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JALAL TALABANI VISITS ANKARA AND DAMASCUS

JALAL Talabani, head of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), one of the two principle parties of Iraqi Kurdistan, during his visit to Ankara, expressed, on 5 March, his support for a democratic change of the Iraqi regime. stating he was "concerned" for the unity of that country in the event of an extension of the American anti-terrorist struggle. *"We are in favour of a united, democratic and independent Iraq. We support strengthening the unity of Iraq and are*

opposed to its division" he declared. Mr. Talabani indicated that his party would welcome foreign support for a "fundamental democratic change" of the Iraqi regime through the countries progressive forces but would oppose "conspiratorial plots". *"If you want to replace one dictator by another, we are against it"* he said, stressing that *"We are firstly Iraqis, and then Iraqi Kurds"*.

This visit to Turkey having given rise to polemics in the Turkish press and

gave rise to criticisms in certain Arab countries, including Syria. To attempt to dissipate them, the Kurdish leader visited Damascus. Thus, on 14 March, the Syrian President, Bashar al-Assad, raised the question of American threats against Iraq with Jalal Talabani. *"Messrs. Assad and Talabani examined matters regarding Iraq and particularly American threats against Baghdad"* specified the SANA Press Agency. Mr. Talabani also met the Syrian Vice-President, Abdel Halim Khaddam and the Assistant General Secretary of the country's ruling Baas Party, Abdallah al-Ahmar, according to those close to him.

On 12 March, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) also denied news items appearing in the Arab Press regarding a reconnaissance mission recently carried out by the American Army in Northern Iraq. Quoting Iraqi opposition sources, the London-based Arabic language daily Al-Hayat had reported that more than 40 American officers and experts had stayed about ten days in Iraqi Kurdistan, inspecting military installations and positions there, including two airfields, in the context of "preparations for military operations in Iraq".

Since the investiture of President Bashar al-Assad, Syria has opted for a normalisation of its relations with Baghdad and the news of fresh American intervention in Iraq worries Damascus. The opposition Iraqi parties no longer favoured in Syria.

The previous month the US President, G.W. Bush, had identified Iraq as one of the three components of an "axis of evil" (along with Iran and North Korea) that continued to threaten world peace. Turkey, the only Moslem country that is a member of Nato and a US ally, fears that an attack against its Southern ally would aggravate its crisis ridden economy and the destabilisation of Iraq would allow the creation of an independent Kurdish State in the North of the country.

On 19 March, Jalal Talabani, leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, arrived from Damascus for a second visit in less than two weeks, to raise with the Turkish authorities a change in the Iraqi regime. In Ankara, Mr. Talabani met the Turkish Under-

Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Ugur Ziyal. His visit also coincided with that of US Vice-President Dick Cheney.

In an interview published on 17 March by the London-based Arab language daily Al Hayat, the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) did not exclude a change of regime in Iraq before 11 September next. "The US Administration is

determined to change the regime in Iraq, we were told by senior officials we met in Washington. I think that a change will take place before the first anniversary of the tragic event" stated Mr. Talabani, referring to the 11 September terrorist attacks in the United States. "I also think that the conflict between Washington and Baghdad is deeper than just the return of the (diarmament) inspectors to Iraq" stated Mr. Talabani.

THE NEWROZ CELEBRATIONS BANNED IN SEVERAL TOWNS IN TURKEY

THE demonstrations to celebrate Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, degenerated into a riot in Mersin, a Turkish city with a very strong Kurdish community, causing two deaths and 61 injured. One demonstrator was crushed against a wall by a police armoured car in the course of violent clashes which resulted in 61 people being injured — 41 police and 20 demonstrators — and 81 being taken in for questioning. The man killed was 34 years of age and, according to the Turkish authorities, in the middle of a crowd shouting slogans in support of the Kurdish rebels of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). According to the Antalya Press Agency, another man, 39 years of age, was also crushed to death at Mersin — though without giving any details...

The demonstrators refused to disperse and the police, after firing in the air, went into action with water canons and tear gas bombs.

However, Newroz demonstrations

were authorised for third year running in the Kurdish provinces, except for Bitlis, but banned in Istanbul and Mersin. No deaths had occurred in these last years. In Istanbul, 354 people were taken in for questioning by the police, mostly during a demonstration in the Topkapi quarter, the European part of the city, organised by the Human Rights Association (IHD) and the People's Democratic Party (HADEP).

In Diyarbakir, some 5,000 police were mobilised for this celebration, authorised from 10.00 am to 15.00 (3.00 pm) in the local fairground about a dozen miles outside the city. Several hundreds of thousands (a million according to the organisers) faced the rain, the police road blocks and the warnings of the police top brass, firmly to celebrate, with plenty of music and peaceful speeches, this festival that has become the symbol of Kurdish nationalism. The forbidden Kurdish colours of red, yellow and green were everywhere to be seen in the crowd. "Be certain that our demands

will be achieved in days to come" declared the Mayor of Diyarbakir. After having lit the symbolic Newroz bonfire, the HADEP President, Murat Bozlak, for his part, expressed the hope of living "in brotherhood" with the rest of the Turkish population. He called on the authorities to include the PKK activists in an amnesty to put an end to any vague tendencies to

secessionism. "There are still young men under arms in the mountains, act so that they may lay them down permanently" he declared.

The famous Turkish singer, Sezen Aksu ended the celebrations with a series of Kurdish songs before the crowd dispersed.

observed. After reflection, those involved in the region's economic life finish by agreeing that their problems come from the Saddam Hussein's misdeeds and that his replacement could do less harm than his maintenance in power. "Of course we do not want instability of our neighbours, but it would be better if certain dictatorial and totalitarian regimes disappeared" admitted Kudbettin Arzu. Bedrettin Karaboga, whose firm is on the edge of bankruptcy, was even more direct when he addressed the American leader: "If you're going to strike, then strike. Otherwise let us trade in peace. This situation must come to an end".

Mr. Cheney said that he had had "frank discussion" about Iraq but that "the United States would not forecast its decisions on the matter". Al-Iraq considered that the co-incidence between his visit and that of the US mediator in the Near East, Anthony Zinni, was "a new manoeuvre" by Washington designed to "calm the situation in Pal estine" and concert "its aggressive project" against Iraq.

THE US VICE-PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO TURKEY

ON 19 March Dick Cheney, the US Vice-President, arrived in Turkey at the end of his tour of 11 Near Eastern countries to sound the US's regional allies on the subject of Iraq. On 12 March, Baghdad had launched a bitter attack on him, describing him as a "criminal" and calling on the Arab countries to prevent this attack on Iraq.

The American Vice met the Turkish Premier, Bulent Ecevit, the President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, and the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, General Huseyin Kivrikoglu. Although a close ally within NATO, Turkey expressed its opposition to any US attack on Iraq, essentially for fear of the conflict spreading over the Northern borders, which straddle the "Kurdish countryside".

The US Armed Forces already uses a Turkish base for its air surveillance of Iraqi Kurdistan. But it would need Ankara's agreement to launch attacks against that country from Turkish territory, strategically placed for such operations.

The Kurdish region, drain and exhausted, implored the American Vice-President, Dick Cheney, to

take into account their serious economic problems, due to repeated regional crises. "This uncertainty over an intervention in Iraq is, in itself, very damaging for us" explained the President of the Diyarbakir Chamber of Trade and Industry, Kudbettin Arzu. "We do not want an attack on Iraq, but it is being said that war would be no worse than the danger of war — the investors avoid us, unemployment is increasing, our industrial equipment is only working at 40% of its capacity, the region is on its knees" Mr. Arzu

OVER A THOUSAND KURDS LAND ON THE SICILIAN COAST

ON 18th March, the Monica, an old tramp cargo boat carrying over a thousand Kurdish passengers arrived at Catania (Sicily), unleashing a controversy over the effectiveness of the new Italian legislation against illegal immigration. The boat, flying the San Tomé flag, is said to have left Lebanon about a week earlier and been intercepted during the night following a tip off from the French Navy. On board were about 500

men, 300 women and 200 children. The passengers claim to be Syrian and Iraqi Kurds, according to information from the Italian authorities.

When it was boarded by the Italian Navy during the night, some passengers and members of the Monica's crew threatened to "throw children into the sea" out of fear of being sent back. After being assured that they were in Italian territorial

waters, the illegal immigrants let the Customs Officers climb aboard. But the crew, who had wrecked the engines, tried to hide amongst the passengers, forcing the Italian authorities to tow it in. Five people, one of whom was a woman, suspected of being part of the crew, were arrested on arrival in port at Catania, and the boat was confiscated by the Italian courts.

One woman passenger went into labour during the night, helped by a naval doctor and shortly after was transported by helicopter to Catania hospital with her baby. Two other pregnant women were also taken to hospital. The other Monica passengers were temporarily housed in a the town's sports gymnasium then directed to reception centres on the mainland.

According to their evidence, they had paid between \$ 2,000 and 4,000 per head for the journey. This fresh landing of illegal immigrants has pushed the government to consider decreeing a State of Emergency on the island so as better to tackle this phenomenon. Last week experienced a tragic case of illegal immigration when some fifty people died in a shipwreck off the coast of Lampedusa.

Lebanon appears to be one of the main take-off points for "boat people" aiming at going to Germany. The Monica is the second boat in a bit more than a year to carry hundreds of Syrian Kurds who had boarded in the Lebanon to be seized off the coast of a country of the European Union. On 17 February 2001, the *East Sea*, a tramp cargo boat flying a Cambodian flag ran aground with

some 900 illegal immigrants aboard, off the French Côte d'Azur coast, on Boulouris Beach, St. Raphael (Var) had also come from the Lebanon, probably from a point close to the Syrian-Lebanese border. According to the French investigators, the *East Sea* passengers, in a pitiful state of health, had been grouped together in the Lebanon. In both cases, hundreds of children had been taken aboard. This makes Lebanon a major route for the traffic of Kurdish "boat people", including whole families. But it is not the only one. Turkey and Syria are equally implicated. "Even when they don't originate from Syria itself, Kurds coming from Turkey and Iraq have to cross Syrian territory" observe3d a European diplomatic source.

The reinforcing of Italian legislation in the direction of greater repressiveness, does not seem to have dissuaded the still more numerous candidates from braving extreme conditions, often at the risk of their lives. The Italian authorities have secured a meeting of the

Interior Ministries of the European Union in Rome for 30 May, specially devoted to this problem, in the course of which the creation of a European border force will be discussed.

"The journeys of illegal immigrants to Italy are organised by Turkish and Albanian criminal organisations" the Italian Intelligence services accuse in their latest six-monthly report, made public last week. Their rings take charge of the candidates who have come from Asia and the Near East, but also from Albania and other Balkan countries, stresses the report.

Over 20,000 illegal immigrants landed in Italy last year, according to figures provided by one of the Under-Secretaries of the Interior, Alfredo Mantovano. Between September and October 2001, four boats with between 250 and 400 Kurds on board, arrived in the Southern part of the peninsula. In April of that year, another boat with 600 passengers from Turkey docked in the port of Gallipoli, in Apulia.

PART OF THE TURKISH TOP BRASS, HOSTILE TO JOINING THE EUROPEAN UNION, IS SEEKING ALTERNATIVES : IRAN ? RUSSIA ?

POLARISATION between Euro-sceptics and pro-Europeans is in full swing following a statement by the all-powerful General Secreary of the National Security Council (MGK) General Tuncer Kilinç. On 7 March the general declared that "Turkey seems no support from the European Union on questions of national interest. Russia is also rather isolated. I think that, without neglecting the United

States, and with our eyes wide open, we owe it to ourselves to start a new search, including Iran". Speaking in a symposium organised by the War Academy Command, General Kilinç indicated that he was only expressing his "personal opinion". But observers note that his remarks will be taken as indicative of a certain school of thought within the Army, bringing to light the anxieties of its conservative wing that thinks

that the reforms of harmonisation undertaken in order to join the European Union could endanger Turkey's territorial unity and integrity — or, more prosaically, reduce the military hierarchy's domination over the countries political life.

The general's remarks appeared as a direct reply to Mesut Yilmaz, Deputy Prime Minister responsible for European affairs in the coalition government, who had, in an interview given to the magazine *Tempo* of 6 March, called for a referendum to decide whether or not Turkey should join the European Union, in the hope that massive YES vote would put pressure on the conservative Eurosceptics. Mesut Yilmaz had also accused his coalition partner, Devlet Bahçeli, leader of the National Action Party (MHP — neo-fascist) of "hiding behind the Army" in his opposition to the reforms needed for EU membership. Devlet Bahçeli had then retorted that Mesut Yilmaz was playing "a dangerous game".

The Turkish Armed Forces Chief of Staff, General Huseyin Kivrikoglu, for his part, declared, in an interview given to the *Defence and Aviation Revue* that "the European Union is a geopolitical obligation" at the same time accusing the European countries of supporting "terrorist actions against Turkey".

The debate is getting increasingly acrimonious as the Turkey's mid-March deadline for short term compliance with E.U. requirements approaches.

"There are thus three possibilities. Either there has been a change in the Army's feelings and they now oppose

the EU ; or they have always been against it because it conflicts with their influence over the country — General Kiling expresses this openly. The third possibility is that there is a split in the Army between the Eurosceptics and the pro-Europeans..." wrote Ilnur Çevik, Director of the English language daily *Turkish Daily News*.

Cuneyt Ulsever simply wrote in his column of 12 March, in the same paper, that "thanks to General Kiling, the anti-E.U. lobby is now much clearer!" and adds "I am very glad that the General has clarified one question. We all feel that there are anti-E.U. elements in the government, the Army and the Civil Service, but hitherto they had been ashamed to express their "anti opinions"... In fact, the Army and the bureaucrats would lose their privileged position in the country if Turkey completely conformed to the Copenhagen criteria. In a country where at least 60% of the economy is controlled by the State apparatus, the Civil Service

and the Army enjoy considerable privileges... The army enjoys another privilege that could be described as "supervision of political affairs"."

"It's a farce... I have just one question to ask our Atatürkists who, finding the conditions too onerous, are opposing EU membership : Do you think that Iran would accept us ?... Iran would never want you unless you adopted the Sharia laws on punishment, business, inheritance and property. In brief, even the Iranian mullahs have their conditions... Why don't you have the courage to say that you don't want to join the EU?" commented Bekir Coskun in the daily *Hurriyet* of 12 March.

The same paper, *Hurriyet*, drew up, on 11 March, a strange balance sheet : "the proposal of Russia and Iran against the EU made by MGK General Secretary, General Yuncer Kiling was the subject of 91 editorials in the press — in 46 he was criticised and in 26 he was supported".

DIYARBEKIR : KURDISH FIRST NAMES ON TRIAL

AFTER the pacification of Kurdistan, the Turkish authorities are now engaging in the purification and the "Turkification" of the registry office records. Kurdish first names might endanger the fragile "Turkish national unity" !

According to the daily *Ozgur Politika* of 3 March, on the basis of a complaint dated 21 December 2001 by the Gendarmes of Dicle, attached to the Diyarbakir High Court, seven Kurdish families have been ordered to "Turkify" the Kurdish first names, considered to be "inappropriate",

of their 23 children, aged between one and 15 years of age. Thus, on the basis of a circular from the Turkish Ministry of the Interior, the commander of the Dicle gendarmerie screened all the Registry Office records from 1985 to 2001, to weed out all the incriminating first names : Berivan (milkmaid), Zilan (valley), Rojda (luminous), Baver (confident), Welat (country), Serhat (border), Kendal (hill), Zinar (rock), Hebun (to exist), Baran (rain), Rojhat (dawn), Agit (brave), Zelal (clear), Zozan (mountain meadow).

The Dicle Public Prosecutor, Alpaslan Karabay, accepting the gendarmerie's argument that these first names were being used as code names by PKK fighters, and based himself on Article 1587 clause 16 of the Civil Register Code that lays down that *"the child's first name is given by the parents. But names that endanger our national culture, morals, or customs or offend public opinion cannot be given"*.

"People called Deniz (Editors Note : reference to a leader of an extreme Left organisation, hanged in 1972) and Alpaslan (Editors Note : reference to Alpaslan Turkes, founder of the extreme Right, neo-fascist party, and also, incidentally that of the Public Prosecutor in question) have managed to live together peacefully. Lets hope that Turkish law frees itself of this shameful paranoia about names ..." wrote Enis Berberoglu in the Turkish daily *Radikal* of 4 March. *"The Court of Appeals, in two different rulings dated 1989 and 1992 respectively, had invalidated decisions to cancel the first names of Berfin, in one case, and Rojda in the other"* recalls for his part Turgit Tarhanli in the 5 March issue of the same paper.

Furthermore, the Diyarbakir gendarmerie command, on 11 March, applied to the Public Prosecutor to ban 600 Kurdish names. *"As a State we opposed such a proceedings 15 years ago. At the time of Todor Jivkov, Turks living in Bulgaria were obliged to "Bulgarise" their names. We then conducted a great Human Rights campaign. Aziz Nesin had also taken part in this campaign with a book entitled "The*

Turks of Bulgaria, the Kurds of Turkey". The author was tried by the State Security Court but acquitted. 15 years have passed — today the Turks

of Bulgaria are represented in Parliament whereas we continue to mark time" wrote Melih Asik in the daily paper *Milliyet* on 12 March.

