

SADDAM HUSSEIN

IN THE LIGHT OF

KOSHTAPA CAMP EVENTS

A genuine report on the Situation of the
Barzani Kurds under the Iraqi President

S A D D A M H U S S E I N

prepared and published

by the

SOCIALIST ORGANISATION OF THE KURDISH STUDENTS IN EUROPE

(S O K S E)

M a r c h 1985

I

A year and a half has now elapsed since the drama of Koshtapa camp. Some 8 000 Kurds were removed at gun-point. Since then, all their traces have been lost. Both the western and the middle eastern press have overlooked almost entirely the significance of the events. Unfortunately this silence on the part of the press and of the international organisations whether deliberate or not, has concealed the crimes of the Ba'ath regime in Bagdad and the Ba'ath government continues to violate human rights to an even greater extent.

In order to show the scope of this calamity, it is necessary to describe the events which led up to the attack on Koshtapa camp. This act of aggression was carried out by the Ba'ath army on the order of Saddam Hussein himself.

In march 1975, the Shah of Iran and Saddam Hussein signed the Algerian Agreement, which concerned a joint opposition to the Kurdish national movement. A few days later, the leaders of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Irak (KDP of Irak) headed by General Mollah Mustafa, decided to surrender, as the decision did not leave any alternatives for the Kurdish people ; all they could do was to give up the armed struggle against their will. The leadership of the Party and of the revolution from 1961 to 1975 liquidated the Peshmergah (the Kurdish revolutionary forces) the most important guarantee of Kurdish national rights. The Ba'ath army found no obstacles to reoccupy all of freed Kurdistan. The regimes anti-Kurd policy of Arabisation and evacuation, especially of oil-rich areas and strategic frontier regions, was put into effect vigorously. The Kurdish people had

to pay a very heavy price and continue to pay. It marked the beginning of a new era of servitude.

The population of the freed territories of Kurdistan included the Barzanis, who had participated in the Kurdish revolt from 1961 to 1975. The population was faced a choice : a small minority chose the long march to refuge in Iran, while the majority of people remained in their region. The latter category believed in the frequent amnesties given by the Bagdad government which clearly stated that no retaliatory action would be taken against the Kurds.

At the end of autumn 1975, the Ba'ath army was in full control of Kurdistan, and Saddam Hussein boasted about the measures taken against the Kurdish people in the name of Arab nationalism. " We must control the frontiers, move the population twenty kilometers from the borders, leave the army in the region, distributing it in camps, and finally construct roads in the mountains ". The colonial policies of the regime brutally applied this policy and almost all of rural Kurdistan has been devastated ; whole villages, vineyards, orchards and cultivated fields were destroyed, stock confiscated and half a million women, children and elderly people deported to arid deserts in southern Irak to live in guarded refugee camps. The Kurds who demanded their freedom, according to government officials, were to be punished. Tarik Aziz, the Iraki Minister of Information, currently the third most powerful man in the Ba'ath regim stated in an interview with the Financial Times on July 14, 1975, " They committed a crime against the Iraki people and Iraki sovereignty and they must pay a political price ". An era of state terror began, and the regim deployed all its forces to des-

III

stroy the Kurdish national entity in all its forms. The brutality of the Ba'ath regime in Kurdistan is unequalled since the creation of Irak by British imperialism.

In 1979, while the Ba'ath regime was implementing its anti-Kurd policy, there were new developments in the middle east. The most dramatic was the Iranian revolution ; which toppled the monarchy and established an Islamic republic. These developments had a great impact on Ba'ath rulers. The Iraki president Saddam Hussein, feared the exportation of an Islamic revolution into Irak, which has a Shiite majority in addition his ambitions for personal glory, pushed him into plotting against the Iranian revolution. In this he was encouraged by most of the governments, which saw in the Islamic revolution a real threat to their short-or-longterm interests in the oil region of the middle east.

While Iran's internal situation plunged into chaos, Saddam's regime was undertaking vast military, economic, political and psychological measures to pave the way for a lightning war against Iran. For this war the regime needed the support of the Kurds, and it was only the exigencies of the future war which made Saddam Hussein bring back the deported Kurds from the south of Irak to Kurdistan. It is worth mentioning that the deportees were never allowed to return to their native villages, which were and are still in ruins. The deportees were distributed in refugee camps near the regime's military garrisons which were stationed throughout Kurdistan like any colonial army.

