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WASHINGTON REITERATES ITS COMMITMENT TO PROTECT THE IRAQI KURDS

ON the invitation of U.S. Vice-President Al Gore, the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) both sent high level delegations to Washington, led by Nechirvan Barzani, Prime Minister of the Irbil regional government (KDP), and Jalal Talabani, General Secretary of the PUK.

On 26 June the U.S. Vice-President held a long meeting with the two Kurdish leaders as well as some leading figures of the Iraqi National Congress. On this occasion he reiterated the U.S.

commitment to grant many forms of aid to the Iraqi opposition to help fall of Saddam Hussein and to defend "the protection zone for the Iraqi Kurds" against any possible attacks by the Iraqi Army.

Officially this zone does not include the Kurdish territories South of the 36th Parallel, nor the province of Suleimaniah, administered by the PUK. Reporting the statements of a senior Iraqi officer who had recently defected, Jallal Talabani warned his American audience and the media of the danger of an "imminent" invasion of that

province by Baghdad's troops. According to him, three divisions of the Iraqi Army were massing on the Suleimaniah Province borders. Saddam Hussein, accusing the PUK of having provided facilities for the recent series of bomb attacks in Baghdad attributed to the Iranian secret services, was allegedly seeking to "punish" J. Talabani.

The U.S. administration stated that it took these threats seriously and that it would prevent Iraqi troops from any acts of aggression against any part of the territory under Kurdish control, including the province of Suleimaniah.

Taking advantage of the presence of the two Kurdish delegations, the

American administration worked at organising a fresh round of inter-Kurdish discussions to advance the applications of the "Washington Agreements" signed in September 1998. Officials of the State Department Thomas Pickering, Acting Secretary of State in the absence abroad of Mrs. Albright, and Mrs. Elisabeth Jones, deputy director for the Middle East, met the two delegations separately. Subsequently the two delegations met for talks under U.S. chairmanship. Following "long and difficult" discussions some "substantial progress" is said to have been made. There is again talk of "the next meeting" of Parliament in plenary session at Irbil to arrange details of General Elections. However, no firm time table has been set, and the dispute over the sharing of Customs Revenues has not been completely settled though the gap between

the two parties' views has been reduced.

Meanwhile Washington preaches calm and the continuation of dialogue. The ending of the fratricidal fighting since November 1997 has allowed a fairly impressive economic and cultural development of Iraqi Kurdistan. In principle there is less danger of a renewal of hostilities between the KDP and the PUK. However one cannot neglect the danger of interference by the neighbouring states (Iran, Iraq Turkey) who can, either directly (bomb attacks carried out by their secret services) or indirectly, via certain islamists, Turcomen or dissident Kurds, maintain a climate of instability so as to torpedo the experiment in self government of the Iraqi Kurds which — despite the setbacks of the black period of May 1994 - October 1997 — has now lasted 9 years. A record in 20th Century Kurdish history.

services (Army and Baath party). Opponents, like the islamists and dissidents of the official Communist Party, were repressed with the greatest brutality — several thousands of deaths in 1982 when heavy artillery was used to repress islamist riots in Homs and Hama.

Though claiming to be "the champion of the Arab cause", the man whose flatterers called "the Lion of Damascus", during his 30 years reign failed to liberate a single inch of occupied Syrian territory. On the other hand he greatly contributed to the ruination of the Lebanon by playing off the various Lebanese factions against one another with diabolical skill — to the great misfortune of the Land of the Cedar. Those, like the Druze leader of Kurdish descent Kamal Jumblat, whose influence spread far beyond the confines of the Near East and who refused to become docile tools in the hands of the Damascus Machiaveli, were assassinated without any scruples. General Assad also fueled the bloody internal differences within the Palestinian movement so as to eliminate Yasser Arafat. With small regard for the means used, he allowed Lebanon, under occupation by his troops, become the crossroads of all sorts of trafficking, in particular of drugs, to the greater profit of his family and sect and this tentacular Intelligence Services.

His skills also had disastrous effects on the Kurds. While denying the slightest cultural or linguistic rights to his 1.5 million Kurdish citizens and refusing to restore citizenship to the 150,000 Kurds who had been stripped of their nationality, he offered an asylum to the PKK with the aim of using it as a tool in his policy against Turkey. Wishing to kill two birds with one stone, he encouraged young Syrian Kurds to enroll in the PKK guerrillas, ostensibly

DYNASTIC SUCCESSION IN DAMASCUS

SYRIAN President Hafez el Assad died in Damascus on 10th June, after an absolute reign of 30 years. His funeral took place on 13 June, attended by many Arab heads of State, the French and Iranian Presidents, as well as the Iraqi Kurdish leaders M. Barzani and J. Talabani. The majority of Western countries were represented by their Foreign Ministers to avoid showing too much respect for the late Syrian dictator. Nicknamed "the Arab Bismarck" by some and "the Machiaveli of the near East" by others, General Assad had played a decisive role in the *coup d'état* of 1966 that enabled the Baath Party to win power. After serving the Baathist regime as Minister of the Defence during the Six Day War (June 1967) in which Israel inflicted a crushing defeat on the Arab Armies and in which Syria lost the

Golan Heights, Assad carried out a second *coup d'état* in 1970 to eliminate "the left wing" of the Baath Party and assume unchallenged personal power. Having become the absolute overlord of Syria, he distributed the main control points (the Army, the Party, the Intelligence Services) to members of his very minor sect, the Alawites.

Some pro-Soviet communists, Druzes and Kurds were, at lower levels, associated with this narrow based and dictatorial regime to give it the appearance of a popular base and legitimacy. The rhetoric of "the Arab revolution", of "liberation of Palestine and the Golan from Zionist occupation", lavishly used by the official media served as an ideological justification for a police ridden regime maintained in power by the ubiquitous presence of various intelligence

"to liberate Turkish Kurdistan" but, in fact, to rid himself of a militant and nationalist part of the Syrian Kurdish youth. After securing a first agreement with Ankara on sharing of the Euphrates waters, Assad, who had hoped to secure even greater advantages from his use of the PKK, was finally obliged, in October 1998, to abandon this game in the face of a threat of war with Turkey, with unimaginable consequences for Syria.

At daggers drawn with the rival Baath faction in power in Baghdad, the Syrian regime also maintained up and down relations with the Iraqi Kurds, without ever giving them any substantial help. After the Gulf war and the creation of the protected zone for the Iraqi Kurds Damascus used every means in its power, often in concert with Teheran, to prevent Iraqi Kurdistan from becoming "a second Israel" — i.e. that it become a stable state entity.

With foresight, General Assad had meticulously prepared his dynastic succession. In particular he had decapitated the powerful Intelligence services by arbitrarily retiring Hikmat hhehabi, Ali Duba, Mohammed Nassif etc. and replacing them with young men of the same generation as his son, Bachar. The latter, inducted into the Army, enjoyed a meteoric ascent before being promoted, on his father's death, "General" and "Armed forces Commander in Chief" by the puppet Vice-President, Abdel Halim Khaddam and receiving the homage of the Minister of Defence Mustafa Ilas. The Syrian parliament thereupon amended the constitution by reducing the minimum age of eligibility to the Presidency from 40 to 34 years of age (Bachar's age, of course). The 9th Congress of the Baath Party, summoned to meet from 17 to 20 June, unanimously elected him General Secretary of the party. And, while they

were about it, Parliament nominated him sole candidate to the Presidency of the Republic. A plebiscite, organised in July is planner to confirm (unanimously, of course!) this choice and thus wind up the red tape needed to ensure dynastic succession in "the Arab and Socialist Republic".

The future seems blocked for a long time ahead in this country which, however, only a few decades ago, had experienced a genuine parliamentary democracy and which now, after nearly forty years of dictatorship, remains one of the most backward countries of the Near East.

ANKARA: DEBATE ON THE DOSING OF DEMOCRACY IN THE COUNTRY

IT is now six months that Turkey has been an official candidate for membership of the European Union and the institutions of the country's establishment are in open confrontation over the democratic criteria to be adopted. On the basis of an opinion regarding a report prepared by the Prime Minister's High Secretariat of Co-ordination for Human Rights, the National Security Council (MGK), the Armed Forces General Staff and the Foreign Ministry are openly in opposition to one another. In cooperation with several Ministries, the High Secretariat had brought to light the need to undertake changes in law to conform with the Copenhagen criteria. The first version of the document, prepared by Gürsel Demirok, called for the removal of obstacles to freedom of expression, the authorisation of Kurdish language broadcasts, the teaching of the Kurdish language, an increase in the number of civilians on the National Security Council (MGK) and the nomination of a civilian to the post of General Secretary of the MGK. In the face of criticisms, G. Demirok was obliged to resign and a watered down report, cooked up by the junior Minister Rüstü Kazım Yücelen was prepared. The final document made no mention of the composition of the MGK.

The Turkish daily *Radikal*, in its editorial of 14 June 2000 revealed the

report of the MGK regarding the Copenhagen criteria. This five page document from the MGK General Secretary, dated 11 March, states, in conclusion that *"in view of Turkish realities, the excessive demands and conditions on the European Union cannot be carried out"*. This pre-eminently executive organ, mainly made up of Armed Forces Chiefs, plays a preponderant role in the country's political life. *"We know that the European Union reports that raise shortcomings in Turkey regarding democracy, the supremacy of the Law, of Human Rights, are, in the main produced by partial organisations which are prejudiced about our country and express subjective views. That is why it has been judged that we should not to conform to excessive and unjust requirements of the European Union which attack the national integrity of Turkey, its form of unitary State and its specific realities. It is preferable to work so that inconvenient demands are no longer mentioned in the EU's reports"*. The report also announces that *"the question of minority rights in Turkey was settled by the Treaty of Lausanne (in 1923). Thus, in Turkey there are only Rûms (Greeks in Turkey), Jews Armenians and a Bulgarian minority. In other words, it was decided by that Lausanne international peace treaty that our citizens of Kurdish origin did not constitute a minority (...)* Recommendations leading to separatism and attacking our territorial integrity,

such as the recognition of Kurdish identity or the authorisation of Kurdish language broadcasts are considered 'irrelevant'. The best thing to do is to insist on 'Atatürk's nationalism' established in our Constitution (Editor's Note: which fiercely denies the very existence of Kurds)".

Moreover, the National Security Council (MGK) suggests that "Article 143 of the Constitution regarding State Security Courts (DGM) be revised and that these courts be replaced by special tribunals competent to deal with attacks on the security of the State". The MGK considers that is acceptable that "apart from periods of martial law or civil war, civilians should not be tried by military tribunals" and declares itself in favour of the abolition of the death sentence, suggesting that Protocol N°6 of the United Nations be signed.

The report also pinpoints its opposition to any possibility of "appeal against decisions of the High Military Council", which decides the career development of senior officers and which periodically expels from the Armed Forces officers considered "suspect" of lacking in Atatürk's nationalist ideology. The MGK, while expressing itself favourable to an increase in the number of civilians in its ranks, declares that "there is no violation of Human Rights nor of democratic principles in the fact that the General Secretary, responsible for the institution responsible for national security, be an Army officer".

At the same time as this report, the Foreign Ministry turned in a report on the same question but described as "courageous" by the daily paper Radikal on 19 June 2000. The Ministry declares itself in favour, on the model of France, of integrating the "principle of inclusive constitutional citizenship". It also declared that it was in favour of teaching children in their mother tongues as well as the right to publish

in any language desired and the ending of all obstacles to freedom of opinion. The report ends by concluding that what must be considered is not "the homogeneity of individuals making up the nation state but their differences" and thus to put the emphasis on "the right to be different". "Individuals who enjoy the right to be different are naturally entitled to freedom to promote and protect their ethnic, linguistic, religious or cultural differences within the society in which they live". Contrary to the MGK, the Foreign Ministry takes into consideration Article 39, Clause 4 of the Lausanne Treaty (Editor's Note: no restriction should be placed on Turkish nationals on their freedom to use any language in the context of private schooling, trade, religion, the press or in public meetings and publications).

The Turkish press has widely reported the differences between the institutions. Sami Kohen (Milliyet, 20 June 2000) quoting the remarks of a diplomat stated: "the Copenhagen criteria are not items on a 'menu' from which one can pick and chose". Radikal, once again, headlined its 20 June issue "The Army is divided on the question of the European Union" and adds "the General Staff adopted a moderate line. Contrary to that of the National Security Council

(MGK), the Foreign Ministry and the High Secretariat of Co-ordination for Human Rights are marked by a liberal attitude".

For his part, in the course of a Conference organised by Parliament called "Constitutional Reforms in Turkey — Principles and Results", President Ahmet Nejdet Sezer stated, on 29 June, that for Turkey to be a democratic, secular and social State of Laws that observes Human Rights, it must develop and protect Human Rights and freedom and raise them to universal levels. "In order to do this, the universal standards laid down in International declarations must be incorporated into our laws after our Constitution has been re-evaluated in the light of these universal declarations" Mr. Sezer stated.

Stressing that the principle of a State of Laws is the determining factor in present day democracies. A.N. Sezer declared: "the most important principle of freedom oriented democracies is based on the fact that the State exists for the people and not the people for the State". The Turkish President, who was President of the Turkish Constitutional Court before his election, stated that human rights had become a "condition that can not be ignored" in the world today, and encouraged Constitutional Reforms in Turkey.

NEW YORK: UNO EXTENDS THE "OIL FOR FOOD" PROGRAMME FOR A FURTHER SIX MONTHS

ON 8 June the United Nations Security Council extended, for a further six months, the "oil for food" programme, which authorises the export of Iraqi oil, henceforth without limitations, while controlling the use of the income from these sales. According to U.N. statistics, the total volume of these sales since 1996 has been \$ 23.3 billion, of which \$ 8.4 billion just over

the last six months. Of these sums, 13% are allocated to the provinces under autonomous Kurdish administration, where they are spent by UN agencies for the population's benefit. All in all, the Kurdish regions should have benefited, in those four years, from an injection of \$ 3.26 billion in the form of a distribution of food, medical supplies, and the financing of educational, health and infrastructure projects. This

contribution, despite the usual wastage due to UN bureaucracy and its extreme slowness, has allowed the devastated economy of Kurdistan to gradually be reconstituted and has greatly contributed to the return of peace and hope in the region. The Kurdish leaders, while criticising the cumbersome administrative procedures of the UN Sanctions Committee have unceasingly reminded their people of the vital role that this allocation of 13% of oil revenues to the Kurdish controlled provinces.

At present, any project put up by the Kurdish administration or an NGO to a local UN agency is first sent to the UN office in Baghdad which, if it accepts it submits it to the Iraqi authorities. If the latter agree, it then makes the round of a series of regional offices (Cairo, Nairobi, Geneva) and, after they have expressed their views, to the Sanctions Committee in New York. If this last approves, the decision takes the same tortuous route back down the line. The result is that any decision, for even an urgent or priority project, can take over a year! Without forgetting the opportunity the Iraqi regime has of torpedoing it, watering it down or for example, substituting, in place of a list of medicines needed in Kurdistan, another list that does not correspond to the Kurdish populations needs.

The Kurdish leaders are thus asking for a simplification of decision making procedures and more cooperation with the Kurdish administration.

For its part, Baghdad, that only partly controls the oil revenues (30% go to paying war reparation and UNO expenses) is calling for an end to the sanctions that it describes as "political genocide". Other countries are also calling for the lifting of sanctions, without taking into account the fate of the Kurds, who would thus be deprived of their 13%, nor considering

how the international community could prevent Saddam Hussein from using the greater part of these resources to rearm and consolidate the dictatorships repressive apparatus.

All the more so as Baghdad has been able to evade any arms inspection since December 1998 and that the new UN inspection Commission, chaired by former Swedish Foreign Minister Hans Blix has still be unable to set up offices in Baghdad to begin work.

Now that there is no limit on the amount of oil Iraq can export, and that, in consequence greatly increased revenues are available to it, the Iraqi government now has the means to reduce the level of malnutrition and improve the public health conditions for the Iraqi people, as the UN Secretary General, Kofi Anann, has stated, appealing to the Iraqi Government to "increase the sums

allocated to health and nutrition in place its orders for supply for efficiently and distribute the goods more diligently".

In effect, Baghdad can no longer play the game of blackmail pleading famine and shortage of medicine. It has, henceforth, the financial means to, and must, put an end to this deliberate neglect, in which hundreds of tons of medicines, costing hundreds of millions of dollars, are allowed to rot in warehouses while the media make propaganda over the children dying from lack of medical treatment.

The debate next December on the sanctions against Iraq are likely to be all the more heated as America will have, in the interval, elected a new President, and that the Kurds, the Arabs and the Europeans are still uncertain what will be the Iraqi policy of the new tenant of the White House.

FRESH TENSION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND TURKEY

THE Council of Heads of State and Governments of the European Union, meeting at Santa Maria De Feira, in Portugal on 21 June, decided to exclude Turkey from the decision making machinery of the European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI), the organ which will be responsible for managing future crises in Europe. Ankara reacted sharply to the outcome of this summit. Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit declared that the European decision would be a fresh source of tension between the European Union and Turkey, adding that it was not rational. Mr. Ecevit threatened to use his veto inside NATO (Editor's Note: in the course of NATO's Washington

summit last year, members agreed that decisions should be taken unanimously whenever any organisation requested its help).

The Turkish Foreign Minister rapidly published a statement to say that Ankara was not satisfied at the Feira conclusions regarding ESDI and that Turkey would call on the European Union to review its decision at the next summit meeting, planned for December, at Nice. The Turkish authorities had initially stated that they would not accept a less favourable position than that which they enjoyed in the Western European Union (WEU). The fact remains that Turkey is the only NATO member that is not a member of the European Union to have expressed dissatisfaction. Its senior ally,

the United States is supporting a more active involvement of Europe in matters of European Security. *"Will this not make Turkey's position more difficult?"*

Isn't Turkey isolating itself in NATO? "asked Ferai Tinc, editorial writer of the English language Turkish daily Turkish Daily News, on 22 June.

STRASBOURG: STILL MORE CONDEMNATIONS OF TURKEY BY THE EUROPEAN HUMAN RIGHTS COURT

ON 13 June the European Human Rights Court found Turkey guilty of *"inhuman and degrading treatment"* under Article 3 of the Human Rights Convention. Suspected of being a member of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Abdulvahap Timurtas a young Kurd born in 1962, disappeared on 14 August 1993 near Yeniköy (Sirnak province) after being placed in detention. The European Court was petitioned by the victim's father, who accused the authorities of being responsible for his son's death. The Turkish government, that denied all responsibility, simply maintains that Mr. Timurtas had not been detained. The Turkish authorities denied, in particular, a photocopy of the security forces report of the latter's arrest, which the father had presented as evidence. The Sirnak Public Prosecutor had filed away the case without taking any action on it, and Turkey subsequently refused to supply the Strasbourg Court with the document on which it based its denial of the authenticity of the photocopy of the report.

In view of this unjustified refusal and of *"a whole series of factors in arguing favour of the disputed document's authenticity"* the European Court

recognised the arrest and detention of the petitioner's son. By concluding that a violation of Article 2 of the European Convention, the Court ruled that *"the Turkish Government, not having furnished any explanation as to what had happened to the plaintiff's son during his detention, must be judged responsible for his death"*.

The Court stigmatised Turkey for *"the absence of any prompt and effective enquiry"* and for *"the absence of any exact and reliable records"* of those detained. According to the ruling, *"some members of the security forces showed a total lack of sensitivity towards the petitioner's concerns, by denying, in defiance of the truth, that his son had been taken into detention (...) Moreover, the anguish experienced by the petitioner regarding his son is still very evident today"*. Turkey was condemned to pay £ 30,000 to the family of the young Kurd who had disappeared.

On 15 June, Turkey was found guilty of violation of the freedom of expression of a young journalist by the European Human Rights Court. The journalist, Umit Erdogan, was taken to court for having published a reader's point of view on the Kurdish question. Editor in chief of the twice monthly *"İscilerin Sesi"* (The Workers' Voice) he had allowed to appear, on 2 October 1992,

an article by a reader entitled *"The Kurdish problem is a Turkish problem"*. A year later, Mr. Erdogan was sentenced for spreading *"propaganda against the territorial integrity of the State and the indivisible unity of the Turkish nation"* to 6 months jail and a fine which he began paying in 1994. The case was retried following the alteration of certain clauses of the Anti-Terrorist Act in 1995 and the sentence reduced to just a fine, without imprisonment. A fresh change in the law led the State Security Court to grant the journalist a reprieve, in December 1997, on condition that he commit no further offence for three years.

In its ruling, the European Court, petitioned in 1994, recognised that the article in question expressed *"a certain political virulence"* and that it was *"clear that the author intended, if only indirectly, to stigmatize both the State's dominant political ideology and the conduct of the Turkish authorities regarding the Kurdish problem"*. But it found nothing in it that might incite the readers to resort to violence against the Turkish State, as claimed by the Turkish authorities, nor to join the PKK camps. By incriminating the journalist the Turkish authorities *"insufficiently took into account the freedom of the press, nor the right of the public to be informed of another way of looking at the Kurdish problem, however that might be disagreeable to the them"* the European Court considered. As for the reprieve granted to the petitioner in 1997, the judges considered that it was equivalent to a *"ban that had the effect of censoring the petitioner's very profession"*.

The Court granted the petitioner damages of FF 26,000 and FF 20,000 expenses.

A CONDITIONAL AND DANGEROUS RETURN TO THE KURDISH VILLAGES

OVER 45,000 Kurdish families have asked the Migrants' Cultural and Social Aid Association (GOÇ-DER) for help in returning to their villages where a relative calm has returned. Nearly one year after the announcement of the end of the PKK's armed struggle. The return of the Kurdish population to their villages, despite an increasingly strong demand, remains sporadic and in danger of remaining conditional. The administration that governs the 10 provinces, still under or only just emerging from 13 years under a State of Emergency, has yet to give the green light, and the 378,355 "forced migrants" recorded in 1997 by a Parliamentary report do not expect any miracles (Editor's Note: The total number of displaced persons in the Kurdish region is estimated by different Human Rights defence organisations at over 3 million).

The Association, like the People's Democratic Party (HADEP), that collect the families' requests do not enjoy a favourable image in the eyes of the Turkish authorities who charge them with separatism. Questioned on this matter, Gökhan Aydinler, the governor responsible for the 10 provinces in question, stated that he is certain that "the villages and hamlets will not all be opened" and that the most isolated will not enjoy State aid: "only applications filed individually with the local authorities will be examined individually on their merits". Mr. Aydinler freely admits the disinclination of the Turkish authorities regarding the project of return by declaring that sending everyone back to the mountains would be "to return to square one" that is, to unleash another

armed struggle. He says he has granted 64,000 authorisation to return of the 131,000 cases and recorded 26,000 returns over the last eight years.

The families, living unemployed the outskirts of major Turkish conurbations often find themselves in an intolerable state of destitution. [Editor's Note: According to a study by the Beyoglu Centre for Youth and Children, which carried out an investigation in 23 districts of Istanbul between 8 May and 8 June covering 905 children (*Milliyet* 2 July 2000), 99% of the children selling handkerchiefs, chewing gum or polishing shoes in the streets are from these displaced families (...). In Istanbul, 38% of these children originate from the East, 31% from the South-East, 18% from the Turkish region of Marmara, 5% from the Black Sea, 4% from the Centre and 4% from the Mediterranean. Moreover 35% of the children state they exercise another profession.] The exiled families, generally forcibly, freely admit that they do not have sufficient means to return home and demand financial compensation for this. Mahmut Özgür, President of GOÇ-DER, stated to the Turkish daily *Milliyet* on 5 July that "to return one family, the lorry alone would cost 400 or 500 million Turkish Lira" (£500 or \$900 — against an income of

about £90 per month) and that most of the families would be living under canvas on their return. Saadettin Tantan, Minister of the Interior, proudly declared, on 27 June, that the National Security Council (MGK) had decided, to devote 2.8 trillion TL (£3 million or \$5 million) to its "plan of action for East and South-East Anatolia",

Moreover, villages repopulated from scratch seem impossible to find whereas three townships (Çatak-Konalga and Dikbiyik near Van and Kaymakamçesme in Sirnak) reserved for clans of "village protectors", the pro-government militia, will be inaugurated in July by Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit. The isolated villages that these "protectors" occupy remain inaccessible without special authorisation despite the lifting of legal restrictions in several provinces. Yet the Chief of Staff, Hüseyin Kivrikoglu, has been declaring since September 1999 that clashes are "at a near zero level". Nearly 65,000 of these militia, three quarters of them paid by the Turkish authorities, are officially on duty "maintaining security". The issue of their demobilisation is regularly raised, with the gradual disappearance of insecurity and a law voted by Parliament on 30 June 2000 considerably restricts the conditions for membership of these militia (necessity of being able to read and write) and sets limits on their freedom of action — which hitherto has been total.

READ IN THE TURKISH PRESS: WHEN THE STATE ARRANGED THE ASSASSINATION, WITHOUT TRIAL, OF SUSPECTED CITIZENS

IN his column in the Turkish daily *Cumhuriyet*, Oral Çalışlar, a staff journalist denounced, on the basis of evidence from a secret service gunman, the crimes committed in Kurdistan under the pretext of the struggle against the

PKK. Here is the full text of the article:

The confessions of the JITEM gunman (Editor's Note: the JITEM is the Gendarmerie's intelligence service, responsible for counter-insurgency in Kurdistan) were revealed by Mutlu

Sereli's article in *Cumhuriyet* (Editor's Note: the Turkish equivalent to France's *Le Monde* and the pre-Murdoch Times). Ibrahim Babat, the gunman in question, tells everything he did, but also what he was ordered to do, with a precision and detail that put his story above suspicion. Read Ibrahim Babat's deposition. Read and learn how he was transformed into Ibrahim Babat by the JITEM, complete with false identity papers.

Of Syrian origin, born in 1965m according to his statements, Ibrahim Babat, code name Mete, declared before the State Security Court and the Prime Minister's Directorate of Inspection "the JITEM gave all those who collaborated with it the power to execute any person having contacts with the PKK. I was also given instructions to this effect".

Infuriated by Babat's declarations, officials have threatened him so as to silence him. The Bureau Chief of the Kırklareli Police Directorate of Intelligence and the Commander of the Gendarmerie visited him and threatened saying "Be careful, don't harm the State — your case is up for Appeal".

Babat describes his relations with the JITEM in these terms: "They had to declare me killed in the course of a clash and then announce my death. I therefore accepted to help them and work in cooperation with the Army. They then prepared false identity papers for me".

"Under cover of the struggle against the PKK I took part in many operations that might be disconcerting for the State, which is why I feel obliged to explain them... The commanders responsible for public security knew full well my situation. I was paid TL 500,000 per month which were, moreover, paid after I had signed a receipt".

Then, Babat describes, giving names and places, the assassinations ordered by State officials — that is officers of JITEM.

Today, in view of these facts, can the public authorities responsible for the police continue to maintain that the JITEM does not exist? Teoman Koman, Gendarmerie Commander at the time, since become Cavit Çaglar's strong arm man, declared: "There is no JITEM" and refused to give evidence before the Turkish Parliament's Commission of enquiry. At the time he was a Major, today he is not in uniform — it would be well to collect his views on the question.

Teoman Koman was one of the key persons at the time. Before becoming Gendarmerie Commander he was General Secretary of the National Security Council (MGK) and even earlier advisor to the Intelligence Service (MIT). As such he should know all about these matters, the arrangements leading to these events and the policy hidden behind them. Is it possible to carry out these types of operations with informing the Gendarmerie Commander?

In the framework of a democratically run country, considered as a State of Laws, there are dreadful truths to conclude from Babat's story. Is it possible in a State of Laws for any State organisation to arrange to execute people? Can it kidnap individuals and furnish them with false identity papers? Can the State eliminate its own citizens by placing itself above the law?

While knowing that the answer to these questions is NO, we have to resign ourselves to accepting as fact that these events occurred. In the heart of the State, through the actions of State officials, illegal operations took place, no one is unaware of this, yet everyone behaves as if all this is perfectly normal.

Ibrahim Babat's statement is horrible. Can citizens of a State accept as normal that the State could assassinate them? Despite the revelation of these cases, can they continue to say that they can do nothing? Regrettably, the answer seems to be YES.

The Syrian's declarations, under his false name of Ibrahim Babat, brings to the cold light of day the obsession with security that governs this country and the planning to achieve security by assassination and intimidation. Ibrahim Babat's statements, published in *Cumhuriyet* prove the deep roots of the concepts that govern the State, in lawlessness and illegality. Were the Director of the Intelligence Services and the Gendarmerie Commander who threatened him in Kırklareli Prison acting solely on their own initiative? Can one really believe that?

It is evident that there are accomplices in high places who want to silence Ibrahim Babat. I think: what if Teoman Koraman were questioned again and a commission of enquiry reviewed the three critical periods he was in office...

For Turkey to be a democratic State of Law, Ibrahim Babat should be questioned and taken seriously. It is time that this horrible plotting of murders ceased. For this the protagonists must give an account of themselves. Having explained the situation I ask the leaders of this State: Do you still claim that the JITEM does not exist? Do you support the concealing of these murders committed in this context? How long do you think you can last?

AS WELL AS...

A EUROPEAN DELEGATION VISITS KURDISTAN TO ASSESS VILLAGE DESTRUCTION. A delegation from the European Parliament composed of a PDS Member of Kurdish origin, Feleknas Uca, an English Green MEP, Jean Lambert, and an English Liberal MEP, Sarah Lutford, went on a visit to the Kurdish provinces on 29 May to enquire into the forcibly evacuated and burned villages in the region. On returning to Brussels on 2 June, MEP F. Uca held a Press Conference in the

course of which she stated "The State provides no financial support for the municipalities. For example, the State promised 700 million Turkish lire (about £ 780 or \$1100) to Batman municipality to enable families in the region to return home, but so far has only disbursed 1% of the sum. Despite their will to return, the inhabitants cannot return to their villages because, instead of rebuilding the houses destroyed, the State (...) projects to amalgamate several villages and form 'centres' (...) The State will only accept the return of villagers on one condition — if they sign a document declaring that *"the village was destroyed by the PKK and not by the State"* they can be authorised to return. Miss Uca also stressed the omnipresence of Turkish troops and the interdiction of taking pictures of the region.

THE DAILY PAPER "ÖZGÜR BAKİS" CLOSED DOWN; ITS SUCCESSOR "2000'DE YENİ GÜNDEM" BANNED IN THE KURDISH REGION. On 5 June 2000, the Turkish authorities decided to ban the pro-Kurdish daily "2000'de Yeni Gündem" in the five largest Kurdish provinces: Van, Diyarbakır, Siirt, Şırnak and Hakkari. The paper has been appearing for barely a week, after its predecessor had simply been banned throughout the country, and states it has received no proper explanation of this decision. Ragıp Zarakoğlu, the publication's General Manager, declared: *"written notification of this decision reached our Diyarbakır office without a word of explanation (...) This sort of decision cannot be challenged in the courts (...) The only way to escape this is for the State of Emergency to be lifted. That is why we have asked the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister to act"*.

2000'de Yeni Gündem began to come out on 27 May, replacing Özgür Bakis and a whole line of earlier pro-Kurdish

papers that had been successively closed by the authorities. Mr. Zarakoğlu also denounced the fact that, banning his paper in those five provinces made its distribution impossible in the neighbouring ones as well. The Turkish authorities, who so often enumerate the number of Kurdish and pro-Kurdish publications that appear in Turkey, forget to explain that they have to face a double censorship, one national, the other regional. In only the last few months the regional prefect has banned several pro-Kurdish or Kurdish language publications, including *Pinê*, a humorous review, and *Özgür Kadının Sesi*, a women's magazine.

A SUBSTANTIAL DROP IN THE NUMBER OF CLASHES AND VIOLENT INCIDENTS IN KURDISTAN. In the course of a Press Conference on 1 June 2000, the Armed Forces General Staff indicated that *"incidents due to terrorism"* had very substantially diminished compared with the same period last year. Colonel Fahir Altan, head of the Public Relations office declared: *"in 1994 the number of terrorist incidents reached 3,300, in the two following years this dropped to 1,500, then in 1997 to 73% and again to 86% in 1998 for a total of 488 incidents recorded this year"*.

OPERATION 'ANTI-HADEP'. The Istanbul police carried out a series of searches and summonses at a number of buildings serving as premises of the People's Democratic Party (HADEP). The police also confiscated "a large number of documents" found in different HADEP offices "for investigation". Kemal Peköz, President of the Provincial leadership of the party, and Mahmut Can, his assistant, were amongst the thirty odd people detained. Observers note that these arrests are taking place, paradoxically enough, at a time where there is talk of

the way things have calmed down in the Kurdish region since the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) called for a cease fire and a withdrawal of its troops from the region but also one week after Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit's statement attacking the political path chosen by HADEP.

On 29 June, several demonstrations took place in Turkey to mark the anniversary of the death sentence passed on Abdullah Öcalan, Chief of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) for treason and separatism by a State Security Court.

Nedim Bicer, an officer of the Bismil local branch of HADEP and five other sympathisers of that party, were arrested on 30 June following the demonstrations.

THE HUMAN RIGHTS FOUNDATION HAS RECORDED 5,000 CASES OF TORTURE IN 10 YEARS. The Human Rights Foundation (TIHV), through its President Yavuz Onen, stated on 26 June, that a million people had been subjected to torture in the last 10 years. Y. Onen denounced the fact that the reports of the Parliamentary Commission did not take into account the political dimension of the use of torture, declaring: *"they want people to think that torture is only practiced in local police stations. Torture is also practiced at police Headquarters and in Gendarmerie stations"*.

Furthermore, Prof. Veli Lok, President of the Izmir branch of the Foundation, declared that there had been no improvement in the matter: *"in a number of cases we have noted that all forms of torture were still in current use while people were in detention"*. According to Prof. Lok, over 1,354 cases of torture, including 44 children and 369 women were recorded by the

Branch since its creation nine years ago. For its part, the Foundation had received 4,696 complaints of torture since 1991. The Foundation officers also stressed that *"despite proofs provided, all the torturers have been acquitted by the Turkish courts"*.

A TURKISH-KURDISH DICTIONARY BANNED FROM DISTRIBUTION. A Turkish-Kurdish dictionary, edited by the Istanbul Kurdish Institute and published six days earlier, was seized on 19 June in the city of Batman, shortly after appearing on the bookstalls. *"About a hundred copies were confiscated a week ago from the distributing company, on the orders of the Batman Police Directorate, and sent to the Diyarbakir State Security Court to check the contents of our dictionary"* stated the Institute's Director, Hasan Kaya.

This dictionary of 1280 pages and over 40,000 entries is, to date, the most important work for studying the Kurdish language. Edited by Zana Farqini, a member of the Istanbul Kurdish Institute, this dictionary is a proof that *"the Kurdish language exists, that it must be protected and that it is not as poor as some say it is"* explained Mr. Kaya.

The work is on sale at Istanbul's Mesopotamian Cultural Centre, but remains unobtainable in many major Book shops, where older dictionaries are still on the shelves.

THE UNDP REPORT FOR 1999: TURKEY RANKS 85th REGARDING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT. According to the annual report on "human development" drawn up by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), Turkey is in 85th place out of 174 countries studied with regards to human development. The report comes from an assessment of the statistics from different countries regarding life

expectation, literacy, and per capita income. The report reveals that the average life expectancy in Turkey is 69.3 years, the literacy rate is 84% and the percentage of people recorded in receiving primary, secondary and higher education is 61%. The national per capita income is \$ 6,422. In the same report, Iran holds 95th place and Syria 111st.

FLAGRANT EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITIES BETWEEN THE KURDISH PROVINCES AND THE REST OF TURKEY. A 76 page report by Hüseyin Çelik, True Path Party (DYP) Member of Parliament for Van, entitled "The situation in South Eastern Anatolia according to socio-economic indicators" which takes into account the areas of education, health agriculture, industry, tourism, cross border trade, migration and attempts to return to the villages was published by Turkish Daily News of 26 June 2000.

According to the report, in Diyarbakir, the principle Kurdish city, 61.4% of young girls between the ages of 7 and 13 have received no schooling. Erzurum comes second with 59.4% followed by Urfa with 46.3% of young girls who received no schooling. The report, drawn up from data of the State Statistical Institute (DIE), the State Planning Organisation (DPT), the World Bank and UNICEF shows that *"in the area of education and culture, as well as other areas, South Eastern Anatolia is the region that has least benefited from the reforms launched since the foundation of the Turkish Republic"*.

The document shows that the proportion of those going to primary school is 68.9% in the East (Kurdish) and 70.94% in the South East (Kurdish) against 89.03% for Turkey as a whole. As for secondary Schools, the rate drops to 28.27% in the South-East and 33% in the East against 54.14% for

Turkey as a whole. As far as High Schools (Sixth Form colleges) is concerned the situation is no better for the Kurdish regions, since the Turkish national average of 38.72% drops to 25.84% in the East and 18.7% in the South-East. For more advanced studies, the rate is 3.88% for the South East, 10.95 for the East against a national average of 22.87% for Turkey as a whole.

In terms of the number of children enrolled, the Kurdish provinces also come last. The report shows that Antalya (a Turkish town on the Mediterranean coast) comes first whereas Diyarbakir comes last. Diyarbakir is also characterised by its very low rate of feminine education, with 42% of women who have never even had any primary schooling, followed by Erzurum with 41.5% — in Izmir the rate is only 8.1%.

DECISION TO LIFT THE STATE OF EMERGENCY IN THE PROVINCE OF VAN. On 26 June, the National Security decided to propose to the Government the lifting of the State of Emergency (OHAL) in the province of Van, as from 30 July, but to prolong it for another four months in four other Kurdish provinces: Diyarbakir, Hakkari, Sirnak and Tunceli.

The special regime had first been decreed for Van on 19 July 1987, for a period of four months which has been automatically renewed ever since.

İlnur Çevik, in an editorial on 27 June, in the English language Turkish paper Turkish Daily News, commented on this decision at a time when *"the Americans are discussing the human genome, we discussing the state of emergency in Van"* and concluded: *"Atatürk asked us to commit Turkey to joining the modern world. And yet we observe that conservative circles in Turkey,*

who claim to be the guardians of Atatürkist ideals, are doing all in their power to block Turkey from a real Westernisation and from creating a modern society. All we can do is listen to the innovation in the West with envy".

A PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION OF ENQUIRY SENDS MESUT YILMAZ TO THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE. The Turkish Government seems to be limping badly since a Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry, on 4 June 2000, decided to send Mesut Yilmaz, leader of the Motherland Party (ANAP), a partner in the three party coalition government, to appear before the Turkish High Court of Justice for "corruption and irregularities" in a scandal in which his name has been implicated. A hard blow for Mr. Yilmaz, who had refused to enter the government in person until his name had been cleared. Recently, and especially since the election of the new President, the Prime Minister and the ANAP party had expressed the wish to see Mr. Yilmaz enter the Cabinet. Very quickly, the different Parliamentary Commissions had begun to reexamine the cases in which he was said to be implicated. Of the Parliament's 15 ad hoc Commissions, 8 involved former Prime Minister Yilmaz (who had been stripped of office by a motion of censure following a scandal involving corruption and links with the mafia). While the sky seemed to be clearing, with six of the Commissions having already voted a cease fire, the seventh decided to send him to the High Court of Justice — by the votes of the National Action Party (MHP), also a coalition partner... Mesut Yilmaz and the former Industry Minister, Yalim Erez, are accused of irregularities and corruption by granting a parcel of public land to the car manufacturer Ford. There are many who question the relevance of this decision, especially as it is the "least serious" affair while the

one that had caused his fall from office had not been carried so far. Moreover, the Commission's decision has first to be approved by Parliament itself. The Parliamentary timetable will certainly not allow this to be debated before the summer recess. According to information gathered amongst M.P.s of the "Democratic Left" Party (DSP), it is the possibility of early elections that has played a major part in the MHP's change of attitude. If the Constitutional Court decides to dissolve the Islamist Virtue Party (FP) there would probably be a General Election in Turkey in the autumn. According to this scenario, the FP would be declared a successor to the Prosperity party (RP) and 70 of the 103 Virtue Party M.P.s would resign. Under the Constitution, if 5% of the seats in Parliament are empty, a General Election must be held within three months. However, more than half of those 70 seats are in the South-East, which leads one to suppose that, in the event of a General Election, the People's Democratic Party (HADEP — pro-Kurdish) would secure a high vote without, however, being able to break the 10% threshold at national level. The MHP strategy is, according to certain observers, to prevent ANAP from collecting the conservative vote by sending its leader before the High Court.

WHILE ON A VISIT TO DIYARBEKIR, ECEVIT ATTACKED HADEP. The Turkish Prime Minister, Bülent Ecevit, leader of the "Democratic Left" Party (DSP), in the course of the second Regional Convention of his party held in Diyarbakir on 11 June, declared that *"terrorist separatism was practically eradicated in the course of the 57th Government's term of office. The separatists have understood that Turkey cannot be divided. Now they are trying to break it up politically. But those who failed to divide the country by means of armed attacks can*

not succeed in dividing it politically." The Prime Minister's remarks are directly aimed at the People's Democratic Party (HADEP) — the only pro-Kurdish party still legal but in danger of being dissolved — provoked sharp reactions from HADEP's leaders.

The Prime Minister also declared that *"it would be a good thing if the death sentence were abolished"*. *"I have always been against the death sentence"* Mr. Ecevit also said, recalling the principled position which enabled him, last January, to force the hand of his ultra-nationalist coalition partner Devlet Bahçeli, and suspend the procedure that would have led to the execution of the PKK leader until the European Human Rights Court could rule on the appeal filed by the defence. *"If we succeed in ridding ourselves of the death penalty"* added Mr. Ecevit *"we could secure the extradition of suspects abroad, and one of the difficulties in the way of our membership of the European Union would disappear"*. Hikmet Sami Türk, Minister of Justice, on 10 June mentioned the date of mid-2001 for the abolition of the death penalty, in the context of a general reform of the Turkish penal code.

Moreover he raised the problem of the "village protectors" (of 60,000) armed by the authorities in the region to fight the PKK. *"We are determined to find a permanent and satisfactory solution to the question"* He declared.

The Turkish Prime Minister continues to only take into account the economic aspect of the Kurdish problem, denying any cultural, linguistic or ethnic problem. Certainly statistics show that the minimum annual revenue in the region is \$1,633, against an overall average for Turkey of \$3,176. In terms of public investment also, the region seems particularly disadvantaged with only \$ 500 million allocated — 8.6% of

the public investments budgeted for this year.

A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE MHP ACCUSES THE MIT AND THE POLICE OF PROVIDING ESCORTS FOR THE DRUG TRAFFICKERS. In an interview given on 12 June 2000 to the Turkish daily Radikal, Sevkettin Yahnici, National Action Party (MHP) Member of Parliament and Deputy President of the party, which is one of the government coalition partners, stated that the police and the Turkish intelligence service (MIT) authorised the drug in Turkey. *"The MIT is divided in two. Many other organs are also divided in the same way. I formally state that on the route Yüksekova/Marsilles, over \$100 million, resulting from the drug traffic, are shared out. The police open the way, the International Transport lorries follow it, others escort them (...). Illegal substances have been transported in this way for about 25 to 30 years"* declared Mr. Yahnici to the paper.

Mr. Yahnici's declaration is in line with the determination of the party to acquire the image of a "clean party" compared with its main rival, the Motherland Party (ANAP), which is deeply implicated in corruption scandals, and whose leader, Mesut Yılmaz, faces the danger of being

brought before the High Court of Justice. The M.P. also raised the Susurluk scandal (**Editor's Note:** the road accident in November 1996 that brought to light the extent of the links between the mafia, the State and the political caste) *"What has happened about Susurluk? What difference would it make if you started to shout about it? It is evident that nothing will change by doing this. Susurluk was a scandal, but it only brought a fifth of the iceberg to the surface"*.

Various European reports regularly attack Turkey's role in this traffic. Over 75% of the drugs consumed in Europe pass through Turkey. In a recent report, the International Observatory on Drugs describes Turkey as a narco-state and accuses the Western countries of hypocrisy and leniency for their Turkish ally.

MEHMET ALI AGCA PARDONED AND EXTRADITED TO TURKEY.

Pardoned then extradited by the Italian authorities on 14 June, Mehmet Ali Agca, author of the assassination attempt against the Pope in 1981, arrived in Turkey where he is due to serve another sentence for the murder of a journalist. M. A. Agca, member of the fascist Grey Wolves, had escaped while on trial in 1979 for the murder, earlier that year, of a journalist Abdi

Ipekçi, Editor in Chief of the Turkish daily Milliyet. He was sentenced to death *in absentia* in 1980, but this was commuted to ten years imprisonment under the 1991 general amnesty. However he has so far only served 158 days of this sentence. He was pardoned by President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi at the request of the Pope after 19 years behind the bars. Incarcerated in the Kartal-Maltepe (Istanbul) high security Prison, he is in the same jail as Abdullah Çakici, extreme Right mafia Chief, also implicated in several murders, who was extradited to Turkey by France a few months ago.

The Turkish media seem to regard Agca's return very unfavourably. Some fear that he will soon be declared a "national hero", like Abdullah Çatli (**Editor's Note:** also member of the Grey Wolves, killed in the Susurluk road accident, implicated in many drug dealing and murder cases carried out with the support of State organisations), others denounce this "poisonous present" and fear revelations that would once more discredit the State. The fact remains that much has changed since Ali Agca's escape, since his old Grey Wolf friends are now in the coalition government....

Iran: un radical à la tête du Parlement

Karoubi a été élu hier président du Majlis, dominé par les réformateurs.

Les réformateurs iraniens n'auront pas réussi à traduire leur raz de marée lors des dernières législatives à la présidence du Majlis (Parlement). La victoire, hier, de l'hodjatollah Mehdi Karoubi y marque en effet le retour de la «gauche religieuse radicale» qui avait, certes, contribué à l'élection de Mohammad Khatami en 1997 mais qui constitue néanmoins la «vieille garde» de la coalition réformatrice. Membre des premiers «Comités révolutionnaires» (milices islamiques), ancien dirigeant de la Fondation de l'habitat, qui assurait le logement des «deshérités», puis du Martyr, qui aidait les familles des combattants iraniens tombés dans la guerre Iran-Irak, Mehdi Karoubi s'était particulièrement illustré lors de la mort de Khomeiny, en juin 1989. «Mon père est mort», avait-il crié, après s'être évanoui; puis il s'était jeté par terre en enlevant son turban. Auparavant, représentant personnel de l'Imam Khomeiny au pèlerinage de La Mecque, il y avait dirigé personnellement les premières manifestations anti-israéliennes et anti-américaines, dont la dernière, en juillet 1987, fut marquée par de très violents affrontements avec les forces de l'ordre saoudiennes qui firent 402 morts. Mehdi Karoubi a pu s'assurer sa victoire au Majlis grâce à la défection du Mocharekat (Front de la participation), le

principal parti réformateur et grand vainqueur des législatives. Dirigé par Mohammad-Reza Khatami, le frère du Président, le Mocharekat a renoncé à présenter un candidat à la présidence du Parlement après l'échec de ses discussions avec ses autres partenaires de la coalition réformatrice pour que le Président soit issu de ses rangs. Mehdi Karoubi est devenu du coup le seul candidat à ce poste où il a été élu hier-matin avec 75 % des voix des 249 députés, pendant que 63 autres parlementaires s'abstenaient. Ce succès est diversement interprété. Pour les uns, et notamment pour l'analyste Khosro Abedi, «les jeunes, les femmes, tout l'électorat de Khatami va se sentir frustré car Karoubi représente le passé». A ses yeux, son élection s'inscrit dans une ambiance générale. «Depuis trois mois, estime-t-il, le Guide (l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei) a montré qu'il entendait garder fermement toutes ses prérogatives, et les instances du pays dominées par les conservateurs, la justice notamment, ont prouvé leur force en suspendant des journaux massivement et en arrêtant des journalistes, hier même.» Une information publiée hier par le quotidien réformateur Bayan n'est pas faite pour le démentir. Citant une personnalité conservatrice, Ahmad Tavakoli, ce journal affirme, sans autre précision, que les services de renseignements

ont arrêté récemment un garde du corps qui cherchait à assassiner le président Khatami. Ces déclarations sont les premières à étayer les rumeurs qui circulent concernant une tentative d'assassinat du chef de l'Etat.

Le politologue Iradj Rachti ne partage pas ce pessimisme. Il voit dans «la solution Karoubi, un compromis et la marque d'une maturité du nouveau Parlement». Karoubi, assure-t-il, est «la continuation de la République islamique, la garantie de sa survie, car on ne peut y échapper. Mais il est aussi très proche de Khatami et totalement impliqué auprès de lui dans toutes les réformes, en particulier pour la liberté de la presse et la justice sociale».

Les partisans d'un renouveau politique n'entendent, quoi qu'il en soit, pas baisser les bras. Le Mouvement de libération d'Iran (MLI), parti islamiste progressiste non autorisé, mais toléré, a demandé hier à Mohammad Khatami un remaniement gouvernemental. «Tout le monde musulman attend le résultat de l'expérience iranienne conjuguant religion et démocratie. Le président Khatami doit choisir de nouveaux ministres, car les dirigeants ont montré leur incapacité à répondre aux exigences du peuple», affirme le parti créé par Mehdi Bazargan qui a soutenu les réformateurs aux élections. Il demande en outre instamment au nouveau Mailis

de «changer au plus vite» la récente loi sur la presse, qui renforce les délits contre les journaux, et de «faire libérer» les journalistes, écrivains et avocats arrêtés (lire ci-dessous). En attendant, une femme a été élue, hier, pour la première fois au bureau de l'Assemblée. Fondatrice de l'Association de lutte contre la toxicomanie, Soheila Jolodarzadeh, 41 ans, députée de Téhéran, avait joué un rôle important dans la mobilisation des milieux ouvriers en faveur de la révolution islamique ● (D'après AFP)

«Il faut prendre des risques pour la démocratie»

Hier à Paris, les écrivains iraniens ont dénoncé l'offensive conservatrice contre la presse.

La victoire des réformateurs au premier tour des législatives, en février, a provoqué une offensive des conservateurs contre la presse réformatrice en Iran. Mais Hassan Youssefi Eshkevari, religieux réformateur, semble optimiste même s'il sait qu'à son retour en Iran il sera arrêté. «Les changements vont commencer. Malgré les difficultés, la tâche la plus importante de la nouvelle assemblée sera de créer une nouvelle loi en faveur de la presse. Il faut être prêt à prendre des risques pour le développement de la démocratie. C'est pourquoi j'y retourne», affirme

ce mollah moderniste venu hier à Paris avec Kazem Kardan, secrétaire général de l'Association des écrivains iraniens et membre fondateur du Comité de défense des droits des victimes des assassinats en série. Invités par Reporters sans Frontières, tous deux sont sous le coup de mandats d'arrêt délivrés par le tribunal révolutionnaire et le tribunal spécial du clergé, accusés d'avoir tenu des propos «contre

la sécurité nationale» lors de la conférence de Berlin en avril 2000 sur le thème: «l'Iran après les élections législatives». Le 19 avril dernier, 140 députés de la majorité sortante ont signé une pétition pour «traduire en justice les participants» à cette conférence jugée «anti-islamique». Les conservateurs ont ensuite interdit depuis deux mois dix-neuf titres proches du président Khatami et six journalistes ont été emprisonnés, parmi lesquels Abdollah

Nouri, Machallah Chamsolvaezine, l'avocate et journaliste Mehrangiz Kar, Latif Safari, Akbar Gangi et Emadeddine Baghi, qui avait critiqué la peine de mort. Hossein Kafi et Arache Pahlavan Nassir, de la revue étudiante 2 Khordad ont été enlevés en mai et on ne sait toujours pas ce qu'ils sont devenus. Kalim Lahidi, président de la Ligue iranienne des droits de l'homme, a souligné le «caractère arbitraire, anti-constitutionnel et illégal de toutes ces arrestations. La situation est grave car écrire et mener des enquêtes concernant les assassinats successifs est

considéré comme un crime». Le Parlement iranien sortant, dominé par les conservateurs, avait adopté en avril une proposition de loi renforçant les sanctions pour délits de presse. Cette loi autorise la justice à intervenir, suspendre ou sanctionner les publications et leurs responsables ainsi que les journalistes. Elle interdit un journal suspendu de reparaître sous un nouveau nom et l'octroi d'une licence pour une publication nécessite l'accord du ministère des Renseignements, de la Justice et des forces de police ●

ALEXANDRA WYDRA

Les réalisateurs et la question de la frontière

Tous les peuples du royaume, Arméniens en costumes ajustés, Scythes à bonnets pointus, Suéens à robes plissées..., apportent une offrande à Darius, Roi des rois. Les architectes et les sculpteurs du Grand Roi appartenaient eux aussi à différentes cultures, enrichissant ainsi de leur savoir-faire et de leur tradition la culture iranienne. Ce bas-relief de Persépolis, illustration du mythe fondateur de l'Etat-nation iranien, vieux selon certains historiens de plus de 2 500 ans, symbolise l'importance des minorités dans la politique nationale. Même si celle-ci est loin d'avoir toujours été aussi favorable à l'expression des spécificités, culturelles et autres. Autoritaire, l'Etat iranien tolère pourtant, voire favorise, dans certains cas, l'expression de langues et de pratiques culturelles différentes dans le cadre de sa conception de la nation.

Le cinéma iranien a souvent projeté l'image de la mosaïque de peuples qui composent le pays. Dès les années 60, Nasser Taqvai montrait les populations arabophones du sud de l'Iran ; en 1985, Bahram Beyzai tournait pour partie en gilaki (langue de la pro-

Les relations les plus problématiques avec des minorités nationales sont au cœur des films iraniens présentés au festival

vince du Guilan) *Bashu, le petit étranger*, et Mohammad Reza Moghadassian filma entièrement en turkmène son court-métrage *Maissa et Massan*, en 1997. Le film de Yadollah Samadi, *Saray*, fut même projeté en Iran en deux versions, l'une en turc azeri et l'autre en persan standard. Mais en prenant pour personnages principaux des Kurdes et des Afghans, les films des nouveaux cinéastes invités par le Festival affrontent des thèmes autrement controversés.

La représentation des Kurdes à l'écran, dès lors qu'elle ne se limite pas à une image folklorique du montagnard moustachu en large pantalon ceinturé, est aussi-

tôt chargée d'un sens politique. Morcelée en plusieurs Etats, victime de la guerre Iran-Irak et de la répression, la communauté kurde est traversée par les frontières qui recomposent son identité. Cette question est au centre des films de Samira Makhmalbaf et de Bahman Ghobadi - lui-même kurde, et qui avait déjà consacré son court métrage *Vivre dans le brouillard* à ce thème. Autour des motifs de la communauté et du rapport à la frontière, ces films mettent en évidence les contradictions inextricables entre appartenances ethniques et nationales.

Même si on avait découvert la beauté des paysages du Kurdistan dans *Le Vent nous emportera* de Kiarostami (et si on les retrouvera dans *La Légende de l'amour* de Fährad Mehranfar), ils jouent un rôle inédit dans *Le Tableau noir* de Samira Makhmalbaf, tourné en kurde, et qui projette une image déstabilisante et violente de cette population ballottée d'un pays à l'autre, montrant en particulier, durant la guerre entre l'Iran et l'Irak, un groupe de vieux Kurdes irakiens qui ont fui les bombardements chimiques. Ils n'ont

comme seul horizon que de retraverser la frontière, pour rentrer mourir chez eux. « L'Autre », ici un instituteur kurde iranien qui cherche à s'intégrer pour enseigner, sera à son tour rejeté de leur groupe.

La place réservée aux immigrés afghans suscite une autre question liée à l'altérité, dans un pays qui, avec près de 2 millions de personnes déplacées, est l'une des principales terres d'accueil de réfugiés au monde. Le personnage de l'immigré afghan a longtemps été tenu à l'écart de la communauté nationale, où il faisait figure de repoussoir. De même qu'il est resté exclu de toute représentation cinématographique (à part *Le Cycliste* de Mohsen Makhmalbaf en 1989). Qu'il gagne aujourd'hui droit de cité sur les écrans est un phénomène significatif, dont témoigne *Djomeh*, qui raconte l'histoire d'un jeune paysan afghan qui veut épouser une Iranienne. Et Hassan Yektapanah n'est pas seul : le prochain film de Majid Majidi comme celui d'Abolfazl Jalili ont un immigré afghan pour héros.

A. D.

Bahman Ghobadi

« Vous êtes présent à Cannes à la fois comme l'un des principaux interprètes du *Tableau noir* de Samira Makhmalbaf et comme réalisateur de votre premier long métrage, *Un temps pour l'ivresse des chevaux*. Comment êtes-vous devenu cinéaste ?

- Auparavant, je travaillais à la fois comme photographe et comme reporter de télévision pour la télévision du Kurdistan. Comme mon père vit au loin et que je suis l'aîné, j'ai dû subvenir aux besoins de ma famille. Ensuite, je suis entré à l'Ecole de cinéma de Téhéran, dont je suis à présent diplômé. Mais l'essentiel de ce que je sais du cinéma, je l'ai appris en tournant des films en 8 mm au Kurdistan. Avant mon premier long métrage, j'ai réalisé 35 courts métrages. Ensuite, ayant appris qu'Abbas Kiarostami avait un projet au Kurdistan, je lui ai proposé de devenir son

collaborateur. J'ai été son assistant dans *Le vent nous emportera*, où je joue aussi le creuseur de puits.

- Quelle est aujourd'hui la situation d'un jeune réalisateur en Iran ?

- Il est toujours possible de faire un film, mais la situation générale du cinéma, ici comme partout, est marquée par une tendance aux productions lourdes, parmi lesquelles il est difficile de se frayer un chemin. C'est pourquoi beaucoup de jeunes metteurs en scène sont bloqués dès le début de leur carrière, alors que certains films qui se tournent portent tort au cinéma iranien. Ce sont des thèmes dont nous, les jeunes réalisateurs, ne parlons guère entre nous : nous nous connaissons, mais il n'y a pas vraiment de débat.

- Comment avez-vous fait pour jouer dans *Le Tableau noir* de Samira Makhmalbaf tout en réalisant votre propre film ?

- J'avais commencé mon film à l'hiver 1997, mais les conditions climatiques étaient trop clémentes, j'ai dû attendre la neige de l'hiver 1998 pour terminer. Après avoir vu ce que j'avais tourné, Mohsen et Samira Makhmalbaf m'ont proposé de faire ensemble un autre film en trois épisodes, toujours au Kurdistan. Le projet a évolué vers le long métrage de Samira, pour lequel elle et son père m'ont demandé d'être à la fois assistant et l'un des acteurs. Je suis fier d'avoir ainsi au cours des deux dernières années amené au Kurdistan à la fois M. Kiarostami et M. Makhmalbaf. »

Propos recueillis par
Jean-Michel Frodon
(avec l'aide de
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**COMMUNIQUE DU BUREAU DU PRESIDENT A. H. BANI-SADR-
VERSAILLES, le 26 AVRIL 2000**

Après la défaite des « conservateurs » aux dernières élections législatives, le duo KHAMENEI et RAFSANDJANI a réagi rapidement en accélérant la mise en œuvre des différentes étapes d'un coup d'état (*) :

- 1- Le « scandale de l'affaire belge » : Rafsandjani, afin d'imposer son élection au Parlement, voulut faire diversion en diffusant une fausse information selon laquelle un juge belge avait donné l'ordre de son arrestation. « La menace » représentée par cette arrestation pour l'ensemble du régime, devait permettre de rassembler le régime et ainsi faire « valider » son élection à Téhéran. Cette affaire fut révélée par un communiqué du Bureau du Président A. H. Bani-Sadr et le piège ainsi déjoué.
- 2- La tentative d'assassinat de Said HADJARIAN, proche conseiller de KHATAMI. Nous disposons d'informations complètes concernant les commanditaires et les exécutants de cette tentative d'assassinat.
- 3- La fermeture de 13 journaux, annoncée la veille du « jugement » des inculpés dans la tentative d'assassinat de Said HADJARIAN. Selon nos sources, KHAMENEI et RAFSANDJANI étaient les commanditaires de cet assassinat et le Général Mohamed Bagher ZOLGHADR, n°2 des Gardiens de la Révolution, chargé de son exécution.
- 4- Le Conseil de la Sauvegarde de la Constitution et l' « Assemblée de discernement de l'Intérêt du régime » ont interdit, avant la prise de fonction du nouveau Parlement, au Parlement tout droit d'enquête sur plus de 90% de l'Etat, dit du domaine du Guide et du Pouvoir judiciaire.
- 5- Les dossiers des assassinats en série ont été retirés à M. NIAZI, Chef de la justice militaire et confiés à Ms. MORAVI et BAHRAMI, du Ministère de la Justice. En effet, les éléments de ces dossiers n'avaient pas de valeur juridique, même pour les tribunaux de ce régime. Après avoir retiré les preuves des dossiers d'accusation, tous les inculpés sauf deux, ont été relâchés. Il est même question de les indemniser pour le temps passé en prison ! Selon un des proches de KHAMENEI, tout a été réalisé selon le plan prévu, en dehors du communiqué du Ministère des Renseignements qui assumait la

responsabilité de certains hauts responsables de ce Ministère dans ces assassinats.

- 6- L'annulation des résultats des élections dans 11 villes. Le Conseil Constitutionnel menace également d'annuler les élections de Téhéran. Ces annulations empêchent la mise en place du nouveau Parlement, le nombre minimal de parlementaires requis étant insuffisant -2/3 des députés soit 194 députés-. Par ailleurs, le Conseil Constitutionnel et l'Organisation de terreur font pression sur les candidats du « 2 khordad » afin qu'ils ne se présentent pas au deuxième tour des élections.
- 7- La crise de Berlin : L'organisation de Terreur a mis en place un comité, appelé comité 3, composé d'Ali LARIDJANI (Président de la radio-télévision), Mohamad Réza BAHONAR (porte parole des conservateurs du Parlement), Ali Agha MOHAMMADI, conseiller de Khamenei et le Commandant ZARGHAMI. Ce comité a envoyé de nombreux membres de l'Organisation de la Propagande Islamique et des autres réseaux de l'Organisation de terreur à la réunion de Berlin, où avaient été invitées plusieurs personnalités de la mouvance de 2 khordad, afin de provoquer certaines démonstrations destinées à être ensuite utilisées par l'aile droite du régime.
- 8- Le communiqué du Commandement des Gardiens de la Révolution du 16 avril 2000 menaçait de frapper les « cerveaux avec des massues » et le discours de KHAMENEI du 20 avril reprenait les grandes lignes du communiqué des Gardiens de la Révolution.
- 9- La répression : Une liste de 300 personnes devant être interdites de toute activité de presse a été établie. Selon la loi sur la presse, votée par le Parlement, une épuration doit être opérée dans les organes de presse. Après l'arrestation du journaliste Akbar GANDJI, un avis d'arrestation a été lancé contre les 17 invités de la réunion de Berlin dont Hassan Youssefi ESHKEVARI. Leurs dossiers ont été confiés au Tribunal Révolutionnaire. Les journalistes suivants sont également menacés d'être inculpés : Emad-al-din BAGHI, Mohsen ARMIN, ALAVI TABAR, EKMAT, Abass ABDI, ESLAMI, DJALLALIPOUR, Fatemeh KOURANI, Karim ARGHANDEHPOUR, Mohamad Taghi FAZEL MOBIDI, Madjid MOHAMMADI, Mohamad Réza KHATAMI (convoqué au Tribunal), Mohamad Djavad MOZAFAR, Mohamad GHOUTCHANI.
- 10- La fermeture de 16 quotidiens ou hebdomadaires. Les quotidiens de la mouvance « 2 Khordad », comme Sobh Emrouz, Payam Emrouz, Omid Djavan ... sont menacés d'être interdits en cas de publication d'articles portant sur 8 thèmes : 1- contre la Souveraineté du Docte ; 2- contre les Gardiens de la Révolution, les Bassidjis et le Ministère de la Justice ; 3- la comparaison entre le régime du mollahatariat et les régimes de l'Europe de l'Est avant la chute du mur de Berlin ; 4- la normalisation des relations avec les Etats-Unis et la fin des relations secrètes ; 5- la guerre Iran-Irak, et particulièrement les responsables de la poursuite de la guerre ; 6- écrire en faveur des

personnalités opposées au régime ; 7- l'Organisation de Terreur et les assassinats en série et la mafia financière de Rafsandjani et Khamenei ; 8- tout sujet pouvant inciter les étudiants à se révolter contre le régime.

11- Création d'un réseau d'unités ayant à leur tête un religieux, un gardien de la Révolution et un membre de la VAVAK (140 unités à Téhéran et ramification du réseau dans toutes les provinces), pour assurer la répression dans les villes, créer un climat d'insécurité et perpétrer des actions terroristes. C'est une de ces unités qui a organisé la tentative d'assassinat de Said HADJARIAN.

12- Isoler KHATAMI et les personnalités de la mouvance « 2 Khordad ».

Mais l'ensemble de ces mesures témoignent de l'isolement croissant du régime et ont été suivies de contre-réactions suivantes :

- la population n'a pas participé à la manifestation à laquelle l'avait invitée Khamenei
- les religieux avec à leur tête l'Ayatollah MONTAZERI ont vivement protesté contre ce coup d'état rampant.
- alors que dans le même temps, le tirage du quotidien Sobh Emrouz dépassait la barre de 600 000, témoin de l'opposition de la population
- un certain nombre de Généraux des Gardiens de la Révolution a protesté auprès de KHAMENEI contre le communiqué du Commandement des Gardiens de la Révolution du 16 avril 2000.

(*) L'agence Reuter, a révélé le soir du 26 Avril 2000 une cassette, dévoilant une discussion entre les chefs des gardiens de la révolution concernant les préparatifs d'un coup d'état.

Nouvelle condamnation pour le chef du parti pro-kurde HADEP



ANKARA, 1er juin (AFP) - 13h42 - Ahmet Turan Demir, le président du Parti de la Démocratie du Peuple (HADEP, pro-kurde), a été condamné jeudi à un an de prison et à une amende pour "propagande séparatiste" par une Cour de sûreté de l'Etat (DGM) d'Ankara, a indiqué l'agence Anatolie.

M. Demir, absent de l'audience, était accusé d'avoir tenu des propos visant à une "propagande séparatiste" lors d'une réunion de son parti en octobre dernier à Ankara, a précisé l'agence.

Une autre accusée, Esin Akgul, a également été condamnée à une même peine pour avoir récité un poème "séparatiste" lors de cette réunion.

Leurs avocats ont indiqué qu'ils feraient appel de la sentence.

Selon l'acte d'accusation, M. Demir aurait dit dans son discours qu'un règlement de la "question kurde est proche" et suggéré une "division" des peuples turc et kurde en Turquie à l'instar de la séparation "pacifique" de la Tchécoslovaquie en républiques tchèque et slovaque.

Ahmet Turan Demir, son prédécesseur Murat Bozlak et plusieurs autres responsables du parti ont déjà été condamnés le 24 février à trois ans et neuf mois de prison chacun pour "soutien" au Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, rebelles kurdes de Turquie). Ils ont fait appel de la sentence.

Le HADEP est menacé d'interdiction par la justice turque qui le considère comme une émanation du PKK, qui a renoncé l'année dernière aux armes à l'appel de son chef.

human rights watch/ Open letter to the EP on Turkey

For more information

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Brussels, June 1, 2000

Dear Member of the European Parliament,

On April 6, 2000, Human Rights Watch wrote to E.U. Foreign Ministers in advance of the E.U.-Turkey Association Council. In that letter, we expressed regret that, in spite of a climate of increasing confidence and optimism which should be highly favourable to reform, no action has been taken on the promising "short term goals" announced in January 2000 by the then Human Rights Minister Mehmet Ali İrmecelik.

Unfortunately, we have to report that the intervening two months brought fresh reports of torture, new prisoners of opinion, but no official steps towards permanent improvement. Human Rights Watch fears that both the Turkish and E.U. governments are becoming complacent regarding positive developments. Armed opposition groups are currently much less active, and this has meant fewer security force operations in the cities of western Turkey as well as the rural southeast. This provides a sense of public security and stability which could be an ideal context in which confidence building measures could be enacted. Instead, the government appears to be treating the relief from the pressure of events as an excuse to do nothing, while its European colleague governments seem content to wait for the joint accession plan - which is unlikely to bear fruit until well into 2001.

There have been other moments of optimism in Turkey during the past ten years. Each time, the Turkish government failed to respond with a program of action. Each interlude was overtaken and destroyed by acts of violence committed by armed opposition groups or the security forces. It would be wrong for the Turkish government or European governments to assume that 'time is on our side.' In order to maintain and increase the momentum of reform, Human Rights Watch urges the E.U. to assist Turkey in prioritizing action in seven areas—violations of freedom of expression, restrictions on minority rights and abuses connected with the conflict in the southeast, violations of religious freedom, torture, prison conditions, the death penalty, and repression of civil society. First steps in all of these areas can and should be made this year. Human Rights Watch's suggestions for these first steps are listed below, together with summaries of related recent developments.

Recommendations

I. Freedom of Expression

The Justice Minister, in his capacity as president of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors, should immediately issue a circular explaining to prosecutors and judges that sentences imposed for the expression of non-violent opinion - no matter how unpalatable that opinion may be - are in contravention of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which supersedes domestic law.

