

KNOW
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SERIES
NO.

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On The Kurdish Movement In Iraq

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هه و النامهه كئيب

THE KURDS AND THEIR HOMELAND

Although Kurdistan is seen today as only parts of the territories of many states in the Middle East where international frontiers cut across the land and the people, geographically and ethnically these parts of Kurdistan continue to form one homogeneous and contiguous unit where the Kurds form the great majority of the population.

Kurdistan has undergone two major fragmentations, once during the 17th century when it was divided into areas of influence between the Ottoman and the Persian Empires and more recently after World War I when various parts of Kurdistan were added to the territories of the modern states of Iraq, Syria and Turkey. At present therefore, Kurdistan can be said to form the northwestern part of Iran, east and southeastern part of Turkey, northeastern part of Syria, a sliver of Soviet Armenia in the U.S.S.R. and north and northeastern part of Iraq.

The pattern of life within the Kurdish society has slowly but steadily changed from one of nomadism to one of settled communities that pursue a basically agricultural way of life supplemented by the raising of livestock, limited amount of trade, and small locally established handicrafts and industries. Like the rest of the Middle East, Kurdistan is also divided into rural and urban communities where the people live in villages, towns and urban centers. However, in general Kurdistan is the least economically developed areas of the countries among which it is divided.

The Kurds are an Indo-European people and they speak Kurdish which, as an Indo-European language constitutes one of the major languages of the Iranian groups such as Persian, Tajik, Pashtu and others. Perhaps some of the most obvious national characteristics which form a distinct badge of identity for the Kurds are their language, their colorful national costume which distinguishes both Kurdish men and women, and their land of Kurdistan where the Kurds have lived for many centuries.

Although thus far no definitive effort has been made to define the origin of the Kurds, more and more authorities on the subject seem to agree that, based on linguistic arguments and the pattern of movement of the peoples from Central Asia, the Medes can be considered as the ancestors of the present-day Kurd.

A Kurd may be best characterized as a mountaineer well adapted to the terrain and climate of his homeland. He is considered by many to be a brave, gay and sincere person. He is hospitable and makes a good family man and a loving father. Kurdish women are normally considered more free than those among the neighboring peoples. As a religious community the Kurds are faithful and liberal practitioners of Islam, and the Muslim religion is the faith of the great majority of

the Kurds. Although statistics vary as to the number of the Kurds, one may estimate the population of Kurdistan to be between 18-20 million divided among Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and a small number in the Soviet Union.

Judging from their rich folklore, the Kurds are a people very fond of music, dancing and poetry. Names such as Ahmed i Khane, Haji Qadir Koyi, Piramerd, Mawlawi Goran, Hajar and Bekas are only a few among many poets and literary figures. By the same token Jam'iyati Taali u Taraqi of 1908, the Kurdistan newspaper which was first published in Cairo in 1882 and the organizations of Hoybun of 1927 and Hiwa of 1938 are only a few landmarks in a long series of literary and political efforts made by the Kurds during the 19th and the 20th centuries.

EVOLUTION OF POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS IN KURDISTAN

The many nationalist efforts that have been spent by various Kurdish nationalist groups both in Kurdistan and abroad are the result and reflection of the long and difficult struggle of the Kurdish people in self-defense and against efforts made to deny his existence and to ignore his legitimate nationalist demands.

During and after World War I the Kurdish people struggled for the principle of self-determination and for this the Kurds achieved recognition as a nation within the framework of the Treaty of Sevres of 1920 which specifically provided for the establishment of an independent Kurdistan.

The guiding principle for the nationalist Kurds during and after World War II was the desire for the creation of more widely-based and better organized political efforts which could gather within one body and under one leadership all existing Kurdistani groups and therefore the natural outcome was the birth of the Kurdistan Democratic Party on August 16, 1946 under the guidance and initiative of its president Mustafa Barzani. A remarkable feature of our present Kurdish nationalist movement is the fact that for almost three decades this movement has grown and matured under the leadership of an increasingly popular man like Barzani and has been served by a constantly growing and well-organized political party such as the KDP.

The Kurdistan Democratic Party is a nationalist progressive party which endeavors to serve the people of Kurdistan by initiating and leading lasting social and economic changes within the Kurdish society. It is a party which believes in both principles of democracy and social justice, principles that are reflected in the Party's program and internal regulations which in turn are formulated on the basis of the concept of democratic centralism. The following are a few of KDP's principles as they are stated in its program:

Article 3. "We struggle for freedom and for the implementation of the March 11 Agreement in both letter and spirit and to enable the people of Kurdistan to achieve autonomy and to protect, consolidate and develop that autonomy in Kurdistan and within the Iraqi Republic."

