyers of international law who determine what the principles dominating the practice of Nations should be assembled. The Institute of International Law unanimously voted a resolution stating that the states have a duty to the international community to respect human rights. It is their duty to respect human rights in their country and this duty is with regard to the whole of the international community, with regard to humanity. It is a thought which changes everything. We are no longer at a time in traditional international law when it's everyone for himself. We are entering into a community vision, the support of international public opinion.

And it is precisely this which gives non-governmental organizations, the NGO, the faculties they are using now, we are witnessing an eruption of the NGO in international life. In reality if the NGO has this daring now, it is because it really feels this transformation, this turning point which demands the support of public opinion. With respect to this, I would like to remember and pay homage to the General Assembly of the United Nations, it is often criticized, but this time it deserves to be paid homage. On December 8, 1988, it voted the resolution 43-131, an extremely important resolution, which was due, I would like to say to the efforts and initiatives of Bernard Kouchner and to all those who have supported him since the famous colloquium in January 1987, in Paris concerning humanitarian aid. The resolution admits that non-governmental organizations have a role to play in humanitarian aid and it affirmed this resolution of the principle of free access to victims. The states are supposed to give these organizations access to victims to give them the assistance and aid they need. What wish does this express?

This means that the victims as members of humanity have a right to be helped and this means that non-governmental organizations have as members of humanity the right and the duty to give them help. Without stepping outside the boundaries of morality, it is impossible to oppose this. Considerable progress is, thus, being established.

I understand that this view, which is still new, seems prospective. But we're here to become aware of these evolutions, these transformations, because it questions the very idea that the defence of human rights is no longer the problem of such and such a person, that the defence of human rights isn't the problem of people like those of the XIXth century. The bourgeoisie of this century recoiled from human rights like from a magot. The only way to defend human rights is to put ourselves at the service of the defense of the rights of others. And it is precisely this way of living as a

community, in the defense of human rights, which is establishing itself now. It is a huge change in attitude. We need to be aware of it in order to help it to consolidate and develop. Its great virtue is precisely its belief that through human rights everyone can be themselves. The objective of human rights is to be oneself. Firstly of course one can be oneself by oneself. But today we also have the opportunity to be ourselves with the support of others, because, from now on others have the duty to consider that there is no longer a place for abandoned peoples. Everyone must join together to help those forgotten by history. Singular vision, of course, because defending human rights means becoming responsible, showing solidarity, it means putting oneself at the very heart of this humanity, which is spoken about more and more. We talk about humanity's common patrimony with respect to the stones in the Pacific, but don't you think that human rights are the first part of humanity's common patrimony. If this is the case, it follows that humanity has the right to its integrality, humanity cannot accept exclusion.

TO BETTER UTILIZE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

*Thomas HAMMERBERG **

I represent here today the newly-formed Swedish committee for Human Rights in Kurdistan which is a committee which represents all 8 political parties in Sweden with support from the church and the unorthodox church, from the trade unions and the humanitarian organisations. I will come back to that committee a bit later. I'm not going to report on anything. I'm trying to look forward and to give some ideas about strategy. But I think to discuss strategy, there's one question that has to be touched upon, and that is, why is it so difficult for us to elevate the Kurdish issue on an international, more official level? The mere fact that this conference is organised in the way it is is a bit of a sensation because it has never happened before that one government had taken a clear, positive position towards the Kurdish nation.

Why is it that it is so difficult ? Just a couple of quick attempts to explain. First of all, in the political world, it's seen that the countries, the nation states in that area are fragile. Secondly, we regard the Middle East as an extremely explosive area for world peace. Thirdly, it is a general understanding among governments, not least the United Nations Members, that one has to be careful about any tendency towards secession because if one began to allow secessions, you could have some kind of a domino effect. And if you look at the African discussion on this, for instance, the answer is very clear: do not allow any part of any country to secede.

The Kurdish issue is even more complicated by the fact that Kurdistan covers more than one country. Furthermore, when in the early 70's a question of oil came up and OPEC began to flex its muscles, we had a situation where more and more governments in Europe, for instance, felt that they did not want to offend these countries because of economic interests. In fact, they also believe that there is one other explanation why it has been so difficult to discuss the Kurdish issue, that is, that your case is so terribly strong. The Kurdish case is so strong, and that makes it even more difficult to begin to discuss it because you may touch on these matters which I've just discussed: the need for so many governments to keep the country together, otherwise the dominant trend will start. I think that there are some other explanations as well. By way of auto-criticism, one of the strategies used by the

** President of Save the Children, Ex-president of Amnesty International*

Kurdish organisations and their friends has not always been very effective. It has been understood that the Kurdish organisations, rightly or wrongly - but that is how it has been understood, have been taking a maximilist position, that you have asked for total independence, one state, and that fairly soon. And this perception of the Kurdish organisations taking a maximilist position has frightened many governments. Another reason is for the problems, when it comes to strategies, that the Kurdish organisations have appeared to be split, non-unified—that has also frightened many governments who were interested in the human rights aspect, for instance, of the Kurdish struggle.

I believe that the discussion now has to go on two lines ; first, self-determination, and secondly, human rights. When it comes to self-determination, for the reasons I've just mentioned, of course, that aspect is a difficult one to discuss today, especially with the background of the events in the Soviet Union. But I think that probably within a fairly short time, there will be a growing awareness among governments that the response to national demands within the country is not to clamp down, is not to create pressure, but the only way , for instance in the Soviet Union, to keep the nation-state together is to start listening to the claims from the different minorities and nationalities. So it is possible that we, within a fairly short time, will have a switch of attitude among some of the governments when it comes to the issue of self-determination. And when that comes, we shall be prepared for an intelligent discussion. I leave that for the moment and go to human rights.

In the struggle for human rights there are three important aspects. One, to have the facts. Two, to utilize the international machineries which have been created and could be used to push our cases forward. And thirdly, to see to it that the conclusions of these international machineries are, in fact, enforced. When it comes to the Kurdish human rights problems, none of these three approaches have been implemented in an effective way. We have not been effective when it comes to fact-finding. There is a recycling of information and when there was a discussion in the U.N. Human Rights Commission in March this year, the information was not sufficient for a good discussion. Secondly, the machineries that do exist, for instance, within the Human Rights Commission have not been used in a prepared, well-planned deliberate way by governments or by the non-governmental groups. And thirdly, there have been too few attempts, of course, by governments to implement the international standards which are there, for instance, when it comes to chemical warfare.

Some proposals :

The Swedish Committee for Human Rights in Kurdistan is prepared to, so to say, take the torch from this Paris conference and organise sometime next year before the summer another conference which will aim at pulling together the information that

does exist. And as a preparation for that conference, to try to organise international teams to go as delegations to the countries concerned, collect facts, and report to that next conference to see to it that we have up-to-date, accurate information when the next U.N. sub-commission starts next August. I am also informed that our British friends are prepared to organise some kind of a preparatory meeting, early next year, January or February, to try to prepare for that kind of fact-finding and conference. I think that it's very important that this conference will not end up with a declaration and a good spirit, but that the concrete work will continue after this meeting. I also believe that there is a need for some kind of an international committee, network, that would help us to bring this strategy forward, for instance, when it comes to using the international machineries that do exist.

With all respect, the proposals that have come here about the General Assembly of the United Nations are very nice, and they may be good, long-range goals. But we will not be able, in a short time, to organise an official representation as an observer for the Kurdish organisations within the United Nations — it's just not realistic. Also, it's just not realistic to believe that within a shorter time, we'll be able to have a decision within the General Assembly for an extra session on the Kurdish issue. It's just not realistic. But there are possibilities, even in a short and middle-range time span to begin to infiltrate the international system to see to it that the positions are moved forward, and one is the Human Rights Commission. Another one is to mobilize more efforts in relation to the United Nations High Commission on Refugees, because they have an obvious task within their own mandate today to do something for the refugees in Turkey, Irak, and Iran. And we have all the possibilities to mobilise our friends and governments at home to go to Geneva and push the United Nations High Commissioner to do much more than he or they have done so far on these issues.

So I propose that this new international support committee for human rights in Kurdistan will be asked to consider in depth a more effective strategy in order to bring the Kurdish issue to the attention of international organisations, and that would also include the European Community and the different parliamentary organisations.

Finally, I think as this is so difficult to bring into the world of governments, the non-governmental organisations have their duty to take the lead on these issues, and I hope that the British friends organising the meeting in London in January/February next, will see to it that non-governmental organisations are brought into this discussion to take part in the shaping of a common strategy to bring the rights of the Kurdish people forward in the international community.

Thank you.