AT THE DEMAND OF THE POLICE, THE TURKISH MINISTRY OF CULTURE BANS THE FILM THAT HAD RECEIVED THE MOST AWARDS IN TURKEY



THE Turkish High Control Committee of Films, Video and Music decided, on 28 February, to ban the film that had been most highly praised and received the most awards of the year — on the demand of the Police Directorate. The grounds are *"attacks on the territorial and national integrity of the country"*. *"Büyük adam, küçük ask"* (Great man, little live" has been showing for over five months and had won awards in five classes, including that of Best Film, at the Golden Orange Festival, (the Turkish equivalent of the Cannes Film Festival). The film had also won a grant from the Turkish Ministry of Culture of 20,700€ and a credit of 16,600€ from the same Ministry. it is also amongst the favourites as Turkey's entry for the Oscar.

The report of the Police Directorate, dated 26 December 2001, notes that *"the film shows extrajudicial executions by the police, displays a chauvinist attitude to the Kurdish identity and language, undermines the feeling of confidence in the security bodies and shows parallels with separatist propaganda"*.

Questioned by the press, İstemihan Talay, Minister of Culture, declined all responsibility for it, stressing that it was due to the High Committee, composed of seven members, including a member of the General Secretariat of the National Security Council (MGK), a representative of the Ministries of the Interior, National Education and Culture, while recognising that the representative of his own Ministry had voted for banning the film. The President of the Authors' Copyright Bureau, Güney Görmez, on the other hand, recognised that the fact that the film, in its foreign export version is called *"Hejar"*, the Kurdish first name of the film's main character, was one of the reasons for the Ministry's irritation.

"Hejar" (Poor) is the story of a little girl who only speaks Kurdish, and who is looked after by a family in a big city after the execution of her parents by the Turkish police. The film tells the story of the sympathy and tenderness of a retired Turkish public prosecutor and Hejar.

AS WELL AS ...

• **ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY.** On 11 March, the Turkish Human Rights Association (IHD) made public in Diyarbakir, its assessment of Human Rights violations for the month of February 2002. "Interdictions that

have not been applied in practice have been put back on the agenda by secret circulars. There has been a 15 year regression, particularly in language expression" declared Osman Baydemir, a lawyer in charge of the Diyarbakir branch. Here is an extract of the published assessment :

- Number of people taken into detention	111
- Number of people subjected to torture, ill treatment and threats ..	12
- Number of "disappearances"	1
- Number of arrests	23
- Number of TV and radios banned	2
- Number of publications banned in the State of Emergency region (OHAL)	29
- Number of victims of land mines Killed	3
..... Injured	15

• THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTS A RESOLUTION CALLING FOR THE ENDING OF PROCEEDINGS AGAINST HADEP.

On 28 February, on the initiative of the GUE/NGL (United European Left/Northern Green Left) Group passed a resolution "on democratic rights in Turkey and, in particular, the situation of HADEP" calling for an end to the proceedings against the People's Democratic Party (HADEP) "considering that it is acting in favour of the granting of civic rights to those of Kurdish origin in Turkey ... (and that it) denies any organic links with the PKK or any other terrorist organisation". The European Parliament "calls on the Turkish government to respect and protect all parties that use democratic means, respectful of the rule of law, to promote their political objectives, whatever their attitude to government policy". The resolution "(also) expresses its concern at the increasing frequency of the banning

of activities and political parties in Turkey".

On 1 March, the President of HADEP, Murat Bozlak, defended his party, threatened with banning, before the Turkish Constitutional Court. Arriving with six of his assistants, he himself defended his party before the Court, meeting in closed session, for over an hour. "The proceeding against us had been started in an atmosphere of conflict three years ago, and they lack any legal basis" he considered speaking to the Press at the end of the hearing. He said he was "convinced" that they would be rejected by the Court.

The European Parliament, moreover, stressed that "the status being of a country applying for membership gives Turkey increased responsibilities and commitments regarding the European Union". It "welcomes the amendments to the Constitution which should lead to a

partial lifting of restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language", "insistently calls for this action be promptly followed by other measures leading to a broad acceptance of the cultural aspirations of the Kurdish people and to the solution to the social, economic and political problems in South-Eastern Turkey, hopes that the Turkish State will shortly guarantee the legitimate rights of all the minorities in Turkey". Furthermore, this resolution "pressingly calls on the Turkish authorities to cease all other actions against the students who have asked that the Kurdish language be amongst the subject taught and release those who have been arrested".

• **THE TURKISH PARLIAMENT RENEWS THE STATE OF EMERGENCY IN FOUR KURDISH PROVINCES.** On 13 March, the Turkish Parliament renewed the State of Emergency, that has been in force for 15 years, in four Kurdish provinces. The provinces concerned are Tunceli, Diyarbakir, Hakkari and Sirnak. Parliament has to decide or not the renewal of the State of Emergency every four months.

The lifting of this emergency decree is one of the "medium term" measures required of Turkey by the European Union prior to opening negotiations for membership. The Turkish government has committed itself to lifting them — but without giving any date — in its "national programme", adopted last year. This is a vast catalogue of measures that should bring Turkey into conformity with European political and economic standards.

During the discussion in the Assembly, the Minister of the

Interior, Rustu Kazim Yucelen, indicated that the PKK "threat" remained in the region. "The organisation has some 500 armed terrorists on Turkish territory" he said in particular. In September 1999, the PKK put an official end to the armed rebellion which it had started in 1984. Since then, fighting in the area has virtually ceased. But the Turkish Army has declared that it was determined to hunt the rebels down to the last man, unless they surrendered completely, and is continuing operations in Iraqi Kurdistan, under Kurdish administration, to which the bulk of the PKK fighters have retreated.

• **FOUR TURKISH GENERALS LAUNCH A CAMPAIGN IN SUPPORT OF ONE THEIR COLLEAGUES SENTENCED IN THE SUSURLUK CASE.** The politico-media scene has been shaken by the joint statement of support by four retired generals for Korkut Eken, Lieutenant-Colonel of the Turkish Army, serving in the Turkish Internal Intelligent Department (MIT), and sentenced to six years imprisonment for his involvement in the Susurluk affair. Dogan Gures, former Chief of the Armed Forces General Staff, Necati Ozgen and Hasan Kundakçi, former Generals commanding the gendarmerie in the Kurdish regions and Cumhur Evcil, a retired general, all declared that Korkut Eken, who was incarcerated on 1 March, "was a military leader, worthy of all kinds of praise (...). He is a hero" and that "his activities between 1993 and 1996 were carried out under (our) our strict control".

Korkut Eken, who is described as "disciplined", "sacrificing his life for his country", "a military hero" by

these generals, was nevertheless sentenced for "organising an armed gang for committing crimes" by the State Security Court that ruled that "a gang exists and must not remain unpunished". The Turkish Court of Appeals, in upholding the verdict, denounced, in its considerations, "the relations with the deep State" and the Public Prosecutor of the Court of Appeals declared, in his closing speech "it is difficult to find the relations hidden behind the gang and this is important as it includes various and sensitive officials and authorities".

"I ask the retired generals : Did the relations (of K. EKEN) with Tarik Umit, a drug trafficker and MIT spy take place under your control ?... Why did you feel the need for such a relationship ? Are you also responsible for Korkut Eken's relations with drug traffickers, casino barons, the protectors and dirty money launderers of the latter ? Why this need ?... How much did you pay for the weapons they possessed ? Where are these weapons today ? Is it possible to hide weapons from the State ? Where are the weapons that were confided to Korkut Eken ?... What kind of heroism do you see in the escape from police detention of Haluk Kirci, responsible for the death of seven young people ?... Did he meet the gang of Abdullah Çatli (mafia leader, member of the Turkish Grey Wolves, killed in the Susurluk accident in 1996) on your instructions ?... Do you know know any other authority than that of the law to make you wait till now to show yourselves, instead of at his trial ?" wrote Tuncay Ozkan in the daily *Milliyet* on 14 March.

Bekir Gündogan, Member of

Parliament for Tunceli, declared in reaction to the generals' plea "If he (Eken) always remained under their control this means that they were equally aware of the responsibility for numerous murders, filed as "unsolved". They (the generals) and Tansu Çiller should also be tried". The President of the Izmir bar, Noyan Ozkan, has filed an indictment against the generals on the basis of Article 312/1 of the Turkish Penal Code against "praising any activity considered a breach of the law".

Thus, knowing that any Presidential pardon is virtually unobtainable today, the generals are trying to arouse the sympathy of the Turkish Parliament, much more inclined to place a motion to free Korkut Eken on the agenda. Korkut Eken's first visitor at Ulucanlar Prison was Orhan Biçakcioglu, MHP member of Parliament for Trebizond, who declared on 10 March "Ulucanlar Prison is in such a run down state that even the Ministry of Agriculture's stables are better equipped. But his is well, he is in the section reserved for government officials". Members of the Turkish Parliament never visit their former colleagues Leyla Zana and her colleagues who have been incarcerated in extremely harsh conditions in the same prison for the last eight years...

A 49TH VICTIM OF THE HUNGER STRIKE IN THE TURKISH PRISONS. The hunger strike in the Turkish prisons continues to claim victims without moving the Turkish Ministry of Justice in the slightest. 49 people, prisoners and members of their families, have died to date in this protest against the type-F prisons. After Yusuf Kutlu on 9 March and Yeter Guzel on 10 March, Yewter

Guzel is the latest victim of this hunger strike, launched over a year ago in Turkey. According to the Turkish Human Rights Foundation, 86 prisoners are continuing their hunger strike in 13 different prisons while 235 others have been released to receive appropriate medical treatment.

• **FREEDOM OF THE PRESS STIFFLED IN THE KURDISH PROVINCES.** Only a last minute respite saved the GUN-TV chain, sentenced to a year's blank screens for having broadcast two Kurdish language love songs, from being closed down by the police as from 22 March — a proof of the stifling of the media in the Kurdish regions. The penalty striking GUN-TV, subject to confirmation on appeal within a fortnight, is the heaviest ever yet decreed by the High Council for Radio and Television (RTUK).

Preparing his daily press revue, the owner, Nevzat Bingol, discovered that his little local channel was subjected to a month's suspension in addition to the one year penalty. At least a dozen radio and TV stations in the region suffer the same penalty. *"After closing down my radio because, they alleged, it 'jammed the police talkie-walkies' I was not surprised at this Nth sentence as there are already 17 writs out against me"* smiled Mr. Bingol, whose previous network, Metro, had suffered the same fate. *"The excuse is pathetic"* he explained: *"I am being accused of mentioning the fact that some Kurds inhabit this region, as if it was a lie"* he exclaimed angrily.

"Even under the Ottoman administration, there were never

Kurdish language papers here — and I fear that there won't be any in the near future" acknowledged Naci Sapan, President of the Association of Journalists of the South-East.

Thus 29 dailies, weeklies and monthlies in Kurdish or too favourable to the Kurdish cause are purely and simply banned from the circulation in the State of Emergency region, even though they sell freely in the rest of Turkey notes the Human Rights Association (IHD). There are two independent papers in Diyarbakir province, who, to survive, take care not to cross the red line and two other local TV channels — also extra careful. Since a veritable censorship has already banned over 400 cassettes, these networks don't have much room for freedom and show essentially cultural programmes without the right to speak in Kurdish. *"We are living behind a real Iron Curtain where psychological torture is a daily experience"* said Mr. Bingol bitterly.

The government is nevertheless at the moment studying the possibility of letting the national channel, TRT, broadcast, for between 20 minutes and one hour, the news in Kurdish, to conform with the recommendations of the European Union, which Turkey wants to join.

However, the pressure on journalists, Turkish and foreign, who must provide themselves with a special press card for this region, is being reduced — in parallel with the fact the armed clashes have virtually disappeared since the withdrawal of PKK forces from Turkey in September 1990.

THE TURKISH GENERAL STAFF IS SAID TO OPT FOR 20 MINUTES OF KURDISH ON A LOCAL STATION AND A "SOLDIER TV" CHANEL FOR THE TURKISH ARMY. According to the Turkish press, the members of the National Security Council (MGK) agreed, in the course of their meeting on 28 February, on measures for Kurdish broadcasts on the public TV network (TRT). The Turkish General Staff, in fact, asked that the President of the TRT network be present at the next meeting of the Council, due on 29 March. The Turkish government decided that, following the example of France with the Corsican language, the Turkish authorities would be ready to broadcast between 20 minutes and one hour in Kurdish on the local public channel GAP-TV, belonging to TRT. The General Staff, at the same time demanded a channel for itself, entitled *"Asker TV"* (Soldier TV). Some people wonder at the reason for the latter since even the written press is obliged by law to publish all Army statements...

TURKEY : "COUNTRY OF DRUG TRANSPORTATION", "CENTRE FOR MONEY LAUNDERING".

According to the Turkish daily *Milliyet*, of 3 March, the 2001 report of on International Strategy for Narcotics Control of the American State Secretariat describes Turkey as the country through which the drug traffic from South-West Asia to Europe transits, with about six tons moving through per month. The report, which also designates Turkey as the centre for laundering dirty money, stresses that 5.1 tonnes of heroin, 10 tonnes of cannabis, 1.7

tonnes of synthetic drugs were seized by the Turkish police in 2001.

SEVERAL BOMB ATTACKS IN IRAQI KURDISTAN. According to the Kurdish daily *Regay Kurdistan* of 18 March, an explosive device exploded at Shera Suwar on 14 March, the very popular summer resort North of Irbil, causing one death, a school teacher Chinar Jamil, and one wounded both on a holiday trip organised for teachers.

for its part, the Kurdish daily *Hawlati*,

reported on 4 March that two other explosions at the headquarters of the KDP Political Committee's Guard battalion had caused 15 deaths amongst the soldiers and caused considerable material damage.

THE EXECUTION OF ANY OPPOSITION BY BAGHDAD. The Human Rights Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party declared on 16 March that six Iraqi officers from the City of Mossul had been executed for having criticised Saddam Hussein. The Committee published

the names of the executed officers : Muhammad Abdallah Shahin, Muhammad Najib and Muwaffaq. The other three were members of the Republican Guard.

Furthermore, the Iraqi Communist Party declared that the Iraqi authorities had returned to their families the bodies of 20 civilians, mostly aged between 25 and 30, from the town of Al-Nasiriya, executed in the Abu-Chreb Prison because they were "suspected of having links with opposition groups".

International Herald Tribune
Friday, March 1, 2002

U.S. hopes to broadcast Iraqi opposition's voice

By Michael R. Gordon

The New York Times

WASHINGTON: The Bush administration is prepared to finance the construction of a radio transmitter in the Kurdish enclave in Iraq or in neighboring Iran so that the Iraqi opposition can begin broadcasts to encourage opposition to Saddam Hussein, according to State Department officials.

"We have given tentative approval to the concept of putting a transmitter in Iraq or Iran," a State Department official said Wednesday. "But we cannot support it unless the Kurds or Iranians agree."

There are increasing signs that the Bush administration is girding for a political — and potentially military — showdown with Iraq over Saddam's efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction.

The decision to build the transmitter represents a new degree of support for the Iraqi National Congress, as the Iraqi opposition group is known, as well as some flexibility in Washington's dealings with Iran.

For years, the State Department has insisted that it would not consider financing opposition operations inside Iraq because they were too risky, and President George W. Bush recently labeled Iran as part of an "axis of evil."

Now, however, the State Department has indicated that it is prepared to pay to build the transmitter on Iraqi territory to beam the Iraqi opposition's programs across Iraq if the project is supported by the main Kurdish groups in the northern part of the country.

The choice of Iran as a potential base for the transmitter demonstrates that, despite Bush's characterization of Iran, there are cases where American and Iranian interests may intersect.

Just as both nations found some common cause in their opposition to the Taliban government in Afghanistan, they each have long-standing rivalries with Saddam, who fought a brutal land war against Iran through much of the 1980s.

The construction of a radio transmitter on Iranian territory would not be the first time that the Bush administration has financed activities in Iran by the Iraqi opposition.

Last year, the Bush administration gave money to the Iraqi National Congress to open an office in Tehran, which has been an important base for many of its activities. To use that money, the Iraqi

opposition received a license from the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Asset Control, which administers the American sanctions against Iran.

Ahmed Chalabi, the founder of the Iraqi National Congress, said that the Iranians would support the construction of an American-financed radio transmitter on their territory.

But Chalabi indicated that, for reasons of symbolism, as well as practicality, his primary goal was to persuade the State Department that he has sufficient Kurdish backing to allow the installation of the transmitter on Iraqi soil in parts of northern Iraq that the Kurds control.

The Kurds in the north have been protected by American and British air patrols over their region but are not united among themselves.

That battle over just how much Kurdish support is needed before the United States would pay to build a transmitter in northern Iraq may just be beginning. A State Department official said it would require the backing of the two main Kurdish groups, which are led by Jalal Talabani and his rival Massoud Barzani.

"We feel it is important that these two major Kurdish groups support this move," a State Department official said.

"I am sure you could always find a Kurd who will support this. That is not what we are looking for."

But Chalabi said he was not proposing to put the transmitter on territory controlled by Talabani or Barzani, because that would make them vulnerable to threats from Saddam.