IV

The Barzani deportees were obliged to settle in Koshtapa, a small town three kilometers south of Arbil (Hewler). The main road divides the camp into two sections, which included the people of the following villages :

1 HOSTAN	2 BARZAN	3 GALAVA
4 REZYA	5 BEDARUN	6 SHIRE
7 KOLEKA	8 RESHE	9 ASTE
10 HEVINKA	11 SALUKA	12 GONDESHKEPTE
13 ZOREGVAN	14 BEKRES	15 BIBAN
16 BILE Nord.	17 BILE Sud	18 HEMDILA
19 REZAN	20 SEPTE	21 IRWAN
22 HESNEKA	23 BAZ	24 BIRSAL
25 ALKA	26 ISOMERA	27 HESNE
28 BALINDA	29 SHANIDAR	30 DERBOTK
31 ZEWE		

In certain respects the deportees were happy to return from Arab parts of Irak to Kurdistan. The regime financed each family in building its own house in the camps .

Barzanis were also dispersed in other refugee camps such as Diyana, which was as big as Koshtapa camp. The camps of Harir, Sebira and Beherke were smaller. There were also a few Barzanis in Bagdad and Arbil. Most of the Kurds in these camps were manual workers or seasonal workers in construction, housing, road-building and porters and drivers. A very small minority became shopkeepers. This situation continued until the Ba'ath army launched its attack on Iranian cities on September 22, 1980.

The Kurdish traditional parties of Irak which conducted a few sporadic operations against the Bagdad regime in the Kurdish mountains, were mistrusted by the majority of Kurdish people. Most of the party leaders were responsible for the collapse of the revolution in 1975 ; they had few armed troops and were often engaged in a fratricidal war. However, when the Iran-Irak war broke out they gained certain advantages. When the Ba'ath authorities began to pressure the Kurdish population to join the Ba'ath army and fight against Iran, a large number of Kurds refused to participate, fled to the Kurdish mountains and joined forces with the traditional parties. Hence the Kurdish armed opposition increased considerably.

The nearly universal refusal of Kurds to fight in Saddam Hussein's war is quite understandable. At the beginning of 1983, more than 50 000 Kurds had escaped military service and were living in the mountains in Kurdistan. In a speech delivered when his regime was strongly shaken by Iranian victories, Saddam Hussein addressed himself to the Kurdish masses, and on January twenty, 1983, he reminded the Kurds that their economic situation had been bad and now everything was better ; that they had better housing, they dressed better, ate better, they earned much more money and the sick people were even sent to be treated in England, France and the U.S.A. He claimed " the Kurds should protect Irak with their hands and defend it with their teeth. Whoever does not defend Irak does not defend the honor of his mother". The Ba'ath president totally disregarded the bitter situation his regime had created ; " It is not enough to be one people in identity ; in order to be one people, we must be one in heart and in mind. "

VI

There is no doubt that the gap between the Kurds identity and the aggressive Arab nationalism represented by Saddam's regime is much too wide to be breached by stirring words. Kurdish hearts and minds are clearly aware of the systematic destruction of their national identity as a people and Kurdistan as a homeland.

At the front the setbacks of the Ba'ath army continued. On land the Iranians seemed to have the upper hand.

The Bagdad regime became extremely wary of a possible mass uprising in Kurdistan and of possible collaboration between the Kurds inside Iraq and the Iranian forces. To minimise the danger, the regime decreed a separate military law for Kurds only. This law in fact is a recognition by the regime of its total failure to coerce the Kurds into integrating with the Arabs. The Iraqi dictator in a speech addressed to Kurds made it clear that : ...

... " Any Kurd called to military service or to reserve duty who refused to join his unit is pardoned. Those Kurds who are serving in the second, third, and fourth army corps are free to join the First army corps ". (Al-Thawra- January 20, 1983)

The first army corps was stationed in Kurdistan, which at the time was relatively quiet. This meant Kurdish soldiers and officers could leave Arab regions and return to Kurdistan. To block any danger from the Kurds, the regime, in addition to the separate military law for Kurds, established contacts with the Kurdish armed opposition, mainly with the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq headed by the sons of General Mollah Mustafa, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan headed by Jala Talabani.

VII

The Iraqi vice-president of the Council, Tarik Aziz, in an interview with Eric Rouleau of " Le Monde " on January 8, 1983, confirmed that : " in order to put an end to the guerilla operations in the north, we recently started indirect negotiations with all Kurdish factions of the Kurdish opposition..."

