



Critical Analysis of Kurds in Kurdistan (Iran) with Special Reference to Hizbe Kamala Kurdistan 1941-1947.

*** Najleh Khandagh**

Political Science Faculty of Humanities, Tarbiat Modarees University, Tehran, Iran.

Accepted 20 March, 2013

This article has tried to show the background of Kurdish people in general, and Kurds in Iran in particular. Kurds like other minorities in Iran, for example, Azeri's in Azarbaijan Iran fought for their political, economic, cultural linguistic, cultural religious rights. To this end many movements took place in Kurdistan Iran. Many of them were short lived and immediately crushed by central government. In the case of Kurdistan with support from the Soviet Union, a Kurdish state was created in the city of Mahabad in 1946 by the Kurdish movement *Kamala Kurd* under the leadership of Qazi Muhammad. The republic of Mahabad, as it is often called, lasted less than a year as the end of the Second World War and the withdrawal of the occupying soviet forces allowed the central government to defeat the movement. It seems Kurdish problems like many other minorities are insoluble in the world.

Keywords: Kamala, Kurdistan, Kurds, Minority, Rights.

INTRODUCTION:

The Kurds are minority scattered all over Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Armenia. Their history with their culture has been overshadowed by the majority populations in these countries. Since these countries have existed, nationalism and dictatorship have also left little room for minority expression when not faced with military oppression or political discrimination. Kurds have been forced at the very least to cope with an environment hostile to developing their own identity.

Kurdistan of Iran is a backward province that mainly suffered from absolute poverty, and there is a need for reform to enhance the standard of living for Kurdish people who live in Kurdistan of Iran. Kurds have struggled throughout to have their legitimate rights, but are denied by oppressive governments. People of Kurdistan live in absolute poverty in many parts of Iran. The capital income per-annum is very low as such one cannot live on such income. Health care, education, employment and other necessities are in a very poor condition. Economic decay coupled with lack of reforms in Kurdistan on one hand, and political repression and discrimination against Kurds, on the other hand roused the Kurdish people to revolt against central government and declared Kurdish independence.

To this end, they looked for external support and the Soviet Union was the only option. This was a good excuse for the central government to label them as a soviet puppet.

The welfare of Kurdish people depends on radical reforms in all aspects such as land, industrial, health and education. Kurds should have the right to teach Kurdish language in schools and use Kurdish language as an official language. Kurds of Iran like other Kurds in the region have struggled against poverty, religious and political freedom.

The Kurdish provinces of northern Iraq are the country's most stable and prosperous ones. However, to the neighboring Iran and Turkey with large Kurdish population it is something else. It is a source of inspiration and support base for the Kurdish rebels in their own countries. The roots of the partition of Kurdistan lay in World War I. At the end of World War 1, the Ottoman Empire was carved and the Kurds found themselves segmented between Turkey, Iran and Iraq.

The Kurdish estate is the ultimate aim of Kurdish people. To this end, many movements occurred in Turkey, Iraq, and Iran, backed by western countries, particularly Britain. Nevertheless, all the movements were broadly crushed by their national governments, which always had interest in this region. For example, Sheikh Mahmud Barzinji was from influential Kurdish family in southern Kurdistan who ignored British

*Corresponding Author E-mail: najlekhandagh@gmail.com
Tel: 00982182884613, 00989123868831, Fax: 0098218822021.

interests and set about forming a government, army and addressing himself as the "King of Kurdistan". The British declared him a rebel after a half-year of battling with his army, and they had him exiled to India with Kamala Kurdistan led by Qazi Mohammad in Mahabad.

Kurds fought throughout their history for Kurdish states for their political, economical and cultural independence. They demanded that independence is their birthright and it would permit them to fight their way along the road of progress and civilization to use the resources of their country and to live in peace with their neighbours.

Moreover, the story of the partition of Kurdistan foreshadows Kurdish history throughout the twentieth century. Foreign manipulation of Kurdish nationalism, the subordination of Kurdish identity by other "nationalisms" (mainly Turkish and Arab), oil interests, and Kurdish factionalism are all common place themes to anyone familiar with Kurdish affairs today. Organizing people by nationality is not "natural"; it is a man-made idea that has only been around since the nineteenth century. Instead, the partition of Kurdistan must be seen as an unjust division. The idea of unifying all Kurds in a place called "Kurdistan" is still a worthy goal not because of their "natural" unity, but because such unification seems to be the best hope for all Kurds to find freedom and justice. They have seen little of these under the regimes which were created out of the partition.