Article 6. "We struggle for the sake of establishing a popularly elected, revolutionary and democratic form of government. We also struggle to achieve far-reaching social and economic changes within all aspects of the society and to guarantee for all the citizens the freedoms of worship, belief, press, and political association."

Article 7. "We struggle: a) for the strengthening of brotherly relations between the Arab and Kurdish nations, b) for the consolidation of brotherhood among the Arabs, the Kurds and the minorities within Iraq and for the strengthening of national unity, c) for the strengthening of bonds of friendship between our Kurdish people and all peoples of the world."

Article 8. "a) We struggle for peace in the world and for the lessening of international tensions and we are guided by the principles of the United Nations, the Bandung Conference resolutions, the principles of peaceful co-existence, peaceful solution of international disputes, the banning of nuclear weapons and tests on them, b) We pursue a nationalist anti-imperialist policy and we strive to strengthen friendly relations with all peoples of the world based upon the principle of mutual benefit and the support of national liberation movements waged by people for the sake of independence and the right of self-determination."

Article 9. "We endeavor to strengthen bonds of friendship and cooperation between our party and all other Iraqi parties and organizations which believe in the justice of the Kurdish question and which support the common struggle of our party and the other democratic organizations in all parts of Kurdistan. We also endeavor to strengthen ties of friendship with the democratic parties and organizations throughout the world."

Article 12. "We struggle to develop our national economy and to raise the standard of living of the people by following the principle of comprehensive economic and social planning, taking into consideration the human and natural resources of the land and hoping to make available the basic needs for development and encouraging both the public and private sectors of the economy while insuring the leading role of the former."

Article 16. "We support the new Land Reform Law No. 37 of 1970 in the hope that all farmers of Kurdistan will be able to own some land and so that fuedalism in Kurdistan will be uprooted . . ."

Article 17. "We believe in the regulating of domestic and foreign trade while assisting and stimulating the business community, all this while taking into consideration the interests of both the public and private sectors based upon the national interest of the country and on the principle of combating monopoly and price speculation. We also believe in establishing commercial ties with other countries based upon the principle of reciprocity and the encouragement of exports and the limiting of imports to the basic and necessary commodities."

Article 22. "We support women's political, economic, social and cultural rights and we work to see the necessary laws passed which will guarantee all rights of women prior, during and after childbirth as well as the rights of mothers and children."

Article 23. "We struggle to a) guarantee the rights of the Kurdish student and in order to wipe out illiteracy and to give education a nationalist and democratic content while fighting reactionary, fascist and racist tendencies; b) revitalize Kurdish history, literature and art and to enrich them with the humanist elements from other cultures and to protect and preserve historic sites in Kurdistan and to build museums for them; c) to develop the University of Sulaimaniya, protect its independence and to turn it into a center for academic research and for the revitalization of the Kurdish national culture; d) emphasize the teaching of Kurdish language, history and culture during all stages of education, promote the teaching of Kurdish throughout Iraq, establish a Kurdish academy of science, a press and publishing house, and a separate radio and television station in Kurdistan; e) make primary school education compulsory for both sexes, open night schools for workers, farmers and others, and to increase the number of libraries, laboratories and literary clubs in order to raise the cultural and educational standards of the people, f) promote Kurdish art and culture and to use their potentials to serve humanity in general and the objectives and interests of the Kurdish people in particular, and to encourage the literary and artistic movement by increasing the number of assistantships and scholarships, the building of theaters and opening of clubs, g) guarantee the rights of teachers in Kurdistan and to raise their standard in various aspects of their profession."

THE KURDISH REVOLUTION AND ITS OBJECTIVES

The Kurdish revolution which began in September 1961 was a natural reaction to the oppressive and discriminating policies which the Iraqi government was carrying out against the Kurdish people. In the face of constant harassment and in order to defend their national existence and right, the Kurdish people were forced to pick up arms. It is during the last several years of struggle that the Kurdish

Revolution has evolved into a definite political movement the objectives of which have crystalized into the demand of Kurdish autonomy within Iraq.