FINAL RESOLUTION

of the International Paris Conference

The International Conference "The Kurds: Human Rights and Cultural Identity, meeting in Paris on October 14-15, 1989 on the initiative of France-Libertés and the Kurdish Institute, in concluding:

and considering that the Kurds, a people divided among several countries, is enduring a tragic fate only because of their desire to preserve their cultural identity and defend their legitimate political and democratic rights in each of the countries in which they live,

expresses the desire:

- that its work be continued by the establishment of permanent missions responsible for defending human rights in the countries where the Kurdish people live, missions which are open to members of the parliaments of all democratic countries, and asks France-Libertés to act towards this goal;
- that representatives of the Kurdish people be invited to address the European Parliament, the Council of Europe and all major international institutions;
- that national governments prohibit the production of chemical weapons and also that the governments support an international agreement to impose economic and political sanctions against countries which use chemical or biological weapons in violation of international law;
- recommends the immediate creation of a representative organization of the Kurdish

people as a whole with the aim of obtaining observer status in the United Nations General Assembly;

- requests, on Professor Sakharov's initiative, that the UN , as guardian of international peace, convene a special session of the General Assembly, on the Kurdish issue;
- draws attention to the tragic condition of the Kurdish refugees and insists that talks with the High Commission on Refugees be held immediately, so that an active and effective support, which took into consideration the wishes and aspirations of the people particularly concerning humanitarian aid, could be brought to bear; a special meeting of the H.C.R. could be devoted to this problem;
- denounces the fate reserved for the displaced Kurdish populations and asks the states involved to respect the relevant principles of International Law, including humanitarian aid, if the people request it;
- requests to this end that the right of free access to victims be granted to intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, acting in an impartial and neutral way in conformity with United Nations General Assembly Resolution 43/131 of December 8, 1988.

The Conference expresses its desire to meet again in Stockholm before July 1990 under the sponsorship of the Swedish Committee for Human Rights in Kurdistan.

SPECIAL RESOLUTIONS

of the international conference in Paris

Three months after the July 13th assassination of three Kurdish individuals, Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, Secretary General of the PDKI, Mr. Abdullah Ghaderi, representative of the PDKI in Europe, and Dr. Fadil Rasoul, the inquest carried out by the Austrian authorities seems to this day to have brought no results. It is as though one still continues to believe that the authors of this crime are still not known to everybody.

The essential pieces of information, those of the autopsy reports and the ballistic expert have still not, officially that is, been put into the file. This has interfered with the establishment of the conditions under which the three Kurds were assassinated during a meeting with three Iranian emissaries.

One of the emissaries disappeared on the night of the crime, another was permitted to leave Austria without problems and with the prerogative of diplomatic immunity which the Austrian authorities say they were not able to avoid granting under these circumstances. The third member of this Iranian "delegation" is officially in refuge in his embassy in Vienna, under the provisions of a ridiculous charge.

We cannot accept a state of affairs that, if prolonged, would signify that the crime in Vienna will go more or less unpunished — not only in respect for the memory of our friends, but also for fear that fairness and justice be respected. We cannot believe that a democratic country, in the name of whatever reasons given by the state, could flout its own laws and values that are the rights and values of all democratic nations.

This is why we entreat the Austrian authorities, with all our force, to implement all possible means available to them so that light may be shed on the July 13th crime and its authors identified and pursued. We ask that the results of the inquest be made public and that the Austrian justice authorities continue their work without hindrance, indicting the assassins and their accomplices.

THE KURDISH QUESTION BEFORE THE AMERICAN CONGRESS

A few days after the Paris conference on 23rd October 1989, the plight of the Kurdish people was raised before the United States' Congress. In addition to congressmen Tom Lantos and John Porter, the co-presidents of the Congress' Committee on Human Rights and the organizers of this special session convoked in honour of Mrs. Mitterrand, a dozen people spoke to evoke the Kurdish drama. We have reprinted in the pages that follow the moving testimony of Mrs. Mitterrand and the intervention of Senator Edward Kennedy.

MADAME MITTERRAND'S TESTIMONY

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very aware of the interest that you bring to the Kurdish people's situation as it appeared to me during my trip to Turkey in May 1989 and I thank you for giving me the opportunity to relate this very trying experience before an assembly as prestigious as that of the U.S. Congress.

I made this trip to Turkey at the request of Kurds exiled in the world, in my official capacity as President of the France-Libertés Foundation.

Perhaps even in the name of two France-Libertés Foundations since New York is home to the headquarters of a twin sister organisation over which I also preside.

So it is in this context that I must very rapidly explain what France-Libertés is.

France-Libertés is the materialisation of a path begun in my adolescence, close to my parents in the Resistance.

In my childhood, I was in good hands with the example of a father who knew how to make his ideals serve his teaching. The refusal of discrimination, respect for the other, fierce indignation before injustice.

I could also have been influenced by a man who is today the President of the French Republic and who has never failed in his Human Rights policy.

The aim of France-Libertés is "to contribute to the emergence and reinforcement of individual and collective freedoms in the world", and also "to help those who work towards this end."

This article of our statute finds its echo in our motto "the free man is he who helps the other to become one."

That is to say that we are at the intersection of two preoccupations: the one traditional: to remedy individual distress; the other which is less so, since it backs

itself up with concrete actions to denounce oppression there where it imposes itself on individuals, on peoples, and on communities.

Such is, at least, our ambition. It's in this way that France-Libertés alone or associated with other organisations has contributed by sending materials or money, or in the course of colloquiums,

- to a campaign in favor of landless peasants in Brazil, defending the right to existence, to settlement, and to work;
- to an information mission in Africa for the prevention of AIDS, right to health;
- to the creation of a Human Rights chair in Brasilia, right to information;
- to a pre-school program in the Philipines and in the South African township; right to education;
- to the creation of orphanages in Bangladesh, to stop the exile of abandoned children;
- but also to the protection of Indians on the Equator, the best guarantors of their environment;
- I should add the Dakar meetings for a democratic alternative in South Africa, right to alternation.

These actions are cited as examples, but chosen for what they signify.

Consequently, the Kurds have naturally found their place in our preoccupations: each of them being in a state of distress and their people as a whole threatened with elimination.

In this region of the world they assuredly exhibit a certain particularity: the Indo-European origin of their language, their religious pluralism in majority Sunni muslim, but leaving room at the same time for other minorities, the modernity of their morals offers women a freedom exceptional on Islamic territory.

Perhaps you remember that, at the suggestion of Woodrow Wilson, President of the U.S.; in 1920 the Treaty of Sevres envisaged for the Kurds the right to create their own nation state, but by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 the exact opposite was established, and the territory populated by the native Kurds was divided into four states: Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria.

Since that time, within each of these states, the Kurds have had to fight without respite to save their lives and their population, there to preserve all that constitutes their originality. The fight against their culture and the memory of their people has sometimes reached an unimaginable cruelty.

The diverse testimonies received over the years have made me conscious of the dramas experienced by this population depending on the country in which they live.

But today I can give my own testimony and react to what I could see, hear and collect as information.

Upon my arrival at the airport of Ankara I was welcomed at the foot of the walkway by representatives of Turkish governmental authorities; a few meters away, Kurdish deputies were waiting for me with greetings in their own language; in the name of their Kurdish brothers.

A few days before they were still at our sides, during a conference in Paris reuniting Kurds from the diverse countries where they live, surrounded by those of the diaspora from all over the world. They came in spite of the prohibitions imposed on them and could testify in complete freedom.

Had I been bound by the various meetings organized in my honor, by the conversations of the Prime Minister's wife and her entourage, by the "information" of a french journalist living in Ankara, I could have been convinced of the inexistence of the Kurdish problem in Turkey.

It appeared that "these mountain Turks" as they are officially called, had banished their Kurdish memory and lived in full harmony with their environment.

"Perhaps we can spare you the trouble of traveling to Diyarbakir" I was proposed. "The planes aren't comfortable and the hotels third class and shabby; in addition your security will be problematic." (Now, why would it?)

Only, on the way, I hadn't forgotten that my mission was to visit the Iraki Kurds who had taken refuge in Turkey. So I had to go.

The plane had scarcely touched the runway at two o'clock in Ankara, when a population with their hands filled with flowers pushed forward to touch me and cry out messages to me that I didn't understand at first. But a sentence which was translated for me, repeated like a leitmotif, and still resonates in my memory.

"We exist for you Mme. Mitterrand, thank you for having come to meet us."

“Welcome to the home of the Kurds”. Then there were only songs, dances and warm and trusting pressings of hands until I moved away in the car.

My program was established. I knew that leaving at the break of dawn the next day, after 4 or 5 hours of travel by car we would reach the first camp to visit, that of Mus. On the way back we would stop at the camp with a greater number of families, a few kilometers from Diyarbakir. But from the evening of my arrival, the requests for interviews came to me from the inhabitants of the city.

Such as a mother who wants to speak to me in the name of all the wives and mothers of prisoners who are serving sentences of up to 30 years in prison for having claimed their language and culture. Her testimony was among the most moving.

Such as the playwright known as a remarkable writer who witnesses his home regularly searched and his writings go up in smoke. The elderly man continues however to write in order to feel free for as long as he is in front of his page; he profoundly moved me.