The Justice Ministry should further establish a training program to ensure that all relevant parties within the judicial system understand their obligations under Article 10 to uphold freedom of expression, and establish a follow-up program to ensure that those trained are implementing the principles in the training program. The European Union, in possible collaboration with the Council of Europe, could be instrumental in providing the funding and expertise for such training.

There has been no legislative change expanding freedom of expression [since the E.U.'s December 1999 Helsinki Summit. Courts have continued to hand down convictions for "incitement" under Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code to politicians and writers who have not advocated violence. On March 10, the former Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan was convicted under Article 312 and sentenced to a year of imprisonment for a speech he had made in March 1994. Necmettin Erbakan is currently banned from all political activity for

five years in connection with the closure of the Refah (Welfare) Party of which he was the leader. If the sentence is upheld at appeal, he will not only go to prison, but the ban will become life-long. Former Education Minister and leader of the Rebirth Party Hasan Celal Guzel has also been deprived of political rights for life. He was imprisoned under Article 312 just five days after the E.U. summit in December and released on 10 May, though subject to a number of other prosecutions, which threaten him with further imprisonment.

The former president of the Turkish Human Rights Association, Akin Birdal, also sentenced under Article 312, was again put behind bars on March 28. Originally imprisoned on June 3, 1999, for a speech he made three years earlier calling for "peace and understanding," his release in September that year on health grounds was widely viewed as a maneuver to avoid official embarrassment during the Istanbul OSCE Conference in November, and the E.U. Helsinki Summit in December. He is currently held at Ankara Central Closed Prison.

In the mid-1990s, most prisoners of conscience were held under Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law. As this provision came under attack, prosecutors began to show a preference for Article 312. Now that the government has been criticized for recent imprisonments under Article 312, indictments under Article 8 are once again beginning to appear. A prosecution seeking imprisonment for up to three years opened at Ankara State Security Court on March 21 against Ahmet Turan Demir, chair of the People's Democracy Party (HADEP) in connection with a speech he made at a Peace Festival in 1999. Prosecutions of non-violent expressions of opinion have also continued under Article 155 of the Turkish Penal Code, which outlaws criticism of military service, and Articles 158 and 159 which deal with insulting the president and the organs of state.

Meanwhile confiscations of newspapers, books, and pamphlets have continued unabated. The Supreme Board of Radio and Television has been so punitive in closing radio and television stations on grounds of "inciting racial hatred" or "threatening the unity of the state" that even the prime minister was prompted to comment, "I, too, have a lot of difficulty understanding the (board's) criteria and standards." (*Turkish Daily News*, February 20).

Turkish politicians and officials have conducted a public but inconclusive debate on freedom of expression. Minister of Justice Hikmet Sami Turk has urged amendment of Article 312 so that only statements presenting a clear and present danger to the state or public order would be outlawed. Deputy Prime Minister Devlet Bahçeli, on the other hand, has expressed the view that Article 312 is a useful and legitimate tool as is. The Chief State Prosecutor has made the extraordinary claim (*Milliyet*, March 22) that Article 312 is fully consonant with the European Convention on Human Rights, despite a string of judgments to the contrary at the European Court of Human Rights (including *Ozturk v Turkey* 22479/93, 28/9/99; *Incal v Turkey* 00022678/93, 9/6/98). The views of the military appear to be intimidating the government and blocking progress. On March 16, according to the Anatolia News Agency, the Minister of Justice explicitly acknowledged that chief of general staff's opposition to change was a factor he was considering in his deliberations.

At the end of May fresh talk of revision of Article 312 was marred by news of a prosecution launched by Istanbul State Security Court against sixteen of the publishers of *Freedom of Thought 2000*, a republication of various texts that have previously been subject to legal action. Although the texts include no advocacy of violence, the charges include not only Article 312 but also Article 169 "assisting an illegal organization." The defendants include the musician Sanar Yurdatapan and the noted actresses Lale Mansur and Zuhale Olcay as well as academics and trade unionists.

II. Restrictions on Minority Rights

The Turkish government should declare its intention to bring the Turkish law on language into accord with international standards. As an important first step, it should amend the Law Concerning the Broadcasting and Television and Radio Corporation in order to permit broadcasting in Kurdish and other minority languages, and repeal Article 42.9 of the Constitution, which states that "No other language than Turkish may be taught to Turkish citizens as their mother tongue."

There has been no legislative change affecting minority rights since the E.U.'s December 1999 Helsinki Summit. The status of minorities and minority languages has not been resolved, even within the government. The newspaper *Radikal* of March 28 quoted the prime minister's view that Kurdish is a dialect of Turkish and not a language. It is still not possible to conduct free public debate on such issues. In May a conference on multiculturalism and democracy, organized by the Mesopotamian

Culture Center was banned by the Istanbul governor. Although the Kurdish Culture and Research Foundation (Kürt Kav) was acquitted by the Istanbul State Security Court of "incitement to racial hatred" by offering instruction in the Kurdish language, the secretary of the Diyarbakir branch of the teachers' union, Eğitim-Sen Hasan Kaçan, is currently being prosecuted for "incitement" under Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code for urging the right to mother-tongue education on Medya TV in December, 1999.

III. Violations of Religious Freedom

The Turkish authorities should immediately lift the ban on the wearing of headscarves or other religious head-covering in education or on state premises.

The campaign to restrict the wearing of headscarves for religious reasons in education or on state premises has continued unabated and is strongly supported by the Office of the Chief of General Staff. This campaign, waged in the name of secularism, has resulted in thousands of devout Muslim women being temporarily or permanently denied access to education, while others were suspended or discharged from employment in teaching or health care.

On February 10, the Minister of Education announced that more than 300 primary and secondary school teachers had been dismissed by the ministry for defying the dress code by wearing a headscarf to work. "This is a crime, the punishment of which is dismissal from civil service. Everybody must comply with this rule. If they don't, they have no place among us." (*Turkish Daily News*, February 11). On May 31, Istanbul Fatih Primary Court sentenced Nuray Canan Bezirgan to six months' imprisonment for "obstructing the education of others" because she wore a headscarf during an examination at the Health Services Vocational Institute of Istanbul University. The sentence was later converted to a fine. Earlier in the month, news emerged of a circular issued by the State Planning Organization barring any civil servants or family member from entering the organization's rest and recreation facilities unless they are wearing "contemporary dress".

Women who wear headscarves say that they adopt this dress as a sincere expression of their religious beliefs. Human Rights Watch believes that the decision to wear (or indeed not to wear) dress such as head-covering in public is a form of protected expression, and that the Turkish government's imposition of a headscarf ban is in breach of Article 9 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

IV. Torture

The Turkish government should immediately abolish incommunicado detention as an important first step to curb torture.

Human Rights Minister Mehmet Ali İrtemcelik's list of short-term goals included bringing detention procedures for those detained under the Anti-Terror Law in line with those for common criminal offenses. In practice this would have abolished incommunicado detention, but no legislative initiative has been taken in the intervening months.

Human Rights Watch continues to receive allegations of torture in police custody, directly from victims as well as through press reports and local human rights organizations. The allegations come from diverse regions of Turkey and are not confined to problem police stations.

Under the leadership of parliamentary deputy Sema Piskinsut, the Human Rights Commission of the Turkish parliament has taken an uncompromising stand against torture in recent years and has carried out unannounced visits to police stations, which have resulted in the discovery of instruments of torture. On May 26, the commission released a series of reports covering its work on torture from 1998 to the present time, based on information collected in dozens of unannounced visits to police stations throughout the country. The reports document many reports of torture of women, children and people accused of common criminal offences, as well as people detained under the Anti-Terror Law. The commission collected various instruments apparently used in torture. The commission also reported the adulteration of custody records, an abuse that not only destroys evidence which might be used in subsequent prosecutions, but also was a contributory factor in the wave of "disappearances" that swept Turkey in the mid-1990s. Responsibility was placed squarely at the top of the chain of command: "As for those who are in reality responsible for such abuses, it is not, as people believe, the police station commanders and executive officers and other lower and middle level positions. Rather, it is the governors and chief public prosecutors who are to blame. This is because both these positions have the authority and

duty to supervise and inspect the entire system. The fact that they do not carry out their duties and avail themselves of their authority should never be excused and should be investigated as extreme neglect of duty. We should have the political determination to resolve this issue without further hesitation or deviation." (Commission quoted in Turkish Daily News; May 27, 2000) There were no reported deaths in custody as a result of torture in the five months since December 1999.

V. Prison Conditions

Gendarmes should be immediately removed from prison guard duties and replaced by staff under the authority of the Ministry of Justice.

The Justice Ministry should put an end to the regime of intense isolation at Kartal Special Closed Prison and make public its plans for the future management of prisons that will provide a healthy environment for prisoners.

Warders under justice ministry authority provide the internal security for all prisons in Turkey, but the external perimeter of prisons is guarded by gendarmes under the authority of the Interior Ministry. These gendarmes, trained for counter-insurgency in southeastern Turkey, are sometimes called in to quell unrest, and they use this as an opportunity to settle accounts with prisoners accused of links with illegal armed groups that may be fighting security forces elsewhere in the country. Since 1995, twenty-six prisoners were killed in Turkish prisons as a result of gendarmes being sent in to "restore order," a duty they customarily carry out with extreme brutality. All of those killed were prisoners remanded or convicted for offenses under the wide-ranging Anti-Terror Law. Prisoners also frequently report being beaten or otherwise abused during the trip from the prison to court or for medical treatment. Again, these transfer duties are carried out by gendarmes.

Substantial current unrest among prisoners held for offenses under the Anti-Terror Law arises from fear that the justice ministry intends to impose a regime of small group isolation. The justice ministry is currently trying to move away from its traditional system of large wards of eighty or more prisoners, which have proved difficult to manage, to a cell or room system. New designs of prisons are under construction, and existing prisons are being remodeled. The Ministry of Justice has already begun to apply small group isolation in parts of the prison system, including at Kartal Special Closed Prison in the Soganlik district of Istanbul.

While remodeling work continues, the Ministry of Justice has remained inexplicably silent on how the new facilities are to be run. Yet this information is vital, as it will determine whether the planned changes represent progress or a serious regression for the Turkish prison system. Speaking about the plan to institute an individual cell system, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture stated in a recent report to the Turkish government:

It is imperative for moves toward smaller living units for prisoners in Turkey to be accompanied by measures to ensure that prisoners spend a reasonable part of the day engaged in purposeful activities outside their living unit. Indeed, the effects of the current almost total absence of any organized program of activities for prisoners would be felt even more keenly in smaller living units. In the absence of a significant improvement in activities for prisoners, the introduction of smaller living units will almost certainly cause more problems than it solves. (CPT/Inf (99) 2 [EN]; February 23, 1999)

The committee asked for detailed information about the planned regime, but unfortunately the Turkish government has so far failed to reply to the committee's request. On May 24, Human Rights Watch issued a public statement on conditions at Kartal Special Type Prison, and the planned F-type cell-based prisons, entitled "Small Group Isolation in Turkish Prisons: An Avoidable Disaster." Since then, prisoners at Kartal Special Type Prison have been told that they are to be permitted access to the prison library and sports facilities. Human Rights Watch will continue to monitor the issue. The report together with additional Human Rights Watch documentation on human rights in Turkey, is available on our website at www.hrw.org.

VI. The Death Penalty

Pending full de jure abolition of the death penalty, Human Rights Watch urges the Turkish government to sign the sixth optional protocol to the European Human Rights Convention and thereby commit itself not to carry out any further executions.

The sixth optional protocol has not yet been signed. Human Rights Watch is unaware of any initiative to effect this important step. Courts continue to hand down death sentences, and fifty-seven death sentences that were confirmed at appeal (Zaman [Time], January 7) are currently pending at the final parliamentary stage.

The Minister of Justice, however, speaking in connection with the Turkish government's agreement to abide by the European Court of Human Rights' request that the death sentence imposed on Abdullah Öcalan, leader of the PKK, be postponed pending the court's judgment on the fairness of his trial, voiced his party's opposition to capital punishment, as well as his own personal opposition. The minister stated: "Turkey, as a member of the Council of Europe and a candidate for full E.U. membership, should make the appropriate amendments to its judicial system. The abolition of the death penalty should be debated within this framework Turkey should harmonize its own judicial system with the trends in the European system. And the tendency in Europe is against the death penalty." (*Turkish Daily News*, December 30, 1999) On May 27, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit once again urged that Turkey should abolish the death penalty.

VII. Repression of Civil Society

Reopen, as a first step, the Diyarbakir branch of the Human Rights Association, closed since May 1997, and the Sanliurfa branch of Mazlum-Der, closed since December 1998.

The Diyarbakir branch of the Human Rights Association and the Sanliurfa branch of Mazlum-Der remain closed, as well as the Malatya branch of Mazlum-Der, which has been closed since May 1999. The Diyarbakir branch of the HRA was originally closed by the local governor using powers under the Law on Associations, as is still the case with Mazlum-Der's Malatya branch. Diyarbakir HRA challenged the closure in the courts and won. On April 19 the court overturned the closure order, and after some delay the branch was permitted to reopen. Their first campaign was to be a signature campaign against the new generation of F-type prisons (see above). Permission for this was refused by the local governor and the branch issued a critical press statement. It was then closed for three months on the orders of the Emergency Region Governor, whose administrative acts cannot be challenged by the courts. The recently opened Van branch of the HRA was also closed by the Emergency Region Governor, also apparently because they were planning a campaign relating to the F-type prisons.

Non-governmental organizations must negotiate a formidable succession of legal obstacles. Although civil society has bloomed in Turkey during the 1990s, should a particular organization incur official displeasure, it may be subjected to a storm of litigation or even armed attack, as exemplified by the imprisonment of and near fatal assault on Akin Birdal, president of the Turkish Human Rights Association, during the past two years.

Revision or abolition of the Law on Associations, with its cumbersome and restrictive rules for non-governmental organizations, will be part of the larger project of establishing freedom of association. In the meantime, if the government is truly determined to improve its human rights performance, it must remove the restrictions from those independent human rights organizations that are best placed to document progress. Government officials must also speak up publicly to challenge the campaign of misinformation about such organizations that has been waged for so long by the military, the media, and others.

We thank you in advance for your attention to the issues raised here. We urge you to raise these matters in the upcoming meeting of the EU/Turkey Joint-Parliamentary Committee.

Sincerely,

Lotte Leicht Holly Cartner

Brussels Director Europe and Central Asia Division
Human Rights Watch Human Rights Watch

LA CHRONIQUE

Euro-islamisme

● Ils passent à la cravate, italienne et baroque, façon Versace. Certains gardent la barbe, mais taillée si court, si soigneusement négligée, si mode qu'ils n'ont plus rien d'islamistes. En Turquie, les islamistes n'aiment plus l'islamisme.

C'est désormais l'Europe qu'ils aiment, parce qu'elle imposera, disent-ils, la démocratie à leur pays, que leurs militaires ne pourront plus, dans une Turquie européenne, les tenir à la lisière de la vie politique, qu'ils seront enfin libres d'accéder au pouvoir sans que l'armée, comme il y a trois ans, les en chasse aussitôt.

Pour eux, l'Europe a d'abord été une arme, une conversion

BERNARD
GUETTA

tactique, mais les mots pèsent en politique. A force d'affirmer leur soudain attachement au modèle européen, à l'Etat de droit, à la tolérance et à la démocratie, à force de retourner ces principes contre ceux qui leur refusaient la liberté au nom des libertés, ils intègrent les valeurs qu'ils combattaient autrefois.

Ce n'est pas seulement l'habit qui change. Ce sont aussi les esprits. Mustafa Sen, par exemple. Costume souple et lunettes légères, 35 ans, il présidait hier la Fondation de la jeunesse nationale, ancien fer de lance de l'islamisme turc. Devenu consultant et chef adjoint du département international du Fazilet, le Parti de la vertu, il explique aujourd'hui que, si sa femme décidait d'abandonner le voile, il n'en divorcerait pas pour autant.

« Nous avons été rigides, dit-

il, car nous adhérions à une idéologie, l'islamisme, qui est partout en échec et qui a déjà échoué en Turquie. Aujourd'hui, pour la première fois, nous lisons vraiment, nous décou-

ouvrons notre religion, qui dit : "Il n'est pas d'autre Dieu que Dieu". Cela signifie, commente-t-il, que lui seul peut édicter des règles, que la décision de porter ou non le voile n'appartient qu'aux femmes, puisqu'il

leur laisse la liberté de choix. »

« Ni l'Etat ni les musulmans, poursuit-il, personne ne peut aller contre ce droit, car les droits de l'homme et la liberté sont inscrits dans l'islam. Un musulman se doit de vivre en musulman, un chrétien en chrétien et, si vous êtes athée, rendez-vous dans l'au-delà, mais libre à vous de vivre en athée. »

Le discours se cherche encore. La nouvelle génération de militants musulmans tente de concilier la politique et la foi, la religion et la laïcité, en

réinventant un communautarisme inspiré de l'Empire ottoman et des Etats-Unis, de la tradition historique et de la puissance qui en impose.

On est encore loin de l'Europe, mais bien plus loin encore de la théocratie à laquelle aspirait la révolution islamiste. Un aggiornamento est en cours. Un euro-islamisme s'invente à Istanbul, car « les valeurs, dit Mustafa Sen, se mondialisent au rythme de l'économie », et l'Europe ouvre à la Turquie les portes de l'Occident, du Graal dont elle poursuit la quête depuis un siècle et demi.

Courants et sous-courants, éléphants et jeunes loups, le Parti de la vertu en est secoué de haut en bas. Le débat fait rage. Les scissions menacent. Les plus audacieux méditent, fascinés, l'histoire des partis chrétiens, qui avaient combattu la modernité d'hier avant d'y intégrer les traditionalistes, d'admettre la démocratie et d'en devenir le pilier droit. ●

● L'EXPRESS 1/6/2000

Ocalan demande à être examiné par une équipe médicale internationale



ANKARA, 2 juin (AFP) - 13h32 - Le chef rebelle kurde Abdullah Ocalan a demandé à faire l'objet d'un examen médical par une équipe internationale pour "lever les doutes" sur son état de santé, et souhaité une amnistie pour les rebelles, dans un communiqué diffusé vendredi par ses avocats.

Le chef du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), unique détenu de l'île-prison d'Imrali (nord-ouest), a en outre renouvelé ses appels à une amnistie pour ses rebelles, mettant sinon en garde contre une poursuite de la "résistance".

"Mon état actuel de santé ne menace pas ma vie. Toutefois, un contrôle médical approfondi avec l'intervention de certaines institutions internationales leverait les doutes à ce sujet", a-t-il dit.

Me Dogan Erbas, l'un de ses avocats contacté par l'AFP, a cité l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé (OMS) et les comités du Conseil de l'Europe et de l'ONU pour la prévention de la torture parmi ces institutions.

Les supporters du chef du PKK en Europe ont accusé récemment la Turquie de le laisser mourir en prison en raison de problèmes respiratoires et ont demandé à ce qu'il soit examiné par une équipe internationale ou transféré dans une autre prison.

Les médecins de la prison ont diagnostiqué chez Ocalan un asthme allergique se traduisant par une forte toux et des insomnies, selon ses avocats.

Le ministre de la Justice Hikmet Sami Turk a estimé pour sa part qu'Ocalan était en bonne santé et n'avait pas besoin d'un traitement spécial.

Ocalan a d'autre part demandé au gouvernement turc d'adopter une amnistie incluant tous les militants du PKK.

"Une telle amnistie est une nécessité. Si l'Etat turc insiste sur un anéantissement (du PKK), la résistance se poursuivra", a-t-il mis en garde.

Ocalan a été condamné à mort en juin 1999 pour trahison et séparatisme pour les 15 ans de lutte armée du PKK. Ankara a suspendu le processus d'exécution en janvier, en réponse à une demande de la Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme, qui a réclamé un sursis pour pouvoir statuer sur le fond.

A la demande de son chef, le PKK a annoncé en septembre 1999 l'abandon de la lutte armée et son retrait de Turquie.

Un porte-parole de l'état-major turc a récemment indiqué que quelque 500 rebelles kurdes étaient toujours présents en petits groupes dans les montagnes turques et 5.000 autres dans les pays voisins de la Turquie.

Manifestation kurde à Athènes contre les conditions de détention d'Ocalan

ATHENES, 3 juin (AFP) - 21h07 - Quelque 300 Kurdes ont manifesté samedi à Athènes devant l'ambassade de Turquie pour réclamer une amélioration des conditions de détention du chef rebelle kurde Abdullah Ocalan, dénonçant une grave détérioration de sa santé, a constaté l'AFP.

La manifestation, commémorant le début du procès intenté l'année dernière à Ocalan par la Turquie, était organisée par la branche politique du PKK (parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan), l'Union kurde populaire et démocratique (UKPD).

Brandissant des drapeaux du PKK et à l'effigie de leur leader, les manifestants ont défilé dans le centre d'Athènes jusqu'à l'ambassade turque, protégée par un important cordon de forces anti-émeutes. Ils y ont hurlé des slogans contre sa détention et le régime d'Ankara avant de se disperser.

Les manifestants ont distribué des tracts de l'UKPD qualifiant d'"inquiétant" l'état de santé d'Ocalan et réclamant qu'il soit examiné "d'urgence par une commission formée par l'Organisation mondiale de la santé". L'UKPD y accuse la Turquie de le laisser mourir, en raison de problèmes respiratoires, sur l'île-prison d'Imrali où il est détenu depuis sa condamnation à mort pour trahison et séparatisme.

Le chef rebelle avait demandé vendredi à faire l'objet d'un examen médical par une équipe internationale pour "lever les doutes" sur son état de santé dans un communiqué diffusé par ses avocats en Turquie.

Le chef de la diplomatie turque visite Bakou

En visite officielle à Bakou lundi et mardi, le ministre turc des affaires étrangères İsmail Cem a réaffirmé la solidarité de son pays à l'égard de l'Azerbaïdjan, et sa volonté de coopérer avec les autorités azéries tant sur les projets énergétiques que sur les questions de sécurité régionale. Son homologue azerbaïdjanais Vilayat Guliyev a souligné à cette occasion que les deux pays liés par des intérêts communs, se situaient à un tournant, le Parlement turc ayant élu un nouveau président et l'Azerbaïdjan s'appêtant à renouveler son Parlement. A cet égard, il a indiqué que le conflit du Haut Karabagh pourrait lui aussi trouver prochainement un règlement, non sans désigner cette question et celle des investissements dans les grands projets économiques régionaux comme étant au cœur des entretiens turco-azéris. De son côté, M. Cem a

rappelé que l'Azerbaïdjan était l'une des priorités de la diplomatie turque et que les relations entre Ankara et Bakou méritaient d'être développées. Sur la question du Haut Karabagh, M. Cem a indiqué que la position de la Turquie n'avait pas changé, à savoir que les territoires azéris occupés devaient être libérés. Il a tenu les mêmes propos au président Aliiev, auquel il a assuré que la Turquie serait favorable à tout règlement qui a l'accord de Bakou. M. Cem a aussi souligné que l'évolution des relations entre la Turquie et l'Arménie dépendra de l'Azerbaïdjan. Le chef de la diplomatie turque a par ailleurs déploré la récente décision du Conseil de l'Europe d'ajourner l'examen de la candidature de l'Azerbaïdjan pour des questions liées aux droits de l'homme, en la qualifiant d'"injuste". Le projet d'oléoduc devant relier les gisements pétroliers azéris de la Mer Caspienne au terminal turc de Ceyhan sur la Méditerranée a été évoqué en profondeur lors de l'entretien qu'a eu M. Cem avec le président Aliiev. Une fois encore, les deux parties ont exprimé leur volonté de voir le projet mis en chantier le plus rapidement possible.

Iraqis Have Little To Hide, Ex-Arms Inspector Asserts

By Barbara Crossette
New York Times Service

UNITED NATIONS, New York — Scott Ritter, the former UN arms inspector who quit two years ago charging that Secretary-General Kofi Annan and American officials were undercutting efforts to disarm Saddam Hussein, now says the Iraqis have no prohibited weapons of any importance left.

Writing in the current issue of Arms Control Today, the journal of the independent Arms Control Association in Washington, Mr. Ritter says that the inspection team on which he served as an expert on concealment had effectively rid Iraq of dangerous weapons by 1997. And he argues that less aggressive monitoring of Iraq will now suffice and that inspectors on any new team should not pursue access to Iraqi presidential and security sites, which caused grave conflict with Iraq in the past.

Mr. Ritter's article was written before American officials disclosed that Iraq was rebuilding and testing a short-range missile system, which is permitted under UN sanctions and does not appear to be immediately threatening. But those reports appear to support Mr. Ritter's thesis that while the missile tests may be legal, they are the kind of activity that must be monitored on the ground to know if the Iraqis are trying to go beyond what is permissible, or are loading the

missiles with prohibited warheads.

In an interview, Mr. Ritter said the purpose of his article was to suggest a way to overcome a deadlock with Iraq that has left the country without arms inspections for a year and half.

He said the United States had little support abroad for either unseating Mr. Saddam, the Iraqi president, or continuing sanctions indefinitely. The Russians, Chinese and French will no longer follow the United States, he said, and Iraq is strengthened by the division among the Security Council's five permanent members. "I propose that maybe people should take another look at the disarmament issue in a way that's more satisfactory to all the parties," he said.

Richard Butler, the former executive chairman of the UN Special Commission, or Unscm, which was responsible for monitoring Iraq, said in a telephone interview that Mr. Ritter's assertions run directly counter to the reports Mr. Ritter submitted when he was in Iraq.

"I didn't see one shred of evidence for these assertions," said Mr. Butler, an Australian arms control expert who is a diplomat in residence at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York.

"Ritter's claim that it was evident then that nothing of any importance remained is completely contrary to the advice that he repeatedly and robustly gave me when he was on the staff," he added.

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE,

WEDNESDAY, JULY 5, 2000

RÉPONSES DES MINISTRES AUX QUESTIONS ÉCRITES

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

*Politique extérieure
(Turquie - droits de l'homme - Kurdes)*

41988. - 21 février 2000. - M. Roger Mei attire l'attention de M. le ministre des affaires étrangères sur la situation politique nouvelle qui existe aujourd'hui à l'égard de la question kurde. En effet, l'appel à la cessation de la lutte armée lancé par le PKK et la décision du Gouvernement turc de surseoir à l'exécution d'Abdullah Öcalan, sans oublier la candidature de la Turquie à l'adhésion à l'Union européenne, constituent autant d'éléments favorables à la consolidation du processus de paix enclenché entre les deux parties. Au-delà de l'idée d'insérer un groupe parlementaire sur la question kurde, initiative à laquelle le groupe communiste à l'Assemblée nationale souscrit pleinement, la France et l'Europe doivent soutenir et favoriser ce mouvement. La détermination de notre pays d'agir en ce sens est d'autant plus importante que ce dernier assumera la présidence de l'Union européenne dès le 1^{er} juillet prochain. Il lui demande donc de préciser les intentions de notre Gouvernement à l'égard du soutien au processus de paix entre la Turquie et le peuple kurde.

Réponse. - Les autorités françaises ont eu l'occasion de s'exprimer à plusieurs reprises sur la situation des Kurdes en Turquie. Elles ont rappelé leur souhait que soit trouvée une solution civile à la question kurde dans le cadre de l'intégrité territoriale de Turquie. Cette solution passe en particulier, du point de vue français, par la possibilité pour ces populations d'obtenir certains droits

culturels. Les autorités françaises ne manquent pas de rappeler à leurs interlocuteurs la nécessité de progresser sur ce dossier, notamment dans la perspective du rapprochement entre l'Union européenne et la Turquie. Il est indispensable qu'Ankara entreprenne des réformes en matière de droits de l'Homme, comme elle s'y est engagée dès avant la reconnaissance de sa candidature par le Conseil européen d'Helsinki. La décision prise par les Quinze doit l'inciter à accélérer les réformes et à adopter des positions conformes aux valeurs européennes. Il est également important que ces réformes soient appliquées. Certains signes encourageants ont été notés ces derniers mois. La décision de surseoir à l'exécution du chef du PKK conformément à la demande présentée par la Cour Européenne des droits de l'Homme, a été un signe positif dont nous avons pris acte avec satisfaction. Cette décision est également conforme à la volonté manifestée par le gouvernement turc de M. Ecevit de renforcer l'Etat de droit et la démocratie en Turquie. C'est également à ce titre que des débats se sont engagés dans ce pays sur les moyens de mettre un terme au conflit dans le Sud Est. Les autorités françaises souhaitent que des mesures soient prises rapidement en la matière. Le gouvernement français suit ces développements avec attention. Il aura à cœur, lors de la présidence française de l'Union européenne, d'encourager la Turquie à poursuivre dans la voie des réformes démocratiques. Il entend demeurer vigilant et exigeant sur ce sujet. C'est dans cette perspective que la France a fait part, le 25 février, aux autorités turques de sa préoccupation après l'arrestation de plusieurs maires appartenant au parti kurde HADEP.

Turkey Opposes US Plan To Open Bureau in Southeast

2000'de Yeni Gundem
01 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Text]

It was reported that US Ambassador in Ankara Mark Parris, who is paying a visit to the southeast, noted that the United States wants to open "a special office" equipped with computers with the aim of contacting businessmen in the region.

Parris added that the Diyarbakir Regional Governor's Office has opposed this. It was noted that the OHAL [State of Emergency] Governor's Office opposes the opening of an office by the United States within the framework of GUNSIAD [Southeast Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association] for contacting businessmen in the region. It was previously announced that during his visit in the region, Parris would sign a protocol with GUNSIAD in Simak for opening an office, which is equipped with a computer system, in the region. It was noted that the Diyarbakir Regional Governor's Office opposed this plan on grounds that it runs counter to the Associations Law and that it requested that the contact with the United States be established through the Internet.

FP [Virtue Party] Bingol deputy Husamettin Korkutata said: "The United States has made such a proposal. This has to be put to practice without any delay." Korkutata stressed that the aim of the office is to contact US business circles directly and to forward information on daily basis. Korkutata said: "It is meaningless to say that this is not in line with the Associations Law because the world is communicating through the Internet. Technology has developed and the walls of knowledge have been destroyed. We, on the other hand, are trying to build additional walls. Who are we afraid of? We have nothing to hide from the United States. They know everything about us. It does not matter where they are—in Incirlik or in north Iraq—they will know everything anyway."

**G.Speech by Mr. Philo Dibble Director of Northern Gulf Affairs/
US Department of State Patriotic Union of Kurdistan's
25th Anniversary Dinner Washington D.C., June 2, 2000**

I am indeed honored to be here today to celebrate with you the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. This silver anniversary is a time for celebration, for congratulation, and it is also a time for reflection.

Let me begin by paying respect to Ibrahim Ahmed, a historic figure whose life was dedicated to advancing the Kurdish cause. His recent death like the PUK anniversary itself is an occasion to take stock of where we are and where we are going. Ibrahim Ahmed set the course for the PUK, a political party whose stated aim is to advance Kurdish society along modern and democratic lines, whose goal is the development of civil society and democratic institutions, a party which is dedicated to preventing renewed efforts to destroy the Kurdish people and the Kurdish society in Iraq.

So let us take stock; all the world knows that the Iraqi Kurds, and like all Iraqis, have suffered brutally under the regime of Saddam Hussein: they have suffered chemical assault mass terror, extermination, and ethnic cleansing which continues today in regions of Kirkuk and in other districts.

But, Kurdish insistence on having not just a token voice, but also a leading voice, in deciding their future status under a new Iraqi government is clearly understood. It is a basic human right, which all Iraqis share, but which too many Iraqis, unlike the Kurds, have not yet found a voice to express.

I need not tell you that from a historic perspective, the residents of Northern Iraq are today in the best and strongest position they have been in many years, perhaps ever. There is peace, economic conditions are improving and civil society is emerging. Northern Iraq has local self-administration, guaranteed food and humanitarian resources through the oil for food program, and importantly unprecedented global attention.

The people of Northern Iraq have voted in democratic elections, including those for municipal positions conducted last year in the PUK area and soon to be conducted in the KDP area as well. The Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians, and others in the northern governates live in an environment with freedom of speech, freedom of communication, and freedom of travel. Dozens of newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations representing a broad spectrum of opinion are available to all. For the first time in history, Iraqis living in Iraqi Kurdistan are assured that they will receive a proportionate share of the wealth and income of the state. A fair share of Iraq's income is now being spent on Iraqi Kurds.

Now, the question is, is this a coincidence? In other words could the good fortunes Northern Iraq enjoy today vanish tomorrow? I do not think so. And I think, the key ingredient is the will of the Kurdish people of Iraq and the leadership and the statesmanship of Mam Jalal and Kak Masoud.

The Kurds have led Iraq's democratic experiment and the world is watching to see if it can become the model for the future of Iraq. I am confident that it can. But the one certainty of Iraqi Kurdistan today is that the status quo is not sustainable. The temporary status of the three northern governates will change. In fact I hope that this status will change, because we want to see the three northern governates, Iraqi Kurdistan, united into a free and democratic Iraq.

But that means that the PUK and KDP must seize this historic opportunity to work together and their leaders must continue to exercise the leadership, the vision, and the statesmanship that have created the situation that we have in the north today.

We are now approaching two years since the PUK and KDP recommitted themselves to the principals of the Ankara Accords by signing on 17 September 1998 what has become known as the Washington Agreement. Turkey, the United States and the United Kingdom and the co-sponsors of the Ankara Process each welcomed and applauded the bold and ambitious agenda agreed upon in Washington and documented such approval in their joint declaration two months later, on November 10, 1998. By means of these statements, the United States committed itself to work with the two parties to ensure the timely implementation of the agreed upon terms. Secretary of State

Albright met personally with Mam Jalal and Kak Masoud. Senior US State Department officials David Welch and Beth Jones traveled to Iraqi Kurdistan and met with both leaders. Senior delegations from both parties have convened on numerous occasions inside the State Department in Washington. I myself visited Suleimanyah, Salahudin and Arbil in February. In each of these occasions both the PUK and KDP reaffirmed their committeemen to honor and implement the Washington Agreement.

And indeed if we look at the Washington Agreement and Ankara Process we see many success stories, and many significant accomplishments. First and foremost is the peace that has prevailed for the past two years. That is very much to the credit of PUK and KDP and the Kurdish people themselves. Both parties pledged in the Washington Agreement to refrain from resorting to violence to settle their differences. Both have honored that pledge despite certain stressful times. This did not happen by accident. Rather, the parties have consistently, not just reaffirming their commitments, engaged one another via meetings, informal and formal through the Higher Coordination Committee. There have been over 50 such meetings.

Let us think back to 1998 and recall the public mood at the time as the Kurds reminded me when I visited Kurdistan. The people clearly feel more secure now than at that time when the recurrence of battle was a daily concern and a daily possibility.

Similarly the two parties agreed in Washington to work together to ensure that the humanitarian requirements of the people of the Iraqi Kurdistan region are met, and that their human and political rights are fulfilled. This has happened. The joint PUK-KDP 986, in reference to the UN resolution 986, Committee has worked extremely well to accomplish these goals. The significant cooperation between the two sides in this area seems now to be taken for granted. Other accomplishment now seem almost commonplace such as the relative free movement of people and goods across the ceased-fire line.

The Washington Agreements provided the PUK and KDP the opportunity to jointly and explicitly state positions on matters of great importance to Iraqis and non-Iraqis alike. They affirmed the territorial integrity and unity of Iraq, and unequivocally accepted and recognized its international boundaries. Similarly, the parties pledged that they would endeavor to create a united, pluralistic and democratic Iraq that would ensure the political and human rights of all Iraqis on a political basis decided by all of Iraqis people. The two parties' active participation within the umbrella Iraqi National Congress democrats such commitment. The parties stated their aspiration that the Iraqi political system be reformed on federative basis and agreed that all the Iraqi people should together make key decision on Iraq's future at an appropriate time and as part of a regular political process. The United States respects that sentiment and encourages that ambition.

But is that enough? Is that enough for now? I don't know. There is still a great deal to be done. The Washington Accord established peace and provided a framework for economic cooperation, which is the key to current prosperity of Iraqi Kurdistan. But the KDP and PUK also committed themselves to hold regional elections and to unify local administrations. This remains a very serious challenge. We hope that both parties will make good on these commitments, most of all to each other and to the people of the North.

The United States will support you as you work together for the common good of Iraqi Kurds and we will remain engaged and remain ready and willing to help implement the Washington Agreement. We will work outside the frame of this agreement also; we will work to improve the UN oil for food program for the effect of the Kurds and all the Iraqi people. We maintain a ready and able force in the region and we affirm that should Saddam move against the north, we will respond.

Let me conclude by saying again to you that the democratic experiment represented by the PUK and the KDP is the best hope for the future of Iraq, for they represent the only Iraqis living freely inside Iraq today. Your experiment must succeed, for the Kurds represent a future when all Iraqis, including Kurds, Shia, Sunni, Turkmen and Assyrian and others are asked to determine the nature of their own government.

There will be many who prefer the Kurds not succeed and will actively encourage tensions between the two parties. Everyone knows this is happening now. Your leadership must be prepared to recognize, as it does, and deflect, as it has, such efforts. Reconciliation cannot be imposed from the outside, and it will take strength and fortitude from you to achieve it. It will only succeed through the actions of far-sighted statesmen. I am confident that in Mam Jalal and Kak Masoud we have exactly the people to make this happen.

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Israel Tips Middle East Balances

- As Israel concludes its withdrawal from southern Lebanon, strategic considerations in the region have once more come to the fore. Turkey, increasing its profile in regional politics, is asked by Israel to use its regional influence to aid security

As Israel has concluded its withdrawal from southern Lebanon, the highly sensitive balances in the Middle East have suffered a transformation once again. Israel is still worrying about security even though it is well known by every country in the region that Israel is the only state in the volatile Middle East that has nuclear weapons.

Israel, which declared its independence on May 14, 1948, has fought four wars with its Arab neighbors and was successful in defeating the joint Arab armies in all of them. But then came the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) waging an armed struggle against Israel. Israel began its occupation of southern Lebanon in 1978 and furthered its presence to Beirut in 1982, which led to the Sabra and Shatilla massacres in which many innocent Palestinian civilians were killed after the PLO had left Beirut.

Israel withdrew from Beirut but created a buffer zone in the South and helped the formation of the South Lebanon Army (SLA), which fought against terrorist organization Hezbollah on behalf of Israel. In the meantime, Lebanon started to show signs of life again after so many

years of civil war and strife. Now Beirut has more authority over its country and wants to exercise its jurisdiction on every inch of its soil.

Now that Israel has surprised everyone with its abrupt withdrawal from the region, many countries, including Turkey, are facing a brand new situation in the region.

Lebanon has always been a concern for Turkey, especially when outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) members and its leader Abdullah Ocalan were sheltered by Syria for years in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. Syria, though the main powerbroker in Lebanon, has always refrained from confronting Israel in terms of a military challenge.

Turkey had urged Syria not to harbor Ocalan and to extradite him to Turkey. Syrian authorities responded by claiming there was no man in Syria by the name of Ocalan. At times, press reports even claimed that Turkey had planned to strike the Bekaa Valley but had later decided to abort the plan.

When Ocalan was captured in Kenya in February last year, as a result of Turkey's relentless pressure on Syria that didn't overlook the threat of war, Turkey and Syria began a process of rapprochement. From Turkey's point of view security issues have now been resolved to a certain extent, but now from Israel's point of view the story is just beginning.

When Turkey and Israel all of a sudden decided to become strategic partners in the region by signing military training and cooperation agreements, experts had stated that one of Ankara's main objectives was to exert influence on Syria, with which Israel, too, had many problems.

Ankara was considering that Turkey, with Israel as a strong ally, would have a stronger chance of deterring Syria from supporting terror in the region. However, when Turkey began warning Syria in late September 1998 that it should either stop sheltering Ocalan or be ready to face strong military action from Ankara, Israel rushed to make an official statement clarifying its position.

Israeli authorities declared the crisis between Turkey and Syria was a bilateral one that Israel had nothing to do with. While some experts argued that the increasing number of agreements with Israel was of no help to Turkey during a serious crisis, others argued that the Turkish-Israeli partnership was quite influential in the changing Syrian policy vis-a-vis Ocalan but also said Israel still had to keep a low profile.

Though Turkey does not seem to be an active player in the Middle East peace process, all of the region's developments have affected Turkey to a certain extent. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon will also have some effect on Turkey.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak reportedly called Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit after Israeli forces completed their redeployment, asking for his help in curbing possible continued Hezbollah strikes against Israel. Barak had allegedly asked Ecevit to use Turkey's leverage to warn Syria not to support Hezbollah guerillas carrying out strikes against Israel.

Another topic that was reported to have been discussed on the phone by the two premiers was Iranian support of Hezbollah. Claiming that Iran was providing Hezbollah with weapons to fight against Israel and was sending the arms in planes via Turkey, Israel allegedly asked Turkey not to allow the aircraft carrying weapons through Turkey. Israel has reportedly requested that Ankara thoroughly check Iranian planes en route to Syria and Lebanon. However, Turkish authorities have not confirmed these reports.

As in the case of Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations in Washington last January during which Turkish waters were bargained over, Ankara is slowly widening its position in the Middle East. During the Washington talks, Syria asked Israel to use its influence on Turkey to release more water to Syria which would, in turn, enable Damascus to give more water to Israel. This bargaining, which Turkey was not directly involved in, was unacceptable to the Turkish side. On numerous occasions, Ankara has made it clear that Turkey would never accept an agreement made over its water.

A related issue is Turkey's desire to sell water to Israel and all other regional countries which are in dire need of it. Turkey, which has long turned its back on the Middle East, is now, willingly or unwillingly, getting involved in the region's politics. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon and asking for Turkey's help in the matter are clear indications of this new paradigm.

Kurdish Party Leader Warns Rival Group of War Consequences

Brayati (Arbil) 4 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] The head of the Kurdistan regional government Nechirvan Barzani attended a meeting for the council of ministers yesterday, 3 June 2000

On the recent tension with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK], his excellency said: "For the past few years, peace has been prevailing in Kurdistan. [passage omitted: Talking about the recent tension with the PUK]

"This has become a source of concern for the people of Kurdistan. We are also concerned about the recent developments because we all know the PUK's habits of starting a media offensive and then deploying their armed forces on the front lines. They did the same this time." [passage omitted: Talking about the PUK's media attacks on the anniversary of the Kurdistan National Assembly, 19th May 2000, and the legality of the Assembly]

His excellency also said: "The PUK leadership wants to exploit the Kurdistan people's misery and poverty to start the war. At a time when they talk about people's misery and poverty, they carry out media attacks and deploy forces. This is nothing more than seeking war."

He also said: "The PUK is accusing the KDP [Kurdistan Democratic Party] of obstructing the peace process. In fact, they are the ones who do not want the peace process to move forward in an appropriate way. On 23rd November of last year, a high-ranking delegation of the KDP and I visited Jalal Talabani and the PUK leadership in Qala Cholan. This was a major step from us to move closer to them. Unfortunately, and after two days of the visit, they responded by establishing a court of appeal and Jalal Talabani appointed himself as a regional president. This, in fact, is what is causing the deadlock in the peace process. [passage omitted: Saying that they feel responsible for the well-being of people in all cities of Kurdistan but the PUK created the division]

At the end of his speech, his excellency added: "We are committed to the Washington agreement, the implementation of all its parts and the preservation of internal peace in the Kurdish region. Whoever thinks that by flexing muscles and deploying forces they can achieve or impose anything, they are dreaming and flogging a dead horse. We hope and we will try to prevent them from choosing the path of war. But if they decide to choose war, let them know from now that they will suffer a substantial loss and they will realize the extent of their miscalculations. They will only have themselves to blame and pay for their wrong moves and arrogance."

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PUK To Hold Own Parliamentary Elections if Peace Process Fails

KurdSat Television 6 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, Leader] Mam [honorific] Jalal Talabani attended the graduation of the PUK Peshmerga [Kurdish fighters] forces' political cadres yesterday, 5 June, in Qala Cholan. [passage omitted: PUK leadership members who attended the ceremony]

At the ceremony Talabani addressed the gathering and explained the way in which they should utilize the knowledge they gained in the course. [passage omitted: Talking about the history of the Peshmerga forces over the past 25 years and their duties for the future]

Mam Jalal spoke about today's political situation and refuted the lies of the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP], which says that the PUK is intending to start a war. He said that it is the opposite, it is the KDP who is deploying its forces. On this issue he said: In order to see the extent of the truth of the KDP's claims, we proposed that four ministers from parties [other than the KDP] in the Arbil administration should visit the front lines and inspect both sides and see who is deploying forces and preparing themselves for war. In another part of his speech, and despite stressing the need for a peaceful solution and the implementation of the Washington agreement, Talabani said

that, although the other party brought armies of different states to fight us each time, the PUK has not been frightened

Then he spoke about the PUK's regional relations and said that they are good and surrounding countries understand the PUK's correct policy

He also said that there are no political relations with the Iraqi government, because there are no grounds for that. But he said that the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan is not against any trade, cultural or sporting relations with Baghdad and other cities under the control of the central government

In his speech, Talabani spoke about the experience of the municipal elections [3rd February 2000] and said: If the peace talks with the KDP do not reach a conclusion, we will have to think about holding parliamentary elections in the PUK-controlled areas. [passage omitted: Other people who addressed the gathering]

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Rival Kurdish Leaders Reportedly Agree on Peace Force Deployment

Turkoman Ale (Arbil) 4 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Text] Brig-Gen Fadil Sirajoghlu, commander of the Peace Monitoring Force [PMF] on 3 June visited the leader of the Iraqi Turkoman Front, Widad Arsalan, at the front's chairmanship offices

During the meeting, Sirajoghlu said that the aim of his visit was to discuss the latest developments concerning the PMF. He added that he had met Patriotic Union of Kurdistan [PUK] Secretary-General Jalal Talabani on 30 May at the latter's request, when Talabani stressed that the PUK will implement the Ankara peace agreement and asked the PMF to resume its work in the region that is under the PUK control

Sirajoghlu added: "I have also met the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party [KDP], Mas'ud Barzani, and conveyed to him what took place during the meeting with Jalal Talabani. On his part, Mas'ud Barzani expressed his satisfaction with the issue

"During the meetings, I felt that the two leaders support peace and do not intend to resort to force

"In the next few days I will meet Assyrian leaders and brief them on the developments."

On his part, Widad Arsalan said that the PMF had an important positive role in keeping peace in the region. He added that peace between the KDP and the PUK would be in the interest of the region's peoples

The meeting was attended by Kan'an Aziz Aghali, member of the Turkoman Front Executive Council, and Fikri Sirt Turkoman, head of the Turkoman Front Security Department.

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Iraq Urges Arab League to Stop Turkish Assault

June 5, 2000

Web posted at: 5:20 PM EDT (2120 GMT)

BAGHDAD, Iraq (Reuters) -- Iraq has urged the Secretary-General of the Arab League to intervene to prevent Turkey from invading northern Iraq in pursuit of Kurdish guerrillas.

"The Arab League should reject such repeated aggression and demand the Turkish government to stop such provocative and unjustifiable acts against Iraq," Foreign Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf said in a letter to Esmat Abdel-Maguid, the league's secretary-general. The official Iraqi News Agency published the letter on Monday.

"This aggression constitutes a flagrant violation of Iraqi skies and territories, the United Nations charter and the Security Council's resolutions," the letter said.

Hundreds of Turkish troops have been involved in repeated military offensives into northern Iraq in pursuit of Kurdish rebels of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party. Late last month, around 3,000-5,000 Turkish troops pushed deep inside a Kurdish-held enclave of northern Iraq to strike at the militant group, known as the PKK.

Sahaf said that the Turkish incursion had caused "human and material losses" among Kurdish civilians in northern Iraq.

Iraq has had no control over its northern provinces since 1991, when local Kurds rose up after the end of the Persian Gulf War, which saw the Iraqi army driven out of Kuwait by multinational forces. Sahaf said Turkey sent in 3,000 troops in a three-pronged offensive on May 23.

Meanwhile, Iraq's Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan told a visiting Turkish official that Ankara should stop Western jets from using an air base at Incirlik, southern Turkey, to enforce a no-fly zone in northern Iraq. INA said Ramadan voiced the Iraqi concern to a Turkish Foreign Ministry official currently visiting Baghdad.

Incirlik-based U.S. fighter planes have attacked Iraqi air defenses several times during recent months.

IRNA
7 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Text]

Khatami's Advisor: "Kurdistan is an Inseparable Part of Iran"

Sanandaj, 7th June: The president's advisor on Sunni affairs in a conference on study of Howraman [an area west of Sanandaj straddling the border with Iraq] convened in Sanandaj, has said: Defending the Iranian borders throughout history has been one of the main characteristics of the Iranian Kurds.

As'ad Sheykholeslami said on Wednesday [7th June]: As history bears testimony, throughout the ancient history of Iran, the Kurdish nation has always been the bearer of the authentic Iranian culture and, for the safeguarding of Iran's independence and its national sovereignty, their men and women have become the target of enemy attacks.

He added: Sometimes biased people, knowingly or unknowingly, utter unfounded words which can cause indifference and apathy in the region.

The president's advisor went on: All the people of Iran love their country and dividing people into first and second class [citizens] has no meaning.

Sheykholeslami stated: In recent years as a result of efforts extended by the president and endorsed by the leader [Ayatollah Khamene'i] we have an open atmosphere in respect of freedom of expression and formation of political parties all within the framework of the constitution. And, I hope all Iranian people especially the Kurds can benefit from such atmosphere.

He said: Kurdistan is an inseparable part of Iran and will never distance itself from the homeland and for this reason, Kurds are Iranians first, Kurds second and Muslims [last].

Referring to the need for the creation of an environment in which the Kurdish elite can participate in the reconstruction and development of Iran, the president's advisor said: The government's approach in respect of the Kurdish people must be cordial, brotherly and with sincerity because the Kurds are noble and honourable people and they are in line with reforms.

The conference on the study of Howraman, with the participation of 800 Iranian and foreign scholars in the fields of science, culture and literature, has been held in the Imam Khomeyni Complex in Sanandaj.

During the three-day conference, 24 papers and 14 talks will be given by the Iranian and foreign scholars about Kurdish history, culture and language.

Turkey Said To Use Kurds Against Iran

Hurriyet
05 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Text]

Even as the uncertainty over President Ahmet Necdet Sezer's trip to Iran continues, Turkey has been making preparations to radically change its policy toward Iran in line with a National Security Council [MGK] decision. Ankara will be exploiting Iran's own problems in retaliation to the anti-Turkey policies of Iran, which is strongly suspected of supporting the reactionary and separatist organizations in Turkey.

The report "Iran's Support for Terror Organizations in Turkey and Countermeasures Required" discussed at the latest MGK meeting points out that the status and rights of the Kurds could be among the issues to be used against Iran.

The report has drawn attention to the following issues:

Five Million Kurds: The Kurds, the largest ethnic minority in Iran after the Turks, live mostly south of Lake Orumiyah, along the Iraqi border, in Western Azerbaijan, Kurdistan, and Kermenshah, and Ilam provinces. Some 4.5-5 million strong, they constitute 9 percent of the Iranian population. Since the collapse of the Mahabat Kurdish Republic set up by the Soviets in 1946, the Iranian Kurdish Democratic Party (IKDP) has been waging a Kurdish national struggle. With its 12,000 militants in its training bases and headquarters in northern Iraq, IKDP has been waging its struggle against the Iranian regime. Iran, in turn, is using the Kurds in northern Iraq to extend its own influence over northern Iraq and to eliminate threats posed against Iran by the IKPD [Iraqi Kurdish Democratic Party] and Komala.

Is Using: In retaliation to the Kurdish movements used against it, Iran is known to be using the Kurdish organizations in the region in line with its own desires and is thus influencing the developments in northern Iraq. Iran also supports and uses the Kurdish Workers Party [PKK] as a trump card against Turkey, and encourages the Kurdish deputies in the Iranian parliament to issue anti-Turkey statements.

The report also says that Turkey will make the Kurds of Iran realise the duplicity of the Iranian administration. With this purpose, the Iranian Kurds' attention will be drawn to the following points:

They Are Being Duped: The Kurds of Iran enjoy absolutely no rights except a geographical location called Kurdistan. The Iranian constitution says that Iran is populated by the Iranian people, and that compared to their population size Kurds are not represented in the parliament with enough deputies.

They Cannot Become Officers: Kurds cannot become officers. The Kurds serve as privates and are stationed in critical regions.

They Are Being Kept Illiterate: The literacy rate in the country is 72 percent, while among the Kurds its is hardly 15 percent.

No Electricity: Some 80 percent of the country is electrified. But only 20 percent of the Kurdish areas are electrified. It is forbidden to establish important industrial enterprises in the Kurdish regions.

The report concludes: "[The condition of the Kurds in Iran] should be widely used to shape public opinion at home and abroad, and launching radio broadcasts against that country should also be considered."

Under Bush or Gore, U.S. Line on Saddam Is Likely to Get Tougher

By John Lancaster
Washington Post Service

WASHINGTON — At the governor's mansion in Austin last year, a top foreign policy adviser to Governor George W. Bush of Texas casually suggested to the Republican presidential candidate that "we ought to have been rid of Saddam Hussein a long time ago."

The adviser instantly regretted his words. "A light went off in my head that maybe this would be taken amiss," recalled the adviser, who feared that Mr. Bush would interpret the comment as criticism of his father, President George Bush, for halting the 1991 Gulf War with the Baghdad regime still intact.

The adviser need not have worried. While avoiding specific commitments, Mr. Bush has vowed publicly that he would adopt a more aggressive posture than President Bill Clinton has taken toward Iraq. Several of his top foreign

policy advisers have publicly advocated a plan by Iraqi opposition groups to overthrow the regime with a U.S.-backed offensive from enclaves carved out of southern and northern Iraq.

Their views suggest that the opposition plan — which has been embraced by Republicans and some Democrats in Congress but derided by critics as a recipe for an Iraqi version of the Bay of Pigs fiasco — almost certainly would win renewed attention in the early months of a Bush presidency.

"We eventually have to undermine the Iraqi leader's position within his own country," said Robert Zoellick, an undersecretary of state in the Bush administration, "and that means slowly taking away pieces of his territory." Mr. Zoellick, who is advising the Texas governor's campaign and was speaking at a May 19 forum sponsored by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, added: "We have started to do that in the north. I believe we could do that in the south. I

believe that in part this involves American air power. It might involve more."

Despite its stated policy of "containment plus regime change" in Baghdad, the Clinton administration's support for the Iraqi opposition has been modest. In 1998, Mr. Clinton reluctantly signed legislation authorizing the Pentagon to give the Iraqi National Congress, an umbrella organization for opposition groups, \$97 million in goods and services. Thus far, however, the administration has made good on only about \$20,000 of that sum, the cost of a two-week course for three Iraqis on civil-military relations. The opposition also has received \$64,000 in direct economic aid, mostly to rent, staff and equip a London office. But administration officials have ruled out arms deliveries as premature.

There are now signs that Vice President Al Gore is trying to distance himself from the administration's Iraq policy. He has agreed to meet with representatives

of the Iraqi National Congress in Washington on June 26 and recently told an audience of the America-Israel Public Affairs Committee, "It is our policy to see Saddam Hussein gone."

An adviser to the Gore campaign, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the Democratic candidate was eager to communicate that "although there may be hesitations" within the administration about the wisdom of aggressively backing the Iraqi opposition, "he doesn't share these."

The adviser emphasized, however, that Mr. Gore was under no illusions about the difficulty of dislodging Mr. Saddam and regarded the opposition plan as but one of a number of potential avenues for doing so.

The emergence of the Iraqi opposition as an issue in the campaign coincides with mounting fears that Iraq is renewing efforts to develop nuclear, chemical and biological weapons in the absence of UN arms inspectors, who left the coun-

try on the eve of U.S. and British air strikes in December 1998. At the same time, growing Arab and international concern about the extent of human suffering in Iraq has eroded support in the UN Security Council for the far-reaching economic embargo at the heart of the administration's containment policy.

Mr. Gore's national security adviser, Leon Fuerth, told the Washington Institute forum that the continued threat posed by Mr. Saddam was, "to be fair, a legacy bequeathed to us by the last Bush administration, which had a sword at his throat at the end of the Gulf War and elected not to use it."

Mr. Fuerth was referring to the decision by President Bush and his senior advisers — including General Colin Powell, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff — to permit Mr. Saddam to withdraw his forces from Kuwait and southern Iraq with half his Republican Guard intact. Baghdad later used those forces to smash a rebellion by Iraq's

Shiite Muslim and Kurdish populations. The Bush administration had encouraged the uprising.

At the time, Mr. Bush and his advisers said they did not want to be seen by Iraq's Arab neighbors as "piling on" and feared that continuing the war would cause the breakup of Iraq. They also said they expected Mr. Saddam's regime to collapse on its own in a matter of months.

Several of those aides have since gone public with their misgivings about Mr. Bush's decision to end the war when he did. They include Paul Wolfowitz, who served as the Pentagon's undersecretary for policy in the Bush administration and now advises the Texas governor's campaign.

Whatever his regrets, Mr. Wolfowitz, like others on the campaign team, has defended the elder Bush's overall conduct of the war while faulting the Clinton administration for permitting the Iraqi leader to grow stronger than he was when Mr. Bush left office in January 1993.

Herald  Tribune
PUBLISHED WITH THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE WASHINGTON POST

MONDAY, JUNE 5, 2000

Shiite Council Details Saddam's Plan to Drain Marshes

Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq 06 Jun 00

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In 1992 SCIRI obtained a copy of Saddam's plan to drain the marshlands of southern Iraq when its fighters captured an engineer working on the site which is reproduced here. Official documents, in addition to special maps, give a detailed account of operations on the ground, as well as the plan to drain the marshlands and its consequences in various areas. The documents reveal that the plan has five stages.

Stage one: River Engineering Works.

Site of the operation: Amara province.

Objective: To establish earth dykes 6 - 18 km in length on the banks of the main rivers which supply the marshlands. The seven rivers affected by the operation are: AL Wadiah, AL Adil, AL Kifa, Ash-Shermekhiah, Mesbah, Haddam and Um Jidi. Progress of the operation: this stage was completed in July 1992. Consequences: diverting the waters of tributaries which supply the marshlands. The land on both sides of the river banks south of Amarah has been deprived of water. This situation has been aggravated by the introduction of water level controllers on the Tigris which severely limit the flow of water. Regulators were first used on the Al Majr AL Kabir and AL Bitaria rivers, resulting in the cutting off of water to AL Maimouna, As-Salam, AL Adil and AL Majr AL Kabir towns.

Stage two: Engineering the River Banks

Objective: to establish two banks at the ends of all the rivers and their tributaries to limit the flow and outflow of water to the main river.

Site of the operation: Amarah province.

1. This project begins south of AL Jandallah village (AL Salam town) and spans the length of Abu Ashrah village (AL Adil town) and continues towards Abu Ajil village to join the two banks which were established during the Iraq-Iran war between Abu Ajil and Beni Mansour where it finally meets the Euphrates six kilometres west of AL- Qurneh town.

Description of the two banks (from the West to the East) Width of the southern bank: 35m at the bottom, 8m at the top. Width of the upper bank: 25m at the bottom, 8m at the top. Height of the two banks: 6m.

Distance between the two banks: 1200m at AL Jendallah village (AL Salam town), 1,400m at Abu AL Jawatil (AL Adil town) , 1,600m at Abu Ajil town and 2,000m (from Abu Ajil to Beni Mansour).

-Length of the two banks: 90 kms

-Completion date: July 1992

Results of the operation: cutting off more than 40 rivers and tributaries and diverting them towards the east. This led to:

1. Depletion of drinking water and water essential for agricultural activities.

2. Lowering the water level in Amarah marsh. Organisation supervising the project: Ministry of Petroleum, Ministry of Industry and Military Industrialisation, Ministry of Housing and Construction, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Stage three: Diversion of the Euphrates to AL Masab AL Aam.

Site of the operation: Nasiriyah province.

Objective: Diversion of the Euphrates waters from AL-Fdhailiah (five kms east of Nasiriyah to AL Masab AL Aam). The tributaries of Masab AL Aam will be linked. It is well known that these waters end at the Gulf at Khor Abdullah. This operation was completed early in July, 1992. Result of the operation: Diversion of the Euphrates waters from its source starting from Nasiriyah town towards AL Masab AL Aam to drain AL Hamar marsh. The diversion of the natural and historical course of the Euphrates starting from Nasiriyah-Al Qurnah to a lower-level canal to drain Amarah marshland.

Stage four: Shouldering the Euphrates River

Site of the operation: Nasiriyah province and Basrah province.

The dam in this case is located between Medainah (at lines 715 east and 342 to the north) and Nasiriyah, passing through AL-Chibaish, which is located at lines 692 east to 342 north.

Purpose of this stage: prevention of the flow of water from Euphrates to Hamar marsh, through the setting up of an earth dam parallel to the river Euphrates. Specification of the dam: width from below is 25m and at top 6m, height 5.7m, length 145m.

Consequences of this stage: cutting off the flow of water from several rivers, which feed to Hamar marsh. These rivers include Saleh, Antar, Khaerah, Khargeah, in addition to certain tributaries and other smaller streams, while the population of these areas are deprived from the water that they require for both irrigation and domestic use.

Progress of work: the regime has benefited from falling water levels in Hamar marsh, as a direct result of the third stage. Also, the two banks of the water flow became apparent, something which made it possible to set up an earthy barrier over these two banks.

The regime has utilised the dam between AL-Qurneh and Medainah (20kms) which was implemented during the Iran-Iraq war. This is called the "Hemaiah Dam".

Also, another 20 kilometres has been performed between Medainah and a point some 5 kilometres to AL-Chibaish, and what remains is the distance between this point and AL-Nasiriyah, i.e. some 100 kilometres, which is now under construction.

Stage five: Division of the Marshes

Site of the operation: Amarah province and Basrah province.

Objective of operation: division of the marshes through several barriers and as a prelude to drying them up. The important steps in this regard are:

1. Establishment of an earthy dam starting from Abu-Saboor village at lines 711 east and 347 north. This dam will extend to the west till AL-Saboor village at lines 696 east and 347 north. It also extends to the south west till a point falling at line 693 east and 346 north. It also continues to the south for some 40 kilometres, so as to meet the Euphrates at lines 696 east and 342 north, then to the south for some 18kms, and then to the south east and east to finish at lines 718 east and 340 north.

2. The regime has benefited from a number of dams which were set up during the war with Iran. Among these is the water barrier starting from a point at lines 718 east and 340 north, and continuing for 11 kilometres to the north, i.e. Lip to "AL-Ibrah" village, then it bends towards the east north and west to form a semi-circle. Consequences: Some 1500 square kilometres has been dried up through this stage alone.

Conclusion: The various stages spelt out above have one single objective. This is to destroy the environment of the marshes and break the resistance of their people. These stages are aimed at drying up the marshes, and have been accompanied by a great deal of violence on the part of the authorities, where brutal force is utilised extensively to ensure the implementation of these stages, where the whole plan is shrouded utmost secrecy.

The people of the marshes have suffered greatly as a result, and are still suffering. Water has become very scarce in certain areas, while in others it has become virtually unobtainable. All this is causing dire consequences for agriculture, animal rearing and human consumption. In addition, hundreds of thousands of inhabitants have fled their areas, so as to escape this new situation that has devastated their environment.

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Iraq Article on Turkish Restrictions on Border Trade

Al-Thawrah (Baghdad) 31 May 00 by Sami Mahdi

[FBIS Translated Text] We have often heard Turkish officials complaining about the effects of the blockade on the Turkish economy and have often given figures about Turkey's losses as a result of the blockade, with some officials even putting these losses at \$50 billion.

Whether the size of Turkish losses is this or less, they are still massive for the exhausted Turkish economy and Turkey still badly needs these lost billions. Turkey has not done what it should have done in terms of activating Article 50 of the UN Charter to compensate for these losses but has done what the United States asked it to do. Although Turkey can still activate this Article it seems it does not want to seriously contemplate the matter on the basis of the US "pieces of advice." Although it has managed to recoup some "compensation" but not "all of it" from the border trade with Iraq, Turkey has started to retreat from this "gain" and to strangle itself and its people.

It has done this by adopting measures curtailing the volume of this trade and the benefits Turkey and the Turkish citizens gain from it.

For during the past five months the Turkish Government issued two laws that have led to cutting the border trade, especially the oil trade, by half, under the pretext of regulating and controlling the border trade between the two countries. According to the first law the people in charge of this trade have to sell the oil to a government company and as a result the oil no longer reaches the consumer except after a tax is levied on it for the benefit of the government. After some time the government issued a new law placing additional restrictions on the border oil trade.

In principle, every government in any country is entitled to issue the laws it deems appropriate for itself and for its citizens but should this government not first study the side effects that could result from the implementation of the of the laws it issues? The enactment of these two laws has reduced the border trade, especially the oil trade, by almost a half. The Turkish Government might have gained some financial returns as a result of the implementation of these two laws but the Turkish economy and Turkish citizens, especially the population of southeast Turkey, have sustained massive losses. We are not the ones who claim these losses have been incurred, the Turkish press and citizens are saying this. The Turkish Daily News newspaper said: The Turkish Government's new law on the border trade has caused massive economic damage in the Turkish border regions, especially the ones near the border with Iraq.

Mehmet Amin Daghir [names as transliterated], owner of one of the transport companies operating in border trade, talked to the same newspaper about the prosperity of those regions when the border trade thrived. He also talked about the losses, which have been incurred when this trade became restricted by two laws, which were not studied and which have been issued at the instigation of foreign oil companies operating in Turkey at the expense of Turkey's interests and the interests of its citizens. Mehmet Amin Daghir says: The people in the border regions no longer want to bring oil from Iraq in view of the increasing costs they have to shoulder as a result of these two laws. The Turkish Daily News newspaper said the number of Turkish trucks that daily crossed the border to transport oil and fuel before these restrictions were imposed had been 1,500, but this number has now dropped to between 100-150 trucks. This means, the newspaper says, the financial returns the Turkish Government had hoped to get and used as another pretext to issue the two laws have also dropped by a very large margin and therefore this pretext has been completely refuted.

In fact, the border trade between Iraq and Turkey is not merely cheap oil, which is transported and sold, and taxes, which are imposed and levied, but it is very important to the Turkish economy. For this cheap oil directly influences the economic cycle and contributes to its invigoration. It also revives the economy of an entire region, which badly needs to be revived in view of its special circumstances. We would like to ask the following question: Is the issuance of such laws in the interest of Turkey and its citizens? Is it in the interest of the multifaceted economic relations between the two countries to curtail and weaken these relations? How does the value of the tax revenues, which tempted the Turkish Government to issue these two laws, compare with the benefits of a thriving border trade between the two countries?

We stress that the Turkish Government is entitled to issue the laws it deems appropriate for itself and its citizens but we believe these two laws harm both Turkey and Iraq. We also believe suspect sides and special interests, which contradict the interests of the two neighboring countries, have been behind the issuance of these two laws. Therefore, we urge the Turkish Government to reconsider these two laws in a manner that would revive and continuously promote the border trade and not the opposite

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Sanctions on Iraq paradoxically strengthen Saddam Selcuk Gultasli

Ankara - Turkish Daily News June 7, 2000

As Ministry of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Faruk Logoglu continues his meetings with Iraqi officials in Baghdad in a bid to improve political and commercial ties, pressure is slowly mounting to ease U.N. sanctions on Iraq. Politicians and experts have raised their voices, questioning the reasoning behind the embargo which has devastated the lives of so many innocent Iraqi civilians.

While Ankara can not openly oppose the U.N. embargo, experts stress that Turkey has been one of the biggest victims of the embargo against Iraq since the Gulf crisis in August 1990. Ankara lost its immense border and bilateral trade with Iraq after the Gulf War, which caused unemployment in the region to skyrocket, fuelling the separatist terrorism of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). As well as declaring the burden Turkey has to bear, Ankara has constantly asked the United Nations to alleviate the misery of the Iraqi people.

Sanctions not benefiting Turkey

Experts state that sanctions have not weakened Iraq's President Saddam Hussein; on the contrary, they have helped to keep him in power. Ali Nihat Ozcan, from the Center for Eurasian Strategic Studies (ASAM), said the power models in the Middle East were not democratic but were built on ethnic, religious or tribal power bases. "There are two bureaucratic mechanisms for power in these models: intelligence and military. In Iraq, Saddam's power base is the Tigris tribe from which he comes." Ozcan continued: "In this model, unlike democratic systems where a change of government is carried out peacefully, a change of regime is only possible from within the system. So the sectors of society which are negatively affected are those outside the ruling elite. Those in power have not been affected by the embargo at all. On the contrary, Saddam has been getting stronger each day despite the sanctions."

Commenting on Turkey's position, Ozcan said that the sanctions did not help Turkey's interests in the region. Ozcan indicated that full normalization in Iraq would be beneficial to Turkey. "Iraq has been working on bettering relations with its immediate neighbors including Syria, the Gulf countries and Iran. Syria has almost completed the renovation of the pipeline carrying Iraqi oil through its land. That may endanger the Kerkuk-Yumurtalik pipeline. Turkey should seek ways to improve its bilateral relations with Iraq," said Ozcan.

U.S. vehemently opposed to lifting sanctions

While Arab and Muslim countries' pressure on the United Nations to ease the sanctions on Iraq increases, the United States is vehemently opposed to such a move. A U.S. Embassy spokesman told the Turkish Daily News that Saddam had aggravated his people's suffering and used the spectacle to seek the removal of sanctions. He argued that ending sanctions on Iraq would not end the suffering of its people.