Instead, Chalabi wants to place the transmitter on Sorain Mountain, which is close to the Iranian border, well away from Saddam's forces and in a region that Chalabi says is under the control of a small Kurdish Socialist party that supports the plan.

"I do not believe this will be a problem if the U.S. wants to help us do it," Chalabi said. "Talabani and Barzani think it would be difficult to put it on their territory, but they are not objecting to our message."

The plan for the radio broadcasts is just one element of the Iraqi opposition's broader plans to undermine Saddam. The Iraqi National Congress is also planning to hold a conference of several hundred former — and even some current — Iraqi military officers. The State Department is supporting the conference, which would be held in Washington.

International Herald Tribune
Friday, March 1, 2002

Iraq awash in illicit tobacco

Report by EU accuses firms

By Myron Levin

Los Angeles Times

Tobacco companies have violated a U.S. trade embargo for more than a decade by illegally sending billions of cigarettes into Iraq, the European Union has charged.

The allegation is detailed in documents recently filed in federal court in Brooklyn, where the European Union has accused tobacco companies of evading hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes by taking part in a vast cigarette smuggling scheme.

The Iraq charge focuses on two companies, R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co. and Japan Tobacco Inc., which acquired Reynolds's international cigarette business in 1999. But an affidavit filed in court also claims that in December a witness saw Philip Morris Cos. brands being trucked from Turkey into Iraq.

U.S. trade with Iraq was outlawed in August 1990, following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The embargo covers not only direct shipments but also transshipments of goods through third countries, according to the Office of Foreign Assets Control, a branch of the Treasury Department.

It could not immediately be determined if U.S. authorities are looking into the EU's claims.

A federal grand jury in North Carolina has been investigating whether R.J. Reynolds was involved in European smuggling activities.

Peter Kellen, an assistant U.S. attorney in Raleigh, said the investigation is "still pending."

Kellen would not say whether the Iraq allegations are part of the probe.

Seth Moskowitz, a spokesman for R.J. Reynolds, denied that the company "has been involved in smuggling activity in Europe or elsewhere," calling the allegations "unsupportable and untrue."

Officials with Japan Tobacco could not be reached for comment.

The Iraqi charge was laid out last month in hundreds of pages of pleadings and exhibits in a last-ditch attempt to keep the EU suit from being thrown out. But last week, U.S. District Judge



Karim Sahib/Agence France-Presse

An Iraqi vendor arranging cigarette cartons at the tobacco market in Baghdad. The European Union has accused tobacco companies of violating a trade embargo.

Nicholas Garaufis dismissed the case and a similar anti-smuggling case filed by 22 Colombian states.

Garaufis did not address the Iraq allegation in a ruling narrowly based on the "revenue rule," a common-law doctrine that prevents U.S. courts from being used to collect foreign taxes. However, the judge said the EU and the Colombian states may refile certain of their claims, including money laundering.

The EU charged that despite trade sanctions, Reynolds throughout the 1990s had knowingly sent billions of its cigarettes into Iraq through intermediaries. The cigarettes allegedly traveled from a Reynolds plant in Puerto Rico to European ports and then were rerouted through Cyprus to Turkey to be trucked over the border into Iraq. According to court papers, Japan Tobacco took over the trade when it acquired Reynolds's international business in 1999.

In support of the charge, the EU filed an affidavit by Tugrul Ozsengul, a Turkish security consultant who said he witnessed the shipments on a visit to the border region in December.

"I went to the Habur border gate of Turkey with Iraq, and I witnessed that Winston cigarettes and Philip Morris brand cigarettes were being shipped across the border into Iraq," Ozsengul

said. Winston cigarettes are sold overseas by Japan Tobacco. "I questioned people working and living in the area about these shipments and learned that almost every day lorries, mainly of the above-mentioned brands, have been shipped to Iraq, and this situation has persisted for several years."

Lawyers for the EU also filed a copy of a suit by an Iranian businessman, who accused Reynolds and a Cypriot tobacco distributor of renegeing on an agreement to give him the exclusive right to supply the Iraqi market.

In the 1997 lawsuit, filed in Limassol, Cyprus, Abdel Hamid Damirji said he began sending Reynolds brands into Iraq from Amman, Jordan, about 1990. Damirji said that routing became impossible and that with Reynolds's approval he spent nearly \$1 million to build and equip two warehouses in Turkey to continue the Iraqi trade.

Damirji also charged that, although he was supposed to be the "sole and exclusive supplier" of cigarettes to Iraq, Reynolds and a Cypriot distributor, IBCS Trading, began in the mid-1990s to divert part of the Iraqi business to two other wholesalers.

IBCS acknowledged being a distributor for Reynolds but denied violating a contract with Damirji.

IRAK Trois jours avant la reprise du dialogue avec l'ONU, le vice-premier ministre irakien s'est entretenu avec « Le Figaro »

Tarek Aziz : « Face aux Américains, chaque village irakien sera un autre Vietnam »

A 66 ans, Tarek Aziz, de son vrai nom Mihail Yohanna, a déjà consacré la moitié de sa vie à servir le parti Baas. Issu d'une modeste famille chaldéenne, ce chrétien nestorien, spécialiste de littérature anglaise, est un pilier sans faille du gouvernement de Bagdad. Chef de la diplomatie et vice-premier ministre de Saddam Hussein depuis 1981, son absolue loyauté au « rais » lui a permis de traverser toutes les purges.

Propos recueillis à Bagdad
par Charles Lambroschini

LE FIGARO. - L'Irak a fini par accepter de reprendre le dialogue avec l'ONU, et la première réunion doit avoir lieu le 7 mars. Ce retournement signifie-t-il que vous avez de nouvelles propositions à faire ?

Tarek AZIZ. - Vous donner des détails serait prématuré. Kofi Annan n'a toujours pas apporté de réponse sur les sujets qui préoccupent l'Irak : les sanctions qui s'éternisent, les « zones d'interdiction aériennes » imposées de façon illégale sur le nord et le sud du pays, les ingérences continues des Américains dans nos affaires intérieures... On parle toujours de ce qui est attendu de l'Irak, jamais de l'inverse. Pourtant, selon le texte des résolutions, l'Irak est aussi en droit d'obtenir des réponses.

Vous venez d'inviter Tony Blair à envoyer une délégation britannique vérifier si, oui ou non, l'Irak a reconstitué ses stocks d'armes nucléaires, chimiques et bactériologiques. S'agit-il d'une de ces idées nouvelles que vous pourriez présenter à Kofi Annan pour sortir de l'impasse ?

Cette initiative n'est pas liée à notre dialogue avec Kofi Annan. Notre invitation est un défi à Tony Blair. Le premier ministre britannique vient d'affirmer que, depuis 1998, nous avons mis à profit notre refus de laisser revenir les inspecteurs de l'ONU pour reconstituer nos stocks d'armes de destruction massive. C'est un

mensonge. Dans les années 80, nous avions effectivement ces trois programmes. Mais après la guerre du Golfe en 1991, les stocks ont été détruits sous le contrôle de l'Unscm. Aujourd'hui, l'Irak est propre à 100 %. Mais puisque Tony Blair soutient le contraire, c'est qu'il doit savoir où et comment nous avons reconstitué nos stocks. Nous lui demandons donc de révéler publiquement la liste des sites soupçonnés. Ensuite, l'Irak sera prêt à recevoir une délégation britannique, qui se rendra aux endroits désignés par Tony Blair. Nous ferons accompagner cette délégation par les médias internationaux et par des diplomates qui serviront ainsi de témoins.

Pour dissuader le président Bush de partir en guerre contre l'Irak, ne serait-il pas sage d'accepter le retour des inspecteurs de l'ONU, qui, jusqu'en 1998, supervisaient le démantèlement de vos armes de destruction massive ?

Nous avons été échaudés. En 1998, le président Clinton nous avait déjà menacés d'une attaque si nous n'acceptions pas d'ouvrir à l'ONU les palais présidentiels, où des stocks étaient soi-disant cachés. Les inspecteurs sont entrés. Ils ont fouillé tous les coins et recoins. Ils n'ont rien trouvé. En août 1998, l'Irak a donc demandé à l'Unscm de déclarer que sa mission était terminée. Richard Butler, le directeur de l'Unscm, a refusé parce qu'il avait besoin de vérifications supplémentaires. En réponse, l'Irak a accepté le retour des inspecteurs pour un mois. Il y eut 400 inspections. Mais à la suite d'un différend avec l'ONU, l'Irak



A propos de Ben Laden, Tarek Aziz explique : « Je ne peux pas parler d'un homme que je ne connais pas. Je ne sais même pas si c'est bien lui qui a organisé les attaques du 11 septembre. » (DR.)

refusa l'accès à quatre sites, et les Américains nous bombardèrent. La coopération à 99 %, ce n'était pas suffisant. Pour 1 % de désaccord, l'Irak fut de nouveau frappé sans que jamais le Conseil de sécurité ait donné son autorisation. Aujourd'hui, la vraie question est celle-ci : quand les Américains exigent la reprise des inspections, craignent-ils effectivement que l'Irak ait reconstitué son arsenal ? Ou ne s'agit-il que d'un prétexte, comme il y a quatre ans ? Si l'inquiétude des Américains est réelle, un arrangement pourrait être négocié entre l'Irak et le Conseil de sécurité. Mais cette fois sur la totalité du dossier.

Que voulez-vous dire ?

Le Conseil de sécurité devra aussi répondre aux demandes des Irakiens, car la résolution 687 sur le désarmement prévoit beaucoup de choses dont on ne parle jamais. Premier exemple : la levée des sanctions.

Il y a onze ans que nous les supportons, et, malgré notre respect scrupuleux des textes de l'ONU, on nous refuse tout espoir de normalisation. Deuxième exemple : ce paragraphe 14 qui prévoit l'élimination, dans la totalité du Moyen-Orient, et pas uniquement en Irak, des armes de destruction massive. En clair, les stocks d'Israël doivent aussi être éliminés.

Mais Donald Rumsfeld, le ministre américain de la Défense, refuse que l'Irak pose des conditions au retour des inspecteurs. Quelle est votre réponse ?

Je vous répète qu'il est trop tôt pour entrer dans les détails. La discussion doit commencer le 7 mars, et, pour l'instant, il est impossible de prédire quelle forme prendra l'accord final. Mais à propos des inspecteurs, je tiens à rappeler que les agents de l'Unscm étaient des espions. Scott Ritter, un Américain, qui

s'était pourtant révélé comme l'un des inspecteurs les plus sévères, a reconnu qu'il recevait ses instructions directement de la CIA. C'est pourquoi le Conseil de sécurité a obligé Richard Butler, le directeur de l'Unscm, à démissionner. C'est aussi pourquoi l'Unscm a été supprimé et remplacé par l'Unmovic.

La résolution « pétrole contre nourriture » vous assure suffisamment de revenus. Mais devant la malnutrition endémique et la mauvaise santé d'une population misérable, on se demande où va l'argent...

Nous fournissons à nos concitoyens une ration alimentaire de 2 400 calories par jour : riz, pain, haricots secs, sucre, thé... Nous sommes le seul gouvernement dans le monde qui nourrisse sa population sur les fonds publics. Les Etats-Unis, eux, sont bien incapables de donner à manger à leurs pauvres, leurs affamés, leurs sans-logis. En Irak, des gens meurent de maladie parce que les sanctions nous privent des équipements pour épurer l'eau, ou parce que des enfants ont été contaminés par les radiations des munitions à uranium appauvri que les Américains utilisèrent pendant la guerre du Golfe. Mais, chez nous, personne ne meurt de faim.

On parle maintenant de « sanctions intelligentes » : toutes les importations qui ne sont pas précisément interdites seraient autorisées. Cet arrangement paraît beaucoup plus favorable à l'Irak. Alors pourquoi protestez-vous ?

Parce que c'est un piège. Avec leurs « sanctions intelligentes », les Américains veulent transformer l'Irak en élevage de poulets. On nourrit les Irakiens, et puis c'est tout. Mais notre peuple n'a pas seulement besoin de manger. Il faut bâtir des hôpitaux, il faut installer des réseaux d'égouts, relancer la production d'électricité... Malheureusement, au sein du comité des sanctions, les Américains suspendent systématiquement tous les contrats conclus par l'Irak avec des entreprises étrangères. Ils opposent même leur veto à des équipements chirurgicaux. Les « sanctions intelligentes » ont pour objectif de maintenir l'Irak dans une économie de simple subsistance.

Si vous dites non au retour des inspecteurs, vous offri-

rez aux Etats-Unis le meilleur alibi pour frapper. Etes-vous prêt à assumer le terrible coût en vies humaines qu'une intervention américaine imposerait à l'Irak ?

L'Amérique est le dictateur du monde. L'Irak n'a pas d'autre option que de se défendre. Il est exclu que nous choissions la reddition dans le seul but de survivre. Ce serait contraire aux traditions de l'Irak. Notre nation est fière, et les Irakiens ont toujours été des combattants de la liberté.

George W. Bush affirme qu'il veut un changement de régime à Bagdad. Quand un président américain s'engage aussi vigoureusement devant l'opinion publique, il ne peut plus faire marche arrière. Pourquoi Saddam Hussein se conduit-il comme s'il s'agissait d'un bluff ?

L'objectif proclamé par Bush est illégitime au regard de la loi internationale. Personne n'est habilité à imposer à un pays un système politique dont il ne veut pas. Et comme nous savons faire la différence entre un slogan et le droit des gens, l'Irak refuse de s'incliner. Quand Hitler a envahi ses voisins européens, ce n'est pas parce qu'il en avait le droit. Mais parce qu'il se croyait le plus fort. A la fin, Hitler a quand même perdu. En 1940, Pétain avait ordonné la reddition alors que de Gaulle choisissait la résistance. C'est de Gaulle qui a eu raison, puisque la France a chassé les nazis. L'Irak ne se soumettra pas non plus au tyran américain.

Ne voyez-vous pas que les attaques terroristes du 11 septembre ont changé la donne ?

George W. Bush ne fait que répéter ce que son père puis Bill Clinton ont dit pendant onze ans. Que le président actuel veuille se débarrasser de notre régime n'a rien de nouveau. Déjà, en octobre 1989, bien avant la guerre du Golfe, j'avais dit à James Baker, le principal conseiller de Bush le père : « Nous savons que vous faites des plans contre le gouvernement de Bagdad. » Pour nous faire tomber, Clinton finançait des soi-disant groupes d'opposition. Bush le fils ne fait qu'employer un vocabulaire plus chaud.

Il y a une grande différence. Le fils veut terminer le travail du père, qui, en 1991, avait renoncé à prendre Bagdad...

Cela prouve que le père était plus sage que le fils. Bush senior ne s'est pas arrêté par gentillesse,

mais parce qu'il avait compris que l'armée américaine subirait des pertes très lourdes. Si Bush junior envahit l'Irak, il échouera, parce que le peuple irakien se battra jusqu'au bout. Pour les Américains, ce ne sera pas une promenade militaire.

Comment pouvez-vous dire que le peuple irakien est derrière Saddam Hussein, alors qu'il l'a entraîné dans deux catastrophes ? En 1980, quand il déclencha une guerre contre l'Iran qui se termina au bout de huit ans par un sanglant match nul. En 1991, lorsque son invasion du Koweït provoqua l'intervention massive des Etats-Unis...

Ces deux guerres furent imposées à l'Irak. En 1980, nous, avons dû nous défendre face à l'expansionnisme de l'Iran. En 1990, l'Irak s'est trouvé confronté à un complot associant les Etats-Unis et le Koweït. Les Américains voulaient détruire notre pays et abattre son gouvernement.

C'est toujours la faute des autres ! Mais la dictature a quand même été instaurée par Saddam Hussein. Pourquoi un peuple qui ne connaît pas la liberté vous suivrait-il dans une bataille contre la superpuissance américaine ?

C'est le peuple qui a choisi notre système politique. Avant notre arrivée au pouvoir, l'Irak n'était sûrement pas un pays de liberté. Le pays était dirigé par des généraux, et, à cette époque, il s'agissait bien d'une dictature. Mais depuis 1968, le nombre des gens qui participent à la décision politique a été multiplié par des milliers et des milliers. Nous avons eu des élections, des syndicats se sont créés, des organisations féminines, des associations de jeunesse... Notre gouvernement a une relation très saine avec le peuple. Si les Irakiens n'étaient pas satisfaits de leur régime, nous n'aurions pas survécu à deux guerres et à onze ans de sanctions. Alors, ne me parlez pas de dictature !

Si vous êtes innocent de toutes les accusations que les Etats-Unis portent contre vous, comment expliquez-vous cet acharnement contre vous ?

Au Moyen-Orient, l'Irak et l'Iran sont les seuls pays qui échappent à l'influence des Etats-Unis. L'Amérique est avide. Elle veut prendre le contrôle de nos réserves pétrolières. Washington entend donc installer à Bagdad un gouvernement à sa botte.

L'« axe du mal » du prési-

dent Bush a mêlé, dans la même catégorie d'« Etats voyous », l'Iran, l'Irak et la Corée du Nord. Que répondez-vous ?