I also met a young woman whose husband, former mayor of the city had been imprisoned for nine years and for how many more years: his only crime was to have spoken Kurdish publicly in the building of this town hall.

I deliver these testimonies to you as I received them.

For the Kurds of Turkey, repression is essentially cultural: impossible to speak, write, or of course to publish in Kurdish and obviously the prohibition on teaching children in their own language. This repression is carried out according to methods which no defender of human rights would be able to tolerate.

From the next day on, I would encounter other calls of distress. The trip was long, and the vigilance of the security officers which the Turks had assigned to me, was extensive. I am not used to such a deployment of forces, accompanied in my travels by only two security officers, wherever in the world I have to go.

The cortege was lengthy with men in arms and on the alert. I could have been impressed.

Finally we reached the camp of Mus: permanent one-floor housing construction, a few kilometers from the city, surrounded with barbed wire, guarded by soldiers night and day.

But simply opening my eyes was enough to understand the reality. The appalling

living conditions of 7 to 8 people in a bare room. They possessed nothing more, in 5 months all had been sold, jewelry, objects and all personal goods. They had to make do with what was parsimoniously distributed, and they no longer bore the degrading inactivity.

Living conditions in the camp of Diyarbakir scarcely differed, but the next day, Tuesday, May 2, images impose themselves and obsess me. Under one of the 2700 tents of the camp of Mardin somewhere in a desert of pebbles in southern Turkey - eleven o'clock in the morning and already 37°, soon in a few weeks it will be 40° to 45° while only two months ago it was -15° under this same tent.

Completely dependent on Turkish good will; feeling completely forgotten by the rest of the world; already so distressed, who are they, these men, these women, that a "host country" isolates them behind barbed wire guarded by the army; children, thousands of children, theirs, but also humanity's wait undernourished, without school, without activities, asking what their crime is.

What can they nourish in their hearts, hate, bitterness, hopelessness? Adults, they will not forget, they will hold grudges against their executioners of course, but also against those who knew and who abandoned them.

Be careful, through indifference, of inciting and feeding violence. Leaving this unimaginable place, I still hear the voices of women and children echoing "Don't forget us Mme. Mitterrand, the silence is killing us."

There is no worse action than to disappoint a sustained hope. I am conscious of this but I also know that France-Libertés' only power is to convince decision making authorities of the necessity of intervention.

In this year 1989, bicentennial of the Declaration of Human Rights, if the French government accepted France-Libertés' proposition to welcome a few hundred Iraqi Kurds, the awaited answer to the Kurdish problem is situated well beyond.

So, I ask aloud the question which doesn't fail to come to your minds: Why close these camps behind armed guards? Why refuse to let the HCR take these refugees into consideration and assure them of the guarantees to which this status entitles them?

But above all why did they flee Iraq? Why did they abandon their homes and all their possessions, since the war between Iraq and Iran is over and peace reinstated, why don't they return to their villages to rebuild, to cultivate their fields, raise their

livestock? Iraqi law is supposed to guarantee them the possibility. Their official status includes no less than 4 measures in their favor!

- a recognition of cultural identity
- use of their language
- school provided
- right to represent the population in the highest governmental proceedings.

Manifestly, the Kurds of the camp of Mus, of Diyarbakir as those in the camp of Mardin are not convinced, one only needs to listen to them: "our villages were bombed, gassed, our population when not exterminated was displaced to southern Iraq, a particularly inhospitable region where we don't adapt, we are even deported in our country Iraq, and in difficult and unacceptable conditions.

We can't do anything as here we can neither produce nor exchange, nor exercise any profession. But in our home, in addition our life is directly threatened; our province has been repopulated by Arabs from Egypt as if our return had been made definitively impossible.

When I speak of the amnesty which has been proposed to them they answer "Some of us believed it and returned; we have had no more news of them."

"We aspire from the depths of our souls to return to our homes. How will we be protected if no one watches over us."

"Don't forget us Mme. Mitterrand, the silence is killing us."

Without wanting to heap abuse on the Turkish government which evidently lacks the means but which however rejects the NGO aid, obviously one mustn't count on it to manage the situation. It wants to consider this accomodation as temporary as it doesn't wish to see the Iraki Kurds come and enlarge the Kurdish community of Turkey. This is probably why they will do everything so that the Iraki Kurds are not recognized as having the status of "refugees" as understood by international convention.

By their inordinate requirements, Turkish authorities made impossible any agreement between themselves and the High Commission for Refugees.

The result: the Kurds of Irak in Turkey in are in a situation of absoloute hopelessness, able neither to return home - their deep wish - nor to insert themselves into the Kurdish population of Turkey.

These are their testimonies which I deliver to you.

So how to get beyond this impasse?

The only hope of a non-governmental organisation is to awaken consciences...to awaken consciences without infringing on the sacrosanct duty of non-interference... seems to me an impossibility - but then who will speak in the name of the Kurds if not democratic states? Certain leaders seem to be already engaged on this track at least in their remarks.

In this year 1989, haven't I retained a citation repeated in several circumstances "the duty of non-intervention ends at the very point where the risk of non-assistance begins."

Tell me, are we out of context?

In order to defend fundamental rights, can the Kurds count on their states which persecute them. Couldn't we find justifications for this "interference" in the necessity of demanding respect for international conventions which were voted on by all concerned countries, beginning with the pacts of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

Conclusion

I will say that we live in a world of principles proclaimed and alas rarely respected, must one only count on an international jurisdiction which allows one to remind those who have made commitments that they have indeed done so?

In all conscience and humanely, we can't wait for such a jurisdiction to put itself into place, what must be urgently done so as not to feed a growing hopelessness?

Don't forget them, the silence is killing them.

I thank you.

Statement of Senator Edward M. KENNEDY

Let me first commend the Congressional Human Rights Caucus and especially Congressmen Tom Lantos and John Porter for hosting this important briefing on the plight of the Kurdish people. For too long, Congress has ignored this tragedy and today's briefing is an important first step in raising the consciousness of Congress and the American people about the crisis of the Kurds.

We are honored today by the presence of a tireless champion of the rights of the Kurdish people, Mrs. Danielle Mitterrand. Her persistence, commitment and dedication to preserving the Kurdish culture have greatly advanced this oft-forgotten goal. Friends of justice everywhere owe her a deep debt of gratitude and thanks for her efforts.

Mrs. Mitterrand has travelled to Iraqi Kurdish camps in Turkey and seen first hand the hardships of these innocent victims of persecution. She established a human rights foundation in Paris, the French Liberty Foundation, which has joined in the struggle of the Kurds and, together with the Kurdish Institute of Paris, she organized the first international conference ever devoted to the tragic history of the Kurds.

Last weekend's conference is a long-overdue recognition by the international community of the need for urgent protection of one of the proudest and oldest cultures. Attended by Kurds from 23 countries and distinguished guests from around the world, the conference was an important international recognition of one of the most flagrant examples of man's inhumanity to man. It brought home to all of us the need to take immediate steps to bring an end to the ongoing campaigns of persecution of these people.

Let us never forget that, even today, Iraq continues to destroy Kurdish villages, Turkey continues to prohibit Kurds from speaking their native language and Iran continues its wars against the Kurds. Earlier this year, the Iraqi government began a massive campaign for the forcible relocation of tens of thousands of Kurds in northern Iraq to other parts of the country. Last year, thousands of Kurds died from the poison gas attacks by Iraq and thousands more had to flee to Turkey, Iran and Syria.

The brutal Iraqi campaign to eradicate the Kurdish culture must be universally condemned by the civilized world. The use of chemical weapons against Kurdish villages last year was one of the most brutal and horrendous actions of modern times. Credible reports detailing the attack by Iraqi warplanes talk of the air smelling like bad garlic, of thousands of "frozen" bodies, of birds falling out of the sky, and of livestock dropping dead. Some villages reported Iraqi troops opening fire with machine guns on the survivors and bulldozing bodies into mass graves. 65,000 Kurds fled Turkey immediately following that attack. Their stories are bone chilling.

We may never know the extent of that tragedy but we must act now to ensure it never, never happens again.

Helsinki Watch summed up the plight of the Kurds as a "staggering list of human rights abuses: arrests, torture, murder, assassination, chemical warfare, mass deportations, expulsions, appalling conditions in refugee camps, refusal of political asylum by the West, denial of ethnic rights to language, literature and music, and destruction of villages, towns and cities."

The international community and the civilized world can no longer remain silent on the issue of the persecuted Kurdish people. Far too often throughout history, the Kurds have been treated as pawns in regional conflicts, their people have been persecuted and their culture repressed. The time to stop this crime against humanity has come.