This negotiation was openly conducted between Jalal Talabani of the P.U.K and the Ba'ath regime. Meanwhile secret negotiations were being conducted between the Party of the sons of Mollah Mustafa and the Ba'ath regime, through the intermediary of Izet Selayman Bey Dergele. The sons of Mollah Mustafa wished to keep the negotiations a secret from the Iranian Government, which is the main supplier of weapons and finance to their armed forces. (There are today some 50 000 - 60 000 Iraqi Kurds who are refugees in various regions of Iran .)

The leaders of the both parties, the P.U.K and K.D.P of Iraq, after pretending that they had firmly adopted the slogan of " No negotiation with Bagdad Government ", and " the continuation of struggle until the collapse of Saddam's regime " began to negotiate with the representatives of the regime, ignoring the ultra-chauvinist nature of the ruling clique in Bagdad. According to some well-informed Kurdish sources, the Bagdad initiative to appease the Kurds was merely an echo of a wider plan, developed by the U.S.A and France primarily to combat the Islamic regime of Iran.

The U.S.A and France have not spared efforts to overthrow the Islamic regime in Teheran : most of the Iranian opposition to Khomeiny, those pro-Bakhtiyar, members of the S.A.V.A.K, pro-Shah officers and Mujahidin Khelq, etc...

VIII

are financed and encouraged in subversive acts against the existing Islamic regime in Iran. A group of anti-Khomeiny that had fled Iran has settled in Turkey, according to the weekly West-German journal Der Spiegel of January 2, 1984, Der Spiegel states that the group has been financed for a while by the C.I.A and 'is prepared for future action. For the anti-Khomeiny elements, the main obstacle to crossing the border into Iran is the Kurdish mountains, which are controlled by the Kurdish armed forces opposed to Bagdad regime. Hence the purpose of the Bagdad initiative, in addition to strenghtening its weak position by enlisting Kurdish support is for the most part, to facilitate the western policy of bringing down the Islamic regime and of re-establishing in Teheran a pro-west government.

However, Abdul Ruhman Ghassinlo, the head of the Kurdsih Democratic Party of Iran, played an important role in opening the dialogue between Jala Talabani and Bagdad Government. The leaders of the P.U.K were eager to reach an agreement with Bagdad. On Christmas day the Ba'ath president received Jala Talabani of the P.U.K in his presidential Palace (Le Monde , April 6, 1984).

For their part, the sons of General Mollah Mustafa were also making secret progress toward a complete understanding with the Ba'ath regime, just before the succesful Iranian offensive of HajOmran. Izet Sulayman Bey, who was the link between Bagdad and the leaders of the K.D.P of Irak, was asked wether there were any results of this long negotiation. He answered that in fact all obstacles had been removed, and that an agreement was imminent. What then, made this imminent agreement fail ? The answer is

IX

most probably the following : the leaders of the K.D.P of Irak, while trying to keep one foot in the Bagdad camp, kept the other foot in the Iranian camp. The Iranian authorities asked the K.D.P leaders to participate in the new campaign to occupy HajOmran and they accepted to take part.

It was in this political circumstances that the imminent accord collapsed and the Koshtapa, Diyana drama was enacted.

On July 22, 1983, Iran opened the fourth front, this time in HajOmran " Iraki Kurdistan ". The Iranian armed forces, with a group of armed men of the Iraki K.D.P attacked the iraki military post of Haj Omran, the Ba'ath army was badly defeated . HajOmran and its surroundings fell into Iranian Hands. For Bagdad, the situation was judged critical, and Saddam Hussein, accompanied by high-ranking officers, inspected his forces in Kurdistan (Le Monde, July 26, 1983).

Saddam Hussein, the head of the Ba'ath regime was shocked by the defeat of his army in Kurdistan, and like other dictators, whose main goal is to stay in power at any price, he saw in this defeat a dangerous threat to his regime. Thus driven by fear and blind hatred, he retaliated : Not at the front against the Iranian army or against the Barzanis in the mountains. But against civilian Barzanis who had lived for the past eight years under hold of the regime. Saddam's reprisal did not spare even women and children, mainly in Koshtapa camp and to a lesser extent in the Diyana camp. In Iraki Kurdistan our reporter met one of the escaped Barzanis from the Koshtapa camp who told him his story :

"... From 22-29 July, 1983, we could tell from the passing of long lines of military trucks, armored vehicles and fighter planes flying non-stop toward the north, that unusual events were taking place. From Teheran radion we knew that HajOmran was occupied. From the movement of trucks in the middle of the night toward Kirkuk, we imagined that the Iraqi losses were quite heavy. We, the inhabitants of Koshtapa camp, had no reason to fear, simply because we were government citizens and had not acted against the regime. Some of our young men had been taken to be trained in government military camps, and we were occupied with our daily work to support our families. We didn't expect any mass retaliation for what was happening in HajOmran. We thought if the government wants to imprison some of us it would call us to Arbil ; in another words, we didn't think that the Arab Ba'ath army would attain such a degree of inhumanity and commit such atrocities against our families, so no precautions had been taken.