Ce slogan bizarre démontre combien Bush ignore l'Histoire. L'« axe », au sens de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, correspondait à une réalité. L'Allemagne, l'Italie et le Japon étaient effectivement alliés, et leurs systèmes politiques étaient similaires. Mais il n'y a aucune ressemblance entre les trois pays ciblés par Bush. L'Irak et l'Iran se sont fait la guerre. L'Irak n'a pas de relations diplomatiques avec la Corée du Nord. Tout cela prouve qu'il y a beaucoup de stupidité dans le raisonnement américain.

Les Etats-Unis ne vont-ils pas répéter la stratégie qui leur a réussi en Afghanistan ? En mobilisant contre votre régime une alliance du Nord, constituée par les Kurdes déjà entrés en dissidence après la guerre du Golfe, et une alliance du Sud, regroupant les chiites qui s'étaient aussi révoltés en 1991...

Ce serait un excellent scénario pour un film de Hollywood. Mais la réalité est très différente.

D'abord, l'Irak est un Etat vérifiable qui existait bien avant Saddam Hussein. Contrairement à l'Afghanistan, où le pouvoir n'a jamais appartenu à la capitale, mais aux chefs de tribus. Deuxième différence : ici, il n'y a ni alliance du Nord, ni alliance du Sud.

Vous ne pouvez pas nier les deux soulèvements de 1991...

Le problème a été réglé en deux ou trois semaines seulement, alors que notre armée, sortant

« Si les Irakiens n'étaient pas satisfaits de leur régime, nous n'aurions pas survécu à deux guerres et à onze ans de sanctions »

de la guerre du Golfe, était très affaiblie. C'est bien la preuve que la situation n'avait rien de comparable avec l'Afghanistan, où la guerre entre Kaboul et les différentes factions régionales a traîné pendant des années. Au Kurdistan, tout est calme aujourd'hui. Pour éviter les frictions inutiles, nous avons retiré notre armée et négocié un accord d'autonomie. Quant au soulèvement du Sud, il avait été

fomenté par Téhéran qui espérait séduire les chiites. Mais l'Iran échoua.

Votre armée est-elle encore capable de se battre contre les Américains ? Avez-vous remplacé les chars et l'artillerie perdus dans la guerre du Golfe ?

Nous avons assez de moyens pour défendre notre indépendance.

Vous dites vous inspirer de l'exemple vietnamien. Mais la géographie vous dessert. Le Vietnam était couvert d'une jungle difficile à pénétrer. Votre pays est un désert...

Ce n'est pas la jungle qui a permis aux Vietnamiens de gagner. Mais la détermination. Les Irakiens combattront dans chaque rue et dans chaque maison. Face aux Américains, chaque village deviendra une autre jungle

du Vietnam.

A vos yeux, Oussama ben Laden est-il un héros ?

L'Irak n'a jamais eu de relations avec Ben Laden. Je

ne peux donc pas exprimer de jugement sur sa personne.

Mais qu'il ait osé frapper le cœur même de l'Amérique devrait vous le rendre sympathique...

Je ne peux pas parler d'un homme que je ne connais pas. Je ne sais même pas si c'est bien lui qui a organisé les attaques du 11 septembre. Tout ce que nous savons, c'est que, parmi les gens tués, quand les avions se sont écrasés à New York et Washington, il y avait un certain nombre d'Arabes ou de musulmans. Je ne suis pas certain que ces gens-là aient effectivement commis les

actes dont Washington les accuse. Il n'y a pas eu d'enquête indépendante pour établir la vérité.

Yasser Arafat n'a-t-il pas manqué une occasion historique en refusant, pendant l'été 2000, l'arrangement que lui avait proposé Ehud Barak, le premier ministre israélien ?

Arafat ne pouvait pas accepter, car Barak ne lui offrait que la trahison. Rappelez-vous la phrase d'Arafat à Clinton : « Si je dis oui, je vous invite à mes funérailles. »

Les Américains veulent traduire Saddam Hussein devant un tribunal international. Se laissera-t-il faire, comme Slobodan Milosevic, qui, après avoir juré de mourir en combattant, a mis les mains en l'air ? Ou bien livrera-t-il bataille ?

D'abord permettez-moi de dire un mot sur Milosevic. Le tribunal de La Haye est illégal. Ce tri-

bunal a été fait par les vainqueurs, il n'est pas équitable. Les vrais criminels de guerre, ce sont les agresseurs de la Yougoslavie. Ils ont détruit ce pays comme ils ont voulu détruire l'Irak en 1991. Je respecte Slobodan Milosevic parce que c'est un patriote serbe.

Alors, que fera Saddam Hussein le jour où les marines viendront l'encercler ?

Les marines ne l'encercleront jamais, car Saddam Hussein est protégé par le peuple irakien. S'il doit y avoir une dernière bataille, je ne peux parler que pour moi-même. Je suis sûr la même liste d'« inculpés », et je peux vous dire que je mourrai plutôt que de me rendre. Alors, imaginez ce que serait l'attitude d'un homme comme Saddam Hussein, si grand, si fier. Tout ce que je peux dire aux Américains, c'est : venez et vous verrez !

Un leader kurde plaide pour un changement démocratique du régime irakien



ANKARA, 5 mars (AFP) - 13h29 - Le chef d'une faction kurde irakienne s'est exprimé mardi en faveur d'un changement démocratique du régime irakien, se déclarant "préoccupé" pour l'unité de ce pays dans le cas d'une extension de la lutte antiterroriste américaine.

"Nous sommes en faveur d'un Irak uni, démocratique et indépendant. Nous soutenons le renforcement de l'unité de l'Irak et sommes opposés à sa division", a dit à la presse Jalal Talabani, chef de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), l'une des deux factions qui contrôlent le nord de l'Irak échappant à Bagdad depuis la guerre du Golfe en 1991.

L'UPK et son rival le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK de Massoud Barzani) se partagent le contrôle du Kurdistan irakien.

Indiquant qu'il s'était entretenu avec le sous-secrétaire d'Etat turc aux Affaires étrangères Ugur Ziyal des "préoccupations partagées" concernant l'unité et la stabilité de l'Irak, M. Talabani a indiqué que sa faction saluerait un soutien étranger à un "changement démocratique fondamental" du régime irakien par le biais des forces progressistes dans le pays mais s'opposerait à des "plans de conspiration".

"Si vous allez remplacer un dictateur avec un autre dictateur, nous sommes contre", a-t-il dit soulignant que "Nous sommes avant tout Irakiens et ensuite kurdes d'Irak".

En réponse à une question, M. Talabani a aussi indiqué que l'Irak ne devait pas menacer la sécurité de la Turquie, l'Iran ou de ses autres voisins.

Le président américain George W. Bush a, le mois dernier, identifié l'Irak comme l'une de trois composantes d'un "axe du mal" (avec l'Iran et la Corée du nord) qui continue de menacer la paix du monde.

La Turquie, seul pays musulman de l'OTAN et alliée des Etats Unis, redoute qu'une attaque contre son voisin du sud n'aggrave la situation de son économie en crise et craint une déstabilisation de l'Irak qui permettrait la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant dans le nord du pays.

M. Talabani qui est arrivé lundi soir à Ankara doit aussi rencontrer le vice-Premier ministre Mesut Yilmaz.

Droits démocratiques en Turquie

Situation de l'HADEP

Doc.: B5-0119/2002

Procédure : résolution commune

Débat : 27.02.2002

Vote : 28.02.2002

Le Parlement européen a adopté une résolution sur les droits démocratiques en Turquie et, en particulier, la situation de l'HADEP.

Rappelant que la Turquie est signataire de la Convention européenne des droits de l'homme, et que son statut de pays candidat lui confère des responsabilités et des engagements accrus en la matière, le Parlement européen se félicite des

modifications constitutionnelles quant à une levée partielle des restrictions relatives à l'usage de la langue kurde, mais il demande instamment que d'autres mesures législatives nécessaires à la mise en œuvre d'un plus grand exercice des droits culturels soient prises. Les députés européens exhortent les autorités turques à cesser toute action contre les étudiants kurdes qui s'expriment en ce sens, et ils demandent au gouvernement de respecter et de protéger tous les partis politiques qui recourent à des moyens démocratiques pour promouvoir leurs objectifs politiques. Ils exigent notamment l'arrêt des poursuites à l'encontre de l'HADEP, et invitent la Grande Assemblée nationale turque à modifier la loi sur les partis politiques, afin d'éliminer ces discriminations.

Le gouvernement s'apprête à proposer un projet de loi sur les repentis



ANKARA, 4 mars (AFP) - 16h19 - Le gouvernement turc a annoncé lundi qu'il préparait un nouveau projet de loi sur les repentis ayant pour but d'encourager les rebelles kurdes à se rendre aux forces de sécurité.

"Une loi sur les repentis est à l'ordre du jour", a déclaré devant la presse un porte-parole du gouvernement, Tunca Toskay, à l'issue d'un conseil des ministres.

Interrogé pour savoir si cette loi comprendrait aussi les commandants du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatiste), M. Toskay a refusé de commenter, se contentant de dire que sa portée serait déterminée à la lumière de futurs "évaluations".

Le gouvernement de coalition du Premier ministre Bulent Ecevit avait fait adopter au parlement en 1999 une loi similaire, excluant cependant le chef du PKK Abdullah Ocalan, condamné à la peine de mort en juin de la même année pour trahison et séparatisme, et les commandants de son organisation, considérée comme terroriste par Ankara.

Cette loi prévoyait des réductions de peine pour les rebelles qui s'étaient rendus aux forces de sécurité et qui n'avaient pas participé à des actions armées.

Le projet de loi en préparation devrait encore une fois viser la dissolution du PKK, qui a abandonné la lutte armée en 1999 après la condamnation de son chef.

Les combats avec l'armée dans le sud-est à majorité kurde ont pratiquement cessé depuis.

Selon la presse turque, le gouvernement projette cette fois d'inclure dans le projet certains responsables du PKK, tout en excluant Ocalan et ses acolytes.

Le PKK avait lancé en 1984 une lutte armée pour la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est anatolien. Selon les autorités turques, les quinze ans de conflit ont fait 36.500 morts.

Newsweek

4 MARCH 2002

The Bush agenda is nothing less than the re-assertion of American power in the world, and Iraq is the next target. BY EVAN THOMAS

HE HAS SADDAM IN HIS SIGHTS



LEANING FORWARD: The president peers at North Korea, an American F-10 refuels over Iraq

WANTED:

One Iraqi general (a colonel will do) able to evade secret police, depose Saddam Hussein and unify warring Kurds, Sunnis and Shiites. Must have iron will but democratic instincts. Secularized Muslim preferred. No human-rights violators need apply.

SOUND FARFETCHED? FINDING THE RIGHT man who can topple Saddam Hussein without plunging Iraq into civil war, and who can simultaneously please Washington and the anti-American Arab masses, is a tall order. The task is so difficult that, in many sophisticated circles, it is deemed to be impossible. President George W. Bush's bellicose rhetoric has provoked a rumble of disbelief and disapproval among the pundits, think-tank experts, congressional staffers and retired diplomats who form a

kind of Permanent Foreign Policy Establishment. Bush can't really be serious about knocking off Saddam, they say. Can he?

He can. The Bush administration has not figured out the "how" or the "when," say senior administration officials, but the president appears determined to overthrow the Iraqi strongman. The timetable, says one top official directly involved in the planning, is "not days or weeks—but not years, either." National-security adviser Condoleezza Rice has said that the president is "a patient man," but another top adviser told NEWSWEEK, "Time is not on our side. We cannot afford to wait for Saddam to get a nuclear weapon." Detering Saddam is no longer enough, says this source: "He is too capable of making a massive mis-



calculation"—by actually using a weapon of mass destruction (WMD) against America or its allies.

Behind Bush's threats against Iraq—and his vigorous waging of the war on terrorism—is a broader agenda, say his closest advisers. And that is nothing less than the reassertion of American power in the world—by a greater willingness to use force, with or without the support of allies, even at the cost of American casualties. Some of Bush's top advisers believe that after the Vietnam War, the pendulum swung too far in the direction of multilateralism and anti-interventionism. Now they are trying to shove it back.

This has come as something of a surprise from a president who, as a candidate, promised to be strong yet "humble" in the pursuit of American interests abroad. Especially since 9-11, Bush has shown unapologetic leadership. "I don't care about the polls," the president tells advisers. (Easier to say, concedes one, when the approval rating is more than 80 percent.) But in Iraq, at least, there is a real risk that the president will overreach. Overthrowing Saddam could transform the Middle East, secure American interests, even give a lift to the bogged-down Israeli-Palestinian peace process. But it could also lead to a cataclysm of unforeseen dimensions.

The chief proponents of this new assertiveness, Vice President Dick Cheney and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, have been waiting for their chance for a long time. More than 25 years ago, when Cheney and Rumsfeld were bright young men in the Gerald Ford administration (Cheney as Ford's chief of staff, Rumsfeld in the same job he has today), the "imperial presidency" was in retreat. Vietnam and Watergate had given a bad name to executive power. Congress and the press were in the ascendancy. Scandals and the blame game became the daily routine of government. At the Pentagon and the CIA, once bastions of gung-ho, can-do spirit, the bureaucracy congealed, slowed, grew risk-averse. Rumsfeld and Cheney came to believe that in the eyes of the world, America had become a paper tiger—formidable-

looking, but too often ponderous and gunshy. More than a year ago, when he was first chosen to be secretary of Defense, Rumsfeld told Bush that a crisis was sure to come, and that the new president would have to be willing to "lean forward"—to show the world that America would no longer back down. Bush heartily agreed, Rumsfeld recounted to NEWSWEEK in an interview last month. That crisis arrived with a vengeance on September 11.

These days, the damn-the-torpedoes mood at the top levels of the Bush adminis-

tration seems right out of the 1950s. In his warning to the president, Rumsfeld's choice of words was revealing of the time warp. "Forward leaning" is an old cold-war euphemism; CIA officials in the late '50s and early '60s were instructed to "lean forward" in their "action memos" to higher-ups. After a long period of self-doubt and decline, the CIA is now urgently gearing up to run covert actions—shades of the agency's plots to overthrow the governments of Iran (1953) and Guatemala (1954). "Psychological warfare," all the rage in the early years of

Squandered Opportunities

Despite years of rhetoric and a number of covert operations, the United States has failed to act decisively in support of Kurdish attempts to overthrow Saddam Hussein.



Victims of Saddam's chemical attack

1972-1975:

The Shah of Iran and the United States give covert support to Kurdish insurgents in Iraq. When Saddam finally signs a treaty with the shah dropping claims on Iranian territory, Iran and Washington cut off the Kurds.

The rebellion is crushed; 200,000 Kurds become refugees.

1980: After Khomeini comes to power,

Saddam tears up the treaty he made with the shah and declares war on Iran.





TYRANT WORSHIP:
Loyalists in Tikrit,
Saddam's tribal
base, celebrate the
dictator's birthday

followers. CIA officials would later chuckle at their own naiveté: many Indonesians cheered their leader's apparent sexual prowess. More damaging was the reputation of the CIA for backing repressive right-wing strongmen against popular revolutionaries.

On Iraq, there may be a balance wheel in the Bush machine: Secretary of State Colin Powell. As chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the administration of Bush "41," General Powell was an avatar of; restraint, cooling off policymakers who believed that armed intervention could be cheap or easy. Moderates have been counting on Powell to rein in Bush "43's" hard-chargers, too. So there was some surprise and disappointment in establishment circles when, in recent press interviews and statements to Congress, Powell pointedly echoed the president's "axis of evil" rhetoric

and warned that the United States would stand up to Iraq, alone if necessary. Some Bush advisers say that Powell, a good soldier, has simply saluted and signed on with his commander in chief's campaign. But one old foreign-policy hand who is close to Powell saw a more sly operator at work.

"Colin's tactics have changed," says this source, "but his heart hasn't." A master of the Washington game, Powell may see that the best way to head off a disastrously precipitous incursion into Iraq is to play possum on the inside. Bush has ordered his advisers to come up with a practical plan for "regime change" in Iraq. After examining all the options in a methodical way, the president, like Powell, may be convinced that there are no easy ways to get rid of Saddam. Better to continue to contain the Iraqi strongman through more effective economic sanctions and the threat of force.

Without question, Saddam is a hard target. Some of Rumsfeld's civilian advisers at the Pentagon want to apply the lessons of Afghanistan to Iraq. The Taliban was toppled by small groups of American Special Forces, joining up with local insurgents on the ground to blast enemy positions with precision-guided weapons launched from American warplanes. In Iraq, however, the United States may have trouble finding a surrogate force to take on Saddam's Republican Guard, which has been substantially rebuilt since it was routed in the gulf war.

the cold war, when capitalism and communism were competing around the globe for "hearts and minds," is making a comeback. After Pentagon reporters questioned the role of the newly established Office of Strategic Influence, Secretary Rumsfeld pledged that the Defense Department would not plant false stories. But the PR consultants hired by the Pentagon, the Rendon Group, have a history of running "black

ops," say intelligence sources. Among them: a rumor campaign after the gulf war to convince Iraqis that Saddam is sexually impotent. (The Rendon Group denies feeding any falsehoods to the media.)

In the pursuit of evil, will the Bush administration lean too far forward? "Dirty tricks" run by the CIA have a way of backfiring. In the late 1950s the agency hired some porn stars to portray Indonesian President Sukarno having sex with prostitutes. The blue movie was intended to make Sukarno look depraved to his Islamic

denies them entry. Embarrassed, the United States helps establish a "no-flight zone" over northern Iraq so the Kurds will return to their homes.