The Kurdish conference last weekend in Paris proposed many worthwhile initiatives which I hope will be reviewed and implemented. I urge my colleagues, in particular, to follow the suggestion of the Soviet human rights activist, Andrei Sakharov, and press UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar to organize a special General Assembly session on the Kurds. I also hope that the High Commissioner for Refugees will use his power and influence to ease the plight of these people. And the United States Government must take a leadership role in prohibiting the use of deadly chemical weapons - and in ensuring that anyone who dares use them suffers severe consequences from the international community.

For too long, powerful governments and individuals have persecuted this priceless culture with impunity. We must rededicate ourselves to combatting this tragedy and preserving the Kurdish way of life. Mrs. Mitterrand, I commend you for your leadership in this important struggle and believe you have brought us closer to the goals we all share. Together, we will triumph and ensure that the Kurds and their culture receive justice and honor they deserve.

ANNEX 1

LIST OF THE PARTICIPANTS

About 240 Kurdish and foreign personalities, including 85 journalists, from 32 countries attended the conference. Far from being exhaustive the following list is provided for your information.

Foreign participants

Mr. ADONIS, poet, representative of the Arab League to Unesco.

Mr. AIT AHMET Hocine, ex-minister, Algeria.

Mr. AKSENTIJEVIC Mirko, Professor of Political Science at Belgrade University, Yugoslavia.

Mrs. AL-OBIED Fayza Hassan, Lawyer, Egypt

Mr. AL-ZOUHARI Kamil, writer, ex-president to the Union of Arab writers, Egypt.

Mr. AMIN AL-ALIM Mahmoud, writer, professor of philosophy, Egypt.

Lord AVEBURY, President of the Parliamentary Human Rights Group, Great Britain.

Mr. BETATI Mario de, Dean of the Law School of the University of Paris XI, France

Mrs. BLAU DE WANGEN Joyce, professor of the Kurdish language, France

Mr. BLUM Michel, President of the Special Committee of Non-Governmental Organisations, the United Nations, France.

Mr. BOEV, Director of the Institute of Oriental studies at the Academy of Sciences, Bulgaria.

Mr. BOLDRINI, Senator, President of the Association of Partisans, Italy.

Mr. BONNOT Michel, doctor, Director of the Emergency Unit at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France.

Mr. BULUS Habib, Representative for the Union of Arab Writers, Israel.

Mrs. BURLY Ann, Leader of the European Section of Amnesty International, Great Britain.

Mrs. CASABIANCA Chantal, spokeswoman for Amnesty International, France

Mr. CHENAL Alain, responsible for the Socialist Party of the Middle East, France.

Mrs. CLYWD Ann, Member of Parliament of the Shadow Cabinet of the Labour Party, Great Britain.

Mrs. CONNORS Jane, law professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies, Great Britain.

Mr. CORBYN Jeremy, Member of Parliament, Great Britain.

Mr. DAFTARI Metin, President of the National Democratic Front, Iran.

Mr. DOPFFER François, Director of OFPRA, France.

Mr. DOUEB Raphaël, Secretary General of the France-Libertés Foundation, France.

Mrs. DUFOIX Georgina, ex-minister of Social Affaires, France.

Mr. DUPUY René-Jean, professor of international law at the College of France.

Algeria, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, East Germany, Egypt, France, Great Britain, India, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kurdistan, Lebanon, Netherlands, Norway, New Zealand, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Syria, Turkey, U.S.A., U.S.S.R., West Germany, Venezuela, Yugoslavia.

- Mrs. DUPUY Lydie, French commissary of human rights, at the European Council.
Mr. EAGLETON William, ex-ambassador to the United States, in Bagdad and Damas.
Mr. FAKHRI Selim, ex-minister, Iraq
Mrs. FUGIER Françoise, official representative of the Presidence, at the Presidency of the Republic, France.
Mr. GALBRITH Peter, member of the Committee of Exterior Relations to the American Senate.
Mrs. GALETTI Mirella, Orientalist and Kurdologist, Italy.
Mr. GALLMETZER Hartman, doctor, President of the Wolkspartei, South Tyrol, Italy.
Mr. GASRATIAN Manuel, professor, ex-director of the Kurdish section of the Institute of Orientalism at the Academy of Sciences, Soviet Union.
Mr. GEORGE Susan, writer, researcher at the Institute for Policy Studies, U.S.A.
Mrs. GHASSEMLOU Elena, France
Mr. GILBERT D, Member of Parliament, Great Britain
Mrs. GJÖRUP Fanny, The Danish Helsinki Committee, Denmark.
Mrs. GRAHAM Helga, journalist, Great Britain.
Mr. GURSOY Gencay, professor, Turkey.
Mrs. GÜNEY Fatos, Turkey.
Mr. HAMMERBERG Thomas, ex-president of Amnesty International, President of Save the Children, Sweden.
Mr. HEYNDIRCKS Aubin, professor and director of the laboratory of toxicologie at the University of Grent, Belgium.
Mr. KREYENBROEK Philip, professor of Kurdish at the School of Oriental and African Studies, Great Britain.
Mrs. LABER Jeri, Director of Helsinki Watch U.S.A.
Mrs. Laizer Sheri, writer, New Zealand
Mrs. LAMOUCHE Anne, personal secretary to Mrs. Mitterrand.
Mrs. LAZAREV, professor, Director of the Kurdish section at the Institute of Orientalism and the Academy of Sciences, Soviet Union.
Mrs. LEATHERBY Janet, Refugee Studies Programme, Great Britain
Mr. LINDEPERG Gérard, Member of Parliament, National Secretary to the Socialist Party for Human Rights and Freedom, France.
Mr. LUDINGTON Nick, journalist, Cyprus.
Mr. MATTARASO Léo, President of the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Populations, member of the Russel Tribunal, France.
Mrs. MINCES Juliette, writer, France.
Mr. MINKOWSKI Alexandre, professor, France.
Mrs. MITTERRAND Danielle.
Mr. MÖNCH ROLAND, professor, West Germany.
Mrs. ÖNEN Yavus, Association for Human Rights, Turkey.
Mr. PELL Claiborne, Senator, Chairman of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee.
Mr. PHILIPS John, Member of Parliament, Great Britain.
Mr. PILZ Peter, doctor, parlamantarian, Austria.
Mrs. PRUNHUBER Carole, writer, journalist, Venezuela.
Mr. PUNON Rafael, journalist, Spain.
Mrs. RASSOUL Susana, Doctor, Austria.

Mr. ROBERTS Gwynne, writer and journalist, Great Britain.
Mr. RODINSON Maxime, professor at the Sorbonne, France.
Mr. SCHWARTZ Laurent, professor at the Polytechnical School, President at the Superior Council of Universities, France.
Mr. TAHIRI Ahmed, writer, Iran.
Mr. TANILLI Server, professor, France.
Mr. TARABULSI Fawaz, writer, Lebanon.
Mrs. TAVIANI Henriette, president of France Land of Refuge. (France Terre d'Asile).
Mr. TEUVER Charlotte, professor, Austria.
Mrs. ZAZA Gilberte, writer, Switzerland
Mr. ZUBAIDA Sami, Professor of Sociology at the University of London, Great Britain.

Kurdish participants

Mr. ABDULRAHMAN Sami, Secretary General to the Popular Democratic Party in Iraqi Kurdistan.
Mr. AHMED Ibrahim, ex-secretary general to the PDK-Iraq.
Mr. AKSOY Ibrahim, parliamentarian, Turkey.
Mr. ALEMDAR Cemal, Great Britain.
Mr. ALINAK Mahmut, parliamentarian, Turkey.
Mr. ARDELAN Yusif, ex-representative of Komele, Iranian Kurdistan.
Mr. ASLAN Ali M., Lawyer, Turkey.
Mr. ATES Ismet, lawyer, Turkey.
Mr. ATTAR Dara, Great Britain.
Mrs. AVDALI Aza, journalist, Georgia, Soviet Union.
Mr. BAKAR Sahin, writer and journalist, Australia.
Mr. BAKSI, Mahmut, writer and journalist, Sweden
Mr. BEDREDDIN Salah, Secretary General to the P.D.K. Syria.
Mr. BEKAS Sherko, poet, Sweden.
Mr. BUCAK Sertaç, engineer, West Germany.
Mrs. BUCAK Yayla, teacher, West Germany.
Mr. BURKAY Kemal, lawyer, Secretary General to the Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan.
Mr. CHARAJI Hesên, member of the B.P. of P.D.K Iran.
Mr. DICLE Serhad, Secretary General to the Peseng, Turkish Kurdistan.
Mr. DIZAYEE Mohsen, personal representative of Mr. Barzani, Kurdistan.
Mr. EKMEK Adnan, parliamentarian, Turkey.
Mr. EREDEM Huseyin, President of the Kurdish Pen Club, West Germany.
Mr. EREN Mehmet Ali, parliamentarian, Turkey.
Mr. GÜÇLÜ Ibrahim, Sweden.
Mrs. GÜÇLÜ Nilüfer, lawyer, poet, Sweden.
Mr. HEJAR, poet, Kurdistan.
Dr. HUSSEIN Fuad, Holland.
Mr. IZOLI Keya, President of the Kurdish Federation of Sweden.
Mrs. JAMIL Perwin, President of the Kurdish Institute of Brussels, Belgium.
Dr. KARIM Najmaddin, U.S.A.
Dr. KHAILANY Asad, President of the Kurdish National Congress of North America, U.S.A.