FINDING

The period in which political activity in Iran flourished in comparatively free conditions and with considerable vigour was a remarkably brief one when viewed from the perspective of the long history that belongs to Iran. It spans the years of 1905-1947 with two marked phases. Most historians of Iran regard the emergence of the first political parties as coming with the constitutional Revolution in 1905-1911 and this preliminary stage of political activity lasted until 1921 in which year Riza Shah came to power. The second stage centered during the years 1941-1947 following the abdication of Riza Shah. It ended with the collapse of the Firqa-yi Dimokrat in Azerbaijan, and hizbe Kamala-Kurdistan which were suppressed by the central government along with all other movements opposed to its policy.

Despite the fact that the Hizbe Kumala-ye Kurdistan was definitely left-wing, it was more in the nature of a regional national liberation movement than a nationwide political party. However, it can be subsumed under the Azarbaijan democratic and nationalist movement where both worked towards autonomy. The Kurdistan problem was compounded by its international character. Kurds inhabited not only the Iranian province of Kurdistan, but also parts of Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Union of Soviet

Socialist Republics (USSR) and Afghanistan (Naamani, I.T., Summer 1966).

Their demand for Autonomy was an interim solution, pending the final aim of an independent unified Kurdish state. As the communist party of Iraq declared at its second conference, July 1959, Iraqi Kurds are inseparable from all other Kurds in Kurdistan, a province which lay between Iraq, Iran and Turkey. For each Kurdish group, autonomy is a preliminary solution before the final unification of Kurds in an independent Kurdish state (Qasimlou.A.R 1970). This statement follows the general communist support for the right of self-determination which included an independent Kurdish state. Lenin stated: (Qasimlou A.R., 1975), "each national problem requires its own concrete solution" and thus the communist parties of Iran, Iraq and Turkey all individually supported the Kurdish movements in their own countries- the Tudeh in Iran and the Iraqi and Turkish communist parties

The west had a similar vested interest in the issue which was diametrically opposed to Kurdish autonomy and independence. The danger inherent to such western powers in the possibility of radical democratic change came with the communist element. This posed a direct threat to western interests in Middle East: the oil monopoly (cf. Kirkuk), military bases and so on. On the one hand, it was possible to support the Kurdish movement, but at the same time, this would incur the hostility of the national governments of Iran, Iraq and Turkey, which were unwilling to take the risk. These powers thus enforced their disapproval through the agency of local feudal lords, tribal chiefs, and religious leaders. The two former groups indeed, were the most formidable obstacles in the way of Kurdish national liberation –see their roles for instance, in the autonomy movement of 1946 in Iran, which was crushed by the central government with the support of Britain and America (Qasimlou A.R., 1970). The Kurds on their part recognized the necessity of struggle (Feili, O.Y., 1976, Fromchuck, A.R. et al, 1976) against external influences if they were to fulfill any claim for democracy or self-determination and gain aims and rights. Nevertheless, they would have done better to have united with all the democratic movements in the Middle East in order to dissipate and eliminate imperialist influence in the economic field, military bases, the Central Eastern Treaty Organization (CENTO). Since the oil monopoly, was the force that resists the movement for national liberation.

In spite of the apparent destruction of the movement in 1946 the strong feeling of the Kurdish movement came out from its re-emergence in Iran with similar claims after the recent revolution of 1979 (Kurdistan Report, 1981), The Kurds, with their different language, and tradition and their cross-border alliances, were seen as vulnerable to exploitation by foreign powers ,who wished to destabilize the young republic. As early as 1979 the armed conflict broke out between armed Kurdish faction and the Iranian government's security