"Saddam rejected the oil-for-food program for five brutal years," said the spokesman. "But now, three years after he acquiesced, Iraqi oil exports and food imports are reaching prewar levels. With oil prices rising, revenues are surging and Iraq has record resources for the purchase of food and medicine. During this latest six-month period, Iraqi oil revenues are expected to reach \$8 billion and yet the Iraqi government has so far placed orders of only \$1.8 billion for food, medicine and humanitarian supplies."

The U.S. diplomat proposed that the "friends of Iraqi people" call on Saddam to end his restrictions on U.N. monitors, non-government organizations (NGOs) and supplementary feeding programs rather than insisting that the United Nations should end sanctions on Iraq.

Pressure in the Arab world

In the Arab world meanwhile, Qatar reportedly presented a proposal on Saturday that aimed at helping lift the sanctions. The proposal was made to the foreign ministers of the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries – Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain.

In Cairo, the six GCC countries plus Syria and Egypt began a two-day meeting on Sunday to discuss ways of alleviating the suffering of Iraqi civilians after a decade of sanctions.

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Iraq Port Will Boost Oil Exports

By Waiel Faleh Associated Press Writer June 7, 2000

BAGHDAD, Iraq – Iraq hopes to increase its oil exports by 700,000 barrels a day by reopening a port that was extensively damaged in wars with Iran and with U.S.-led forces over Kuwait, a senior official said Wednesday.

The additional output would raise Iraq's export capacity from 2.5 million barrels a day to 3.2 million barrels a day. If the target is achieved, it would exceed Iraq's total production of about 3 million barrels a day before the United Nations imposed economic sanctions to punish Iraq for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions have devastated Iraq's economy and oil industry.

Rafid al-Diboni, the director-general of Iraq's state-run Southern Oil company, told reporters that the rehabilitation of the Khor al-Omaia oil exporting port is almost complete. Once it is ready, "we expect to add a capacity of 700,000 million barrels per day to Iraq's total exports," al-Diboni said. The port was extensively damaged by bombing in the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war and again in the 1991 Gulf War in which U.S.-led allies ended Iraq's occupation of Kuwait.

The sanctions were eased in 1996 when limited oil sales were allowed under U.N. supervision for Iraq to purchase needed food and medi-

cal supplies. Now Iraq is allowed virtually unlimited oil sales, but still under U.N. supervision. Iraq, however, says it cannot produce its full capacity because of a dilapidated infrastructure. Given the problems, it is not clear how Iraq expects to increase production, which would be necessary to raise exports by 700,000 barrels a day as envisaged by al-Diboni.

Iraq's current production is 3.1 million barrels a day, of which about 600,000 barrels are consumed domestically. Oil exports currently go from the Iraqi port of Basra and via a pipeline to Turkey.

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Austria must ask for extradition of a renegade of the Iranian secret service

KDPI - June 9th, 2000

Khosrow ABDOLLAHI Head of the Bureau of International Relations of KDPI - Paris

According to information provided by various press agencies, a renegade of the Iranian secret service by the name of Ahmad BEHBAHANI has made devastating statements on the implication of the Iranian regime in terrorist operations abroad.

This man, who says that he has coordinated terrorist operations of the Iranian regime for more than ten years, also declared during the + 60 minutes; programme of the American CBS channel, broadcast last Sunday, that + he has taken part personally, under cover of reporting, in the assassination of Dr. Ghassemlou; in July 1989.

We wish to point out that:

- Firstly: since the verdict of the Berlin Court on 10 April 1997 in the case of the Mykonos restaurant, which established officially the responsibility of the highest officials of the Iranian regime in the assassination of three of our leaders and of their interpreter, on one has any more doubts as to the implication of the Iranian regime in terrorist operations abroad, notably against its opponents.
- Secondly: it is not the first time that a renegade of the Iranian secret service reveals information of this kind. It is the first time, however, that an agent of the Iranian secret service makes a confession and states that he took part personally in such crimes.

In view of Mr. Behbahani's confession during the CBS broadcast that he took part in Dr. Ghassemlou's assassination in July 1989 in Vienna, we are entitled to ask the Austrian authorities:

- to reopen the file of the assassinations of Dr. Ghassemlou and of his two collaborators
- to officially urge the Turkish government to extradite the Iranian renegade to Austria, in order that he, who claims that he has documents which prove his allegations, be brought before an impartial court ;
- to allow the creation of a parliamentary commission to find the Austrian persons in charge, both legally and politically, who were responsible at the time for preventing justice from being done and for allowing the Iranian criminals to go back to Iran under escort.

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Demonstration against forced repatriation of refugees

IkNA n Jun 11, 2000

Vienna, June 11, IRNA -- Hundreds of people took to the streets of Zurich on Saturday in protest against the forced repatriation procedure adopted by the Federal Refugee Office.

The demonstrators were carrying placards warning against the repatriation of refugees from war zones, reported Swiss Radio International. Among the protestors were many foreigners and their representatives such as Kurds and Iranians. The demonstration had been organized by the Swiss human rights group "augen auf".

The protest march which started at Zurich's Helviaplatz finished in front of the building of the Federal Refugee Office.

There, the protestors also demanded the lifting of the ban on jobs for refugees. This was also the chief concern of the Iraqi Federation of Refugees which launched their own march. They intend to demonstrate in Zurich, Lucerne and Bern against the repatriation of Kurds into Iraq.

INC's Al-Jalabi Seeks Clear US Position on Change in Iraq

Al-Zaman 06 Jun 00 by Sa'id Abbas

[FBIS Translated Text]

London – Dr. Ahmad al-Jalabi, a member of the seven-party provisional leadership of the Iraqi National Congress [INC] has announced that the INC leadership delegation to visit Washington on 26 June for a meeting with US Vice President and Democratic Presidential candidate Al Gore will be seeking his attitude toward and views on the process of democratic change in Iraq. He added that Al Gore has already made positive statements on this issue recently by saying that there is no possibility of peace or stability in the Gulf and the Arab region generally while Saddam Husayn's regime is still in place. Al-Jalabi said the delegation hopes its meeting with Al Gore will define the US position on the process of change in Iraq clearly and in practical terms, "stressing that there is now a legal formula for helping the Iraqi people in this respect in the form of the law to liberate Iraq. We are seeking to obtain clear and committed support from Al Gore and will be asking him to take certain measures -- if he wins the presidential elections -- to push ahead with the law to liberate Iraq as well as gain a clear understanding of his ideas about the process of democratic change in Iraq."

Al-Jalabi said the delegation will discuss with Al Gore the issue of helping the Iraqi people and "we will explain to him our position on the sanctions imposed on Iraq. We will attempt to deal with it in a new and serious way, which will allow the Iraqi people and the UN to make use of UN resources to end the suffering of Iraqis. We will try to get away from the idea that the Iraqi people can only be helped through the regime of Saddam Husayn and that lifting the sanctions will only allow him to resume the persecution and oppression. The best way is to enable the INC to work with international organizations to provide aid to the Iraqi people by assisting the INC to build an infrastructure inside Iraq that will allow it to get humanitarian aid to Iraqis."

Al-Jalabi added that the Allocations Committee in the US Senate has agreed to provide extra funding to the INC and that disbursement measures for these amounts are currently passing through executive channels. The funding will cover the costs of aid plans as well as the setting up of two radio and television stations.

Al-Jalabi stressed that the INC leadership has been in contact with Republican presidential candidate George Bush Jnr., with whom a similar meeting is expected to take place at an as yet unspecified time.

Al-Jalabi concluded his statement by saying that it has become clear in light of recent developments in the US presidential elections that the attitudes and positions of Democratic Party nominee Al Gore and Republican Party nominee George Bush Jnr. are more supportive of the Iraqi people, "which is an important and positive development that will help the process of change in response to the aspirations of the Iraqi people." Al-Jalabi expected the two nominees to be more responsive to and cooperative with the INC in the present US Administration." What is more, Ambassador Frank Ricciardone is today in London discussing with the INC's seven-member provisional leadership the latest developments on the Iraqi scene.

A source in the INC told Al-Zaman that the visit by US coordinator for the Iraqi opposition, Ricciardone, who arrived in the British capital at the beginning of this week, is aimed at following up certain issues relating to his work as a coordinator. He added that Ricciardone will attend a special meeting with the INC leadership in order to discuss all the issues concerning follow-up matters on the law to liberate Iraq, US commitment to supporting the Iraqi opposition, and helping it to overthrow the Iraqi regime.

The source, a member of the provisional leadership, added that, during today's meeting, Ricciardone will discuss arrangements for the INC leadership's visit to the United States and its anticipated meeting with US Vice President Al Gore on 26 June.

He explained that the INC leadership had previously entered into correspondence with Al Gore in order to arrange the meeting with him. It had then received a letter from him stating that he would set a date for the meeting some time after March this year. The INC leadership was subsequently informed the meeting was to be held this month. The source said the INC leadership had spoken to and corresponded with the US presidential candidates over aid for the Iraqi people and INC plans to overthrow the regime in addition to commitments under the law to liberate Iraq. During its visit to Washington, the INC delegation will probably have meetings with a number of members of Congress and US political activists.

The source added that the INC leadership held a meeting last Friday with the INC's Central Council Coordinating Committee to discuss all the political and technical matters relating to the Central Council meeting to be held next month.

He pointed out that the committee has initiated contacts and consultations with the members of the Iraqi opposition and is discussing

with them the issues that are due to be addressed during the meeting. The Committee is also engaged in preparing working papers for the meeting.

INC Reportedly To Open Office in Damascus

Al-Zaman 08 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Text] London, Al-Zaman -- The provisional seven-member presidency of the Iraqi National Congress [INC] has said that it discussed the issue of opening an office for the INC in the Syrian capital Damascus.

An INC source has told Al-Zaman that the provisional presidency decided to go ahead and set up the office, pointing out that the presidency values the Syrian leadership's stand and support in facilitating the INC's mission. The source added that the presidency decided to follow up the procedures in order to open the office as soon as possible. The office is expected to be run by Izzat al-Shabandar [member of the INC's national assembly]

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Italian Senate Passes Motion on Seeking Lifting of Iraq Embargo

ANSA (Rome) 06 Jun 00

[FBIS Transcribed Text] (ANSA) - Rome, June 6 - The Senate tonight overwhelmingly passed a motion calling on the government to work towards getting the embargo on Iraq lifted.

Speaking for the government, Foreign Undersecretary Ugo Intini said Italy had been working for some time alongside other European countries to ease the embargo. But he added that proponents of lifting the ban should also consider the fact that Saddam Hussein had flatly rejected all proposals for easing the ban, insisting that it be lifted totally and unconditionally.

The motion calls on the government to take all initiatives to revoke the embargo, strengthen Italy's diplomatic presence in Baghdad and open new and more direct channels for bilateral humanitarian aid, especially food and medical supplies.

Another of the goals set down is re-opening the Italian embassy in Baghdad.

The Senate whip for the largest party in the house, Cesare Salvi of the Left Democrats, said the motion meant Italy could "place itself in the vanguard for the defence of human rights...responding to the cries for help from the children and old people of Iraq."

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Iraqi Speaker Leaves for Rome To Discuss 'Siege' With Italian Officials

Republic of Iraq Radio 07 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Text] National Assembly Speaker Sa'dun Hammadi has left for Rome on a visit of several days to Italy upon the invitation of the Italian House of Representatives' speaker.

In statements to the Iraqi News Agency, Speaker Hammadi said that during the visit, he will hold meetings with Italian officials and parliamentarians to discuss the siege that the United States and its follower Britain insist on prolonging unjustifiably. He will also be discussing the continuous aggressions launched by US-UK planes on civilian installations and targets, in addition to Iraqi-Italian ties.

Accompanying Speaker Hammadi is a delegation that includes: Dr. Abd-al-Rahman Latif al-Juburi, head of the Oil, Energy, Industry, and Minerals Committee; and Dr. Najib al-Rawi, head of the Agricultural and Irrigation Affairs at the National Assembly.

* * * * *

Iran Planned Pan Am and Saudi Attacks, Defector Says

The Associated Press

ANKARA — The U.S. and Turkish authorities have questioned an Iranian defector who says he coordinated for Tehran the bombings of Pan Am Flight 103 and U.S. military barracks in Saudi Arabia, officials and news reports said Monday.

Turkey's secret service, the National Intelligence Agency, identified the defector as Seyyid Behbahani, 32, and said he was seeking asylum in the United States. Mr. Behbahani has identified himself to the CBS News television program "60 Minutes" as an intelligence official involved in Iranian terrorism operations for a decade or more.

In the "60 Minutes" report, broadcast Sunday, he said Tehran had planned the Pan Am attack, which killed 270 people, and the truck bombing that killed 19 members of the U.S. Air Force at the barracks, the Khobar Towers, in 1996. In the report, he gave his first name as Ahmed. There was no immediate ex-

planation for the discrepancy in names.

In Iran, a conservative newspaper, the Tehran Times, said Mr. Behbahani was a member of Mujahidin Khalq, an Iraqi-based opposition group that attacks Iranian targets and has been branded a terrorist group by the United States.

In the Netherlands, legal experts at the Pan Am bombing trial insisted that the new allegations of Iranian involvement did not damage the case against two Libyan defendants accused of blowing up the plane over Lockerbie, Scotland, on Dec. 21, 1988.

The Turkish intelligence agency said Mr. Behbahani arrived illegally in Turkey on March 7.

"Behbahani, who was seen as suspicious, has been interviewed by our agency," it said in a statement carried by the Anatolia News Agency. "The person claims that Iran organized some terrorist actions in the past. In his initial testimonies, he said he worked for a while at the Iranian Intelligence Ministry and escaped from Evin prison, where he was imprisoned in 1998 for spying on behalf of a foreign country."

The intelligence agency said foreign secret services were also involved in evaluating the statements by Mr. Behbahani, but it gave no details. Turkish newspapers reported that U.S. agents were holding him at a secret location in Turkey and that he had applied for asylum with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in the eastern city of Van, which borders Iran.

"I am in a difficult position," the newspaper Hurriyet quoted Mr. Beh-

bahani as telling the UN agency. "I fled to Turkey because they were going to kill me. I want America to grant me asylum."

The U.S. Embassy in Ankara and the UN refugee agency would not comment on Mr. Behbahani.

In the "60 Minutes" report, he said Iran had planned the Pan Am bombing to avenge the death of 290 people when an Iranian passenger plane was mistakenly downed by a U.S. Navy warship in July 1988. He said he had recruited a radical Palestinian terrorist living in Syria, then imported and trained Libyan operatives to do the job.

At the Lockerbie trial, being held in a Scottish court at Camp Zeist, a former U.S. military base in the Netherlands, court officials would not comment on the statements by Mr. Behbahani or whether he might be called as a witness. The court heard testimony from explosives experts testifying for the prosecution.

The defendants, Abdel Basset Ali Megrahi and Lamen Khalifa Fhimah, have pleaded not guilty, blaming two Syrian-backed Palestinian groups. But legal experts said the case against the two Libyans was not necessarily affected by allegations over who ultimately ordered the attack.

"This trial is not a trial of the various competing theories of what happened at Lockerbie," said Robert Black, the Edinburgh University law professor who proposed the compromise venue for the Libyans' trial. "It is a trial into one theory — namely the prosecution theory that these two Libyans were responsible."

La Suède refuse d'accorder l'asile politique à l'écrivain kurde Barakat



STOCKHOLM, 8 juin (AFP) - L'Office suédois de l'immigration a refusé d'accorder l'asile politique et un permis de séjour à l'écrivain kurde de Syrie Salim Barakat, a annoncé jeudi l'Office de la Culture à Stockholm.

Salim Barakat, 49 ans, avait été invité il y a deux ans par l'Office de la Culture de Stockholm à résider pendant deux ans en Suède afin de pouvoir y écrire, car l'écrivain était poursuivi à cette époque.

Salim Barakat, qui est le premier écrivain invité par les autorités culturelles de Stockholm, est l'auteur d'une dizaine de livres écrits en arabe. Il est considéré comme l'un des jeunes écrivains les plus reconnus de sa génération, a indiqué l'agence de presse suédoise TT.

Salim Barakat avait eu des problèmes en Syrie à l'âge de 19 ans, ayant estimé que "le milieu intellectuel syrien était oppressant" avant de quitter illégalement la Syrie pour le Liban.

Ayant obtenu un passeport yéménite en 1983 par le canal de l'OLP (Organisation de libération de la Palestine), il s'est réfugié pendant 17 ans sous un faux nom à Chypre, où sa véritable identité était connue.

L'écrivain kurde a déclaré qu'il n'avait "plus de compte à régler avec la Syrie", mais a estimé qu'il ne pouvait plus y retourner pour y vivre.

Salim Barakat a demandé la nationalité suédoise pour lui, son épouse et son fils âgé de huit ans.

"C'est un honneur pour la Suède d'avoir accueilli Salim Barakat, mais ce refus de lui accorder l'asile politique et un permis de résidence est si absurde, que cela ne vaut même pas la peine de se battre à ce sujet", a déclaré l'écrivain suédois Marina Stagh, qui est membre de la direction du PEN Club suédois, à Stockholm.

L'avocat de l'écrivain, maître Louise Bjurvill, a estimé de son côté que le rejet des autorités suédoises serait remis en question lorsque l'affaire sera traitée au niveau du gouvernement.

Un "deuxième Pompéi" disparaîtra bientôt

THE NEW YORK TIMES

DE BELKIS (TURQUIE)

ici comme dans plusieurs autres régions du sud de la Turquie, l'eau monte inexorablement et encercle un village voué à disparaître. Ce sont les eaux de rétention d'un nouveau barrage, qui fait lui-même partie des plans ambitieux de l'Etat turc afin de produire de l'électricité et d'irriguer de vastes zones de terrain desséché. Mais, à Belkis, les eaux montantes ne viennent pas seulement bouleverser des vies et noyer pour toujours des foyers longtemps chéris. Ces dernières années, les archéologues ont multiplié les mises en garde, car sur ce site se trouve une cité antique qui contient sans doute l'une des collections de mosaïques romaines les plus riches du monde. Laquelle risque fort d'être engloutie avant même que l'on ait eu une chance de la voir.

"C'est une véritable tragédie", se lamente Mehmet Onal, l'archéologue chargé de superviser les efforts désespérés entrepris pour sauver ce qui peut l'être avant que le site ne soit inondé. "Nous n'avons dégagé que deux villas, et nous avons retrouvé douze mosaïques magnifiques. Mais il y a des centaines de villas enfouies, donc vous imaginez ce qu'il nous reste à découvrir. Ce que nous avons ici est tout bonnement incroyable."

"Si nous pouvions disposer de quatre mois, nous dépasserions le musée d'Antakya [Anioche]. Si nous avions deux ans, nous ferions mieux que le musée de Tunis", affirme-t-il. Le musée de la ville d'Antioche s'enorgueillit de la plus belle collection de mosaïques antiques de la région. Quant à celle de Tunis, on la considère comme la plus belle du monde.

Le directeur du programme d'énergie et d'irrigation de l'Etat dans le sud du pays déclare qu'il n'était pas en mesure d'estimer la valeur culturelle du site. Le gouverneur provincial, lui, se dit impuissant à endiguer l'inondation de ce qu'il définit comme "un deuxième Pompéi". Si tout se déroule comme prévu, M. Onal et la poignée d'archéologues qui travaillent avec lui sur place ont moins d'un mois avant que Belkis ne disparaisse. Chaque jour, ils creusent et dégagent des mosaïques, mais aussi des objets comme une statue du dieu Mars en bronze de 1,50 m ou encore 65 000 moules en céramique de sceaux familiaux et officiels, soit plus que l'on n'en a jamais trouvé sur un seul site.

Les mosaïques, dont beaucoup dépeignent des scènes tirées de la mythologie grecque, sont démontées et emportées dans un musée de la ville voisine de Gaziantep. Parmi celles qui ont été récemment découvertes, deux sont encore en place. Elles ne pâleraient pas face aux collections



TURQUIE . Les eaux du nouveau barrage de Birecik vont engloutir en partie la cité romaine de Zeugma et ses splendides mosaïques. Malgré l'appel des archéologues, l'Etat turc a décidé de faire passer la politique énergétique avant la sauvegarde du patrimoine.

des grands musées. L'une décrit Poséidon sur son char, accompagné de Thétis et d'Océanos, divinités aquatiques. L'autre montre Persée sauvant Andromède d'un monstre marin. Chacune est de la taille d'une pièce de taille moyenne. A quelques pas de là, on trouve un atrium couvert de terre et de fragments de colonnes romaines. Les archéologues pensent qu'une fois les débris éliminés ils mettront au jour une nouvelle mosaïque.

La cité qui se dressait là il y a deux mille ans avait pour nom Zeugma. Située à la frange orientale de l'Empire romain, elle abritait une population évaluée à 70 000 personnes et servait de base à une légion romaine. Sa position sur les rives de l'Euphrate et son rôle en tant que centre prospère sur la Route de la soie l'avaient rendue immensément riche. Les négociants fortunés cherchaient à s'éblouir les uns les autres en faisant décorer les sols de leurs villas des mosaïques les plus raffinées. Au III^e siècle, Zeugma aurait été ravagée coup sur coup par une invasion, un incendie et un tremblement de terre. Couverte d'une épaisse couche de terre et de débris, elle n'aurait jamais vu son repos perturbé depuis.

Les archéologues y travaillent de façon sporadique depuis des années, mais n'ont entrepris des fouilles plus ciblées que quand il s'est avéré que le site était condamné. Ils s'avouent époustoufflés par ce qu'ils ont déjà retrouvé. *"Nous savions que nous allions découvrir des œuvres d'art, mais brutalement, au cours des deux derniers mois, nous avons compris qu'il s'agissait d'un site majeur au niveau mondial"*, explique Christine Kondoleon, conservatrice du département d'art gréco-romain du Musée d'art de Worcester, dans le Massachusetts. Elle effectue ce mois-ci une tournée des ruines antiques en Turquie.

"Les photos que nous avons reçues de Zeugma montrent des mosaïques d'une richesse extraordinaire, extrêmement élaborées, poursuit-elle. Ce serait une grande honte si l'on sacrifiait un tel site, surtout si l'on ne découvre jamais ce qui s'y trouve. Toute cette affaire est profondément désolante parce que c'est un trésor inestimable."



Mehmet Gulbayrak/Spa

▲ 14 mosaïques, 60 000 sceaux en céramique, une statue du dieu Mars et 3 700 pièces d'argent et de bronze ont déjà été découverts dans la cité antique. Combien de trésors s'y trouvent encore, qui vont être enfouis sous les eaux du lac de retenue ?

Au bout du chemin de terre qui mène au chantier de fouilles, Abdulrahma Kizilirmak, paysan qui vit depuis soixante-trois ans à Belkis, est assis sur un mur de briques et contemple avec stoïcisme la lente disparition de son village.

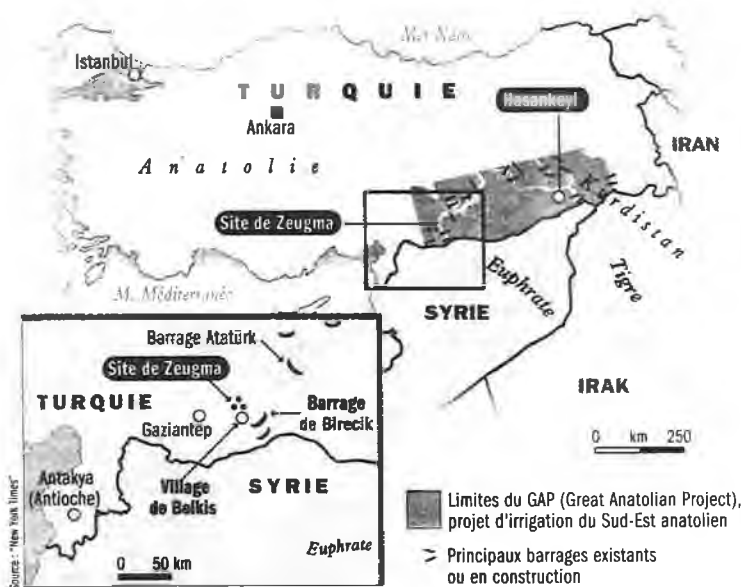
On lui a promis qu'il obtiendrait un bon prix pour la maison qu'il va perdre, mais il n'y croit pas. *"Je suis tellement furieux que j'ai envie de sortir mon fusil"*, lâche-t-il.

Le barrage, situé à moins de 1 km du site, fait partie du "Projet du Sud-Est anatolien", d'un montant de plusieurs milliards de dollars. C'est la pièce maîtresse du programme de développement de la Turquie. Certains des barrages envisagés par les concepteurs du projet, et plus particulièrement celui qui va aboutir à l'engloutissement [du village arabe] de Hasankeyf, à 320 km plus à l'est, sur le Tigre, sont au centre d'un mouvement de protestation international. Mais les barrages tels que celui de Hasankeyf ne sont pas encore construits. Alors que celui de Birecik est terminé. La plupart de ses écluses ont été fermées le 29 avril, déclenchant le processus de création d'un lac artificiel dont les eaux serviront à la production de courant.

Interrogé par téléphone, Olcay Unver, ingénieur formé aux Etats-Unis qui dirige ce projet colossal, a répondu, depuis son bureau d'Ankara, qu'il connaissait mal les détails des découvertes archéologiques sur le site. Le gouverneur local, Muammer Guler, se dit quant à lui impuissant à freiner la montée des eaux. Mais il ajoute que moins de la moitié du site sera en fait inondée. Il espère que l'on pourra continuer à travailler sur le reste, qui serait peut-être finalement transformé en musée de plein air. *"De plus, le barrage n'a qu'une durée de vie de cinquante ans, précise-t-il. Donc nos petits-enfants pourront voir la partie qui est recouverte en ce moment."*

Plusieurs des mosaïques récemment sauvées à Belkis reposent désormais sous des bâches dans la cour du musée d'archéologie de Gaziantep. Hakki Alkan, le directeur du musée, explique que l'on prévoit la construction d'une nouvelle aile pour les abriter. *"Nous avons fait tout notre possible pour préserver le site, mais personne ne nous a écoutés, conclut-il. L'Etat a pris sa décision. La politique énergétique passe avant les projets culturels et historiques."*

Stephen Kinzer



Sommet de l'ECO samedi à Téhéran, sans le président turc

TEHERAN, 8 juin (AFP) - Téhéran accueille samedi le sixième sommet de l'Organisation de la Coopération économique (ECO), qui réunit dix pays de la région, mais l'absence du président turc Ahmet Necdet Sezer, dans une période de tension entre Téhéran et Ankara, pèsera politiquement sur ses travaux.



jeudi 8 juin 2000

L'Iran, la Turquie et le Pakistan sont les trois pays fondateurs, en 1985, de cette structure de coopération et concertation régionales, qui s'est donnée pour tâche de créer un "marché commun musulman" et auxquels se sont joints, en 1992, six Républiques ex-soviétiques d'Asie centrale, l'Azerbaïdjan, le Tadjikistan, l'Ouzbékistan, le Kazakhstan, le Kirghizistan et le Turkménistan, ainsi que l'Afghanistan.

Les questions économiques, notamment le commerce régional, les banques, le transport routier, ferroviaire et maritime, le pétrole, et le gaz seront discutées, de même que la paix en Afghanistan, pays qui sera représenté par le président déchu Burhanuddin Rabbani et non les taliban au pouvoir à Kaboul.

Ouvrant jeudi la conférence ministérielle, le chef de la diplomatie iranienne Kamal Kharazi a appelé à un "allègement des réglementations douanières" et à "un renforcement des relations bancaires" entre pays membres, et a rappelé la disposition de l'Iran "la voie la plus courte, la plus sûre, la plus économique, la plus écologique" à transporter le pétrole et le gaz du Caucase vers les marchés internationaux.

Sept chefs d'Etat et le chef du régime militaire pakistanais Pervez Musharraf participeront au sommet de Téhéran.

Toutefois les défections des présidents turc Ahmet Necdet Sezer et kazakh Nursultan Nazarbayev pèseront politiquement.

Les relations entre Téhéran et Ankara sont envenimées par plusieurs affaires, qui s'ajoutent aux anciennes accusations formulées par la Turquie à l'Iran -toujours démenties- d'abriter des bases des Kurdes séparatistes du PKK.

Le 17 mai, le Premier ministre Bulent Ecevit avait accusé Téhéran de vouloir "exporter" sa révolution islamique vers la Turquie.

Dans le même temps, la presse turque avait lancé une grande campagne accusant l'Iran d'être impliqué dans une série d'assassinats d'intellectuels turcs pro-laïcs dans les années 1980 et 90.

Téhéran a démenti et fait état d'arrestations "massives" d'Iraniens à Istanbul, pour lesquelles il a protesté officiellement. En outre, l'Iran reproche très vivement à Ankara sa coopération militaire avec Israël.

La Turquie vient aussi de transmettre à l'Iran un dossier élaboré par les forces de sécurité sur le Hizbullah turc, organisation intégriste clandestine soupçonnée d'implication dans des centaines d'assassinats en Turquie avec le soutien de Téhéran.

De plus, les services de renseignements turcs (MIT) ont confirmé lundi la présence en Turquie d'un homme, Ahmad Behbahani, se présentant comme ancien agent des renseignements iraniens, qui a affirmé à la chaîne américaine CBS avoir organisé, avec le chef palestinien Ahmed Jibril, basé à Damas, l'attentat de Lockerbie le 21 décembre 1988 (270 morts).

Mais Téhéran s'attache à minimiser l'absence du chef d'Etat turc. "Son absence n'affectera pas la Conférence. Le fait que le président turc ne participe pas à la réunion de Téhéran ne signifie pas qu'Ankara ne désire pas le renforcement de l'ECO", a dit aux journalistes le vice-ministre iranien des Affaires étrangères Mohammad Hossein Adéli.

Tout comme M. Sezer, le président kazakh a invoqué un "agenda chargé" pour ne pas venir, mais les relations ne sont pas au beau fixe entre Téhéran et A. maty, l'accord de livraison de brut kazakh à l'Iran de 1996 n'étant toujours pas appliqué, et l'oléoduc destiné à acheminer son brut via l'Iran, dont les Etats-Unis ne veulent pas, n'ayant pas vu le jour.

Bombardements américains dans le nord de l'Irak



jeudi 8 juin 2000

ANKARA (AP) -- Des avions américains ont bombardé jeudi un système de défense antiaérienne irakien en réponse à des tirs d'artillerie pendant une patrouille dans la zone d'exclusion aérienne située dans le nord de l'Irak, a annoncé l'armée américaine.

Les appareils ont été visés depuis des sites à l'ouest de Mossoul, à quelque 400km au nord de Bagdad, a précisé le commandement américain basé en Europe. Les avions ont pilonné le système de défense antiaérienne avant de regagner sans encombre la base aérienne d'Incirlik dans le sud de la Turquie.

L'Irak refuse de reconnaître les deux zones d'exclusion aérienne imposées depuis la guerre du Golfe de 1991, pour protéger au nord la minorité kurde et au sud les populations chiites. Bagdad s'oppose aux patrouilles américano-britanniques au-dessus de ces zones et les accrochages sont fréquents depuis décembre 1998.

Ricciardone Confirms US Support for INC; Acknowledges Covert US Activity inside Iraq

Al-Zaman 08 Jun 00 by Taj-al-Sirr Kunh and Sa'd Abbas

[FBIS Translated Text] London – US Coordinator for Iraqi opposition affairs Ambassador Ricciardone has acknowledged the existence of covert US activity both inside Iraq and elsewhere in order to bring down the regime of President Saddam Husayn. He said Washington has allocated substantial additional funding for the training of Iraqi leadership and military personnel to achieve this end.

In a press conference held at the US Embassy in London yesterday, he said the present US Administration has decided to work with the Iraqi National Congress [INC] as a means to unify rather than divide the Iraqi people and has succeeded in refuting the claims of President Saddam Husayn that he is Iraq's unifying factor. INC members, with their collective leadership, have made it clear to Saddam that the Iraqi people are capable of unifying themselves.

He stressed that the other opposition groups outside the INC are not a unifying force but are a divisive force because they have slogans that express the views of a particular group, nationality, or religion rather than of the Iraqi people as a whole. He said the rumors about the INC being the agent of the United States are not true and that the reality is quite the opposite. He said, "It is the INC that issues orders to us. We just carry them out." He added that the Administration will allocate substantial financial resources for the training of leadership and military personnel to operate in a considered and practical way in order to bring down the Iraqi regime and set up a democratic system in Iraq. He said "Saddam is well aware that the United States cannot overthrow him, just as he knows that the Iraqi people are the ones who can do that. This is what he is afraid of and what he expects to happen at any moment and so he is focusing on accusing Iraqis of being agents of this party or that, presenting himself as the victim of an international conspiracy and the only nationalist in Iraq." He stressed that the US Administration is engaged in covert operations inside Iraq and elsewhere with a view to destroying the regime of President Saddam Husayn, adding that this was part of its work toward achieving the aims of containment and to end the suffering of the Iraqi people.

In response to a question put to him by Al-Zaman about the high price the Iraqi people are paying as a result of the international sanctions against them, Ricciardone said "the United States is maintaining and focusing on sanctions because they are the only alternative to using military force and because the use of military force would pose even greater and harsher risks to the Iraqi people. However, we have recently started to introduce new methods in accordance with carefully considered plans to expedite the downfall of the regime, which will obviate the need continue with the sanctions." Ricciardone emphasized that his country is not seeking to change the governments or political regimes in other countries. He added that "the situation in Iraq is different. It is a special case because the regime of Saddam Husayn is not just a dictatorial regime but one that contains all the various evils. It does not just constitute a domestic threat to its people but poses an external threat also."

He said his country is well aware of the suffering of the Iraqi people as a result of the sanctions and that Saddam is not affected by them but is in fact continuing to use his resources to strengthen his regime, spending billions on palaces, luxuries, and his personal security apparatus. However, lifting sanctions unconditionally and without any guarantees will only aggravate the suffering of the Iraqi people. Replying to a question about the existence of secret contacts between Tel Aviv and Baghdad concerning the settlement of Palestinians in Iraq, Ricciardone said "this is primarily Israel's business. We do not become involved in such issues. We have also heard these rumors but I am unable either to deny or confirm them."

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Paper Reports New US Financial Aid to Iraqi Opposition

Al-Sharq al-Awsat 08 Jun 00 by Yunus Sulaymani

[FBIS Translated Text] In an apparently escalatory step by the United States, a prominent US official yesterday announced a new plan for helping the Iraqi opposition bring down President Saddam Husayn.

A State Department official told a number of correspondents in London that Washington has approved new arrangements for backing the Iraqi opposition. These include \$8 million in financial support during the current financial year to the Iraqi National Congress [INC]

for military, political, media, and humanitarian activities. They also include an additional \$2 million for the efforts to topple Saddam Husayn's regime. The official explained that this cash (\$10 million) is additional to Washington's former obligation to back the Iraqi opposition with \$97 million for spending on various services and equipment.

The US official, who asked to remain unidentified, said that this new aid is allocated for five principal fields. The first is the INC's organizational structure in order to enable the Iraqi opposition to hold conferences inside and outside Iraq and provide the necessary security arrangements. The second is the media one and aims to facilitate the dispatch of Al-Haqiqah into and out of Iraq, adding that Al-Haqiqah is the biggest weapon against Saddam Husayn's regime. The third is the work with international organizations, such as the United Nations and its General Assembly. This also includes the efforts to try the Iraqi regime, both the ones to bring it before an international court and the ones that aim to achieve this locally. The US official said international law plays a vital role in such cases and Saddam Husayn could be the best example for applying it to him.

The US plan apparently does not ignore humanitarian and relief work following the international pressures on Washington because of the current sanctions' negative effects on the Iraqi people. This is the fourth field in these arrangements. The US official revealed that the INC has agreed to manage this program so as to meet the Iraqi people's needs and demands.

In a new step that is expected to evoke contradictory Arab and international reactions, the US official announced that the United States has decided to give direct and concrete material aid to the opposition in order to enable it to bring about the change. He readily revealed his country's intention to provide military and medical training, information equipment (such as computers and so on), and the logistical equipment that is needed for use inside and outside Iraq. He said that he hopes that these arrangements will start very soon.

Answering an Al-Sharq al-Awsat question, the US official refused to regard this plan as a declaration of a new war between the United States and Iraq. He described it as backing for the opposition from the premise that it is the one more qualified than the Iraqi regime to achieve unity and prosperity for the Iraqi people. He asserted that the US role "is not seeking to liberate Iraq but to back the Iraqis themselves to achieve this."

The official also rejected reports that the United States is seeking to partition Iraq. He said, "Saddam Husayn is the one who represents the real danger to this country's unity." He added: It was Saddam who has imposed an embargo on northern Iraq. The United States fully respects the Kurds and backs the Kurdistan Democratic Party under Mas'ud Barzani and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan under Jalal Talabani. But he added that the United States has also decided to back the INC in its capacity as a "liberation movement seeking to change the situation in Iraq."

He went on to say that it is the opposition that is asking the United States for help and not the other way around, as it is widely believed. He added that his country realizes the difficulty of effecting the change inside Iraq from abroad and therefore hopes that the Iraqi opposition will reach a transparent and effective formula for representing all the Iraqis. He then expressed his hope that the INC "will succeed in embracing all the Iraqis from all tendencies and creeds and showing that it can do what Saddam Husayn has failed to do."

The official revealed that the US administration has held contacts with this Iraqi opposition group that expressed its preoccupation with the sanctions on the Iraqi people and its proposals to tighten the sanctions on the Iraqi regime. He admitted that the sanctions are "a blind instrument", but stressed that they were imposed to make Saddam comply with the international resolutions. He said: "Use of force is legal and Saddam's regime has to comply with the international resolutions and not negotiate."

In a sign that explains Washington's "boredom" with the options that have been followed so far toward the Baghdad regime, the US official said, "The Iraqi people's blood and commitment are the only ones that can bring down Saddam Husayn's regime."

In response to another Al-Sharq al-Awsat question, the US State Department official said that the INC is not the only organization opposed to the Saddam's regime but there are other organizations that have expressed their agreement to cooperate with it."

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European parliamentarians urge Turkey to make more progress on human rights

Ankara - Turkish Daily News June 8, 2000

The Turkey-European Joint Parliamentary Commission (KPK) completed its work on Tuesday with a joint declaration urging Turkey to accelerate its efforts to improve human rights. The KPK was able to compromise on a joint declaration for the first time in its history.

In the joint declaration Turkey was praised for its determination in becoming an EU candidate member, but was criticized for not taking bigger steps after being declared a candidate country in Helsinki last December. The declaration also said that the KPK would continue its support for Turkey in its fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria. The KPK also called Turkey to take effective measures to prevent torture and human rights violations.

Criticising the EU for blocking financial aid to Turkey, the KPK said in the joint declaration that the EU should meet its responsibilities to Turkey.

"The Helsinki decision brought Turkey closer to the EU. Turkey showed its determination for membership by taking some steps, but full membership requires bigger steps and more of them. Turkey does not have any problem with conforming to the economic criteria since it is in the EU customs union, but it may encounter some problems with political criteria. Therefore, it should make more of an effort to meet its responsibilities," the EU commissioner responsible for enlargement, Gunter Verheugen, said after the talk.

The European parliamentarians also said after talks with their Turkish counterparts on Tuesday that Turkey's failure to abolish the death penalty remained an obstacle to better relations as it seeks EU membership.

"We are very satisfied with the meeting, in which differences of opinion were frankly and openly discussed, enabling us to understand each other better", said Daniel Cohn-Bendit, co-chairman of the joint parliamentary commission.

But he added, "If we want to deepen the partnership between Europe and Turkey, the death penalty must be abolished."

The EU has repeatedly made it clear Turkey cannot make progress towards joining the 15-nation bloc or starting full membership talks until its human rights record improves and it does away with the death penalty.

State Minister Yuksel Yalova, who attended the meeting, said steps were being taken to meet EU standards on human rights and Ankara remained hopeful relations were on the right track.

He said Turkey was committed to amending its constitution and legislation to "remedy shortcomings in the fields of democracy, the rule of law and human rights."

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S.Iraq steps up attacks on UK pilots

BBC - June 8, 2000

RAF jets patrolling the no-fly zone in southern Iraq are increasingly coming under missile attack, says a government minister. And British aircraft have dramatically stepped up their own attacks on Iraq's air defences. The rising hostilities come after months of tension, during which dozens of Iraqi civilians are reported to have been killed. Between August 1992 and December 1998, UK aircraft fired 2.5 tonnes' worth of bombs and bullets over the southern no-fly zone.

But new figures show that between 20 December 1998 and 17 May 2000, that number jumped to 78 tonnes.

Policy shift row

Liberal Democrat defence spokesman Menzies Campbell accused the government of changing the rules of engagement for British planes. He said the huge increase in bombing by British planes over Iraq would seem to bear out his claims. But Armed Forces Minister John Spellar

denied there had been a shift in policy. He said Iraq is targetting British and American crews policing the region under conditions laid down by the United Nations.

The minister told the BBC that missiles had been fired at allied planes.

Mr Spellar said: "There's been no shift in policy." And to suggest so was "outrageous", he said. He added: "There's been a very substantial increase in the threat to allied planes, a lot of targeting [of allied planes]."

Missiles launched

"We understand bonuses are being offered to Iraqis who shoot down British planes, and indeed even missiles are being fired at our planes." Defending the increase in bombing by UK jets, he said: "There is a very serious threat to our aircrew. If Saddam Hussein wants to stop that action all he has to do is to stop targeting our air crews." The minister said he was astonished that Mr Campbell was expressing surprise when he had taken part in debates on the policy.

Mr Campbell had said: "The purpose of the British presence in the southern no fly-zone is to ensure that Iraq complies with UN resolution 688, and that essentially our purpose was an humanitarian one. "But there is a very strong suggestion of a policy shift here and that is something that has never been announced nor debated in Parliament." The southern no-fly zones are patrolled by the US and UK to protect Kurds from attacks by the Iraqi government. The air exclusion zones were imposed after the Gulf War in 1991. There have been regular clashes between American and British planes and Iraqi defences ever since. Iraq says hospitals and homes have been targeted, but allied forces deny attacking civilians.

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S.Saddam Hussein becoming secretary general of the Baath national leadership

Arabic News - June 8, 2000

The Iraqi dailies issued on Wednesday said the Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has, besides his many posts, a new post of the secretary general of the national leadership of the Baath Arab Socialist party (of Iraq). A post which has been vacant since 1989 with the death of one of the Baath Party founding member Michael Aflaq (he is Syrian). The Iraqi dailies said that President Saddam Hussein headed the meeting of the national leadership which was held by the end of last month in his capacity as a secretary general of the Baath Party. The national leadership of the Baath Party theoretically supervises the Party's activities in various Arab states. It includes the regional leaderships of the Baath Party branches in these Arab states.

Besides his being the secretary of the Baath Party, Saddam Hussein also has the posts of President of the Republic of Iraq, the prime minister, the higher command of the armed forces and the presidency of the revolution's leadership council.

However, the Baath party was split in 1960 into two competing leadership the first is in Syria and the second in Iraq after this party ascended to authority in the two countries. Since 1970 President Hafez al-Assad presides over the Baath party regional leadership, Syrian branch, and the party's national leadership in Damascus.

The Baath party was founded in the 1940 s by Syrian intellectuals, including Michael Aflaq and Salah al-Bittar.

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E.Iran Denies Links With Defector

AP - June 6, 2000

By AFSHIN VALINEJAD, Associated Press Writer

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) - An Iranian defector fabricated claims that Iran was involved in two deadly anti-American terrorist attacks in order to gain asylum in the West, Iran's intelligence minister was reported as saying Tuesday. Ali Yunesi also denied that the defector's claim that he had once worked for Iran's secret service.

The defector, who identified himself as Ahmad Behbahani, told the CBS News program "60 Minutes" that he was an intelligence official involved in Iranian terrorism operations for more than a decade before his defection to Turkey. He is currently seeking asylum in the United States.

"Since the establishment of Iran's (intelligence) ministry, no person named Ahmad Behbahani has been working with the ministry," the official Islamic Republic News Agency quoted Intelligence Minister Yunesi as saying. Yunesi's predecessor, Qorbanali Dorri Najafabadi, also told Iranian radio he had never come across Behbahani during his tenure.

An Iranian dissident journalist who three weeks ago broke the news about Behbahani's defection said Monday that like other Iranian agents, the defector was known in the intelligence community in Iran as Abdollahi or Hosseini. Ali Reza Nourizadeh, who broke the story on his Web site and in the London-based Kayhan weekly, said Behbahani is probably using an assumed name now to hide his real identity from Iran.

Behbahani told "60 Minutes" he was the mastermind behind the 1988 bombing of Pan Am 103, but that claim appeared exaggerated after Turkey said the defector was only 32 - likely too young to have led such a complex operation. But Behbahani, who did not appear on camera in the television interview, looked older in a published photo seen later, and CBS told The Associated Press the defector had said he was born in 1962. The Mujahedeen Khalq, an Iraq-based opposition group, claimed Behbahani was in his mid-40s.

Yunesi said that Behbahani's own statements cast doubt on his claims.

"The contradictory statements of this person prove the falseness of his claims since he claims to have been imprisoned in Iran in 1998 while claiming to be a top official with the Iranian (intelligence) ministry in the same period," IRNA quoted Yunesi as saying.

"Those Iranians who wish to be granted asylum in Western countries usually try to achieve their aims through libelous statements or slander against the Islamic Republic of Iran," Yunesi said.

Behbahani told CBS that he proposed the attack on Pan Am flight 103 that killed 270 people and that he brought on board a radical Palestinian terrorist living in Syria, then imported and trained Libyan operatives to do the job.

The program said his motive was to avenge a U.S. Navy cruiser's mistaken shooting down five months earlier of an Iranian passenger plane over the Gulf. But Yunesi denied Iranian involvement in that or any other terrorist incident, saying "Iran opposes terrorism in any shape and form."

Two Libyan defendants are on trial in the Netherlands for the Dec. 21, 1988 Pan Am bombing, which killed all 259 persons aboard the plane and 11 more on the ground in Lockerbie, Scotland. Law experts in the Netherlands said Behbahani's statements were unlikely to affect the outcome of the trial. Behbahani also said Iran planned the 1996 bombing of a U.S. barracks in Saudi Arabia. The attack killed 19 U.S. Air Force personnel.

In Damascus, Ahmed Jibril, leader of the radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, who has previously been suspected of involvement in the Pan Am bombing, also dismissed Behbahani's charges. "These accusations are not new. Any time there is a need to exert new pressure on the Palestinian opposition, this roaming accusation is revived," a PFLP-GC statement quoted Jibril as saying.

In an interview with Iranian radio, Jibril said he doesn't know Behbahani.

"I believe that he is a mercenary and a traitor who has put himself at the disposal of the espionage agencies of the global arrogance to enable them to take advantage of him in pursuit of their own interests."

On Monday, a U.S. State Department official, who spoke on condition he not be named, expressed strong doubt about Behbahani's credibility. The official said he was not at liberty to discuss the reasons why.

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Ankara fears EU members to follow US to Diyarbakir

- As US diplomats say the bureau in Diyarbakir will open as of June 15, Ankara fears that the US will set a precedent for EU countries to make similar requests

Selcuk Gultasli

Ankara - Turkish Daily News

The motive behind Ankara's ambivalent attitude towards the U.S.-sponsored business bureau in Diyarbakir has been concerns that some European Union countries may knock on the door to open similar offices in the region.

A top government source told the Turkish Daily News that Ankara had no problem of trust with the United States and sees the U.S. efforts as sincere plans to develop the region. However the same source clearly indicated that Ankara fears the U.S. example could set a precedent for some European countries whose intentions regarding the Southeast problem Ankara is not so sure of. The source did not name any countries specifically.

The senior official said Turkey could find itself in a very difficult situation if Ankara issues the same sort of permission to some European countries that may use it for different purposes. The sharp difference between the United States and some European countries was made evident during outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan's stay in Italy last year. Italy refused to extradite Ocalan to Turkey, despite numerous requests and public protests. Germany also refused to ask for Ocalan's extradition from Italy to try him as he had been indicted in Germany.

The United States has supported Turkey in its struggle against separatist terror from the very beginning, and Washington asked its European allies to extradite Ocalan to Turkey. Both the Turkish authorities and public have deep suspicions of some European countries' intentions regarding the Kurdish issue. Diplomatic sources stated that they have recommended the United States open the bureau with an association whose regulations are suitable for such an initiative. Stressing that Ankara has recommended the bureau be opened with the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodities Exchanges, the source said the U.S. side had responded to the effect that it would consider the recommendation.

U.S.: It is not a diplomatic mission

While the U.S. Embassy has already declared that the bureau will be opened on June 15, Ankara had previously made it clear that without signing a protocol permitting the opening of such an office it was impossible to start work in Diyarbakir. A U.S. Embassy spokesman told the TDN that the bureau would be a Southeastern Anatolian Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (GUNSIAD) facility, not a diplomatic mission. He stressed that they have extensively briefed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about their plans.

"The United States is committed to promoting new trade and investment ventures in Turkey, including the Southeast. We would like to be able to facilitate better contact between local and U.S. businessmen, and so GUNSIAD is lending us an office which U.S. commercial officials can use to meet with local businessmen. In addition, local businessmen can use the computer and software to make connections with U.S. firms," said a U.S. diplomat.

Al-Hayah
09 Jun 00
by Ja'far al-Ahmar

Iraqi Opposition Sources: Regime Massing Troops To Invade Kurdistan

Translated Text

An Iraqi opposition source has stated that the United States "is not willing and does not wish to deal with the Iraqi issue outside the framework of containing the regime."

The source said that Washington's policy is focusing at present on "maintaining the current situations while underlining the need for Baghdad to comply with the red lines, most importantly not to invade the Kurdish areas in the north or threaten Kuwait and US interests in the region."

Opposition sources have meanwhile reported that Baghdad "has deployed massive forces on Kurdistan's border in preparation for an imminent large-scale attack on and invasion of the area."

Ghassan al-Atiyah, the Democratic Centrist Tendency's Official Spokesman, belittled the importance of the remarks made by Frank Ricciardone, the US Coordinator of Iraqi Opposition Affairs, in London the day before yesterday about the US role in the "process of

changing" President Saddam Husayn's regime. Ricciardone announced that his country is intensifying its efforts to bring down Saddam's regime by increasing its financial support to the Iraqi National Congress [INC].

Al-Atiyah said, "Baghdad is complying with the red lines because this serves its interests. It is exploiting this situation to strengthen its position at the Arab level and benefiting from the Arab countries' conviction that Washington is not thinking of changing the Iraqi regime at this stage." He added: "The Arab brothers' conviction is having a (negative) impact on their dealings with the Iraqi opposition forces. Saddam's regime is benefiting from these conditions to dismantle the blockade and erode the sanctions."

Al-Atiyah ruled out any change in Washington's handling of the Iraqi file during the remaining months of President Clinton's presidency. He said that it is his belief that the file will be handed over to the next US President's administration.

Meanwhile, a newsletter published by the INC's Iraqi Broadcasting Corporation reported that the Iraqi regime "has deployed massive forces from the army and the Republican Guards on the border of the liberated areas in the north in preparation for launching a large-scale attack on them soon."

A copy of the newsletter received by Al-Hayah yesterday said: "A high level military source has confirmed that the regime is planning to invade areas in the north. The invasion will target at first the Dukan and Darbandakhan dams and then advance to occupy Sulaymaniyah in an operation called "Fair Retribution" on the pretext of liberating the water springs."

The source was cited as saying that "a state of alert has been declared in military units and the Ba'th Party's centers in the region." It also asserted that Iraqi President's son Qusayy Saddam Husayn "is in charge of this operation." The newsletter warned that Saddam "will try to exploit the run-up to the US elections to carry out the invasion."

It is recalled that relations between Mas'ud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan became tense recently in Sulaymaniyah area. The two sides underlined the need to contain this tension and not to resort to weapons to resolve disputes.

Kurdish Political Parties Warm Against Settlement Of Palestinians In Kerkuk

Al-Hayat
June 11, 2000

Translated Text

In a letter to the UN, a total of six Kurdish parties urged the UN to put a stop to the campaign of Arabization by Iraq of the Kurdish city of Kerkuk through the settling of Palestinians. The Kurdish parties delivered to the UN Secretary General Kofi Anan historical documents as evidence of the Kurdish identity of Kerkuk and also evidence of Arabization actions by successive Iraqi regimes in Kerkuk and its suburbs since the 1930's. The Arabization actions included forced evacuation of the Kurdish population from their cities and towns in the Kurdish region in the North and transporting them to Southern Iraq, while settling Arabs from the South in the evacuated Kurdish homes and towns.

Among the evidence delivered to the UN Secretary General were documents of a General Census conducted in 1957 in Iraq. This Census showed that 48% of Kerkuk's population was Kurdish, 28% of Arabic origin, and 21% of Turkoman origin.

Settling Palestinian Arabs in the Kurdish cities and towns under Iraqi control represents the latest Arabization efforts by the Iraqi regime. The Kurdish parties are cautioning the Palestinians from this latest Iraqi scheme.

The letter to the Secretary General was signed by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Social Democratic Party of Kurdistan, the Communist Party of Kurdistan, the Basok Party, and the Kurdish Socialist Party.

RSF dénonce l'interdiction de 13 publications



ANKARA, 8 juin (AFP) - 11h42 - Reporters sans Frontière (RSF) a dénoncé jeudi l'interdiction de diffusion de 13 publications, la plupart pro-kurdes, dans le Sud-Est anatolien à majorité kurde par les autorités turques.

Dans une lettre adressée au Premier ministre turc Bülent Ecevit, le secrétaire général de RSF, Robert Ménard, demande que tout soit mis en oeuvre "afin que cessent ces interdictions totalement arbitraires", précise RSF dans un communiqué reçu à Ankara.

"De telles mesures sont en contradiction avec l'article 10 de la Convention européenne des droits de l'Homme dont la Turquie est signataire", écrit l'association de défense de la liberté de la presse, basée en France.

Cet article protège "la liberté d'opinion et la liberté de recevoir ou de communiquer des informations ou des idées sans qu'il puisse y avoir ingérence d'autorités publiques".

Parmi ces publications figure le journal pro-kurde 2000'de Yeni Gundem, interdit de diffusion dans plusieurs régions du Sud-Est, avait annoncé lundi à l'AFP son directeur de publication, Ragıp Zarakoglu.

L'interdiction, prononcée par le gouverneur de Diyarbakir (sud-est), chargé de coordonner la lutte contre le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan rebelles kurdes de Turquie), concerne les provinces de Van, Diyarbakir, Siirt, Sirnak et Hakkari, les quatre dernières étant soumises à l'état d'urgence.

2000'de Yeni Gundem (Nouvel ordre du jour en l'an 2000) avait commencé à paraître le 27 mai, remplaçant Ozgur Bakis et plusieurs autres journaux pro-kurdes successivement interdits par les autorités.

UN Extends 'Oil for Food' for Iraq

New Arms Inspection System to Be Readied Within Next 6 Months

By Barbara Crossette

New York Times Service

UNITED NATIONS, New York — With Iraqi profits from oil sales now at record high levels, the Security Council has extended the "oil for food" program for another six months to allow the imports of a wide range of civilian goods.

During this period, a new arms inspection system will be readied to go into action in Iraq, the chief inspector said Thursday, challenging Iraq to take advantage of a more lenient set of requirements for sanctions to be suspended.

In the debate before a vote near midnight Thursday, the deadline for the oil-sales extension, the council defeated a Russian and Chinese attempt to single out economic sanctions as the sole cause of continuing hardships in Iraq. That argument is getting harder to make, as the Iraqis are thought to have generated \$8.4 billion in oil sales over the last six months under the United Nations-supervised program. Since 1996, \$25.3 billion in oil has been sold. Experts say that President Saddam Hussein is also pulling in hundreds of millions of dollars in illegally smuggled oil.

Not all the legal profits go to the government for purchases to improve the lives of Iraqis. A third of the income is set aside for a compensation fund for victims of the Iraq invasion of Kuwait and other sums are earmarked for autonomous Kurdish areas of Iraq and for the arms inspection budget. But even so, Secretary General Kofi Annan said in his latest report to the Security Council this week, there is now enough money to mitigate civilians hardships significantly if the government chooses to do so.

'Now that increased revenues are

available for the implementation of the program, the government of Iraq is in a position to reduce current malnutrition levels and to improve the health status of the Iraqi people," Mr. Annan said in his report. He urged Iraq to increase the levels of money allocated to health and nutrition, to order supplies more efficiently and distribute goods more expeditiously.

Mr. Annan also said in his report that the most recent surveys by Unicef, the United Nations Children's Fund, found that malnutrition rates had leveled, with a slight reduction in the number of underweight children, although rates for severe conditions, known as stunting and wasting, were still too high. In other areas of children's lives, Mr. Annan's report noted some advances in education, including the rehabilitation of schools and the installations of computers in some of them.

But Mr. Annan again warned that the practice of blocking contracts for water and sanitation equipment by Security Council members — mostly the United States, though it was not named — will continue to cut into health gains.

The Security Council also decided to send an independent assessment team to Iraq to study the condition of the Iraqi people.

The government-controlled Iraqi press again called the embargo an act of "genocide."

Restrictions on Iraq will remain in place under Security Council resolutions going back to the 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait until the Iraqis can be certified free of prohibited weapons — chemical, biological and nuclear arms as well as long-range missiles.

In an interview, Hans Blix, the executive chairman of the United Nations

Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, or Unmovic, said that his new organization had filled most senior-level jobs and would be training a corps of inspectors over the next few months. By August, they will be ready to reopen the Baghdad monitoring center, closed since December 1998 and prepare for resumed inspections. The International Atomic Energy Agency, which Mr. Blix once directed and which is responsible for monitoring nuclear programs, is ready to resume its inspections at any time.

Although most of Iraq's complaints about the earlier inspection commission, Unscm, have been addressed in the new system — among other things, inspectors will now get training in Iraqi history from Columbia University to make them more sensitive to Iraqi culture — Mr. Saddam has shown no inclination to let inspectors return.

Mr. Blix said that after an absence of 18 months, inspectors would have to re-establish baselines for their surveys, re-viewing all suspect Iraqi sites to be monitored. Confounding his critics, Mr. Blix, a former Swedish foreign minister, has kept some key experts from Unscm on his team, ignoring Iraqi and Russian demands for a clean slate.

"Then comes the question, 'When are we going in?'" Mr. Blix said, with a laugh. "We see no sign whatever of that at the present time. However, in politics things can change, and my personal view is that the Iraqis would gain by cooperating and accepting. They are duty-bound to do so. I think they might well come to reconsider it one day. They want to see whether the commission becomes a genuine UN identity. I think they are interested in seeing how we define this new system of reinforced, ongoing mon-

itoring and see which are the key disarmament tasks we are identifying."

"They demand that the so-called sanctions should be lifted," Mr. Blix said. But he added that if the Iraqis thought about it, few stringent sanctions actually remained, beyond a ban on air travel in and out of the country. "It was an embargo on the sale of oil first; now there are no limits on how much oil they

can sell. But the proceeds go into an account controlled by the UN. They can use any amount they want to buy food and medicine — but they cannot buy weapons."

"This is the Iraqi position: that they want to have all these restrictions lifted," he said. The Security Council resolution that created his new commission offered some innovations, however, Mr.

Blix added, and the Iraqis should think about these. "The resolution has a new avenue," he said, describing one change. "It enables the Security Council to suspend the sanctions provided two criteria: that there be cooperation with Unmovic in 120 days and included in the cooperation will also be the resolution of some key disarmament issues. The criteria are, I would say, more lenient."

Iranian Radicalism Seen to Be on Decline At Home and Abroad, Government Works at a More Moderate Image

By Howard Schneider
Washington Post Service

CAIRO — Although the U.S. government still regards it as the world's "most active state sponsor of terrorism," Iran appears to have moderated its radical behavior in the last three years as its movement for internal liberalization has grown increasingly influential.

Evidence is accumulating that official tolerance and backing for terrorist activities abroad have been waning since the 1997 election of President Mohammed Khatemi, according to Western diplomats and other analysts.

In the former Soviet republic of Tajikistan, for example, Iranian diplomacy has helped quell discontent within a restive Muslim population, Western diplomats in Tehran say. As further signs of moderation, they cited Iran's recent impoundment of a tanker carrying contraband Iraqi oil and its release of thousands of prisoners held since its grueling war with Iraq in the 1980s.

On Iran's eastern frontier, moreover, its soldiers have died by the hundreds trying to block the transit of heroin from neighboring Afghanistan. Iranian officials say the effort underscores their country's commitment to world security, because most of the heroin is bound for Europe and elsewhere in the West.

While the radical Revolutionary Guard — a militia controlled by hard-line conservative clerics — continues to operate with wide latitude, and Iran may be supporting stepped-up guerrilla activity against Israel, diplomats believe Mr. Khatemi and his supporters have worked to bring Iran's behavior more in line with international norms.

Iran has begun sending formal military and political delegations to the Gulf states and other countries to try to improve ties with governments it once tried to disrupt by backing local Islamic radicals. Iranian officials, who previously were viewed with suspicion, now receive red-carpet receptions, medals and pledges of cooperation.

Domestically, renegade institutions that once operated under their own agendas — such as the Information Ministry

— are being more tightly regulated. Diplomats and security experts say the Information Ministry was responsible for periodic assassinations of Iranian dissidents abroad, including the killing of three Iranian Kurds at a Berlin disco in 1992. Now it has been stripped of the independent funding sources that left it beyond public control, and its old guard is being encouraged to retire.

At the same time, police officers, intelligence agents and others who have killed, beaten or abused citizens are, with some consistency, being put on trial. Such abusive behavior now seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

"There are people here who see the benefits of playing by the rules," a veteran Western diplomat in Tehran said, "and they are gaining ground." The diplomat reflected thinking that is common in the city's diplomatic community. "They are thinking nationally, as opposed to revolutionarily."

"There has been a real change in the last three years, a change that has not been given credit in the West," where bombings, kidnappings and other acts carried out by Iranian-backed agents in the 1980s created an enduringly negative image of the country, said a European official. While U.S. officials are encouraged by democratic trends in Iran,

they say doubts about the future have prevented any quick improvement of U.S.-Iranian relations. Hard-liners still represent a powerful constituency and could either block or turn back efforts at change, the officials say.

And there are still important unresolved questions from the past, including a report over the weekend that an alleged Iranian defector has claimed Iranian agents played a role in planning the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland, which killed 270 people. Two Libyan agents are on trial for the bombing.

Iran's day-to-day behavior can be unpredictable as well. After beginning to enforce the international embargo against Iraqi oil — a move U.S. officials saw as a positive signal — Iran has apparently resumed allowing it to be

shipped through its coastal waters. The Los Angeles Times reported this week that a flotilla of ships was sighted moving through Iranian waters, beyond the reach of Western vessels enforcing the Iraqi oil embargo in the Gulf.

The coming months could provide significant evidence about which way Iran is headed.

The main "front" on which Iran had most openly encouraged armed action against other states is in southern Lebanon, where Iranian financial, spiritual and material support fueled the militant group Hezbollah in its campaign against Israel's occupation. The Israelis have withdrawn, and what happens next will be critical. Many analysts in Lebanon expect Hezbollah to become less militant and to focus on sustaining and expanding its influence in Lebanese politics.

Israeli and U.S. officials, however, have contended since late last year that Iran — perhaps in preparation for the Israeli withdrawal — has been increasing support for radical Palestinian groups in Lebanon and elsewhere in the hope they will expand operations inside Israel. On Saturday, Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, called the recent withdrawal of Israeli troops from southern Lebanon encouraging, and urged militant Palestinians to continue their struggle against Israel.

If cross-border attacks on northern Israel begin, U.S. and Israeli officials will be looking for an Iranian link and questioning Iran's intentions. In its report on global terrorism, released last month, the State Department declared: "Despite statements by the Khatemi administration that Iran was not working against the peace process, Tehran stepped up its encouragement of, and support" over the last year for such militant Palestinian groups as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

But many Western diplomats in Tehran view the State Department's assessment as exaggerated, and they note that assessing responsibility for terrorist acts is complicated by divisions in Iran's government and by the possibility that such acts may be coordinated outside official channels.

"It is all the more difficult to paint clear lines when it is not so clear what is the state and what is not," one Western observer said.

Some Iranian ties to Hezbollah and other such groups are acknowledged by all sides. Money for the Lebanese group, which regards Ayatollah Khamenei as a spiritual guide, comes through a quasi-governmental foundation directly under Ayatollah Khamenei's control and is justified as support for an Islamic army ousting a foreign occupier.

Mid-East's future lies with son of Damascus Lion

The Irish Times n Jun 12, 2000

President Assad of Syria was an Arab dictator who did not rule with the persistent resort to terror employed by the likes of Saddam Hussein. Lara Marlowe in Damascus assesses the legacy of the only significant leader who shared a border with Israel and who had yet to make peace with the Jewish state

They called him the Lion of Damascus, the Bismarck of the Middle East, the Fox and - for his habit of listening more than he spoke - the Sphinx. However, President Hafez al-Assad of Syria, who died this weekend from a heart attack at the age of 69, most liked to compare himself to Salahedin, the 12th century Kurd who defeated the Crusaders, and whose crypt lies in the Omma yad Mosque a few kilometres from President Assad's palace.

Assad died without fulfilling the goal he pursued for 33 years - the restitution of the Syrian Golan Heights, captured by Israel in 1967.

In the eyes of many Arabs, Hafez al-Assad will go down in history as a great man. Even the Western leaders who paid tribute to him yesterday recognised that the air force officer from a poor family in northwestern Syria achieved what 11 presidents and 20 coups between 1946 and 1970 failed to do - he brought stability to Syria.

His 30-year rule was repressive, often cruel, but as in most police states, Damascus was a place where you could walk the streets at night without fear, where, as long as one took no interest in politics, one could get on with life in relative tranquility.

With 17 different intelligence services, known as mukhabarat, to watch every citizen's movements, there was little likelihood of crime, even less chance of political unrest. When the Muslim Brothers staged an uprising in Hama in 1982, Assad's troops killed an estimated 10,000 people and destroyed the city. It was Assad's pan-Arab, secular Ba'ath Party against the fundamentalists. "These so-called Muslims will pay the price," he said in a radio speech which underlined his ruthlessness. His annihilation of the Hama rebels became a model for other Arab leaders facing similar movements.

Assad's Syria was no respecter of human rights. Although groups such as Amnesty International reported a dramatic improvement over the past decade, it was not uncommon for enemies - real or perceived - literally to rot in prison.

Salah Jedid, the leader overthrown by Assad in 1970, was jailed for 24 years. There were east German torture machines to make recalcitrant plotters talk, and sources in Damascus speak of helicopters dropping dissidents' bodies in the desert no man's land between Syria and Iraq, to be eaten by wild dogs.

All means were used to quash threats to the rule of Hafez al Assad, yet unlike the neighbouring but enemy Ba'athist regime in Iraq, terror in Syria was not an end in itself. It was not used gratuitously. Perhaps that is why so many of Assad's subjects seemed to love him almost as much as they feared him.

Assad's other claim to greatness, in Arab eyes, was his iron will, his consistency in standing up to the US and Israel, his constant, unwaivering demand for a "global comprehensive peace [between Israel and Arabs] based on UN resolutions". Unlike Egypt, the PLO and Jordan, he never gave in to the desire to ingratiate himself with Western leaders. Unlike Sadat, Arafat and King Hussein, he was not willing to make what he saw as humiliating concessions. Assad interpreted the 1991 Madrid formula of "land for peace" literally.

Why should Arabs be expected to relinquish land, he asked me and my colleagues when we interviewed him in 1992. "There is no moral, legal or political justification for the Arabs to offer their land to Israel simply to obtain Israel's agreement for peace," he said then.

Assad regarded the Arabs who made a separate peace with Israel as traitors. Too bad for the Palestinians if they never regained Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. They had broken ranks, he felt, and they paid for it. On the fate of his Golan Heights, "there is no possibility of compromise", he told me.

"Nobody in Syria could give up one inch of land in the Golan. Every Syrian believes deep in his heart that whoever yields a part of his land is a traitor." The Israelis and the US miscalculated, believing that Assad's age, severe diabetes and desire to regain the Golan before dying would make him relinquish key demands, including access to the sea of Galilee.

When he met President Clinton in Geneva in March, he reminded the US leader that as a child he had played on the shores of Galilee. For Assad, there was no better proof that the lake was also Syrian.

Syrian-Israeli negotiations broke down in January, and it will fall to Assad's son Bashar to resume them. The Israelis and Americans may be hoping that the inexperienced Bashar will be a soft touch, but it would be politically disastrous for Bashar al-Assad to accept less than his father would. Hafez al-Assad's negotiating technique was not unlike that of the lion, whose name he took. He would keep his prey waiting for days - a former US Secretary of State Warren Christopher once threw his attaché case on the ground in fury. Once they were in his presence, Assad would keep guests talking for hours - four or five at a stretch was not unusual - then move in for the kill when his interlocutors were weary.

Throughout the session, always filmed by a hidden camera, sugary tea and coffee were served. Diplomats in Damascus joked that however ill the Syrian president was, no one in the diplomatic corps could match the strength of his bladder.

Assad cared very much what would happen to his country after his death. Emile Lahoud, the President of Lebanon, was talking on the telephone to Assad when he died at midday on Saturday. "He was telling me, 'It is our fate to build a safe future for our children'," Mr Lahoud said. There was a silence when the phone dropped. Lahoud rang back 15 minutes later and Bashar answered, telling him his father was dead.