- Mr. KHALIQI Mazhar, President of the Kurdish Cultural Centre, Great Britain.
Mr. MAMEND Rassoul, Secretary General to the P.S. of Iraqi Kurdistan.
Mr. MAJEED Jafar, Sweden.
Mr. MUFTI Adnan, member of the Political Bureau of the Socialist Party of Iraqi Kurdistan.
Prof. NADIROV Nadir, member of the Academy of Sciences, Kazakhstan, Soviet Union.
Dr. NADIROVA Helima, Kazakhstan, Soviet Union.
Dr. OTHMAN Mahmud, Leader of the Socialist Party of Iraq, Syria.
Mr. ÖNAL Ibrahim Hakki, parliamentarian, Turkey.
Mr. PIROT Ibrahim, representative of PDK Iran, Austria.
Dr. QAZZAZ, Shafiq, Great Britain.
Mr. RASUL Besir, researcher at the Institute of Orientalism, Soviet Union.
Mr. RESO Hemres; poet and journalist, West Germany.
Mr. SERHAD Medet, lawyer, Turkey.
Mr. SHAFFI Mozaffer, coordinator of the Kurdish Cultural Centre, Great Britain.
Mr. SÖNMEZ Kenan, parliamentarian, Turkey.
Mr. SÜMER Salih, parliamentarian, Turkey.
Mr. TALABANI Celal, Secretary General to the Patriotic Union of Iraqi Kurdistan.
Mrs. TALOYAN Marina, academic, Georgia.
Mr. TEIMORIAN Hazhir, journalist, Great Britain.
Mr. TÜRK Ahmet, parliamentarian, Turkey.
Mr. UZUN Mehmet, writer, Sweden.
Mr. VANLY Ismet Sheriff, historian, Switzerland.
Mr. ZILAN Reso, linguist, Sweden.

SELECTED PRESS ARTICLES

The conference gave rise to more than 400 articles both in near-eastern and in international press. A representative selection of these articles was presented in a special issue of the Institute's *Bulletin de liaison et d'information*. Here we have reproduced a small sampling of articles which appeared in the international press.



VENREDI 13 OCTOBRE 1989

Kurdes : le tort de ne pas être terroristes

PAR MARC KRAVETZ

Défense des droits de l'homme et identité culturelle : Une conférence sous ce titre se devrait de faire l'unité. À gauche comme à droite, ces thèmes font recette. Pourquoi non ? Ce devrait être l'honneur des démocrates d'en faire les principes intangibles de leur politique, et du respect de ceux-ci les bases de leurs interventions extérieures. La conférence qui s'ouvre demain à Paris, avenue Kleber, concerne les Kurdes. Et du même coup, les grands principes se font tout petits. Comme s'il s'agissait d'un sujet tabou.

Pour avoir été si souvent constaté, le silence général qui entoure le sort des quelque 25 millions de Kurdes répartis entre la Turquie, l'Irak, l'Iran et la Syrie - outre l'URSS - n'en reste pas moins desolant. On cherche à en vain dans le monde, et notamment au sein de celui qui s'affiche démocratique et se veut phare de la liberté, une voix officielle qui se soit un jour élevée pour défendre ce peuple ou même l'une des populations kurdes particulièrement en danger, comme c'est le cas aujourd'hui des Kurdes d'Irak menacés d'un véritable génocide.

Qui croira encore au discours occidental sur la défense des droits de l'homme quand on a larse impunément le régime de Bagdad exterminer, le mot n'est pas trop fort, des milliers de Kurdes irakiens réfugiés en Iran en utilisant massivement des obus chimiques ? A-t-on seulement entendu la France, qui a tant fait pour arrêter l'Irak de Saddam Hussein, élever une protestation même de pure forme ?

S'etournera-t-on alors que l'Autriche cherche par tous les moyens à oublier l'assassinat prémédité dans sa capitale d'une délégation kurde venue négocier la paix avec des officiers irakiens qui se sont révélés être autant de tueurs ? Certes, l'Autriche n'est pas, en ce domaine, un modèle de courage et de moralité, mais qui, parmi ses voisins de l'Occident européen, oserait lui jeter la pierre ?

L'accueil en France de quelques-uns des réfugiés kurdes d'Irak entassés dans les camps de Turquie ne peut faire oublier que, malgré les moyens diplomatiques dont la France dispose à Bagdad, celle-ci n'a pas pu, et en l'espèce pas voulu, imposer Saddam Hussein en engageant de lui un traitement simplement humain de la minorité kurde qui vit dans son pays. L'ait-il croire encore que la promesse de contrats juteux avec Ankara ou l'appartenance de la Turquie à l'OTAN expliquent la gêne de Paris ou de Washington s'agissant du sort des Kurdes turcs, dans un pays où parler kurde est un délit et où l'on interdit les films de Yilmaz Güney, Palme d'or à Cannes, parce que l'un d'eux mentionnait l'existence d'une question kurde en Turquie ?

Abdel-Rahman Ghassemlou, le secrétaire général du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan irakien, « exécuté » à Vienne le 13 juillet 1989 sur ordre de Teheran, avait noté à plusieurs reprises qu'on parlait d'autant moins des Kurdes qu'ils ne se livraient pas au terrorisme. Dans le cas particulier de son mouvement, le refus du terrorisme était une affirmation fondatrice. Ghassemlou était en effet convaincu que non seulement l'action terroriste ne pouvait que nuire au prestige international de la cause qu'il prétendait illustrer ou servir mais qu'elle finirait par la détruire de l'intérieur. Le secrétaire général du PDKI n'avait pourtant rien d'un apôtre de la non-violence. C'est un intellectuel de haute culture, ancien professeur, ayant troqué la vie universitaire pour celle d'un chef de guerre qui, depuis dix ans menait la vie dure à l'armée irakienne et autres Gardiens de la révolution. Son attitude, assurément dictée par un sens aigu de la morale en politique, était d'abord politique et nourrie d'une réflexion permanente sur l'histoire contemporaine. S'il pensait que la fin ne pouvait justifier les moyens, c'est qu'il avait aussi une idée précise de la fin poursuivie. L'autonomie (pour les Kurdes d'Irak) et la démocratie (en Iran), les deux mots d'ordre de son mouvement, impliquaient pour lui que ces principes s'incarnaient dans la lutte elle-même.

Abdel-Rahman Ghassemlou était l'un des très rares dirigeants de mouvements de libération nationale à croire de toutes ses fibres que la démocratie n'est pas un luxe pour le tiers monde, mais au contraire l'un des instruments essentiels de son émancipation. A ce titre, n'était-ce la désertion de l'homme, ont eût aimé imaginer qu'on l'aurait dans toutes ces tribunes internationales où il est si fort question des droits de l'homme. Ce ne lui jamais le cas. Jamais non plus on ne s'avisa autrement que dans de rares journaux (dont le nôtre) de solliciter son avis sur le terrorisme contemporain. Il aurait eu, pourtant beaucoup à dire, qui eût aidé à mieux comprendre la nature du danger, voire les moyens d'y faire face.

Aura-t-il assez répété à ses amis, à défaut de se faire entendre au-delà, que le terrorisme «...terrait moins bien s'il n'était constamment prêté à la gloire médiatique ? Que le crime serait moins tentant si finalement, et tellement souvent, il ne « payait » pas ? D'autres, bien sûr, l'ont noté et regretté. Accordons à cet homme d'en avoir apporté la preuve ultime au prix de sa propre vie. Si nul n'ignore d'où est venu l'ordre de l'assassiner et pas plus de nom des assassins que des commanditaires, force est de constater, une fois de plus, qu'on préfère laisser le crime impuni plutôt que de chercher noise à Hachemi Rafsandjani ou d'effa-

roucher de soi-disant opposants au nouveau maître de l'Irak, qui auraient commis ce crime pour lui nuire. Admirable dialectique qui permet au choix de blanchir ou d'ignorer l'assassin.