On July 30, 1983, my wife wake up as usual, at four o'clock in the morning, for the morning prayer and to prepare breakfast for us. On that morning, I was awoken by my wife shaking me vigourously. She was horrified and said " our camp is encircled by the Arab soldiers, we are inside a ring of armored vehicles." I didn't believe what she said, but I looked out the door, I was convinced ; instinctively my eyes searched for an escape, but escape was impossible, Ba'ath soldiers were in full control and ready to open fire. Then from all sides the soldiers came down into the camp. Fired with great hatred, like hungry wolves, they attacked houses, kicked down doors with their boots, swearing angrily at the Kurds. They awakened women and children, who opened their eyes to the horror taking place inside their homes ; most of

XI

them didn't understand what was going on. The cry of women and children of a camp of twenty thousand inhabitants were mixed with the shouts and insults of the Ba'ath soldiers, beating and kicking men. For the inhabitants of our camp it was dooms day .

Before the Arab's soldiers arrive I went to hide myself into the toilet area, behind a door, I was praying God to save me from the hands of the Ba'ath soldiers. They came into the toilet area many times, and one of them even looked into where I was hidden, but he didn't see me behind the door. My heart was beating wildly ; There I was listening to the voice of the tragedy which was being born , the tragedy caused by those who pretend to be brothers of Kurds. Angry images passed through my mind about the decision of General Mollah Mustafa in March 1975, which put an end to our struggle against this infernal regime. The decision is the source of all our misfortune. In my mind. I was telling myself ; By his decision to lay down arms, those in charge of the K.D.P of Irak prevent us from having the pleasure of dying in defense of our homeland. It would have been a million times better for all of us including our women and our children, to be killed at the fronts than to became slaves of the Arab Ba'ath regime, and witness such black days.

The escaped Barzani of Koshtapa camp continued : " I knew later that all those people who were found in hiding were savagely beaten by the Arab soldiers, so that they were covered by their blood. A mother (Fatim Mohamed), aged 68 years, the mother of Zero, try to stop a group of soldiers from beating her son, and took the Coran, the Holy Islamic Book , and faced the soldiers, saying in Kurdish :

XII

" if you are a believer in God and his prophet I beg you, in the name of this Coran, to stop beating my son ". An Arab soldier turned and kicked her abdomen , she fell down in a faint . There are other unimaginable examples of cruelty carried out by the Ba'ath army, in Koshtapa and Diyana camps. By 11.20 A.M, there were no men left in the camps between the ages of 12 and 80. Only a very few were fortunate enough not to be found in their hide outs in ovens, barrels etc.. In the night, I emerged changed out of my traditional Kurdish clothes and set out toward the Kurdish mountains. It took me four days of walking to get here. " ...

In the camp, the families were cut off from water and electricity. The Bagdad government condemned all of them to extreme deprivation, and since the disappearance of their 8000 men, no news, no letters, and no information reached the families. All traces were lost. The place where they were taken is still not known. Have they been tortured, massacred or are they still alive ? There is no clear answer. In Europe, International Humanitarian organizations have been informed about the tragic events : The League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Comité International de la Croix Rouge , The United Nation High Commission for Refugees, The International Commission of Jurists, and, Amnesty International. None of them have given any answer about their fate. The annual report of 1984 of Amnesty International did not even mention the events :

It seems that the events that swept Koshtapa and Diyana camps are the direct result of the ultra aggressive Arab nationalisme symbolized by the Ba'ath regime and the personal reaction of its psychopath President Saddam Hussein.

XIII

The Barzanis were also used by the regime as a scapegoat to cover its defeat in HajOmran, and to demoralize that Barzanis who were fighting the regime in the mountains. Under the pretext of war with Iran helped by the international silence, the regime may commit further atrocities .

The Ba'ath crime in Koshtapa camp caused indignation and consternation among Kurds, and the Kurdish population of the region were secretly helping the desperate families in the camps.