No Syrian will forget the death in 1994 of Bashar's older brother Bassel. A handsome, athletic, outgoing army officer, Bassel had been groomed for the succession since childhood. Speeding to Damascus airport in fog in his red Ferrari, he crashed into a traffic island.

As Assad climbed the steps of the aircraft taking Bassel's body to the family village of Qordaha, he looked like a broken man, but when he stuck his head out of the pilot's window and raised both hands in a victory salute, the crowd of mourners cheered. They understood him: Assad would continue; his regime would continue; Syria would not crumble.

Within months, photographs of the shy, homely Bashar, a British-trained ophthalmologist with a passion for computers, began to appear all over Syria. He became an army colonel, and was to have been named vice-president in an extra ordinary session of the Ba'ath Party on June 17th. Yesterday, the vice president, Abdel-Halim Khaddam, named him chief of the armed forces after promoting him from colonel to lieutenant-general.

On the day of his father's death, the Syrian parliament met to change the constitution to allow him to succeed his father. Previously, the minimum age for a Syrian president was 40; now it is Bashar's age, 34. Assad may have transformed his family, from the tiny Alawite minority, into a dynasty. North Korea is perhaps the only other place where a dictator has passed power on uninterrupted to his son. In neighbouring Iraq, Saddam Hussein plans to do the same thing.

That Western governments - including France and Britain - enthusiastically embraced Bashar during his recent trips to Europe shows how little the West really cares about democracy in the Middle East.

Stability, not democracy. But will nice Bashar al-Assad be able to deliver the commodity so fiercely preserved by his father? Potential challenges exist - first and foremost Bashar's black sheep Uncle Rifa'at, whose militia had a shoot-out with presidential guards earlier this year in the seaport of Lattakia. Then there are the majority Sunni Muslim army officers who have been set aside in recent years, the politicians charged with corruption in a campaign led by Bashar. Turkey and Israel, whose military alliance so disturbed Hafez al-Assad, might have an interest in stirring up trouble, to silence Syrian claims to land occupied by both countries. Last but not least there is Lebanon - "the sister country", Assad always called it. With tacit Western support won through his anti-Iraq stance after the 1990 Kuwait invasion, Assad snuffed out an 18month rebellion by the Maronite Gen Michel Aoun in 1990.

Lebanon remains a Syrian satellite, with 20,000 Syrian troops and millions of Syrian "guest workers".

Bashar has told close Lebanese friends that he will never leave Lebanon at the demand of a few Maronite Catholics. However, three weeks after Israel withdrew its troops from the south, Syria's justification for remaining has never looked so tenuous. Perhaps Bashar's greatest asset is the dread of chaos instilled in Lebanese and Syrians by the 1975-1990 Lebanese civil war. He inherits an introverted, backward Syria, a country put on ice for 30 years to perpetuate his father's rule, a sort of Soviet Moscow on the Euphrates. Bashar al-Assad wants to give it mobile phones, the Internet and peace with Israel. The future of the Middle East could depend on him.

Yahnici accuses MIT and police of escorting drug smuggling trucks

- In an exclusive interview for Radikal, the MHP's Yahnici said that police had cleared the way for trucks carrying drugs on the Yuksekova-Marseilles route
- Yahnici claims that the \$100 billion-worth of narcotics have been shared out by MIT

Ankara - Turkish Daily News

Sevket Yahnici, a deputy from the coalition partner Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), in an exclusive interview with Radikal's Nese Duzel, claimed that the police force and the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) were allowing drug smuggling in Turkey.

"MIT is split down the middle. Many other things have been divided as well. I am telling you clearly that on the Yuksekova-Marseilles route \$100 billion-worth of narcotics is shared out. The police clear the road, the international transport trucks drive on. Others serve as their escorts, following behind. Illicit narcotics have been transported in that manner for some 25-30 years," Yahnici told Radikal, one of Turkey's mainstream newspapers.

As a member of the MHP, one of the coalition partners of Turkey's 57th government, Yahnici's statements were seen as a positive move towards "clean politics," by political experts.

The MHP has been keen to maintain its image of a "clean party" since the April elections. The party failed to secure representation in Parliament in the 1995 elections when it failed to pass the 10 percent national threshold. While it carried on its activities outside Parliament, there were other developments on the political agenda.

Turkey's two center-right parties, the True Path Party (DYP) and the Motherland Party (ANAP) were in difficulties over allegations of corruption and mafia ties.

These allegations caused a reaction among the parties' grassroots. And finally, ANAP and the DYP saw an immense decrease in the number of votes they won in the 1999 elections, while the MHP received a large amount of support from the public. In the latest elections the party secured the second largest number of seats.

The results of the ballot were seen as a reaction to "dirty politics," and the rise of MHP as a public desire for clean politics.

As a part of the MHP's wish to be seen as a pristine party, Yahnici's statements attacking Turkey's security forces also included the Susurluk scandal.

"Where has the Susurluk issue reached? What difference would it make if you cried out? It is obvious that nothing can be achieved by doing that. Susurluk was scandalous, but it amounted only to one-fifth of the iceberg," he said.

The earth-shattering scandal broke after a car accident in 1996 in Susurluk, in the Aegean region and has ever been since known by that name. A police chief, Huseyin Kocadag, a deputy from the DYP, Sedat Bucak, and a fugitive, Abdullah Catli, were travelling in the one car. Kocadag and Catli were killed and Bucak seriously wounded in the accident.

The accident exposed the relations between the state, the mafia and politicians. After the incident a commission was set up in an effort to investigate these relations. A number of high-ranking officials were questioned by the commission.

RSF demande au Conseil de l'Europe de suspendre la Russie et la Turquie



mercredi 14 juin 2000,

PARIS (AP) -- L'association Reporters sans frontières (RSF) demande au Conseil de l'Europe de suspendre la Turquie et la Russie de l'organisation tant que la liberté de la presse ne sera pas assurée dans ces pays.

Dans un communiqué mercredi, à la veille d'une rencontre du Conseil de l'Europe à Cracovie (Pologne), réunissant des ministres en charge des médias, l'association de défense de la liberté de la presse soutient que les journalistes sont interpellés, interrogés et que certains sont tués ou disparaissent en Tchétchénie. "La Tchétchénie est plus que jamais une zone de non-droit où la guerre peut se dérouler sans témoins. Alors qu'il n'y a plus de média tchétchène indépendant, l'accès à la république sécessionniste est depuis plusieurs mois soumis à l'attribution d'une accréditation, délivrée par les forces militaires et quasiment impossible à obtenir", précise RSF.

Reporters sans frontières affirme aussi que la Convention européenne des droits de l'homme à laquelle doivent se soumettre les membres du Conseil de l'Europe n'est pas respectée non plus dans le sud-est anatolien qui abrite la minorité kurde de Turquie où "des lois d'exception permettent de réduire considérablement les libertés".

RSF demande aussi au Conseil de l'Europe d'"exiger de l'Ukraine la fin des pressions financières et politiques sur la presse indépendante, sous peine d'être suspendue de l'organisation".

Reporters sans frontières affirme par ailleurs que les médias sont maltraités en Azerbaïdjan et en Bosnie-Herzégovine, deux pays dont les demandes d'adhésion au Conseil de l'Europe sont en cours d'examen. RSF demande au Conseil de lier l'adhésion de l'Azerbaïdjan à une amélioration de la situation sur son territoire.

Disparition au Kurdistan turc: la Turquie condamnée à Strasbourg



STRASBOURG, 13 juin (AFP) - 17h23 - La Turquie a été condamnée mardi par la Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme à Strasbourg pour la mort d'un Turc, disparu après son arrestation dans le sud-est du pays il y a presque sept ans.

Le gouvernement turc, qui nie toute responsabilité, a été condamné à verser 30.000 livres sterling (47.481 euros) pour indemniser à la famille d'Abdulvahap Timurtas, disparu depuis le 14 août 1993 près de Yenikoy (district de Silopi), dans la province de Sînak.

Les autorités turques soutiennent que M. Timurtas, né en 1962 et soupçonné d'être membre du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), n'a pas été placé en garde à vue, a rappelé la Cour dans son arrêt.

Elles contestent en particulier la photocopie d'un rapport des forces de sécurité faisant état de l'arrestation de M. Timurtas, qui a été fourni comme preuve par le père de la victime, Mehmet Timurtas, 72 ans, domicilié à Istanbul. Le procureur de Sînak avait classé sans suite la plainte de ce dernier.

Les autorités turques ont par la suite refusé de fournir à la Cour de Strasbourg le document sur lequel elles se fondent pour nier l'authenticité de la copie du rapport.

La Cour européenne a jugé que compte tenu de ce refus non motivé et de "toute une série d'éléments militants en faveur de l'authenticité du document litigieux", le fils du requérant a bien été appréhendé par des gendarmes du district de Silopi et placé en détention.

"Le gouvernement turc n'ayant fourni aucune explication au sujet de ce qui est arrivé au fils du requérant pendant sa détention, il doit être jugé responsable du décès de l'intéressé", a jugé la Cour, concluant à une violation de l'article 2 de la convention européenne des droits de l'Homme (droit à la vie).

La Cour a stigmatisé la Turquie pour "l'absence d'enquête prompte et effective" sur la disparition de M. Timurtas et pour "l'absence de registres précis et fiables" concernant les gardes à vue, y voyant une violation de l'article 5 (droit à la liberté) et de l'article 13 (droit à un recours effectif).

Selon l'arrêt de la Cour, les autorités turques ont réservé un "traitement inhumain et dégradant à l'égard du requérant". "Certains membres des forces de sécurité ont fait preuve d'un manque total de sensibilité devant les préoccupations du requérant, en niant à la face de l'intéressé et au mépris de la vérité que son fils eut été placé en garde à vue", a-t-elle critiqué.

"De surcroît, l'angoisse éprouvée par le requérant au sujet du sort réservé à son fils est toujours très actuelle", a jugé la Cour, concluant à une violation de l'article 3 (interdiction de la torture et des traitements et peines inhumains ou dégradants).

Grève de la faim de membres du PKK à Vienne en soutien à Ocalan



VIENNE, 13 juin (AFP) - 18h01 - Une cinquantaine de partisans du PKK (parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) observent une grève de la faim depuis samedi à Vienne pour protester contre les conditions de détention du chef rebelle kurde Abdullah Ocalan, a indiqué mardi la fédération des associations kurdes en Autriche.

Les manifestants exigent qu'Ocalan, détenu par la Turquie dans l'île-prison d'Imrali, soit transféré dans une autre prison ou qu'il soit mis fin à son isolement qui dure depuis plus de 15 mois.

Leur jeûne doit cesser mercredi.

Selon les avocats d'Ocalan, les médecins de la prison d'Imrali ont diagnostiqué chez lui un asthme allergique se traduisant par une forte toux et des insomnies.

Abdullah Ocalan, condamné à mort pour trahison et séparatisme, avait demandé début juin à faire l'objet d'un examen médical par une équipe internationale pour "lever les doutes" sur son état de santé.

Assad's Son Moves To Assume Power

Major Figures Offer Backing In a Bid to Ensure Stability

By Howard Schneider
Washington Post Service

DAMASCUS — Backed by the mainstays of his father's regime, Bashar Assad has quickly consolidated power in Syria, acting as de facto head of state since President Hafez Assad died Saturday and dominating the official public images surrounding the event.

While Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam is nominally acting president, his picture has not appeared in any of the official papers, and his only public act so far has been to hand command of the army over to the younger Mr. Assad, 34.

The minister of defense, Lieutenant General Mustafa Tlas, visited Bashar Assad soon after the promotion, according to local reports, and gave him a pledge of loyalty — a key signal that core supporters behind his father would now support him. Others from the intelligence community, like General Bahajet Suleiman, have voiced similar support. Both institutions are central to Syrian political life: Hafez Assad rose to power through alliances built during his military service, and maintained it through pervasive security.

[But a potent new challenge arose Monday when Hafez Assad's exiled brother, Rifaat, hinted that he would work to overthrow a government headed by Bashar Assad. The Associated Press reported from Beirut.

["There will be a new corrective movement for a new course covering all political, social and economic levels," Rifaat Assad said in a statement to the Syrian people read Monday night by an announcer on Arab News Network, a London-based satellite television station owned by his son, Sawmar.

[By referring to the "corrective movement" Rifaat Assad was borrowing terminology used to refer to Hafez Assad's takeover of the Damascus government in a coup in October 1970. Hafez Assad, then defense minister, declared that the coup was to correct the course of the leadership of the ruling Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party, which he said had deviated from its true objectives.

[In the statement, Rifaat Assad, 63, said his campaign was aimed at changing the way Syria had been governed for decades. "Freedom and democracy will be established in Syria. The citizen will play his role in building the nation and choosing his representatives in Syria," he said.

[Once the feared and effective enforcer of President Assad's wishes during much of his 30-year rule, Rifaat Assad later stretched his limits and even tried to overthrow his older brother in 1983. He has been living in exile.]

On the streets of Damascus, public emotion — some spontaneous, some apparently staged by cadres of the Ba'ath Party — has been divided between sorrow for the president's death and exuberance over the son's elevation. Small gestures, such as a condolence phone call from President Bill Clinton, are promoted as signs of Bashar Assad's standing.

In the government-controlled press, pictures of Hafez Assad dominate, but are rivaled by those of his son, referred to intimately as "Doctor Bashar," because of his training as an ophthalmologist. "Doctor Bashar is the promising hope of the future and a faithful successor to a great predecessor," a headline in the Tishrin newspaper read.

Syrian officials, meanwhile, made it clear they would brook no challenge to a transition that has even been given a catch phrase — "change through continuity" — meant to convey the hope that the younger Assad's ascension to the presidency will allow political stability as well as eventual reform.

Asked early Monday about the possible presence of Rifaat Assad at the funeral, the speaker of the Parliament, Abdelqadir Qaddurah, said that if the late president's brother tried to enter the country "there is difficulty for him."

"Don't gamble on him," Mr. Qaddurah said sternly at the end of a press conference. His comments seemed consistent with reports in Al Hayat newspaper quoting unnamed senior Syrian officials as saying that an arrest warrant had been issued for Rifaat Assad.

If all goes according to schedule, Bashar Assad's rise to power will be officially finished within two weeks. Along with being commander of the armed forces, the younger Assad is expected to be named head of the Ba'ath Party at a congress that was scheduled before President Assad's death of a heart attack at 69. Though Bashar Assad was due to be given a more modest role before his father died, local analysts say that now he will be elevated to the top of the party, granting him another of the several titles needed to demonstrate political legitimacy here.

Finally, on June 25, the Parliament is expected to nominate him for the presidency and schedule a public referendum to confirm the choice.

Amid long-standing concerns that Hafez Assad's death would leave fertile ground for instability after 30 years of sometimes harsh authoritarian rule — opponents included not only his brother, but militant Islamists as well — diplomats and other analysts here and outside Syria say that he and his advisers appear to have prepared a solid plan to shift power between the generations. Though the Assads are from a religious minority, the Alawites, who make up only about 10 percent of Syria's 17 million people, there has been no credible challenger for the presidency — in part because potential rivals were weeded out over the last year.

Hafez Assad's funeral will be held Tuesday as world and regional leaders gather to pay their respects to a man who embodied Arab pride even as he frustrated Western attempts, led by the United States, to broker a compromise between Syria and Israel. In the end, Mr. Assad's refusal to let Israel keep any of the occupied Golan Heights proved more important to him than achieving a peace that he even he agreed was of strategic importance to Syria and the region.

Dignitaries Attending Assad's Funeral

The Associated Press

The following dignitaries have announced plans to attend the funeral Tuesday of President Hafez Assad:

Heads of State:

President Hosni Mubarak, Egypt; President Jacques Chirac, France; President Mohammed Khatami, Iran; King Abdullah II, Jordan; Sheikh Jaber al Ahmad al Sabah, Kuwait; President Emile Lahoud, Lebanon; Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Saudi Arabia, acting head of state; General Omar Hassan Ahmad Bashir, Sudan; President Ali

Abdullah Saleh, Yemen.

Others:

Yasser Arafat, president of the Palestinian Authority; Vice President Taha Moheiddin Maruf, Iraq; Prime Minister Salim Hoss, Lebanon; Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, Britain; Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, France; Foreign Minister Yohei Kono, Japan; Foreign Minister Nkosazana Zuma, South Africa; Foreign Minister Joseph Deiss, Switzerland; Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, United States; Heinz Fischer, president of Austria's Federal Assembly; Information Minister Javed Jabbar, Pakistan.

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La condamnation à la prison ferme d'un militant du PKK aggravée en appel



PARIS, 13 juin (AFP) - 17h05 - La Cour d'appel de Paris a condamné mardi à un an de prison ferme Ozcan Erdogan, 34 ans, condamné en première instance à neuf mois d'emprisonnement pour ses activités de militant du PKK (Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan).

Le prévenu avait été condamné le 4 mars 1999 par le tribunal correctionnel de Paris à deux ans de prison dont 15 mois avec sursis pour participation à une association de malfaiteurs terroriste.

Ozcan Erdogan a été détenu du 22 mars au 5 juin 1997 pour avoir, avec ses camarades, organisé ou participé en 1996 à des expéditions punitives contre des commerçants turcs du sud-est de la France qui ne payaient pas l'impôt révolutionnaire du PKK.

Les autres condamnés n'avaient pas fait appel. Il s'agit de Orhan Yilmaz, 26 ans, condamné à 4 ans d'emprisonnement et à 10 ans d'interdiction du territoire français. Mehmet Akansu, 28 ans, condamné à 3 ans d'emprisonnement dont 18 mois avec sursis, Kamber Akyol, 44 ans, condamné par défaut à 2 ans d'emprisonnement dont un an avec sursis et 10 ans d'interdiction du territoire français. Sebatin Soner, 26 ans, condamné à 2 ans d'emprisonnement dont un avec sursis, et Nihat Tas, 26 ans, condamné à 3 ans d'emprisonnement dont 2 ans avec sursis.

Mehmet Ali Agca gracié par le président italien



ROME (AP) - Le président italien Carlo Azeglio Ciampi a gracié mardi le Turc Mehmet Ali Agca, l'homme qui avait tiré sur le pape Jean Paul II en 1981.

13 juin 2000,

Le ministre de la Justice Piero Fassino a immédiatement signé un ordre d'extradition de Mehmet Ali Agca vers la Turquie où il doit encore purger sa peine pour le meurtre d'un rédacteur en chef d'un journal local. Mehmet Ali Agca avait perpétré l'attentat contre le pape après s'être échappé de la prison où il était détenu dans cette affaire. Condamné par contumace à la peine capitale, il a vu sa peine réduite à dix ans de prison lors de l'amnistie de 1991.

"Ces derniers jours", souligne le communiqué du ministère de la Justice, "le Saint Siège avait confirmé son soutien à un geste de clémence". Jean Paul II avait lui-même accordé publiquement son pardon à celui qui avait tenté de le tuer, qu'il avait rencontré dans sa cellule en 1983.

"L'octroi de la grâce pendant les célébrations du Jubilé fait que la satisfaction personnelle du pape est encore plus intense", a déclaré le porte-parole du Vatican Joaquin Navarro-Valls.

Mehmet Ali Agca, âgé de 42 ans, a remercié le pape et le Vatican lorsqu'il a appris la nouvelle de la grâce présidentielle, ont rapporté les agences de presse italienne. "C'est un rêve. Je ne peux pas le croire", a déclaré le détenu dont les propos étaient rapportés par son avocat.

Le Turc Mehmet Ali Agca avait été condamné à la réclusion criminelle à perpétuité pour avoir tiré sur le souverain pontife le 13 mai 1981 alors que Jean Paul II traversait la place Saint Pierre de Rome dans une voiture découverte. Le pape avait été atteint d'une balle dans l'abdomen. Selon ses médecins, cet attentat a considérablement affaibli la santé du pape, aujourd'hui âgé de 80 ans et qui présente les symptômes de la maladie de Parkinson.

Arrêté quelques minutes après l'attentat, Mehmet Ali Agca a passé 19 ans et un mois derrière les barreaux, dont les plus récents dans la prison d'Ancône dans l'est de l'Italie.

Au cours des années, le détenu a fourni des explications contradictoires à ce geste dont les vraies raisons n'ont jamais été établies avec certitude.

Le juge Rosario Priore, qui avait enquêté sur un complot présumé d'agents bulgares en liaison avec Agca pour tuer le souverain pontife, a estimé que la grâce était "une sage décision" même s'il s'est dit convaincu que la vérité n'avait jamais été établie. "C'est le seul acte possible", a-t-il déclaré. "On ne peut pas laisser les gens en prison simplement pour les faire parler".

En revanche, le procureur Antonio Marini considère que Mehmet Ali Agca avait délibérément feint la folie lors de son procès. Pour lui, son retour en Turquie "éteint le dernier espoir de parvenir à la vérité".

Jean Paul II avait attribué à la Vierge de Fatima d'avoir survécu à l'attentat. Le Vatican a révélé cette année que le troisième "secret" révélé par la Vierge Marie apparue aux enfants dans le petit village de Fatima au Portugal en 1917 était l'attentat contre le souverain pontife. AP

PROCHE-ORIENT



Rifaat (à g.), l'onde de Bachar, fut frappé de disgrâce en 1984, après sa tentative de putsch contre Hafez el-Assad, ici à droite.

La Syrie

Bachar el-Assad a assis son autorité sans traîner. Les fidèles de son père l'y ont aidé

Ni faux pas, ni trahison, ni rébellion. Pour Bachar el-Assad, 34 ans, nouveau maître de la Syrie, la transition dynastique suit en apparence son cours. Un cours dessiné méthodiquement par le défunt père Hafez depuis 1994, date de la mort accidentelle de Bassel, aîné des héritiers et dauphin désigné. Bien sûr, le décès du Lion de Damas aura hâté le tempo de la succession. Pour preuve, le 9^e Congrès du parti Baas, tenu du 17 au 20 juin, qui a intronisé le cadet, déjà promu général et commandant en chef de l'armée au lendemain du deuil, candidat unique à la présidence. Proposition que l'Assemblée du peuple – Parlement aux ordres – ne manquera pas d'entériner huit jours plus tard, ouvrant ainsi la voie à un plébiscite joué d'avance. « Même s'il a fallu l'accélérer, note un familier du sérail syrien, la "bacharisation" du système était largement accomplie. » Conscient des handicaps d'un rejeton peu aguerri, Hafez el-Assad lui avait déblayé le terrain, écartant de son chemin rivaux présumés et vétérans à la loyauté incertaine.

Armée, services de sécurité, parti : la purge n'a épargné aucun des trois piliers du régime alaouite. Dès 1998, on vit ainsi s'effacer le sunnite Hikmat Chehabi, chef d'état-major, remplacé par son adjoint Ali Aslan. Depuis, le vieux général, soupçonné d'enrichissement frauduleux,

a jugé plus sage de s'exiler aux États-Unis. Tandis que l'ancien Premier ministre Mahmoud Zohbi, démis de ses fonctions pour un motif analogue, mettait fin à ses jours. D'autres barons galonnés ont été invités à faire valoir leurs droits à la retraite. De même que Bachir Najjar, pont de renseignement intérieur, limogé pour « malversations financières ». Enfin, la rumeur damascène annonce la mise à l'écart sans fracas des deux vice-présidents, Abd el-Halim Khaddam, pourtant chargé de l'interim, et Zoheir Macharka.

Ainsi affranchi de la vieille garde, Bachar le *chebel* – lionceau – peut en revanche miser sur de précieux alliés. A commencer par l'influent

Union récusée de son vivant par Bassel. Il faut dire que le féroce Assef n'a guère la cote chez les mâles de la famille. Lors d'une rixe, il fut ainsi blessé par Maher el-Assad, autre membre, réputé turbulent, de la fratrie. Reste que sa brutalité peut s'avérer utile à Bachar, dépourvu à en croire son entourage du *killer instinct* – l'instinct du tueur – requis pour asseoir toute autorité au sommet d'un régime dont le clan alaouite, minoritaire, confisque les leviers. Le cadet Assad comptera aussi sur l'expérience de grognards éprouvés, loyaux au nom du père. Tel est le cas du ministre de la Défense, Moustafa Tlass, du chef de la diplomatie syrienne, Farouk el-Charah, ou d'Ibrahim Saafi, général de

dernier un équipement archaïque et maintenir le contingent de 35 000 hommes déployé au Liban voisin. D'autant que la pesante tutelle exercée sur le pays du Cèdre garantit aux officiers affairistes de juteuses prébendes. Le dossier libanais vaut au Lionceau d'autres soucis. Certes, celui-ci laisse le protectorat aux mains d'un proche, le général Ghazi Canaan. Certes, Hassan Nasrallah, figure de proue des intégristes chiïtes du Hezbollah, ne lui a pas mégoté son allégeance. Reste que le Parti de Dieu, héros de la libération de l'ex-zone de sécurité, occupée pendant vingt-deux ans par l'Etat hébreu et ses supplétifs locaux, peut être tenté de s'affranchir de ses tuteurs syrien et iranien. Ou de renouer sur la frontière avec la lutte armée, au risque d'exposer la Syrie à de cuisantes représailles de Tsahal. Très improbable à ce stade, le dégel des pourparlers de paix avec Israël inquiète aussi les gradés, conscients de la prééminence que leur vaut l'état de guerre.

La prise de contrôle du parti Baas – « Résurrection » – paraît moins aléatoire, même si la dérive monarchique du régime heurte les puristes du panarabisme laïque. L'accession au « commandement régional », instance suprême, de figures bacharistes – dont le Premier ministre, Mohammad Miro, et Farouk el-Charah – témoigne de la réussite du verrouillage. Dépeint sous les traits de l'héritier intègre, Assad le jeune se verra néanmoins contraint de tempérer

“Pour Bachar, Rifaat est une gêne, pas un danger”

Bahjat Suleiman, patron de la Sûreté générale. Jadis fidèle de Rifaat el-Assad, frère cadet et rival déchu de Hafez, ce général passa tout autant dans l'art d'orchestrer les disgrâces a ensuite mis son savoir-faire au service des fils du chef, Bassel, puis Bachar. Placé à la tête d'un puissant appareil de renseignement militaire, Assef Chawkat peut tout autant prétendre au titre de bras droit. Il doit à l'intercession de Bachar d'avoir épousé sa sœur, Bouchra, la seule fille et, dit-on à Damas, le seul homme politique de la descendance.

division chargée de la sécurité de la capitale. Moins exposé, Ibrahim Howeijeh avait quant à lui veillé à la mise en orbite de l'héritier malgré lui, ovni politique.

Le nouveau venu aura bien besoin de cette garde rapprochée pour affermir son emprise. Les galons conquis à marche forcée n'y feront rien : Bachar l'ophtalmo ne jouit pas au sein de la troupe, sunnite pour l'essentiel, de la légitimité de son père ou de son aîné, issu l'un et l'autre du sérail militaire. Il lui faudra, sur fond d'épuration inachevée, mo-

« bacharisée »

Bachar (au centre), pendant le 9^e Congrès du Baas, le 17 juin, avec à sa droite le ministre de la Défense, Moustafa Tlass, « loyal au nom du père ».



ses ardeurs de « M. Propre ». Populaire, la lutte contre la corruption, prétexte idéal à l'éviction des gêneurs, risque de lui aliéner le soutien d'acteurs économiques, dans les milieux d'affaires sunnites, voire au cœur de la mafia familiale. C'est aussi ce qui incitera ce libéral supposé à avancer à pas comptés sur la voie de l'ouverture et de la privatisation. Bachar doit-il par ailleurs redouter un soulèvement des Frères musulmans ? Les experts en doutent. La terrible répression menée dans les années 80 a affaibli les intégristes sunnites. D'autant qu'Assad père s'est employé à promouvoir un islam assagi : on lui doit d'innombrables mosquées et l'ouverture de 300 instituts d'études coraniques.

Nul n'est prophète en sa tribu. Il reste au « général docteur » à vaincre la méfiance de l'élite alaouite, qui doute de son aptitude à préserver ses privilèges. Argument volontiers invoqué par l'oncle Rifaat, prompt à revendiquer depuis son exil doré de Marbella une singulière « légitimité ». De fait, le riche prétendant peut se prévaloir du rôle d'éradicateur en chef joué en 1982. Alors patron des Brigades de défense de la révolution, il avait dirigé l'écrasement de la rébellion sunnite à Hama, Homs et Alep. Le même promet l'instauration d'une « démocratie respectueuse des droits de l'homme », y compris au profit des ennemis d'hier. Comment mesurer la capacité de

nuisance de Rifaat el-Assad, frappé d'une disgrâce à éclipses depuis 1984, rançon d'une tentative de putsch avortée, et privé en février 1998 de son ultime titre, au demeurant fictif, de vice-président ? « Pour Bachar, avance un diplomate, c'est une gêne, pas un danger. » Ses atouts, il est vrai, ont perdu de leur éclat. Les liens étroits qui l'unissent à la famille royale saoudienne n'ont pas empêché le prince héritier Abdallah de gratifier Bachar d'un soutien ostensible. De même, la fortune colossale du Pharaon – de 15 à 30 milliards de francs – lui permet d'entretenir un réseau d'obligés, notamment dans la montagne alaouite, où l'on vit circuler en septembre 1999 des tracts hostiles

à son neveu, sans pour autant effacer le passé. Bien sûr, la télévision satellitaire Arab News Network (ANN), confiée à son fils Somer, forge depuis Londres la légende du prétendant perpétuel. Mais, là encore, il manque à l'expatrié, naguère choyé par l'Occident et que la France traita avec une bienveillance inexplicable, la stature du recours. De plus, l'assaut massif donné en octobre 1999 à son port privé de Lattaquié (Nord) lui a porté un coup très rude. Voilà bien le drame de Rifaat le banni : s'il peut tirer profit du chaos, il n'a pas le pouvoir de le créer. ●

Vincent Hugué, avec Scarlett Haddad à Beyrouth et Damas, Hesi Carmel en Israël, Tangi Salaün au Caire et Dominique Lagarde

15/6/2000

L'EXPRESS

DOSSIER

Syrie L'héritage d'Assad l'impitoyable

Le destin du Proche-Orient, de la Syrie, de Hafez el-Assad et de son fils Bachar, qui lui succède aujourd'hui, s'est joué voici exactement trente-trois ans. Juin 1967 : en six jours, l'armée israélienne occupe le Sinaï égyptien, le plateau du Golan syrien, la Cisjordanie et la bande de Gaza. Hafez el-Assad, qui a été nommé ministre de la Défense quelques mois plus tôt, à la suite d'un coup d'Etat, assiste, impuissant, à la déroute arabe. Au lendemain de la défaite, il s'enferme chez lui et reste cloîtré pendant trois jours. « C'est dans la souffrance de cette défaite qu'est née son ambition d'atteindre le sommet et de peser sur les choses », affirme Patrick Seale, journaliste bri-



Héritier fragile, Bachar devra consolider le front intérieur avant de négocier avec Israël. D'autant que son père est mort sans avoir fait la moindre concession.

tannique, auteur d'une biographie du président syrien.

En trente ans d'un pouvoir exercé sans partage, Hafez el-Assad va s'imposer comme l'un des acteurs clefs de la scène proche-orientale. Cynique et sans scrupules, il n'hésite pas, quand ça l'arrange, à changer d'alliances. Ou à mandater des poseurs de bombes pour mieux se faire entendre. Seul compte à ses yeux le rapport de forces : rien ne doit pouvoir se faire sans la Syrie. Il réussit à en convaincre les plus grands. Les secrétaires d'Etat américains se succéderont à Damas. Henry Kissinger fera 26 fois le voyage. Madeleine Albright s'y rendra à deux reprises en 1999.

Sa vision de la scène proche-orientale restera toujours largement influencée par le climat qui, avant même la défaite de 1967, a marqué son adolescence. Les intellectuels syriens ont vécu comme une déchirure le refus des Français et des

C'est au lendemain de l'humiliante déroute arabe de juin 1967 que le ministre de la Défense Hafez el-Assad fera le serment d'imposer la Syrie comme un acteur clef sur la scène proche-orientale.



En juin 1974, le président américain se rend à Damas pour rétablir les relations diplomatiques rompues depuis 1967.



●●● Britanniques de créer, au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale, un grand royaume arabe, puis le dépeçage de la Grande Syrie, dont les contours embrassaient la Palestine, le Liban et l'actuelle Jordanie. Les années de l'entre-deux-guerres se caractérisent, dans l'ensemble du Proche-Orient, par une forte politisation des élites et la montée en puissance, face au projet sioniste, d'une gauche arabe, laïque et nationaliste. Au moment de la naissance d'Israël, en 1948, le jeune Hafez a 18 ans. Il vient d'adhérer au parti Baas, qui s'est créé un an plus tôt et qui a pour dessein la renaissance arabe. Avec six autres de ses camarades du lycée de Lattaquié, il se rend à Damas pour se porter volontaire. « On ne comprend rien à la politique d'Assad si l'on ne prend pas en compte sa vision nationaliste », écrira Karim Pakradouni, l'un des dirigeants des Phalanges libanaises (chrétiennes), qui l'a beaucoup pratiqué et observé.

Fascinante habileté

Il était, depuis la paix israélo-palestiniennne d'Oslo, le seul chef d'Etat arabe de la région à ne jamais avoir personnellement rencontré de responsables israéliens. Une intransigeance qui n'était pas seulement tactique. Car, contrairement à l'Egyptien Anouar el-Sadate, au roi Hussein de Jordanie ou à Yasser Arafat, Assad n'a probablement jamais accepté, en son for intérieur, l'existence d'Israël. Au cours des très longues audiences qu'il affectionne – une entrevue avec Assad durait rarement moins de quatre ou cinq heures – il se lance souvent dans de grands développements historiques. Lorsque l'interlocuteur est américain ou européen, il est bien rare qu'il ne soit pas question, dans ces épopées, de l'histoire des croisades et du rôle de Saladin, le libérateur de Jérusalem. Au début des négociations avec l'Etat hébreu, en 1991, il fera ériger une nouvelle statue du guerrier kurde au pied de la citadelle de Damas... « Il lui fallait, écrit Henry Kissinger dans ses Mémoires, surmonter une haine congénitale pour Israël qui plongeait profondément ses racines dans le pays. »

Dear Henry, qui découvre le personnage au lendemain de la guerre d'octobre 1973, sera fasciné par son habileté. « Vous êtes, lui dit-il un jour, le seul négociateur à sauter dans le précipice avec l'espoir, pour arrêter votre chute, de vous raccrocher à un arbre dont vous seul connaissez la présence. » Assad finira par accepter un accord de désengagement sur le front du Golan, qu'il respectera ●●●



Assad impose sa tutelle au pays du Cèdre.

Rencontre en septembre 1978. Le chef d'Etat libyen et son homologue syrien se voulaient intractables avec l'ennemi israélien.



La répression de l'armée syrienne contre l'irréductibilité des chrétiens libanais est impitoyable. Les organes de Staline bombardent sans relâche Beyrouth-Est, n'épargnant ni les civils ni même les hôpitaux.



●●● d'ailleurs scrupuleusement. Mais sa façon de négocier s'apparente, le plus souvent, à une ingénieuse stratégie du refus. S'il prend soin de ne jamais couper les ponts, il n'est jamais non plus pressé de conclure. « Il fallait discuter à ses conditions ou rien. Il n'était pas prêt à faire la moindre concession et, s'il mettait en avant sa propre dignité, dont nous devons tenir compte, il ne cherchait jamais à s'adapter à notre univers à nous, notamment à nos préoccupations sécuritaires », se souvient un négociateur israélien, qui a participé aux discussions israélo-syriennes dans le cadre du processus lancé après la conférence de Madrid, en octobre 1991. Ni Shimon Peres, ni Itzhak Rabin, ni Ehud Barak n'arriveront à un accord...

La valse des alliances

Cette intransigeance va de pair avec une grande prudence sur le terrain. En septembre 1970, il refuse d'accorder à la guérilla palestinienne, qui se bat contre l'armée jordanienne, le soutien de l'armée syrienne, estimant le combat perdu d'avance. Et, depuis la guerre de 1973, il a toujours soigneusement évité de provoquer Israël ou les Etats-Unis. Conscient du rapport des forces, il n'a aucun goût pour le romantisme révolutionnaire. Le général d'aviation est un joueur d'échecs qui calcule ses coups, mûrit longuement ses décisions et déteste l'improvisation. Déterminé à faire de la Syrie une puissance régionale, il n'hésite pas à modifier ses alliances chaque fois qu'il a le sentiment que la donne a changé. Après les accords de Camp David, alors que les partisans d'une paix négociée gagnent du terrain dans le monde arabe, il s'allie à l'Iran. Au lendemain de l'effondrement du bloc soviétique, il profite de la guerre du Golfe pour se placer dans le camp des alliés de l'Occident... Au Liban plus qu'ailleurs, il multiplie les volte-face, jouant les pompiers incendiaires, soutenant les uns, puis les autres, au gré des rapports de forces du moment. Avec un objectif qui, lui, ne varie pas : établir durablement sa tutelle sur le pays et faire admettre aux Occidentaux que son rôle y est incontournable. Il ne conçoit pas non plus qu'une organisation palestinienne puisse exister en dehors du giron syrien. « La cause palestinienne a toujours été la cause du peuple syrien tout entier », martèle-t-il.

Si la clef du nationalisme arabe est essentielle pour comprendre la politique régionale de Hafez el-Assad, la clef alaouite, elle, éclaire son comportement de chef d'Etat. Communauté pauvre ●●●



Damas, mai 1985.
Des civils accusés
d'espionnage au profit
d'Israël sont exécutés
publiquement
en plein centre-ville.



Le Parlement syrien,
novembre 1981.
Assad dirigeait
son pays d'une main
de fer, ne tolérant
aucune critique.

... et minoritaire (10 % de la population syrienne), les alaouites appartiennent à une secte dérivée du chiisme qui se caractérise par le culte d'Ali, gendre du prophète et quatrième calife. Longtemps, ils ont été considérés en Syrie comme des citoyens de seconde zone, notamment par la bourgeoisie sunnite des grandes villes. Il faudra d'ailleurs attendre un décret de 1952 pour que leur religion, et par conséquent leur identité culturelle, soit officiellement reconnue. Pendant trente ans, Hafez el-Assad va gouverner la Syrie en *zaim* (chef de tribu). Il ne fait confiance qu'à ceux de son clan. Majoritaires dans le pays, les sunnites occupent certes de nombreux postes au sein du gouvernement ou de l'administration. Mais les alaouites tiennent ce que les Syriens appellent la *mouassassate*, l'institution militaire, sur laquelle repose la sécurité du régime : brigades de défense, forces spéciales, renseignement militaire de l'armée de terre ou de l'air...

Une succession préparée

À quelques exceptions près, Assad aura plutôt évité de liquider ceux qu'il a chassés du pouvoir, préférant les laisser croupir en prison. Sans doute parce que, pour ce calculateur, un adversaire peut toujours devenir un allié. En revanche, chaque fois qu'il a eu le sentiment que son pouvoir était menacé, il a réprimé sans états d'âme. En 1982, la ville de Hama, qui s'est soulevée à l'appel des Frères musulmans, est pilonnée à l'artillerie lourde. Son centre historique est rasé au bulldozer. Bilan : au moins 10 000 morts. Il s'agit en fait du dernier épisode d'une véritable guerre livrée au régime alaouite, depuis 1979, par l'organisation islamiste, avec le soutien d'une partie de la bourgeoisie sunnite. Moins connue que la répression des insurgés de Hama, la mise au pas d'Alep, en 1980, aurait fait plus de 2 000 morts.

Mieux encore que dans son clan, c'est dans sa propre famille que Hafez el-Assad avait préparé sa succession. Il avait d'abord fait de son fils aîné, Bassel, son dauphin désigné et l'avait progressivement préparé à régner. Mais, en 1994, Bassel se tue dans un accident de voiture. Le président syrien décide alors de rappeler de Londres son fils cadet, Bachar... Sommé d'abandonner ses études d'ophtalmologie, le jeune homme reçoit une formation militaire accélérée qui fera de lui, cinq ans plus tard, un colonel. Parallèlement, les cadres de l'armée sont rajeunis, ce qui permet à Hafez el-Assad de mettre à la retraite plusieurs de ses vieux compagnons, qui craignent plus ou

moins ouvertement que le jeune ophtalmo n'ait pas la poigne nécessaire. Exit Hikmat Chehabi, Ali Douba et quelques autres... Et Bachar peaufine son image de M. Propre à la faveur d'une vaste campagne anticorruption. En mars dernier, un remaniement ministériel d'une ampleur sans précédent accompagne le limogeage du Premier ministre, Mahmoud al-Zohbi, mis en accusation quelques semaines plus tard pour détournement de fonds publics avant de se donner la mort. Bachar était programmé pour être « candidat » à la présidence – donc évidemment plébiscité – en 2006. Jusqu'au samedi 10 juin, il fallait, pour briguer le poste, avoir 40 ans révolus. Mais, quelques heures après la mort d'Assad, les dépu-

tés ont modifié à l'unanimité le texte constitutionnel. Il suffit désormais d'avoir 34 ans, l'âge de Bachar. Nommé officiellement chef des forces armées dès le lendemain par le vice-président, Abdel Halim Khaddam, qui assure l'intérim, le jeune homme paraît donc certain de succéder à son père. Reste à savoir pour combien de temps. Il y a fort à parier que la disparition du Sphinx de Damas ne réveille les ambitions, qu'elles soient alaouites – Rifaat el-Assad, le frère du président défunt, qui n'a jamais accepté sa mise à l'écart, se considère comme le successeur « légitime » – ou sunnites. Reste aussi à savoir la position qu'adoptera Bachar sur le processus de paix. « Le fait qu'Assad soit mort sans avoir fait la

La paix toujours différée



Le président américain espérait, avant la fin de son mandat, conclure une paix globale au Proche-Orient.

Jacques Chirac, seul dirigeant occidental ayant assisté aux funérailles d'Assad, a toujours considéré que la paix au Proche-Orient passait par Damas.



●●● moindre concession territoriale risque de rendre tout compromis extrêmement difficile à négocier pour son successeur », estime le journaliste syrien Okba Saleh, rédacteur en chef du mensuel *Al-Karrar*, édité à Paris.

Héritier fragile, Bachar devra consolider le front intérieur avant de s'aventurer sur la voie d'un accord négocié avec l'Etat hébreu. Là-dessus, tous les experts s'accordent : enlisé depuis janvier, le processus de paix israélo-syrien ne sortira pas de sitôt de l'ornière. Une affaire de mois ? « Un gel d'une durée indéterminée », avance, prudent, l'éditorialiste du quotidien israélien *Haaretz*, Zeev Schiff. Seul Assad père jouissait de l'autorité requise pour imposer aux siens d'hypothétiques concessions dans la bataille pour la restitution du plateau du Golan, occupé par Tshal depuis 1967, puis annexé de facto en décembre 1981. On voit mal son dauphin, à l'instant où il doit asseoir sa légitimité sous le regard méfiant de l'élite alaouite, céder là où le défunt patriarche manifesta toujours une intransigeance obstinée.

Ecueils sur la voie de la paix

Si toute embellie paraît illusoire à brève échéance, l'opinion israélienne mise sur le moyen terme. Moins dogmatique qu'un Hafez prisonnier de sa vision fossilisée des enjeux régionaux et planétaires, plus ouvert, plus au fait des réalités internationales, plus enclin au compromis, Bachar devrait, une fois son emprise sur le pouvoir affermie, faire preuve d'audace. Les plus confiants invoquent à cet égard son séjour à Londres et son attrait pour l'informatique, gage de modernité. A la différence de son prédécesseur, insistent-ils, le lionceau de Damas aurait admis comme un fait historique irréversible l'existence de l'Etat juif. Loin de figer la donne, soutient Patrick Seale, biographe et confident du disparu, le décès du Sphinx pourrait « ouvrir une nouvelle page, inciter à plus de souplesse ». Peu avare d'éloges envers le maître de Damas, Ehud Barak, chanteur de la « paix des braves », s'emploie pour sa part à émettre des signaux conciliants. Bien sûr, depuis l'échec, le 26 mars, à Genève, du sommet Clinton-Assad, le Premier ministre israélien a renoncé à tout espoir de boucler les pourparlers avant l'automne. Mais il prédit la « fin d'une époque » et l'émergence d'un « Moyen-Orient différent », et promet de continuer à « œuvrer pour la paix ». Pour autant, la mort de Hafez el-Assad n'escamote pas les écueils surgis sur la voie de la paix. A commencer par le tracé

Le pouvoir d'un clan



La famille Assad en 1969. Père de trois fils et d'une fille, Hafez el-Assad a perdu son fils aîné, Bassel, dans un accident de voiture en janvier 1994.



À son jeune frère Hafez el-Assad est entré au parti Baas, parti de la réunification arabe, dès l'âge de 17 ans.



Hafez et Rifik el-Assad. Le frère du président défunt n'a jamais accepté sa mise à l'écart et se considère comme le seul successeur « légitime ».

de la future frontière, au lendemain d'un retour du Golan à la mère patrie. La Syrie exige le respect de la ligne de partage du 4 juin 1967, en vigueur à la veille de la guerre de Six Jours. Ce qui lui permettrait de reprendre pied sur la rive nord-est du lac de Tibériade, où Assad père, comme il le rappelait volontiers, se baignait enfant. De même, Damas persiste à réclamer un engagement préalable de « l'ennemi sioniste » à céder jusqu'au dernier pouce le plateau fertile. Tout dépend, objecte Barak, des « arrangements de sécurité » futurs et de l'ampleur de la normalisation entre les deux Etats.

La mise en sommeil prolongée des tractations israélo-syriennes soulage, quoi qu'il en dise, Yasser Arafat. Car elle res-

taure la primauté du volet palestinien au sein du *peace process*. Et incite le parrain américain, en quête d'un succès diplomatique avant la fin du second mandat de Bill Clinton, à pousser les feux sur ce terrain-là. Longtemps, le président de l'Autorité palestinienne a craint de faire les frais d'une Pax syriana. Barak avait beau jeu de le contraindre à transiger, sous peine de rester en rade. Epoque en partie révolue. Mieux, la mort du dictateur alaouite affranchit le raïs au keffieh d'une pesante tutelle : celle d'un censeur implacable, héros irréductible de la cause du peuple sans terre, qui ne lui pardonnait pas de s'être engagé sur la voie d'une paix séparée. Donc de la trahison. Reste que le contentieux entre les ●●●

●●● deux hommes ne datait pas, loin s'en faut, des accords d'Oslo (1993).

Aux yeux d'Assad, la Palestine - Israël et territoires occupés confondus - n'était que la province méridionale de la Grande Syrie. C'est dire que la farouche volonté d'indépendance d'« Abou Amar » l'exaspérait au plus haut point. En 1965, pourtant, à l'heure du lancement de la lutte armée, Damas équipe les premiers commandos du Fatah d'Arafat. Mais, dès l'année suivante, le mentor tente de lui substituer Ahmed Jibril, réputé plus docile. Qui orchestre la rafle ? Le général Assad, alors ministre de la Défense, un temps résolu à pendre le futur patron de l'OLP. Dès lors, il n'aura de cesse, à coups de complots ou d'attentats, d'évincer, voire d'éliminer ce « prétendu Palestinien, lâche, fanfaron et criminel ». Dix ans plus tard, nouvel accroc. A leur demande, Damas vole au secours des milices chrétiennes libanaises, menacées par l'essor de la mouvance « palestino-progressiste ». En 1983, les troupes syriennes assiègent Arafat et ses fidèles dans leur réduit de Tripoli, dans le nord du Liban. Aux abois, l'éternel rescapé trouve le salut dans la fuite, à bord d'un bâtiment de la marine française.

« Fils de 60 000 putes »

La poignée de main échangée à la Maison-Blanche avec Itzhak Rabin lui vaudra de nouveaux anathèmes. Jusqu'à ce jour d'août 1999 où le ministre syrien de la Défense, Moustafa Tlass, traite le raïs de « fils de 60 000 putes ». Une autre menace plane : celle des factions palestiniennes du Front du refus, hébergées à Damas, hostiles à tout pacte avec les « sionistes ». Enclin ces temps derniers à les inviter à la discrétion, le pouvoir baassiste peut raviver leurs ardeurs en cas de besoin. Impatient d'apaiser cette haine vigilante, Yasser Arafat, qui n'a pas mis les pieds en Syrie depuis 1996, assistait le 13 juin aux obsèques d'Assad. Et a promis de « se tenir aux côtés des frères syriens dans l'épreuve ». Si elle dégage quelque peu l'horizon, ladite épreuve ne saurait à elle seule sortir de l'ornière les discussions sur le statut final des territoires cédés à l'Autorité. Reste que, dans la coulisse, les émissaires de Barak et ceux d'Arafat discutent âprement des frontières du futur Etat et du sort de Jérusalem, des réfugiés palestiniens et des colonies juives. Le jour même des funérailles, ils ont repris leur marathon à Washington, à la veille d'un nouveau tête-à-tête entre Clinton et le *chairman*. L'objectif : signer un document commun, même ●●●

●●● incomplet, avant l'échéance du 13 septembre.

Vu du Liban, réduit au rang de protectorat syrien, la disparition du despote de Damas amplifie le séisme déclenché, fin mai, par le retrait, unilatéral et précipité, du contingent israélien de la « zone de sécurité » instaurée dans le sud du pays. Témoignage, le désarroi du Premier ministre, Selim Hoss, pétrifié par cette « terrible catastrophe », prompt à pleurer celui qui fit don au pays du Cèdre de « ses efforts, sa pensée, sa raison et son cœur ». Dès le 11 juin, le dignitaire sunnite prenait le chemin de Damas, tout comme le président chrétien, Emile Lahoud, et le patron chiite du Parlement, Nabih Berri. Tous trois savent, il est vrai, à qui ils doivent leur titre. Sur ce front-là, un test instructif attend Bachar : l'attitude des intégristes chiites du Hezbollah, fer de lance de la résistance contre l'occupant et ses supplétifs locaux de l'ALS, soumis d'ordinaire aux injonctions de leurs parrains syrien et iranien. On verra alors si l'héritier bénéficie d'une autorité suffisante pour perpétuer la retenue affichée jusqu'alors par la guérilla.

Une image honorable

Le cadet du clan dispose dans son jeu d'un atout : sa connaissance du boursier libanais, que lui avait confié Hafez, soucieux de l'aguerrir avant de l'introniser. Le « Dr B. », à qui l'on prête un rôle décisif dans l'accession de Lahoud à la présidence libanaise, jouit d'ailleurs là-bas d'une image honorable. Bien meilleure en tout cas que celle du général Ghazi Canaan, chef du renseignement militaire, et du vice-président Khaddam, proconsuls honnis. Cela posé, son père lui lègue une main affaiblie, privée d'une carte maîtresse. Plus question, depuis l'évacuation par Tshal, de marchander le Golan contre le pacifisme tout neuf du Hezbollah. Il lui faudra donc plus que jamais justifier le maintien en terre étrangère, très lucratif il est vrai, de 35 000 soldats syriens. Sans doute Bachar devra-t-il, fût-ce en apparence, desserrer l'étreinte. Et s'abstenir de régner sans partage, en virtuose des déchirements libanais, comme le fit son père à compter de 1984, date du départ de la force multinationale. D'autant qu'au pays du Cèdre des voix s'élèvent, de plus en plus audibles, en faveur du départ des « amis de l'est » et de la reconquête d'une souveraineté authentique. De là à imaginer qu'Assad le jeune renonce aux privilèges de l'accord de Taef (1989), censé légitimer la tutelle militaire de Damas... De

même, la ruée vers le pays natal des travailleurs syriens, frappés de stupeur par la mort de l'autocrate, ne saurait faire illusion. Le deuil passé, ils reviendront au Liban, pays de cocagne à leurs yeux.

Nul doute que la « terrible catastrophe » hâtera d'autres ajustements régionaux, sans pour autant bouleverser le paysage. Avec l'Iran, le statu quo a toutes les chances de prévaloir. L'alliance scellée voilà vingt ans, lorsque la Syrie prit le parti de la République islamique contre l'Irak, frère ennemi baassiste, paraît solide. De même, le laborieux rapprochement amorcé avec Bagdad devrait suivre son cours. A condition d'oublier la bourde commise l'été dernier par le dauphin, coupable d'avoir qualifié Saddam Hussein de « bête humaine ». L'enterrement de son rival détesté aura au moins permis la venue d'un vice-président irakien, événement inédit depuis 1980, année du divorce. Le réouverture sélective de la frontière en 1997, l'accord conclu l'année suivante en vue de remettre en état l'oléoduc courant de Kirkouk au port de Baniyas témoignent d'un dégel. Mais il en faudra davantage pour effacer les rancœurs nées du ralliement d'Assad à la coalition anti-Saddam lors de l'invasion du Koweït (1990). Ralliement qui lui assura au demeurant la bienveillance de l'Occident et la gratitude argentée de l'Arabie Saoudite, principal bailleur de fonds de Damas. En s'engageant sans tarder à soutenir activement le successeur du défunt, Riyad aura rassuré ceux qu'inquiétaient les liens privilégiés noués jadis entre la famille royale wahhabite et l'« oncle Rifaat ». Pour peu qu'il en ait le pouvoir, Bachar el-Assad aura tout intérêt à rassurer l'Egypte de Hosni Moubarak, inquiète pour la stabilité de la Syrie, et à vider quelques querelles reçues en héritage. L'amitié qui le lie au roi Abdallah II de Jordanie, son aîné de trois ans, paraît propice à l'apaisement des tensions nées de la paix séparée conclue en 1994 avec Israël ou de l'activisme des Frères musulmans syriens, intraitables opposants installés à Amman. La tâche sera plus ardue sur le front turc. Bien sûr, le lâchage des rebelles du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et de leur gourou Abdullah Öcalan, expulsés fin 1998 de leur sanctuaire syrien, a conjuré le spectre d'un conflit armé entre Damas et Ankara. Mais la Syrie dénonce le rationnement des eaux de l'Euphrate, ressource vitale dont la Turquie maîtrise le débit grâce à un impressionnant réseau de barrages hydro-électriques.

Novice jeté dans l'arène plus tôt que prévu, le cadet de la tribu Assad mesure l'ampleur du défi. Le défi ? Il s'agira d'abord pour cet ophtalmo à la vocation contrariée d'imposer sa vision. ● V.H. et D.L.

Sectarian Issue Shadows Transition in Damascus

By Joseph Fitchett
International Herald Tribune

PARIS — The succession to Hafez Assad in Syria will be complicated by the fact that the country is largely run by a tiny minority, the Alawites.

Totaling fewer than 10 percent of the Syrian population, they have held sway over the Sunni Muslims, who constitute 75 percent of the nation, since Mr. Assad forged the current state apparatus in the 1970s.

This sectarian tension was absent in recent Arab generational changes in Jordan and Morocco. In addition, both countries were hereditary monarchies, where crown princes mounted the thrones unchallenged.

In contrast, Syria affords few institutional guarantees for the apparent new

leader, Bashar Assad. Both his strength and potential vulnerabilities stem from his origins in the Alawite clan, around which his father constructed the modern Syrian state.

His officially orchestrated rise has been buffeted by a leadership challenge by a banished uncle, Rifaat Assad. The exiled uncle has been consolidating his contacts with the Alawites in recent months as his brother's health weakened, reminding them of his role as the brutal defender of the Alawites' dominant position in Muslim Syria.

The uncle's forces repressed the biggest public challenge to the regime

when Sunni Muslims, organized by the fundamentalist Muslim Brothers, took over the Syrian town of Hama in 1982.

The town was razed by special troops commanded by Rifaat Assad in an operation in which 20,000 Syrian Muslims reportedly died.

Exiled to Europe as a potential rival to his brother, Rifaat Assad, 63, announced Monday that he "represents the true legitimacy and is ready to take up his responsibilities at any moment."

The message, broadcast in Arabic via the BBC, was really directed at the Alawites, according to an Arab ambassador in Paris. It was simple, he said: "Who do you trust for your survival? The butcher of Hama? Or a 34-year-old eye doctor who was just his father's boy?"

In seeking to make his son a "hereditary republican" ruler in a theoretically socialist state, President Assad, according to most analysts, wanted to preserve the link between leader and clan that has kept power out of the hands of Sunni Muslims in Syria.

Bashar Assad, analysts said, faces two imminent threats. First, the Syrian Army, where the Sunni Muslim forces are controlled by a handful of Alawite officers, may erupt in a bid to throw off Alawite hegemony.

Ali Bayanoni, a fundamentalist Sunni leader in exile in Jordan, recently predicted this outcome.

Also, said the Arab ambassador, "the Alawites themselves may worry that

Bashar is not tough enough to safeguard their interests."

The rivalry over leadership of the Alawites has been heating up for five years, ever since Hafez Assad's elder son and heir apparent, Basil, was killed in a car accident — and replaced in public by Bashar, who had until then had been an eye doctor. Last September in Latakia, the Mediterranean port that is the unofficial capital of the Alawites, the army rounded up followers of Rifaat Assad.

The potentially explosive dimensions of Syrian politics reflect the country's recent history in which Hafez Assad built up a powerful security machinery for the country, including its suzerainty over Lebanon, by relying on his own tightly knit sect of Alawites.

If the Alawite connection fails, "the country has only shallow political, religious or dynastic institutions to preserve unity," the Arab envoy said.

In the Arab world, Syria is comparable to neighboring Iraq, where a small clan of Sunni Muslims wield power in Baghdad over a Shiite Muslim majority.

In both countries, the leaders have built systems based on terror and then sought to pass power to sons in their mid-30s. In Iraq, Uday Hussein has battled for years with his brother Qusay. They have both battled with their uncles, the half brothers of President Saddam Hussein, who all come from the same Takriti clan of Sunnis.

If anything, these religious tensions — never discussed publicly by officials in these nominally secular states — are more acute in Syria because Alawites have historically been viewed as heretics by most Muslims. President Assad persuaded a leading Lebanese cleric in 1975 to issue a declaration saying that Alawites were Shiite Muslims.

Syria After Assad

Hafez Assad was a fixture of Syrian politics and diplomacy for so long that it is hard to imagine the Middle East without him. In 30 years of rule, he transformed Syria from a coup-prone pawn of stronger Arab states into a formidable regional power. His Soviet-equipped forces slashed across the Golan Heights and menaced Israel's survival in the early days of the 1973 war and have progressively taken over Lebanon since 1976. His fixation with reclaiming every inch of the Golan made him the last of Israel's Arab neighbors to resist a negotiated peace. His successor should shed this costly policy of confrontation and begin integrating Syria's closed and backward society into the 21st century world.

Family loyalists have moved quickly since the dictator's death on Saturday to install his son and designated heir, Bashar, as his successor, naming him the nation's top military commander and the ruling party's presidential candidate. But it is still to

be seen whether the younger Assad, a Western-educated ophthalmologist with limited political experience, can master the murderous intrigues of Damascus. Israel and the United States will need to watch closely for possible changes in Syrian security policies and negotiating positions.

Mr. Assad maintained his tight grip through a cold-blooded instinct for power. He surrounded himself with loyal military commanders from his minority Alawite religious group and assured his domination through the competing machinations of 15 intelligence agencies. When all else failed, he did not hesitate to use violence, as in his 1982 massacre of 10,000 residents of the rebellious city of Hama.

For a decade, Israeli prime ministers have tried to negotiate peace with this ruthless leader. They reasonably imagined that a deal swapping all or most of the Golan Heights for rigorous security guarantees would be easier to work out than a more complex ar-

range with the Palestinians involving Jerusalem, refugees and statehood. But each time, their hopes foundered on Mr. Assad's unyielding insistence that all territory held by Syria prior to June 1967 be returned. Israel says it is ready to concede the principle of full withdrawal, but wants border adjustments to assure continued control of the Sea of Galilee, its principal freshwater source. Mr. Assad refused, most recently when he met President Bill Clinton in Geneva in March.

No negotiating breakthrough is likely soon. But if Bashar Assad consolidates control, he might be able to make the deal his father could not. Re-establishing the precise June 1967 border had become a personal obsession for Hafez Assad. His son may have other priorities, like carefully opening up safety valves in Syria's Leninist police state and guiding its backward and isolated economy into the Internet age. Hafez Assad bequeathed Syria a dictator's legacy of militarism, repression and economic suffocation. His successor must offer Syrians and their neighbors something better.

—THE NEW YORK TIMES.

Agca's Return Stirs Questions For Turkey

By Stephen Kinzer
New York Times Service

ISTANBUL — When Mehmet Ali Agca, the man who shot Pope John Paul II in 1981, stepped off a plane at the Istanbul airport early Wednesday, he was carrying some of Turkey's darkest secrets.

Whether he will tell what he knows, however, is highly uncertain. During his 19 years in Italian prisons, he never gave a definitive account of why he shot the pope or who helped him plan the attack. Many Turks believe he will be no more forthcoming now that he is at home.

Mr. Agca, who had been serving a life term, was released Tuesday and extradited to Turkey. President Carlo Azeglio Ciampi of Italy said that he had ordered the release at the urging of the pope.

An armored convoy brought Mr. Agca to the high-security Kartal prison.

During the 1970s, Mr. Agca had been a part of a network of neofascist gunmen who wanted to purge Turkey of leftist influence. Some evidence has suggested that network was tied to far-right politicians, police commanders and intelligence officers.

Mr. Agca was arrested in 1979 in the murder

of a liberal newspaper editor, Abdi İpekçi. While awaiting trial, he escaped from prison.

He was convicted in absentia and sentenced to die, a sentence that was later commuted to 10 years in prison.

Mr. Agca, who is now 43 and gray-haired, has been just as silent about the murder of Mr. İpekçi as he was about his attack on the pope.

"His honest testimony would be an earthquake in Turkey," said Sami Kohen, a newspaper columnist who was one of Mr. İpekçi's closest friends. "He must know a great deal about the connection of the extreme right wing to intelligence services, police and other elements of what we call 'deep state.'"

In recent years, several major scandals have uncovered connections among Turkish gangsters, drug smugglers, far-right gunmen and powerful state officials.

Turks were confronted with the first evidence of these connections in 1996, when a top police commander and a convicted heroin smuggler known for far-right views were killed in a car crash. Questions about what they were doing together led to a parliamentary investigation and a series of stunning disclosures. Although the scandal profoundly shook Turkey, investigators later complained that the military and other security agencies blocked their work and did not allow them to follow many leads.

This year police made a series of raids on hideouts used by Hezbollah, a group fighting for a Muslim state in the largely Kurdish southeast. Under floorboards and in adjacent gardens they found the remains of dozens of people who had been tortured to death. Several news commentators and politicians have charged that Hezbollah worked closely

with security agents in southeastern Turkey, where hundreds of suspected Kurdish nationalists have disappeared or been murdered since civil war intensified there in the early 1990s.

Many of the killers active in Turkey during recent decades maintained ties to a far-right political party called Nationalist Action, known by its initials MHP. That party is now part of the ruling coalition, and its leader, Devlet Bahçeli, is deputy prime minister. Mr. Bahçeli says the party has renounced violence.

Nevertheless, Mehmet Ali Birand, a Turkish journalist who interviewed Mr. Agca three times in his Italian prison, said: "I don't think Agca is going to tell secrets, because he fears for his life."

"Don't forget that he was helped out of prison after he said that during his trial: He was going to tell what he knew," Mr. Birand said. "That got some people frightened, and they helped him escape."

"He's probably thinking that if he serves two or three years he'll be able to escape the rest through some kind of pardon or amnesty," he said. "He feels that there are people in the MHP who are keen on protecting their old allies."

Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit, a former journalist who had worked closely with Mr. İpekçi, thanked Italy for sending his killer back to Turkey.

"Italy's handing the terrorist Agca over to Turkish justice is a very important event," he said, "that could raise the curtain of secrecy from İpekçi's murder and illuminate some dark pages in our recent history."

Syria's New Ruler Puts His Training to Test

By Susan Sachs
New York Times Service

DAMASCUS — It was Bashar Assad's first real day at work as the ruler of Syria.

From 8 in the morning until 8 at night, as his father's coffin was wept over, prayed over and finally buried, he was constantly in the spotlight.

During the long memorial ceremonies Tuesday, it was Mr. Assad, standing tall and forlorn, who accepted all of the condolences on behalf of the country and his family.

Television stations in Syria and throughout the Arab world broadcast live nearly every minute of his debut as a political celebrity. He was sought out by visiting diplomats, princes and foreign ministers for hints about Syria's future direction. In the crowds of mourners around the country, people brandished as many pictures of him as of his father.

It was not supposed to be this way. For years the heir apparent to President Hafez Assad was his eldest son, Basil, a dashing and gregarious sportsman who was popular with his army buddies and accepted by many of his father's generation of political operatives.

Bashar Assad, the soft-spoken younger brother, an ophthalmologist by training, kept out of the limelight. He was a gangly bachelor and computer buff whose personal blueprint for life appeared to include nothing more public than running a quiet medical practice.

But Basil Assad's death in a high-speed car crash in 1994 suddenly called for a new game plan. Its centerpiece was Bashar Assad, the eldest surviving son.

Since the death of his father Saturday, this 34-year-old eye doctor who never held a government post has swiftly assumed at least the most visible accouterments of his father's power.

Although his military background is limited, he was named commander in chief of the armed forces. And while his political experience is nil, he was nominated as the only candidate in a field of one to assume the presidency in a week or two.

It has been an exhausting climax to his brief six-year apprenticeship in leadership. Death, once again, has changed Bashar Assad's plans.

Bashar Assad was born on Sept. 11, 1965, in Damascus, the third of Hafez



Khalid Hamn/Reuters

Bashar Assad, right, and his younger brother Maher at their father's funeral in Damascus. The new leader's apprenticeship began in 1994 when his older brother, Basil, died.

Assad's five children.

He was educated at one of the capital's elite high schools, Al Hurriyeh, where courses were taught in French as well as Arabic. After graduation in 1982, he studied medicine at Damascus University and received a degree as a general practitioner six years later. He trained in the specialty of ophthalmology at a military hospital in Damascus and left for England in 1992 to continue those studies.

Mr. Assad — long known to Syrians as "Doctor Bashar" — was considered by his Damascus contemporaries to be a shy young man very much in the shadow of his brother. He came to the attention of most Syrians only after Basil Assad's death, when their father summoned him home from London. He never returned to his studies.

Instead, he was sent to a military academy north of Damascus to acquire the necessary credentials for power and set on the path to become the new ruler-in-waiting.

President Assad slowly introduced the new heir-apparent to the outside world, sending him on trips to meet the leaders and journalists of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman and, in the riskiest instance, France. In Paris he made headlines by exploring the city without bodyguards.

As he accepted the condolences of hundreds of visitors and well-wishers Tuesday, huddling in private with some like the U.S. secretary of state, Madeleine Albright, and President Jacques Chirac of France, his education seemed to have reached jet-propelled speed.

He had appeared to acknowledge, not long before his father's death, that his preparation for power was not yet complete. In an interview last week with the London-based daily newspaper Asharq al Awsat, Bashar Assad listed his three personal conditions for accepting a nomination from the ruling Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party for a political role: his own sense of worthiness, the confidence of others and the articulation of a personal vision of what he could bring to the country.

"I have a lot of respect for experience," he was quoted as saying, "and I am going to try always to acquire it."

Most Syrians have expressed public confidence in Mr. Assad, even while conceding that he is young and inexperienced. They know him as the director of the Syrian Scientific Society for Information Technology, which offers computer courses, although only a small percentage of Syr-

ians can afford luxury items like computers.

Thanks to an orchestrated campaign in the state news media to credit him with fighting corruption and promoting a more open economy, he also is seen as a beacon of hope for a new, more relaxed Syria.

He recently said in an interview with The Washington Post that he personally favored lifting all of hidebound Syria's restrictions on what people read, watch on television or discover on the Internet.

"As a point of principle, I would like everybody to be able to see everything," he was quoted as saying. "The more you see, the more you improve." But others, he added, have their reservations.

One of his challenges will be to avoid disappointing the legions of Syrians who are his age and younger.

"There are very high expectations, because he's young and open and wants to give more liberty and democracy," said Youssef Jedani, a member of Parliament and leader of a tiny Arab nationalist party.

But, like his father, Mr. Assad is likely to go slow rather than upset the traditionalists who control the military and much of the state-run economy.

"I think he'll follow the same rhythm as his father," Mr. Jedani said. "You can't go fast here. You have to wait for things to develop."

Dysfonctionnement au sein du gouvernement français à propos du successeur du président syrien, Bachar El Assad

POUR L'IMAGE du gouvernement français, cela fait désordre. Entre les déclarations, mercredi 14 juin, du porte-parole du gouvernement, Daniel Vaillant, sur la capacité de Bachar El Assad, successeur plus que probable de son père à la présidence syrienne, à exercer durablement le pouvoir, et les démentis du ministre des affaires étrangères, Hubert Védrine, il y a eu comme un dysfonctionnement embarrassant. Rendant compte, en fin de matinée, de la réunion du conseil des ministres, M. Vaillant a attribué à M. Védrine des déclarations selon lesquelles « la question qui se pose naturellement [à propos de la Syrie après la mort d'Hafez El Assad] c'est de savoir si [Bachar] pourra exercer durablement [le pouvoir] et si les évolutions souhaitables seront possibles sous son autorité ». Toujours d'après Daniel Vaillant, le chef de la diplomatie avait égale-

ment relevé « l'incertitude concernant la reprise des discussions » avec Israël. « Aura-t-il l'autorité pour reprendre les discussions (...), pour parvenir à un accord, ce qui est évidemment souhaitable ? », s'est interrogé le ministre des affaires étrangères, cité par Daniel Vaillant, à propos du fils de Hafez El Assad.