Cela s'appelle, nous le savons, la Realpolitik. Et les Kurdes le savent mieux que quiconque, eux qui pour leur

Les Kurdes ont trop d'adversaires bien placés et pas assez d'amis, ne sollicitant l'attention ni des tiers-mondistes impénitents ni des croisés de l'Occident. Pourtant, les 25 millions de Kurdes sont bien menacés d'une sorte d'ethnocide, sanglant en Irak et en Iran, insidieux en Turquie. Ils ne peuvent compter que sur eux-mêmes et peut-être aussi sur nous.

malheur vivent principalement entre trois pays tenus pour essentiels à l'équilibre géopolitique régional et qui plus est en pleine région pétrolière. Non seulement Ghassemlou le savait, mais il en avait fait l'un des piliers de la politique du PDKI. En cette fin de XX^e siècle, disait-il, on ne laissera pas la nation kurde se reconstituer en Etat sur la ruine de la Turquie, de l'Iran et de l'Irak. Aussi ne revendiquait-il pas l'indépendance mais l'autonomie pour son peuple. Le droit pour les Kurdes de gérer leurs propres affaires en Iran comme dans chacun des autres pays, dans le respect des souverainetés nationales. Le droit à la différence kurde dans le cadre d'Etats démocratiques respectueux de tous les peuples qui les composent. Autonomie, différence, démocratie : trois mots qui, s'il faut en croire l'histoire et l'actualité, ne se traduisent pas dans le vocabulaire politique irakien, irakien, turc ou syrien.

Nouvelle preuve s'il en fallut, les multiples pressions exercées depuis Bagdad et Ankara sur les invités de la Conférence internationale de Paris, l'interdiction faite aux parlementaires turcs de s'y rendre, y compris par leurs propres dirigeants du groupe social-démocrate dont le parti est membre de l'Internationale socialiste. Il est vrai qu'en ce domaine ils sont concurrencés par le silence gêné ou les excuses de dernière minute de personnalités françaises de la majorité comme de l'opposition, également invitées et subitement sollicitées par d'autres obligations dans leurs circonscriptions d'origine.

Les Kurdes ne sont ni juifs ni chrétiens. L'Occident n'a donc pas pu à exprimer sa mauvaise conscience à leur égard qu'il ne s'y sent impliqué à travers l'un de ses pseudopodes. Que leur reprocher d'autre ? De ne pas recourir au terrorisme qui leur vaudrait au moins la triste considération que l'on accorde aux preneurs d'otages ? Ou pis encore de ne pas être une espèce en voie de disparition à la manière des Indiens d'Amérique ou des aborigènes d'Australie ? Il est tellement plus confortable de défendre les droits de l'homme quand il n'y a plus d'hommes.

THE NEW YORK TIMES INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15, 1989

Paris Talks Seek Attention for Plight of Kurds

By STEVEN GREENHOUSE

Special to The New York Times

PARIS, Oct. 14 — Kendal Nezan, a soft-spoken refugee from Turkey and chairman of the Kurdish Institute, is dismayed that the world's millions of Kurds and their 1,000-year-old culture have become orphans of history.

Not only have the Kurds been denied their own homeland, but Iraq is systematically destroying Kurdish villages, Turkey prohibits Kurds from speaking their native language and Iran is waging a 10-year-old war against its Kurds.

Mr. Nezan complains that the Western democracies seem to have forgotten about the Kurds' plight ever since about 400,000 of them fled Iraq in 1967 after Baghdad dropped poison gas on several Kurdish villages. Kurdish leaders say thousands of Kurds died.

"Everyone seems to pay much more attention to a tiny Lebanese family group that kidnaps a few Americans than they do to the world's 25 million Kurds," said Mr. Nezan, a physicist who fled Turkey in 1971.

To "break the wall of silence" on the plight of his people, Mr. Nezan's Paris-based institute has organized the first international conference on the Kurds' human rights situation and cultural identity. Kurds are assembling in Paris from 23 countries, and Senator Claiborne Pell, Democrat of Rhode Island, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, is scheduled to speak on Sunday. The conference is also being sponsored by a French human rights group founded by Danielle Mitterrand, wife of the French President.

When the conference opened today, Yelena G. Bonner, wife of Andrei D. Sakharov, the Soviet human rights campaigner, read a letter from him in

which he urged the United Nations to demand that nations with large Kurdish populations establish autonomous regions for Kurds. Dr. Sakharov was scheduled to attend the conference, but his wife said he was too weak.

Mr. Nezan wants the West to put pressure on Iraq, Iran and Turkey to stop denying the Kurds their rights. About half the world's Kurds live in Turkey, one third in Iran and one fifth in Iraq, and there is also a significant Kurdish population in Syria and the Soviet Union.

"The Kurds are pariahs of the international community," Mr. Nezan said. "No government wants to speak up on our behalf because they do not want to disturb certain military, political, strategic interests."

Peter W. Gaibraith, a Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff member who spoke at the conference, said, "Too many governments are too concerned about alienating the oil-rich or politically powerful nations where the Kurdish people reside."

He said that after Iraq used poison gas, the Senate backed strong sanctions against Iraq, but that they were blocked by the Reagan Administration.

After World War I, Kurdistan was to become a nation under the 1920 Treaty of Sevres. But the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne superseded that and distributed Kurdistan among several nations.

The Kurdish Institute, a group of writers, artists, historians and other intellectuals, is trying to keep the Kurds' culture from being snuffed out. Turkey has banned Kurdish songs, books on Kurdish history and Kurdish grammars. Iraq, trying to force assimilation, has leveled more than 3,000 Kurdish villages, according to the institute.

"We have a very ancient culture," Mr. Nezan said. "We don't want our generation to be the last link in the chain."

THE WASHINGTON POST

October 16, 1989

Conference Highlights Plight of Kurds

Resolutions Call for U.N. Sessions on Abuses of Human Rights

By Jonathan C. Randal
Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS, Oct. 15—Kurds from around the world met here this weekend in the first international conference devoted to their often tragic history.

The forum, organized with the help of Danielle Mitterrand—wife of the French president and a human rights campaigner—was intended to focus attention on the plight of an estimated 20 million Kurds who now live in communities scattered across six countries from Lebanon to the Soviet Union.

More than two dozen speakers provided details on what Jeri Laber, executive director of the U.S. human rights group Helsinki Watch, termed a "staggering list of human rights abuses: arrests, torture, murder, assassination, chemical warfare, mass deportations, expulsions, appalling conditions in refugee camps, refusal of political asylum by the West, denial of ethnic rights to language, literature and music, and destruction of villages, towns and cities."

"In terms of the severity of the problem, the Kurds should be near the top, not at the bottom, of our human rights agenda," said Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-R.I.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who spoke at the conference. "Too many governments are too concerned about alienating the rich or politically powerful nations where the Kurdish people reside."

Pell was unsuccessful last year in efforts to enact legislation to impose economic sanctions on Iraq after charges that it used chemical weapons on its Kurdish population. But the senator expressed optimism about the chances of a new bill aimed at punishing governments using such internationally banned arms. The object, he said, was "to send a message to the government of Iraq and that message is 'never again.'"

Sponsored by Danielle Mitterrand's human rights foundation and the Kurdish Institute of Paris, the conference focused on cultural identity and human rights.

Kurds have fought for decades to win an independent Kurdistan in the mountains of eastern Turkey, northern Iraq and northern Iran. Last year, after a cease-fire halted the eight-year war between Iran and Iraq, about 65,000 Kurds fled into Turkey to escape an Iraqi offensive against their villages that they charged included poison gas attacks. The Iraqi government has denied the charges.

At one point today, delegates led by Jalal Talabani, a veteran Kurdish nationalist, threatened a walkout if the chairman of the Iraqi government's Kurdish autonomy zone, Bahdeen Ahmad, spoke to the conference. The French government tried unsuccessfully to persuade the conference to hear Ahmad, who is considered a collaborator by Kurdish nationalists.

Talabani scolded the Socialist-led French government for having "a double-faced policy" and what he called a readiness to "sacrifice all rules of humanity, the Universal Declaration of the Rights of Man and socialism for commercial policy."

France, a major arms supplier to Iraq, recently agreed to reschedule \$1.35 billion in overdue payments on a \$4 billion debt. The influential Iraqi lobby in France hopes to persuade Paris to sell the Baghdad government Mirage 2000 fighter-bombers.

Aside from Bernard Kouchner, a junior minister in charge of humanitarian affairs, no French official or legislator attended the conference.

In what delegates privately described as an acknowledgment of the fragility of Middle East states and their fears about secession in such a volatile region, resolutions adopted by the conference avoided mention of self-determination for the Kurds.

Acting on a suggestion by Andrei Sakharov, the Soviet human rights activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner, the resolutions asked U.N. Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar to organize a special U.N. General Assembly session on the Kurdish problem and for similar treatment by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees.

The resolutions, which many delegates privately acknowledged stood little chance of immediate acceptance, also called for: the formation of a single umbrella group to represent the traditionally divided Kurds; the granting of observer status at the United Nations to the Kurds and invitations to the 12-nation European Parliament and the Council of Europe; an international agreement to ban manufacture of chemical weapons and to seek diplomatic and economic sanctions

against governments using them; and the creation of a "permanent mission" of legislators from "democratic" countries to keep tabs on Kurdish human rights.