Since the Kurds constitute one of the two major nationalities within Iraq, they have as a people, put forth the legitimate demand of having their separate and distinct national identity both recognized and respected. Through the many years of association with the Iraqi Arabs and the bitter struggle which they have had to undertake in the face of various Iraqi regimes – particularly since 1961 – the Kurds have come to the conclusion that the only guarantee which will safeguard and promote their nationalist development is through enjoying autonomy within Iraq.

Since the concept and application of Kurdish autonomy is conceived of within the larger framework of the Iraqi state, it is important that there should be no contradictions between the proposed regional (Kurdish) administration and the larger national (Iraqi) form of government. Thus another objective of the Kurdish Revolution is democracy for all of Iraq and this is based on the belief that the best atmosphere within which Kurdish autonomy can flourish is the general framework of a democratic system of government for Iraq as a whole.

The Kurdish Revolution is led by the Kurdistan Democratic Party under the leadership of Barzani who in addition to being the President of KDP and the leader of the Kurdish people and his revolution, is the only man that has successfully led the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq and whose leadership is widely believed in and accepted by the Kurdish people.

The political state of affairs in Iraq has been such that while the Kurdish Revolution has continuously grown in its organization and in its positive response to the principle of a peaceful solution for the Kurdish problem within Iraq, various Iraqi regimes have persisted in their insensitive and hostile policies toward the Kurdish people and their movement. However, the failure of racist and aggressive policies on the one hand and the resolution of the Kurdish people for their legitimate demands on the other hand, have finally and after long years of dampened hopes and broken promises brought the Ba'th Arab Socialist Party and the present Iraqi Government to a better and more responsive understanding of the nature of the Kurdish question and it was this understanding which resulted in the conclusion of the March Agreement.

Thus on March 11, 1970 the long and difficult struggle of the Kurdish people ended by the victory of the will of the people of Kurdistan, a victory that produced the March Agreement which recognizes and provides for autonomy for Kurdistan. The cornerstone of the ensuing alliance between the KDP and the Ba'th Arab

Socialist Party is nothing other than the latter's recognition and acceptance of the national rights of the Kurdish people, a recognition which will seem genuine only when the provisions of the Agreement are implemented fully and in good faith.

The March Agreement has established a principle which requires a constitutional, administrative and economic framework within which the concept as well as the practice of Kurdish autonomy must be consolidated. This the ruling Ba'th Arab Socialist Party and the Iraqi Government have failed to produce even after three and a half years of hopeful anticipation by the Kurdish people. This is not an attempt to deny the implementation of minor provisions of the Agreement during this period, but the fact remains that the provisions which have a direct bearing on the preservation and consolidation of the Kurdish national identity and the existence of the Kurdish people in his homeland of Kurdistan, have not only been ignored, but feverish and systematic efforts are being made to blur the reality of Kurdish existence in Southern Kurdistan and to disrupt and distort the geographic and ethnic homogeneity of Kurdistan.

The present policy of Arabization which is being diligently pursued inside Kurdistan is a perfect example of how sincere efforts for the implementation and practice of Kurdish autonomy have been replaced by sinister and systematic plans to arbitrarily detach parts from the area of the proposed Kurdish autonomy and to cut up and divide the area and population of Kurdistan. One has only to follow the progress of this hateful policy in the areas of Kirkuk, Khanaqin, Sinjar and parts of the provinces of Nineveh and Duhok to see in use such measures as the bringing of Arab tribes from outside to settle them in Kurdistan; the deliberate creation of antagonism between the Kurds and the ethnic and religious minorities living in Kurdistan; the resort to terror and the arming and financing of suspicious and pro-government elements; the mass deportation of Kurdish families and clans; and the pursuit of a definite policy of discrimination against the Kurds of these areas by refusing them government jobs and by arbitrarily transferring Kurdish civilian and military officials to the southern part of Iraq. All this is done to make life miserable for the original Kurdish population of these parts and consequently to force them out. One can only wonder whether such treatment by a government of its citizens can ever produce any sense of loyalty and belonging to a system which is so discriminating and which is that hostile. All this is in addition to the plots that are organized against the life of Barzani and the local military attacks which have been carried out against such areas of Kurdistan as 'Aqra, Barzan and others.