1995-1996:
The United States

mounts a covert program to eliminate Saddam. When the Kurds launch an offensive in 1995, the White House says they're on their own. Those who cooperated with the CIA are forced to flee en masse.



**Meeting
with his
troops**



A Kurdish refugee camp in Uludara, Turkey

1987-1988:

Saddam assigns his cousin Ali Hassan Al Majid to subdue the Kurds. Majid uses poison gas. Meanwhile, the United States is sharing intelligence with Saddam.

Feb. 15, 1991:

At the climax of Desert Storm, Bush

Sr. calls on the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam. The Kurds in the north and the Shiites in the south try to do just that. But the Bush administration allows Saddam to crush the revolt, and the Kurds, fearing Saddam will use poison gas again, flee toward Turkey. Turkey

Ex-London banker Ahmed Chalabi, the leader of the best-known opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress, is derided by spooks and diplomats as an opportunist with no real following in Iraq. The CIA, meanwhile, is busily looking for its own Man on a White Horse to ride into Baghdad. It is doubtful that volunteers are rushing forward. Kurds in the north of Iraq and Shiites in the south still bitterly complain that the CIA abandoned the opposition to the tender mercies of Saddam's secret police after the gulf war.

The hawks assert that once the revolution begins and the American bombs start to fall, the Iraqi people, many of whom hate and fear their ruler, will rise up in rebellion. In this scenario, Saddam's own Republican Guard will march on the palace. But what if the troops stay in their barracks and the people do not welcome their liberators with open arms? American ground soldiers will have to grind it out—house to house, if necessary. Pentagon officials shudder at the prospect of urban street-fighting; "Black Hawk Down" was all too realistic a movie. The Joint Chiefs say that invading Iraq will require between 100,000 and 200,000 U.S. troops. (During the gulf war, America sent 500,000 troops to the region, but that was overkill, and since then smart bombs have gotten smarter.)

The United States is likely to get the grudging cooperation of Iraq's neighbors, Turkey and Kuwait. Saudi Arabia will be harder. At a minimum, the United States will need to use Saudi airspace to refuel its warplanes, and the only state-of-the-art air-command center in the region is at the Prince Sultan Air Base in the Saudi desert. The Saudi princes have already said that they oppose an American attack on any Arab capital, Baghdad included. When he travels to the Middle East in two weeks, Cheney is expected to try to change their minds. The Saudis will want reassurances that the United States will stick around to clean up the mess after Saddam falls. They may also want American support for a still-emerging Arab peace initiative to try to control the interminable and ever-bloodier conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Bush "43" would like to forge a coalition along the lines of the new world order put together by his father for the gulf war. But America's European allies are threatening to stand on the sidelines with their arms crossed. Conceivably, the Bush administration could muster some support by provoking a *casus belli*. This spring the U.N. Security Council is expected to demand that Saddam allow international arms inspectors to identify and eliminate his WMD. If Saddam says no, there may be more support for U.S. intervention. Bush administration officials fear, however, that Saddam will play the fox and say yes. Washington does not want to be drawn into the exasperating game of Lucy-and-the-football that Saddam played with U.N. inspectors during the Clinton administration. A senior administration official told NEWSWEEK that the United States will demand "total, unfettered, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year" inspection rights. Saddam is not likely to permit arms-control inspectors into his bedroom.

There is one more uncertainty in the campaign to get rid of Saddam, and it is the most frightening. The Iraqi strongman is not a suicidal religious fanatic; he does not

appear to want to die a martyr's death. But what if he feels trapped, believing that the Americans really are coming for him, dead or alive? Will he lash out and try to use his chemical or biological weapons? Before the gulf war, Bush "41's" secretary of State, James Baker, quietly warned Saddam that if Iraq used a WMD, the United States would no longer feel constrained in its own use of weapons. Rather than risk the nuclear incineration of Baghdad, Saddam did not fire off any rounds from his chem-bio arsenal. But American war aims in 1991 did not include "regime change"; in the next war, Saddam's demise will be *the* war aim.

Bush's team may advise the president that Saddam lacks the capacity to use a WMD against the United States or its allies. But intelligence is always imperfect; Bush's advisers will not be able to offer any guarantees. The president alone will have to decide. That will be the moment when he weighs the true cost of fighting evil and feels the real burden of command.

With JOHN BARRY, MICHAEL ISIKOFF, MARK HOSENBALL, ROY GUTMAN, COLIN SOLOWAY, TAMARA LIPPER and DANIEL KLADMAN in Washington, and MARTHA BRANT with President Bush



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Le PKK juge insuffisant un projet de loi sur les repentis



ISTANBUL, 6 mars (AFP) - 14h52 - Le parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (rébellion kurde de Turquie) a jugé insuffisant un projet de loi sur les repentis du gouvernement turc visant à encourager les rebelles à se rendre, dans un communiqué publié par la revue Ozgur Politika mercredi.

Le PKK a de nouveau réclamé une amnistie générale et l'égalité des droits pour les Kurdes en Turquie.

La nouvelle "loi sur les repentis", discutée cette semaine en conseil des ministres, sera aussi inefficace que les précédentes, a prévenu le conseil de direction de l'organisation, qui veut se transformer dans les semaines à venir en parti politique.

Le PKK réclame une "loi spéciale" prévoyant une amnistie générale pour le "mouvement de libération kurde" et la fin de toutes les discriminations envers les Kurdes, poursuit le communiqué.

Cette loi ferait des Kurdes "des citoyens libres de la Turquie", souligne le conseil de direction. Il réaffirme que le PKK va lors de son prochain congrès prendre "des décisions positives" vers "une solution pacifique" à la question kurde.

La "loi sur les repentis" prévoit de fortes réductions de peine y compris pour les responsables du PKK, à condition qu'ils livrent des informations sur la structure et les activités de leur organisation.

Le PKK avait lancé en 1984 une lutte armée pour la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est anatolien. Selon les autorités turques, les quinze ans de conflit ont fait 36.500 morts. Il a mis fin à sa lutte armée en septembre 1999, à l'appel de son chef Abdullah Ocalan, condamné à mort en Turquie la même année.

International Herald Tribune
Tuesday, March 5, 2002

The real problem in Iraq ■ By Jessica Mathews

Not Saddam but his weapons

WASHINGTON

The No. 1 problem in Iraq is not Saddam Hussein but his pursuit of weapons of mass destruction. Without them he is dangerous and despicable but not a threat remotely worthy of American intervention.

Rather than seeking to oust Saddam from power, the U.S. goal ought to be to thwart his continuing attempt to acquire these weapons. The inability to make a clear choice between these two aims was the Clinton administration's costliest foreign policy error. The Bush administration seems prepared to make a choice — but the wrong one.

The choice matters enormously because the two goals, regime change and nonproliferation, are not complementary. In important respects they conflict.

As a first course of action, only one carries any degree of legitimacy and at least the potential for wide international support. Only one might strengthen, rather than undermine, the cooperation necessary for long-term success in the war against terrorism. Only one might help resolve, rather than exacerbate, the closely related threat posed by Iran.

Only one has a legal basis for action. Iraq is in violation of UN Security Council resolutions requiring dismantlement of its nuclear, chemical and biological weapons programs. For this last reason, only one serves the long-term U.S. interest in a world governed by the rule of law.

There are many vicious, aggressive rulers in the world. And America does not have the slightest interest in affirming the right of a government to attack another that it considers evil. The answer that the United States would be acting to rid the region of weapons of mass destruction raises the obvious question of why not Iran, not to mention Israel.

Perhaps the least sound justification is that the United States would be acting in "preventive self-defense." Supply your own nightmare result of that becoming an acceptable norm of international behavior. Mine is the invitation to India to attack Pakistan to end terrorist attacks on itself, a course likely to end in nuclear war.

The most common response, however, is to assert that no choice exists; that it is impossible to control weapons of mass destruction in Iraq without deposing Saddam Hussein. This argument fails on two counts.

First, we don't know it to be true. An armed inspection regime has not yet been tried. Saddam's record indicates that he will choose staying in power over maintaining active weapons programs. So the real issue is not whether he will continue to want these weapons (he will) but how tough the international community can be in forcing him to make the choice and for how long it can sustain its determination.

Second, it is not clear that regime change can accomplish the nonproliferation goal. A successor regime in Iraq might be as committed to seeking nuclear weapons as Saddam. Only nuclear weapons, Iraqis might conclude, could prevent another foreign invasion.

Iranians are likely to feel the same.

Because Iran is so split between a pro-reform, pro-American, population and elected government on the one hand and irredeemably anti-American mullahs who hold the

power, the United States can do almost nothing to promote constructive change in Tehran. Eventually (not soon) the mullahs' conservatism, venality and economic incompetence will undo them. Except for Iran's weapons of mass destruction and missile programs, time is on the West's side.

But something must be done about the weapons, which means doing something about Iraq's, because fear of its neighbor drives Iran's nuclear program.

But in doing so Washington must avoid giving Iran an excuse to renounce the Nonproliferation Treaty. If the government were openly to seek nuclear weapons to meet a perceived external threat, these weapons instantly would become the focus of Iranian nationalism, just as happened in Pakistan, and hopes for peace in the region would be set back immeasurably.

The tight link between Iraq and Iran's nuclear programs points to the right U.S. strategy. The first goal should be to force Iraq's compliance with UN Security Council resolutions. Rebuilding an international commitment to that end will take vigorous diplomacy to convince skeptical governments that this, and not regime change, is indeed America's intent, and a focused effort to engage global public opinion.

This probably will require making proof of what both countries are doing public, as Washington did with pictures of Soviet missiles during the Cuban missile crisis. That would strip away the veil of hypocrisy behind which France and Russia, in particular, cloak their commercial interests while insisting that America exaggerates the threat.

The inspectors in Iraq must be empowered to move without prior approval from New York and be accompanied by helicopter-borne troops to force immediate access to any site if Iraq balks.

Russian cooperation is a key to success. To secure it, Washington should make clear to Moscow that Iraq's debts to Russia will be paid and drop its self-defeating opposition to Russian exports of conventional arms to Iran.

But Americans need not, and should not, take this whole job on ourselves — 186 other nations have signed the Nonproliferation Treaty and share an interest in its integrity. Influential countries could be pushed to build a global consensus that Iraq and Iran's use of the treaty as cover for an illegal weapons program is an intolerable threat.

North Korea demonstrated how to do it. If others are allowed to follow that example, the treaty and the system of export controls, inspections and sanctions it supports won't be worth the paper they are written on.

An American decision to keep weapons of mass destruction out of Saddam Hussein's hands is the clear choice over a course of action that ignores the Iranian half of the problem, risks political chaos in Iraq and the region, requires peacekeeping forces that the world has no appetite to supply, and causes long-term damage to the kind of world order that the United States wants to live in.

The writer is president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. She contributed this comment to The Washington Post.

La Turquie joue à Chypre l'avenir de ses relations avec l'UE

La reprise des négociations intercommunautaires sur un règlement de la situation de l'île, divisée depuis l'occupation du Nord, en 1974, par l'armée turque, se heurte aux indécisions de la politique d'Ankara

NICOSIE

de notre envoyé spécial

Les deux hommes se retrouvent désormais, ponctuellement, les mardis et vendredis, sous l'égide des Nations unies, dans une salle à colonnes fraîchement repeinte qui n'est autre que l'ancien hall d'arrivée de l'aéroport désaffecté de Nicosie.

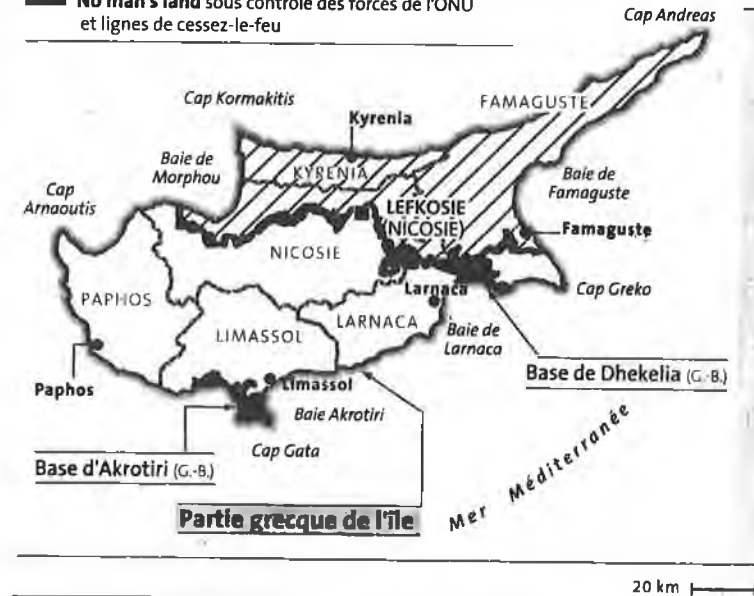
Rauf Denktash, le dirigeant chypriote-turc, et Glafcos Klérîdès, le président chypriote-grec, prennent place de chaque côté d'une table, flanqués de trois conseillers. Alvaro de Soto, l'envoyé spécial du secrétaire général de l'ONU, Kofi Annan, préside. Puis les deux délégations sont raccompagnées jusqu'aux grilles de la zone-tampon qui sépare le territoire des deux communautés par des soldats de l'Unficyp, la Force de maintien de la paix des Nations unies à Chypre.

AMBIANCE CONVIVIALE

Les négociations, qui ont commencé le 16 janvier, ont repris vendredi 1^{er} mars après « une période de réflexion » de dix jours pour les festivités musulmanes de l'Adha. Rien n'a filtré sur d'éventuels progrès pendant la première phase. Les discussions se passent dans une ambiance conviviale, presque complice, pour ces deux vieux lutteurs qui se connaissent depuis plus de cinquante ans. Agés respectivement de 77 et de 82 ans, tous deux avocats, ils se fréquentaient dans les prétoires avant de se combattre. « Lors des discussions, rapporte un participant, il n'est pas rare qu'ils échangent des blagues, se taquinent, s'emporcent parfois, tout en revenant vite à un ton plus serein : aucun des deux ne prendra le risque de se voir attribuer la res-

Zone occupée par l'armée turque depuis 1974, autoproclamée "République turque du nord de Chypre"

No man's land sous contrôle des forces de l'ONU et lignes de cessez-le-feu

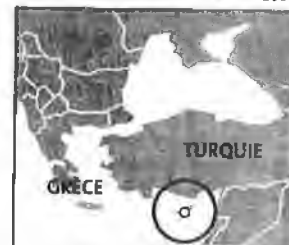


CHYPRE

Caractéristiques

Superficie	9 300 km ²
Population	762 887 hab.
Capitale	Lefkosie (Nicosie)
Langues	Grec, turc, anglais
Religions	orthodoxes 78 %, musulmans 18 %

Source : Bilan du Monde 2001



ponsabilité d'une rupture ».

Pour ces discussions censées aboutir à un règlement sur l'avenir politique de l'île, divisée depuis l'occupation du Nord, en 1974, par l'armée turque, cette connivence est une chance, ou peut-être l'inverse.

Car le climat de ces pourparlers est à la fois excellent et peu productif : les deux hommes réaffirment avec des nuances des idées ressassées depuis trois décennies, mais ils ne négocient pas. Silencieusement, Alvaro de Soto se contente d'être les « yeux et les oreilles » de l'ONU. Il attend son heure pour débattre de ce qui risque d'évoluer en dialogue de sourds.

Si Rauf Denktash persiste à

réclamer un partenariat systématique de la souveraineté du futur État indépendant de Chypre, il n'y aura pas d'accord. Pas davantage s'il fait semblant de croire à la viabilité et à la crédibilité internationale d'une confédération avec un exécutif bicéphale et une présidence « tournante ».

Si Glafcos Klérîdès n'introduit pas un peu de souplesse dans son projet d'une fédération bizonale et bicommunautaire, s'il n'accepte pas que les Chypriotes turcs conservent une partie du territoire annexé (37 % de la surface de l'île) dépassant celle de leur poids démographique (200 000 personnes sur une population totale d'environ 800 000 habitants), alors rien ne se passera.

« FEUILLE DE ROUTE »

A la fin de l'année, Chypre, bon élève des pays-candidats, aura terminé avec Bruxelles ses négociations d'adhésion à l'Union européenne. En 2004, elle sera « européenne », avec ou sans la partie Nord, puisque les Quinze en ont décidé ainsi. La communauté internationale, qui n'a jamais accepté le fait accompli turc après 1974, ne reconnaît qu'une seule République de Chypre, avec pour président Glafkos Klérîdès.

Ankara a menacé, au cas où cette adhésion deviendrait réalité

sans accord avec elle, d'« annexer » la République turque de Chypre du Nord, autoproclamée, pour en faire une simple province de la « mère patrie ». Cela n'aurait pas grande signification sur le terrain, dès lors que 35 000 soldats turcs s'y trouvent déjà, mais aurait des conséquences graves pour ses relations avec

l'Union européenne, à laquelle la Turquie est également candidate. Ankara dispose à ce titre de trois représentants à la Convention sur l'avenir de l'Europe qui s'est ouverte, le 28 février, à Bruxelles.