Thomas Hammerberg, a former president of the human rights organization Amnesty International, announced plans for another conference next July in Stockholm. An interim meeting may be held in London.

A Kurdish delegate said that the Paris conference "has saved us from [embarking on] terrorism for another year" by demonstrating the world's concern to despairing Kurds.

Outside the conference hall both Saturday and today, hundreds of hard-line Turkish Marxist Kurds of the Kurdish Workers Party chanted their disapproval of the meeting and their belief in armed struggle. Since 1984, more than 2,000 Marxist insurgents and a similar number of Turkish security forces and Kurdish civilians have lost their lives in an ever fiercer civil war.

Soviet Kurds 'Rediscovered' by Kremlin

By **Jonathan C. Randal**
Washington Post Foreign Service

PARIS, Oct. 16—A leading Soviet Kurd has told an international conference that the Soviet Union purposely "forgot" nearly a million Kurds by doctoring census tabulations.

Speaking this weekend at the first international conference ever devoted to focusing attention on the plight of the Kurds, Prof. Nadir Nadirov of the Academy of Sciences in the Soviet city of Alma Ata in central Asia noted that the official number of Soviet Kurds declined from 500,000 at the time of the Russian Revolution in 1917 to 59,000 in 1969 before increasing to 170,000 a decade later.

This year's census, the first in a decade, will show 1.15 million Kurds, an increase of nearly a million, Nadirov said, citing statistics that he said were leaked to him.

He credited President Mikhail Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*—openness and restructuring, respectively—for the sudden rediscovery of so many Kurds, part of an estimated 20 million-strong ethnic group that stretches westward to Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Lebanon.

The "disappearance" of so many Soviet Kurds, Nadirov explained, can be traced to former Soviet ruler Joseph Stalin's policy between 1937 and 1944 of dispersing most of the Kurds who historically resided in the Transcaucasia in the Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian republics.

Fearing potential treason among the Moslem Kurds so close to sensitive Soviet borders, Stalin dispersed them among nine Soviet republics, stretching as far east as Alma Ata, some 1,600 miles away from their original homes.

Forced to remain in isolated vil-

lages, many of these dispersed Kurds forgot their language since the use of Kurdish in schools and in books, newspapers, radio and television was authorized solely in Armenia and Georgia.

Only those Kurds allowed to stay in the Armenian and Georgian republics were authorized to describe themselves in official documents as Kurds—which explains why census figures declined, Nadirov said. Elsewhere, he said, the dispersed Kurds were counted as Kazakhs in the Kazakh republic or Turkmen in the Turkmen republic, for example.

In the last four years, Nadirov said, all Soviet Kurds have been allowed to use Kurdish, and major cultural centers were started in Moscow and the Georgian capital of Tbilisi. But those dispersed have not been allowed to go back to the original Soviet Kurdish heartland in the Transcaucasia.

THE WASHINGTON POST

October 19, 1989

EL MOUDJAHID

17 octobre 1989

KURDES

La conférence de Paris souhaite le statut d'observateur à l'ONU pour les Kurdes

LA première conférence internationale sur l'identité kurde », réunie à Paris, a exprimé dimanche le souhait que les Kurdes obtiennent un statut d'observateur à l'Assemblée générale de l'ONU et recommande à cet effet la constitution d'une organisation représentant l'ensemble des populations kurdes.

Dans une résolution adoptée à l'issue de ses travaux la conférence a par ailleurs demandé, à l'initiative de l'académicien Andreï Sakharov, au Secrétaire général de l'ONU, M. Javier Pérez De Cuelar, de réunir une session spéciale de l'Assemblée

générale sur la question kurde. Elle a souhaité que des représentants de la population kurde soient invités au Parlement européen et au Conseil de l'Europe.

Elle a également souhaité la constitution d'une mission permanente chargée des droits de l'homme dans les pays au sein desquels vivent des minorités kurdes ».

La conférence a demandé que les législations nationales interdissent la fabrication d'armes chimiques » et souhaite la conclusion d'un accord international sur des sanctions économiques et diplomatiques » à l'encontre

des pays qui utiliseraient des armes chimiques et biologiques. Elle a attiré l'attention sur la situation dramatique des réfugiés kurdes » et s'est inquiétée du sort des populations déplacées, demandant le libre accès à ces personnes pour des organisations gouvernementales et non gouvernementales.

La conférence a enfin annoncé qu'elle s'efforcera de tenir une nouvelle réunion avant juillet 1990 » à Stockholm sous l'égide du Comité suédois pour la défense des droits de l'homme au Kurdistan.

AFP

JOURNAL DE GENÈVE — GAZETTE DE LAUSANNE 17 octobre 1989

Les Kurdes se réunissent à Paris sous l'égide de Mme Mitterrand

Pari largement réussi que celui tenté par la Fondation France-Libertés de Danielle Mitterrand, en collaboration avec l'Institut kurde de Paris présidé par Kendal Nezan: réunir dans une même salle des personnalités kurdes et les représentants de leurs divers mouvements politiques.

Pas évident quand la cause d'un peuple, déchire politiquement entre cinq États, ne se distingue pas particulièrement par son homogénéité.

DE PARIS: GILBERTE FAVRE

La première Conférence internationale kurde, qui avait pour thème «Les Droits de l'homme et l'identité culturelle» des Kurdes, réunie au Centre international des conférences de l'avenue Kléber, à Paris, a rassemblé près de trois cents personnes, Kurdes mais aussi experts, invités d'Occident et d'ailleurs: plus de vingt-cinq pays étaient représentés. Le sénateur Edward Kennedy et l'ex-chancelier Bruno Kreisky, qui avaient répondu favorablement à cette invitation, se sont fait excuser.

Des témoins du génocide

Ainsi, durant deux jours, Kurdes et témoins du génocide de ce peuple vinrent témoigner de la malédiction qui, aujourd'hui comme hier, s'acharne sur un peuple d'ethnie indo-européenne, riche de 25 millions d'âmes, et dont le plus grand crime consiste probablement à s'étendre sur une terre riche en pétrole...

Persécutions, tortures rivalisant de barbarie et négation de l'identité kurde, en Turquie, guerre en Iran. Oppressions en Syrie. Extermination au moyen de gaz chimiques et déportations, en Irak. Le cortège des vicissitudes endurées encore à l'heure qu'il est par les Kurdes est infini.

Parmi les moments forts de ces deux jours de conférence, la lecture, par Elena Bonner-Sakharov, d'une lettre ouverte de son mari, l'académicien Andreï Sakharov. «Tous les actes de cruauté et toutes les illégalités commises dans le passé envers les Kurdes doivent être condamnés et des mesures interdisant leur renouvellement dans le futur doivent être prises».

Auditoire bouleversé

Dimanche, l'auditoire fut littéralement bouleversé par le témoignage du professeur Heindryx, toxicologue, qui réussit à se rendre à Halabja (au Kur-

distan d'Irak) lors des bombardements aux gaz chimiques.

C'est une vision cauchemardesque qui défila alors sous nos yeux. «Enfants, femmes, personnes âgées, ils n'étaient pas tous morts... mais agonisants... La preuve formelle était là, sous nos yeux!». Ce génocide contemporain, digne du nazisme, ne suscita même pas la condamnation de l'Irak «en raison de l'hypocrisie internationale», souligna le professeur Heindryx. Pour lui, il s'agit de continuer de témoigner afin de «défendre ces malheureux qui sont gazés maintenant comme des rats et dont personne ne s'occupe».

Message entendu par certains en tout cas. Le 24 octobre, la première dame de France parlera devant la commission des Droits de l'homme du Sénat américain de la situation du peuple kurde. Danielle Mitterrand n'a pas oublié sa visite récente dans les camps de réfugiés kurdes irakiens, au Kurdistan de Turquie. «Sans pause ni trêve, France-Libertés et sa présidente parleront pour ces femmes, ces enfants, parqués dans les camps, dont le seul crime est d'être Kurde».

D'autres personnalités non kurdes intervinrent lors de ces deux journées parmi lesquelles le sénateur américain Clairborne Pell, Maxime Rodière, Hocine Ait-Ahmed et le Dr Bernard Kouchner, secrétaire d'Etat à l'action humanitaire.

Cette première conférence internationale kurde ne devrait pas rester sans lendemain. De la résolution finale, adoptée au terme de ces travaux, les participants reprirent notamment la proposition de Andreï Sakharov, demandant au secrétaire général de l'ONU «de réunir une session spéciale de l'Assemblée générale sur la question kurde».

Cette résolution prévoit aussi de prolonger cette conférence «par la constitution d'une mission permanente ouverte aux parlementaires des pays démocratiques chargée de la défense des Droits de l'homme dans les pays où vivent les Kurdes». Et encore qu'un accord international permette d'infliger des sanctions économiques et diplomatiques «au pays qui ferait usage d'armes chimiques et biologiques».