No doubt that the accumulative effect of all this has made the implementation of the provisions of the March Agreement more

complicated, although the Kurdish Revolution and the Kurdish people on their part continue to try and overlook the negative aspects of the present policy and to find points of agreement with the government in order to salvage a deteriorating situation and to spare the Iraqi people the recurrence of the sad and regretful events of the past. The Kurdish Revolution's policy of constantly asking the government to put an end to certain undesirable and unworkable policies and to instead cooperate towards a genuine implementation of the March Agreement is based on the belief that this type of cooperation is the only foundation upon which the sovereignty and independence of Iraq can be consolidated and by which peace and stability of not only Iraq but perhaps of the whole area of the Middle East can be affected. On the other hand if our call to reason fails and it is instead met with indifference and hostility, then the Kurdish people will no doubt practice the legitimate right of self defense whenever and wherever that becomes necessary.

The sense of fairness and responsibility that characterizes the leadership of the Kurdish Revolution, and the general feeling that cooperation and friendship with the Christian community is not only necessary but desirable have all caused the Kurdish Revolution to pay particular attention to solving the problems and insuring the well-being of this community in Kurdistan. As a practical application of these principles the Kurdish Revolution and the Kurdistan Democratic Party have established joint committees with the representatives of the Christian community to work with and help the religious leaders particularly in repairing, and preserving their places of worship; to keep contact with the Assyrian speaking community and to focus on their problems by publicising them in the KDP Publications; to ask the Christian community to present its own list of names of people who could be appointed as officials in their own areas; and in general to try and explain to them the rights and privileges which they will enjoy within the framework of an autonomous Kurdistan.

The Kurdish Revolution is also a social movement and as such it both depends on the support of the Kurdish people and strives to translate its own achievements into tangible services for the people of Kurdistan. Having suffered many years of official neglect and lack of development, the Kurdish community has remained plagued with many social and economic ills which require immediate and full attention. More than 75% of the people of Kurdistan remain illiterate, a situation which was aggravated by the constant disruption of education due to the general lack of peace and the lack of educational facilities within the liberated Kurdish areas. All this has led to the growth of a whole generation of Kurdish children without any education. To say that tuberculosis, kidney disease, rickets and

numerous contagious diseases are rampant throughout Kurdistan is to demonstrate in only few examples the constantly deteriorating health condition of the people of Kurdistan. The picture grows gloomier when we realize that health and sanitation facilities practically do not exist in the area and that facilities for the treatment and prevention of various diseases exist on a very limited scale. To effectively demonstrate this lack of medical care, one has only to state the fact that there is only one doctor for every 250,000 of the inhabitants and there is only a very small supporting group of dressers and male nurses.

The Kurdish Revolution therefore must broaden its social content and it intends to do this by focusing on community development in areas where the people need most help. In areas where the community needs direct assistance, such as in health and education, the Kurdish Revolution tries to help by operating the existing schools and hospitals, by opening new ones whenever possible, by attracting doctors and teachers and providing medical care when possible and available.

The Kurdish Revolution's concept of community development is also based on the principle of helping the people to help themselves. The thousands of village communities throughout liberated Kurdistan are not only deprived of basic tools of development, but they often are not even aware of how they can improve their own social and economic conditions with relatively little cost and effort. With all this in mind, the Kurdistan Democratic Party has recently created a Department for Community Development which will try to tackle the problems of rural Kurdistan, specifically those of health and education.

Needless to say that the ambitions and aspirations of this department by far exceed its means, for it is the organ of a movement which in turn is the product of a society that has remained poor and underdeveloped for too long. The fact that Arabization disperses and dislocates our population, and the fact that our political question remains unsolved, and that for more than a decade we have had to put everything else aside and to pick up arms in order to defend ourselves, all these are factors which have prevented the Kurdish Revolution and its various organs from keeping the economic and social conditions of Kurdistan from further deterioration, let alone trying to keep pace with the basic and increasing needs of our community.

While we confirm our belief in the fact that the peaceful solution of the Kurdish question in Iraq, based on the full implementation of the March Agreement and the consolidation of autonomy for Kurdistan, is the most correct and practical way of consolidating peace and national unity, we call upon all concerned and peace-

loving individuals to carry the peaceful message of our Kurdish people home to their peoples and governments. We also ask you to encourage the various humanitarian organizations in your countries to heed the call of the needy people of Kurdistan and to offer their help in the form of food, clothes, medical care and other basic needs. We finally invite the delegates of all friendly nations to come and visit Kurdistan in order to witness the difficult struggle which our people put up for their national existence and their dire need for help to lead a simple and peaceful life.

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