C'est faux, a affirmé quelques heures plus tard le ministère des affaires étrangères. « Les propos qui ont été rapportés n'ont pas été tenus », a déclaré la porte-parole, Anne Gazeau-Secret, avant que M. Védrine lui-même les démente, au terme d'un entretien avec son homologue danois, Niels Helveg Petersen. « Nous souhaitons (...) que Bachar El Assad, si c'est lui qui est confirmé comme président, confirme le choix stratégique fait par la Syrie depuis 1991, qui est le choix de la paix. » « C'est entre cette orientation stratégique et le fait de conclure la

paix que se situe la difficulté. Nous souhaitons que la négociation [israélo-syrienne] puisse reprendre et nous l'encourageons. » C'est de fait la position officielle des autorités françaises, mais M. Vaillant n'a pas arbitrairement attribué à M. Védrine des propos qu'il n'aurait jamais tenus. Le porte-parole du gouvernement lisait en effet des notes transmises par le Quai d'Orsay, mais n'a visiblement pas su distinguer ce qui était dicible de ce qui ne l'était pas.

ESPOIR DE PAIX

Les interrogations sur l'après Hafez El Assad en Syrie et sur la capacité de son fils, jeune et relativement inexpérimenté, à tenir les rênes du pouvoir sont les mêmes partout dans le monde. Mais officiellement, la plupart des gouvernements ont choisi de soutenir le futur président, pour la stabilité de

la Syrie et dans l'espoir de voir aboutir le processus de paix engagé avec Israël.

La France est le seul pays occidental à avoir donné une nette visibilité à cet espoir. Après avoir longuement pesé le pour et le contre, le président de la République, Jacques Chirac, est en effet l'unique chef d'Etat occidental à avoir fait, en compagnie de M. Védrine — c'est-à-dire d'un représentant du gouvernement socialiste — le déplacement à Damas pour les obsèques d'Hafez El Assad. Bien que critiqué au sein de l'opposition et de la majorité, ce déplacement est justifié par le fait que, via le Liban, sous tutelle syrienne, Paris a mis un pied dans le processus de paix, et que, selon de fortes probabilités, la France se prépare à envoyer des casques bleus au Pays du Cèdre.

Mouna Naïm

L'héritage de Hafez el-Hassad

La fin du rêve de la « Grande Syrie »

PAR JEAN DANIEL

Tous les hommages rendus à Hafez el-Assad au moment de sa mort sont-ils rituels ou hypocrites ? Cette volonté manifeste d'oublier un despotisme sanglant et même d'en souligner les aspects positifs sont-ils sincères ? Paradoxalement, il faut répondre non à la première question et oui à la seconde. L'Israélien Ehoud Barak n'est pas hypocrite lorsqu'il dit regretter, de soldat à soldat, la « fermeté loyale » d'un adversaire dans la négociation. Et Bill Clinton est sans doute sincère lorsqu'il dit avoir gardé un « bon souvenir » des entretiens avec le président syrien. Quant à Jacques Chirac, seule personnalité occidentale à se déplacer à Damas, on voudrait être sûr qu'il manifeste plus, en se rendant là-bas, la volonté de la France de conserver un rôle dans la région que l'oubli d'un certain nombre de graves déconvenues dans les rapports franco-syriens, en particulier l'assassinat – tout de même ! – de l'un de nos plus grands ambassadeurs, Louis Delamare, sans parler des prises d'otages, dont le chercheur Michel Seurat devait ne pas revenir. En réalité, on sait que les Américains, les Français et les Israéliens se sont longtemps comportés comme si aucune paix n'était possible au Proche-Orient sans l'accord d'Hafez el-Hassad et de sa puissante armée.

Mais ce n'est pas la première fois que le bilan d'un homme fort n'est pas dressé avec des conclusions seulement négatives. Voyez Staline. Voyez Tito. Et même Milosevic ! Les opinions publiques sont schizophrènes. Elles haïssent le despotisme mais la tentation est forte, devant la perspective du chaos, de la guerre civile et de l'effondrement d'une société, de regretter la force, même injuste, d'un règne, surtout s'il a duré longtemps.

Qu'ont retenu pendant deux jours les grands commentateurs anglo-saxons ? Presque toujours le vide que va laisser Hafez el-Assad, comme si, lorsque ce vide était rempli par lui, son pouvoir autocratique s'en était trouvé justifié. Il est vrai que pour ce qui est du maintien de l'ordre, du conservatisme machiavélique et du réalisme tordu, ce despote n'avait pas son pareil. Au physique d'abord, il paraissait entouré d'un grillage de silence. Long comme un personnage de Bernard Buffet, sec et luciférien comme le maître du « Chien des Baskerville », il ne sortait du mystère

qu'à son avantage et c'était pour mieux y réintroduire l'ambiguïté. Il aimait les tête-à-tête avec des interlocuteurs qu'il tenait sous son charme pendant plus de quatre heures, en suscitant chez eux des propos séduits, déconcertés et eux-mêmes ambigus.

Kissinger écrit : « *Assad était de taille moyenne. Ce qui frappait d'abord dans son visage expressif, c'étaient deux yeux sombres, étincelants, et sa moustache. L'arrière de son crâne semblait jaillir tout droit de son cou, ce qui donnait l'impression que le président syrien était toujours un peu penché en avant, prêt à fondre sur quelque interlocuteur imprudent.* »

Après avoir décrit la sobriété des gestes du président syrien, Kissinger lui donne la parole : « *Assad me dit que son pays avait été trahi pendant la Première Guerre mondiale par la Turquie, après celle-ci par la Grande-Bretagne, puis par la France et, plus récemment, par les Etats-Unis qui avaient créé l'Etat d'Israël.* » Et Kissinger ajoute : « *Quand un peuple est convaincu que tous ses ennemis viennent de l'extérieur, une suspicion maladroite lui tient lieu de caractère national. La Syrie n'a pas la foi de l'Egypte dans sa mission civilisatrice, ses dirigeants doivent chercher querelle à autrui pour subsister. Ils aspirent à diriger le monde arabe sans avoir la force de le proclamer. Ils s'accrochent donc de façon provocante à la pureté de leur cause tout en reconnaissant douloureusement la nature ingrate des exigences pratiques de leur mise en œuvre.* » (« Les Années orageuses », tome 2, p. 956.)

Kissinger avait tendance à tout attribuer du comportement de Hafez el-Assad à sa crainte d'un prétendu complot extérieur et international. Erreur. Car Hafez el-Assad, s'il avait l'obsession des menaces d'ingérence venues de ses voisins, n'a pas cessé de redouter ses ennemis de l'intérieur. Il n'a jamais oublié qu'il faisait partie d'une minorité, les Alaouites, qui a toujours été méprisée et souvent persécutée. Assad n'a jamais oublié qu'il ne devait la stabilité de son règne qu'à sa capacité à diviser ses ennemis, à accorder à chacun, tour à tour, son soutien, quitte à exercer sa terreur sur tous.

Il fit de même au Liban, pays vassal, où il intimidait volontiers les élites qui admiraient son « immense intelligence et sa mémoire fabuleuse » (cité par notre confrère britannique Patrick Searle, légèrement inconditionnel). Pays dans lequel il refusait

de dépêcher un ambassadeur pour bien prouver aux Libanais et surtout, aussi, aux Turcs, aux Anglais, aux Français et aux Américains qu'il était chez lui à Beyrouth. C'est dans ce pays qu'il a distribué des protections orientées non par la proximité idéologique mais par le seul calcul des rapports de force. Un analyste anglais affirme que Hafez el-Assad avait fait sien le conseil donné par Disraeli à la reine Victoria : « *L'Empire doit toujours être du côté des vaincus.* » Non parce que l'empire en question était sensible à on ne sait quelle chrétienne compassion mais parce que le vainqueur, quel qu'il fût, constituait un futur rival et un ennemi potentiel.

Ainsi Hafez el-Assad commença-t-il par protéger les chrétiens maronites de Beyrouth contre les Palestiniens, qui avaient installé au Liban un Etat dans l'Etat, puis s'est retourné contre eux quand les chrétiens ont prétendu instaurer un Liban indépendant. Enfin, lorsque les Palestiniens se sont affrontés aux Jordaniens lors des journées du fameux Septembre noir, Hafez el-Assad refusa de leur porter secours et des milliers de Palestiniens furent massacrés. Deux exemples édifiants montrent bien la prudence rusée et la stratégie cynique de l'ancien général d'aviation. D'abord, la tranquille perfidie avec laquelle il va prendre parti pour l'Irak contre l'Irak pendant l'interminable guerre (huit ans) qui fera près d'un million de morts. Or c'est l'Irak qui est le voisin et le proche. Il est arabiste et « socialiste ». Mais Saddam Hussein est accusé de protéger l'aile syrienne du parti Baas syro-irakien et de comploter contre Assad. Ensuite, la détermination avec laquelle, deux ans après la chute du mur de Berlin et après s'être douloureusement résigné à la disparition du grand allié et protecteur soviétique, Assad s'est adapté aux nouveaux rapports de force dans le monde et au règne de la *pax americana*. Au point d'aller, dans la guerre du Golfe, lui, le grand leader du radicalisme anti-israélien, anti-occidental et anti-impérialiste, jusqu'à participer aux opérations contre l'Irak, son voisin. Dans celui que Kissinger appelle « le Bismarck du monde arabe », il y a, en fait, beaucoup de Louis XI.

Comment succéder à un homme pareil ? C'est

la question que l'on se pose chaque fois qu'un homme disparaît après un long règne. Ce n'est plus l'homme qu'on loue, c'est la longévité de l'ordre qu'il a instauré. Voilà donc, ici aussi, comme en Jordanie, comme au Maroc et bientôt, semble-t-il, comme en Arabie Saoudite, un jeune dauphin, Bachar el-Assad, inconnu avant la mort en 1994, dans un accident d'auto, de son frère aîné qui avait été formé pour succéder à son père.

Quel est l'héritage d'Assad ? Il doit consolider son pouvoir nouveau à l'intérieur avant de changer quoi que ce soit dans la politique, obstinément opposée et à la guerre et à la paix, de son père. Hafez el-Assad était un fanatique du statu quo. Bachar ne peut rien faire d'autre que de s'efforcer de le maintenir. De plus, la pérennité de son propre pouvoir dépend de la façon dont la minorité alaouite va se faire accepter en devenant le symbole fédérateur des factions divisées des musulmans sunnites. Il va lui falloir, comme son père, obtenir d'être déclaré « *musulman exemplaire* » par les autorités religieuses et majoritaires de Damas. Le problème va être de garder le Liban, source de richesses et poumon d'oxygène de la Syrie, sous la tutelle militaire indiscutée du nouveau président syrien.

Au Liban, tout est possible. Pas forcément le pire. Les Iraniens n'ont pas un intérêt immédiat à inciter leurs protégés du Hezbollah à s'agiter sur les nouvelles frontières libano-israéliennes. Les Palestiniens du Liban n'ont pas intérêt non plus à risquer, par des actes contraires à la souveraineté libanaise, de voir le Hezbollah se retourner contre eux. Enfin, l'incroyable obsession juridique avec laquelle les Israéliens ont étudié le retrait de leurs forces, en se référant aux cartes les plus anciennes sur les frontières libanaises, cette obsession peut, en mettant le droit international et les forces d'interposition de leur côté, décourager les imprudences qui seraient fatales pour le pays libanais tout entier. Cet optimisme n'est pas entièrement déraisonnable.

Cela dit, on ne peut rien comprendre à Hafez el-Assad ni à l'héritage qu'il laisse à son fils Bachar si l'on n'évoque pas constamment l'histoire du projet de « Grande Syrie ». Le président de la République syrienne n'a cessé de se sentir investi de la mission, d'en conserver vivant le rêve et de se comporter comme si elle existait déjà et qu'elle était acceptée par tous. Mais pour cela, il faut remonter loin en arrière.

D'abord, comme toujours, une carte. La Syrie a une frontière avec l'Irak, avec Israël, avec la Jordanie, avec le Liban et avec la Turquie. Une carte et une méthode : dans plusieurs parties du monde, il n'y a pas d'alliance entre voisins. Il n'y en a qu'avec les voisins des voisins. Où s'applique ce

vieux principe cher aux pays des Balkans ? Ici, à la Turquie et à Israël. Ces deux voisins de la Syrie ont conclu un accord par-dessus le territoire et la tête des Syriens. Ces derniers ne pouvaient pas le prendre bien. Cela date de 1996.

Après la géographie, l'histoire. 1904 : projet d'une émancipation arabe de la tutelle ottomane. 1916 : « grande révolte arabe » contre les Turcs. 1917 : promesse faite par les Britanniques de la formation, sous leur influence, d'un « grand royaume arabe » confié à Hussein, chérif de La Mecque et membre de la puissante famille hachémite. 1920 : les Français s'opposent à ce grand royaume sous tutelle britannique et obtiennent les protectorats de Syrie et du Liban. Emotion à Damas. Le grand royaume arabe devait se constituer autour de Damas, qui fut la capitale du premier empire musulman, celui des Omeyyades (640-750). La « Grande Syrie » devait englober la Syrie d'aujourd'hui, le Liban, la Palestine, la Jordanie et même l'Irak.

Les notables et les militants de Damas n'ont jamais pardonné aux Français d'avoir torpillé le projet d'un grand royaume arabe et leur ont toujours reproché la création d'un Liban indépendant de la Syrie. Cela peut-il expliquer l'éventuelle apparition chez les Syriens d'un sentiment antifrançais ? Pour l'ensemble de la population, oui, encore que ce sentiment ait quelque peu disparu. Mais en aucune façon pour Hafez el-Assad, dont nous avons rappelé plus haut qu'il faisait partie des Alaouites, minorité chiite jusqu'alors toujours réprouvée et parfois persécutée. Non seulement, pendant le protectorat, ces Alaouites ne s'opposèrent pas aux Français mais ils s'engagèrent nombreux dans les troupes coloniales françaises, ce qui leur a valu de constituer, après l'indépendance de la Syrie, une grande partie des cadres de l'armée syrienne et d'occuper une position tout à fait dominante, aujourd'hui encore, autour de l'un des leurs, le général d'aviation, chef des armées et président de la République Hafez el-Assad.

Dans quelle mesure les impératifs de la géographie et

les messages de l'Histoire peuvent-ils s'incarner chez un jeune ophtalmologue laïque, formé à Londres, soucieux de modernité et découvrant simultanément les délices et les poisons du pouvoir ? Je prends pour ma part le risque de soutenir que le rêve de la Grande Syrie – réunion du Liban, de la Jordanie et de la Palestine, sous la forte tutelle de Damas – est en train de disparaître. La Syrie va bientôt n'avoir qu'elle-même pour souci et, pour ce pays exsangue, c'est amplement suffisant.

J. D.

ON NE SUCCÈDE PAS
A UN HOMME DE
LA STATURE DE HAFEZ
EL-ASSAD ? SANS
DOUTE. LE PIRE EST A
CRAINdre AU LIBAN ?
C'EST POSSIBLE. MAIS
AVEC LA DISPARITION
DU PRÉSIDENT SYRIEN
S'ÉVANOUIT LE RÊVE DE
LA « GRANDE SYRIE »,
QUI FERMAIT CE PAYS À
TOUT AVENIR DE PAIX.
N'OUBLIONS PAS QUE
C'EST LA DISPARITION
DU RÊVE D'UN « GRAND
ISRAËL » QUI A PERMIS
LA NÉGOCIATION
ET PARFOIS LA PAIX.

Il était l'un des derniers leaders du nationalisme arabe **HAFEZ EL-ASSAD, DICTATEUR ET ILLUSIONNISTE**

Maître d'un petit pays sans ressources et menacé d'éclatement, le président syrien a réussi, par la ruse et la terreur, à gagner une place incontournable dans les affaires du Proche-Orient. Mais la Syrie l'a payé cher...

Ce 12 juin, Hafez el-Assad a dû se retourner dans son cercueil. Avant même qu'il ne soit porté en terre, le beau mécanisme qu'il avait mis en place pour assurer sa succession en la personne de son fils Bachar risquait de se dérégler. Rifaat el-Assad, le frère banni, annonçait à partir de son exil son retour en force, contestait le choix de Bachar, se portait candidat et en appelait au peuple syrien. Fronde sérieuse ou rébellion sans lendemain ? Signe en tout cas que le Parrain de Damas était mort et bien mort. Car lui vivant, rien ni personne n'aurait osé bouger.

Il détestait le désordre et la contestation. Par dessus tout, il avait horreur de l'exaltation et des sursauts de passion si fréquents en Orient. Une méfiance qui venait de loin. Lorsque le jeune Hafez, 9^e des 11 enfants d'une modeste famille alaouite du nord de la Syrie, entre à 16 ans dans la vie politique, il adhère tout naturellement au nouveau parti qui vient de se constituer et dont le berceau est la Syrie : le Baas, parti de la renaissance arabe. On y parle de révolution populaire, de droits des femmes, de laïcité et d'arabisme, un programme séduisant pour un jeune homme ambitieux mais pauvre, appartenant à un groupe religieux minoritaire et méprisé. Très vite, la nouvelle idéologie baassiste flambe et rallie la jeunesse dans tout le monde arabe, du Caire à Damas et de Bagdad à Alger. On retrouve parmi ses cadres dirigeants de nombreux chrétiens, comme le fondateur Michel Aflak, mais aussi des druzes, des chiites, des ismaéliens et des alaouites, tous minoritaires en pays d'Islam. Tous rêvent de bouleversements révolutionnaires et font de l'unité arabe leur credo. Le nationalisme arabe, le socialisme et la laïcité ne sont-ils pas les seuls moyens, pour eux, de dépasser leur marginalité ?

Le jeune Hafez el-Assad sera donc, à ses débuts, un baassiste militant. Mais tendance dure plutôt



S'il fallait trouver un fil rouge dans la vie d'Assad, ce serait sans doute celui-là : fanatique de l'ordre, il détestait le mouvement qui déplace les lignes.

que débridée. A 22 ans, il devient pilote et embrasse la carrière militaire seule voie de promotion sociale pour un jeune homme pauvre. Au même moment, Nasser au Caire dépose le roi Farouk et prend le pouvoir au nom des Officiers libres, sous le slogan « *Peuple, relève la tête !* ». L'époque est épique, grandiose, agitée.

Mais cette agitation se paie. La Syrie, où l'aile

gauchiste du Baas exerce le pouvoir, est devenue ingouvernable. Les coups d'État s'y succèdent – il y en aura onze en vingt ans. Factions, purges, sécessions s'y multiplient. On parle toujours d'unité arabe mais une tentative d'union entre Syrie et Egypte, de 1958 à 1961, échoue et Nasser lui-même baisse les bras. Les complots contre Damas se nouent à Beyrouth, au bar de l'hôtel Saint-Georges, rendez-vous luxueux de tous les espions de haut vol du Moyen-Orient. La Syrie est devenue le terrain de football politique où s'exercent les Turcs, les Irakiens, les Saoudiens, les Libanais, les Kurdes, les Algériens et les hommes d'affaires venus du monde entier.

Hafez el-Assad, qui a vite gravi les échelons de la hiérarchie militaire, fait une brutale entrée en politique en 1966, en prenant le pouvoir à Damas avec un petit groupe d'officiers putschistes. Mais c'est le terrible choc de la défaite de juin 1967 face à Israël (il est alors ministre de la Défense) qui ancre en lui une certitude : il se promet de ramener l'ordre dans une Syrie déboussolée et de stopper les ingérences extérieures qui mettent en danger l'existence même du pays. Arrivé au pouvoir en 1970, il agit sur deux plans : à l'intérieur, il isole les gauchistes du Baas et instaure un régime autoritaire, plus nassérien que baassiste, à base de police secrète, de parti unique et de militarisation de la société, un mélange énergique utilisé sans modération. A l'extérieur, il décide de frapper préventivement ses voisins trop agressifs, utilisant tous les moyens pour diviser, attiser les haines, dresser ses ennemis les uns contre les autres.

Sous la poigne de fer du nouveau chef, le pays se calme. Les Syriens sont rassurés. Assad va patiemment « corriger », tel est son terme, les excès de ses prédécesseurs. Ils avaient supprimé la mention de l'islam, religion de l'État ? Assad le rétablit, comme religion obligatoire « du chef de



Reuters/Naip

13 juin, transfert de la dépouille mortelle du président Assad avant les obsèques. Qu'est-ce qui fait qu'on oublie ses erreurs, souvent dramatiques, pour ne retenir que son charisme et reconnaître son autorité ?

Il est évident, même pour Assad, que le pays a besoin d'ouverture sur le monde, de modernisation, de réformes économiques. Mais l'exemple russe inquiète : peut-on, dans un système aussi rigide, aussi rouillé, libéraliser sans tout faire sauter ? Assad est mort sans avoir voulu franchir le pas. A ses successeurs de tenter la mission impossible...

Enfin, dans le domaine où Assad est le plus attentif, c'est à dire l'armée, les désillusions ont succédé aux défaites, mettant à mal l'orgueil national et les budgets militaires. Aux guerres de 1967 et 1973, perdues contre Israël, s'ajoutera en 1982 une catastrophe mal connue, lorsque Sharon, fonçant vers Beyrouth, écrase au passage, en quelques heures, les rampes de missiles SAM et les radars anti-aériens et détruit une centaine d'avions syriens et plus de 80 les chars syriens, privés de protection aérienne. Potion amère, qui a laissé l'armée traumatisée. Et qui explique en partie pourquoi Assad sera le dernier à tenter l'accord avec Israël, pour le refuser ensuite.

Le bilan d'Assad, après trente ans de pouvoir, semble donc largement négatif. Pourtant, le leader syrien apparaît dans le monde arabe, et dans le monde tout court, comme un modèle, un mythe. On célèbre sa sagesse, on le croit incontournable. Lorsqu'il s'agit de négocier la paix du Moyen-Orient, les chefs d'Etat se pressent à sa porte et les

divas internationales supportent sans faiblir des entretiens interminables – la première fois que Kissinger lui rendit visite, son entourage alarmé pensa, au bout de six heures, qu'il avait été enlevé.

Assad était-il un illusionniste ? Qu'est-ce qui fait qu'on oublie ses erreurs souvent dramatiques pour ne retenir que son charisme, reconnaître son autorité et considérer la Syrie, pays pauvre, petit, sous-développé, dernier vestige existant d'un modèle soviétique périmé, comme une grande puissance ?

La magie tenait à son équation personnelle. Il inspirait le respect parce que, contrairement à d'autres chefs d'Etat arabes, il méprisait l'argent, vivait très simplement, et qu'il était l'homme d'une seule passion, la politique. Il a toujours fasciné par son calme et son sang-froid : lorsqu'un islamiste lui jeta une grenade dégoupillée, en 1983, il ne broncha pas et se contenta de la repousser du pied. La grenade déchiqueta son garde du corps mais Assad, impavide, reçut ensuite les visiteurs prévus, sans même enlever sa chemise ensanglantée. Légendes ? Peut-être, mais révélatrices.

Ce qui a fait sa force fera aussi la faiblesse de ses successeurs. Bachar, s'il lui succède, ne pourra plus jouer le même air sur le même instrument. Le Parrain est mort, une nouvelle Syrie devra se révéler. C'est peut-être, pour le Proche-Orient, le moment de tous les dangers.

JOSETTE ALLA

La paix en suspens, l'unité en question...

Bachar, le dauphin menacé

PAR GHASSAN SALAME*

Désigné par son père, Bachar el-Assad a tout à prouver. Sans expérience, il doit faire face à la vieille garde et à une société syrienne qui réclame des réformes



Le Nouvel Observateur. – Assad disparu, qui va lui succéder ?

Ghassan Salame. – Son fils Bachar. Du moins c'est ce qu'Assad avait décidé et qu'il a soigneusement, depuis six ans, mis en place. En trois étapes. D'abord, il a introduit son fils dans l'armée, pièce maîtresse du pouvoir syrien, en lui assurant une promotion extrêmement rapide puisque Bachar est aujourd'hui général et commandant en chef. Ensuite, Assad a décapité tous les services de renseignements – il y en a au moins cinq – et il a placé à leur tête des gens plus jeunes, ceux que Bachar n'était pas obligé d'appeler « mon oncle ». Ont été ainsi exclus Rifaat, le propre frère d'Assad, Ali Douba, chef des renseignements militaires, Mohammed Nassif, chef des renseignements intérieurs et bien d'autres. Leurs successeurs savent qu'ils doivent tout à Bachar et sont liés à son sort. Enfin,

Assad avait commencé à conforter la position de Bachar dans le parti Baas, troisième pilier du pouvoir, en écartant là aussi la vieille garde. Bachar devrait être intronisé par le congrès du parti le 17 juin.

N. O. – La dernière phase est restée en suspens ?

G. Salame. – Dans un premier temps elle a été au contraire accélérée. Le Parlement s'est réuni trois heures après la mort d'Assad, pour modifier la Constitution et ramener à 34 ans l'âge du futur chef de l'Etat, l'âge exact de Bachar. Ensuite le 17 juin, le congrès du parti intronisera Bachar ; le 25 juin, le Parlement en prendra acte et ouvrira la voie à un plébiscite. Mais un plébiscite pour

Bachar el-Assad devra affronter des divisions prévisibles au sein de son propre clan, un refus de principe de la succession dynastique, voire une impatiente exigence d'ouverture.

quand ? Tout le problème est là. L'intérim sera-t-il court ou long ? S'il est court tout sera bouclé en juillet. Sinon, peut commencer pour Bachar un long purgatoire, qui serait la période de tous les dangers, qu'il s'agisse de renégociation des conditions de l'accession de Bachar au pouvoir ou même d'une réouverture de la succession.

N. O. – Au profit de qui ? Existe-t-il un homme fort en Syrie, qui attende son heure ?

G. Salame. – Le système mis en place par Assad pourrait être résumé à « Bachar ou le chaos ». Bachar aura cependant à affronter des divisions prévisibles au sein de son propre clan, un refus de principe de la succession dynastique, voire une expression plus impatiente de l'exigence d'ouverture.

N. O. – Que restera-t-il du long règne d'Hafez el-Assad ? Comment s'opéreront les nécessaires réformes ?

G. Salame. – Assad a redonné à son peuple la fierté, à son pays une dignité et une autorité. Il a consolidé la société syrienne en intégrant ses minorités dans un fort sentiment national. Cela restera son héritage. Les indispensables réformes peuvent se produire selon deux scénarios : à l'intérieur du système ancien, des aménagements interviendraient entre les barons, leurs fils et leurs neveux. Mais la marge de manœuvre est très limitée : Assad était le seul à réfléchir, à penser, à décider, et sa mort laisse un vide immense.

Pour les politiques en place, oser penser par eux-mêmes était déjà un début de rébellion ! Ce premier scénario ne peut donc aller bien loin ni répondre aux nouveaux impératifs de changement en Syrie. L'alternative serait un mouvement de contestation qui viendrait de la société civile et qui imposerait une ouverture, non par le haut mais par le bas. Certes cette société a été longtemps écrasée par le système et coupée du monde. Mais aujourd'hui le pays a changé. Les Syriens apprennent désormais ce qui se passe chez eux en lisant les journaux libanais, en regardant les télévisions par satellite, en se connectant aux serveurs libanais d'internet. Ils ont ainsi accès à la presse israélienne et c'est sur internet qu'ils ont découvert, lors des dernières négociations avec Israël, l'existence des clauses concernant l'accès au lac de Tibériade, dont la presse syrienne n'avait jamais parlé. Assad n'avait pas vu venir cette évolution. En cela il était un homme d'un autre temps.

N. O. – Excluez-vous l'hypothèse d'une crise violente, d'un coup d'Etat, militaire ou pas ?



ASSASSINATS, ATTENTATS, PRISES D'OTAGES...

Terreur au dedans, terrorisme au dehors

Malgré sa participation – il est vrai modeste – à la guerre du Golfe aux côtés des Etats-Unis et de leurs alliés, la Syrie est toujours considérée par le Département d'Etat américain comme l'un des Etats qui « soutiennent le terrorisme », au même titre que l'Irak, l'Irak, la Libye et la Corée du Nord. Damas a certes fait, aux yeux de Washington, quelques pas dans la bonne direction, au cours des dernières années, en demandant aux chefs des groupes terroristes installés sur son territoire de limiter leurs actions au terrain politique, ou en participant avec la France, Israël, les Etats-Unis et le Liban au « groupe de surveillance » chargé de prévenir les attaques contre les civils de part et d'autre de la frontière israélo-libanaise. Mais ces gestes sont jugés nettement insuffisants au regard du soutien politique, de l'asile et de l'appui logistique que la Syrie continue d'offrir au Hezbollah libanais et à plusieurs groupes palestiniens hostiles à Yasser Arafat et au processus de paix.

Essentiellement implanté au Sud-Liban, où ses combattants ont tué en vingt-trois ans près de 1 000 soldats israéliens, le Hezbollah est aussi présent dans la banlieue sud de Beyrouth et dans la plaine de la Bekaa, deux zones sous occupation syrienne où il ne pourrait agir à sa guise sans le feu vert de Damas. A côté de l'aide décisive qui lui a été apportée depuis sa création par ses « parrains » iraniens, il continue, selon les services secrets américains, de recevoir un appui « substantiel » de la Syrie sous forme d'armes, d'explosifs, d'argent, d'entraînement, d'assistance diplomatique et politique. Quant aux groupes de l'opposition palestinienne – Front populaire de Libération de la Palestine-Commandement général (FPLP-CG)



Louis Delamare, diplomate français...



...et la voiture dans laquelle il a trouvé la mort

d'Ahmed Jibril, Djihad islamique, Hamas – ils disposent de locaux à Damas et de bases dans la Bekaa. Bien qu'elle ait officiellement quitté la Syrie en 1987 pour l'Irak, la plus ténébreuse organisation terroriste de la région, celle d'Abou Nidal, conserve elle aussi un bureau à Damas et

une « présence opérationnelle » dans la Bekaa. Aux yeux de Hafez el-Assad, qui fut lui-même la cible de multiples complots, le terrorisme était un instrument majeur de l'action politique. Il n'a pas hésité à y recourir, au Liban en particulier, chaque fois que les intérêts de la Syrie le réclamaient. Il lui suffisait de faire appel à l'un de ses multiples protégés palestiniens ou libanais pour atteindre ses cibles tout en restant dans l'ombre. L'assassinat de l'ambassadeur de France au Liban Louis Delamare, en 1981, mais aussi les attentats de 1983 contre le poste Drakkar du contingent français à Beyrouth (58 morts) et le QG des marines américains (241 morts), puis les prises d'otages de 1985 et 1986 s'inscrivent dans cette « stratégie de la terreur ». Stratégie sanglante mais efficace : elle a notamment provoqué le départ de la Force multinationale de Beyrouth et la reprise en main du Liban par Damas et ses alliés.

Terrorisme à l'extérieur, terreur à l'intérieur : en vertu de la loi martiale et de l'état d'urgence, en vigueur depuis... trente-sept ans, les multiples services de police syriens peuvent surveiller, arrêter et détenir qui bon leur semble : plus de 1 700 prisonniers politiques sont recensés par le Comité de Défense des Libertés démocratiques (CDF), dont plusieurs militants ont été condamnés à dix ans de prison. La torture est, selon Amnesty international, « très répandue » tandis que les trois seuls journaux autorisés et les chaînes de radio et de télévision sont étroitement contrôlées. La principale cible du pouvoir est l'organisation – interdite – des Frères musulmans, dont près de 700 membres sont actuellement détenus. Malgré une répression féroce – près de 10 000 morts lors de l'écrasement au canon du soulèvement islamiste de Hama, en 1982 – les Frères musulmans, qui viennent d'appeler à « l'instauration du pluralisme politique », constituent, dans la clandestinité, l'une des forces politiques majeures du pays.

R. B.



G. Salame. – Une telle radicalisation me semble peu probable, parce qu'elle irait contre la pente actuelle de la société syrienne, plus encline à une ouverture progressive, notamment sur le plan économique où les premières mesures libérales, distribuées au compte-gouttes, n'ont fait que décevoir.

N. O. – *Bachar semble avoir été bien « installé » par son père. Mais une fois désigné, s'il l'est, aura-t-il les épaules assez larges pour assumer un tel pouvoir ?*

G. Salame. – Il est le fils puiné. Etudiant en ophtalmologie à Londres, il a été ramené de force à Damas après la mort de son frère, pour prendre un pouvoir qu'il semblait ne pas souhaiter. Il est aimable, cultivé, agréable. Mais a-t-il vraiment le goût du pouvoir ? Est-il disposé à l'exercer comme l'a fait son père ? N'oublions pas que la Syrie n'est pas une monarchie héréditaire, mais une république.

N. O. – *Quelles seront les conséquences de la mort d'Assad, pour les pays de la région et le monde arabe en général ?*

G. Salame. – Dans la région un événement très important, passé presque inaperçu, a été l'accord de coopération militaire signé en février 1996 entre la Turquie et Israël. Les Jordaniens ayant signé avec Israël, les Irakiens étant neutralisés, les

Iraniens étant occupés ailleurs, cet accord permettait aux Turcs de faire pression sur Damas pour qu'il cesse d'appuyer les Kurdes du PKK et d'abriter Öcalan. La Syrie, dont l'approvisionnement en eau dépend à 57% de l'Euphrate, dut céder. Les camps kurdes de la Bekaa ont été fermés, Öcalan s'en est allé et il a été enlevé par les Turcs au Kenya. Cet affaiblissement syrien a conduit Israël à croire qu'il pourrait obtenir de la Syrie les mêmes concessions. Fatale erreur d'appréciation, qui contribua à l'échec des négociations israélo-syriennes.

N. O. – *D'un point de vue syrien, un accord de paix avec Israël est-il désormais compromis ?*

G. Salame. – Il n'est pas imminent, en tout cas, parce qu'en Syrie Bachar a besoin de consolider sa position, parce qu'en Israël Barak doit refaire sa coalition et parce qu'aux Etats-Unis on est déjà en pleine campagne électorale. Il n'est pas compromis parce que les grands traits de l'accord sont non seulement écrits mais même publiés et que ce qui reste à faire est minime par rapport à ce qui a déjà été réalisé. Les problèmes de l'eau, de la sécurité, de la réduction des forces aux frontières sont réglés. L'accord de paix est donc simplement retardé, probablement jusqu'au printemps 2001.

N. O. – *Quel sera l'impact du changement politique en Syrie sur la situation du Liban ?*

G. Salame. – Assad avait une réelle autorité personnelle sur la classe politique libanaise. Après lui, les Libanais seront-ils tentés de s'émanciper brutalement de la tutelle syrienne ? Je ne le crois pas. Les Libanais ont conscience qu'une chance d'émancipation graduelle leur est aujourd'hui offerte et je pense qu'ils saisiront cette chance. La difficulté sera de la gérer intelligemment, c'est-à-dire de consolider une unité qui reste fragile, face à la tentation constante de leurs voisins de s'ingérer dans leurs affaires.

N. O. – *Sans la présence des 35 000 soldats syriens au Liban, y aurait-il un ordre relatif au Liban ?*

G. Salame. – C'est la thèse américaine. Mais ce n'est pas la mort d'Assad qui remet en cause l'accord passé en 1984, selon lequel la Syrie a obtenu un feu vert américain pour contrôler le Liban. C'est le retrait unilatéral d'Israël du Liban-Sud qui introduit un élément nouveau. D'autant que ce retrait s'opère selon une ligne de frontière précisément délimitée, en accord avec l'ONU et selon les cartes internationales, ce qui devrait éviter toute contestation ultérieure. La présence des troupes syriennes, du coup, apparaît comme beaucoup moins justifiée et les Libanais ne manquent pas de le souligner. Le successeur d'Assad, quel qu'il soit, devra faire face à une nouvelle stratégie d'Israël face au Liban.

N. O. – *Le Hezbollah, toujours présent au Liban-*

LONGTEMPS PERSÉCUTÉS, AUJOURD'HUI AU POUVOIR...

Les secrets des Alaouites

L'appartenance de Hafez el-Assad à la communauté alaouite, minorité religieuse qui compte un million de membres en Syrie – moins du dixième de la population –, est sans doute l'une des clés pour décrypter le mystère de celui qui est né à Qardaha, petit village des montagnes alaouites du nord-ouest du pays.

Les docteurs de la loi musulmane débattent encore de la nature même de cette religion ésotérique et syncrétique née d'un schisme au sein du chiisme, survenu au IX^e siècle à l'initiative de Mohammad Ibn Nusayr, fondateur de la secte. Les croyances alaouites, consignées dans leur livre sacré, « le Livre du recueil », sont extrêmement hétéroclites puisqu'on y découvre des influences babyloniennes, chrétiennes, persanes, druzes et ismaéliennes. Leurs pratiques religieuses ont intégré de nombreux éléments de toutes les religions avec lesquels les Alaouites ont été en contact. Ils vénèrent une trinité composée d'Ali, gendre du

Prophète, de Mahomet et de son meilleur ami, Salman al-Farsi.

Jusqu'à l'occupation française après la chute de l'Empire ottoman, au début des années 20, l'histoire des Alaouites a été celle de leurs persécutions par tous les courants majoritaires de l'islam. Considérés comme hérétiques, ils durent se réfugier dans les montagnes du nord-ouest de la Syrie. Minorité en permanence assiégée, isolée dans des contrées reculées, les Alaouites ont développé au cours des siècles de forts sentiments de solidarité clanique et une impressionnante culture du secret. C'est en effet dans la plus grande discrétion qu'ils pratiquent leur religion à laquelle chaque membre est initié par degrés avant une révélation complète de la doctrine de la secte, condition de son admission dans l'élite de la communauté dominée par les clans familiaux. Il y a un peu plus de vingt ans, les Alaouites ont réclamé et obtenu une déclaration publique de

l'imam Moussa Sadr, guide disparu des chiites libanais, qui les légitime comme rameau de l'islam. Au milieu des années 20, les autorités françaises ont créé un éphémère Etat des Alaouites qui leur a permis d'accéder à une certaine autonomie. Après l'indépendance de la Syrie en 1945, les Alaouites ont investi en masse la nouvelle armée nationale et adopté l'idéologie laïque et panarabe du parti Baas afin d'échapper à une nouvelle exclusion de la part des sunnites. Ce double engagement leur a permis, en 1971, d'installer l'un des leurs, Hafez el-Assad, à la tête de l'Etat. Les Alaouites n'ont jamais cherché à « alaoutiser » religieusement l'ensemble de la société syrienne. Ils se sont contentés de la diriger et de la contrôler entièrement.

Le particularisme alaouite a rendu possible la mainmise d'une minorité sur l'ensemble de l'Etat syrien. Mouvement religieux ésotérique, les fondements de la foi alaouite ne sont connus que par les chefs les plus âgés. Les 7 millions d'Alaouites de Turquie, connus sous le nom d'Alevis, n'entretiennent que très peu de relations avec leurs coreligionnaires syriens.

Gilles Anquetil



Sud, reste malgré tout un instrument de déstabilisation à la frontière israélo-syrienne. Un instrument dont Damas peut être tenté d'user, comme il l'a souvent fait...

G. Salame. – Le Hezbollah est plus autonome qu'on ne le pense, et s'il est sensible à une influence ce serait plutôt celle de l'Iran. En fait, le Hezbollah, qui a déjà 6 députés au Parlement, entend maintenant exploi-

ter sa « victoire » au Liban-Sud pour jouer un rôle politique au Liban.

N. O. – Est-il prêt à démanteler son appareil militaire ?

G. Salame. – Il n'y paraît pas disposé pour le moment. C'est pourtant, pour les autres Libanais, un préalable à son intégration dans le jeu politique.

N. O. – L'islamisme peut-il, à la faveur du changement politique, connaître un regain en Syrie ?

G. Salame. – Les islamistes syriens ont été décimés entre 1976 et 1982. En décembre 1999, ils avaient proposé à Assad un troc : la libération de leurs prisonniers et le retour d'exil de leurs chefs contre leur allégeance à Bachar. Assad avait refusé.

Propos recueillis par JOSETTE ALLIA

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LE PRÉSIDENT PALESTINIEN ASSISTAIT AUX OBSÈQUES, MAIS...

Arafat-Assad : des ennemis de trente ans

Les trois jours de deuil décrétés par Yasser Arafat dans les territoires sous contrôle de l'Autorité palestinienne en hommage à Hafez el-Assad ne peuvent dissimuler une vérité historique : ce sont des ennemis de trente ans que la mort vient de séparer. Aucun de ceux qui entouraient Arafat au Liban n'a oublié que le chef de l'Etat syrien a fait tirer au canon et au mortier lourd sur les positions tenues par les combattants palestiniens à Beyrouth et à Tripoli. Et Arafat lui-même, qui va se rendre à Damas pour la première fois depuis quatre ans, ne peut avoir chassé de sa mémoire les tentatives d'assassinat commanditées par la Syrie auxquelles il a échappé.

Le contentieux entre les deux figures historiques du nationalisme arabe remonte aux premières années de l'Organisation de Libération de la Palestine (OLP), lorsque Hafez el-Assad, en échange des privilèges accordés aux Palestiniens de Syrie (accès à l'université, aux emplois dans l'administration ou l'armée) exige que les activités militaires des fedayine soient supervisées par son armée et réclame de l'OLP un soutien sans faille dans sa tentative de supplanter l'Egypte comme champion de l'unité arabe. Hanté par le souci de préserver son autonomie parmi des régimes arabes qui ne lui inspirent pas confiance, Arafat refuse les conditions syriennes et évacue en secret ses unités vers la Jordanie et Gaza.

Le désaccord s'envenime à Beyrouth en 1976,

lorsque l'armée syrienne entre au Liban, à la demande des miliciens chrétiens qui se battent contre les combattants palestiniens et leurs alliés druzes. Après une brève réconciliation, contre l'accord israélo-égyptien de Camp David, il tourne même à la guerre ouverte lorsque Damas, qui espère prendre le contrôle du mouvement national pales-



Départ des Palestiniens de Tripoli

tinien en écartant Arafat, décide de soutenir, au sein du Fatah, la scission du colonel Abou Moussa et de liquider les derniers bastions loyalistes repliés au nord-Liban. La bataille entre les dissidents, appuyés par la Syrie, et les fidèles d'Arafat, assiégés dans deux camps de réfugiés, au nord de Tripoli, est féroce. Et inégale. Il faudra l'aide de l'Egypte, des Etats-Unis et la protection des navires de guerre français pour que les 4 000 combattants de

l'OLP parviennent à échapper à l'étau syrien et à s'embarquer pour le Nord-Yémen. Ce nouvel exil, le deuxième en quinze mois, scelle la réconciliation entre l'Egypte et les Palestiniens.

Tandis qu'à Beyrouth la milice chiite Amal se lance, avec l'approbation de Damas, dans un nettoyage des camps palestiniens qui fera près de 6 000 morts, la « Guerre des pierres » explose à Gaza et en Cisjordanie. Elle va déboucher, six ans plus tard, sur l'ouverture de négociations secrètes entre Israël et l'OLP et la signature des accords d'Oslo, en 1993. Signature qui provoque une nouvelle crise ouverte avec la Syrie. Reprochant à Arafat de les avoir trahis en signant une « paix séparée », les dirigeants syriens jouent une fois encore le jeu de la division en soutenant le Front de Salut national palestinien créé à Damas par six organisations hostiles à Arafat et au processus de paix. Peine perdue. Même si leurs dirigeants historiques sont restés à Damas, plusieurs mouvements membres du Front ont déjà ouvert des locaux à Gaza. Et désormais, c'est sur le calendrier des négociations avec Israël que Syriens et Palestiniens s'affrontent, les seconds accusant les premiers de parasiter un processus de paix qui prend du retard. En fait, derrière les obligations diplomatiques du protocole funèbre, les relations entre l'Autorité palestinienne et la Syrie sont au plus bas. L'été dernier le général Moustapha Tlass, ministre syrien de la Défense, a publiquement traité Arafat de « fils de pute ». Le président de l'Autorité palestinienne a répliqué en recevant comme un ministre Sumer el-Assad, le fils de Rifaat el-Assad, frère banni du président syrien.

Les secrets des négociations israélo-syriennes

Les pique-niques de Hafez el-Assad

PAR CHARLES ENDERLIN *

Avant même son élection, Barak avait fait d'un accord avec la Syrie la première de ses priorités. La mort de Hafez el-Assad vient de provoquer l'effondrement de cette stratégie régionale et de remettre en selle « l'éternel survivant » : Yasser Arafat



En ce mois de décembre 1996, l'avenir s'annonce plutôt sombre au Proche-Orient. Depuis l'arrivée au pouvoir de Benyamin Netanyahu, en mai, la région va de crise en crise. Et c'est avec une certaine mélancolie qu'on évoque, à Damas, les occasions perdues. « *Quand vous verrez Shimon Peres dites-lui que j'ai commis une erreur en ne relevant pas le défi qu'il nous avait lancé, confie Hafez el-Assad à Miguel Moratinos, l'émissaire européen au Proche-Orient. Et le président syrien ajoute, après une pause : mais il faut dire que Peres lui aussi a commis une erreur en décidant des élections anticipées.* »

Moins d'un an plus tôt, à Wye Plantation aux Etats Unis, les négociateurs israéliens et syriens étaient parvenus à un accord de principe sur 90% des sujets en litige. Restait à trouver une entente sur les arrangements de sécurité : le déploiement des forces des deux côtés de la frontière et le contrôle de la démilitarisation du Golan. Au train où ils avaient commencé, les pourparlers risquaient de durer des mois et le premier ministre israélien était pressé. Il comptait sur un sommet historique avec Hafez el-Assad pour faire avancer le processus de paix et gagner des points précieux dans l'opinion publique. Mais le président syrien avait d'autres plans. Début février il annonçait qu'il ne rencontrerait pas le successeur d'Itzhak Rabin. Déçu, Peres, décidait, six jours plus tard, d'avancer la date du scrutin prévu normalement pour le mois de novembre. C'était une erreur. Le 29 mai Benyamin Netanyahu était élu.

Les Syriens s'armèrent de patience. A tout hasard ils acceptèrent de recevoir plusieurs médiateurs qui faisaient la navette entre Damas et Jérusalem. Le milliardaire américain Ron Lauder, héritier des parfums du même nom et ami personnel de Netanyahu fit le voyage à plusieurs reprises rapportant invariablement la même réponse de Hafez el-Assad : « *Israël doit accepter le principe d'un retrait sur la ligne de cessez-le-feu qui prévalait le 4 juin 1967, avant la guerre de Six-Jours.* ». Le Premier ministre israélien tenta de faire croire qu'il était sur le point de conclure un accord très favorable à Israël. En fait, il avait refusé de reprendre à son compte un engagement secret contracté par Itzhak Rabin auprès du secré-

taire d'Etat américain Warren Christopher le 18 juillet 1994 : « *J'accepte des négociations sur la base d'un retrait israélien "total", avait proposé Rabin, à condition que les Syriens acceptent des arrangements de sécurité satisfaisants du point de vue d'Israël et une paix totale comportant l'échange d'ambassadeurs et l'ouverture des frontières.* ». Pour Damas cela signifiait non seulement récupérer la totalité du plateau du Golan mais aussi quelques centaines de mètres de rives au nord-est du lac de Tibériade. Un territoire conquis par la Syrie en 1948.

Elu en mai 1999, Ehoud Barak, tritura quelque peu la formule en ajoutant qu'il la considérait comme « *une base de négociations.* ». A la différence de ses prédécesseurs travaillistes, Barak avait placé un accord avec la Syrie en tête de ses priorités. Il jugeait plus facile d'évacuer du Golan 15 000 colons juifs (la plupart, d'ailleurs, électeurs de gauche) que de faire des concessions impopulaires à Jérusalem Est ou d'affronter des dizaines de milliers d'habitants des implantations de Cisjordanie. Au fil des ans, la valeur stratégique du plateau du Golan s'était considérablement dévaluée aux yeux des experts. Et Barak, ancien chef d'état-major et officier le plus décoré de l'histoire d'Israël estimait que la paix avec la Syrie, des touristes israéliens à Damas valaient largement le Golan. Il avait donc lancé, dès son élection, une véritable campagne de charme en direction de Hafez el-Assad, répétant aussi souvent que possible « *c'est un chef d'état courageux qui a fondé la Syrie moderne.* ». Un chef d'Etat, avec qui il entendait conclure « *la paix des braves, pierre angulaire de la paix, de la stabilité au Proche-Orient...* ». Après quoi, Dennis Ross et Madeleine Albright, les parrains du processus de paix se mirent au travail.

Bill Clinton réunit son monde en janvier 2000 à Shepherdstown aux Etats Unis. La discussion entre Ehoud Barak et Farouk A Charah, le ministre syrien des Affaires étrangères, permit quelques progrès mais, les Israéliens refusant de définir avec précision la ligne de leur retrait, la

rencontre se termina dans une atmosphère de crise. Après de nouveaux contacts une rencontre Clinton-Assad fut organisée à Genève le 26 mai dernier. Voyant le président syrien arriver avec tous ses experts en relations syro-israéliennes, américains et européens furent persuadés que le pas allait être franchi. Clinton avait en poche la promesse de Barak d'un retrait total du Golan en échange d'arrangements de sécurité satisfaisants

pour Israël et l'ouverture des frontières. Restait le problème épineux de la rive du lac de Tibériade. L'affaire tourna mal à cause d'une maladresse de Clinton. Au lieu de présenter d'abord les concessions de Barak, le président américain lança la conversation sur le dernier point en litige. Montant sur ses grands chevaux, Assad répondit qu'avant la guerre de juin 1967, il faisait des pique-niques sur la rive du lac et qu'il n'entendait pas y renoncer. Donc qu'il ne céderait pas sur ce point. « *Mais, à Shepherdstown, votre ministre des Affaires étrangères a laissé entendre qu'un compromis était possible,* » répondit Clinton. Assad se tourna vers Farouk A Charah : « *Tu as accepté cela ?* » L'intéressé, gêné, ne contredit pas son président. Le soir même les porte-parole de l'administration américaine rejetaient sur la Syrie la responsabilité de l'échec.

L'espoir d'une reprise de la négociation a donc fait long feu et, avec la disparition d'Assad, la stratégie régionale d'Ehoud Barak s'est effondrée. Il en est réduit à suivre de près la situation en Syrie et les réactions au Liban. Et à prier pour qu'un Bachar el-Assad modéré tienne solidement les rênes du pouvoir et reprenne le processus de paix. Mais tout cela risque de prendre de longs mois. Et une fois de plus Israël se retrouve face à l'éternel survivant : Yasser Arafat seul en lice avec toutes les cartes en main. Lui aussi est pressé. Il a promis aux siens de proclamer l'état palestinien avant la fin de l'année.

C. E.

(*) Journaliste à France 2. Auteur de « *Paix ou guerre : les secrets des négociations israélo-arabes, 1917-1997* », Stock, 1996.

BARAK EST RÉDUIT À SUIVRE DE PRÈS LA SITUATION EN SYRIE ET LES RÉACTIONS AU LIBAN. ET À PRIER POUR QU'UN BACHAR EL-ASSAD MODÉRÉ TIENNE SOLIDEMENT LES RÊNES DU POUVOIR.

Turkey says Iraq Should control Services In Kurdistan

ANKARA, June 14 (Reuters) - Turkey said on Wednesday it had urged neighbouring Iraq to expand local services into the Kurdish-held north, which Ankara fears could end up splitting from Baghdad.

Northern Iraq slipped from Baghdad's rule at the end of the 1991 Gulf War when Western powers set up a safe haven for the Kurds. But two rival Iraqi Kurdish parties have failed to set up a joint administration despite efforts by the United States to bring them together.

Turkey complains a power vacuum has allowed Abdullah Ocalan's Turkish Kurd rebels to set up bases there.

"We see the extraordinary conditions there as temporary," a foreign ministry official told reporters. "But Baghdad should take a role in resolving those problems. It can bring in some local services and create an atmosphere of confidence with the people there."

He said a senior diplomat had travelled to Baghdad this month and conveyed the message. He said Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's government could relaunch local services ranging from health to electricity and passport offices.

"Can anyone say there is any obstacle preventing Iraq from providing health services in northern Iraq in line with U.N resolutions?" asked the official, who declined to be named.

The United States says Iraq's lack of cooperation with the U.N.'s administration of the oil-for-food programme has led to widespread suffering in government-held territory but that in the north, where Kurdish leaders are more cooperative, it has worked well.

Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) led by Jalal Talabani have set up rival regional governments in northern Iraq with their own ministries, civil servants, television stations and parliaments.

Many Turks fear these institutions could evolve into a separate Kurdish state, providing a dangerous precedent for its own often-restive Kurdish population bordering on northern Iraq.

"Turkey cannot tolerate the establishment of a Kurdish state there (in northern Iraq)," the official said. "Besides, our allies and the KDP and PUK are telling us they are not pursuing such a target."

But the official denied he saw a link between Turkey's concerns about northern Iraq and the message to Baghdad.

Frequent Turkish military incursions into northern Iraq to chase Turkish Kurd guerrillas in the enclave have led to complaints from Baghdad that its sovereignty was being violated.

Iraq has also protested against Turkey's hosting of U.S. and British warplanes which patrol a no-fly zone over northern Iraq.

Kurdish mayor suspended from office: party

ANKARA, June 15 (AFP) The Kurdish mayor of an eastern Turkish town has been suspended from office by Turkish authorities without being given a reason, an official from Turkey's main pro-Kurdish party said Thursday.

Hamit Geylani, deputy chairman of the People's Democracy Party (HADEP), said Salih Haktan, mayor of Ozalp in the province of Van, was informed of his suspension in a circular from the Van governor's office.

"The circular makes no mention of the reason for the suspension. Haktan himself has no idea why this measure was taken," Geylani told AFP by telephone.

Geylani said HADEP members in Van were seeking extra information on the decision from officials to enable a legal bid to reverse the suspension.

"There is no reason for Haktan to be suspended from office. We believe the decision is political and arbitrary," he added.

Turkish authorities accuse HADEP, which swept to power in a string of town halls in southeastern and eastern Turkey in April 1999 elections, of having links with rebels loyal to condemned Kurdish chief Abdullah Ocalan.

The party, which faces a possible ban over the allegations, denies any contact with Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

The PKK waged a 15-year armed campaign against Ankara from 1984 demanding Kurdish self-rule, but last year called an end to the conflict -- which has claimed some 36,500 lives -- in a bid to reach a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

* * * * *

Ecevit Remarks on HADEP Viewed

Kurdish Observer 15 Jun 00

Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit, who continually sees the Kurdish problem from only its economic aspect, this time came out with the views of Chief Prosecutor of the Supreme Court Vural Savas and sent indirect messages to many different circles, particularly the US. Evaluating HADEP, the party which holds local power in the Kurdish provinces, as a party based on race, Ecevit stated, "We will not leave the field to HADEP," while on his flight back to Ankara from the DSP Diyarbakir Provincial Convention

Ecevit stated that the messages that he had given at the Diyarbakir Provincial Convention would be realized step by step. Answering a question concerning the function of HADEP in the Kurdish provinces, Ecevit gave the following response: "It is forbidden in Turkey to establish a party based on race. But HADEP has a policy it is pursuing on this subject, especially in our Southeast Anatolia Region. We, as the DSP, will not leave the field to HADEP. All the other parties appear to have left the Southeast to HADEP. It seems as if the representative of the political parties who go to the region feel that they had followed a successful policy if they are looked favorably upon by HADEP. They are trying to please HADEP. The cooperation they exhibit in choosing candidates catches one's attention."

The Turkish Prime Minister also said that one of the requests that had been forwarded to him was that crimes under Turkish Penal Code (TCK) 169, which concerns giving shelter and assistance to illegal organizations, be included in the pardon

Ecevit continued: "Many people of the region gave shelter and assistance because they were forced to. This request will be taken into consideration."

Ecevit, who saw even the existence of the Kurdish problem as separatism in his speech, asserted that, "the politicization of separatism is at least as dangerous as terrorism."

One Message to the US, Too?

The United States, which is following the Kurdish problem closely, has sent numerous officials to the region, foremost of whom was Ambassador to Ankara Mark Parris. Ignoring the high web of relations that US officials have in the Kurdish provinces, Ecevit sent indirect messages to that country as well

Political analysts state that, despite the fact that Ecevit sees the problem as limited to HADEP alone, he has ignored the mission that the US has cut out for HADEP. The analysts say that Ecevit's latest comments are "directed

to the US in one sense," and continue their evaluation as such: "What does 'politicization of separatism' mean? All the things that the Americans have done in recent weeks in the Kurdish provinces, their meetings with members from both the political and the economic worlds, Parris' arranging a press conference in Sirnak, etc; these are all actually things that Ecevit should have said and done in the name of the state."

Ecevit Recommended TOBB to the US

The US had requested of Turkish Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit permission to open a "liaison bureau" under the roof of the Southeast Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (GUNSIAD) in Amed. It is reported that Ecevit suggested to the US: "Establish this bureau with an organization that is closer to the government, like the Turkish Union of Chambers and Stock Exchanges (TOBB)."

The problem that arose when US Ambassador to Turkey Mark Parris made an announcement during his trip through the Kurdish provinces last month, to the effect that they would establish a liaison bureau in Amed in order to attract American businessmen to the region, has still not been overcome. The US Embassy aims to establish an office in GUNSIAD headquarters and to supply it with computers in order to establish links between local people and American investors. But according to the Associations Law, no association can accept financial or logistic support from a foreign country. The US, on the other hand, is insistent that this liaison bureau will be established under the GUNSIAD roof on June 15. The US's insistence has made the Interior and Foreign Ministries uncomfortable

The topic was mentioned again when Ambassador Parris met with Prime Minister Ecevit last Friday, and it has been learned that Ecevit then made the recommendation that the US cooperate with TOBB instead. Ecevit reportedly told Parris that he would be able to overcome the legal difficulties in this way.

* * * * *

Ecevit brings hope to the Southeast

by Mehmet Ali Birand

Ankara - Turkish Daily News June 17, 2000

The majority of people were about to abandon their hopes...

The execution of Abdullah Ocalan had been suspended and the activities of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) decreased to a minimal level never witnessed before. Due to these circumstances, almost everyone was expecting the government to move promptly in an effort to repair damage done over the Southeast question.

However, not a single movement was made by the political wing of the state, although the months were passing by. The question, "Has the Southeast been forgotten?" began to surface.

The military wing was periodically giving out messages. The Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) were organizing programs in almost every field, varying from developing the villages, education and health. Commanders in the region were saying, "From now on, efforts are based on improvements for the people of the Southeast."

U.S. Ambassador Mark Parris visited the region and called for the initiation of social, cultural and political reforms.

There was no reply from the government.

Worst of all, no one in Ankara was making a single move, no research was undertaken.

In such an environment Ecevit arrived in the southeastern city of Diyarbakir, where he delivered a speech. His speech, unlike previous ones, was not about opening a package which was already empty. Ecevit demonstrated that as prime minister he was undertaking the mission of being the locomotive of the coalition. He was taking the initiative as a leader who was moving the wheels of politics along and urging his coalition partners to make moves.

Ecevit, speaking in the name of his party, the Democratic Left Party (DSP), voiced the following messages;

1. Capital punishment should be abolished. 2. A project providing a basis for the return of villagers obligated to leave their homes will be prepared. 3. Border trade and animal husbandry will be promoted. 4. After creating new business opportunities for village guards, this system will be revisited. 5. The PKK is on the way to politicization. Precautions preventing this will be taken.

I wonder if the promises made by the prime minister will be fulfilled.

Ecevit's messages caused positive echoes both in Turkey and in foreign circles. It gave the impression that the Turkish government had not forgotten the Southeast.

It makes me wonder. I wonder if these words will vanish into thin air, or turn into concrete steps.

The Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) is the biggest obstacle in this context.

MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli, answering a question about Ecevit, said, "I don't want to make comments for now." His cautious approach is clearly understood.

No objections were expected from the Motherland Party (ANAP), which is part of the coalition.

ANAP's leader Mesut Yılmaz previously displayed his approach towards the Southeast problem in policies during his term as prime minister and in his statement, "Turkey's road to full membership to the European Union passes through Diyarbakir."

Now, all improvements depend on the first steps to be initiated under Ecevit's leadership.

Many observers like us believe that the Southeast package will be implemented without any problem if passed by the National Security Council(MGK). The MGK is an organ which has previously toppled governments. Hence, the signature of the military, which has lost many of its soldiers in the struggle with the PKK, will contribute to the persuasiveness of the package.

The formation of a special commission, including the MGK Secretariat, in order to prepare a series of precautions gathered from all the country's ministries would be the most realistic approach.

Let's note that a precaution taken at the right time is as precious as gold. Precautions not timed correctly will be useless no matter how broad they are. They will fail to exert the expected influence. Let's not waste time...

* * * * *

Parliament with HADEP deputies

Editorial by İlnur Çevik
Turkish Daily News June 17, 2000

Why is the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), the senior coalition partner, sending warnings to its nationwide organization telling them to be prepared for possible early elections? The answer apparently lies in the plight of the Virtue Party (FP), which is being threatened with closure by the Constitutional Court.

The MHP feels the Constitutional Court will close down the pro-Islamic FP on charges of being the continuation of the former Welfare Party (RP), which was closed down for Islamic fundamentalist activities. If the FP is actually closed down as the continuation of a closed-down party, then about 70 of its deputies may lose their seats in Parliament.

This would mean a major number of vacancies which by law would require by-elections in at least 53 provinces. On the other hand when you hold by-elections in Turkey, you suddenly eliminate some of the hurdles, like the 10 percent national threshold, which is required for a party to win seats. The smaller parties which cannot pass the 10 percent threshold have a chance to win seats in the by-elections.

So when the FP deputies lose their seats, especially in southeastern Turkey, this means it will be a golden opportunity for the pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HADEP) to win seats in these elections where the national threshold does not exist.

HADEP was unable to win seats in the April 1999 elections because of this. But the by-elections resulting from a possible closure of the FP may well create a new situation.

This is what is creating jitters in the MHP leadership. They do not want the pro-Kurdish deputies in Parliament at any cost. The MHP executives feel if there is the prospect of by-elections, then general parliamentary elections are desirable. That would mean HADEP would again be left out of Parliament by failing to pass the 10 percent threshold.

So if the FP is closed and many deputies lose their parliamentary seats, then the MHP will opt for parliamentary elections instead of by-elections. Of course, all this is based on the assumption that the FP will be closed. But there is also a general belief that if those in powerful places do not want HADEP in Parliament, they could easily use their influence to prevent an FP closure.

* * * * *

Demirel, Ecevit Comments on Kurds Viewed

17 June 2000 Kurdish Observer

The ninth president of the Republic of Turkey Suleyman Demirel - in contradiction to announcements to the effect that "The PKK is finished; we have crushed terrorism" - admitted that they had reached the conclusion that, "The PKK has achieved success; it has mass support behind it." Yeni Binyil columnist Ali Bayramoglu made important revelations and observations the other day in this column entitled "HADEP, Ecevit, and the state."

Bayramoglu quoted Ecevit as saying words to the effect: "Terrorism has become a political struggle that is as dangerous as the armed struggle. We are going to take political measures to prevent this. The other parties left the field open to HADEP in the Southeast. HADEP is following separatist policies." Bayramoglu said that he found these accusations to be bewildering, and continued: "Because it is a completely wrong and unacceptable situation for the leader of a political party who almost never lets words about basic rights and freedoms fall from his lips, for a prime minister who continually stresses his sensitivity on the subject of democratization, to expend these words concerning a legitimate political party which emerged victorious from the ballot box. Beyond that, it is not an auspicious sign."

Bayramoglu went on to say that this was not Ecevit's view alone, but the view of all the actors and institutions of the state. Bayramoglu asserted that Demirel had underlined this matter in every visit they had and had acted more sensitively on the issue than Ecevit. Writes Bayramoglu concerning the meeting they had in January 2000: "Demirel's words, of which it has become inescapable to write after these latest development, are still ringing in my ears." Bayramoglu then goes on to tell how the state's highest officials - who every day issue declarations that "We have scraped the PKK out by the roots; we have finished terrorism" - describe the historical realities when speaking behind the scene.

"Cultural rights cannot be granted"

According to Bayramoglu, Demirel had the following to say in that January meeting: "Following the April 18 elections, the top of the state - in other words, me, the Chief of General Staff and the Prime Minister - saw that the country was face to face with a disaster and that Turkey had very seriously come to the threshold of division, that we were heading for division. The votes that HADEP won in the Southeast were pro-Kurdish votes; they were votes that demonstrated that the PKK had achieved success and that it had the support of the masses behind it. Even in a place like Hakkari, which has 30,000 village guards, they gained 65 percent of the vote. How can we cope with this wave of nationalism? Every single step that we take today must be taken thinking how we can prevent division. Serious precautions must be taken; the arena must not be left to HADEP. We are explaining this to the party leaders. That is why Apo's punishment was postponed..."

According to Bayramoglu, after Demirel spoke these words, he said that taking steps on such matters as cultural rights or Kurdish television was out of the question and that it would only make the situation more serious. Bayramoglu then made the observation that, "the state finally realized that it had condemned itself by its own lack of policies, but even after reaching this point, it had no intention to take any step other than to increase the dosage of lack of policies."

The state's well-known attitude

Bayramoglu said that Ecevit's words targeting political freedom and HADEP had made it obvious that Ecevit had completely adopted the state's well-known attitude exactly as is and that he was now declaring this openly. Bayramoglu continued to say the following: "Ecevit's words are objectionable not only from the standpoint of democratic values. They are at the same time grave from the aspect that they show that the state and the political parties are determined to play this game of policy-lessness. For effective political precautions do not consist of economic packages presented from the central government and of ostracizing HADEP from the system. Quite the contrary. [Effective political measures] pass through acting with the sensitivity that party [HADEP] has expressed [is necessary], by embracing the region culturally, and taking steps that will result in a different view of the Kurdish identity. The problem is clear: In direct proportion to the state and political parties condemning themselves to lack of policies, HADEP is following with great consistency a policy which, even though it doesn't use the same methods as the PKK, has international attributes and which is based on the foundation of nationalism. But it must be known that the principle reason for this formation and the direction it has taken is the fact that the system has been condemned by the lack of a policy. Kurdish politics is being created by this lack of policy. As for Ecevit, he took a stance which will encourage the politicization of turning inward. The fact that the system, including Ecevit, is encircled on every side by defensive reflexes and the mentality of public order policies does not give hope for our tomorrows."

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PKK's Ocalan Assures Armed Forces in South Kurdistan Will Not Cross Into North

Medya TV 15 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the PKK [Workers Party of Kurdistan], issued a statement through his lawyers in Imrali yesterday. In his statement, Ocalan expressed his views on the stand of the government with regard to the Kurdish issue. Ocalan said that false declarations are being made by various government organs to the effect that the PKK will resume its armed actions. Stressing that it is out of the question for the armed forces deployed in southern Kurdistan to cross into the north, Ocalan described the withdrawal of the forces to the south as a withdrawal in principle. Those forces which could not be withdrawn can be deployed as a peace force, he added

Stressing the importance of correctly interpreting the cease-fire, Ocalan described the fact that there were no clashes in the past year as a positive development and added: It has become evident that the armed violence has reached an acceptable stage. Ocalan continued: We had said that strategically there will not be an armed revolution. The government and the parliament should have already adopted certain decisions, however. Unfortunately, this did not happen.

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Elci: Southeast must be demilitarized

- Serafettin Elci says that the return to villages program can only work in an environment of peace and calm and that this requires the total demilitarization and disarmament of the Southeast

Ankara - Turkish Daily News

The lawyer Serafettin Elci, who is working to set up a new liberal Kurdish party, held a press conference in Adana last week. The majority of questions put to him concerned the

Kurdish issue and the unity of the Kurds' movement, to which he replied that if he and his colleagues received the right backing they would be better able to protect the rights of Kurds. Elci said that the Peoples Democracy Party (HADEP) was not using its political muscle for the benefit of the people. "In fact," he said, "because of their false policies, they have even lost the ground they had earlier gained."

One journalist asked what would happen to the displaced villagers in the southeastern region, and Elci said the matter of displaced persons was one of the more dramatic events Kurds have had to live through. He said that Kurds see their land as sacred and that they would only leave their land under extreme circumstances, which is indeed what had happened. He said that displacement or migration was a Kurdish issue that Turkey was not taking seriously but which Europe was more sympathetic towards. He said that Europe says it is ready to help Turkey resettle these displaced persons -- that the funding was available -- but that Turkey had not taken any steps to rectify the situation.

In order to ensure a safe return to the villages, a secure and peaceful environment is needed, Elci said. This can only come about with the total demilitarization of the region, he went on. Adding that the people to want to live alongside the military, he stated there was a land mine problem in the region that needed to be addressed forthwith.

He went on to say that the younger generation of families who had been displaced from their villages to the cities would not want to return anyway, because the education and economic opportunities in cities were far better. Only the older generation would return to their memories, he continued, and only then under the right conditions.

Recalling that U.S. President Clinton had called for the rights of Kurds in Turkey to be recognized, Elci added that the leader of one particular political party had actually attended a meeting to protest Clinton's visit and words.

When asked why, as an intellectual and experienced Kurd, he had not tried to unite the various Kurdish parties and find a joint solution, Elci replied that he wanted Kurdish unity with all his heart but that it can only come about when the conditions are right. This requires people who can agree with each other to unite in a specific political program, he said, but people having different worldly views cannot get together and agree on anything. He said the basic foundation of the party he wants to form are ideas and a manifesto, and he asked how could people who did not have any faith in these ideas and manifesto possibly reach agreement on anything. Each one would only have one aim in mind, he predicted, and that would be to take control of the party.