« Ce n'est pas le moment de parler d'annexion. Il faut que chaque camp se rende compte de l'ampleur de la catastrophe qui s'abattrait sur Chypre si nous échouons à trouver un compromis », estimait, en février, Ergün Ölgün, principal

conseiller de Rauf Denktash. La Turquie, soupçonnée de leur côté les membres du gouvernement chypriote-grec, espère que les Quinze vont s'engager sur une « feuille de route », s'agissant de sa propre adhésion à l'Union, lors du conseil européen de Séville, en juin. Elle sait qu'elle n'obtiendra pas satisfaction sans manifester sa bonne volonté à propos de Chypre. « L'important pour Ankara, relève le ministre chypriote des affaires étrangères, Ionnis Kassou-

Les autorités turques entre deux feux

Les Turcs considèrent la reprise des négociations comme une étape positive, estime-t-on à Ankara. Ils sont conscients que le temps presse : le tic-tac de l'horloge de l'UE, avec, en fin de parcours, l'adhésion de Chypre, est désormais un bruit de fond constant. Le ministre des affaires étrangères turc, İsmail Cem, l'a reconnu récemment : « Si nous ne parvenons pas à résoudre cette question en 2002 avec un accord acceptable pour les deux parties, je pense qu'il sera impossible d'y revenir après la fin de l'année. » Pour Ankara, qui a menacé d'annexer le nord de l'île, les pourparlers actuels offrent une dernière chance de sortir de l'impasse diplomatique : si la Turquie mettait sa menace à exécution, elle risquerait sa propre candidature à l'Union. Il reste qu'aux yeux de nombreux Turcs, Chypre demeure une cause nationale qui ne permet aucune concession. Pour l'armée, Chypre est perçue comme une base stratégique importante. Les autorités turques demeurent prudentes sur les chances de succès, accusant l'UE de favoriser le camp grec en annonçant d'emblée que rien ne retardera l'entrée de Chypre dans l'Union. — (Corresp.)

lidès, c'est d'obtenir une aide financière de la communauté internationale. Sur le fond, je crains que la situation de statu quo actuel, avec une partition de fait de l'île, ne lui suffise ».

« FOSSE INFRANCHISSABLE »

Chypre entrée dans l'Union européenne, des négociations sur la division de l'île pourraient-elles reprendre ? Ces considérations prospectives sur l'avenir de Chypre font partie du non-dit des discussions entre Glafkos Klérédès et Rauf Denktaş.

Ergün Olgun pense que la division de l'île deviendra alors « permanente, le fossé politique et économique entre les deux côtés devenant

infranchissable ». Son alter ego, George Vassiliou, responsable du dossier des négociations de Chypre avec l'Union européenne, n'en est pas si sûr : il estime qu'après

avoir manifesté sa colère, Ankara voudra relancer le dialogue. « La Turquie, explique-t-il, se rend compte qu'elle a perdu son monopole de relations avec les Etats-Unis, et que l'Asie centrale acquiert de plus en plus d'importance et d'autonomie. Face à une Europe qui comptera vingt ou vingt-cinq membres dans quelques années, elle ne pourra pas rester isolée ».

Laurent Zecchini

La promesse d'une aide européenne

L'Union européenne s'efforce à sa manière d'amener les Chypriotes turcs au compromis lors des négociations de Nicosie. Si un accord permettant à Chypre d'entrer unie au sein de l'Union intervient, elle se propose d'allouer une somme de 206 millions d'euros à la partie nord de l'île (respectivement 39, 67 et 100 millions, en 2004, 2005 et 2006), afin qu'elle puisse peu à peu rattraper son retard de développement sur le sud. Rauf Denktaş, le dirigeant chypriote turc, a minimisé cette offre, en soulignant qu'Ankara verse une aide financière bien plus importante, mais la Turquie, compte tenu de sa situation économique, ne peut qu'être sensible à la perspective d'un allègement du fardeau financier que représente sa tutelle sur le nord de l'île. — (Corresp.)

D'un côté du « mur » de Nicosie, la prospérité du Sud ; de l'autre, l'envie...

NICOSIE (côté « turc »)
de notre envoyé spécial

A pied, il faut moins de cinq minutes pour passer du « check-point » chypriote grec au « check-point »

■ REPORTAGE

D'une zone à l'autre, le modernisme cède la place au sous-développement

chypriote turc. Avec force slogans peints sur les murs, le visiteur est prévenu des « atrocités » dont s'est rendu coupable, dans le passé, l'« autre côté », mais l'accueil est bon enfant. Côté « grec », les consignes sont strictes : pas question de revenir du Nord après 17 heures, c'est-à-dire d'y passer la nuit. Tout ce qui pourrait légitimer l'occupation « illégale » de la partie Nord de Chypre est banni.

Un calme étrange règne sur ce no man's land qui sépare les deux zones de la « dernière capitale divisée du monde » (depuis 1958), une situation que les dépliant touristiques ne se privent pas de souligner. Sur les balcons du Ledra Palace, occupé par les forces des Nations unies, les soldats ont disposé des parasols et des pots de fleurs. En face, plusieurs maisons détruites sont autant de témoignages des combats de 1974. Un simple permis de séjour permet de rendre visite aux « parents pauvres » de Chypre.

Hüsnü Uçar, patron du petit café situé au centre du Yigifter Burcu Park, s'étonne de notre étonnement devant l'impression de sous-

développement qui saute aux yeux en passant d'un côté de Nicosie à l'autre : « Nous subissons un embarras depuis près de trente ans. Il n'y a que la Turquie pour nous aider financièrement, pendant que le monde entier donne des millions de dollars aux Grecs ! » Les enfants qui jouent sur des toboggans ne laissent pas deviner que ce petit espace vert est « stratégique ». Pour s'en rendre compte, il faut pousser jusqu'à la grille qui borde un côté du parc.

Juste en contrebas, à 30 mètres, la République (grecque) de Chypre, son modernisme et son opulence. Ici, la « buffer zone » entre les deux lignes du cessez-le-feu de 1974 est quasiment inexistante. Ailleurs, la largeur de cette zone-tampon de 180 kilomètres, qui traverse l'île d'est en ouest, varie de 20 mètres (à Nicosie) à 7 kilomètres. Il est facile de comprendre pourquoi les Chypriotes turcs aspirent à un règlement politique : le PNB par habitant est de 4590 euros au Nord, contre 18390 euros au Sud.

« IL FAUDRA DU TEMPS »

« Nous ne pouvons vivre sans l'aide de la Turquie, confirme Mehmet Ali Talat, président du Republican Turkish Party (opposition), et la Turquie, où le chômage et la pauvreté ne cessent de croître, ne peut survivre sans l'aide de la communauté internationale et du FMI. La vérité est que Ankara, pour qui nous sommes un protectorat, veut nous maintenir dans un état de dépendance. » Le procès est nourri par les nombreux récits du sous-développement des campagnes du Nord, par l'accroissement de l'émigration vers l'Europe,

partiellement compensée par l'implantation de colons d'Anatolie (quelque 70 000, sur une population « nordiste » d'environ 200 000 habitants, dont 35 000 soldats turcs), peut-être davantage encore par la multiplication des demandes de passeport chypriotes, qui, selon Ionnis Kassoulidès, ministre chypriote grec des affaires étrangères, est passée « ces dernières années, d'environ 400 par mois à entre 2 000 et 4 000 demandes ».

Officiellement pourtant, tout va bien : Semi Bora, maire de la partie turque de Nicosie, s'efforce d'expliquer qu'il est confronté aux problèmes ordinaires d'une ville de 50 000 habitants, mais ses propos en disent long sur l'étendue des pénuries : deux fois par semaine, des bateaux turcs franchissent les 70 kilomètres qui séparent l'île des côtes turques, en remorquant deux ballons de 20 000 mètres cubes chacun. Ils complètent ainsi l'alimentation en eau douce de la République turque de Chypre du Nord (RTCN). Chaque année, la municipalité reçoit d'Ankara environ 4 millions de dollars (4,4 millions d'euros), un chiffre à comparer à celui de ses recettes, soit 2,5 millions de dollars.

En dépit de l'absence de relations officielles entre les deux entités, Semi Bora rencontre plusieurs fois par an son homologue grec Michael Zambelas (à qui il ne peut pas téléphoner). C'est ainsi qu'ont été résolus – au bout de nombreuses années – les questions de l'assainissement de la rivière Pedaios, ou du système d'égouts. Comme la plupart des responsables du Nord, Semi Bora ne croit pas à une vraie

réconciliation.

Il souhaite qu'un accord prévoie la libre circulation de tous les Chypriotes, et n'est pas hostile à ce qu'une partie des 160 000 Chypriotes grecs expulsés en 1974 puissent revenir, ou qu'une juste indemnisation leur soit accordée. Mais vivre ensemble, dans les mêmes villages, est une autre histoire : « Il faudra du temps pour bâtir la confiance. Dans un premier temps, mieux vaudra ne pas repartir à l'aventure »...

L. Z.



6 MARS 2002

IRAN-ARMÉNIE

Téhéran veut développer sa coopération avec Erévan dans le domaine militaire

Suivant de quelques heures une délégation de hauts responsables militaires américains, le ministre iranien de la défense, l'amiral Ali Shamkhani, s'est à son tour rendu lundi à Erévan pour une visite officielle de deux jours, qui a été l'occasion de réaffirmer les relations de bon voisinage et de partenariat unissant l'Arménie à son puissant voisin iranien. Le ministre iranien en a profité pour faire état du mécontentement de Téhéran concernant le déploiement attendu en Géorgie de 200 soldats des unités d'élite de l'armée des États-Unis, qui avait été confirmé lors de la visite à Tbilissi de la même délégation militaire américaine. L'amiral Ali Shamkhani, qui a eu un entretien dès son arrivée à Erévan avec son homologue arménien Serge Sarkisian, ne s'est pas privé pour exprimer les préoccupations de l'Iran quant à l'éventualité d'une présence militaire américaine dans cette région du Caucase dont Téhéran a toujours dit qu'elle ne devait pas accueillir les armées de puissances étrangères.

Face à l'intrusion annoncée sur la scène régionale de soldats américains dont la mission consisterait officiellement à encadrer et à équiper les forces géorgiennes dans leurs opérations militaires contre les combattants d'Al-Qaïda qui se cacheraient dans les gorges de Pankisi, aux confins de la Russie et de la Géorgie, sous la protection des rebelles Ichétchènes, le ministre iranien a donc exalté "les relations spéciales" liant l'Arménie à l'Iran dans "les domaines politique, économique et culturel", en souhaitant qu'elles s'étendent à la sphère de "la défense et de la sécurité", conformément aux "intérêts des deux pays" et de "la situation géopolitique régionale". Ali Shamkhani n'a pas précisé les contours de cette coopération militaire arméno-iranienne qu'il semble appeler de ses vœux, se contentant d'affirmer qu'elle ne serait pas dirigée contre un pays tiers. Mais d'ores et déjà, il semble que Téhéran veuille l'inscrire plus généralement dans sa réponse aux accusations des États-Unis, dont le président George W. Bush avait dernièrement dénoncé un "axe du mal" comprenant l'Iran, l'Irak et la Corée du Nord, ouvrant ainsi un nouveau front dans sa "guerre contre le terrorisme" déclarée au lendemain des attentats du 11 septembre 2001. L'Arménie, avec laquelle l'Iran doit signer un accord de compréhension mutuelle au terme de la visite à Erévan de M. Shamkhani, qui devait rencontrer mardi le président Robert

Kotcharian et d'autres responsables iraniens, se présente dans la région comme le partenaire le plus fiable de Téhéran.

En mauvais termes déjà avec l'Azerbaïdjan, dont il a toujours redouté les visées irrédentistes sur la province de l'Azerbaïdjan iranien et dont il conteste les droits de propriété sur certains gisements pétroliers de la mer Caspienne, l'Iran redoute désormais l'évolution de la situation en Géorgie, où une présence militaire américaine tendrait à resserrer l'étau atlantiste dans cette région caucasienne d'une importance stratégique qui le met en contact avec la Russie, sur laquelle il pouvait compter jusque là pour opposer un axe stratégique contre les États-Unis. Mais les attentats du 11 septembre et la connivence qu'ils ont semble-t-il suscitée entre Moscou et Washington dans la "guerre contre le terrorisme" ont brouillé les cartes d'un jeu aux forts relents pétroliers. A tel point qu'après avoir dénoncé en termes vifs le développement accéléré de la coopération militaire entre la Géorgie et les États-Unis, la Russie s'y est finalement résignée le 1er mars par la voix de son président Vladimir Poutine. Entre la Géorgie qui affiche ses ambitions atlantistes à l'horizon 2005 et l'Azerbaïdjan qui a mis lui aussi le cap sur l'Otan, au nom d'une solidarité sans faille avec la Turquie, puissance régionale rivale de l'Iran, Téhéran ne peut plus guère compter que sur l'Arménie pour servir de passerelle vers la Russie et réduire les effets de cet endiguement américain. A Erévan, Ali Shamkhani a rappelé que l'Iran a toujours exprimé son opposition à la présence, à ses frontières, de forces extérieures à la région, une allusion évidente aux projets américains en Géorgie, en soulignant qu'une telle "ingérence" ne pouvait qu'exacerber les tensions, comme cela avait été le cas dans la région du Golfe arabo-persique. Il a exposé à ses interlocuteurs arméniens les risques que présentait une présence militaire américaine pour la région et pour l'Arménie elle-même, dont le ministre de la défense, dans la foulée de la Russie, avait, peu avant, tenu à minimiser la portée de la coopération militaire américano-géorgienne, affirmant qu'il convenait de la juger sur pièces et qu'elle ne semblait pas, en tout état de cause, de nature à compromettre la stabilité régionale. Si l'Arménie n'est donc pas disposée à joindre sa voix à celle de l'Iran pour dénoncer les projets militaires américains en Géorgie, il n'en reste pas moins que cette visite à Erévan du ministre de la défense de l'un des trois pays de "l'axe du mal" rappelle la spécificité d'une diplomatie arménienne qui entend maintenir un certain équilibre dans les relations avec l'Occident, la Russie et l'Iran ; un exercice diplomatique d'équilibriste depuis le 11 septembre 2001 et que le ministre arménien de la défense Serge Sarkisian aura sans doute quelque difficulté à expliquer lors de la visite qu'il doit effectuer à Washington où il conduira du 17 au 21 mars une délégation de militaires arméniens pour finaliser l'accord relatif au versement d'une aide américaine de 4,3 millions de dollars au titre de la coopération militaire entre les États-Unis et l'Arménie.

G.U.

Iraqi seen easing on arms inspections

By Barbara Crossette

The New York Times

UNITED NATIONS, New York: After three years of refusing to deal with UN arms inspectors, a high-level Iraqi delegation is about to come face to face for the first time with the leader of the inspection commission, Hans Blix.

That the Iraqis have agreed to the meeting, set for Thursday, after asking to see only Secretary-General Kofi Annan, is indicative of the concern they have that the threat of an American attack is real, if not imminent, diplomats and UN officials said in interviews this week.

While no one expects a quick resumption of arms inspections in Iraq, diplomats said that the Iraqis appeared more conciliatory.

They also said that the five perma-

nent Security Council members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — were more unified than in recent years, at least on their insistence that until inspectors return on the council's terms, no relief from sanctions can be permitted.

Blix, a Swedish disarmament specialist and international lawyer, said in an interview this week that the council's terms meant unrestricted access and no Iraqi veto over the nationality of inspectors.

"I am not giving any discounts on Security Council resolutions," he said.

The Iraqis sought the meeting after a year of cold-shouldering the United Nations.

When Annan agreed to the talks, he decided to include Blix, the executive chairman of the United Nations Monitoring, Verification and Inspection

Commission, created in December 1999 to replace an earlier body, the United Nations Special Commission.

A senior UN legal counsel will also be present.

The Iraqi delegation to what is expected to be only the first round of talks will be led by a new foreign minister, Naji Sabri, who is considered more amenable than his predecessor, Mohammed Said Sahhaf.

Weapons specialists will be included in the Iraqi group, the first to venture out on this issue since a reshuffle in the Iraqi foreign affairs hierarchy that may have reduced the influence of Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, diplomats said.

Aziz recently visited Moscow and Beijing but received little in the way of support for continued defiance of the Security Council.

IRAK Photos-satellite à l'appui, les États-Unis viennent de déclencher le compte à rebours d'un « changement de régime » à Bagdad

Bush veut en finir avec Saddam Hussein

Le secrétaire général des Nations unies, Kofi Annan, a repris hier, après un an d'interruption, les discussions avec Bagdad sur la difficile question du retour des inspecteurs en désarmement de l'ONU en Irak, alors que la tension s'accroît entre Washington et le régime de Saddam Hussein. M. Kofi Annan et le ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, Naji Sabri, sont convenus hier de se revoir mi-avril, après des entretiens jugés positifs. Le porte-parole de l'ONU, Fred Eckhard, a indiqué que M. Annan avait trouvé les discussions « à la fois honnêtes et utiles ».

Washington :
de notre correspondant
Jean-Jacques Mével

C'est la première manœuvre des États-Unis, le point de départ de l'assaut annoncé contre Saddam Hussein. Discrètement, mais photos-satellite à l'appui, la diplomatie américaine a entamé son entreprise de démolition, dans le huis clos du Conseil de sécurité des Nations unies.