After the attack on the Koshtapa camp, the media of the Ba'ath regime, to cover its savagery showed pictures of Saddam Hussein carrying a little Kurdish girl of five years old and smiling paternally.

In his first speech after the defeat of HajOmran, the Iraqi President angrily accused the sons of Mollah Mustafa claiming: " their treachery brought them to point of non return they committed the crime of becoming the assistants of the Persian army and of becoming their guides to the occupation of Iraqi land. Moreover they conducted negotiations to come back into the national ranks, contacts were established, through letters and through envoys in order to carry out their dirty plots ; they betrayed twice, betrayed the homeland and betrayed the promise. Some of those who are called Barzanis collaborated with them - they got their severe punishment and went to the hell-". He means the Barzanis who were living under the regime's hold. We already mentionned their case .

The head of the Ba'ath again accused the sons of Mollah Mustafa : " Now they betrayed the homeland, they brought a foreign army as an occupier of Kurdistan soil ". In

XIV

order to save his regime and turn Kurds against Iran, Saddam Hussein called upon Kurdish nationalism : " Khomeiny and his aides were mistaken, as Khomeiny was told that the people of Kurdistan will carry arms in your support, and would facilitate the occupation of Kurdistan in order to establish what is called an Islamic republic in Khomeini's way, and to change Kurdish names. Even the names of mountains were changed and renamed Bihisti and others " .

With unmatched hypocrisy Saddam Hussein went on : " It will a great honor for our Kurdish people, when history say that the war started here, it continued there, but finally ended by enemy defeat on the soil of Kurdistan.

As we have already seen, Saddam Hussein accused the sons of Mollah Mustafa of treachery, of having helped the Iranian army to occupy Kurdistan. If we take Saddam's own logic and apply it to him, it would be quite clear that he himself committed all the crimes he accused the others. He himself committed the crime of twice bringing a foreign army to occupy Kurdistan.

Why, when on two occasions, the Turkish invasion of Iraki Kurdistan, in May 1983, and again in October 1984, did Saddam Hussein not defend Kurdistan ? He himself stated on January twenty, 1983, " whoever does not defend Irak, does not defend the honor of his mother " (Al Thawra January 20, 1983). Not only did the Iraki President not defend Irak, but he was in a total agreement with the Ankara dictators to carry out joint operations in both Iraki Kurdistan and of Turkish Kurdistan. The Iraki ambassador in Ankara declared :

XV

" The operations of the Turkish army in which Iraki forces are participating, have resulted in the capture of around 1500-2000 Kurds" (Le Monde May 31, 1983).

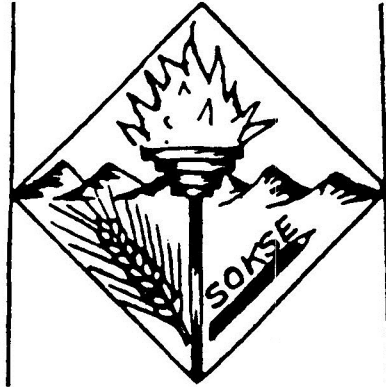
The main obvious features of Kurdish life today, are the multiple states of war, a part from the vast destruction caused by Irak-Iran war, which is in a major part waged on Kurdistan soil. There is also Turko-Kurd, Arabo-Kurd and Irano-Kurd war. In the first example, the Kurds are facing a N.A.T.O army of Turkey.

To face such highly equipped armies, the unity of all Kurdish national forces is the backbone of the struggle for freedom . Hence, we call upon the traditionalist leaders to refrain from any act which is not in a harmony with the Kurdish unity, and call upon all Kurds abroad to pay more attention to the events occuring in Kurdistan, and to manifest reactions against the repression in Kurdistan by all means of protest, demonstrations and hunger strikes, etc...

Concerning the crimes committed in Koshtapa camp, we call upon all humanitarian and international organisations which showed certain activity in favour of Kurds, to adopt a stand derived from its own constitution and not to be influenced by prejudices of ^{their} its government in the Irak-Iran war.

M a r c h 1985

SOCIALIST ORGANISATION OF THE KURDISH STUDENTS IN EUROPE
(S O K S E)



Rêxirawî Xwendkarani sosyalistî Kurd le Ewrûpa

Socialist Organisation of the Kurdish Students in Europe (SOKSE)

Sozialistische Organisation Kurdischer Studenten in Europa (SOKSE)