Elci went on to say that when Clinton came to Turkey he said things of immense value to the Kurds, saying they must be allowed their natural-born rights. Without mentioning its name, Elci said that one political party leader staged a protest in Kizilay together with small-time Marxist groups telling Clinton to "Go home" and added, "How can you live under the same roof with such people?" Elci said that the party he was forming would be headquartered in Ankara and that they could only work with people who accepted this fact. He added they could not work with people either at home or abroad, within the party or not, who were working while receiving instructions from other "focal points". He said that people abroad do not know Turkey's problems or how to practice politics as well as those in Ankara do. Unless those people can stand back and be objective, they cannot work with his party, said Elci.

In reply to a question as to what he thought of the various political efforts to make Turkey a "democratic republic," Elci said everybody knows where the democratic republic project sprang from, that it was not the idea of those people working on it, but rather something based upon the outcome of certain, specific conditions in Turkey. He called it a false project, one that dilutes the Kurdish issue and marginalizes it before presenting it to the people, and he called upon the public to more aware. He said that anyone praising the project, which has no specific, concrete agenda or manifesto, and who then said "I am trying to solve the Kurdish issue" was actually simply deceiving the people.

Although he said he would not be taken in by such a ploy, Elci admitted that there were people with genuinely good intentions at work here, but commented that the road to hell was paved with good intentions. Elci maintained that good intentions were not the solution, rather vision was, that is being able to determine where something would end up. He called

upon those with genuinely good intentions to join them in a political program that already has its scope and limits drawn up and defined.

A journalist said that Elci's manifesto was markedly different from that of HADEP and commented that such a small voting base could not afford the luxury of two different parties. Elci responded by saying that to see contradictions in the two parties' agendas was to misunderstand the two. He said he respected HADEP's grassroots and all who voted for them, adding that it was a shame that the party itself had been unable to use its political weight for the benefit of the people. He went on to say that HADEP had even lost much of the ground it had gained because of mismanagement and bad policies. He said that in the past the leadership of HADEP had had great influence on Turkey's policies towards Kurds, especially within the Republican People's Party (CHP), but that today Kurds had no influence at all. He said there was a serious gulf between HADEP's leadership and its grassroots.



Elci added that HADEP's leadership was not acting in accord with the just wishes and expectations of its grassroots and said his problem was with HADEP's leadership, not its voting base. Praising his nascent organization over HADEP, he said his party was not surrendering its power to others and that if it ever made a mistake it was not afraid of accepting criticism, but that to date it was not criticism but rather slander and lies that had been directed at it.

In reply to a question as to possible links between HADEP and the democratic republic project, Elci said he didn't have a definite view on the subject, but that those people behind the project all say that HADEP is on their side and working with them. He went on to say that there was already a dearth of political parties in Turkey so why waste the time and energy on forming another one, a "Turkey Party." Stating he wanted with all his heart to have Turks in his party, Elci maintained that any political party

seriously addressing the Kurdish issue could only bring the project to life if its administration was dominated by people of Kurdish ancestry and that anything else would be a mistake. Saying that his group had an abundance of reasons to criticize and accuse people, Elci added that it was not doing so as it did not want to hurt anyone as people were already facing a crisis of morale and were disheartened enough. He said he did not want to deceive people with sugarcoated promises or to falsely raise their hopes.

On the issue of working together with other Kurdish intellectuals, Elci said that certain democratic entrepreneurs had been in contact with him but he had told them their manifesto was totally Kurdish-centered and that is what separated them from other parties. He said he appreciated the support being given them by non-Kurdish democratic bodies. He said they could support them from outside and this was to be expected and that those who wanted to join them could do so.

Adding that the Kurds had first to unify themselves before doing anything else, Elci said that if they were to prepare a questionnaire for Kurdish people to ask what they want and expect they would not get any consistent answers at the moment. He called on them to unite, iron out their differences and then determine a concrete political agenda. He stated his was a legal party and accused others, with whom he had been in contact, of not acting under their own volition. He said they had told him they could simply drop 25 years of party tradition. To that comment he had told them if they could not break with their past, they could not be of any benefit to his party.

In reply to a question concerning what he would do if his party were to be closed down, Elci said his was a party with an idea and a mission and as such, to close them down would never achieve anything, that they would carry on in one form or another. He added that he saw no immediate threat of closure for the new party he was about to form. Elci maintained that even though the Democratic Masses Party (DKP), his former party, had committed no improprieties they had fought a long, serious and calculated legal battle.

He said that earlier parties had been closed down without even touching on the Kurdish issue, but that the DKP had not denied itself in the dock or tried to wriggle out of the situation it found itself in. He maintained that their struggle at the Constitutional Court must have had an effect on its members as it only just lost the vote to close it down by a 6-5 tally. Elci mentioned that the new president was a man of the law, who had openly opposed the legal system in Turkey and insisted that it be changed. Pointing out that one of the Constitutional Court members who had voted against closing down the DKP was now the president, Elci said that Turkey would no longer see such travesties of justice.

When asked what he would do if his new party ever came to power in government, Elci replied that even if they secured enough votes to become part of a coalition government, the Kurdish issue could be resolved and painlessly and without bloodshed, but he stressed that the issue was not one that could be solved overnight and said that nobody should expect his party to work miracles. Elci said he believed his party could resolve the Kurdish issue within five years and expressed his wishes that those Kurds and democrats who voted for other parties would vote for his party instead. He said that in Turkey just to be right was not enough, that one had to have the political muscle to fight for one's rights. He concluded by calling upon all those who genuinely want the Kurdish issue to be resolved to unite behind him and to use their energies and power to their best effect.

Jabar Farman Refutes Allegations, Affirms Commitment to the PUK Kurdistan

Newsline (PUK) June 16, 2000

(Suleimani) In a letter to George Sam'aan, the Editor in Chief of the Arabic international daily al-Hayat, Jabar Farman has dispelled speculations and clarified issues relating to his recent resignation from the Bureau. We reproduce here in English for Kurdistan Newsline readers the full text of Mr. Farman's letter of clarification to al-Hayat.

"al-Hayat published in its issue of June 12, 2000 an article entitled "Failed Efforts to Resolve Differences between Talabani and his Military Deputy" which contained a great deal of erroneous speculation and interpretation. Towards enlightening readers of the paper who may have read the article, I would like to offer the following clarification regarding the situation.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan was born in difficult circumstances in the wake of the setback received by the Kurdish struggle in March 1975, at a time when the Iraqi government was buoyant with its success in snuffing out the Kurdish revolution, and had launched its policy of forced migrations, deportations, village demolition and destruction of the economic infrastructure of Kurdistan. It sought to transform Kurdish society from productive to consuming society, dependent upon the central authority for subsistence and contributing to the waves of recruitment for its armed forces. Under these conditions the birth of the PUK was an objective necessity to resist these designs, and it stood resolutely against the vicious aggression of the Iraqi forces.

I was fortunate to rank among those in the organization who could continue the struggle until victory was achieved. And it is for this reason that contemporary freedom fighters see themselves as being more fortunate than those who witnessed the earlier Kurdish revolutions and rebellions, starting with the rebellions of Sheikh Sa'eed Biran and of Sheikh Mahmoud Hafeed, then the revolutions of Mahabad and September, and ending with our new revolution. Today, as a result of our efforts, we can see that large areas of liberated Kurdistan are not under the writ of the central government, and that we have been able to establish a federal entity after conducting free parliamentary elections.

I personally consider myself to be very lucky and honored to have contributed to this struggle as a member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, and over a period of a quarter of a century. And I would like to state that I have no difference of opinion with Mr. Jalal Talabani, contrary to the news item published in al-Hayat. I consider Talabani to be a role model and a teacher; I, like so many freedom fighters, grew up in Talabani's school. The fact that the newspaper Kurdistanî - new published a discussion of some issues in which I expressed some views regarding possible internal party politics and contradictions or negative points, such as exist normally in all vital and dynamic political parties, is neither here nor there, and does not relate to my resignation. The fact is I offered these views to a newspaper of the party, our party, the PUK. I view this as an indication that there is unique and important element of freedom of expression and democracy in practice that is associated with the PUK.

My aim in publishing my views was to start a dialogue, and provide some constructive criticism to get the ball rolling. There are some gaps and there are some disconnects, and these can be addressed in a way which promotes the development of the party. I still retain the honor of being a member of the party, and will continue to do so. I am after all one of its fighters; what I have asked for is simply to be relieved of my party position and its responsibilities until further notice, that is until such time as I feel it appropriate to take them up again. And I will always be a devoted peshmarga, and I will never abandon my comrades, with whom I have struggled, as one column, throughout a quarter of a century.

Al-Hayat
18 Jun 00

by Ali Abd-al-Amir in Amman

Qusayy Inspects Forces' Preparedness for Any Intervention in Kurdistan

[FBIS Translated Text]

Qusayy Saddam Husayn, Iraqi President Saddam Husayn's second son, inspected the Republican Guard units stationed in the northern sector that is adjacent to the Kurdistan region on 2 and 3 June. He met with the unit commanders and discussed with them preparations to intervene in Kurdistan if the command so decides.

Reliable Iraqi sources said that ranking Republican Guard Command officers accompanied Qusayy, who supervises the Republican Guard and the security agencies, on his tour. The visit takes place two days after Samir Abd-al-Aziz al-Najm al-Tikriti, secretary of the Arab Socialist Ba'th Party's military bureau, toured the army units deployed in the north in areas close to Kurdistan, which is not under Baghdad's control. Saddam Husayn chairs the Ba'th Party Military Bureau.

Sources say that the preparations of the army and the Republican Guard, the meetings, and the field maneuvers could be part of an Iraqi plan to enter Kurdistan if the dispute between the two major Kurdish parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party under Mas'ud Barzan, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan under Jalal Talabani develops into armed clashes that Baghdad would consider as reason enough for it to act.

The same sources added that Saddam Husayn ordered Samir al-Tikriti to grant military units and formation commanders' financial rewards and cars, a step Saddam carries is known to carry out before any large-scale military operation. Saddam ordered the promotion of Samir al-Tikriti to the post of member of the Iraqi Ba'th Party Regional Command for his role in enhancing the preparedness of the armed forces and for his suggestions to replace many of the army corps and division commanders.

Ankara Considers Upgrading Its Diplomatic Representation in Baghdad

June 20, 2000
Selcuk Gultasli

Ankara - Turkish Daily News

It has been learned that Ankara is considering upgrading the status of its diplomatic representation in Baghdad from the level of charge d'affaires to that of ambassador. Diplomatic sources told the Turkish Daily News that for some time now Ankara has been considering raising the level of representation by appointing an ambassador to the post. Ambassador Selim Karaosmanoglu has represented Turkey in Baghdad since 1996 at the level of charge d'affaires.

Turkey's considerations for upgrading the level of diplomatic relations come in the wake of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary Faruk Logoglu's visit to Baghdad two weeks ago. It has been learned that the Iraqi side told Logoglu that it wants Turkey to appoint an ambassador and would be very happy to see a Turkish ambassador in Baghdad in order to further improve bilateral relations.

Iraqi diplomatic sources in Ankara have told the TDN that they have always asked Turkey to appoint an ambassador to Baghdad and strongly conveyed this message to Logoglu once again when he visited Iraq in the beginning of June. Iraqi sources say that not only during Logoglu's visit to Baghdad but during all meetings between the two countries Iraq has asked Turkey to raise its level of diplomatic representation.

Despite Turkey's remarkable success in stopping the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) terrorism in the Southeast, Ankara has been uneasy over developments in northern Iraq. Turkey, which has stated on numerous occasions that it would not permit the founding of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, has urged Baghdad to establish better relations and adopt an all-embracing policy for its citizens in northern Iraq. Ankara has also clearly demonstrated its annoyance over the symbols of an independent Kurdish state used by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). With the decision to reconsider upgrading the level of its diplomatic mission, Ankara wants to send a clear signal that Baghdad should be the only place to solve all the problems in Iraq, including its northern territories.

Diplomatic sources underlined that Turkey had expressed its concerns about developments in northern Iraq during Logoglu's visit and reiterated its position that all problems in the region must be solved by Baghdad being involved in all the arrangements.

GÉNOCIDE

Avant le colloque du CRDA (17-06)
et la manifestation unitaire du lendemain

Christian Poncelet demande à Ankara de «faire un geste»

Le président du Sénat Christian Poncelet s'est exprimé à deux reprises, la semaine dernière, sur la question du génocide arménien. Il a lancé d'abord un appel, dans une déclaration écrite datée du 6 juin, en annonçant la tenue d'un colloque organisé samedi 17 juin par le Centre de Recherches sur la Diaspora Arménienne (CRDA), au Sénat, sur le thème du «dialogue entre la Turquie et l'Arménie sur la question arménienne aujourd'hui» (1). «Il n'est pas trop tard pour inciter la Turquie à parler avec ses voisins, et spécialement l'Arménie, et à régler ses comptes avec son histoire, comme d'autres pays l'ont fait. Une telle attitude est selon moi d'autant plus envisageable que les Turcs de l'an 2000 ne sont pas responsables des erreurs de leurs ancêtres. Déjà en 1982, j'avais personnellement interpellé le gouvernement français concernant la reconnaissance du génocide arménien.»

Interrogé jeudi 8 juin à Valence, où il s'était rendu pour l'Assemblée générale des maires de la Drôme, M. Poncelet répondait : «Il faut aussi prendre en compte la situation là-bas. (...) Vous savez, les Turcs frappent à la porte de l'Europe. Mais il faudra qu'ils fassent un geste avant d'entrer. Souvenons-nous que Willy Brandt s'est agenouillé à Varsovie...» ●

(1) Dimanche 18 juin, à 15 h, une manifestation organisée à l'appel du Comité du 24 Avril ira de Matignon au Sénat.

GÉNOCIDE

126 chercheurs sur l'Holocauste affirment que le génocide arménien est un «fait historique incontestable»

Une pétition parue dans le *New York Times* presse les démocraties occidentales de convaincre la Turquie de reconnaître le génocide arménien

Le *New York Times* du vendredi 9 juin a ouvert ses colonnes à 126 chercheurs sur l'Holocauste, qui ont signé une déclaration commune parue sous la forme d'une demi-page de publicité, dans laquelle ils reconnaissent le «caractère incontestable» du génocide arménien et «pressent» l'Occident «de le reconnaître officiellement» (1).

L'édition du vendredi 9 juin du *New York Times* titre en page A29 : «126 chercheurs sur l'Holocauste affirment le caractère incontestable du génocide arménien, et pressent les démocraties occidentales de le reconnaître officiellement.» Suit le texte de la pétition, dont voici l'intégralité (traduit de l'anglais) : «A l'occasion du 30^{ème} anniversaire du Congrès des Chercheurs sur l'Holocauste et les Eglises, réuni à l'Université St-Joseph de Philadelphie, en Pennsylvanie, du 3 au 7 mars 2000, 126 chercheurs de l'Holocauste, directeurs de chaires et de Centres de Recherches et d'Etudes sur l'Holocauste, participants au Congrès, ont signé une déclaration affirmant que le génocide arménien perpétré durant la Première Guerre Mondiale est un fait historique incontestable, et pressent les gouvernements des démocraties occidentales de le reconnaître comme tel. Les pétitionnaires, parmi lesquels on trouve le Prix Nobel de la Paix Elie Wiesel, principal intervenant du Congrès, demandent

également aux démocraties occidentales de presser le gouvernement et le Parlement de Turquie de se mettre enfin en accord avec cette page sombre de l'histoire de la Turquie ottomane et de reconnaître le génocide arménien. Cela donnerait une impulsion inestimable au processus de démocratisation de la Turquie.»

On trouve sous ce texte une liste partielle des signataires, renfermant 26 noms classés par ordre alphabétique, parmi lesquels ceux de Yehuda Bauer, directeur de l'Institut international pour la Recherche sur l'Holocauste de l'Université hébraïque de Jérusalem (Yad Vashem), Israël Charny, directeur de l'Institut sur l'Holocauste et les Génocides de l'Université hébraïque de Jérusalem, Directeur de l'Encyclopédie du Génocide, Stephen Feinstein, directeur du Centre d'Etudes sur l'Holocauste et les Génocides de l'Université du Minnesota (Etats-Unis), Steven Katz, directeur du Centre d'Etudes juïques de l'Université de Boston et Elie Wiesel, Prix Nobel de la Paix. Au bas de cette liste, le Dr Feinstein «déclare que les originaux de ces 126 signatures sont classés dans [son] bureau», et une note précise que cette publicité a été «payée par des descendants de rescapés du génocide arménien et de l'holocauste juif». ●

(1) Devait également paraître dans le *Jerusalem Post*, le *Jerusalem Weekly* et deux journaux édités par le Congrès US.

Un maire kurde suspendu de ses fonctions accusé de détournement de fonds

ANKARA, 18 juin (AFP) - 13h11 - Le maire de la ville d'Ozalp, dans la province turque de Van (est), suspendu de ses fonctions par les autorités turques est accusé de détournement de fonds, selon un rapport des inspecteurs du ministère de l'Intérieur, a rapporté dimanche l'agence Anatolie.

Salih Haktan, membre du parti pro-kurde de la démocratie du peuple (Hadep), avait été suspendu temporairement de ses fonctions mercredi sur décision du ministère de l'Intérieur, dont dépendent les maires en Turquie.

Selon le rapport, M. Haktan a détourné l'équivalent d'environ 30.000 dollars de la boulangerie appartenant à sa municipalité sans remettre aucun document officiel en contrepartie, a précisé l'agence.

Le Hadep avait qualifié la décision de suspension de "politique et "arbitraire".

Les autorités turques accusent le Hadep, qui avait remporté toute une série de municipalités dans le sud-est et l'est de la Turquie lors des élections municipales d'avril 1999, d'être organiquement lié aux rebelles kurdes du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) d'Abdullah Ocalan.

Le Hadep, qui est l'objet d'une procédure en justice visant à l'interdire pour cette raison, rejette l'accusation.

Le PKK a mené pendant 15 ans dans le sud-est à majorité kurde une rébellion armée avant d'annoncer en septembre dernier qu'il cessait les combats, à l'appel d'Ocalan, condamné à mort pour trahison et séparatisme.

Le Baas ouvre l'ère Bachar en Syrie

Le fils d'Hafez el-Assad s'appuiera sur l'armée et les services de sécurité.

Damas envoyé spécial

Le téléspectateur syrien a le choix entre des récita-tions de versets du Co-ran, des images relatant l'enterrement du président Assad ainsi que «les jours inou-bliables» de son règne de trente ans, et les discours intermi-nables et interchangeable des intervenants au Congrès extra-ordinaire du parti Baas. Pour-tant, en dépit des quarante jours de deuil qui empêchent Damas de redevenir une capi-tale comme les autres, de l'om-niprésence des portraits du dé-funt raïs dans toutes les rues et de l'opacité de la bataille poli-tique en cours qui fait ressem-bler la ville à une capitale socia-liste des années 50, on perçoit ici et là, une certaine légèreté dans les attitudes et les propos. Tel fonctionnaire, qui excellait dans la plus impénétrable des langues de bois, ose une confi-dence. Tel journaliste, connu pour être un inconditionnel du régime, se laisse aller à qualifier feu le chef de l'Etat de «dicta-teur». C'est déjà la fin d'une époque. Bien sûr, le chapitre Hafez el-Assad est loin d'être encore terminé, mais celui de son fils a com-mencé. Congrès ou pas, l'ère Bachar débute. La ré-union extraordinaire du Baas, qui s'est ouverte samed-i à Damas et devrait s'achever aujourd'hui, aura été une chambre d'enregistrement de la volonté du dé-funt «chef magnifique». Le lieu d'un simulacre de «eu institutionnel, la vitrine où le transfert du pouvoir, ré-duit à un simple passage de témoin, a été officialisé.

Epuration. Le 9^e congrès extraordinaire du Baas (parti unique au pouvoir prônant le nationalisme arabe et le socialisme) n'est pas terminé mais a «pro-clamé le camarade Bachar comme dirigeant du parti et du peuple». C'est la dernière étape avant sa désigna-tion, le 25 juin, comme chef d'Etat par le Parlement. Et on sait également que les 1021 délégués de ce congrès, le premier à se tenir depuis quinze ans, vont choisir les hommes à la tête du «commandement ré-gional», la structure dirigeante du parti. Ce «com-mandement» compte 21 membres mais l'épuration a déjà frappé 3 d'entre eux, hostiles à la montée de Ba-char: Rifaat, le frère du Président, exclu en 1998 pour «trahison» et en exil à Paris, Mahmoud Zohbi, l'ex-Premier ministre qui, selon la version officielle, s'est suicidé fin mai, lors de son arrestation et Hikmat Chahabi, l'ex-chef d'état-major de l'armée pendant vingt-deux ans, qui a quitté la Syrie, il y a une dizaine de jours après des accusations de corruption. Selon une source proche du pouvoir, seuls 7 des 18 membres restants devraient conserver leur poste,

dont Abdel-Halim, Khaddam, l'un des deux vice-présidents syriens. Les hommes de Bachar devraient prendre la place de ceux qui partent. Parmi eux, Fa-rouk el-Chareh, ministre des Affaires étrangères de-puis 1984 et qui irritait Bachar à la politique interna-tionale, et le nouveau chef du gouvernement Mohammed Mirc.

Capacité de nuisance. En fait, Bachar va prendre la tête d'un parti marginalisé. Son père l'avait voulu ainsi. «A l'ombre d'un grand homme comme Assad, on n'avait plus besoin du Baas ni du com-mandement régional. Le Président court-circuitait tout le monde. En son absence, le besoin de réactiver ces insti-tutions se fait sentir», déclare un jour-naliste syrien proche du pouvoir. Mais le destin de Bachar s'est d'abord joué dans l'armée et les services de

sécurité, les *Mcukhabarat*, qui, aujourd'hui, sont les deux piliers du régime. Il demeure que l'ouverture du congrès s'est faite dans une atmosphère qui détonnait avec celle des précédents. Le fils du Président, plutôt détendu, s'est même approché des journalistes, alors que son père les fuyait tout particulièrement. Même s'il est impossible en Syrie d'évaluer les rapports de force, il semble que l'opposition à Bachar soit aujour-d'hui des plus limitées. Rifaat el-Assad, le frère enne-mi du président défunt et de son fils, continue cepen-dant d'inquiéter. «On ne sait pas ce qu'il représente, s'il

a ou non des forces derrière lui», s'interroge un haut fonctionnaire syrien. Selon un intellectuel très proche de Bachar, le frère du président défunt ne représente qu'un «danger limité». Tous ses réseaux sont sous contrôle, dans l'armée comme dans le parti. Il garde cependant une capacité de nuisance. Avec son im-mense fortune, il peut payer n'importe qui, au Liban ou au Soudan, pour déstabiliser le pays. «Je regrette qu'on ne lui ait pas permis de revenir pour les obsèques. Entre l'aéroport et Damas, le peuple aurait arrêté sa voi-ture pour le mettre en pièces car vous ne pouvez pas sa-voir la haine qu'on a de lui.»

M. Propre. Si aujourd'hui Bachar semble compter assez peu d'adversaires, c'est parce qu'une épuration sévère a été entreprise depuis plusieurs années parmi ceux qui s'opposaient à son destin. Comme le sou-ligne un autre journaliste proche de Bachar, «le régi-me s'est servi de deux prétextes pour ses purges: l'âge de la retraite et la lutte contre la corruption». Le premier prétexte a permis de se débarrasser d'hommes de premier plan comme Ali Douba, le chef de l'un des plus puissants services de sécurité et du chef d'état-major. Les accusations de corruption se sont éten-dues à tout le régime. Le coup de génie du président Assad est d'avoir dès le début consacré son fils com-me le «M. Propre» de la Syrie, ce qui lui a permis d'ac-quérir une grande popularité au sein d'une popula-tion dégoûtée. Mais la bataille n'est pas terminée. D'autres têtes devraient prochainement tomber ■

JEAN-PIERRE PERRIN



Samedi, à l'ouverture du congrès, Bachar el-Assad est entouré des membres du Baas, qui l'ont intronisé «dirigeant du parti et du peuple».

«Le président Hafez court-circuitait tout le monde. En son absence, le besoin de réactiver les institutions se fait sentir.»
Un journaliste syrien

Un dictionnaire de langue kurde saisi peu après sa diffusion



ISTANBUL (Turquie), 19 juin (AFP) - 17h19 - Un dictionnaire turc-kurde, rédigé par l'Institut kurde d'Istanbul et publié il y a dix jours, a été saisi dans la ville de Batman (sud-est de la Turquie, à majorité kurde), peu après sa mise sur le marché, a annoncé lundi à l'AFP le directeur de cet institut, Hasan Kaya.

"Une centaine d'exemplaires ont été confisqués il y a une semaine auprès de la société de distribution sur ordre de la direction de la sûreté de Batman et envoyés à la Cour de sûreté de l'Etat de Diyarbakir (sud-est) pour contrôler le contenu de notre dictionnaire", a expliqué M. Kaya.

Ce dictionnaire de 1.280 pages et plus de 40.000 entrées est à ce jour le plus important ouvrage donnant accès à la langue kurde la plus parlée en Turquie, le kurmandji (parlé par 85% des Kurdes turcs, avec le zaza, alors que le sorani est principalement parlé dans le nord de l'Irak).

Rédigé par Zana Farqini, membre de l'Institut kurde d'Istanbul, ce dictionnaire est une preuve que "la langue kurde existe, qu'elle doit être protégée et qu'elle n'est pas aussi pauvre qu'on le dit", a expliqué son directeur.

L'ouvrage est en vente au Centre culturel mésopotamien, pro-kurde, mais reste introuvable dans plusieurs autres grandes librairies où des dictionnaires plus anciens sont dans les rayons, a constaté l'AFP.

"Nous en vendons moins de cinq par an", a expliqué un vendeur au sujet de ces ouvrages de quelque 12.000 entrées, publiés après la levée de l'interdiction sur les publications en langue kurde, en 1991, et qui a dit ne pas être au courant de cette nouvelle publication.

M. Kaya a annoncé que "d'ici six mois à un an" serait également publié un dictionnaire kurde-turc.

La Turquie à nouveau accusée à Strasbourg de violations des droits de l'Homme



STRASBOURG, 20 juin (AFP) - 14h02 - La Turquie a, une nouvelle fois, été mise au banc des accusés mardi à Strasbourg devant la Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme lors d'une audience, après la plainte d'une enseignante kurde grièvement torturée pendant sa garde à vue et dont le mari a été assassiné par des inconnus.

La Commission européenne des droits de l'Homme avait conclu déjà en 1999 que la Turquie avait violé quatre articles de la Convention des droits de l'Homme: le droit à la vie, l'interdiction des tortures, l'absence d'enquête effective après le meurtre du mari, et l'interdiction d'intimider une personne pour l'empêcher de se plaindre auprès de la Cour européenne.

La requête a été déposée par Nebahat Akkoç, 47 ans, résidant à Adana (sud-est de la Turquie). Cette enseignante, responsable d'un syndicat enseignant, avait déjà été inquiétée par son administration après la parution d'un article accusant les autorités de harceler et d'emprisonner certains membres du corps enseignant, en 1992.

En 1993, son mari, Zubeyir Akkoç, enseignant d'origine kurde et également militant syndical, était tué alors qu'il se rendait à l'école primaire pour travailler. Le meurtrier présumé qui avait été arrêté suite à ce meurtre, un membre du parti illégal Hizbullah, a été acquitté le 21 mai 2000.

En 1994, Mme Akkoç était arrêtée à son domicile par les forces de l'ordre. Suivirent dix journées de "tortures extrêmes", selon l'enquête de la Commission qui cite des abus sexuels et mentaux, l'usage de projecteurs dans les yeux, des électrochocs, des douches écossaises, des coups, le tout attesté par des examens médicaux.

Après l'audience de mardi, la Cour européenne devrait rendre son arrêt dans un délai d'environ trois mois.

L'arrêt est obligatoire pour la Turquie, qui est l'un des 41 membres du Conseil de l'Europe.

Le maire d'un parti pro-kurde se défend de complicité avec le PKK



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 20 juin (AFP) - 13h22 - Le maire de Diyarbakir (sud-est), Feridun Celik, a rejeté mardi lors de la deuxième audience d'un procès devant la Cour de sûreté de l'Etat de sa ville les accusations de complicité avec la rebellion kurde portées à son encontre, a constaté un journaliste de l'AFP.

M. Celik, Selim Ozalp, maire de Siirt (sud-est) et Feyzullah Karaslan, maire de Bingol (est), tous membres du HADEP, sont accusés d'avoir aidé et financé le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) et risquent jusqu'à sept ans de prison dans un procès qui s'est ouvert le 24 avril.

"Je n'ai pas aidé cette organisation. Mon parti n'a pas d'argent, donc il est impossible que je les aide", a dit M. Celik, qui était absent à la première audience. Les autres maires étaient une nouvelle fois absents.

L'accusation est essentiellement fondée sur les présumés contacts entre les maires et un commandant du PKK, Murat Karayilan, qui s'est réfugié aux Pays-Bas.

Selon l'accusation, les maires ont profité d'un voyage en Allemagne pour rencontrer à la frontière germano-néerlandaise des membres du PKK, dont Karayilan.

M. Celik a rejeté cette accusation indiquant qu'il avait voyagé en Europe pour des projets de sa municipalité et n'y avait pas rencontré Murat Karayilan.

La cour a fixé la prochaine audience au 29 août.

Ankara consults Iraqi Kurds before Washington talks

Turkey is uneasy about the meeting to be held between the Iraqi opposition and the US administration

Saadet Oruc
June 21, 2000
Ankara - Turkish Daily News

Preceding a meeting to be held between Iraqi Kurds and top U.S. officials in Washington on June 26, Ankara reiterated its concerns over northern Iraq to Iraqi Kurdish groups in a meeting with a delegation from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) yesterday. Uneasy about the idea of a meeting between the U.S. administration and Iraqi opposition groups, officials at the meeting emphasized Turkey's policy towards Iraq, which is based on Iraq's territorial integrity and political unity.

The delegation from Jalal Talabani's PUK led by Kosrad Rasul was received by Turkekul Kurttekin, the head of the Foreign Ministry's Middle East department. Mohammad Tofiq, a leading PUK representative, was also present at the delegation.

Ankara questioned both sides' intentions for meeting in Washington. "We discussed the economic, social situation and the future of the region. We, as the PUK, respect Turkey's consideration in guaranteeing the security of its borders and we will not allow any foreign element to use our territories against our neighbors," Shazad Saib, the head of the PUK office in Ankara told the Turkish Daily News.

Jalal Talabani is currently in Europe and will travel to the United States to meet with Vice President Al Gore and George W. Bush, the democrat and republican candidates for the U.S. presidency, respectively.

There was no confirmation whether Massoud Barzani, the head of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), would attend the talks to be held in Washington. Head of the KDP in Ankara Safeen Dizayee said the issue is still being discussed.

However, political analysts have commented that due to the region's current realities, "none of the Iraqi opposition groups will miss the chance to meet with the U.S. administration's number two in command"

Elections and Iraq

Turkey, which closely monitors increasing emphasis the United States is putting on Iraq as election day approaches, has started making sharp remarks against the United States' policy on Iraq.

Senior Turkish officials think that as elections near, Washington has started to use stricter rhetoric with Iraq, which is against Turkish policy.

The current U.S. administration is being criticized by Republicans for its "soft" policy on Iraq and is giving the indication that a republican administration would pursue a more-sharpened policy to topple Saddam Hussein.

Ankara has recently reminded both sides of its sensitivities with the recent visit of Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Faruk Logoglu to Baghdad. Logoglu suggested that Iraq re-establish its administrative presence in the north by providing services to the people in the Kurdish-controlled area.

Consulting with Iraqi Kurds, Turkey has continuously proposed that Iraqi Kurdish groups do not cut off relations with the central Iraqi administration.

Bachar El Assad, élu à la tête du parti Baas, poursuit son ascension au pouvoir en Syrie

Un référendum devrait lui donner le titre de président dans un délai maximum de 80 jours

Bachar El Assad, fils du président Hafez El Assad, décédé le 10 juin, a été élu sans surprise, mardi, secrétaire général du Commandement ré-

gional, ou bureau politique du parti Baas. Douze des 21 membres de ce Commandement sont des nouveaux venus qui lui sont proches. Le fils de

l'ancien président a promis de réformer le pays tout en restant fidèle à la ligne de conduite « socialiste » du parti.

DAMAS

de notre envoyé spécial

En l'espace d'une décennie prodigieuse, Bachar El Assad est passé du rang de militant à celui de chef du parti Baas au pouvoir en Syrie. La clôture du neuvième congrès de cette formation, mardi 20 juin, dans la banlieue de Damas, a confirmé l'ascension fulgurante du fils du président Hafez El Assad décédé le 10 juin, et qui avait déjà glané dimanche 11 juin, sur son seul nom, les galons de commandant en chef des forces armées du pays. L'obtention du titre de président à l'issue d'un plébiscite de pure forme couronnera, dans moins de quatre-vingts jours conformément à la Constitution, cette évolution dynastique de la Syrie. Le Parlement syrien devrait s'engager dans cette voie dimanche 25 juin, en présentant officiellement Bachar El Assad comme candidat unique à la succession.

Le secrétaire général adjoint du parti, Abdallah El Ahmar, a justifié, mardi, cette promotion en expliquant qu'en tant qu'« élève de l'école Assad », le fils était le mieux placé pour succéder à son père, avec pour feuille de route le triptyque de la « continuité », de la « stabilité » et de la « modernité ». Les deux premiers termes de ce slogan trouvent leur traduction dans la composition du nouveau Commandement régional, l'instance suprême d'un parti autrefois panarabe, mais réduit depuis longtemps à sa section syrienne, comme dans celle du comité central, tous deux élus mardi.

Le fort taux de renouvellement des membres (plus de 50 % pour le Commandement régional qui compte 21 membres, plus de 70 % pour le comité central qui en ras-

semble 90) ne doit pas abuser. Le dernier congrès remontant à l'année 1985, il ne s'agit que d'une évolution somme toute prévisible, qui permet surtout au nouvel

Damas prêt à négocier si Israël s'engage à un retrait total

Le secrétaire général adjoint du parti Baas au pouvoir en Syrie, Abdallah El Ahmar, a affirmé, mardi 20 juin, que la Syrie reprendra les négociations de paix avec Israël lorsque ce dernier se sera engagé à un retrait total du Golan : « Lorsque Israël sera disposé à appliquer le principe de l'échange de la terre contre la paix, c'est-à-dire à s'engager à un retrait jusqu'à la ligne du 4 juin 1967, nous serons prêts à retourner à la table des négociations », a déclaré M. Ahmar lors d'une conférence de presse, à l'issue du 9^e congrès du parti Baas. « La question de la restitution totale de la terre ne peut faire l'objet de compromis », a ajouté le responsable syrien, en soulignant que « la paix est un choix stratégique fait par le parti ».

Les négociations syro-israéliennes sont suspendues depuis janvier. Damas réclame la restitution totale du Golan occupé en 1967, alors qu'Israël veut garder la rive nord-est du lac de Tibériade pour maintenir un contrôle total sur ce réservoir d'eau. - (AFP)

homme fort syrien de s'entourer de personnes sûres. C'est ainsi que Farouk El Chareh, inamovible ministre des affaires étrangères, et Mohamad Moustafa Miro, premier ministre nommé il y a un peu plus de deux mois, font leur entrée au Commandement régional, ainsi que deux autres nouveaux ministres et deux gouverneurs de province.

ORIENTATION FAMILIALE

La forte proportion de militaires ou d'hommes chargés de la sécurité intérieure confirme le poids de ces deux appareils dans le pays. Les cas les plus emblématiques au comité central sont peut-être ceux du général Ibrahim Houeiji, chef des services de renseignements de cette armée de l'air dont était issu Hafez El Assad, et du général Hassan Khalil,

chef des renseignements militaires, nommé par le défunt à la place de son prédécesseur Ali Douba. Par ailleurs, la présence dans ce comité du propre frère du

futur président, Maher, un militaire, est significative. Il en est de même avec le fils du ministre de la défense Moustafa Tlass, Manaf, militaire lui aussi (son père étant

membre du Commandement régional). Elles confortent l'orientation familiale ou patrimoniale d'un parti qui ferait sans doute se retourner dans leur tombe ses fondateurs qui s'étaient donné comme devise : unité, liberté, socialisme.

DISCOURS FLOUS

En revanche, la modernité revendiquée par le Baas n'a pas encore trouvé sa traduction, c'est le moins que l'on puisse dire, dans les « recommandations » politiques et économiques du parti, adoptées à l'issue du congrès, et qui mettent en avant sans ciller le succès de « la démocratie populaire » que serait la Syrie et le fort attachement du parti au secteur public déjà hypertrophié. Assez flous pour ne pas lier les mains de Bachar El Assad, ces discours devraient tenir lieu de programme présidentiel d'un homme qui ne s'est toujours pas exprimé publiquement sur ses intentions depuis dix jours, seulement à huis clos.

Gilles Paris

Anatomie d'un pouvoir vieux de trente ans

Le régime d'Hafez el-Assad reposait sur trois forces interdépendantes : les officiers alaouites, le parti Baas, ainsi que les paysans et les commerçants sunnites.

HA'ARETZ
Tel-Aviv

Un homme qui n'écoute pas le cœur de son peuple ne peut qu'entrer en conflit avec lui, voire en mourir." Ces propos, feu Hafez el-Assad les tint à propos de Yasser Arafat, après que le président de l'OLP eut signé les accords d'Oslo. Ironie de l'Histoire, en trente ans de pouvoir, Assad père n'a jamais eu à affronter son peuple. Il s'est seulement permis de renverser des gouvernements, de combattre des minorités, d'assassiner des milliers de Frères musulmans et d'opposants, tout en s'assurant du soutien de la majorité de la population. Hafez el-Assad a assis son pouvoir sur des piliers politiques et militaires d'autant plus fiables qu'ils étaient interdépendants. Qui, de Bachar ou des piliers politico-militaires, contrôlera l'autre ?

Le pouvoir syrien offre deux visages. A priori, on a affaire à une démocratie institutionnelle. Dans un Parlement multipartite, le Conseil du peuple, composé de 250 députés, domine le parti Baas. Pour des regards non avertis, le Baas, socle idéologique de la Syrie moderne, dispose d'institutions semblables à celles de n'importe quel parti démocratique. Il est organisé en sections locales, lesquelles élisent leurs représentants au sein d'un Conseil central de 90 membres, lequel élit à son tour les 21 membres de la direction nationale. Enfin, la Constitution syrienne, amendée en une heure afin de permettre la nomination de Bachar à la présidence, fixe les règles de gouvernement, le rôle du président et la confirmation de sa nomination par le Parlement via un référendum. Quoi de plus démocratique ?

Toutefois, le véritable centre du pouvoir repose sur les cadres supérieurs de l'armée, les services de renseignements et les services de la sécurité intérieure. Les principaux chefs de l'armée et des renseignements sont issus de la minorité alaouite [secte chiite présente dans le nord de la Syrie, dont fait partie la famille Assad]. Dès lors, bien que 60 % des parlementaires syriens soient sunnites, 90 % des officiers supérieurs

sont issus de cette communauté alaouite qui ne représente que 11 % de la population.

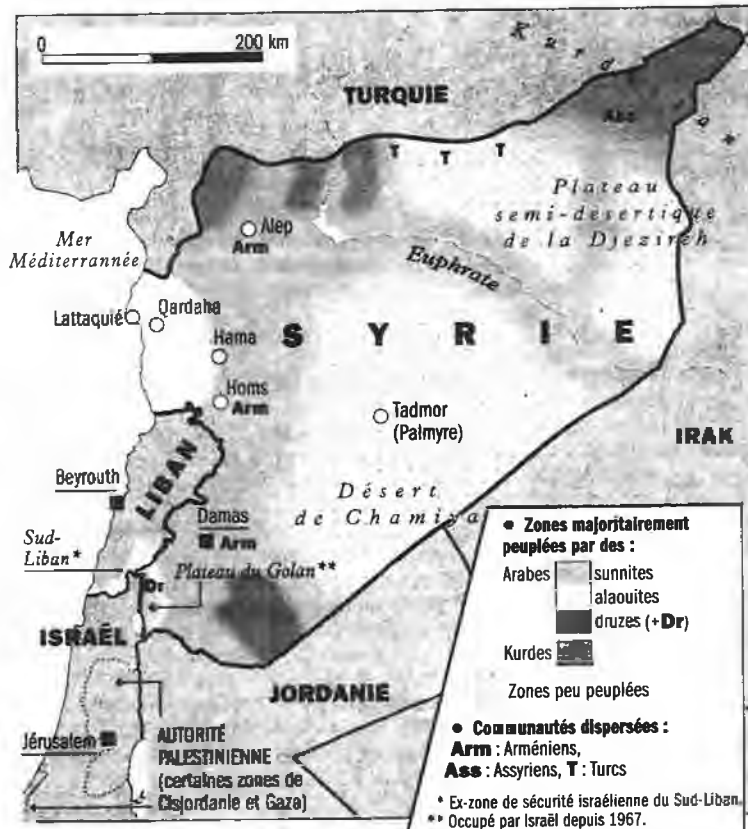
Les deux systèmes qui régissent la Syrie, le civil et le militaire, sont interdépendants. Ainsi, les officiers supérieurs siègent également à la tête du parti Baas, tandis que 9 membres de la direction nationale du parti sont des militaires alaouites, auxquels s'ajoutent quelques officiers sunnites. Cette combinaison est censée protéger le pouvoir de toute initiative du Baas risquant d'affecter le statut des officiers supérieurs alaouites et de mettre à mal le glacié qui entoure le clan Assad. Hafez el-Assad a toujours été soucieux de prouver que ses décisions étaient le fruit d'un large consensus, car il savait bien que le pouvoir exercé par les alaouites sur la majorité sunnite était son talon d'Achille. En effet, non seulement les sunnites ont toujours constitué la majorité de la population, mais également le noyau de la propriété économique et foncière.

Son intelligence fut de créer autour de lui une "ceinture sunnite" tributaire en cooptant des sunnites d'origine rurale et modeste à de hautes fonctions militaires et civiles. Les cas les plus connus sont l'ancien chef d'état-major Hikmat Shihabi, le ministre des Affaires étrangères Farouq el-Shareh, l'inamovible ministre de la Défense Moustafa Tlass, le Premier ministre (qui s'est récemment suicidé) Mahmoud Zouabi et le vice-président Abdel Halim Khaddam.

RIFAAT EL-ASSAD EST À PRÉSENT NEUTRALISÉ

Les officiers supérieurs alaouites, le parti Baas et les paysans sunnites constituent donc une triade qui, malgré la mort d'Hafez el-Assad, laisse peu de place à des surprises ou à des changements radicaux. L'équilibre instable de la triade était le secret de son pouvoir, tant sur le plan intérieur que sur le plan international. Ainsi, il n'a jamais mené seul une guerre contre Israël ou un autre Etat arabe. Jusqu'à son dernier souffle, la paix à laquelle il aspirait avec Israël était une paix négociée avec un front arabe uni et un Israël contraint de faire les principales concessions. C'est pourquoi il a toujours considéré que l'Egypte ne l'avait pas seulement trahi personnellement, mais avait aussi trahi la cause arabe. Il pensait la même chose du roi Hussein de Jordanie et de Yasser Arafat. Par ailleurs, contre l'Irak de Saddam Hussein, Hafez el-Assad avait pris soin de s'associer à une coalition composée des Etats du Golfe et de l'Egypte.

C'est cette subtile triade militaro-politico-confessionnelle qui permit à Hafez el-Assad de perpétrer les terribles massacres de Hama et de persécuter les Frères musulmans, qui contestaient les fondements laïques de l'Etat. Ces fondements n'étaient pas seulement un principe clé de l'idéologie baasiste, mais permettaient surtout le maintien de la domination alaouite.



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La triade le trahit une seule fois, lorsque son frère Rifaat, profitant du malaise cardiaque d'Hafez, en 1983, tenta de s'emparer du pouvoir. A posteriori, il s'avère que, inquiets d'être écartés au bénéfice d'officiers sunnites chargés par Hafez d'exercer la vacance du pouvoir, un groupe d'officiers alaouites avait choisi d'appuyer leur coreligionnaire Rifaat. Ce dernier est désormais neutralisé, les services de renseignements ayant donné l'assaut à sa résidence privée de Lattaquié [port au nord de la Syrie] en 1999, incarcéré ses partisans et confisqué la plupart de ses biens. Exclu des rangs du parti

Baas en 1988, il a perdu toute légitimité pour accéder à la présidence.

Si Bachar ne dilapide pas le legs de la triade laissé par son père, il n'a aucun souci à se faire. C'est pourquoi la lutte qu'il mène actuellement contre la corruption ne peut aller jusqu'à son terme. Réformer les structures économiques, privatiser les monopoles et s'ouvrir à la mondialisation risquerait non seulement de jeter à la rue des milliers de gens devenus des sans-emploi, mais aussi de pénaliser les oligarques de son entourage. Il en va de même en matière de politique étrangère et de ligne diplomatique vis-à-vis d'Is-

raël. Mais la dépendance de Bachar envers cette force tripartite a sa réciproque. Cette triade a besoin que Bachar suive la ligne tracée par son père si elle veut conserver ses positions. **Tzvi Barel**



ANARCHIE OU MODERNITÉ

Trois scénarios après un enterrement

Pour l'éditorialiste William Safire, le décès du président Assad ne peut que relancer le processus de paix. Reste la situation intérieure de la Syrie, toujours imprévisible.

Vous voulez dresser la liste des bonnes actions du dictateur syrien Hafez el-Assad ? Commencez donc par ça : il a fait partie des ennemis de l'Irakien Saddam Hussein. Et la liste s'arrête là. Côté débiteur, en revanche, on peut inclure son alliance active avec le communisme soviétique, le massacre de milliers de dissidents à Hama*, le soutien frénétique qu'il a accordé aux terroristes du monde entier, l'occupation militaire du Liban et sa haine inextinguible d'Israël, qui a fait de lui l'un des champions du front du refus dans le monde arabe. Son décès aidera-t-il ou au contraire

généra-t-il le processus de paix ? Il ne peut que l'aider. A court terme, "l'option syrienne" est au point mort pour au moins un an. A plus long terme, l'absence d'Hafez el-Assad sera positive parce que le dictateur était poussé par l'orgueil, par son désir de reconquérir par les négociations chaque pouce de terrain perdu. Ce besoin excessivement personnel d'autojustification a disparu avec lui.

Nous sommes maintenant confrontés à plusieurs scénarios :

- Le pire : l'anarchie en Syrie. Les Assad sont issus d'une minorité religieuse, les alaouites, et les sunnites majoritaires pourraient bien être tentés de reprendre le dessus. Le dictateur avait également atteint un équilibre des forces entre l'armée, les services de renseignements et son parti

politique [le parti Baas]. Son fils de 34 ans, figure de proue des fidèles du régime, n'a peut-être pas la rouerie manipulatrice d'un père dont on pouvait seulement attendre qu'il ne fasse ni la paix ni la guerre. L'anarchie pourrait entraîner des coups d'Etat, des émeutes, une offensive désespérée contre Israël, un rapprochement avec Saddam Hussein. Itamar Rabinovitch, spécialiste [israélien] de la Syrie, m'a dit craindre que "le temps de la prévisibilité soit révolu".

- Le pis-aller : un équilibre des pouvoirs derrière un dictateur qui a besoin de faire la paix pour survivre. Si ce n'est pas Bachar, ce pourrait être un militaire ou un politicien capable d'imposer l'ordre dans le pays, la "stabilité", sans massacres comme à Hama. Pour des raisons économiques, il pourrait être amené à rapatrier

les 30 000 soldats déployés au Liban, si l'on persuade le Hezbollah soutenu par l'Iran de partir.

- Le meilleur : Bachar entraîne vers le monde moderne une Syrie exaspérée et arriérée. Avec au départ des investissements venus d'Arabie Saoudite et des Emirats arabes unis, avec un peu d'habileté et beaucoup de chance, il pourrait mettre en place les rudiments d'une réforme de marché et apporter un peu de prospérité à un pays privé de liberté. Un vœu pieux, certes, mais voilà comment une véritable paix pourrait s'imposer.

William Safire, The New York Times

* En 1982, le pouvoir syrien lance une opération dirigée par Rifaat el-Assad, frère du Président, contre les islamistes dans la ville de Hama. Trente mille personnes auraient été tuées.

CÉDRES

L'éternel casse-tête libanais

■ Le premier geste actif de défi pour le nouveau régime de Damas viendra vraisemblablement du Liban, vassal rétif de la Syrie. L'un des rares sentiments qui soit partagé par l'ensemble du spectre religieux libanais est le ressentiment face à l'occupation du pays par une armée de paysans mal dégrossis et par les milliers de travailleurs manuels qui ont débarqué dans son sillage.

Les politiciens libanais, éternellement en conflit, avaient pour habitude d'essayer de se prendre de vitesse pour solliciter les faveurs d'Hafez el-Assad... De son côté, ce dernier maintenait l'équilibre du pouvoir entre eux en se choisissant constamment de nouveaux favoris. Ils sont venus en masse à son enterrement, et on les a vus pratiquement courir autour du cercueil dans leur empressement larvaire à se mettre dans les petits papiers de leur nouveau maître. Mais, en privé, les mêmes politiciens sont prompts à décrire, non sans mépris, le nouvel Assad comme un gamin. Des législatives étant annoncées au Liban pour le mois d'août, Assad junior devra donc très vite trancher entre les rivaux qui se battent pour obtenir des sièges. Ceux qui se sentiront lésés n'hésiteront sans doute pas à le défier ouvertement, tandis que d'autres s'efforceront de manœuvrer en coulisses pour accroître leur influence. Bachar el-Assad sait qu'en Syrie ses adversaires potentiels étudieront de près avec quelle fermeté il gèrera ses pupilles libanais.

The Economist (extraits), Londres

IRAN

Les conservateurs iraniens seraient-ils de retour ?

AL HAYAT

Londres

Le ministre iranien de la Culture et de l'Orientation islamique, Ataollah Mohajerani, collaborateur de la première heure du président Mohammad Khatami, a pris une initiative trahissant un profond découragement en annonçant sa décision de quitter la vie politique pour se consacrer à l'écriture et à l'enseignement. Dans ses propos, publiés par le journal *Ettela'at*, proche des milieux conservateurs, Mohajerani a vainement essayé de donner à sa décision un caractère purement personnel, mais l'ébullition qui règne sur la scène iranienne et les tiraillements qu'elle connaît montrent que l'affaire ne relève ni d'un caprice ni d'un choix personnel, mais des difficultés considérables rencontrées par le courant des réformistes qui soutiennent Khatami. Et cela malgré le succès remporté par ce courant aux dernières législatives.

Ce qui traduit le découragement de ce ministre qui a mené une campagne de réformes courageuse dans le domaine de l'art et des médias durant ces trois dernières années, c'est qu'il n'a pas parlé d'une démission institutionnelle ni manifesté l'espoir de revenir à son poste quand la situation se serait améliorée. Il a annoncé qu'il se retirait totalement et définitivement de la politique, de ses convulsions et de ses intrigues.

Ce qui rend plus manifeste encore le désespoir du ministre, c'est que sa décision a été annoncée dans une atmosphère de confiance vis-à-vis de la force grandissante du courant réformateur, entre la célébration turbu-

lente du troisième anniversaire de la victoire de Khatami et la préparation anticipée des prochaines présidentielles, qui auront lieu dans un an environ.

La désillusion perçait déjà dans les propos du ministre après le résultat des élections organisées dans la circonscription de Téhéran [en mai 2000]. Ce résultat n'a pas seulement confirmé la victoire précédemment obtenue par les réformistes ; il constituait également une victoire personnelle pour Mohajerani, après le succès remporté par sa femme Jamileh, qui figure parmi les premiers élus de la capitale. Enfin, le retrait de Hachemi Rafsandjani* a conféré une autre dimension à la victoire. Pourquoi, dans ces circonstances, Mohajerani a-t-il décidé de se retirer du



gouvernement ? Et pourquoi cela à un moment crucial, alors que se déroule un combat titanesque entre deux camps, une majorité réformatrice et une minorité conservatrice qui s'entête à vouloir jouir du pouvoir ?

KHATAMI EST PRÊT À NÉGOCIER AVEC LES CONSERVATEURS

Rappelons que Mohajerani avait déjà présenté sa démission l'année dernière, à la suite des premières attaques lancées par les conservateurs contre les sympathisants de Khatami. Mais le président iranien modéré, manquant de collaborateurs qualifiés comme le ministre de la Culture, avait refusé son départ, le pressant de rester en poste et de ne pas le laisser mener seul la bataille de la réforme. Ultérieurement, Mohajerani avait de nouveau menacé

de se retirer : le courant religieux conservateur venait d'exiger la révocation du ministre de la Culture au cours d'une campagne contre les journaux réformistes, l'accusant à cette occasion d'inciter les jeunes et les intellectuels à abandonner la "voie de l'islam" pour une "culture athée" et des idées de réforme "à l'américaine". Mohajerani avait retiré sa démission dans les deux cas, croyant – les apaisements de Khatami aidant – que la dernière victoire parlementaire donnerait au courant réformiste un nouvel élan pour affronter les adversaires de la réforme. Cependant, un doute le

tenaillait : Khatami, prétextant l'étroitesse de sa marge de manœuvre et le risque d'un affrontement sanglant, commençait à dilapider ses acquis, à marchander avec les conservateurs et à fermer les yeux sur leurs pratiques juridictionnelles, tout en préparant le terrain pour leur donner la présidence du Parlement et d'importants portefeuilles ministériels dans le prochain gouvernement, dont, peut-être, la Culture et l'Orientation islamique...

Cela ne veut pas dire que Mohajerani entendait tirer parti de la victoire électorale pour liquider la partie adverse, ou qu'il poussait à l'affrontement violent. Cela signifie qu'il veillait à ne pas dilapider les acquis institutionnels et légaux fournis par les suffrages en faveur de la réforme. Il s'agissait pour lui d'éviter que les conservateurs ne reviennent par la fenêtre quand les Iraniens venaient de les chasser par la porte.

Sami Shawrsh

* Le 26 mai, à la veille de la réunion du nouveau Parlement iranien, l'ancien président Rafsandjani a renoncé à son mandat de député.

◀ Dessin de Saberian paru dans *Adineh*, Téhéran.

■ **Main de fer**
Sur l'ordre du Tribunal de la révolution, les locaux de la revue *Iran-e Farda* et le domicile d'Ezzatollah Sahabi, son rédacteur en chef, ont été perquisitionnés durant plusieurs heures. Les domiciles de plusieurs intellectuels et journalistes, dont Akbar Ganji (actuellement en prison), M^{me} Monirou Ravanipour (écrivain) et Ali Afshari (l'un des dirigeants du mouvement étudiant), ont été de la même manière visités par les agents. Des documents, manuscrits, ordinateurs et carnets de téléphone personnels y ont été confisqués.

— COURRIER INTERNATIONAL N° 503

DU 22 AU 28 JUIN 2000



ROMANS . Exilé en Suède, Mehmed Uzun a tenté de faire revivre une littérature pratiquement anéantie par la répression turque. A sa grande surprise, ses œuvres sont aujourd'hui récupérées par les dirigeants politiques d'Ankara.

La voix du peuple kurde

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
New York

DE STOCKHOLM

Mehmed Uzun a découvert la puissance des mots le jour où il a vu un homme se brûler la chair avec une cigarette. Accusé de soutenir l'indépendance du Kurdistan, Uzun, qui était alors un jeune militant kurde de 18 ans, avait été arrêté et transféré à Diyarbakir, la plus grande ville kurde de Turquie. Incarcéré dans la même cellule qu'une vingtaine de compatriotes kurdes, il s'est retrouvé à côté d'un commerçant terrorisé, qui s'était fait tatouer sur une main un mot interdit : Kurde. Sous le regard du jeune Uzun, l'homme le brûla pour l'effacer. *"Mes bourreaux devraient me remercier de leur faciliter la tâche"*, avait-il lâché au moment où on l'avait emmené à l'interrogatoire.

Mehmed Uzun réussit par la suite à fuir et à s'exiler en Suède, où il s'engagea dans une activité subversive d'un tout autre genre : élaborer une forme moderne et littéraire du kurde – langue longtemps interdite par les autorités turques. Son entreprise le conduisit, entre autres péripéties, à infiltrer sous couvert d'un déguisement une base de l'armée turque pour y effectuer des recherches sur un prince kurde de l'époque médiévale et à faire venir à Stockholm par avion un berger kurde afin de recueillir des mots rares qu'il voulait intégrer dans un nouveau dictionnaire kurde. A 47 ans, cet ancien extrémiste studieux estime être devenu, au même titre que ses écrits, un acteur central du différend qui a récemment opposé Ankara à l'Occident.

L'année dernière, la Turquie a mis fin par la force à quinze années de rébellion kurde. Mais, à la surprise générale, elle a ensuite laissé se développer un "printemps kurde" : la culture kurde est devenue à la mode, des librairies kurdes ont ouvert leurs portes et les romans de Mehmed Uzun se sont vendus comme des petits pains. La soudaine célébrité du romancier a favorisé



▲ Dessin paru dans The Wall Street Journal, New York.

■ **Mehmed Uzun**
Après s'être essayé à un roman kurde moderne, en 1985, il publia la première anthologie de littérature kurde et souleva l'enthousiasme de la critique avec son roman *La Poursuite de l'ombre* (Phébus, 1999), qui raconte l'histoire d'un intellectuel kurde des années 20 tiraillé entre l'amour d'une femme et le devoir de lutter contre la jeune République turque. Le livre s'est mieux vendu dans sa traduction turque qu'en kurde, étant donné que quelques centaines d'individus seulement lisent et écrivent encore le dialecte kermanci des Kurdes de Turquie.

la campagne d'adhésion d'Ankara à l'Union européenne. Lorsqu'Ismail Cem, le ministre des Affaires étrangères turc, est allé défendre à Stockholm la candidature de son pays à l'entrée dans l'UE, il a exhibé trois romans d'Uzun. Mais, dès le mois de février suivant, un tribunal provincial turc mettait sept titres d'Uzun à l'index. M. Cem et d'autres progressistes turcs sont montés au créneau pour faire invalider cette décision – après que la ministre des Affaires étrangères suédoise, Anna Lind, eut menacé de geler la candidature de la Turquie à l'UE.

C'est son amour pour une langue menacée de disparition qui a valu à Mehmed Uzun de se retrouver au cœur de ce drame. Il y a quelques années, à l'époque où il avait déclaré vouloir écrire en kurde, ses amis lui avaient conseillé de choisir plutôt le turc, voire le suédois, langue de sa terre d'accueil. Entre 1920 et 1990, la Turquie avait pratiquement interdit l'usage du kurde, craignant qu'il ne renforce les séparatistes. *"Il n'y avait pas le moindre éditeur, pas de marché, pas un critique, pas une école, pas de télévision, aucun dictionnaire digne de ce nom, pas de traducteurs et pas de lecteurs, expliquait-il. La langue était dans un état tragique."* Il décida alors de créer une nouvelle littérature kurde, en puisant dans son enfance à Siverek, une ville du sud-est de la Turquie, région habitée par les Kurdes. Son père, marchand de moutons, alimenta l'amour de son fils pour la vie rurale kurde ; tous deux allaient suivre les troupeaux, discuter avec les villageois et écouter les ballades chantées par les bergers qui s'accompagnaient sur une flûte en bois.

Il reprit ses recherches linguistiques à Stockholm, encouragé par des bourses du gouvernement suédois. Pour recueillir le lexique et la tradition, il alla voir le chef des Kurdes irakiens dans une vallée des montagnes d'Irak tenue par les rebelles. Là, il passait ses soirées sous une tente à écouter des poètes et conteurs kurdes à la lueur d'une lampe à huile. Il apprit l'arabe afin de pouvoir lire la poésie classique kurde, qui s'était développée aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles.

Plus tard, il exhuma des exemplaires rarissimes d'une revue publiée par les exilés kurdes dans les années 20. Les tragiques aventures de ces pionniers constituent la trame de deux de ses romans, qui, comme toutes ses œuvres de fiction, décrivent par le menu les combats des Kurdes à travers les âges.

A la faveur d'une trêve entre les rebelles kurdes et Ankara, Uzun est donc devenu une

vedette. En janvier dernier, la police l'a autorisé à retourner pour la première fois depuis vingt-trois ans dans sa région natale. Plus de 3 000 personnes se sont massées à l'hôtel de ville de Diyarbakir, où il lisait des extraits de son nouveau roman [non traduit], *L'Amour comme la lumière, la mort comme l'obscurité*. Des foules de Kurdes ont fait la queue pendant des heures pour se faire dédicacer leur exemplaire de cette histoire

d'amour entre un rebelle et une jeune fille kurdes, sur fond de répression militaire. Depuis que la rébellion a été écrasée, les Turcs ordinaires s'intéressent davantage à leurs concitoyens kurdes et en ont moins peur. La traduction turque du roman est un best-seller.

Hugh Pope

« Un avion pour l'Irak » afin de briser l'embargo

APRÈS LES MOTS, les actes : quatre associations françaises, qui réclament la levée des sanctions imposées depuis dix ans à l'Irak, veulent organiser une opération symbolique, « *Un avion pour l'Irak* », qui vise, selon Gilles Munier, secrétaire général des Amitiés franco-irakiennes, à briser l'idée fausse qu'un embargo aérien est imposé à Bagdad.

Les organisateurs – les Amitiés franco-irakiennes, Co-développement-Tiers-Monde, la Coordination internationale pour la levée de l'embargo, Enfants du Monde-Droits de l'Homme – sont soutenus par l'Association des Juristes-démocrates européens et l'Appel franco-arabe. Ils font circuler une pétition, déjà signée par une trentaine de personna-

lités des mondes politique, artistique, religieux et culturel. Ils souhaiteraient réunir entre 25 et 50 candidats au départ.

Dans un communiqué, ils affirment vouloir « violer légalement un premier embargo, l'embargo aérien qu'aucune résolution de l'ONU ne fonde juridiquement ». Ils rappellent une déclaration en ce sens faite le 4 avril par le porte-parole du Quai d'Orsay, après une initiative du même genre prise par un député européen, l'Italien Vittorio Sgarbi et le prêtre français Jean-Marie Benjamin, secrétaire général de la Fondation Beato Angelico. Accompagnés du journaliste Massimo Santo Paolo, ils s'étaient rendus en Irak à bord d'un avion piloté par l'Italien Nicola Grauso, en fournissant aux autorités

aéro-portuaires jordaniennes un plan de vol truqué, ce qui leur a valu, à leur retour, la confiscation de leur avion par la Jordanie. De son côté, le député travailliste britannique George Galloway a tenté d'organiser un vol sur l'Irak, mais il en a été empêché par les autorités britanniques.

Les auteurs du projet français agiront « à visage découvert », affirme M. Munier. Ils en informeront le ministère français des Affaires étrangères, feront déposer un plan de vol en règle, mais ne demanderont pas l'autorisation de l'ONU, celle-ci n'étant requise, indique-t-il, qu'en cas de transport de produits, quels qu'ils soient, ce qui ne sera pas le cas.

M. Na.

Interpellations et saisies dans plusieurs locaux d'un parti pro-kurde



ISTANBUL, 26 juin (AFP) - 22h16 - La police d'Istanbul a effectué des perquisitions et des interpellations dans plusieurs locaux du Parti pour la Démocratie du Peuple (HADEP, pro-kurde), a annoncé lundi soir l'agence Anatolie.

Kemal Pekoz, président de la direction provinciale du parti, et Mahmut Can, son adjoint, figurent parmi les personnes mises en garde à vue, selon Anatolie, qui ne précise pas combien de personnes au total ont été interpellées, ni quand dans la journée de lundi ces opérations ont eu lieu.

L'agence annonce que la police a également confisqué "un grand nombre de documents", trouvés dans les différents locaux du Hadep, "pour enquête".

Outre le siège de la direction provinciale, dans le quartier de Nisantasi (centre d'Istanbul), quatre branches locales du Hadep, dans différents quartiers de la ville, ont ainsi reçu la visite de la police, sur ordre de la 5e Cour de sûreté de l'Etat d'Istanbul, rapporte Anatolie.

Le Hadep est sous le coup d'une procédure en interdiction pour ses liens présumés avec le PKK (Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan, ancienne rébellion séparatiste), et, plusieurs de ses dirigeants, dont son actuel président Ahmet Turan Demir, font l'objet de condamnations pour "soutien" au PKK et "propagande séparatiste".

Plusieurs maires membres du Hadep, dans le sud-est à majorité kurde, sont également poursuivis pour des motifs similaires.

Iranian Kurdistan Governor Zadeh: Kurds Prefer Democracy Over Autonomy

Al-Sharq Al-Awsat
24 Jun 00

["Text" of interview with Dr. Abdallah Ramadan Zadeh, "the first Kurdish Governor of Iranian Kurdistan," by an unidentified correspondent in Tehran]

[FBIS Translated Text]

[Correspondent] Kurdistan is among the Iranian provinces that always experienced crises and political disturbances. It was always unstable and unsafe. How did the region develop under your administration; and, what methods did you apply to resolve its problems?

[Zadeh] Yes, Kurdistan has always experienced political disturbances, both before and after the revolution. Instability and lack of order spread all over the province after the revolution. Everybody knows the incidents that happened there. However, in 1994, the military forces took charge of security instead of the Revolutionary Guards. As a result of the tight grip they held on the region, the activities of the Kurdish political groups that were hostile to the revolution retreated considerably.

All the Kurdish groups boycotted the presidential elections that were held on 23d May 1997. However, the public turnout was very high in these elections. In Saqaz (the cultural and political center of Kurdistan) for instance, more than 68 percent of the votes went to Khatami. This was the highest ratio in Iran after Yazd.

The citizens voted for Khatami. They were expecting changes in their favor. For that reason, and because I was the only Kurd to work in Khatami's electoral center, I was appointed governor of Kurdistan after the presidential elections in 1997.

The previous governor spoke Kurdish, although he was not a Kurd. He was a Turkish speaking resident of Kurdistan. In one of the speeches Khatami gave during his campaign in the province, he said, "the national Kurdish involvement in higher posts in the country is very low. This is one of the issues that needs proper attention."

It is worth noting that Kurds, who represent one of the ethnic groups in Iran, have a set of demands that were never observed in the past 50 years for different reasons. I personally believe that one of the causes of our problems was the ethnic policies that were enforced during Reza Shah's era. Mind you, we had no problems of that sort before that era. We experienced numerous crises in Kurdistan because the policies the capital developed for the region created many problems. It was not possible to resolve these crises through regional administrative methods. Therefore, our primary concern was to improve security in the governorate by ridding it of the military forces and replacing them with the police. That took a long time. Ultimately, the Iranian National Security Council decided to restore normalcy in the governorate. The police took charge of security instead of the military and the Revolutionary Guard, just like all other governorates.

Moreover, the people of Kurdistan had other culture-related demands. They are connected with the Kurdish language and higher posts in the governorate. We actually started to follow up on these matters. But our efforts produced no concrete results, because officials in Tehran did not think positively when it came to security in that governorate. They felt that Kurdistan was like a fire under the ashes and that it could flare up any minute.

Furthermore, the Kurdish elite showed no interest in cooperation with the Islamic Republic in the past 20 years. They did not get involved in the government.

We do not have skilled and experienced manpower in the region. We, therefore, pursued a certain policy. We started to hire Sunni Kurds in lower posts. Shiite Kurds were hired elsewhere. We appointed a number of Sunni Kurds as district managers and assistant governors in the Sunni populated areas. We also appointed a Sunni ruler in one of the cities.

Before Khatami's government took power, it was prohibited to appoint Sunni Kurds as managers in government departments or as governors. But we actually started to do that. Sunni Kurds now occupy over 45 percent of the managerial positions in Kurdistan. They are working very hard.

When it comes to the cultural aspect, Article 15 of the Constitution states that the Kurdish language is one of the important languages that should be used officially in the region. Unfortunately that article was not enforced due to a series of problems.

We actually took preliminary measures in that concern. I believe the problems can be summed up in the following:

First, there was no actual political will to enforce that article in the same way the other language-related articles of the Constitution are enforced. Now that we have the political will, we have other problems. We do not have teachers or books.

We started to take the initial steps in this concern as well. But we thought it was better if private institutions taught the Kurdish language until the necessary measures were completed in government schools and until the cultural council made the necessary decision in that regard.

Cultural and literary societies were limited in numbers. They all were supported by the Ministry of Culture and Guidance. We now have 10 new cultural societies.

When it comes to newspapers and magazines, no independent newspaper was issued regularly in Kurdistan unless it was affiliated with the central government. We now have two newspapers and a number of monthly magazines, which are run by the people of the governorate. Half of these are issued in Kurdish and there are no prohibitions on their work.

Kurdish books were censored heavily. But the freedom of publication is guaranteed under Khatami's government and we have no problem when it comes to publishing in Kurdish.