On retiendra encore que la conférence kurde de Paris a émis la volonté de se réunir une nouvelle fois, à Stockholm, avant juillet 1989, sous l'égide du comité suédois pour les Droits de l'homme au Kurdistan. D'ici là, il y a fort à parier que le sort des Kurdes, persécutés et emprisonnés tant en Turquie qu'en Iran et en Irak, n'aura pas évolué d'un iota...

THE INDEPENDENT Tuesday 17 October 1989

Kurds unite to tell world of 'genocide'

LEADERS of the 20 million Kurds of the Middle East have resolved to press for observer status at the United Nations for a unified Kurdish front in order to bring world attention to repression which they say amounts to physical and cultural genocide.

A weekend conference here, chaired by Danielle Mitterrand, the wife of the French president, was the first time in 60 years that heads of Kurdish autonomy movements from the main states embracing Kurdistan — Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria — had gathered to formulate a common programme.

The impetus came in part from Iraq's campaign over the past year to depopulate Iraqi Kurdistan, including the use of chemical weapons, and also from fears that an eventual peace treaty between Iran and Iraq after eight years of war could include a tacit agreement to strangle the Kurdish resistance in both countries.

The conference was to have been presided over by Abdulrahman Qassemlou, the secretary-general of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran and the leading theoretician of the Kurdish movement. But he was assassinated in Vienna on 13 July during peace talks with Iranian representatives in what Kurds sources allege was a trap set by Tehran.

Mr Qassemlou, who led a 10-year insurgency against the

Kurdish leaders are calling for urgent international action to protect their rights and attempting to find a common political programme, Harvey Morris writes from Paris.



JOHN VOOS

Turkish Kurds, forced out of their mountain villages, try to make a home in an encampment near Sirmak in south-eastern Turkey

Khomeini regime, was quoted in an interview shortly before his death as saying: "One doesn't speak enough about the Kurds because we have never taken any hostages, never hijacked a plane. But I am proud of this."

Kurdish delegates to the two-day conference said privately that they were concerned that lack of international action to protect the rights of Kurds could lead to hardline pressure for the launch of terrorist campaigns.

The Paris conference, however, was restricted to the issues of cultural identity and human rights and glossed over maximalist demands for an independent state. This was mainly out of deference to the host country, France, which has diplomatic relations with the four countries concerned.

Kurdish speakers nevertheless pointed out that the Kurds were the largest nation in the world which did not have its own state despite promises, at the break-up of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, that there would be an independent Kurdistan. The Kurdish claim to independence was based on the Kurds' distinctive culture and language and a 2,000-year history of autonomy from their Turkish, Arab and Persian neighbours.

Western speakers concentrated on the human rights abuses suffered by the Kurds in the countries in which they live. The chairman of the US Senate foreign relations committee, Claiborne Pell, said that Kurds in Turkey were denied the right to speak their language outside their homes, in Iran their leaders were persecuted and killed and in Iraq Kurdish villages were razed to the ground and

Kurdish children tortured and killed by chemical weapons. "In terms of the severity of the problem, the Kurds should be near the top, not at the bottom, of our human rights agenda," Senator Pell said. He said one reason for the lack of international action in defence of the Kurds was that "too many governments are too concerned about alienating the oil-rich or politically powerful nations where the Kurdish people reside".

He may have had in mind, among others, the French government and its strong pro-Iraq lobby which was said to be concerned by the decision to hold the conference in Paris, albeit in the presence of Mrs Mitterrand,

in her capacity as head of the private France-Libertés foundation, and of the minister for humanitarian action, Bernard Kouchner. Dr Kouchner appeared to acknowledge the conflict of interest when he told the conference that, had he been concerned about political advancement, he would not have been there.

The Iraqi Kurdish rebel leader, Jalal Talabani, said he hoped the Kurdish people would not be the victims of commercial policy. "It was the indifference and silence of the superpowers and of some governments which provided Iraq with weapons and ammunition which encouraged Iraq in its chemical weapons genocide," Mr Talabani said.

The conference backed an initiative by the Soviet human rights activist, Andrei Sakharov, to request a UN General Assembly session on the plight of the Kurds. Kurdish delegates acknowledged, however, that there was a long way to go before the establishment of a pan-Kurdish organisation to press a unified demand for autonomy. In the past, Kurdish groups have more often than not been rivals, used by regional states as catspaws to undermine the stability of their neighbours.

Since the world powers prevented the emergence of the promised Kurdish state after World War I, the various Kurdish insurgencies, predominantly in Iran and Iraq, have aimed to win autonomy for the Kurds within the existing borders of the Middle East.

In Turkey, where the existence of a separate Kurdish community is denied, the human rights campaign on behalf of the Kurds has concentrated on demands for official recognition of the Kurdish language in education and the administration. But the Turkish situation has also spawned the most hardline of the Kurdish movements, the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) which is fighting an armed insurrection in the south-east of the country in which 2,000 people have been killed in the past five years.

Although the PKK was represented at the Paris meeting, supporters demonstrated outside the conference hall to denounce "petit bourgeois reformists" in the Kurdish movement who limited their aims to cultural autonomy. The PKK, by contrast, would settle for nothing short of national independence.

Turks accused of burning villages

From Tim Kelsey
in Sirmak

TURKISH security forces are evicting Kurds from their mountain villages and burning their homes in an attempt to stamp out insurgency in the south-east, according to hundreds of displaced Kurds living in squalid camps near the Iraqi border.

In one of the larger encampments, near the town of Sirmak, there are nearly 2,000 Kurds, most of whom arrived three weeks ago after the military gave them a day to leave their homes. Like most others here, Sait Kılıç, a farmer, was able to salvage little before departing from his village of Basagac. "The local army commander told us that if we didn't leave the village, the army would burn everything, including us. Some of us went back secretly the next day and the soldiers were burning everything — even the wheat we had stacked."

As a matter of pride, he demolished his house before the soldiers could. Outside his brown cloth tent, there is a neatly stacked pile of wood. "It is half of my house," he said. "We weren't able to carry any more with us." Other frightened villagers gave similar accounts.

The army has repeatedly denied burning Kurdish villages to destroy potential hiding places for the guerrillas of the Marxist Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK).

who have been fighting since 1984 for an independent Kurdistan. The conflict has escalated since a PKK offensive in the spring, and the death toll has reached unprecedented levels.

The villagers are victimised by a frustrated army searching for partisans and by the guerrillas. "If the army does not burn our villages, then the guerrillas threaten to do so if we don't help them," Mr Sait said. Recep, a Kurd who had just arrived at the settlement with his family, said the army killed his brother, a shepherd, when he told anti-terrorist commandos he did not know the whereabouts of any guerrillas. The separatists strangled one of his relatives afterwards for refusing to give them money.

A shepherd said soldiers were awarded a bounty for killing guerrillas. A group ambushed a taxi on the road from Sirmak to Cizre and killed three of his friends. They decapitated the dead men and took the heads back to their base to claim the reward.

■ ANKARA — Eight Kurdish separatists and three Turkish soldiers were killed in weekend clashes in the provinces of Sirt, Hakkari and Van, AFP reports.

Lost Soviet Kurds rediscover their roots

PARIS — The Kurdish minority in the Soviet Union, previously believed to have dwindled to less than 200,000, has been found to number well over a million, according to as-yet-unpublished census figures, writes Harvey Morris.

The new figures were revealed by a Soviet academician and scientist, Nadir Nadirov, himself a Kurd, at the weekend Paris conference on Kurdish rights. He said a 1989 census showed that there were 1,150,000 people scattered throughout nine Soviet republics who identified themselves as Kurds. Previous counts were based on nationality as inscribed in identity documents and therefore tended to reflect where respondents lived rather than their ethnic background. A census taken in 1979 showed the Kurdish

minority to be only 170,000.

Professor Nadirov, speaking in Kurdish, described how in 1932 he was deported from Armenia with his widowed mother and her nine children to the central Asian republic of Kazakhstan as part of Stalin's campaign to split the Kurdish and other ethnic minorities. He said the Kurds were dispersed and many forgot their culture and language. Professor Nadirov said he only managed to secure a higher education by writing to Stalin and getting permission to move to a town.

He said the Kurds remained a largely forgotten minority until the advent of perestroika. As a result of the nationalist resurgence, Kurdish cultural centres had opened in Moscow and a number of republics and the Kurdish language was now being taught.

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“The tragic fight of the Kurdish people, which has lasted for such a long time, has its origins in the principle right of every population to auto-determination. This is why it is a righteous fight.

I call upon all governments, organisations and citizens of all countries as well as the international organisations to become aware; in their relations with the countries where Kurds live, they should become aware of the real politics conducted by the leaders of these countries and their politics concerning the Kurds. No manifestation of cruelty, no national or social injustice, no impinging on human rights and no genocide should go unnoticed. Neither should it remain without consequence for those countries allowing these actions.”

Andrei SAKHAROV