forces. The Kurdish forces included primarily the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK), and the leftist Kamala (Revolutionary Organization of Kurdish Toilers). It seems, kamala Kurdistan movement in 1946 did not vanish forever, and at the first opportunity after [the Islamic revolution of 1979] reemerged and claimed their own rights. Kamalah, a Marxist Kurdish group outlawed since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, has been clashing for years with security forces in northwestern Iran, where there is a sizeable Kurdish population. It thus appears that the only way in which to solve the Kurdish problem is through amelioration of conditions within Kurdistan, since that province is extremely disadvantaged in comparison with the rest of the country. Apart from Kermanshah, the industry in Kurdistan and capital income per annum among the peasants is only \$100. Radical land reform is thus required as are educational facilities to lower the high rate of illiteracy (National Census of Population and Housing, Nov. 1966) and the granting of basic cultural rights would help to improve the Kurdish situation.

The number of Kurds living in Southwest Asia is estimated at around 35 million, with another one or two million living in Diaspora. Kurds are the fourth largest ethnicity in the Middle East after Arabs, Persians, and Turks. Kurds comprise 20% of the population in Turkey, 15-20% in Iraq, perhaps 8% in Syria, 7% in Iran and 1.3% in Armenia (Eagleton, W. 1963) They mostly inhabit mountainous regions and support themselves through agriculture and pastoral farming. The majority are Sunni Moslems although there are some Shia Moslems mainly living in Ilam and Kermanshah, and the Kurdish languages belong to the north-western subgroup of the Iranian languages, which in turn belongs to the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European family.

Most Kurds are either bilingual or multilingual, speaking the language of their respective nation of origin, such as Arabic, Turkish and Persian as a second language alongside their native Kurdish, while those in diasporas communities often speak 3 or more languages, (Limbert, J.1948) and have their own cultural heritage: the first Kurdish literature dates from the seventh century, and a Kurdish press from 1898 (Feili 1976, Naamani et al 1966). In Iran, the Kurds form 16% of the Iranian population, (National census of population and housing, Nov.1966) living mainly in the western plateau, covering an area of 125,000 square kilometers - a distinct ethnic minority.

The first organized movement of Kurds in Iran began in 1943 with the creation of the kamala, the committee of Kurdish Youth, reflecting a tendency popular among Kurds in general at that time, (Roosevelt, E. July 1947) internal support for the movement came mainly from progressive tribal leaders, landowners (Machalski, A.P.1962), merchants, and forward-looking clergymen and intelligentsia (Farquhar to Bevin, April 18, 1946). External help was derived from the support given in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in particular (among

the socialist countries) – a Kurdistan-Soviet Cultural Relations Society was formed, on the basis of this co-operation. In January 1946, during the Soviet occupation of north-western Iran, the Soviet-backed Kurdish Republic of Mahabad declared independence in parts of Iranian Kurdistan. Nevertheless, the Soviet forces left Iran in May 1946, and the self-declared republic fell to the Iranian army after only a few months later. When the Kamala finally announced its existence in public in April 1945 it was to found the hizbe kumalayi Kurdistan, with the religious leader Ghazi Muhammad at its head. The new party was approved on September 12, 1945, at a meeting (Machalski, A.P.1962) between Ghazi and Makhirov, president of Azarbaijan Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The hizbe Kumala-yi Kurdistan in effect replaced the ineffective Tudeh Party (Sayr-i Kumunist Dar Iran, Government Publication, 1959) in Kurdistan, and built upon the support that had been given to the Tudeh. The one hundred founder members declared in the party's manifesto their advocacy of freedom from fascism, and the return to constitutional liberties, and rights that they had enjoyed before the reign of Riza Shah. The three papers, 'Kurdistan', 'Havar' and 'Hilat' started publication with the final dissolution of the Kumala (Sayr-i Kumunist Dar Iran, Government Publication, 1959).

The programme of the Democratic Party of Kurdistan was based upon: freedom, self-government and autonomy for Kurdistan; education in Kurdish, and local official not 'imported' from the central government; law and security for all classes of society; co-operation and friendship with Azerbaijan; increased efficiency in the exploitation of natural resources, agriculture, education and health care; general welfare and prosperity in Kurdistan (Ivanov, MS.1959).