On the other hand, the local elections that were held in our cities and villages represented a positive step toward public involvement. Even the Kurdish Democratic Party that boycotted all previous elections urged the people to take part in these elections. It also declared its plan to take part in the parliamentary elections. When Party Leader Abdallah Hasan Zadeh was asked why he decided to take part in the elections, he said, "because the people will take part in the elections, whether we like it or not." We, therefore, believe that action actually started in Kurdistan. The question is whether or not that action would forge ahead at the same pace that reforms are taking in all other areas. Of course not. This is due to various reasons. The citizens are still afraid of indulging in political activity in Kurdistan, because the security agencies are still more active here than they are in any other region.

[Correspondent] One of the problems concerns the rights of the Sunni minority. Sunnis believe that they are discriminated against in many ways. You made efforts and took active steps in that regard. You appointed a number of Sunnis as managers in government departments in Kurdistan. But what about other measures, particularly since religious Sunni schools and gatherings are being harassed? What have you done to allow the Sunnis to enjoy the same rights the Shiites enjoyed?

[Zadeh] Sunnis have their own mentality. They think that they are treated as second-class citizens. I believe the problem is closely associated with the Kurdish ethnic problem and the religious identity in Kurdistan. The two factors combined created a state of political instability and lack of security in the region. It created a kind of pessimism in both sides that, on the one hand, led Sunnis to keep their distance from the government. On the other, the government was not able to hire them in government posts.

When it comes to religious schools, the basic problem is summed up in the question: Do Sunni schools have to be free or not? Can they teach outside the government school curricula?

We actually did that. We now have schools that are run traditionally and have no links with the governmental centers.

As for the Friday prayer rituals, we observe standard official Friday rituals in the city of Sinendeg every week. Moreover, some seven or eight informal Friday rituals are being observed in the Sunni-populated areas. The problem with Sunni religious schools is that they wish to operate independently from the government. In the meantime, they want to use the government resources.

This caused many problems.

Religious Sunni schools are demanding their degrees be recognized and accredited by the government, although they have no link with the government. They want their graduates to occupy educational posts. Here lies the problem. However, we tried to settle the issue. In fact those who study in independent Sunni schools that have no link with the government may take the test the Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences (shari'ah) organizes in Tehran once every year. The tests were held once four years ago and then stopped. But they resumed after Khatami came to power. Students at these schools may take these tests now. We have thus solved the problem. We also settled another problem. We started to appoint a considerable number of Sunnis officially in the educational department for the first time in 19 years.

[Correspondent] Autonomy is the principal slogan political groups raise in Kurdistan. Being specialized in Ethnology, do you think the Kurds of Iranian Kurdistan view themselves as primarily Iranians and secondly Kurds? Furthermore, the Kurdish Democratic Party raised the slogan "autonomy for Kurds and democracy for Iran." Is that slogan still in force in the Kurdish community? Did developments in the political structure in Iran change these left-inspired slogans, or did they remain as they had been? Has there been any change in the Kurdish mentality similar to that which affected the Iranian community?

[Zadeh] Naturally, we have to examine the political aspect of the ethnic question at two levels: The level of political leaders and the level of citizens in general. We have to analyze the socio-cultural state of any ethnic community and its relationship with the leaders of the community. This relationship may either be organizational or associated with sentiments or tribal and semi-tribal dispositions. Examining the history of Iranian Kurdistan, we will find that no single political leadership has ever been capable of controlling the entire Kurdistan region because of the sectarian disputes and the varying dialects. A very famous British linguist says: "The differences between the various Kurdish dialects are just like the differences between English and German." These differences, in addition to ethnic and tribal differences, led to a certain classification of the political leadership of the Kurdish community. For the past 50 years, Kurdistan has been divided into north and south as a result. That division remained the same, even after the revolution.

Southern Kurdistan includes Sinendeg and its suburbs, the stronghold of Cumalah Party (the Kurdish Communist Party), and Northern Kurdistan includes the city of Sahabad, the Democratic Party's center of activity. The historical antagonists of the Democratic Party never cooperated with that party. They were always loyal to the central government in Tehran. So, there are differences and disparities within that ethnic community, which always refused to have one political leadership.

We have to convince Kurds of the benefits they stand to gain if they remained Iranian citizens. But the Kurdish citizen is asking: If I am an Iranian citizen, why is my governorate the most underdeveloped economically? Kurdistan is one of the three or four most underdeveloped regions in Iran.

This question is being raised in Kurdistan. But Kurds proved on more than one national occasion that they are holding on to their Iranian identity. At the various elections--presidential, legislative and municipal--Kurds get involved widely, just like all other Iranians, when conditions are favorable. This shows that national solidarity is demonstrated more powerfully in a free climate.

The Democratic Party recently announced that it was prepared to operate in the national Iranian framework and that it has departed from the Marxist notion of autonomy. It declared its willingness to contract its demands once circumstances allow that. I believe that some kind of political development is materializing in the Democratic Party's vision of autonomy

and Kurdish rights.

[Correspondent] Do ordinary citizens in Kurdistan pay greater attention to political development and openness than to autonomy? Do they give precedence to democracy over autonomy?

[Zadeh] I think that they favor democracy. They believe that resolving the question of the basic freedoms of the Iranian people would allow them to exercise their activity in that framework.

[Correspondent] Can we say that the majority of intellectual Kurds abandoned the autonomy slogan and substituted it with democracy?

[Zadeh] If we take the elections that were held in Sinendeg or Mahabad as a measure of other politically oriented cities in Kurdistan, we will find that the leftist and rightist powers that cast their votes made no mention of autonomy.

[Correspondent] Did the Guardians of the Constitution exclude the autonomy zealots?

[Zadeh] No candidate was ruled out or deprived of taking part in the recent elections in Kurdistan.

[Correspondent] Did autonomy zealots run in these elections?

[Zadeh] Looking at the slogans the candidates raised in some cities, any observer could see that they were more extremist than those the opposition groups raised. For instance, candidates in the cities of Meriwan and Sinendeg raised extremist slogans on political matters. The citizens rejected them and denied them their votes, although they were very active and mounted wide media campaigns. The candidates who supported the reform-oriented powers and raised their slogans won the elections, although they did not belong to the reformative movement itself.

[Correspondent] What is your relationship with the Kurds of Iraq? How do the Iraqi Kurds view the issues that concern the Kurds of Iran? Do they still advocate "greater Kurdistan," and how do you handle this issue?

[Zadeh] The theory of "greater Kurdistan" the Kurds advocate is just a slogan they raise to intimidate the ruling regimes. They warn them that they would join the other side if their demands were not met.

In fact all Kurds exercise their activity within the borders of their individual countries, with the exception of the Turkish Workers Party of Kurdistan [PKK], which operates regionally outside the homeland to establish greater Kurdistan.

The political leadership of the Kurdish opposition in Iranian Kurdistan did not participate in the Netherlands conference. They believe that "greater Kurdistan" is nothing but an illusion--a mirage.

As for the Iraqi Kurds, information available to us shows that the Kurdish coordination with the Iraqi

opposition indicates that the Kurds do not favor a breakaway with Iraq. They want to work within the Iraq borders and to live in Iraq under a federal regime.

It is worth noting that the Iraqi Kurds represent the highest ratio of the population in the entire region. They make up 25 percent of the Iraqi population. The Turkish Kurds are greater in number. Statistics indicate that their population is 10-12 millions higher than the Iraqi Kurds. But they make up 15 percent of the Turkish population. Both Sunni and Shiite Kurds in Iran make up 10-15 percent of the Iranian population.

Moreover, the Iraqi Kurds reject the "greater Kurdistan" slogan because of their dire need for their neighbors on the borders with Iran and Turkey. They cooperate with us in monitoring the Iranian Kurds who are opposed to the regime in political or judicial terms. I believe that the higher the number of intellectual Kurds gets the lesser the desire to back the "greater Kurdistan" theory.

Military Imposes Criteria on Villagers' Return

Ozgur Politika 24 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Text] The victims of migration who applied to the military authorities in the Omerli district of Mardin so they can return to their villages were told that they would have to become village guards in order to return to their villages. The authorities will not allow families whose relatives have joined the PKK [Workers Party of Kurdistan] to return to their villages.

The migrants from Sivritepe, Cimenli, Guzelagac, and Tasgedik villages, who applied to the Omerli Battalion Command in order to return to their villages, were notified of this by the village heads. The military authorities stated that families whose members have not joined the PKK and who want to return to their villages are allowed to do so on condition that they agree to receive weapons from the state in order to protect themselves. Those who migrated from the Fistikli village, which was evacuated in 1992, also received the same information from former village head Abdurrahman Dag. The military authorities banned the Budak and Gumus families, whose relatives joined the PKK, from returning to their villages on the grounds that they might disturb the "tranquility."

In reaction to the preconditions for return, the victims of migration drew attention to the fact that their villages were evacuated because they did not agree to become village guards. A migration victim who wanted to remain anonymous said: "If we had agreed to receive weapons, the village would not have been evacuated and we would not have been miserable for years."

Passports Are Required To Enter the Village

Sivritepe, Cimenli, Guzelagac, and Tasgedik villages were evacuated in 1992. The migrants, who settled in Omerli, received the necessary permits to plant their fields only this year from the Battalion Command. The villagers, who were handed a permit that confirms that they can plant their fields, can enter the village at 0800 and have to return to the district at 1430 hours. The migrants define the permit as "the passport."

The State Should Provide Security

The nongovernmental organizations reacted to the conditions set by the military authorities for returning to villages. Noting that the state should not discriminate and should provide for the security of the people, IHD [Human Rights Association] Mardin branch chairman Cemil Aydogan said: "If the village guard system continues, the return to villages will not be realized in a healthy manner. Policies meeting the economic and social needs of the people should be developed."

MGK snag in Copenhagen criteria

Ankara - Turkish Daily News June 24, 2000

Amidst discussions over the future of Turkey's European Union membership candidacy process, the National Security Council (MGK) is reportedly lukewarm over necessary legal amendments that constitute part of the process.

When Turkey was named as a candidate for EU membership at the Helsinki summit last year, it was clear that Turkey needed good coordination among its various government departments to prepare for the task of easing Turkey into the union. It meant Turkey would have to adapt to a long list of rules and regulations set by the EU. It had to overhaul its system and introduce real democratic reforms which were framed by the Copenhagen criteria. Reportedly, the MGK objects to some of regulations which will be made within the framework of Copenhagen criteria including the "comprehensive citizenship concept," the lifting of the ban on Kurdish language broadcasting and restrictions on the military's dominance in politics.

The Turkish Daily News has learned that the discussion started during the preparation of a report which explains what steps Turkey should undertake during the accession process.

The report proposing the amendments, which was prepared by Human Rights High Coordination Board Secretariat Chairman Gursel Demirok in February, suggested radical reforms for human rights and was admired by foreign diplomats.

Demirok's report had proposed that the number of MGK civilian members should be increased and that MGK secretary-general candidates could include civilians such as governors or veteran ambassadors. It has been learned that the military was disturbed about the

report over possible amendments regarding human rights issues and the MGK's role. Discussions on these issues were raised at a joint meeting held in the MGK office, and discussions continued at a meeting under the Higher Board for Human Rights with the participation of the Foreign Ministry and the MGK. When the original draft prepared by the board advised that Turkey should adopt a "comprehensive citizenship concept" to replace the present citizenship law, due to MGK objections, the reference was omitted from the final version of the report.

Again in the original report, the Foreign Ministry had advised that the language ban on the expression of ideas should be lifted. That reference also was omitted from the final report. In its final version the report left out targets such as freedom of thought and permitting TV broadcasts and education in Kurdish.

Upon these developments, the Human Rights High Coordination Board Secretariat Chairman Gursel Demirok quit his post last week. It was speculated that discussions between the military and the Human Rights Board over possible amendments to the MGK led to Demirok's resignation. Now, the MGK has not only won the discussions on all those issues, but it has also secured from the meeting a decision to the effect that from now on all constitutional, legal and administrative arrangements involving the EU will be monitored by the MGK.

A Western diplomat told the Turkish Daily News that if the reports in the Turkish press are true, then the developments will put obstacles in Turkey's EU membership candidacy process. "As far as I can understand, some circles continue their objections to Turkish membership in the EU," the diplomat said. "If the MGK continues its dominant role in Turkish politics, and keeps on vetoing certain parts of the EU harmonization amendments, it means that there is a long way in front of Turkey before it can become a full EU member."

Commenting on Turkey's preparations for EU membership, a Turkish diplomat said that Turkey had been lagging behind in fulfilling its responsibilities on the way to EU membership. "To be able to do all that [is required], many ministries and state departments will have to be involved in a concerted effort," he said. "This means good coordination from a single source. But now we are facing a lack of coordination and the controversy among the most senior state officials on issues related to Turkish plans to comply with the EU's Copenhagen criteria."

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Report: education in the East and Southeast falls far short

Ankara - Turkish Daily News June 26, 2000

A just-released report covering all Turkish provinces shows Diyarbakir as having the highest number of girls aged seven to 13 who are not enrolled in any school, with 61.4 percent. Erzurum ranked second with 59.4 percent and Sanliurfa third with 46.3 percent.

True Path Party (DYP) Van Deputy Huseyin Celik prepared the report, which is entitled "The Situation in Southeastern Anatolia in Light of Socioeconomic Indicators," through drawing on data provided by the State Institute of Statistics (DIE), the State Planning Organization (DPT), the World Bank and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The 76-page report includes evaluations of a number of sectors, including education, health, agriculture, industry, tourism, border trade, migration and the return to villages initiative.

"In the field of education and culture, as in all other fields, Southeastern Anatolia is the region which has benefited the least from the reforms which began with the founding of the Turkish Republic," the report says in its chapter on education.

It states that region's unfavorable geographic conditions, harsh climate, and long distance from the country's main hubs such as Istanbul and Ankara have played an important role in this unfavorable development.

Imbalance between regions

The report says the rate of primary school attendance is 68.9 percent in eastern Anatolia and 70.94 in southeastern Anatolia, while the overall Turkish rate is 89.03 percent. The secondary school attendance rate is 33.7 percent in eastern Anatolia and 28.27 in the Southeast, compared to an overall Turkish rate of 53.14 percent. The report also documents high school attendance rates, which are 25.84 percent in eastern Anatolia, 18.7 percent in the Southeast and 38.72 percent in Turkey overall.

In terms of university attendance, the imbalance grows even wider at the expense of eastern and southeastern Anatolia. According to the report, this rate is 10.95 percent in eastern Anatolia and a mere 3.88 percent in southeastern Anatolia, while the overall Turkish rate is 22.87.

In terms of the number of children supposed to be registered for school, too, the provinces in eastern and southeastern Anatolia lag quite considerably behind the provinces in the west. The report shows that Antalya comes first in the number of children between the ages of seven and 13 who are registered for school. On the same list, Diyarbakir comes last.

In the ranking of provinces in terms of women who receive no education at all, not even primary school, Diyarbakir again comes first with some 42 percent. By way of comparison, in Izmir this same rate is only 8.1 percent. Diyarbakir is followed in the list by an eastern city, Erzurum, with 41.5 percent.

Difficulties of education in rural areas

Commenting that the outlook in schools in the rural parts of eastern and southeastern Anatolia is by no means promising, the report draws attention to the fact that previously in most schools, all the primary classes were conducted in a single room. It also points out that in many cases, students began to attend schools not in their own villages, but in neighboring villages. Also, they began to go to school only after the eight-year compulsory education requirement went into effect.

The report also emphasizes that the number of teachers in the region is far from adequate.

The report makes the following suggestions to the government for the improvement of educational conditions in eastern and southeastern Anatolia;

Boarding schools which are still being under construction should immediately be completed and their teachers and administrative staff should be appointed as soon as possible. Teachers who are willing to work in village schools should be encouraged by extra financial incentives. Vocational and technical education facilities should be designed in a way which takes the demands of the area into consideration, and all necessary equipment should also be provided. Equality of opportunity should be created in university education. Most high school graduates from eastern and southeastern Anatolia have to compete in university entrance exams with their counterparts from western provinces who have much better educational opportunities. Unsurprisingly, the result is almost invariably to the detriment of the former group. The region's excessive number of students per class should be reduced to at least to the overall Turkish average, and the teacher-student ratio should also be reduced to a reasonable figure. The Vocational Higher Schools, most of which were opened with political considerations in mind, are unable to provide satisfactory education and training. These schools should be subject to a serious revision. The region's universities should have their physical facilities and condition improved.

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dimanche 25 juin 2000, 12h10



La Turquie aurait choisi les chars allemands

BERLIN (Reuters) - Le gouvernement turc se serait prononcé en faveur de l'achat de 1.000 chars de combat allemands de type Leopard pour une somme de 7,1 milliards de dollars et le Conseil fédéral de sécurité allemand se réunirait le 3 juillet pour approuver le contrat, rapporte dimanche l'hebdomadaire allemand Welt am Sonntag.

L'obtention du contrat turc constituerait une victoire importante pour le constructeur Krauss-Maffei Wegmann, filiale du groupe Mannesmann (Paris: 5826.PA - actualité) AG, sur ses concurrents, l'Américain General Dynamics, le Français Giat Industries, l'Italien Iveco Fiat et une petite société ukrainienne.

Mais la commande turque doit être autorisée par le gouvernement allemand de centre-gauche, certains membres des Verts ayant menacé de quitter la coalition gouvernementale en arguant que les chars allemands pourraient servir à réprimer le mouvement séparatiste kurde en Turquie.

Le chancelier Gerhard Schröder a promis qu'aucune commande d'armement turque ne serait avalisée tant que la Turquie n'aurait pas prouvé son respect des droits de l'homme.

Une porte-parole du gouvernement allemand a refusé de commenter l'article du Welt am Sonntag, expliquant que le calendrier et le programme du Conseil fédéral de sécurité, qui regroupe les ministres concernés par les questions de défense et de sécurité, doit rester confidentiel.

Parties Urge UN To Stop Arabization in Government-Held Kurdish Region

Al-Ittihad 25 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan; head and members of the UN Human Rights Commission,

[Passage omitted: A historical background about Kirkuk area and the history of the Arabization policy which dates back to 1930]

In the following points, we list some of the aspects of the Arabization that is taking place in Kirkuk and its suburbs:

1. The destruction of villages located near Kirkuk city such as Yaruli, Pancha Ali, Chiman, Jol Bor, Kashka, Quwattan Khalifa and Shoraw, and tens of other villages.
2. Expulsion of workers and deporting them to the south of Iraq
3. Deployment of large police force and civil servants from the south of Iraq to Kirkuk
4. Changing the names of schools, streets and city districts from Kurdish into Arabic names, such as changing the name of Rahimawa District to Al-Andalus, Sargeran Village to Al-Quds, Asu School to Al-Tali'ah and Kurdistan Primary to Abd-al-Malik Bin Marwan. In addition to that, they have built a large number of new Arab districts like, (Al-Ba'th, Wasit, Sikak, Ishtirakiyah, Gharnatah, Wahda, Hurriya, Uruba, Hajjaj, Qutaiba)
5. Constructing wide roads in order to demolish as many houses and buildings as possible and deport their inhabitants to the south.
6. Altering the records of the 1957 census by adding names of the new Arab settlers. The 1957 census, despite its shortcomings, is considered to be the fairest held in Iraq. In this census, the population of Kirkuk was found to be as follows: Kurds 48 per cent, Arabs 28.2 per cent and Turkoman 21.04 per cent.
7. Encouraging Arabs to settle in Kirkuk and giving them financial help, land and weapons.
8. Transferring four major districts of Kirkuk Governorate to the administration of other governorates, namely (Chamchamal, Kifri, Dobz and Tuzkhormatu). This was done to reduce the number of Kurds in the Governorate.
9. To this day, the Arabization campaign continues in a very ruthless manner in the city of Kirkuk and its suburbs. Up until the beginning of the year 2000, the number of families deported from Kirkuk had reached 17,630, totalling 100,000 members. Furthermore, and prior to 1960 there was not a single Arab cemetery in Kirkuk or any mention of Arabs having any role in the history of the city or that the city was in any way an Arab city.

Recently, we have been hearing of a new conspiracy against the city, settling Palestinian refugees in it. The intention behind this policy is:

- A. To distance the Palestinians once and for all from the land of their ancestors, Palestine.
- B. To create hostility between the Kurds and the Palestinians.

For our part, we warn our Palestinian brothers not to take part in this vile plot, and urge the Palestinian leadership and all democratic movements to take a responsible stance and foil this aggressive conspiracy.

Therefore, we urge your excellency to:

1. Stop this oppressive campaign and [ensure] the implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 688.
2. Bring Saddam Husayn and his aides before an international court for the crimes they have committed.
3. Return all deportees to the homes of their ancestors and compensating them for the losses they have suffered and remove all traces of the Arabization policy.
4. Find a political solution for the Kurdish issue, without which the area will not have security and stability.

Finally, please accept our gratitude.

[Signed] The Kurdistan Democratic Party; The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan; Kurdistan Socialist Democratic Party; The Kurdistan Communist Party; The Kurdish Socialist Party.

Turkey Urges Baghdad to Increase Its Control over Northern Iraq

- It is no secret that Turkey does not want a Kurdish state in northern Iraq and it has defended the territorial integrity of Iraq so far. Since Turkey fears a possible Kurdish state, it is urging the Baghdad administration to increase its control over the region

Ankara - Amid discussions over what the future of Iraq and Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein might be, Turkey recently has been following a policy to press Baghdad's administration to regain its control over the region of northern Iraq. Turkish Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Faruk Logoglu visited Iraq two weeks ago and met all its high-level officials, excepting the head of state, President Hussein.

During this visit, Turkey suggested that Iraq increase its governmental and administrative efficiency in northern Iraq by providing services for the benefit of the people in the Kurdish-controlled area, and to not cut its contacts with the Iraqi Kurds.

It is no secret that Turkey does not want a Kurdish state in northern Iraq, and it has defended the territorial integrity of Iraq so far. Since Turkey fears a possible Kurdish state, it is urging the Baghdad administration to increase its control over the region.

In addition to Logoglu's trip to Iraq, there were two other important recent visits. After a visit to Ankara by the Massoud Barzani-led Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) also held regular meetings with Turkish officials last week. The KDP has stronger ties with Turkey than the PUK.

PUK seeks ways to improve relations with Turkey

In the lead-up to a meeting between Iraqi Kurds and top U.S. officials to be held in Washington on June 26, Ankara reiterated its concerns over northern Iraq to Iraqi Kurdish groups in a meeting with a PUK delegation last week. Reportedly, during the meeting Turkey emphasized its policy towards Iraq, which is based on Iraq's territorial integrity and political unity.

After the meeting, Shazad Saib, the head of the PUK Ankara's office, told the Turkish Daily News that the PUK delegation was here to improve relations with Turkey. "We discussed the economic and social situation and also the future of the region," he said. "We, as the PUK, respect Turkey's consideration in guaranteeing the security of its borders, and we won't allow any foreign element to use our territories against our neighbors."

U.S presidential elections and Iraq

Additionally, Turkey also has some concerns about the United States, particularly in the runup period to that country's November presidential and congressional elections. Turkey had been closely monitoring the United States' increasing emphasis on Iraq as this election day approaches, and it has started to make pointed remarks against its ally's policy on Iraq. Senior Turkish officials think that as the elections draw nearer, Washington has started to use stricter rhetoric with Iraq, a move which is contrary to Turkish policy.

Drawing attention to the U.S. Republican party's (GOP) foreign policies, the same officials said that the current U.S. administration was being criticized by the GOP for its "soft" policy on Iraq. The GOP has also been indicating that a Republican administration would more aggressively pursue a policy aim of toppling Saddam Hussein.

It should be kept in mind as well that the presumptive GOP presidential candidate, George W. Bush, is the son of the same former President George Bush who failed to topple Saddam Hussein either during the 1991 Gulf War or after, despite a demonizing of that leader's regime, much to the elder Bush's chagrin. It has thus

been suggested by some that should the younger Bush win the presidency, he may have a "score to settle" with Saddam.

Upon consultations with the PUK delegation, Turkey has continually proposed that Iraqi Kurdish groups not cut off relations with the central Iraqi administration.

On the other hand, it was reported that Iraqi opposition groups had been invited to Washington to meet with Al Gore, the U.S. vice president and presumptive Democratic party presidential candidate. Next week the leaders of all Iraq's opposition groups, including the Iraqi Kurds, will be received by Gore. The Iraqi issue seems to be a priority issue of U.S. foreign policy because of criticism of the current administration concerning the continued presence of Saddam Hussein in the Iraqi capital.

Turkey fears a 'possible' Kurdish State

Despite Turkey's remarkable success in stopping the terrorist campaign of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) in the Southeast, Ankara has been uneasy over developments in northern Iraq, particularly those concerning the possible establishment of a Kurdish state. Turkey, which has stated on numerous occasions that it would not permit the founding of an independent Kurdish state in northern Iraq, has urged Baghdad to establish better relations and adopt an all-embracing policy for its citizens in northern Iraq. Ankara has also clearly demonstrated its annoyance over the Kurdistan Democratic Party's (KDP) use of symbols of an independent Kurdish state. With its recent decision to consider upgrading the level of its Baghdad diplomatic mission, Turkey wants to send a clear signal that Baghdad should be the only place making decisions on how to solve the problems in Iraq, including those in its northern territories.

According to a recent article by the Washington Post's Howard Schneider, there are claims that "a Kurdish state with increasingly looser ties to the Baghdad administration" is taking shape in the northern Iraqi region. Reporting from Erbil, Iraq, Schneider said that under the protection of American warplanes patrolling the northern "no-fly" zone, and benefiting from oil smuggling and U.N. programs that have helped them more than the rest of the country, the Kurds of Iraq's three northeastern provinces have every year drifted further away from the authority of Saddam Hussein's central government in Baghdad.

Drawing attention to the role of the Gulf War in shaping the situation in northern Iraq, the article stated that: "People remain Iraqi citizens in territory that remains part of Iraq. However, since gaining an initial degree of U.S.-protected autonomy after the 1991 Gulf War, they have run their own affairs to a remarkable extent, creating a region sharply different to the rest of the country."

Ankara considers upgrading its diplomatic representation in Baghdad

In the wake of Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Faruk Logoglu's visit to Iraq, it has been reported that Turkey is considering upgrading the status of its diplomatic representation in Iraq to the ambassadorial level. Ankara wants to make it clear that Baghdad is the only place for all decisions and arrangements to be made in Iraq.

Iraqi diplomatic sources in Ankara told the TDN that Iraq would be more than happy to have a Turkish ambassador in Baghdad. Ankara's move would supplant the charge d'affaires position as its head post in favor of a full ambassador. Ambassador Selim Karaosmanoglu has represented Turkey in Baghdad since 1996 as its charge d'affaires.

Very bad economic and political situation in northern Iraq

Because of sanctions imposed by the United Nation since 1991, the economic situation in northern Iraq has grown deplorable. People are able to earn their sustenance only through border trade with Turkey. There are no economic activities in the region except for the Turkish border trade, which mainly consist of oil. However, as a result of a recent Turkish government decree, this border trade has come to a halt. Due to these dire economic conditions, many people from the region try to migrate to Western countries.

In addition to poor economic conditions, people have also suffered from ethnic conflicts in the region. There are Sunni, Shiite, Kurdish, Turkmen, Christian and Arab groups, and sometimes they clash with each other. Because of the lack of any powerful state authority, every ethnic group has organized its own armed force, and so even a tiny disagreement can easily escalate into an armed conflict.

Because of the above-mentioned reasons, Turkey is once again urging the Baghdad administration to increase the efficiency of its governance of northern Iraq.

Report: Migration from GAP cities harming Southeast

Ankara - Turkish Daily News June 27, 2000

Hacettepe University's Assistant Professor Sevil Atauz, in her new report entitled, "Macro-Indicators of Locational Elements in Settlement Areas of the Southeastern Anatolia Project [GAP] Region," states that migration away from the GAP region is in full force and happening very quickly. She added that this high migration rate was destroying the cities in the region, the Anatolia news agency reported.

Atauz said that incoming migration to the region was fueling outgoing migration. She stated that because the outgoing migrants are people who are carrying the traditional cultures of their own cities with them, GAP cities were becoming indistinguishable and their traditional character was in danger of extinction.

Adding that some of the incoming migrants were looking for opportunities, Atauz said: "These types of migrants are very dangerous for the GAP cities. People looking to take advantage of the situation, while either building or buying shanties, do not consider such dwellings a permanent tie to the region. Shanty houses are also convertible to money and a tool for new investment."

Atauz concluded: "The GAP cities don't offer enough quality job opportunities. They don't have any time to organize or educate future generations so they can establish permanent jobs. What is needed to increase the number of such jobs is the creation of new and permanent job opportunities through government investment."

Wall Street Journal June 28, 2000

Gore, Bush Seem Committed To Ousting Saddam Hussein

By Gerald F. Seib

UNDERSTANDABLY ENOUGH, most Americans are only starting to take a close look at the coming presidential election. Six thousand miles from here, though, stands a man who ought to be watching very closely – and getting a little worried.

He's Saddam Hussein, the maddeningly resilient dictator of Iraq. Slowly but surely, he's becoming an issue in the presidential race, and inspiring a bitter war of words between the presidential camps of Al Gore and George W. Bush. Through the rhetoric, though, one reality is becoming clear: Saddam next year will face a new American president who is publicly committed to get rid of him, not merely contain him.

On the Gore side of the equation, the vice president himself met just this week with the leaders of the Iraqi National Congress, the umbrella organization of Saddam foes. The meeting was loaded with symbolism. The intended message was that Mr. Gore isn't interested in simply humoring the Iraqi opposition, which critics charge the Clinton administration has done, but rather in working with the opposition to drive him out.

Lest anyone miss the point, Mr. Gore's office issued a statement declaring: "The vice president reaffirmed the administration's strong commitment to the objective of removing Saddam Hussein from power, and to bringing him and his inner circle to justice for their war crimes and crimes against humanity." There also was one tangible move to buttress those words, Gore aides say. The Iraqi opposition leaders delivered to Mr. Gore a list of 140 candidates for American training in ways to build the opposition into a meaningful force.

PRIVATELY, GORE ADVISERS talk of a kind of three-step process for going after Saddam. Step one would be to turn the Iraqi National Congress, still a young and frequently querulous organization, into a unified voice that can win international respect. Step two would be to use that international respect to persuade Iraq's neighbors to let the opposition operate from their territory. Step three would be to figure out how to move – and whether to try to precipitate a crisis that creates an opening.

Such talk leaves some Bush backers sputtering in anger and charging that the words are hollow after the Clinton-Gore administration has let the opposition wilt over the last seven years. "I have never seen, in 30 years in Washington, a more sustained hypocrisy, never," says Richard Perle, a former senior Pentagon administration aide who now advises the Bush campaign.

In his own remarks, Texas Gov. Bush hasn't been particularly specific, saying merely that he would hit Iraq hard if he saw any clear sign that it is building weapons of mass destruction or massing its military forces. But look for Mr. Bush to hold his own meeting with the Iraqi opposition soon. And Mr. Bush's lead foreign-policy adviser, Condoleezza Rice, is explicit: "Regime change is necessary," she declares.

She is careful not to overpromise, asserting: "This is something that could take some time." Like team Gore, she talks of the need to rebuild the anti-Iraq coalition, including Persian Gulf states and Turkey, as a precondition for eliminating Saddam.

Others in the Bush orbit, offering their personal ideas, sound more aggressive. Both Mr. Perle and Robert Zoellick, a former top aide to Gov. Bush's father, advocate specific steps to oust Saddam. Mr. Perle calls for giving the Iraqi National Congress tools such as radio transmitters to beam an anti-Saddam message into Iraq and for more extensive training for Saddam's foes in ways to mobilize opposition, particularly in the Iraqi military.

THEN, MR. PERLE suggests, the U.S. should help the opposition "re-establish control over some piece of territory" inside Iraq and remove international economic sanctions from that toehold of Iraq. Saddam then would have to either accept losing a chunk of his country, a humiliation, or mass his army to take it back, leaving his forces vulnerable to American air attack. Either way, he says, Iraqi military defectors will "come in droves."

In a similar vein, Mr. Zoellick talks of turning the existing "no-fly zones" in northern and southern Iraq, where American planes now patrol to keep out Iraqi aircraft, into "no-move zones," in which ground movements by Iraqi forces would be blocked as well. That, he argues, would open the way for the opposition to occupy a piece of the country, where they could be protected by U.S. forces.

This kind of talk leaves Gore partisans sputtering in their own anger, for they contend that the best chance to take such steps was squandered in 1991, when the Bush team was in power right after the Persian Gulf War. Mr. Gore, one of the few Democrats to back the war, called then for ousting Saddam.

In the end, both sides are right: The chances of ousting Saddam were best back in 1991, and the Clinton administration hasn't made the Iraqi opposition into a serious force. But that shouldn't obscure the basic fact: Both presidential contenders are talking a different game now.

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June 28, 2000

Bush Campaign Challenges Democrats on Iraq Policy

By Jonathan Wright

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - A foreign policy adviser to Texas Gov. George W. Bush (news - web sites)'s presidential campaign on Wednesday joined the looming battle over the Clinton administration's failure to get rid of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Richard Perle, an assistant secretary of defense under President Ronald Reagan, told a Senate hearing that a Bush administration would take seriously its duty to support the Iraqi opposition, with a view to ousting the Iraqi leader.

Iraq is a salient weak point in the Clinton administration's foreign policy record because Saddam Hussein does not appear significantly weaker than he was when President Clinton took office in January 1993.

Bush's father, President George Bush, was much criticized in the 1992 campaign on a similar count -- leaving Saddam in power after the 1991 war to drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait. Saddam has shaken off a U.N. weapons inspection regime and convinced much of the world that U.N. sanctions rather than his government are to blame for the suffering of the Iraqi people.

Four Gulf states which took part in the military campaign to make Iraq withdraw of Kuwait -- Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates -- have since restored diplomatic relations with Baghdad, easing its isolation.

Vice President Al Gore, the presumptive Democratic candidate in presidential elections in November, apparently aware of his vulnerability on Iraq, promised on Monday to accelerate assistance to the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an umbrella opposition group that Washington is promoting. But Perle, the INC and the chairman of the Senate committee that deals with Iraq all said on Wednesday they had doubts about whether anything would change.

In the Iraq Liberation Act of 1998 the U.S. Congress gave the administration authority to give the Iraqi opposition Pentagon supplies and training worth up to \$97 million.

Kansas Republican Sam Brownback, chairman of the Senate subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, said the Administration had disbursed only \$20,000 of that to the INC. Perle said: "Governor Bush has said ... he would fully implement the Iraq Liberation Act. We all understand what that means. It means a serious and sustained effort to assist the opposition with a view to bringing down Saddam's regime."

Nonlethal Training

"In 31 years in Washington, I have not seen a sustained hypocrisy that parallels the current administration's public embrace of the Iraq Liberation Act and its dilatory tactics aimed at preventing any progress taking place under the act. That will not be the case in a Bush administration," he added. Perle suggested the Clinton administration reassign Frank Ricciardone, the State Department official responsible for relations with the INC, and appoint someone who "believes in the goals and objectives of the Iraq Liberation Act."

Another foreign policy adviser to Bush, Robert Zoellick, has proposed detaching a part of Iraq from Saddam's control for use as a base by military operations by the INC. Ahmed Chalabi, a member of the INC joint leadership, told the hearing on Wednesday he favored that idea but so far the Clinton administration has offered only nonlethal training in skills such as field medicine, logistics and communications.

"We don't understand this resistance to lethal training. You can't liberate Iraq by treating wounded people," he added.

Administration officials defend their cautious approach, citing the debacle of 1996, when Iraqi forces, in alliance with one of the two big Kurdish parties, wiped out the INC infrastructure in the Kurdish-run north of the country. A senior State Department official, speaking after a meeting between the INC and Al Gore on Monday, said the United States had spent the last 18 months reuniting and reorganizing the INC and making it eligible for direct U.S. aid.

"This year they mean to make a year of 'operationalizing' the INC again, coming back together as a real organization, with leaders, staff, office space, activities, programs et cetera that they can lay out," the official said. But critics of the administration say the INC will never succeed by making speeches and releasing press statements.

"We need to work with the United States on a plan of action which would have a military component to get rid of Saddam quickly... This fiction, this bogeyman that the opposition is not united must be put behind us now," Chalabi said.

"Unless the strategy is to bring down the Saddam regime by inducing fatal laughter ... this is not the way to advance the purposes of the Iraq Liberation Act," added Perle.

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Kurds Forced to Live in Villages in Turkey

Associated Press 28 Jun 2000

YENI ARSLANBASAR, Turkey (AP) Soldiers won't let Buhar Goktas stay outside the village at night. They carefully record the times that she leaves and comes back.

The village she and other Kurds have been forced into since the military razed their homes is like a prison, Goktas said as she stepped back to avoid steam rising from a cauldron of boiling cheese curd. Soldiers in armored cars watch every move.

A year after a Turkish court sentenced Kurdish rebel leader Abdullah Ocalan to death for treason, the government is dealing with one of the most difficult problems caused by the 15-year rebellion that he led: what to do with the hundreds of thousands of Kurds whose homes were destroyed by the military in a brutal campaign to depopulate areas considered havens for rebels.

The government's solution; heavily garrisoned "central villages" away from the mountains where Ocalan's Kurdistan Workers Party, or PKK, once operated; has outraged Kurds and human rights groups. Although Ocalan has ordered a cease-fire and there is little fighting in the largely Kurdish areas of the southeast, the military fears that if left alone, Kurdish villagers could organize against the state.

"In central villages, providing security would be easier compared to the hamlets," Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit said during a recent visit to the southeast. "Those who are affiliated with the PKK want to be scattered in hamlets and villages. We won't fall for this trap."

The government began building "central villages" a decade ago but has quickened the pace of late. Interior Minister Sadettin Tantan said the government allocated \$4.5 million for the project, reports said Wednesday. The government won't say how many it plans to construct. Human rights groups have criticized the project and are calling on the government to allow refugees to return to their own villages and pay them compensation.

Goktas' new village, Yeni Arslanbasar, has about 2,000 people from eight destroyed villages. The remains of her home village, Samanlı, are in the gray mountains about five miles away. Yeni Arslanbasar is not surrounded by a fence, but soldiers stand guard in a concrete bunker outside the village and record the names of people leaving or entering. Non-residents must have military permission to enter.

"This place is like an open-air prison," said Goktas, 17.

"We even need to obtain permission from the military to pick cardoon," a local herb.

"If we are late, they slap us," she said, slowly stirring the bubbling cheese mixed with cardoon. "No one is suffering like us."

According to Amnesty International, about 3 million people were scattered when 3,000 villages and hamlets were destroyed during the fighting. Most were razed by the military, although the rebels did burn villages that did not support their cause.

Many Kurds fled to western Turkey or to shantytowns that formed outside major cities in the southeast. Others, like the residents of Yeni Arslanbasar, were sent to central villages.

A government-built primary school and a military-run health clinic near Yeni Arslanbasar are the government's efforts to prove that it is not causing unrest but providing facilities that are scarce in the impoverished region.

The government plans to build a school and a health clinic for each "central village

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German Ambassador Opens Plant in Diyarbakir, Greeted by Kurdish Rights Slogans

Hurriyet 28 Jun 00

by Namik Durukan and Ozgur Cebe

[FBIS Translated Text] A foundation stone laying ceremony for a waste-water treatment plant in Diyarbakir, financed entirely by the German Development Bank to the tune of DM 39.5 million, turned into a meeting of the Peoples Democracy Party [HADEP]. Slogans of "Free Ocalan" were shouted at the ceremony attended by Germany's Ambassador to Ankara Dr. Rudolf Schmidt and his wife, Utto. Those invited to the foundation ceremony for the waste-water treatment plant, financed by Germany with the aim of solving a major infrastructure problem in Diyarbakir, which has a population of over one million, danced a traditional Turkish dance, the Halay, making the V for Victory sign and accompanied by both HADEP banners and red, yellow and green streamers. Placards bearing the slogans "The solution is a democratic republic not the death penalty", "Education in the mother tongue", "Our problem is not economic but political". "End the Emergency Rule and the Guardians" and "Long live the democratic republic" were unfurled at the ceremony.

Announcing in his address that violence had begun to lose its effect in the Southeast, Amb. Dr. Schmidt said that all obstacles to peace must be lifted. Following this, the HADEP Mayor of Diyarbakir Feridun Celik took the rostrum and stated that despite all the honest and transparent services they were providing, they still faced innumerable obstacles and added, "We are facing prejudice on a scale no municipality in Turkey has ever been exposed to." Following the addresses fireworks were let off and pigeons released into the air.

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Les Etats-Unis vont former 145 opposants au régime irakien

REUTERS

mardi 27 juin 2000

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Les Etats-Unis vont former jusqu'à 145 opposants irakiens en exil dans des domaines comme la médecine, la logistique, l'informatique, les télécommunications, la diffusion et l'électricité, a annoncé un haut responsable du département d'Etat à Washington.

Le Congrès national irakien (INC, opposition en exil) a communiqué aux Etats-Unis une liste de 145 candidats à des stages organisés par le Pentagone.

Pour le moment au moins, les Etats-Unis n'entraîneront pas les militants de l'INC à combattre militairement l'armée irakienne, ajoute le responsable, sous le sceau de l'anonymat.

Des dirigeants de l'INC, dont Jalal Talabani et Nechirvan Barzani, des deux grands partis kurdes, ont rencontré lundi le vice-président américain Al Gore, qui a promis que les Etats-Unis continueraient à les soutenir. Les livraisons de matériel et les stages de formation s'intensifieront, leur a-t-il dit.

Un an après la condamnation à mort d'Ocalan, la rébellion est éteinte



mercredi 28 juin 2000

ANKARA, 28 juin (AFP) - Il y a un an, le 29 juin, le chef rebelle kurde Abdullah Ocalan était condamné à mort pour trahison et séparatisme par une Cour de sûreté de l'Etat turque sur l'île-prison d'Imrali (ouest), un procès qui allait changer la face d'un conflit vieux de 15 ans.

Les trois juges rendaient la sentence à l'unanimité et refusaient les circonstances atténuantes à l'ennemi publi numéro un de l'état turc, enlevé au Kenya par un commando turc le 15 février précédent.

Pourtant, Ocalan s'était rallié de façon spectaculaire à la "république démocratique" turque et avait appelé dès l'ouverture du procès le 31 mai son parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) à cesser les combats, rapidement suivi par ses troupes.

Il ramenait ses revendications à des droits culturels spécifiques pour un peuple sentant son identité bafouée et abandonnait son but premier d'un état kurde indépendant, pour lequel il avait lancé la guerre en 1984.

Mais il échouait dans sa tentative pour obtenir la clémence des juges en se posant comme un médiateur incontournable pour une paix dans le sud-est à majorité kurde, ravagé par la guérilla et les opérations de l'armée turque.

Nombre de commentateurs n'y ont vu qu'une tentative pour sauver sa peau. Et il décevait les adeptes d'un romantisme révolutionnaire qui attendaient de lui un défi jusqu'au boutiste et un plaidoyer passionné pour la cause kurde avec laquelle il avait fini par être identifié.

Le procès sur l'îlot d'Imrali, en mer de Marmara, dont Ocalan est l'unique prisonnier, se déroulait sous état de siège dans une ambiance lourde de passions et de tensions. L'accusé était protégé par une cage vitrée pare-balle.

Des petits bateaux amenaient à chaque audience avocats, familles des victimes de la rébellion, parents d'Ocalan, journalistes et observateurs européens venus vérifier que le procès était impartial.

La Turquie passait le test avec succès, puisque les Européens jugeaient en fin de compte le procès équitable.

Quelques mois plus tard, en décembre, ils lui décernaient le statut officiel de candidat à l'Union européenne.

Au passage, Ankara avait dû modifier en plein procès sa législation pour supprimer le juge militaire siégeant au côté des civils dans les Cours de sûreté de l'Etat.

Si les appels à la paix d'Ocalan étaient rejetés sans appel par l'état et l'armée turque, qui refusent de voir en lui un interlocuteur, ils furent rapidement avalisés par un PKK à bout de souffle: son commandement annonçait officiellement l'arrêt des combats et le retrait de Turquie à partir de septembre 1999.

Depuis, les affrontements ont pratiquement cessé dans le sud-est, où l'état d'urgence est progressivement levé, province par province.

Mais au plan politique, aucune évolution n'est encore intervenue sur une reconnaissance de droits culturels pour les Kurdes. Une concession devenue d'autant plus difficile pour l'état qu'elle correspond désormais à des demandes d'Ocalan, note un diplomate occidental.

Le débat sur l'abolition de la peine de mort n'a pas avancé malgré les efforts du Premier ministre Bulent Ecevit, lié par les partenaires ultra-nationalistes de sa coalition gouvernementale.

Et les grands projets de développement économique du sud-est restent pour l'heure à l'état de vœux pieux.

Pour Ocalan, 51 ans, la perspective de la corde s'est éloignée lorsque le gouvernement a décidé en janvier d'attendre une décision sur le fond de la Cour européenne des droits de l'Homme.

Réduit au silence par le gouvernement après avoir multiplié depuis sa prison les communiqués appelant à la paix et la concorde entre Turcs et Kurdes, l'ancien marxiste-léniniste se consacre à l'étude des religions, a indiqué à l'AFP l'un de ses avocats Dogan Erbas.

Neuf Kurdes, accusés de violences contre des Turcs, devant la justice française



PARIS, 29 juin (AFP) - 18h49 - Huit Turcs et un Français -tous d'origine kurde- comparaissent depuis jeudi devant un tribunal parisien pour s'être opposés violemment à des Turcs qui manifestaient, en juin 1998, contre une éventuelle reconnaissance par la France du génocide arménien de 1915.

Mis en examen (inculpés) pour violences volontaires et association de malfaiteurs en relation avec une entreprise terroriste, les neuf prévenus, favorables à la reconnaissance du génocide arménien, sont soupçonnés d'avoir organisé une contre-manifestation, et d'y être venus armés de bâtons et barres de fer. Dix-huit personnes avaient été blessées, dont trois grièvement.

Venus principalement de France, mais aussi d'Allemagne, 100 à 200 Turcs préparaient, le 20 juin 1998, à Paris, une manifestation, après l'adoption par les députés français d'un texte -jamais examiné par les sénateurs depuis- reconnaissant le génocide arménien de 1915.

Selon la police, un groupe de 80 Kurdes se serait approché des manifestants, armé de bâtons et de barres de fer. L'agression a été qualifiée de "brève mais particulièrement violente" par les policiers.

Devant le tribunal, les prévenus ont rejeté sur les organisateurs de la manifestation la responsabilité de la violence, réfuté l'accusation d'association de malfaiteurs et expliqué qu'ils étaient venus seuls, et non en groupe.

"J'ai pris un bâton par terre pour répondre à la violence turque" a affirmé Deniz Ozedemir, le seul prévenu de nationalité française. "Il faut pas nous prendre pour des terroristes" a précisé un autre accusé, Kemal Akuz. "Ce n'est pas parce qu'on est kurdes qu'on est des terroristes" a renchéri Ozedemir.

Le procès doit se poursuivre le 30 juin, et les 6 et 7 juillet.

Les déportations vers la Syrie -alors province de l'empire ottoman- et les massacres d'Arméniens de 1915 à 1917 ont fait entre 1,2 et 1,3 million de morts selon les Arméniens et 250.000 à 500.000 selon les Turcs.

Key Assad Allies Put Son on Fast Track

Smooth Rise to Power in Syria as Presidential Candidacy Is Approved

By John Kifner

New York Times Service

BEIRUT — As Hafez Assad, absolute ruler of Syria for 30 years, slipped into a final coma for several days before he died on June 10, his closest circle of aides and advisers worked swiftly behind the scenes in Damascus to assure that his untested 34-year-old son would have a smooth, well-orchestrated ascension to power.

That steady, swift march continued Tuesday as the son, Bashar Assad, was unanimously approved by Parliament as the sole candidate for president in a referendum scheduled for July 10.

The Parliament speaker paused a second or so before declaring approval by a show of hands, which was followed by cheers and chants.

Bashar Assad already, in rapid succession, had been promoted from army colonel to lieutenant general (his father's rank) and commander-in-chief, elected leader of the ruling Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party at its first congress in 15 years, then named head of its ruling Regional Command Council. All this took place in 16 days.

In the past, his father regularly won such referendums by an official margin of 99.9 percent, and there is little likelihood of voter dropoff.

Indeed, the only thing that slowed the bandwagon was the eagerness of Syrian officials to climb aboard. A parliament-

tary committee delegated to study his candidacy on Sunday found him overwhelmingly qualified, and he was scheduled to be anointed in a session Monday night. But so many delegates — some 200 of the 250-member assembly — wanted to speak in his praise that the session had to be rescheduled for Tuesday.

President Assad, one delegate declared, had made Syria "the envy of all the world," adding that, as for his son, "we shall march behind you with absolute loyalty and sincerity." Another called him a "knight who will lead us day to day."

There had been momentary consternation Monday when one member voiced an objection to a constitutional change put through in 15 minutes after President Assad's death that lowered the age for president to 34, not coincidentally that of the son. The member was shouted down and later apologized.

Hafez Assad was known as a very careful planner, and the pieces had been put into place over the last two years. His son was put in charge of Syria's domination of Lebanon, given more and more responsibility for governing at home and — perhaps most important — put in charge last year of an anti-corruption drive that purged a number of high-ranking politicians and generals who might have turned into challengers.

Among the once powerful figures no

longer on the scene in the wake of the anti-corruption drive is former Prime Minister Mahmoud Zoubi, who is reported to have committed suicide last month as security forces surrounded his villa after he was discovered to have become corrupt in his 13 years in that office and several more as speaker of Parliament. Hikmat Shehabi, who had been the army chief of staff, fled the country rather than face a graft investigation.

The member of his father's Old Guard who appears to be most protective and supportive of Bashar Assad is the defense minister, General Mustafa Tlas. He arranged at least two meetings for senior military officers to get to know the young man and was prominently by his side at many of his public appearances since the president's death.

General Tlas's son, Manaf, is said to be one of Bashar Assad's closest friends and has been introducing him to members of the Sunni merchant class in an apparent attempt to broaden his base of support.

Manaf Tlas commands a battalion in the elite Republican Guard, a mainstay of the late president, as does Bashar Assad's younger brother, Maher.

His brother-in-law, Asef Shawkat, is the head of security and military intelligence. Another key supporter is Bahajjat Suleiman, director of internal security.

The support of the military and the dozen or so overlapping *mukhabarat*, or intelligence agencies, which were central to his father's rule, will also be crucial to the new president's survival.

Many of these important security positions are held by Alawites, who like the Assad family are members of a once-poor minority sect risen to power. It did not pass unnoticed that the late Mr. Zoubi and General Shehabi were Sunni Muslims.

Bashar Assad was training in London as an ophthalmologist until his older brother, Basil, a charismatic soldier and athlete who was the heir apparent, died in a car crash in 1994.

Michael Hudson, director of the Center for Arab Studies at Georgetown University, recalled meeting Mr. Assad at a computer convention and described him as shy, studious and "apparently a genuinely nice guy."

Mr. Hudson, who happened to be in Damascus at the time of the funeral, said that the son's "hasty appointment as commander of the armed forces was important in establishing his authority over a military establishment that has dominated Syrian politics since 1966, but at the same time there are doubts about how deep and effective that au-



Louai Beshara/Agence France-Presse

Syrians holding up portraits of their late president, Hafez Assad, right, and his son, Bashar, who is the heir-apparent, in Damascus on Tuesday.

thority may be."

The new president must "thread his way through minefields of potential opposition as he moves to build his own power base," he added, warning that the anti-corruption drive could be a two-edged sword.

"Dozens of other high officials are vulnerable to similar charges," he said. "They must already be strategizing about how to curb this possibly dangerous young man."

A measure of the speed with which the

Old Guard is moving to consolidate itself around Bashar Assad is that the election date has been set well before the end of the traditional 40-day Muslim period of mourning, which would be July 20.

"Is it reasonable to hold all work for 40 days? Or keep the position of president vacant for 40 days?" the Parliament speaker, Abdul-Qader Qadoura, told reporters in Damascus, explaining the haste.

Some of the shifting political alli-

ances could be seen in the appointments to the 21-member regional command, the Ba'ath party's ruling body dominated by the Old Guard appointed 15 years ago and now, presumably, more reflective of Mr. Assad's supporters.

Joining General Tlas and Vice President Abdel Halim Khaddam, who promoted Mr. Assad to general and commander, were two new members, Foreign Minister Farouk Shara, and Prime Minister Mohammed Mero, who appear to be an established core of support.

Arrestation, en Iran, d'un célèbre opposant et fermeture d'un journal réformateur

EZATOLLAH SAHABI, rédacteur en chef du mensuel iranien *Iran-e-Farda*, a été arrêté et placé en détention provisoire lundi 26 juin pour avoir participé, début avril à Berlin, en tant qu'orateur, à une conférence sur l'Iran organisée par l'Institut Heinrich-Böll. Cette conférence a été jugée « anti-islamique » par la justice (conservatrice) iranienne, parce que certains orateurs ont critiqué le régime et surtout parce que des opposants présents parmi les auditeurs se sont livrés à des actes de provocation.

L'arrestation de M. Sahabi a été décidée après « la découverte de documents confidentiels au cours de récentes perquisitions », indique un communiqué officiel. D'après l'AFP, le domicile de M. Sahabi ainsi que ceux de deux journalistes réformateurs, Akbar Ganji et Alireza Alavizadeh, ont été perquisitionnés le 14 juin. Visiblement, la faction conservatrice du pouvoir iranien est déterminée à maintenir la pression sur les « mal-pensants » et sur le président réformateur Mohammad Khatami et ses amis, malgré – ou plutôt à cause – de la quasi-mainmise de ces derniers sur le Parlement après leur victoire écrasante aux élections législatives.

Au total, ce sont dix-sept Iraniens, appartenant tous à la mouvance réformatrice qui soutient M. Khatami, qui ont participé à la dite conférence. A l'exception d'un seul, l'hodjatolislam Hassan Yousefi Eshkevari, qui n'est pas encore rentré à Téhéran, et qui fait lui aussi l'objet d'un mandat d'amener devant le tribunal spécial pour religieux, tous les participants ont été interrogés à leur retour à Téhéran. Certains ont été placés en détention, les autres, dont M. Sahabi, ont été laissés en liberté sous caution.

« ACCUSATION INTROUVABLE »

Opposant de longue date, membre du Mouvement pour la li-

bération de l'Iran de l'ancien premier ministre Mehdi Bazargan et fils de Yadollah Sahabi, qui fut un compagnon de l'ancien premier ministre Mohamad Mossadegh – père de la nationalisation du pétrole –, M. Sahabi avait alors été soumis à deux interrogatoires au Tribunal révolutionnaire de Téhéran et il savait qu'il n'était pas au bout de ses peines.

Non point à cause de « quelque accusation sérieuse introuvable » à propos de la conférence de Berlin, « où j'ai défendu le régime de la République islamique », avait-il déclaré au Monde lors d'une rencontre début mai à Téhéran, mais parce que les durs du régime « cherchent à susciter une crise politique ». « Au terme de la deuxième séance, après

cinq heures de déposition orale et écrite, où il n'était plus vraiment question de la conférence de Berlin, mais de mes idées et de mes projets personnels, ils [les enquêteurs judiciaires] m'ont dit qu'il y aurait une troisième session. Ce n'est donc pas fini », avait-il prévu.

D'un interrogatoire à l'autre, le climat s'est durci, avait-il alors noté : le juge, qui avait été son unique interlocuteur durant la première séance et qui avait eu un comportement « correct », avait été remplacé la fois suivante par deux enquêteurs judiciaires, « au comportement strict et brutal ». « Les intentions avaient apparemment changé et ils cherchaient à monter toute une histoire de conspiration à partir de la conférence de Berlin. » Pour lui, les adversaires du changement, hostiles à toute ouverture, « veulent empêcher tout lien rationnel avec d'autres pays, notamment européens, alors que tout le monde en Iran pense qu'il est dans l'intérêt national d'avoir de bonnes relations avec l'étranger, en particulier l'Union européenne ».

L'arrestation de M. Sahabi est paradoxalement survenue à un mo-

ment où d'autres participants à la conférence, arrêtés à leur retour de la capitale allemande, ont été remis en liberté sous caution : c'est le cas de l'avocate Mehranghiz Kar, de la directrice d'une maison d'édition, Chahla Lahidji, et du leader étudiant Ali Afshari. « M. Afshari n'a prononcé aucun discours à Berlin. Je pense qu'ils le cuisinent à propos du mouvement étudiant. Idem pour M. Ganji, qui paie pour ses écrits antérieurs à la conférence », avait dit au Monde M. Sahabi. Journaliste et écrivain, auteur de révélations très audacieuses sur le système politique iranien, M. Ganji est toujours sous les verrous.

La pression est également maintenue sur la presse : à l'instar de dix-neuf autres publications – dont une seule conservatrice –, le quotidien *Bayan* a été fermé dimanche 25 juin par la justice, pour avoir « violé les lois sur l'islam et la presse ».

Dans une lettre au chef du pouvoir judiciaire, l'ayatollah Mahmoud Hachémi Chahroudi, l'organisation Reporters sans frontières a protesté contre cette fermeture, décidée quelques jours après que 151 députés réformateurs eurent contesté la constitutionnalité de la loi sur la presse. Les parlementaires avaient également fait valoir que les entraves à la liberté d'expression ternissaient l'image de l'Iran à l'étranger. A en croire le quotidien réformateur *Hayat-e-No*, le président de la République a lui aussi protesté auprès de M. Chahroudi.

Mouna Naïm

The Economist

A SURVEY OF TURKEY



Ataturk's long shadow

FEW museums would make such a meal of three stale chickpeas. Yet there they sit in their plate-glass display, shrivelled and grey but lovingly lit and labelled in two languages. As the labels explain, these are not just any chickpeas. They belonged to Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, "Father of the Turks", the founder of modern Turkey.

When Ataturk died, in 1938, the government of the day commissioned a shrine to house not only his body but also his old cars, suits, golfing plus-fours, pyjamas, socks, unsmoked cigarettes, even his nail-clippers. In a souvenir shop you can buy Ataturk carpets, fridge magnets and CD-ROMs, not to mention a selection of snaps of a sun-kissed Ataturk in tight-fitting swimming trunks. A diverse stream of visitors shuffles by: giggling lovers, veiled housewives, impish children, conscripts, businessmen, pensioners, all united by their fascination with the most mundane details of Ataturk's daily life.

Turks undoubtedly owe Ataturk an enormous debt of gratitude. After all, he almost single-handedly saved their country from destruction. At the end of the first world war, it looked as though, after centuries of Ottoman decline, Turkey might disappear from the map altogether. But Ataturk rallied the bedraggled remnants of the Ottoman army, defeated the invading Greeks, threw out the humiliating treaty of Sèvres and won international recognition of an expanded and revitalised Turkish state.

Over the next 15 years, Ataturk reinvented Turkey on the model of a European nation-state. He replaced an absolute monarchy with a democratic republic, an explicitly Islamic ethos with staunch

secularism, a fractured and inefficient administrative system with a centralised bureaucracy, and an agrarian economy with an increasingly urban and industrial society. For Turkey, Ataturk was the equivalent of the Pilgrim Fathers, George Washington and Henry Ford all rolled into one.

Astonishingly enough, it worked. Ataturk's creation has not only survived but thrived. The remnants of a tattered empire have become an important country by any measure, with the world's 17th-largest population as well as economy. Its armed forces are the second-largest in NATO. It exports everything from T-shirts to F-16 fighters, not to mention workers by the million. It has football teams that can challenge the best in Europe, and an airline that flies all over the world. For decades, Turkey has managed to preserve—albeit with the occasional interruption—both a vibrant economy and a functioning democracy.

Preserved in aspic

Even so, standing in front of the 70-year-old cocktail snack painstakingly preserved because Ataturk almost ate it, you cannot help feeling that Turkey's reverence for its founder is a little short on perspective. What applies to Ataturk's chickpeas applies even more strongly to his philosophy. At times, it seems, Turks are so busy defending the details of his reforms that they forget about the big picture. Ataturk wanted to make Turkey into a modern, dynamic European country, not to replace one ossified and archaic system with another.

Both Europe and Turkey have changed out of all

If Turkey wants to become a thoroughly modern European state, it must embrace the spirit, not the letter, of its founding father's teachings, argues Edward McBride





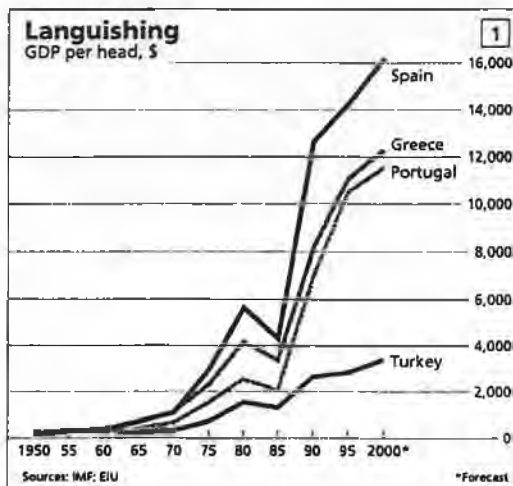
recognition since Ataturk danced the Viennese waltz as Ottoman military attaché in Sofia, but Kemalist orthodoxy has not. The buzzwords in the European Union these days are autonomy, devolution, regionalism and subsidiarity; but Turkey's rulers are still harping on about the sacred and indivisible unity of the state. When Ataturk first conceived that policy 77 years ago, invasions and uprisings had already lopped Turkey in half, and looked set to continue. Today, Turkey could thump any of its neighbours in a war, and has thumped the separatist guerrillas of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). Yet it remains paranoid about being dismembered.

Likewise, when Ataturk banished all traces of religion from public life, Muslim traditionalists had been resisting all innovation, education and development, causing Turkey to fall far behind Europe. Nowadays, the most Islamically inclined political party is also one of the keenest on Turkish membership of the EU, and secularists are making it harder for devout Muslims to get a proper education. In the topsy-turvy world of Turkish secularism, the state has prevented women from wearing what they want, and banned the country's most popular political party—in the name of democracy.

All-powerful state

In this and other ways, Turkey clings to the idea of a know-it-all state. The constitution not only defines the country as "loyal to the nationalism of Ataturk", but also attempts to keep it that way forever, by expressly forbidding any change to the clauses containing that definition. It weighs down its protection of civil liberties with so many restrictions that Turks jokingly refer to it as the constitution of exceptions. They are not allowed to elect their president (the parliament does that), nor to insult him. Likewise, Turkey's laws do little to subordinate the army to civilian control, but take great pains to protect its "moral character" from criticism. Policemen feel free to torture, soldiers to meddle in political affairs and civil servants to whitewash their abuses. Such paternalism may have helped to shake Turkey out of its Ottoman torpor, but it goes down badly in liberal-democratic modern Europe.

That said, Turkey has managed to shake off some of its most dated Kemalist practices. Over the past 20 years, successive governments have been trying to disentangle the state from the economy. The late Turgut Ozal, who held office both as prime minister and, subsequently, president, is said to have devised the now familiar "build-operate-transfer" formula for private infrastructure invest-



ment back in the 1980s. The public sector's once huge share in industry and commerce has shrunk to about 12% today. With state steel mills, petrol stations and meat-packing factories among the many public enterprises on the auction block, Ataturk's legacy of state-led industrialisation will soon have rusted away. That should make it easier to tame Turkey's reckless spending and runaway inflation.

There are grounds for optimism on the political front as well. The capture of Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK, may pave the way for a more dispassionate debate of the Kurds' place in Turkish society. Ahmet Necdet Sezer, a judge who has just become president with the support of all the big political parties, has called for reform of the constitution. And both press and public have become quicker to denounce misbehaviour by generals, politicians and bureaucrats.

In 1950, 12 years after Ataturk's death, the income of the average Turk was marginally higher than that of his counterpart in Spain or Portugal. Since then, Spain and Portugal have erased most traces of their authoritarian and statist past, whereas Turkey has dawdled. Nowadays, the income of the average Portuguese, Spaniard or Greek is three to five times that of his Turkish equivalent (see chart 1).

By following the spirit rather than the letter of Kemalism, Turkey could yet make up the lost ground. Whereas, by sticking to a narrow interpretation of Ataturk's legacy it might actually encourage the very problems he was trying to head off: religious extremism, ethnic separatism and institutional decay. That would be very bad news for Turkey's 66m people, and at least a pity for the world.

A prickly friend

Turkey's influence in the world's councils is not all it might be

COMMENTATORS on Turkey cannot resist images of bridges. The country, after all, spans Europe and Asia and links the Black Sea to the Mediterranean. Tourist brochures invariably stress that Istanbul—uniquely among cities—sits astride two continents. Geo-strategists enthuse about Turkey's pivotal position along a new Turkish-speaking silk route, between the oil wealth of the Caspian and its potential consumers in the West, between the fac-

tories of Europe and the burgeoning markets of Asia. For the metaphorically-minded, Turkey bridges the cultural chasm that separates the democracies of the European Union from the Arab dictatorships, and Christendom from the world of Islam.

But for all the talk of bridges, Turkey often seems to stand on its own, cold-shouldered by Europe, mistrusted by the successor states to the Soviet Un-

ion and despised by the Arab world. It has a history of troubled relations with seven of its nine immediate neighbours, not to mention the Russian bugbear across the Black Sea. In 1997, Turkey froze ties with the European Union after it failed to win the status of candidate for membership. In 1996, it almost went to war with its supposed NATO ally, Greece, over a few specks in the Aegean Sea. Since 1995, the Turkish army has sent its troops into Iraq each spring to hunt Kurdish rebels, and has threatened to do the same in Syria and Iran.

So is Turkey a bridge over troubled waters, or an island amid them? The short answer is, both. A flourishing Turkey could serve as a regional pipeline not just for oil but for trade and democracy. A failing one could help pump anti-western feeling, ethnic rivalries, fundamentalist Islam and irredentist nationalism throughout the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East. For now, though, Turkey is neither flourishing nor failing, and its influence is far less than either scenario might suggest.

For a start, Turks' prickliness about any perceived slight mars their foreign relations. Ishak Alaton, a leading businessman, compares Turkey and its neighbours to ten families sharing an apartment building. "If one family quarrels with all the others," he asks, "whose fault are all the fights?" Turks are so nationalist that Superonline, a local Internet service provider, advertises the web as an opportunity for Turkish backgammon players to take out their aggression on foreigners instead of competing with each other. Turkish diplomats screamed blue murder in April when an Israeli minister suggested including the history of Ottoman massacres of Armenians in his country's school curriculum. Ismail Cem, Turkey's foreign minister, tends to dismiss potential European concerns with a grumpy "That's their problem."

Double-edged sword

Turkey's membership of NATO compounds its isolation. The country makes a useful military staging post precisely because it lies within such a troubled region. During the cold war, it provided a critical southern bulwark against the Soviet Union. Nowadays, America and Britain rely on its bases to launch their frequent bombing raids on Iraq. Turkey also serves as Israel's only ally in the region, and a check on Syria and Iran. "Turkey is the best aircraft-carrier NATO ever had," says one western diplomat.

Yet such cosiness with the West undermines Turkey's value as a beacon of democracy to its rogue-state neighbours, or even as a conduit for commerce. Iran and the Arabs tend to view Turkey as an American stooge. Its alliance with Israel infuriates the Syrian government and angers Arabs everywhere. Disputes over the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates cast a further pall on relations. Of all the Arab countries, Turkey gets on best with Algeria, one of the most distant and least attuned to broader Arab sentiment.

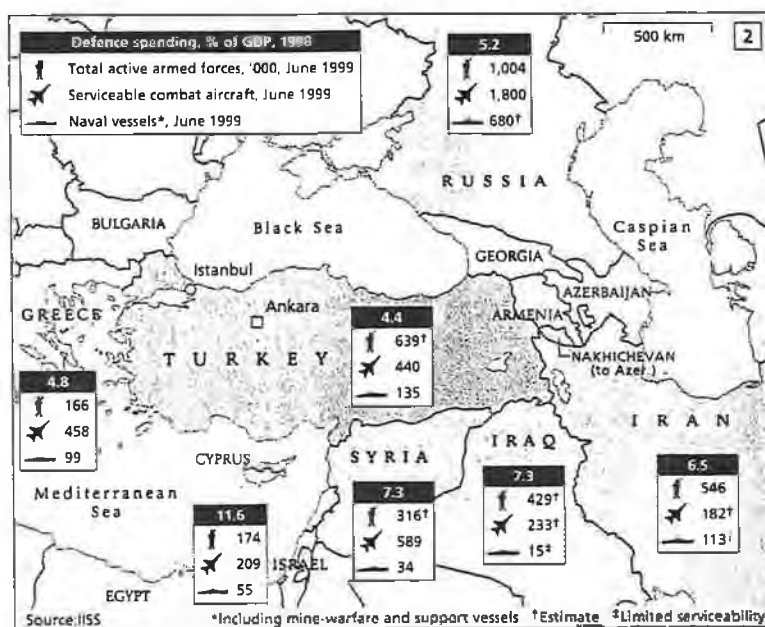
Nor does Turkey wield that much influence among the ethnic Turks of the Caucasus and Central Asia. When the Soviet Union broke up, Turkish politicians dreamed of leading a Turkic block that would stretch from the Adriatic to China. Turkish nationalist politicians keep maps of the Turkic-speaking world in their offices, highlighting kindred

spirits from Albania to Siberia. Yet in reality only Azeri and (at a push) Turkmen and Kyrgyz make any sense to the Turkish ear. Local politicians in those areas see their Turkish counterparts as pushy and condescending, and are more interested in sharing their experience with other post-Soviet states than in pursuing pan-Turkic hankerings.