Les diapositives projetées mercredi n'ont sans doute rien appris aux pays membres du « directoire » de l'Onu. Pour les Américains, il s'agissait de prouver que Bagdad persiste à changer le beurre en canon, au mépris de ses engagements : par centaines, les semi-remorques russes et allemands de l'aide internationale se retrouveraient dans la panoplie militaire irakienne, transformés en tracteurs d'artillerie et en rampes lance-missiles mobiles.

A ses alliés et partenaires des Nations unies, Washington n'a pas pu – ou pas voulu – montrer des preuves plus ac-

cablantes : celles qui établiraient que l'Irak travaille sans relâche à un arsenal de mort, nucléaire, biologique et chimique. Sans doute George W. Bush garde-t-il pour plus tard une démonstration convaincante que le maître de Bagdad est bien le pire génie de l'« axe du Mal ».

Le message adressé au conseil et à son obscur comité des sanctions est pourtant transparent. Pour la Maison-Blanche, Saddam Hussein n'est pas seulement dangereux, il est aussi d'une constante mauvaise foi. Cela suffirait à justifier son éviction *manu militari* s'il manque une seule fois à sa parole après le rendez-vous diplomatique de la dernière chance, fixé au printemps par le Conseil de sécurité.

Washington signale aussi qu'elle entend garder la main, du début jusqu'à la fin d'une

partie qui pourrait conduire les GI à Bagdad. Les Américains parlent d'une « coïncidence », mais ce n'est pas un hasard si la séance de diapositives à l'Onu a précédé de vingt-quatre heures un rendez-vous crucial à New York : la rencontre entre Naji Sabri, chef de la diplomatie irakienne, et Kofi Annan, secrétaire général des Nations unies.

En clair, les États-Unis viennent de déclencher eux-mêmes le compte à rebours de ce que le prudent secrétaire d'État Colin Powell appelle « le changement de régime » à Bagdad. L'avertissement est d'autant plus fort que le calendrier diplomatique-militaire est, dans ses grandes lignes, connu et arrêté.

Le Conseil de sécurité décidera fin mai d'un nouveau régime de sanctions, avec obligation pour l'Irak d'ouvrir

toutes ses enceintes militaires suspectes aux inspecteurs de l'Onu. Si Bagdad renâcle, ainsi que Washington en est persuadé, l'ultimatum américain pourrait tomber cet été. George W. Bush chausserait alors les bottes de son père, avec pour but affiché « d'en finir avec le boulot commencé en 1991 », selon la formule des durs de l'administration républicaine.

D'autres étapes bornent déjà le compte à rebours. Le président a donné à l'état-major jusqu'au 15 avril pour échafauder un premier scénario, croit savoir l'hebdomadaire *The New Yorker*. Il s'agit notamment de choisir entre deux scénarios de guerre.

L'un, « léger » et rapide, s'appuie sur les forces spéciales américaines et une dissidence irakienne anti-Saddam qu'il reste à armer, voire même à identifier : c'est le

modèle afghan, projet fétiche des chefs civils du Pentagone. L'autre est une force d'invasion allant jusqu'à 200 000 hommes, après des semaines de bombardements aériens. Les préparatifs exigeraient jusqu'à l'automne, à l'exemple de la guerre du Golfe. L'option lourde a la préférence des généraux et de la CIA. Mais rien n'est dit du régime qui devrait succéder aux trente ans de dictature de Saddam Hussein.

Le calendrier international se dessine lui aussi, autour des échéances du Conseil de sécurité. Le vice-président Dick Cheney part sonder les voisins de l'Irak à la fin de la semaine. Le Britannique Tony Blair, allié indéfectible, vient à Washington début avril pour ce que la presse appelle déjà un « sommet de guerre ». George W. Bush cherchera à rallier les Européens et les

Russes lors d'une tournée qui le conduira en Allemagne et en Russie à la mi-mai, puis au sommet des huit, dans l'Ouest canadien fin juin.

Aux États-Unis, les élections législatives de novembre restent l'inconnue de l'équation. Il ne fait aucun doute que la cote du président et du parti républicain bénéficient de l'atmosphère de mobilisation qui règne dans le pays depuis les attaques terroristes du 11 septembre. Mais la Maison-Blanche sait aussi qu'une campagne militaire réussie peut finir en retentissante débâcle électorale.

Il y a dix ans, les Américains avaient refusé un second mandat à George Bush le père, pourtant brillant vainqueur des troupes de Saddam Hussein. D'ici au scrutin du 4 novembre, George Bush le fils sait en tout cas qu'il n'a pas droit à l'erreur.

A Bagdad, dans l'attente des frappes

LE FIGARO VENDREDI 8 MARS 2002

Bagdad : de notre envoyé spécial
Charles Lambroschini

Bagdad aujourd'hui, c'est le Moscou de Staline le sanguinaire et la Rome de « ce César de carnaval » qu'était Mussolini. Saddam Hussein est omniprésent : avec ses bacchantes à la Clark Gable, en portraits, en statues, tantôt martial, tantôt bonhomme. Coiffé d'une casquette chamarrée, la poitrine couverte de décorations, c'est le chef de guerre qui, tel le maréchal moustachu du combat contre Hitler, va conduire à la victoire une nation de héros. Un panama sur la tête, des lunettes noires sur le nez, c'est plutôt la version « mode » du petit père des peuples, simple, aimable, prêt, semble-t-il, à chanter les vertus de la canne à pêche plutôt que celles du bazooka.

Quand on voit Saddam campé tout en haut d'un immeuble en forme de mausolée, fusil brandi vers le ciel, c'est un résumé véridique du personnage. La politique, il l'a faite l'arme au

poing. Il a tué pour arriver au sommet, il a tué pour s'y maintenir. La diplomatie aussi, il ne l'a mesurée que par le sang versé : pour corriger les frontières héritées du colonisateur anglais, il n'a pas négocié. Il a lancé deux guerres, contre l'Iran et contre le Koweït. Deux catastrophes pour son malheureux pays.

Mais dans cette ville immense parcourue d'autoroutes construites quand l'argent du pétrole permettait tout à la fois de se doter de « la quatrième armée du monde » et de recopier l'architecture de Wall Street, on sacrifie aussi au syndrome de Disneyland. Sur le trottoir du ministère de la Défense, il y a par exemple cette sculpture en métal argenté qui reconstitue une scène de guerre à la façon d'un film de Steven Spielberg : un pilote qui surgit indemne de l'épave de son chasseur-bombardier abattu par l'ennemi. Pour une fois ce n'est pas Saddam. Un peu plus loin, un guerrier, sabre au clair et enveloppé de voiles de bédouin comme Omar Sharif dans *Lawrence d'Arabie*, lance son cheval à l'assaut de l'ennemi. C'est de nouveau Saddam.

Ici, le rictus finit toujours par l'emporter sur le sourire. Alors, la reprise du dialogue entre l'Irak et Kofi Annan n'annonce pas forcément la sortie de l'impasse. Onze ans après la guerre du Golfe, c'est en effet moins l'ordre du jour officiel qui compte que les arrière-pensées, celles des Irakiens comme celles des Américains.

Le gouvernement de Bagdad réclame la levée des sanctions internationales mais préfère le statu quo puisque l'embargo lui a permis de resserrer son emprise sur la population. Washington réclame le retour des inspecteurs de l'ONU, pour vé-



Les journaux étrangers et les antennes paraboliques étant interdits en Irak, « la propagande du régime n'a pas de concurrent. Le petit peuple est convaincu que le responsable de ses malheurs, ce n'est pas Saddam Hussein mais l'Amérique », estime un observateur étranger. (Photo AP.)

rier que l'Irak n'a pas reconstitué ses stocks d'armes nucléaires, chimiques et bactériologiques, mais espère un refus car sinon George W. Bush perdrait l'alibi moral d'une intervention militaire dont le but avoué est de faire tomber le régime de Bagdad. Les deux camps poursuivent donc des stratégies totalement opposées. L'Irak cherche à faire juste assez de gestes pour dissuader les Etats-Unis d'attaquer. De son côté, le président américain continuera de relever les enchères jusqu'au moment où il pourra abattre Saddam Hussein.

Les Irakiens souffrent terriblement. Ce pays qui, grâce à la manne pétrolière, se voyait il y a vingt ans en passe de rejoindre le peloton des dragons asiatiques est retombé dans le sous-développement. Il se nourrit de rations alimentaires distribuées par le pouvoir sous le contrôle de l'ONU ; des enfants meurent de dysenterie parce que l'eau coule polluée du robinet ; à Bas-

sorah, la grande ville du sud, et à Mossoul, au nord, site des premiers gisements de pétrole, les pannes d'électricité sont endémiques car les centrales sont à bout de souffle ; l'inflation du dinar a connu une telle envolée qu'un haut fonctionnaire, ayant pris sa retraite au moment de la guerre du Golfe, a vu sa pension tomber en dix ans de 3 000 dollars par mois à... 4 dollars.

Le pays vend autant de pétrole qu'en 1991 : trois millions de barils dont deux millions « légalement » et le reste sur le marché noir. Mais il n'en dispose pas librement : 25 % des revenus servent à indemniser le Koweït des destructions de l'invasion, 13 % vont aux Kurdes à qui, sous la pression internationale, Bagdad a dû consentir l'autonomie, 3 % reviennent à l'ONU qui couvre ainsi ses frais de gestion car, fait sans précédent dans l'histoire de l'aide internationale, le programme humanitaire est payé par ceux-là même qui en sont les bénéficiaires.

Surtout, le Comité des sanctions contrôle strictement les achats que le gouvernement fait à l'étranger pour rééquiper l'Irak. Ainsi, sur 2,2 milliards de dollars de contrats destinés à rebâtir un réseau national d'épuration de l'eau, plus de la moitié a été approuvée mais le reste est en attente. En effet, comme l'explique Tun Myat, le responsable birman du programme humanitaire des Nations unies, « tous les tuyaux transportant l'eau, toutes les pompes, tous les moteurs recouverts de produits chimiques anticorrosion pour résister à l'humidité sont susceptibles d'utilisation duale. Ils peuvent aussi bien servir à reconstituer un arsenal. Or peu importe que 95 % des équipements aient été autorisés. Les 5 % qui manquent empêchent d'avoir un système d'épuration d'eau qui fonctionne ».

Constat identique pour l'électricité : pour des commandes totalisant 4,8 milliards de dollars,



près de trois milliards ont reçu le feu vert mais un milliard reste bloqué. Même les investissements de santé n'échappent pas au soupçon de détournements militaires. A cause d'ordinateurs ultrarapides pour la chirurgie, de scanners particulièrement performants ou de produits chimiques haut de gamme, 2,2 milliards de dollars ont passé la censure. Mais près de 500 millions sont en suspens. Les deux prédécesseurs de Tun Myat ont démissionné, af-

firant que les sanctions ne remplissaient pas leur but. Elles épuisent le peuple. Mais elles renforcent le régime. Le gouvernement avait été très fragilisé par les révoltes qui, en 1991, avaient suivi la défaite de l'armée irakienne face aux Américains.

Au nord celle des Kurdes et au sud celle des chiïtes. Depuis le pouvoir s'est rétabli. A Bagdad, un observateur étranger remarque : « Pour le rationnement, les listes sont nomina-

tives. Le gouvernement peut donc décider qui mange et qui ne mange pas. Tout contestataire potentiel, tout opposant éventuel, réfléchira à deux fois avant de condamner sa femme et ses enfants à la disette. »

Cet observateur ajoute : « Les sanctions ont créé une société fermée. Personne ne sort, personne ne rentre. Saddam Hussein n'a pas à craindre que les citoyens puissent comparer la vérité du régime à la réalité extérieure. Comme le pouvoir a interdit les journaux étrangers et les antennes paraboliques qui permettraient de regarder une chaîne de télévision comme Al Djezira, la propagande du régime n'a pas de concurrent. Le petit peuple est convaincu que le responsable de ses malheurs, ce n'est pas Saddam mais l'Amérique. »

Depuis les attaques terroristes du 11 septembre contre le World Trade Center à New York et le Pentagone à Washington, la donne a changé. George W. Bush ne se satisfait plus du statu

quo qui durait depuis 1991. Même si rien ne prouve que Saddam Hussein, le tyran laïc, se soit acquiné avec Oussama ben Laden, le terroriste religieux, le président américain veut se débarrasser d'un régime qu'il considère comme une menace pour la stabilité de toute la région. Bush compte donc appliquer à l'Irak sa stratégie afghane : le corps expéditionnaire américain sur l'« alliance du nord » avec les Kurdes et sur l'« alliance du sud » avec les chiïtes.

Au nom de Saddam Hussein, l'un de ses conseillers, Tarek Aziz affirme : « Les Américains ne gagneront jamais. Chaque village irakien deviendra une autre jungle du Vietnam. » Mais ils semblent bien loin de cette volonté de mener un combat à mort les misérables patelins qui, de Bagdad à Bassorah, se succèdent sur la route vers la frontière iranienne.

Les hommes accroupis devant des masures de torchis ont l'air d'avoir renoncé à même faire pousser de quoi manger, vaincus par le combat contre le sel qui, conséquences de barrages trop systématiques sur le Tigre et l'Euphrate, revient toujours empoisonner la terre. Les femmes, cachées aux regards par le tchador noir, touillent avec la même désespérance des chaudrons contenant la soupe familiale.

Dans tous ces villages, il n'y a plus d'eau courante ni d'électri-

cité depuis la guerre du Koweït. Les instituteurs cherchent ailleurs le deuxième emploi qui seul leur permet de survivre. Les médecins restent en ville.

Dans ce désert sinistre de sables gris, des barrages militaires coupent périodiquement la route. Les soldats qui examinent les papiers des automobilistes ont une allure nettement moins fringantes que les statues de Saddam Hussein. Uniformes dépareillés, traînant la kalachnikov plus qu'ils ne la portent, mendiant une cigarette, ils n'ont rien qui rappellent les farouches Vietcongs. A Bagdad, l'observateur européen avait prédit : « Pour tenir tête aux Américains, Saddam Hussein ne pourra vraiment compter que sur les dix ou quinze mille hommes de sa Garde républicaine. »

Charles Lambroschini

Saddam « vote » Chevènement

L'Irak n'est pas contente de la France. Dans un entretien avec l'envoyé spécial du Figaro, Tarek Aziz, vice-premier ministre irakien et conseiller diplomatique de Saddam Hussein, protestait la semaine dernière : « Franchement, je ne comprends pas la position de Paris. Avant 1998, nous avions un dialogue suivi. J'avais rencontré aussi bien Jacques Chirac que Lionel Jospin. Les entreprises françaises avaient été très bien accueillies ici et leur volume d'affaires était très important. Mais, après les bombardements américano-britanniques, votre pays a eu une attitude ambiguë. Ces attaques étant illégales, la France ne les a pas soutenues. Mais elle ne les a pas critiquées assez vigoureusement pour vraiment aider l'Irak. Je crois que la cohabitation est une mauvaise formule pour la France. Le pouvoir politique ne peut plus fonctionner normalement. » Heureusement, il y a Jean-Pierre Chevènement. Après avoir de nouveau salué la démission, en pleine guerre du Golfe, du ministre de la Défense de François Mitterrand, Tarek Aziz remarque : « J'ai le plus profond respect pour Jean-Pierre Chevènement qui est un grand patriote français. Les Arabes ont aimé la France à cause de la vision du monde que se faisait de Gaulle et de sa politique à l'égard des pays arabes. Alors, l'Irak dit bonne chance à l'homme politique qui se rapproche le plus des idées du Général. Monsieur Chevènement s'est lui-même qualifié de gaulliste de gauche. C'est aussi ma définition de Monsieur Chevènement. »

Ch. L.

TURQUIE

La liberté d'expression toujours malmenée

L'assouplissement de plusieurs articles du Code pénal relatifs aux libertés civiques reflète la volonté turque de s'intégrer à l'Europe. Mais les juges peuvent continuer à interpréter les lois à leur guise.

TIME (extraits)
New York

La Turquie, ce pays qui s'est longtemps targué d'être le lien entre l'Orient et l'Occident, subit le choc des civilisations sur son propre territoire. Au mois de février, deux réunions organisées à Istanbul à un kilomètre d'écart ont mis en lumière le fossé entre le rôle international ardemment souhaité par la Turquie et les réalités internes de ce pays, qui peine à devenir une démocratie digne de ce nom. Les deux rencontres ont, chacune à leur façon, mis l'accent sur la dualité d'une nation qui veut à tout prix être intégrée à l'Europe, mais dont la candidature est chaque fois rejetée à cause de son dossier lamentable en ce qui concerne les droits de l'homme.