Ghazi's position was consolidated with the acquisition of Mulla Mustafa Barzani's support from Iraq (Roosevelt, E. July 1947) With his help, Kurdistan autonomy was announced on January 11, 1946, affecting Mahabad, Ushnu, Mianduab, Saqqiz, and Maku (Ivanov, MS.1959). This followed the declaration of a people's government on December 15, 1945. Ghazi was elected as president of the Kurdish Republic, at a mass meeting of delegates from all over Kurdistan on January 24, 1946, while his cousin, Husayn Khan Sayf ghazi became minister of War in the 13 member-strong cabinet ("The Kurds in Persia",1959). Kurdish thus became the official language, with local Kurds as administrative officials; the Iranian army and police appointed by the central government were disarmed and replaced with a Kurdish national army; ("The Kurds in Persia",1959) Partial land reforms were effected, limited in its scope by the Kurds' willingness to redistribute only that land that had been abandoned by fleeing feudal lords or tribal chiefs; trade with Soviet Union was also initiated, and helped improve Kurdistan's economic situation, (Farquhar to Bevin, April 18,1946) which was opposed strangely by

national government of Iran particularly by western powers which could jeopardize western interest in Iran.

Barzani played a major role in the talks between the Democratic parties of Kurdistan and Azerbaijan, held in April 1946 in Tabriz. These centred on the Articles, with the conclusion of a treaty of mutual aid friendship (Qassimlou, A. R.1975). These talks were important for both parties, and enabled them to present a united front against the oppressive central government. Tehran, indeed, received the articles very badly (Roosevelt, E.1947) because they did not want to solve the problem and their ultimate aim was to crush the movements. This in turn made both movements to take action in their province in order to achieve their aims for welfare of their people, which caused many problems in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. Thus Suggestion concerning local autonomy and bureaucracy were submitted to Qavam, but while apparently accepted, were in the end dropped by Qavam (Roosevelt, E.1947) and this resulted in more friction between the Kurds and the central government. In December 1946, Iranian troops were sent to Kurdistan, apparently to supervise the election to the 15th Majlis but in fact their aim was to suppress Kurdish movement (Ramazani, R. K., 1971).

At that time in Iran, Barzani, conducted negotiation with Qavam to reach an agreement. The suppression of the Azerbaijan autonomy movement caused Barzani's efforts to fail. The Iranian army moved into Kurdistan on February 22, 1947, the Kurds were disarmed and the movement crushed with the help of local feudal and tribal chiefs ("The Kurds in Persia", 1959). The short-lived autonomy finally collapsed with the execution of its leaders. While Barzani returned to Iraq on April 13, Ghazi, his brother Sadr Ghazi, and cousin Sayf Ghazi were arrested, brought before a military tribunal, and executed on March 30, 1947, along with many others (Roosevelt, E., 1947). Barzani came back to Kurdistan, on May 22, in an effort to continue the fight, but with an Iranian force of 10,000 men, the attempt was doomed to fail. Barzani then left for the USSR in June, 1947 (Qasimlou A.R., 1975).

Five main reasons can be deduced for the collapse of the democratic party of Kurdistan. The Kurds, while accepting help from the Soviets, also resisted Soviet disapproval of their own ideology. The peasants were suffering from a failed tobacco crop and consequent drop in trade with the rest of Iran. The party depended upon the import of food, a scarce or non-existent commodity partly due to the extra men to be fed. There were allegations of Soviet non-co-operation, and Kurdish tribesmen gave no support, the party relied heavily upon Barzani, while the rank and file in army comprised a mere rabble, out only to gain its own material profit (Roosevelt, E., 1947)

Much research needs to be done in this area, beyond this brief overview. Nevertheless, several comments can be added here (Eagleton, W., 1963, Adamson, N.

Y. 'et al', 1948). Western writers are mistaken in assuming the party to be a Soviet puppet (Farquhar to Bevin, April 18, 1949); this is impossible in the face of the strong religious tendencies of the Kurds in general, and of Ghazi himself. The true cause of the revolution was not communist-inspired by the USSR, but due to the abject poverty within Kurdistan, a situation ignored by the central government. The movement was purely a nationalist movement that sought to establish Kurdish as the official language in schools and local government, and, quite independent from the Soviet Union. The USSR became involved only through the Kurds' need for material support that was not forthcoming from the Iranian government.