Turkish businessmen have got on quite well in Central Asia—Mr Alaton's firm, for example, is building three airports in Uzbekistan, a cigarette factory and a suspension bridge in Kazakhstan, and a polypropylene plant in Turkmenistan. But only Azerbaijan ranks Turkey as its top trading partner, and only 5% of Turkey's trade goes to its immediate neighbours. Turkey may not even end up as the conduit for Caspian oil. Geologists have scaled down earlier estimates of the region's oil wealth, though a recent huge discovery in Kazakhstan has made them think again. For now, with less oil to pump, the export route that Turkey is pushing, between Baku in Azerbaijan and Ceyhan on its Mediterranean coast, looks far too expensive, although American and Turkish officials still insist it will go ahead.

In the Balkans too Turkey is seen as something of an interloper. As a member of NATO, it sent aeroplanes to bomb Yugoslavia during the Kosovo crisis, and it is participating enthusiastically in the reconstruction effort. But local Muslims (and the odd ethnic Turk) do not feel as strongly about their supposed kinship as do the Turks who come to their aid. Since all countries in the region look to the European Union for salvation, Turkey, at the bottom of the candidacy list, does not cut an impressive figure.

One of the reasons that Turkey comes so low on the EU's list (see next article) is its endless sparring with Greece, an EU member since 1981. The EU has said that Turkey cannot join until it settles its territorial dispute with Greece, and has urged it to help solve the ethnic stand-off that has kept Cyprus divided between Greeks and Turks for more than 25 years. Until recently, strong mutual hostility made both disputes look intractable. In a typical statement in 1997, Greece's foreign minister of the day dismissed Turks as "thieves, murderers and rapists





Some good came out of it

with whom we cannot negotiate".

But last year respite came, improbably enough, in the form of destructive earthquakes in both Turkey and Greece. When the first quake struck Turkey's crowded Marmara region in August, ordinary Greeks spontaneously donated care packages. Footage of Greek rescue workers pulling bruised toddlers from the wreckage softened Turkish hearts. When

disaster struck Greece a month later, Turks returned the favour.

Even before this popular rapprochement, Mr Cem had started to warm to George Papandreou, his Greek counterpart. For the first time since the early 1970s, Turkish and Greek soldiers agreed to perform joint exercises in late May. Fuzzy feelings of goodwill are yet to translate into any practical progress on the Aegean dispute, not least because the Greek election in April slowed things up. But the disagreement between the two sides is narrow enough for a start to be made on resolving it—or at least getting it sent to the International Court of Justice, the EU's minimum demand.

Cyprus presents more of a problem. The EU is asking Greece and Turkey alike to behave constructively in the UN-sponsored negotiations for a permanent settlement. Turkish officials hint that Rauf Denktash, the Turkish-Cypriot leader, might pull a rabbit out of his hat when the two sides next convene. The Greek-Cypriot side, the internationally acknowledged government and a candidate for EU membership, claims it has been offering most of the concessions. But EU governments—though they back it, while still embargoing the Turkish-Cypriot part of the island—remain sceptical about admitting a divided country. They may not let Turkey in without a settlement, but they are unlikely to let the Greek Cypriots in on their own. All the parties concerned have an incentive to reach an agreement.

Why are we waiting?

After decades of knocking on the EU's door, Turkey has at last got a foot in it. But the rest will not follow easily or quickly

AS WITH Spain, Portugal and Greece, the proof of Turkey's transformation will be membership of the European Union. Turkey has wanted to join for the best part of four decades. It began building economic ties with the EU's predecessor in 1963. Ten years later it signed a treaty to phase in a customs union, which was eventually completed in 1995. It lodged an application for full membership 13 years ago. Yet the EU did not get round to accepting Turkey as a candidate until last December.

Opinion polls consistently show a majority of around two-thirds of Turks in favour of joining. All the main political parties are of the same mind. Mümtaz Soysal, a former foreign minister and a rare opponent of EU membership, complains that he has trouble recruiting anyone to his cause. Even Islamists, who used to derounce Europe and talk up ties with the Muslim world, have suddenly developed a soft spot for membership—in the hope that the freedom of political expression that comes with it will

give them more scope to pursue their agenda.

That hints at the flaw in Turkey's enthusiasm for the EU: membership means all things to all people, not all of whom can be satisfied. Secularists are as enthusiastic as Islamists, hoping that membership will guarantee Turkey's leaning towards the West. The generals imagine EU entry will safeguard Turkey's integrity, even as Kurdish separatists see their salvation in Europe's generous treatment of minorities. Nationalists see entry as an implicit confirmation of Turkey's greatness; liberals look to Europe to scotch such chauvinism. Politicians cannot wait to get their hands on aid for Turkey's deprived regions—whose inhabitants, in turn, cannot wait to emigrate to Berlin or Stockholm.

Sukru Sina Gurel, a minister and government spokesman, admits that few Turks grasp what EU membership means, or how hard it will be to achieve. Turkey has few of the unofficial ties—for example, between professional groups, municipalities or NGOs—that link other candidate countries with EU members. If Turkey does join, an Ankara-based diplomat predicts, it will replace Britain as the EU's most difficult and obstreperous member. Bulent Ecevit, the prime minister, has spoken of entering by 2004—a hopelessly ambitious target, but one the government refuses to disown.

Indeed, most Turks attribute their record wait for membership to brute European racism, not to any failings of their own. Greece, a full member of the EU and Turkey's bitterest rival, is assumed to have stirred the latent anti-Muslim sentiment of its

Who's the fairest? 1999

Country	Population m	Average annual population growth 1980-98, %	GDP per head, \$*	Trade balance with EU €m†	Workforce in agriculture %	Freedom score‡
Czech Republic	10.3	0.0	5,220	-1,496	5.2	1.5
Estonia	1.1	-0.1	3,730	-520	13.55	1.5
Poland	38.7	0.5	4,030	-11,368	19.0	1.5
Romania	22.5	0.1	1,480	-543	12.65	2.0
Turkey	65.5	2.0	3,050	-5,489	43.0	4.5

*Estimates. †As recorded by EU. ‡Average score for political rights and civil liberties. †High degree of freedom, ‡low degree of freedom. ‡1997

Sources: UN; World Bank; EU; ILO; IMD; Freedom House; Eurstat

partners to block Turkey's accession. How else, Turks ask, could all the other candidate countries, some of which have little to recommend them, have jumped the queue to end up ahead of their own?

It may well be true that many West Europeans regard Turkey as unfit for EU membership, but even for the open-minded its admission remains a daunting prospect. Among all the current members and candidates, only Germany has a bigger population at present; and if (improbably) Turkey maintains its high birth-rate, it will become number one by about 2020. It has more farmers than Belgium has people. Income per head is only about a third of the EU average, even on a purchasing-power comparison that is relatively generous to Turkey. Inflation has put three or four more zeros on its currency notes than on most countries'. Turkey almost went to war with Greece four years ago. Its human-rights record is dismal. Even by the standards of some of the more destitute Balkan candidates, Turkey stands out.

Yet with a little goodwill Turkey's candidacy can also be seen in a more positive light. Ageing Europe needs eager and youthful workers—something Eastern Europe cannot provide, but Turkey has plenty of. Two million of them are already in Western Europe. The big Turkish market already takes more imports from the EU than do several existing members, and than all the other candidates save Poland. Its successful customs union with the EU puts Turkey streets ahead of the other candidates on the trade side. Turkey's income per head may be low, but is not much lower than that of Estonia, a front-runner for entry. And other big applicants such as Poland, with 39m people, or Romania, with 23m, may prove almost as awkward to integrate.

A candidate like any other

Karen Fogg, the EU's ambassador to Turkey, hopes last December's decision will end the bickering about the applicants' relative merits. Whatever the reasons for Turkey's long wait, she points out, the EU has now accepted its candidacy "on the basis of the same criteria as applied to other candidate states". Once both sides have got down to looking at how the EU's 100,000 pages of regulations will apply to Turkey, the argument runs, sound and fury will give way to nuts and bolts.

So far, the plan is working. Over the past year, Turkey's parliament has enacted various human-rights reforms designed to appeal to European sentiment. The government has booted military judges out of its civilian courts, lengthened prison terms for those found guilty of torture, and made it harder for Turkey's zealous prosecutors to shut down political parties. It has even agreed to stay the execution of Abdullah Ocalan, the captured leader of the PKK, until the European Court of Justice rules on his case.

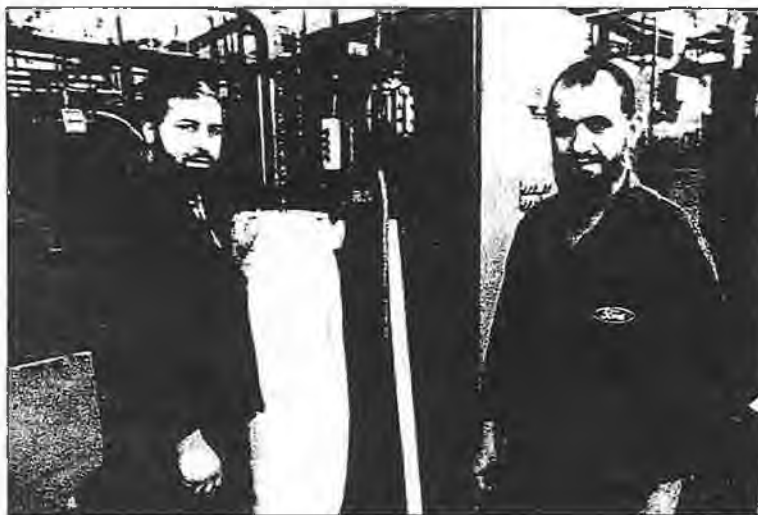
But if the new measures are to achieve anything, the government will have to enforce them. For example, Turkey has always had laws against torture; it has just not bothered to apply them. When Turkish parliamentarians inspecting an Istanbul jail recently discovered a special beam used for suspending victims during torture, the governor asked why everyone was making such a fuss about an old stick. His remarks did not even earn a reprimand. The "deep state", as Turks call the fustier reaches of the bureaucracy, will doubtless resist any interference.

Moreover, Turkey's politicians have so far gunned only for easy targets. Local and international human-rights groups confirm that the most egregious abuses—extra-judicial killings, disappearances and deaths in custody—are declining fast. But the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, a local pressure group, highlights a countervailing trend: towards suppression of freedom of speech, under Turkey's many draconian laws. According to Reporters Sans Frontières, a human-rights organisation, Turkey has almost as many journalists in jail as the rest of the world put together.

On this issue, parliamentarians have proved less than resolute. A few years ago, when the EU pressed a previous government to end restrictions under Turkey's anti-terrorism law, the courts simply resorted to equivalent clauses in the penal code to jail people for their ideas. Last year, the present government proposed an amnesty that would have freed the thugs who attempted to assassinate a prominent human-rights activist—but not the activist himself, who was serving a jail term for questioning the official line on the Kurds. Only a thorough overhaul of Turkey's army-inspired constitution can put an end to such absurdities.

The politicians have steered clear of that, because it would touch on the rawest nerves in Turkish society: the role of Islam, the Kurds and the armed forces. Instead, Turkish officials argue that EU membership itself will help exorcise such demons. Like the Greeks and Spaniards, who saw entry into the EU as a means to banish the spectre of military rule for good, or the Italians, who hoped to force financial discipline on their politicians through monetary union, Turkish democrats dream of redeeming their country with a wave of the European wand.

Nowadays, however, the EU has clear political criteria for membership, including a government free from military influence, and complete freedom of expression. Turkey must show that it is at least moving in that direction before it can hope to accede. The EU could help by releasing long-promised aid, extending the customs union and negotiating a blueprint for accession. But with so many other candidates competing for the Union's attention, Turkey will have to do most of the work.



Turkey's vanguard in Europe

So where is Kurdistan?

There's no such place, says Turkey's government. It has a point

AT THE time of the Kosovo crisis last year, Anna Lindh, the Swedish foreign minister, mused on the sort of human-rights abuses that might lead to the horror of ethnic cleansing. The first example she chose was that of the Kurds in Turkey, who, she said, "are denied their language, cultural identity and democratic rights". So is Turkey an incipient Serbia, and are the Kurds future Kosovars awaiting their Armageddon?

Not exactly. Under Turkish law, people can be sent to jail for broadcasting in Kurdish, teaching Kurdish in schools or running a political campaign on the basis of ethnicity. Since 1984, the army's bloody war against the PKK in south-eastern Turkey, where perhaps half the country's Kurds live, has cost at least 30,000 mainly Kurdish lives and driven several million Kurds from their homes.

But that leaves out millions more Kurds who go about their business in the rest of Turkey, apparently integrated and prosperous. Many successful businessmen are Kurdish, such as Aga Ceylan, one of Turkey's biggest construction barons, or Halis Toprak, a prominent industrialist and financier. About a quarter of Turkey's MPs claim some sort of Kurdish ancestry. People openly identifying themselves as at least partly Kurdish have served as mayor of Istanbul, prime minister, president, even army chief of staff. Nor do they necessarily play down their Kurdishness: Hikmet Cetin, a former foreign minister and speaker of parliament, likes to parade his fluency in Turkey's main Kurdish dialect.

Hadepe, the largest Kurdish political party, polled only 4.7% of the national vote (or about one Kurdish vote in five) at the last election. Party leaders complained that the authorities stopped them from running a proper campaign in the south-east, but the millions of Kurds who live in western cities are perfectly aware of Hadepe; they simply choose not to vote for it. The PKK, too, is unpopular with many Kurds. Its Marxist dogma turns off upwardly mobile ones in the western cities and conservative ones in the south-east alike. Its terrorist tactics, such as murdering schoolteachers and postmen for "collaborating" with the enemy, must have alienated many more. The Kurds of Iraq are helping the Turkish government to fight the PKK, as are Kurdish landowners and Islamists within Turkey. Indeed, many of the soldiers sent to fight the PKK over the past 20 years were Kurdish themselves.

Turkish nationalist ethnographers used to claim that Kurds were simply wayward Turks who had

forgotten their true language and culture. That claim is clearly fanciful, but it is true that Kurds do not constitute a coherent group. They speak several different, often mutually unintelligible, dialects, and espouse different forms of Islam. The traditional tribal ties and the remote and mountainous landscape of the south-east have made it hard to develop a collective consciousness. Inter-marriage with Turks is common, although never quantified. Even at the Hadepe headquarters in Ankara, party functionaries speak Turkish amongst themselves.

Go west, young man

For decades, Kurds in the south-east have been voting for assimilation into Turkey with their feet. In 1996, the government calculated that the average in-

habitant of the largely Kurdish province of Mus lived on less than a tenth of the income of a resident of Kocaeli, a western manufacturing centre. Unsurprisingly, therefore, Kurds have been moving west, at the rate of perhaps half a million a year. Whole Kurdish quarters have sprung up in western cities such as Izmir and Bursa.

True, the government bears much of the blame both for the lack of development in the south-east and for the fighting that has spurred the exodus from it. In the past, at any rate, Turkish leaders viewed mass emigration as one way to cure their south-eastern headache. But whatever prompted the outflow, it has become irreversible.

In a rare poll conducted on the subject in 1992, almost half the Kurds interviewed in Istanbul said they had come to stay. In all the big cities, young, chic, Turkish-speaking women can be seen shepherding their veiled, Kurdish-speaking mothers on to buses with an air of embarrassment. The émigré Kurds of Ankara and Istanbul like to sing uplifting songs about their people's struggle, their resentment fostered by restrictions on the Kurdish language and petty harassment from the police. But for all their grumbling, they have no wish to go back to their villages, let alone into the hills with a gun.

That makes it all the more baffling that the government should be so determined to suppress the slightest pro-Kurdish peep. The courts regularly interpret a law against promoting "hatred between ethnic groups" to include any mention of a Kurdish problem. Last year, for example, they confirmed a two-year jail sentence against Akin Birdal, a human-rights campaigner who rashly spoke of a "Kurdish identity" in public. Around the same time, Vural Sa-



The price of an identity



vas, the public prosecutor, closed down a small Kurdish party on similarly flimsy grounds, and started proceedings against Hadeş for good measure. The courts even prevent parents from giving their children Kurdish names. The effect, naturally, is to ensure that politically apathetic or moderate Kurds turn more extreme.

In Diyarbakir, the capital of the south-east, the atmosphere is even more repressive. Many of the residents are refugees, living in fly-ridden tenements since the army burnt their villages as part of a scorched-earth campaign against the PKK. Locals at a teahouse worry that they will get into trouble for speaking to journalists. The security services, they say, make no distinction between law-abiding Kurds and PKK supporters. Everyone has a tale of arbitrary arrest, torture or disappearance. An old man in a frayed suit accuses the police of routinely raping their male prisoners. "We accept torture," he says. "The state has the right to torture you—but some methods are too shameful."

Some 60,000 people, about a tenth of the province's adult population, have been tried in the special emergency-rule courts since 1989. Yet local human-rights lawyers say they have not managed to get a single torture case heard in 15 years. "To whom should we complain?" asks the sister of a torture victim. "Even members of parliament can be tortured in Turkey." The American government's report on Turkey's human-rights situation in 1999 bears her out: "The rarity of convictions and the light sentences imposed on police and other security officials for killings and torture continued to foster a climate of impunity."

Throwing money at the problem

The government seems to think that a dash of prosperity will take the locals' minds off such concerns, but that is easier said than done. Refugee farmers cannot earn any money until they can return to their land, yet Diyarbakir's governor says there are no funds to rebuild their villages. The military campaign, meanwhile, is costing perhaps \$8 billion a year. The benefits of GAP, a \$30 billion hydroelectric and irrigation scheme designed to win Kurdish hearts and minds, have so far flowed disproportionately to the state electricity company and to wealthy landlords. Local businessmen complain that the

many incentives for investment in the area help only west Turkish carpetbaggers with capital.

The atmosphere has improved somewhat since Mr Ocalan's capture and the PKK's subsequent ceasefire last year. The army was gaining the upper hand even before that; by now, claims the governor of the "emergency-rule" area, there are only 500 guerrillas left within the country. Even a PKK splinter group that was defying the ceasefire is said to have given up. Instead of barricading themselves indoors at dusk, locals feel secure enough to stroll home from restaurants late at night. But the chief of staff has ruled out any reduction in forces. At Diyarbakir airport, fearsome Apache attack helicopters still sit on the runway, ready for take-off.

The government's military success has also translated into a more relaxed political atmosphere. The head of the provincial bar association says the number of extra-judicial killings and disappearances has fallen, although torture remains widespread. As a gesture of goodwill, the government this year permitted public celebrations of Nawroz, the Kurdish new year, for the first time in more than a decade. Many television and radio stations are now able to broadcast non-political Kurdish songs. At a recent Hadeş get-together in Diyarbakir, Kurdish singers even crooned the word "Kurdistan".

But staunchly Kemalist bureaucrats resist even such faltering steps. The governor of Istanbul, for example, prohibited the city's Kurds from celebrating Nawroz, on the ground that they had not transliterated the word correctly into Turkish in their application. Feridun Celik, the Kurdish mayor of Diyarbakir, sees his sudden arrest and then release in March as intended "to sabotage the peaceful atmosphere". Plenty of people, from government-sponsored paramilitary squads to arms- and drug-smugglers, stand to lose if the region returns to normal.

Moreover, officials still present any concessions as part of a general effort to improve human rights, not something aimed specifically at the Kurds. Mr Gürel, the government spokesman, insists that the government does not consider the Kurds a minority, and therefore has no plans to grant them the minority rights by which the EU sets so much store. Instead, he says, the "social and economic problems of the south-east will lead the agenda." That will not reassure the teahouse customers of Diyarbakir.



Fundamental separation

IF YOU are looking at the humdrum Ankara skyline from Atatürk's hilltop mausoleum, one building stands out: the Kocatepe mosque. Its four minarets hem in a massive vanilla sundae of domes and semi-domes, in a modern pastiche of the traditional Ottoman style. But the architects planned as much for convenience as for tradition. The muezzins ride to the top of the minarets in purpose-built lifts. A huge underground car park offers the congregation an instant earthly reward after the snarled city streets. Best of all, when God begins to call, visitors can turn their attention to mammon, in the form of a large subterranean shopping mall.

Few Turks seem to see anything odd about

shopping for miniskirts and hair-dye in the basement of Ankara's biggest mosque. In a recent survey conducted by TESEV, a respected Turkish think-tank, 97% of those questioned identified themselves as Muslim, 92% said they fasted during the holy month of Ramadan, and 46% claimed to pray five times a day. But 91% also said different religious beliefs should be respected, and clear majorities thought it did not matter if Muslims consumed alcohol, failed to fast and pray or, if they were women, went outside without covering their heads. Only 21% called for an Islamic state, and once the implications were pointed out to them, some were not so sure.

But even if ordinary Turks do not get worked up

In its anxiety to keep state and religion apart, Turkey sometimes goes too far



Which is the more liberated?

about religion, their government does. The constitution bars "even partially basing the fundamental social, economic, political and legal order of the state on religious tenets". Although mildly Islamist parties do exist, the least hint of radicalism is severely punished. Thus the courts slapped a lifetime political ban on Tayyip Erdogan, a popular Islamist mayor of Istanbul, for using the word *jihād*, which literally means religious struggle, but can have military connotations. The irony that Mr Erdogan was quoting from one of Atatürk's favourite poets was lost on the judges. Even their more liberal colleagues find little room for interpretation in Turkey's rigid laws; and the special military courts that regularly dismiss officers for Islamic leanings do not allow appeals to any civilian authority.

In their hunt for Islamic extremists, hardline secularists have cast the net so wide that they have caught most Turkish women in it. Although the Kemalist elite in the cities abandoned the traditional headscarf long ago, almost every woman in rural and poorer urban areas wears one, as do some Islamic revivalists. To weed out the small minority who intend their headscarves as a political statement, Turkey's universities have expelled all students and instructors who wear them—up to 30,000 of them, according to a veiled students' advocacy group. The only woman who has ever dared to enter the parliament in a headscarf was soon stripped of her seat and her citizenship. Mothers whose conscript sons have been injured fighting the PKK must bare their heads to visit them in military hospitals, all in the name of separating religion and state.

Yet that does not mean the state steers clear of religion. For example, it put up most of the funds for the Kocatepe mosque. It supervises religious education (which is compulsory), specifies the qualifications for those wishing to become *imams*, appoints

suitable candidates to mosques (all 74,356 of them) and pays their salaries. Squads of state inspectors sit in on Friday prayers around the country to make sure the preachers avoid politics. The government even dictates the charities to which devout Muslims can present animal skins after the traditional annual sacrifice.

Search for the devil

Despite all these strictures, many Turkish secularists fear that *irtica*, a sort of nebulous fundamentalist threat, is about to swamp the state. When the Islamist Welfare party won the largest number of seats in the 1995 parliamentary elections, the army knocked heads together to make sure a secularist coalition excluded it from office. When that arrangement broke down in 1996, the generals permitted Welfare to lead a government, but used their political power (see next article) to impose a raft of anti-Islamic reforms. Mr Savas, the ever-vigilant public prosecutor, charged Welfare with plotting to impose an Islamic regime, the chief evidence being its notorious tolerance of beards, turbans and headscarves.

When the press joined in with unsubstantiated stories about illicit fundamentalist slush funds and a secret scheme to paint Istanbul's roads an Islamic green, the government collapsed. The courts followed up by banning the party and exiling its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, from politics for five years. As soon as Welfare was out of the way, the furor about *irtica* subsided, claims Oya Akgönec, an MP from Welfare's successor party, Virtue: "If there really were large numbers of people who threatened the state, what happened to them?"

Indeed, there seems to be only one Islamic extremist group worth the name in Turkey—and many Turks suspect the authorities of promoting it. Hizbullah (no relation to the Lebanese group of the same name) led a terror campaign in the south-east throughout the 1990s in favour of an Islamic Kurdish state. The government certainly did not seem unduly exercised over its attacks on secular Kurdish political activists and PKK sympathisers. Mesut Yilmaz, leader of one of the parties in the present government coalition, is quite blunt: "My belief is that Hizbullah could not have done what it did without the co-operation of certain traitors within the state." At any rate, the police did not begin a serious crackdown on the group until last February. Since then, they have arrested some 1,000 Hizbullah members, and unearthed about 60 of their victims.

Next to such horrors, Mr Erbakan's transgressions seem minor. He did resist shutting down Turkey's flourishing religious schools, arguing that it was the soldiers themselves who encouraged their spread as an antidote to the leftist upsurge of the 1970s, but he eventually gave in. His much publicised trips to Libya and Iran were bound to raise military hackles, but he went along with the generals in their decidedly unIslamic alliance with Israel.

It is also fair to say that many Turks plumped for Welfare not because of its Islamist tinge, but for its air of probity and competence. Popular Welfare mayors such as Mr Erdogan made their reputations by fighting corruption and improving public services in the major cities. When the Welfare government indulged in the same parliamentary wheeling and dealing as its predecessors, its support



declined. The air of crisis engendered by Mr Erbakan's showdown with the army also seems to have put off many voters, tired of the past decade's endless chopping and changing. In last year's election, Virtue polled about 5% less than Welfare at its peak.

Virtue's leaders seem to have learned their lesson. When explaining the party's platform, its MPs take five minutes before they get down to mentioning Islam. Though ideas such as repealing the headscarf ban or promoting religious schooling doubtless attract Islamist voters, party members present them purely as a matter of civil liberties. No doubt many former Welfare-ites still espouse some of Mr Erbakan's more outlandish proposals, but they also know that these go down almost as badly with the electorate as they do with the army. If Virtue wants

to get beyond the 21% of the vote won by Welfare in 1995, it will have to remain down-to-earth.

None of this reassures the indefatigable Mr Savas, who has launched a new attempt to close Virtue. The same man who has charged so many politicians with "inciting enmity and hatred through religious and doctrinal differences" unashamedly denounces Virtue as a "tumour" run by "blood-sucking vampires". Clearly, Mr Savas's brand of Kemalism equates the merely pious with the truly subversive, much as it conflates all disgruntled Kurds with PKK terrorists. "When they talk about fundamentalism, they really mean Islam," says Fehmi Koru, a devoutly Muslim columnist. And that confusion, he argues, threatens Turkey's stability far more than do Mr Savas's fundamentalist chimeras.



Last line of defence

DURING Turkey's recent presidential election, a prominent newspaper put about the story that the army's chief of staff had vowed not to meddle in the race. His office, keen to squash such a scurrilous rumour, issued an immediate denial. "It is inconceivable that the armed forces would not have an opinion," ran the indignant press release. Mr Ecevit, the prime minister, was the first of many politicians to support the military's forthright stand, declaring that its public interventions in one of the country's key political contests were "only natural".

Military meddling is indeed natural in Turkey—yet distinctly inappropriate in the eyes of the EU. In its most recent report on Turkey's progress towards membership, the European Commission declared that "the lack of civilian control of the army gives cause for concern." Two constitutional anomalies, in particular, caught the EU's attention. First, Turkey's chief of staff reports directly to the prime minister, not to the defence minister, as in West European countries. Second, the army regularly weighs in on matters of purely civilian concern, through a body called the National Security Council (MGK), made up of the five most senior officers, plus the president, prime minister and three other ministers.

In a sense, this is an improvement over the days when the first sign of military displeasure would be the roar of tanks rolling into the streets. The army took control of the country three times between 1960 and 1980, but has stayed in its barracks since then. Likewise, six of Turkey's ten presidents have been soldiers—but none of the last three. After the most recent coup, in 1980, the generals promulgated a new constitution designed to preserve military influence, mainly through the MGK, without the need for full-scale intervention. It was at an MGK meeting, for example, that the army instructed Mr Erbakan to rein in Islamic schooling and sack Islamist civil servants. When military pressure eventually forced him from office, Turkish commentators dubbed the move a "post-modern coup".

Such showdowns are rare, of course; but the army also gets its way on more mundane matters. Defence spending accounts for about 14% of Turkey's budget, compared with 6% in Britain and 4% in Italy. Despite persistent fiscal deficits, no one both-

ers to check how this money is spent. "When the budget of the defence ministry comes to the parliament, not a single MP stands up and says anything," complains Mr Koru. Although the end of the cold war, the growing rapprochement with Greece, Turkey's deepening alliance with Israel, and its effective defeat of the PKK all leave the country more secure than at any time in living memory, the army has embarked on an expensive weapons upgrade.

So are these arrogant and unaccountable soldiers unpopular? Far from it: in poll after poll, Turks rate the armed forces as the country's most popular institution. "It's about the only thing in the country that works," says one, echoing a near-universal sentiment. The shared experience of military service creates some common ground between the future plutocrats of Istanbul and the bumpkins of the Anatolian hinterland. Whereas politicians are considered scheming and dishonest, top officers come across as principled and straightforward. And unlike the snooty circles of big business, the army gives ordinary Turks the opportunity to make good.

It is also fair to say that the army has openly taken power only during real emergencies, and has always handed it back to civilians willingly and reasonably quickly. "The army never, never wanted power for itself," insists Mehmet Ali Kislali, a mili-

Turkey's generals see themselves as guardians of the constitution. So will they allow it to be updated?



Power in the land



tary analyst. The soldiers genuinely seem to think of themselves not as Turkey's rightful rulers, but simply as Kemalism's last line of defence. The twin successes of their military campaign against the PKK and their political assault on the Welfare party must have reinforced their sense of righteousness.

No wonder, then, that the present government does not want to tangle with the top brass. When presented with a list of basic questions about Turkey's military goals and expenditures, the minister of defence says he cannot answer any of them without referring to the general staff. Other officials also refuse to outline future reforms, however dim or distant; instead, they ask for "understanding of Turkey's special circumstances".

Digging for dirt

Fortunately the press has recently proved a little less timid than the politicians about the role of the armed forces. The army's slow and clumsy response to last year's earthquake prompted the first complaints. Since then, columnists have become braver about questioning its more grandiose procurement schemes. A recent book on the war in the south-east daringly suggested that some officers had exploited the conflict to run rackets, smuggle drugs and abuse civilians. Although some of these allegations remain unproven (and the book banned), questions about the army's financial entanglements keep cropping up. In these days of privatisation, its industrial holdings—eg, a car-building venture with Renault—look increasingly anachronistic. Apparently unqualified retired generals often take up seats on the boards of big companies; several have got caught up in financial scandals. All these revelations strengthen the argument for greater civilian oversight and control.

Nor is pressure for reform coming from civilians alone. In line with the trend within NATO, the army itself is keen to develop leaner, more mobile and higher-tech forces. That will call for more procurement, and therefore greater scrutiny, both from those holding the purse strings in Turkey and those selling the weapons to it. The army has also floated the idea of abolishing conscription, to streamline the forces—a move that would call its own special role in Turkish public life into question.

The army wants to participate in the EU's fledgling "security and defence identity", so it will have to learn to rub along with the civilians who will be designing this. The generals, army-watchers say, are shopping around the constitutions of Europe to find the most palatable formula for civilian-military relations. They view membership of the EU as the culmination of Atatürk's dreams. So the tighter Turkey's embrace with Europe, the less, it's said, they will feel the need to meddle in politics.

Perhaps the presidential election in which the chief of staff showed such interest will also play a part in curbing the army's off-base adventures. The generals should be comfortable with the choice of Mr Sezer, who as chief justice of the constitutional court presided over the closure of three Kurdish parties as well as that of Welfare. But for all his hardline credentials, he has also called for reform of the generals' constitution, especially insofar as it restricts freedom of speech. He has even said that Turks should be free to speak whatever language they want, a nod in the direction of Kurdish cultural rights. Coming from anyone else, such suggestions would be anathema; but with a committed Kemalist like Mr Sezer as its commander-in-chief, the army might just swallow such a change.

Shifting coalitions

The one certainty in Turkish politics is constant change

PLUCKY Turkish politicians can break Kemalist taboos and get away with it. Turgut Ozal, the late prime minister and president, once faced down his chief of staff over plans to open a second front against Iraq during the Gulf war. In the end, Ozal forced the recalcitrant soldier into retirement (although he still did not get his way over the second front). On another occasion, he reviewed some troops in a T-shirt, in a country where even taxi drivers wear jackets and ties. He was vigorous enough and popular enough to shrug off objections to moves like lifting the total ban on Kurdish, or promoting Islamic banking.

Since Ozal's day, however, Turkey has suffered from a series of short-lived and weak govern-

ments—nine of them in as many years, all but two of them coalitions or minorities. The blame lies partly with the electoral system, an unhappy compromise between proportional representation and first-past-the-post. To avoid many-headed coalitions, it excludes parties that poll less than 10% of the national vote. At the most recent election, several bigish parties fell below that threshold, in effect invalidating one vote in six. Yet even so the system usually fails to create strong, single-party governments, or even two-party coalitions. True to form, the present government is made up of three parties.

All this would work better if a couple of parties had a clear lead over the others. But the army put paid to any stable party system by banning the main parties and their leaders from politics, when it took power in 1980. Later, the ban was reversed in a referendum, leaving two different parties for each ideological shade. Frequent mergers, splits and name changes further muddy the waters. One MP earned the nickname "the spinning top" by changing parties six times.

The lack of internal democracy within the parties exacerbates the problem. The leaders of the present coalition did not bother to inform their MPs of the government's choice of candidate for presi-

Chopping and changing

Turkey's general-election results

Date	First-placed party	% share of vote	Second-placed party*	% share of vote
Nov 1983	Motherland	45	Populist Party	30
Nov 1987	Motherland	36	Social Democratic Populist Party†	25
Oct 1991	True Path	27	Motherland	24
Dec 1995	Welfare	21	True Path	19
Apr 1999	Democratic Left	22	Nationalist Action	18

Source: The Economist *Based on seats won †Created from a merger between the Populist Party and the Social Democratic Party

dent until three days before parliament met to elect him. No one seems to have thought of consulting the provincial party organisations at all. "The leaders are the emperors of their parties," gripes one political analyst. They can summarily dismiss members, have absolute control over the all-important party lists at elections, and never seem to retire. Today's young Turks spend most of their time twiddling their thumbs in the shadow of septuagenarians.

All this means that squabbling seems to bring down governments as often as policy disputes. A tie-up in 1996 between two right-wing parties, for example, collapsed when the leader of one supported a corruption investigation into the leader of the other. In parliament, petty bickering is the order of the day. Last month, members of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP) tried to stop one of their colleagues at gunpoint from registering as a presidential candidate.

The limited scope for democratic debate permitted by Turkish law encourages such shenanigans. The army-inspired constitution forbids all attempts at "placing the government of the state under the control of an individual or a group of people, or establishing the hegemony of one social class over others, or creating discrimination on the basis of language, race, religion or sect". And this is not a hollow threat: in the past 40 years the courts have closed 35 parties for that sort of thing.

No wonder, then, that the main Turkish political parties look hauntingly alike. All of them are nationalist to varying degrees, but they all support EU membership. They all in theory uphold the separation of religion and state, although most have Islamist wings. They all agree that deficits and inflation must be brought down by IMF-inspired austerity, although they all open the coffers when elections draw near. According to Cüneyt Ulsever, a columnist for the *Hürriyet* newspaper, they have all become patronage groups, competing for the privilege of applying the same policies.

The price of a vote

With shaky coalitions raising the constant risk of early elections, politicians do not muck about with long-term planning, but resort to populism of the most blatant and ruinous sort. Civil servants always win huge pay rises when election day nears. Country-dwellers, who make up 40% of the population, are the biggest vote bank, and so win the biggest payouts. Mr Ulsever calculates that subsidies contribute as much as 50% of rural incomes. During one campaign, Süleyman Demirel, a former president and prime minister, literally bid for farmers' votes by promising to fix the price of tobacco above the best price offered by his political rivals.

This sort of patronage often blurs into corruption. Inside the party offices, huge queues of pe-

titioners wait to trade their support for help with finding a job or a hospital bed. No company can win a government contract without paying a kick-back, businessmen say. Tansu Çiller, a former prime minister, got into trouble when \$6.5m disappeared from a government account under her control. A fresh scandal, over influence-peddling in the privatisation of a state bank, brought down the government of her successor and arch-rival, Mesut Yılmaz. Even the supposedly whiter-than-white Welfare government was damaged by including the party of the sleaze-spattered Ms Çiller.

A series of scandals of this kind has gradually built up a picture of a political class in cahoots with mafiosi, big businessmen and supporters of the far right. In 1996, a police chief, a right-wing hitman sought by Interpol and a former beauty queen were all killed in the crash of a car belonging to a wealthy Kurdish MP. It soon transpired that the minister of the interior had been staying in the same hotel. Since then, revelations about friendly telephone conversations between ministers and mafiosi, or hanky-panky in the privatisation process, have become common. "Corruption", says Mehmet Elkatmis, the head of the parliamentary investigation into the mysterious car crash, "reaches the highest level of the state." Yet hardly anyone ever seems to get punished.

Turkish voters are clearly searching for something more inspiring. In each of the past four elections a different party has topped the ballot (see table 4, previous page). At the most recent election, just over a year ago, the voters decided to try out the MHP and Mr Ecevit's Democratic Left Party (DSP) chiefly, it seems, because neither had been near power (bar the DSP's brief role in a pre-electoral caretaker government) for years.

Apart from that, the two parties have nothing in common. Mr Ecevit, the leader of the DSP, was the great hope of the left in the late 1970s. The "Grey Wolf" activists of the MHP, on the other hand, made their name beating up left-wing students and assassinating union leaders. It was the fierce street battles between the two sides that triggered the 1980 coup. When this disparate pair floated the idea of a coalition after last year's election, Turkey gasped.

But so far, to everyone's surprise, the coalition (which also includes Mr Yılmaz's centre-right Motherland) has held together well. Both the MHP and the DSP are drifting towards the centre. Devlet Bahçeli, the MHP's leader, likes to play the statesman. Mr Ecevit, who is elderly and unwell, has an eye on posterity. Both know that, after the turmoil of the past few years, voters crave stability above all. Although the two parties may still not see eye to eye on the touchiest subjects, such as Islam, they have wisely chosen to concentrate on the economy.



Unparliamentary behaviour



Fingers crossed

The latest economic reform programme just may deliver the goods

THE world may see it as a basket-case, but Turks consider their economy miraculous. Where else, they ask, could an economy grow by over 4% a year for a decade, despite inflation averaging over 80%? Where else could industrialists keep expanding their output, despite real interest rates that ranged to 50% and more? And where else could the treasury keep borrowing, despite ten years of rudderless government and umpteen failed IMF reform packages? On inflation, at least, the Turkish economy has defied the conventional wisdom which holds that such high rates will inevitably slide into hyperinflation: after a year or two. But apart from this anomaly, sadly, economic gravity caught up last year.

Turkey's woes stem from its massive state sector. Instead of cutting payrolls and privatising, the populist governments of the 1980s and 1990s kept doling out subsidies and jacking up wages. Deficits grew, and inflation ballooned in their wake. For a while the economy still flourished, thanks to Turgut Ozal's lifting of stringent controls on imports and capital flows. When he became finance minister in 1980, it was a crime to carry foreign currency; since then, European investors have helped Istanbul's stock exchange to take off (see chart 6, next page). Foreign trade also jumped,

though one corollary of this was a large trade deficit.

But even the iconoclastic Ozal did not dare to attack the subsidy-guzzling farmers and factories, and the all-too-numerous civil servants. The treasury found itself issuing debt at rising rates and shrinking maturities. In 1994 inflation temporarily eased the problem by causing a plunge in the value of the lira, and hence reducing the real burden of debt—at the expense of a deep recession. But that also made investors warier about buying government paper, and pushed up the price of borrowing still further. By the end of last year, real interest rates stood at 40% and inflation near 70%. The overall burden of debt was not particularly outlandish—less than 60% of GDP—but the cost of servicing it had got out of hand.

The government's financial straits have inevitably taken their toll on the wider economy. For a start, heavy public-sector borrowing has siphoned money away from more productive uses. Last year, 88% of the profits of Turkey's 500 biggest firms came from lending to the government. Worse, public borrowing left the country vulnerable to any sort of external shock. Professor Asaf Savas Akat, of Bilgi University, likens the weakness brought on by persistent inflation to living with AIDS. "In the end," he says, "you die of a cold." Turkey's economy did not quite die last year, but it shrank by 5%.

In December, at the IMF's initiative, the government unveiled a comprehensive three-year reform programme. To puncture public expectations of inflation, it announced a schedule for the devaluation of the lira month by month for the whole year in advance. In the meantime, it promised to re-

duce the deficit by making it harder for people to qualify for public pensions, cutting agricultural subsidies, raising taxes and privatising. In return, the IMF agreed to provide \$4 billion of loans to ease the pain. If all goes according to plan, Turkey will be down to single-digit inflation and a consolidated public-sector deficit of 3% of GDP by 2003.

Turkey has embarked on many such programmes before: 17 by a popular, although exaggerated, count. But this time the IMF made sure that the government brought in not just painful spending cuts and tax increases, but also needful laws on privatisation and pension reform, before getting any IMF cash. As in any IMF accord, the programme is conditional: each dollop of money will arrive only if fiscal targets are met and further legal reforms introduced. The government is also well aware that its popularity depends in large part on its economic prudence. Turkish bankers say this is Turkey's last chance, and failure would spell terminal disaster. Their gloom has helped concentrate minds. By the end of April, the government had already pulled in privatisation revenues of \$5 billion out of its \$7.5 billion target for the whole year, and now hopes for a total of \$9 billion. Tax revenues are up sharply.

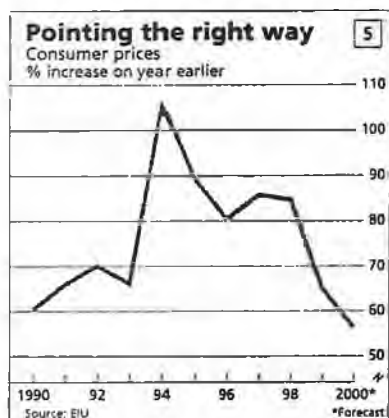
The biggest risk is that inflation will remain higher than the pre-announced rate of devaluation, causing a gradual appreciation of the real value of the lira. Analysts fear that might dent exports, push up the current-account deficit and finally prompt a sudden, large exchange-rate adjustment, wrecking the government's anti-inflation strategy. But at least a stronger lira would cut the cost of imports; and many of these go out again as exports, so the harm should not be too great. And the government has already said it will switch to a less rigid exchange-rate system in about a year's time.

Hope in the air

So far, touch wood, the plan seems to be working. Inflation has come down to about 60% year-on-year (see chart 5), and real interest rates have plummeted to 10%. The governor of the central bank is reportedly getting ready to chop some zeros off the lira. In April two foreign rating agencies, Standard & Poor's and Fitch IBCA, upgraded Turkish government debt. The IMF has issued a glowing report card.

If the programme succeeds, the first people to feel the effects will be Turkey's businessmen. According to conventional wisdom, Turkish business came of age in 1996, after a customs union abolished all tariffs on industrial goods between Turkey and the EU. In the short term, Turkish industry suffered. Imports from Europe shot up, whereas exports rose much more slowly. Imports of cars rose from 15% to 45% of the market in only four years. Yet though some manufacturers went bust, most soon adjusted. By 1999 exports had clawed their way back to about 70% of imports. Turkey now exports 65,000 cars a year. On Istanbul's trendy Istiklal street, the home-grown Mavi jeans shop pulls in as many customers as the Levis outlet next-door.

It all shows, say Turkish businessmen, that on a level playing field their goods can compete with the



best in the world. But the field is not level. Turkish firms have had to cope with the impossibly high cost of borrowing and unpredictable exchange rates of the past decade. The big family conglomerates, desperate to get their hands on finance, founded banks. Smaller enterprises had to rely on their profits or family connections to expand. Most could do nothing. The high rate of inflation makes company accounts meaningless. Foreigners, put off by all this, invested a paltry \$817m in Turkey last year, almost all of it additional funding for existing projects.

If the government's reform programme does bring inflation and interest rates down to less exotic levels, the resulting shake-out in Turkish business could be as dramatic as that following the EU customs union, if not more so. Firms will be able to borrow. Investors will be able to see clearly where profits are being made. Some of the small tradesmen of Turkey's black economy (which some analysts reckon is as big as the official one) might even be lured back into the official sector.

Banks under pressure

Banks, however, will feel the squeeze. Until the beginning of this year, they could simply take deposits from customers and hand them to the central bank. Now they must actually start to do some banking. Guldem Atabay, a banking analyst, thinks that perhaps only ten of Turkey's 80 banks will prove competitive in the new environment.

The pressure to find new sources of revenue might drive some banks to burden their books with bad loans—already a problem for many. Politics has long influenced lending decisions, especially at the four state-owned banks, which the government is preparing to sell off. It has set up a new, independent banking watchdog, and taken over five struggling private banks.

Turkey's huge conglomerates will also have a rough ride. In the old days, Turkish markets were so opaque and Turkish bureaucracy so impenetrable that foreigners had to choose one of the big names as a local partner or distributor. Sabanci, one of the biggest, modestly declares itself adept in "the industrial, financial, commercial and agricultural sectors". It has joint ventures or distribution deals with DuPont, Philip Morris, Kraft, IBM, Toyota, Bridgestone, Sharp, Mitsubishi, Danone, Carrefour, Banque Nationale de Paris and Dresdner Bank, among others.

Foreigners will keep coming to Turkey. Abdurrahman Ariman, the head of the foreign investment board, quotes a study claiming to show that western Turkey's 25m people have an average income (the black economy included) of \$15,000 apiece, and are keen to spend it. Some of these newcomers may team up with smaller, nimbler firms, or even go it alone. "The monopoly of the conglomerates will be broken, and that can only be good

for Turkey," says Andrew Jeffreys, head of Oxford Business Group, an economic-research firm.

Not that the giants are standing still. Their managers, who are increasingly outsiders rather than family members, are already talking of spinning off peripheral businesses to concentrate on three or four of their most profitable ventures. Many are using their old industrial businesses as leverage to move into booming sectors such as telecoms and media. When the government put out two mobile-phone licences to tender in April, both Koc and Sabanci, the best-known family conglomerates, put together consortia to bid. The hottest conglomerates in Turkey these days are Cukurova, which combines an existing mobile-phone firm with media and industrial interests, and Dogus, a sprawling banking-tourism-media hybrid.

The spread of conglomerates to the media has raised fears of corruption. One company director complains that he gets frequent calls from newspapers threatening to run critical stories about his firm unless he advertises with them. Another says he cancelled his plans to bid in the recent sell-off of the government's petrol stations when he saw that all his rivals had media interests. The privatisation process had become so suspect that the government took to broadcasting auctions of state-owned firms live on television. Even if they stick to the rules, media moguls wield enormous influence: Aydin Dogan, one of the best-known, has direct or indirect stakes in three of Turkey's four best-selling newspapers, its biggest magazine group and its biggest distributor, as well as six TV channels, a bank and an Internet portal.

In theory, all kinds of laws prevent excessive concentration of power in a single media company, but media barons have been able to evade such restrictions through complicated networks of cross-holdings. Three of the four consortia bidding for new mobile-phone licences involved media groups.

Whatever the difficulties, the rush to the media illustrates the dynamism of Turkish business. In 1980, Turkey had one, state-owned television channel. Today, it has 15 more national television stations, all of them private, and hundreds of local ones. Each sector the state has opened up to competition has boomed. You cannot walk more than two blocks in downtown Istanbul without passing an Internet café, and there are more websites with Turkey's .tr suffix than there are with China's .cn. Just imagine what Turkish business could do with low inflation and more abundant, and cheaper, capital.



What every business needs

Multiple choice

If Turkey is to flourish, its people need less nannying and more freedom to make their own decisions

THE boom in Turkey's media is a boon to Turkey's civil society. No matter how self-serving and circumscribed their ownership, Turkey's multiple television channels cannot help but provide more information and debate than the single station of 20 years ago. Likewise, the margins of the press fizzle with counter-cultural ideas. Turkey has Kurdish papers, communist papers, Islamic papers, even *Kuva-yi Medya*, a courageous exposé of the business moguls' media manipulation. In the same way, organisations that will broaden and deepen civil debate are springing up all over the place: to oppose the destruction of historic sites, to fight pollution, to care for victims of torture, or to defend Muslim women's right to wear headscarves.

To be sure, the proportion of Turks who, say, belong to a sports club, charity or religious organisation is still in the low single digits. Again, Turks can thank their constitution, which, in the words of a recent UNDP report, "considers all civil initiative, voluntary associations and non-governmental organisations with serious misgivings". But many of the restrictions, eg, on trade unions and professional associations, have been lifted in the past few years.

Even in the grimmest parts of Turkey, it is hard not to be optimistic. In a poor village outside Yozgat, itself the most derelict town in central Anatolia, the farmers live in rickety wooden huts in a narrow dell between folds of the steppe. The undulating terrain defies their ploughs, frost turns the soil to stone for half the year and water runs short during the other half. One farmer shows off the well-oiled shotgun he uses to deter sheep rustlers. His wife laments the village's decline, from 120 families in the 1960s to 40 today. And yet.

What happened to slim the numbers? "Well," she explains, "the young people saw the opportunities in the cities and then they couldn't come back here." One of her sons works at a supermarket in Yozgat, the other at a sausage factory in the next town, and her daughter has taken a job at a nearby beer-bottling plant. Hardly the grandest of positions, but enough to help put a satellite dish on the

roof of the family's tumbledown house.

In Ankara's and Istanbul's sprawling *gecekondu*, or "night-built" squatter districts, it is the same story. Ten people squeeze into three-room houses, patched together with cardboard and odd bricks. But many of these flimsy structures nonetheless have running water, electricity, telephones, refrigerators and televisions. Although most were built on government land without the proper permits, a series of vote-buying pre-election amnesties have made them legal. Shiny door-knockers and geraniums in rusty oil drums hint at proprietary pride.

In Altindag, one of Ankara's older *gecekondu*, most residents arrived from eastern Turkey 15 or 20 years ago. Their grandparents worked the land, their parents moved to a provincial town, they have come to the big city and their children, they hope, will move on to a smarter address. Over the course of two or three generations, Turkey is turning penniless Anatolian peasants into petty bourgeois.

Education first

Yet, for all its economic opportunities, Turkey is becoming more unequal. High inflation and interest rates have enriched those with capital, but have eroded the earnings of the poor. Between 1987 and 1994, the share of total incomes going to the richest fifth of Turks rose from 50% to 55%; the share of the poorest fifth shrank from 5.2% to 4.9%. Only 10% of applicants win places at Turkish universities. The rich can have their children coached for the entrance exams, or send them abroad should they fail; the poor have to rely on the underfunded state schools. Ayşe Ayata, an academic who has compared public and private schools, worries that the education system is creating two separate Turkey: one of them wealthy and dynamic, the other poor, resentful and vulnerable to political extremism.

Such problems are not unique to Turkey. But it seems to have gone out of its way to compound them. For example, the education system has suffered extra strain because of restrictions imposed on the widespread and successful Islamic schools. Many Turks chose to send their children to these not out of strong conviction, but for an extra dose of sobriety and discipline. Instead of bringing the state schools up to scratch, the government simply shut down the religious ones for younger pupils.

Already, privatisation and deregulation have loosened the state's grip on the economy. Sustained falls in inflation and interest rates would help pass the benefits of these reforms on to a broader public, and start picking apart the unhealthy ties between politicians, financiers and the press. A wealthier, more stable Turkey might look more generously on its restive Kurdish and devout Muslim citizens, and more askance at its haughty bureaucrats.

During his military service, every Turkish man learns a list of Atatürk's qualities. He was, it seems, not only the world's greatest man in general, but also its greatest thinker, organiser, nationalist, soldier, leader, statesman, politician and revolutionary. Now it is for Turks to keep that revolution going.

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Don't forget the revolution

Kordestan Governor on Devolution, Regional Economy

Javan (Tehran) 17 Jun 00

[Interview with Dr. 'Abdollah ramazanzadeh, provincial governor of Kordestan, by Fereyduñ razavi and 'Ali Emami; date and place not given: 'Regional Executives Understand Local Requirements Better;' first four grafs are newspaper introduction]

[FBIS Translated Text] When the wind blows, and makes the green meadows of Kordestan dance, you can hear the song of 'Hureh' in your ears -- an ancient song that comes from the depth of the human spirit, and tells you the story of distance, destitution, and misery. Kordestan is beautiful. Its strawberry farms and its green fields, extended to the thousand-color slopes of the never-ending mountains, put any viewer's mind in a dream for hours. You can see with your own eyes that the sky has not deprived this land of any blessing. But have the Kurdish people gained anything from these blessings?

Unfortunately, shortages of facilities, and failure to optimally utilize the resources of the province, have made many young and educated Kurds abandon this dream land, and emigrate to other regions in pursuit of a piece of bread. Meanwhile, local officials say it is possible to prepare the ground for work and activity with a little fundamental investment.

Some time ago, we went to the provincial governor of Kordestan, a young doctor who is better known as a political figure in Tehran, Dr. 'Abdollah Ramazanzadeh. Born in Kordestan himself, he believes his closeness to the president's thoughts, and his familiarity with the region's requirements, were the main factors in his selection as governor of Kordestan. However, he asserts he does not know whether this was a totally apt selection or not.

Anyway, he knows better than anyone else about the many problems he is facing in controlling, improving, and reforming the living and economic standards of Kordestan Province. Maybe this is why he says: 'In the issue of management, we must put factional games aside. It does not matter for me whether my managers are left or right.'

[Razavi and Emami] From the very outset up till now, one of the clear objectives of the system regarding the Kordestan region was to eliminate tension, and establish peace and trust between the people of this region and the central government. Many people believe the efforts of Mr. Rahimi, the former provincial governor of Kordestan, were followed by a kind of 'forward mutation' in the implementation process of this policy. Do you have any inclination to continue Mr. Rahimi's programs in this regard?

[Ramazanzadeh] Naturally, large-scale national policies -- particularly in critical regions like Kordestan -- are out of the provincial governor's field of activity, and are decided and ratified in another place. The Supreme National Security Council and the Security Council determine these policies, and provincial governors are usually not the policy-makers in these cases, and they only implement the policies adopted.

The general policy of the system -- specifically following Mr. Khatami's arrival in power -- was, and still is, that Iran belongs to all Iranians, and any Iranian person who accepts the Constitution may be active there. Therefore, I do not consider any role for myself, or the governor before me.

[Razavi and Emami] So in this case, basically what is the necessity for changing the management?

[Ramazanzadeh] Well, of course, there could be some tastes in the field of implementation that definitely do not agree so much with each other. The most important feature that Mr. Khatami's government has is the issue

of transparency, honesty, and law-abidance. And I think the most important difference between this period and the previous period is this very transparency, and also the issue of practicing the law.

In addition, with regard to the extent to which an executive can be effective in policy-making, I think it depends on the individual's capabilities, which are to be judged from outside.

[Razavi and Emami] The reason we propounded this discussion is that one of the legal aims of the third program is decentralization, and giving more authorities to regional managers, which has come together as the Land Logistics Plan.

[Ramazanzadeh] In my opinion, this point is the most important issue of the economic reform program, and it has been confirmed by the eminent leader too. For the very first time, a government that believes in the participation of all experts comes and ratifies an internally generated program based on the country's internal requirements, by using the different opinions of specialists and experts.

Basically, one of the most serious obstacles to the programs of the government and the Majles is that those who are the first executives of programs in Tehran do not understand regional requirements. On the other hand, in today's world, everyone has reached the conclusion that the more the superficial layers have authority to control the country, the more efficient it becomes. This is a scientific issue in the science of management.

[Razavi and Emami] But how can we be sure there is a suitable matrix to which to entrust these authorities in our society today?

[Ramazanzadeh] To whom are these authorities going to be entrusted? Provincial governors and general managers are going to be entrusted with these authorities. These individuals either have the capability of working, or they do not. If they have, well, there will be no problem. But if they have not, an individual who is able to use these authorities should be appointed instead. Anyway, there is a notion that maybe you did not want to mention, and I will. Some say entrusting authorities might produce problems for the country politically.

From my point of view, entrusting managerial authorities will not produce political problems anywhere in the country, because no-one has ever proved, for example, that giving authority to a provincial governor to build a school for genius students has anything to do with a particular national policy, or for example, what the difference is between deciding here or in Tehran whether or not a road in a village must be built. Moreover, I am the one who is directly involved in the problems of my own province. I know better than Tehran in which area production responds better. I am the one who better knows the priorities for dividing resources... [ellipsis as published]

[Razavi and Emami] Doctor! I will express my intention a bit more clearly. Lately, I was reading an analysis in one of the valid foreign news agencies about the reasons the Zionist regime retreated from south Lebanon. The reason was said to be the establishment of an independent Kurdish government in northern Iraq, because Israel and the Western powers think they should change the geopolitics of the region to achieve their long-term aims.

[Ramazanzadeh] On the issue of Greater Kurdistan, and whether Israel is seeking to accomplish it or not, we should observe this matter from different aspects. We should consider the level of convergence between the Kurds of the region, and also the level of divergence between the Kurds of each country. We should consider the interests achieved for those Kurds who are seeking independence, and see whether all these agree or do not agree with the presumed policy of the Zionist regime that you mentioned.

I am not talking about the Kurds in our surrounding areas. But what I assume about Iranian Kordestan is that maybe less than 100 percent of the whole Kurdish population in Iran are preoccupied with the issue of independence [sentence as received] All the Kurds in Iran consider themselves Iranian, and even more than this extent. They say that as they are Iranians more than others are, they must have more advantages than they have in the existing situation.

Additionally, even for the other Kurds, I believe the establishment of a Greater Kurdistan is possible neither politically, nor scientifically, nor from the aspect of the interests it may hold for the Kurdish people.

I said this as an expert opinion.

[Razavi and Emami] Mr. Governor! Let us take a few steps backward. In the discussion on giving authority to provincial managers, you said if a manager were not capable, we could put him aside, and bring in another one. But I think we forgot one point, and that is that the councils are to be the reference for giving authority. Would this not reduce the central government's power to change provincial managers?

[Ramazanzadeh] In the economic reform plan, the discussion is not to entrust economic and managerial authority to the councils. The discussion is about giving authority to managers.

[Razavi and Emami] But the Land Logistics Plan says this.

[Ramazanzadeh] The issue of increasing the councils' authority figures in the logistics plan too. You see, at the present time, the councils' authority is just at the level of supervising the affairs of the municipalities. Now, if you come and give the issue of local health services to the municipalities -- and consequently, to the councils -- this will have nothing to do with politics.

[Razavi and Emami] But still you say the appointment of provincial governors is ultimately entrusted to the councils.

[Ramazanzadeh] The matter that you are talking about does not exist in the national economy plan. This requires alterations in the Constitution, because our present Constitution does not permit such a thing.

I know what you want to say. You want to put forward a conceptual discussion to show whether or not, if the people of a region are finally entitled to choose their governor, this will be troublesome. This is a discussion to be raised in another place. (Of course, I explained it to a certain extent before, regarding Kordestan.)

The matter that the national reform plan mentions -- which is also within the limits of the Constitution -- is giving more authority to executive managers, in order to carry out the government's policies.

[Razavi and Emami] I accepted this point. But even if we presume that giving these authorities only concerns governmental managers, we should also consider this important point -- that you, as a governmental manager, need to get assistance from the private sector. And given the system's general policies on privatization, this need becomes even more conspicuous.

It is always said that money generates power. Do you not think there is a possibility that with the formation of huge, local economic powers, their influence and power on you -- as a governmental manager with more authority -- will grow stronger, and in the long term, this will cause difficulties for national sovereignty?

[Ramazanzadeh] First, you yourself used the word 'possibility.' Second, the danger you mention is quite pos-

sible anywhere, and in any circumstances. You can also say that if someone who does not believe in the Constitution gains economic power in Tehran, he can obstruct the execution of the Constitution as a political power.

You cannot prevent something that is scientifically dominant over an efficient managerial system with these mental conceptions.

Third, the issue you are stating means that we consider the central government to be very incapable in political and economic programming, so that if an economic power forms, it can act as a political power. My conception is that in most of the developing countries, at least for a long period, there is no possibility of huge economic powers rising up against their government.

Anyway, we believe consolidating the economy of the provinces will politically strengthen national power, not provincial powers.

[Razavi and Emami] One of the measures taken as of a few years ago to strengthen the region's economy, and also fight against the smuggling phenomenon in Kordestan, is the establishment of border markets. But we see these markets not only did not help resolve the problem of smuggling, but also even intensified it. Besides, these markets increased the relations between the border dwellers of the two sides, which sometimes produced security problems for the region, and consequently, the whole country. How do you evaluate this matter?

[Ramazanzadeh] First, I do not agree with your theory. I not only believe the border markets had a suitable function, but I also think the causative agent of the problems is to be sought in the incomplete activity of the border markets.

With regard to the matter you referred to as an increase in illegal relations on the border, this takes place not within these markets, but outside these areas. And that is because the responsible authorities do not control the borders.

In fact, we think we have legalized border trade by means of the border markets. From the other point of view, these markets had desirable economic outcomes. More than 6,000 people are earning their livings from these markets. And if we did not have these areas, we would not be able to provide work for this group of jobless people at all.

Another point I should mention is that, considering the dominant traditional cultures of border regions anywhere in the world, including the Kurdish region of Iran and Iraq, these kinds of relations and contacts have always existed, and whether you like it or not, they will always continue.

We think the border markets of Kordestan have a positive security function, while they are the best way of legalizing border trade, obtaining governmental rights, and controlling the importation and exportation of legal and illegal goods.

[Razavi and Emami] Mr. Ramazanzadeh! This morning, when we were entering the city, we expected to see a lot of factories, and productive and industrial centers -- as in many other cities in the country, particularly the centers of provinces. But we did not. What is the reason for this?

[Ramazanzadeh] The economy has the rules and regulations of its own game. In the absolute capitalist economic system that our country experienced before the revolution, the closer you were to Tehran, the greater

your chance of regional advancement. Therefore, excluding some exceptions such as Khuzestan, Tabriz, and Mashhad, which historically had an active economy before the outset of the development period, other remote areas, particularly Kordestan, Kohkiluyeh va Boyer Ahmad, Chahar Mahal va Bakhtiari, and Baluchestan, drew the least advantages from development. For this very reason, we see that the Islamic revolution found Kordestan with 70 percent uneducated people, four villages with electricity, and only 400 industrial workers.

Following the revolution, a series of justice-seeking policies were carried out in the deprived areas. But unfortunately, Kordestan hardly ever used these policies. So you see, Kordestan faced the problem of absence of investment in two periods. First, there was the 1332-57 [1953-79] period, which was the retardation period, for the very reason I mentioned, and the other was a 10-12 year period of insecurity following the revolution.

[Razavi and Emami] Mr. Governor! If you mean the war period, other regions were war-stricken, too.

[Ramazanzadeh] Yes! What you say is right. The whole western region was in trouble. But in Kordestan, the state of insecurity started before the war, and still persisted after the war.

Anyway, you can compare the growth rate of economic indices in the provinces of Kerman, Yazd, Khorasan, and Markazi during the war period. I mean that another problem Kordestan had was that it did not have anyone in Tehran to support its regional resources. You can go see how much the growth rate of economic indices in Lorestan Province increased in the third session of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, when Mr. Karrubi was the Majles Speaker. Or for instance, Kerman Province was the 11th province in the country in development indices at the beginning of the revolution, and now it is the second province.

[Razavi and Emami] But still I think economic development underwent a mutative process in the province after that 10-12 year period of insecurity that you mentioned.

[Ramazanzadeh] The process of investment, particularly for the industrial department, started around 1372-73 [1993-94], following the establishment of security. This was the time when a real external security was established, but definitely, it would take five or six years to clear the minds of investors. Thus, we feel the process of investment is gradually commencing in the province. For this reason, we should come to the important conclusion that the previous problems were completely out of the government's control.

Right now, the first large industrial units are being established in the province. The cement factory, the strawberry processing factories, the largest tile factory in the west of the country, the weaving factory, etc. -- all these have either already commenced their activities, or will join the country's production cycle very soon.

Fortunately, the government allocated \$10 million of subsidized industrial foreign currency to Kordestan Province last Esfand [February-March]. And it is interesting that this amount is somewhere around 10 percent of all the subsidized foreign currency in the country. More interesting, the whole \$10 million worth were absorbed within less than 10 days, which itself is one of the economic miracles.

[Razavi and Emami] So, definitely, we should observe a considerable reduction in unemployment in the province.

[Ramazanzadeh] It is good that you mentioned this matter. Let me tell you something interesting. The rate of unemployment in Kordestan Province, according to the Plan and Budget Organization's statistics, was announced at 9.01 percent in my introductory session, which means even less than the mean unemployment rate in the country. These statistics seemed completely wrong and misleading to us, for the unemployment rate in the province had been declared 16.5 percent in 1370 [1991]. So the question arose for us as to what kind of miracle had happened to reduce the unemployment rate by half within a short period. The interesting point is that after

our investigations, we found out that this miracle had happened in Sistan va Baluchestan, Hormozgan, and Bushehr Provinces too. Also in these provinces, the unemployment rate reduced by 7 percent within this very six-month period.

This was why we requested the Plan and Budget Organization to take the statistics again. They gave us written statistics that the rate of unemployment is 19.5 percent in our province. And then they repeated it for the second time, and it became 12 percent.

At last, we came to an agreement to presume the rate of unemployment in Kordestan Province is 13.5 percent of the total existing active population.

Anyway, the point that is certain is that we have 64,000 registered unemployed individuals. Of this number, some 7,000 are seeking better jobs, and the rest are really jobless. This number comprises 15.5 percent of the active population in the province.

We also have a great problem. That is, 72 percent of our unemployed people lack any kind of skill. So one of the priorities was to train them. During the past two years, we trained about 10,000 to 12,000 of them. And fortunately, almost 50 percent were absorbed into the market.

[Razavi and Emami] What is the government's program to resolve the unemployment problem in the province?

[Ramazanzadeh] We tried to define a series of new work patterns in the province. Luckily, the country's employment headquarters accepted these, and even encouraged them. Kordestan was the most successful province in the country in making fish ponds, strawberry gardens, and the Tuba Plan, and also in using the special notes of animal husbandry.

Another aspect of our activities over the past few years was our efforts for stable economic development in the province, and the production of the required infrastructure. When I came to the province, the electricity manager of the province told me he cannot provide electricity for any other industrial unit. Fortunately, the government invested almost 7 billion [currency not stated] in the electricity industry of Kordestan over the past three years, and now we do not have any problems with electricity, at least for the next 10 years.

Some of the activities carried out in the province over the past few years provided drinking and industrial water, at least for the next 15 years, provided 90 percent of the city of Sanandaj with a gas network, gave gas to three other cities in the province, invested more than 10 billion tomans in the roads, etc.

I am very glad to announce that despite the abundant problems and insecurities in Kordestan, now that 21 years have passed since the victory of the Islamic revolution, the coverage of education in the province has reached more than 95 percent, while more than 60 percent of the villages have piped drinking water, and there is no village of more than 20 families in the province without electricity.

[Razavi and Emami] Mr. Governor! The statistics you mentioned indicate that the economic infrastructure of Kordestan has improved. How much are you hopeful about speeding up the process of private and governmental investment in the province?

[Ramazanzadeh] Kordestan Province has very great potential in the fields of water, mines, agriculture, and their dependent industries. The proof of this claim is that these departments absorbed all the internal and foreign currency credits allocated to them during the past years. So the thought that Kordestan Province lacks the required facilities for investment at national level is quite wrong.

We call on all internal and foreign investors to take the possibility of investment in Kordestan Province into consideration.

However, the process of investment in Kordestan Province is obviously dependent on this process at national level. Until you reach a state of complete political stability in the country, and stability in the economic rules, you definitely cannot expect investors to come and take risks.

[Razavi and Emami] Dr. Ramazanzadeh! We thank you for the time you gave us, and wish you success.

[Ramazanzadeh] Me too.

Kermanshah MP on Kurdish Faction,

Press, Reform Afarinesh (Tehran) 08 Jun 00

[FBIS Translated Text] A Kurdish faction has been formed in the sixth Majles, with 40 deputies from provinces with Kurdish settlements.

According to reports by the Iranian Students' News Agency, Isma'il Tatari, a deputy for the people of Kermanshah in the sixth Majles, stating the above, also said that the Kurdish faction has no leader, since it would be in disarray if we elect a leader for it. This faction has been formed to coordinate the Kurdish deputies, and has no objective except to exalt Iran.

He regarded economic questions, and the problem of unemployment, as the priorities of the sixth Majles, and he added that great attention should be paid to these problems, particularly the problem of youth unemployment, which is a grave one.

He emphasized: I want young people to get married, and I do not want the youth of Iran to be poor.

This deputy of the people of Kermanshah, who possesses a masters degree from the religious schools, said in connection with the question of the press, that the sound press in the country should be supported, and those newspapers that propagate false information, and embarrass Muslims, should be dealt with.

Emphasizing press liberties, he confirmed that the publications that are sound, and are to be supported, are those that are anxious about the nation, consider territorial integrity, and engage themselves with the people's problems.

With respect to the probability of substituting the deputy Speakers of the Majles, Tatari said: I would support Majid Ansari, since I do not know Mohammad Reza Khatami very well. The Imam told us not to vote for those you do not know. Khatami, of course, is a nice man, and God forbid, I am not trying to undermine him. With respect to Nabavi, again I have to say he is a nice man.

With respect to the question of reformism, he said that last year I made a speech in the Majles on reformism, which made them try to prevent me being elected for the fifth Majles. I believe in freedom, and was the first person to make a speech with respect to reformism.

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