CONCLUSION

Kurdish history, thus, is a catalogue of unsuccessful attempts to achieve autonomy from Persia, Turkey and Iraq. The 'bandit' image is a false and misleading one: their struggle was the safeguarding of a period of political freedom, gained after the Soviet occupation (1941-7). Just like the Kurds in Iraq, the struggle for democracy, and its attainment in Kurdistan, even if but briefly, was destined to change the political future of the area (Edmonds,N.Y.,1948).

According to Christopher Hitchens, (Christopher, H., August 1992): "The Kurds are homeless even at home and stateless abroad. Their ancient woes are locked inside an obscure language. They have powerful, impatient enemies and a few rather easily bored friends. Their traditional society is considered a nuisance at worst and a curiosity at best. For them the act of survival, even identity itself, is a kind of victory. "

REFERENCES

- "The Kurds in Persia", (1959) Central Asian Review, vol. 7, p. 192.
 "The Kurds in Persia", (1959), Central Asian Review, vol. 7, p. 192.
 Ch., Hitchens (August 1992), Struggle of The Kurds, 182 National Geographic 32, 60.
 Dr Najleh Khandagh (1984), the great powers and the Middle East PhD Treatise.
 Eagleton, W. (1963), The Kurdish republic of (1946), London p.38.
 Eagleton, W., (1963) The Kurdish Republic of (1946), London;
 Adamson, N. Y. 'et al', (1948) The Kurdish War, (1965); Safrastion, Kurds and Kurdistan, London.
 Edmonds,N.Y.,(1948), op. cit., p. 10
 Farquhar to Bevin, April 18, (1946), p. 2. (E 3499/3/34) public record office (PRO).
 Farquhar to Bevin, April 18, (1946). (E3499/3/34) PRO, P. 10.
 Farquhar to Bevin, April 18, (1949), p. 2. (E3499/3/34) PRO.
 Feili, O.Y., (1976) and Fromchuck, A.R. et al, (1976) "The Kurdish Struggle for Independence", The middle East Review, vol.ix, no.1, , pp.47-59.
 Feili, op. cit., p. 47; Naamani et al, op. cit., pp. 280-81.
[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=\(2011\09\13\)\story](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=(2011\09\13)\story)
[http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/Default.asp?page=\(2011\09\13\)Story](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/Default.asp?page=(2011\09\13)Story)
<http://www.kurdoyouth.org/learn/hst001.htm>
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle-east/turkish-prime-m...>
 Ivanov, MS. (1959) "Kurds in Persia", Central Asian Review, , p. 192.
 Ivanov, op. cit., p. 192.
 Kurdistan and Kurds, Ch. 12, Section 2.
 Kurdistan Report, (1981), No.2, March, London.
 Limbert, J. (1948), "The origins and appearance of the Kurds in the Pre-Islamic Iran", Iranian Studies, vol. I, p. 41.

5 Elite Res J. Edu Rev.

Machalski, A.P.(1962), Political Parties in Iran 1941-1946, Krakow, op. cit., p. 254.
Machalski, A.P.(1962), Political Parties in Iran 1941-1946, Krakow.
Naamani, I.T., Summer (1966), "The Kurdish drive for self-determination".
National Census of Population and Housing, Nov. (1966).
Qasimlou A.R., (1970), Kurdistan and the Kurds, Ch.12, Section 1.
Qasimlou A.R., (1975), People Without a Country, Intro., p.8.
Qassimlou, A. R.(1975), in people Without a Country.
Qassimlou, People Without a Country, ch.2.

Ramazani, R. K., (1971) "The Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan and the Kurdish People's Republic: Their Rise and fall", Studies on the Soviet Union II, p. 471.
Roosevelt, E.(1947) "The Kurdish Republic of Mahabad", MEJ, vol., No. 3, p. 258.
Roosevelt, op. cit., p. 257.
Roosevelt, op. cit., p.260.
Roosevelt, E. July (1947), "Kurdish Republic of Mahabad", MEJ, p. 247.
Sayr-I Kumunist Dar Iran (1959), Government Publication.