Parallèlement à la rencontre entre les pays membres de l'Union européenne (UE) et ceux de l'Organisation de la Conférence islamique (OCI) – qui visait à «faire la promotion de la compréhension et de l'harmonie entre les civilisations» [voir CI n° 591, du 28 février 2002] –, un procès retenait lui aussi l'attention du monde entier. Fatih Tas, 22 ans, éditeur et propriétaire de la maison d'édition Aram, était accusé de faire de la propagande séparatiste, accusation fréquemment portée contre ceux qui critiquent le comportement de la Turquie à l'égard de sa population kurde, estimée à 12 millions (sur une population totale de 65 millions). Le «crime» de Tas est d'avoir publié *Interventionnisme américain*, un recueil d'articles hostiles à la Turquie rédigé par Noam Chomsky, célèbre linguiste et bête noire de l'establishment américain. Tas a évité l'inculpation et un an de prison en partie grâce à l'intervention de Chomsky. La présence de ce dernier au procès a conduit le procureur – soucieux d'éviter une publicité contre-productive – à jeter l'éponge. C'est le système judiciaire turc qui est en ligne de mire. Selon de nombreuses personnes, si les diri-

geants politiques, malgré leur appétit de réformes, se contentent seulement d'assouplir la législation, les juges pourront continuer à interpréter les lois à leur guise.

RADIOS ET TÉLÉVISIONS SUSPENDUES, LIVRES INTERDITS

Début février, le Parlement turc a amendé certains articles du Code pénal dont l'objectif était – comme les partisans des droits de l'homme le répétaient depuis longtemps – de limiter la liberté d'expression. Malgré les farouches objections des législateurs conservateurs, les changements ont finalement été ratifiés. Les peines encourues pour insulte aux institutions de l'Etat turc (dont les tribunaux et l'armée) ont été adoucies. Quant aux poursuites engagées au titre de l'article 312 du Code pénal (qui considère comme un délit l'incitation à la haine pour des raisons de classe, de race, de religion ou de région), elles sont rendues plus difficiles. Cette clause fourre-tout était utilisée pour poursuivre toutes les

personnes qui exprimaient des opinions prokurdes ou des points de vue islamiques en matière de politique. Mais les points les plus sensibles, comme l'abolition de la peine de mort pour terrorisme ou pour trahison, n'ont pas encore été abordés.

Selon les militants des droits de l'homme, la nouvelle législation reflète simplement les efforts que fait ostensiblement la Turquie pour se plier aux exigences de l'UE, sans pour autant changer l'esprit dans lequel ces lois sont appliquées. Selon la Fondation des droits de l'homme de Turquie, de nombreux procès destinés à museler la liberté d'expression se sont tenus l'année dernière. Vingt-huit chaînes de télévision et 32 stations de radio ont été sommées de suspendre leurs programmes pour une durée totale de 3 786 jours. La veille de l'arrivée de Chomsky à Istanbul, une radio locale de Diyarbakir, la capitale du sud-est de la région kurde, s'est vu infliger un an de suspension pour avoir diffusé des chants à contenu idéologique. Cinquante livres ont été retirés de la vente en 2001 et des cassettes de musique kurde ont été interdites.

Dans la plupart de ces cas, le délit était tout de même plus flagrant que le texte de Chomsky incriminé. Lors d'une conférence prononcée à Toledo (Ohio) en mars 2001 et intitulée «Perspectives de paix au Moyen-Orient», l'universitaire américain avait décrit la répression turque à l'égard de la population kurde comme «l'une des plus atroces atteintes aux droits de l'homme des années 90». Chomsky avait également imputé la responsabilité de la mort de dizaines de milliers de Kurdes et la destruction de leurs villages – «un nettoyage ethnique impressionnant» – aux États-Unis, qui fournissaient à la Turquie les moyens financiers nécessaires à la répression contre les Kurdes.

Les caméras du monde entier étant braquées sur le pays au moment où il accueillait un forum sur l'harmonie entre les peuples, la Cour de sûreté de l'Etat a préféré accepter la thèse de la défense : Tas avait seulement essayé de «contribuer au débat universitaire». Dans un pays comme la Turquie, c'est une victoire de taille.

Maryann Bird et Andrew Finkel

▼ Dessin d'Ismael Carrillo paru dans El Periódico de Catalunya, Barcelone.



L'Irak reprend le dialogue avec Kofi Annan dans la crainte d'une attaque américaine

Bagdad accepte de discuter d'un retour d'inspecteurs de l'ONU sur ses programmes d'armement

NEW YORK (Nations unies)
de notre correspondante

Sans admettre la reprise des inspections de ses programmes d'armement, l'Irak a accepté, pour la première fois, d'aborder le sujet de façon « sérieuse et cohérente ». Ainsi la première rencontre, depuis plus d'un an, entre le secrétaire général de l'ONU et les autorités irakiennes s'est-elle achevée, jeudi 7 mars, avec la prise d'un nouveau rendez-vous vers la mi-avril. Cette réunion entre Kofi Annan et le ministre irakien des affaires étrangères, Naji Sabri, s'est déroulée dans une atmosphère « sereine ». Les pourparlers de quatre heures ont été « francs et utiles » selon M. Annan et « constructifs et positifs » selon son interlocuteur irakien.

Déclarant, avant la réunion, ne pas vouloir assister « à une extension du conflit au Proche-Orient car nous avons bien assez de la tragédie qui se déroule là-bas », le secrétaire général, qui agit comme une sorte de médiateur entre les Etats-Unis et l'Irak, a entrepris le dialogue avec un mandat clair des cinq membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité : le retour, inconditionnel, des inspecteurs de l'ONU chargés du désarmement de l'Irak. « Sur ce point nous sommes tous d'accord, explique l'ambassadeur français Jean-David Levitte, et ainsi, si l'Irak dit "non" au secrétaire général, il le dira non pas seulement aux Américains, mais au Conseil de sécurité tout entier, et devrait donc en subir les conséquences ». Ce que le diplomate français ne dit pas est que, si les cinq « Grands » sont en effet unanimes sur la nécessité du retour des inspecteurs, leur unani-

mité s'arrête là. Toutes autres questions concernant les modalités des inspections – et la levée des sanctions économiques qui en dépend – les divisent.

Selon des sources proches des pourparlers, Kofi Annan a centré les discussions sur la reprise des inspections. A la différence des précédentes rencontres, non conclusives, la délégation irakienne n'aurait pas évité le sujet mais « a même posé un certain nombre de questions concrètes ». Le ministre irakien voulait s'assurer par exem-

du que « la suspension éventuelle des sanctions » serait discutée « si Bagdad était prêt à se plier aux résolutions du Conseil de sécurité ». Le ministre irakien a alors insisté sur le fait que, parmi ces résolutions, la 687, instaurant le cessez-le-feu dans la guerre du Golfe, compte un paragraphe 14 qui stipule l'absence d'armes de destruction massive « dans toute la région ». Les autres sujets abordés ont été le retour des prisonniers koweïtiens, ainsi que la restitution des archives nationales du Koweït par l'Irak.

Aide humanitaire détournée, selon Washington

La mission américaine à l'ONU a transmis à des membres du Comité des sanctions contre l'Irak, créé après l'invasion, en 1990, du Koweït par les troupes de Saddam Hussein, des images satellites prouvant, selon elle, que Bagdad a détourné, au profit de son armée, des véhicules livrés dans le cadre du programme humanitaire Pétrole contre nourriture. Selon le porte-parole de la mission américaine, Robert Wood, le comité a pu avoir connaissance du fait que plusieurs centaines de camions, importés par les Irakiens à ce titre, avaient été détournés de leur destination finale et aménagés en véhicules pour le transport d'artillerie lourde. Ainsi, des camions ont été démantelés pour récupérer des pièces détachées, notamment des systèmes hydrauliques pour des éléments de missiles. D'autres ont été transformés pour tirer des canons de 150 millimètres. « Tout cela s'est fait en violation des résolutions de l'ONU », a expliqué M. Wood. – (AFP.)

ple que les inspecteurs n'agiraient pas « comme des espions en fournissant aux Américains des informations militaires ». Participant à la réunion, le chef des inspecteurs, le Suédois Hans Blix, aurait assuré la délégation irakienne de « l'impartialité des inspecteurs et de la transparence de leur travail ». Les Irakiens voulaient aussi savoir ce que ferait l'ONU « en échange » du retour des inspecteurs. Les sanctions seraient-elles levées ? A quoi le secrétaire général aurait répon-

Faisant le bilan de cette rencontre, le conseiller juridique de l'ONU, Ralph Zacklin, a estimé avoir entendu de la part de l'Irak « la position la plus cohérente depuis le début de cette affaire ». Par rapport à la réunion du 27 février, le comportement des Irakiens « n'était pas arrogant, nous dit une source, mais plutôt raisonnable et conciliant ». Le secrétaire général, pour sa part, s'est engagé à aborder les préoccupations irakiennes avec les membres du

Conseil de sécurité. Une séance à huis clos du Conseil sur l'Irak devait avoir lieu, vendredi 8 mars. Avant de quitter New York, le ministre irakien a rencontré l'ambassadeur russe à l'ONU, Sergueï Lavrov, dont le ministre des affaires étrangères, Igor Ivanov, a écrit une lettre au secrétaire général demandant « des clarifications » de la résolution 1284, qui avance l'idée d'une « suspension » des sanctions en échange du retour des inspecteurs en Irak.

Par ailleurs, alors que la rumeur concernant une éventuelle opération militaire américaine contre l'Irak se fait de plus en plus insistante, le secrétaire d'Etat, Colin Powell, a affirmé, jeudi, qu'aucune guerre n'était sur le point d'être déclenchée contre l'Irak. Démentant les informations selon lesquelles le premier ministre britannique, Tony Blair, en visite à Washington du 5 au 7 avril, viendrait donner son feu vert à des plans d'attaques contre Bagdad, M. Powell a déclaré qu'aucun plan de cette nature ne serait sur la table. « Les Irakiens disent : "Faites-nous confiance, nous n'avons plus d'armes de destruction massive", a dit le secrétaire d'Etat américain ; et nous disons : "Laissez-nous donc vérifier". »

Entre-temps, à Bagdad, le vice-premier ministre irakien, Tarek Aziz, a affirmé que son pays se préparait à la guerre : « L'agression américano-britannique est attendue », a dit M. Aziz, promettant à ce propos « un nouveau Vietnam ». « Face aux Américains, chaque village deviendra une autre jungle du Vietnam... », a-t-il averti.

Afsané Bassir Pour

Annan presses Iraqis on return of arms inspectors

From news reports

UNITED NATIONS, New York: Under the shadow of threats of U.S. military action against Baghdad, Secretary-General Kofi Annan of the United Nations conducted talks with a high-level Iraqi delegation on Thursday, saying he would press for the return of UN arms inspectors.

"So far so good," Annan said without elaborating during a break from talks with the Iraqi foreign minister, Naji Sabri, the first such discussions with a

ministerial delegation in a year.

A UN spokesman, Fred Eckhard, said "the discussion was much more focused" than when Annan last year met a delegation led by Sabri's predecessor, Mohammed Said Sahhaf.

That meeting ended in disaster, with Annan receiving a lecture and a sheaf of documents. Annan decided against a follow-up meeting.

The talks Thursday were held amid heightened tensions since President George W. Bush made Iraq the key element of his "axis of evil" State of the Union speech in January. He demanded that Baghdad accept UN inspectors or face the consequences.

"I wouldn't want to see a widening conflict in the region," Annan said before the meeting Thursday.

"I think we have our hands full with the tragedy that is going on there already," he said in a reference to Israeli-Palestinian violence.

"So I would want to see a situation where we are able to solve our differences diplomatically," he said.

UN arms experts want to determine whether Iraq has continued acquiring weapons of mass destruction — a key element in any easing of UN sanctions, imposed when Baghdad's troops invaded Kuwait in 1990.

"We will be pressing for the return of the inspectors," Annan said. "The question of inspectors and the return of inspectors has been one of the key bones of contention between the United Nations and Iraq."

At the start of the discussions in Annan's office, the secretary-general and the foreign minister met privately for about 20 minutes before being joined by their delegations, Eckhard said.

Hans Blix, the chief UN weapons inspector, sat next to Annan in the talks spoke, as did a UN legal counsel, Ralph

Zacklin. Sabri alone spoke for his delegation, which included General Hussan Amin, the Iraqi government's chief liaison official with the UN inspectors.

The arms inspectors, who tried to determine whether Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, left the country on the eve of a U.S.-British bombing raid in December 1999. They have not been allowed to return since.

The most recent resolution governing inspections and a suspension of sanctions was adopted by the UN Security Council in December 1999.

Under that measure, the UN inspectors get 60 days after their return to establish a work program and draw up a list of key remaining tasks. Once they say Iraq has begun cooperating, the Security Council will wait 120 days and then suspend sanctions for renewable periods of 120 days each.

But the council has not yet defined

how and what elements of the sanctions would be suspended.

Blix and other experts believe Iraq had nearly accounted for its nuclear materials and ballistic missiles when the teams left. But gaps remain in accounting for chemical and biological weapons materials.

The Bush administration, which is demanding inspections and at the same time considering ways to topple President Saddam Hussein, hopes the talks will be brief and direct.

Several UN officials believe the threat of an American attack was taken as a real one, and in part accounted for the meeting requested by Iraq.

"The first session of the talks was positive," the official Iraqi press agency, INA, quoted Sabri as saying. It gave no details on whether Iraq would accept the return of the inspectors. (Reuters, AFP)

Allies ■ By Christoph Bertram

Europe must get serious on Iraq

BERLIN The chief objective in dealing with Saddam Hussein's Iraq must be to get the UN inspectors back and working. Whatever the ultimate plans of the Bush administration, the fact remains that U.S. threats of eventual military intervention are helpful towards this goal while European agonizing over it is not. Three facts need to be kept in European minds.

The first is that the prohibition of mass destruction weapons in Iraq and respective verification through UN inspectors has as its basis a binding UN Security Council resolution.

Second, only when the members of the Security Council, as well as the United States and Europe, are united behind the demand for effective inspections do they stand a chance to get their way.

Third, if Iraq should continue to disregard its commitment to allow the inspectors in and let them to do their job, only those who want to weaken the United Nations can turn a blind eye.

Perhaps the "smart sanctions" which the Security Council is expected to impose in May will lead to Iraq readmitting the inspectors. But if they do not, other means including military action would be justified.

The mere threat of such action by the United States has already had the positive effect of making Saddam Hussein think of the consequences if he continues to flaunt UN resolutions on weapons of mass destruction.

As Europeans should remember from the decades when deterrence of the Soviet Union provided for their security, threats only work if they are credible. There is no doubt that the Bush administration is determined to

have in place a serious military option to overthrow the Saddam regime. Those wanting the inspectors back must be grateful for it.

It is true that many in Washington want to crush Saddam regardless of whether he honors his UN commitments or not. But the president has not yet endorsed this view, and, even if he had, Iraqi readiness to bow to the UN's demands would make him reconsider. It is one thing to punish Iraqi violations of UN resolutions; it is a totally different one to strike a cooperative Iraq.

True, the chances of Iraq becoming cooperative under Saddam are slim. If past behavior is any guide, the cautious feelers which the regime is currently putting out towards the United Nations are likely to be mere tactical maneuvers to gain time and divide the West. In the end, there may be no alternative to using force where international law, diplomatic pressure, economic sanctions and military threats have been to no avail.

If it comes to that, will the Europeans really want to stay aside? They can scarcely object to Washington's renewed pressure for a return of the inspectors. At least now European governments are joining in. Unless they want to undermine the UN's authority and the credibility of U.S. pressure, they must not rule out the military option. Indeed, they have no other choice than to support it.

Some would claim that clever U.S. tactics have painted Europe into this corner of having to endorse in words what it does not want in deeds. In fact, it is the regime in Iraq which has painted the United Nations, and Europeans who care about its authority, into that corner. There is no escape from accepting the responsibility. European

governments must therefore not only reiterate their condemnation of Iraqi stonewalling and the demand for the return of inspectors able to inspect. They must also lobby in the United Nations for using force should Saddam fail to bend to other pressures.

This will not come easy to European leaders who share with their voters a deep skepticism toward using force for political ends. Yet standing up for the United Nations and against Saddam now is not only the correct policy, it is also a wise one. It will add to the pressure on Iraq and thus increase the chances for avoiding military intervention. It also puts any subsequent use of force into an established framework of international law. Furthermore, by demonstrating European commitment it will strengthen an Atlantic relationship now strained by suspicion and resentment.

Finally, it will allow European governments to shape the issue instead of being hypnotized by what the United States might or might not do. Many countries, most prominently France this summer and Germany this fall, will hold national elections under the shadow of what could be a showdown with Iraq. Whatever their current reservations, it is difficult to imagine major European governments opposing outright a U.S. action justified by Baghdad's refusal to honor UN demands. Unless they offer their own publics the framework of their policy soon, they may find that public opinion has deserted them when they need its support most.

The writer, director of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, contributed this comment to the International Herald Tribune.

Blair faces revolt over backing U.S. against Iraq

By Warren Hoge

The New York Times

LONDON: Prime Minister Tony Blair, the United States's most vocal ally in the war on terrorism, is running into resistance from his party, the British public and some members of his own cabinet for backing President George W. Bush's call for action against Iraq.

A group of Labour legislators has put forward a motion urging him not to support any U.S. moves against Baghdad, and public surveys show that many of the people who overwhelmingly backed the war in Afghanistan and dismissed criticism of the American treatment of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, do not favor military action in Iraq.

Critics point to Blair's continuing pro-U.S. rhetoric, a visit by Vice President Richard Cheney here Monday and Thursday's announcement of a Blair trip to the United States next month to discuss anti-terror strategies with Bush as evidence that plans for British participation are already under way. Britain has a military presence in the Gulf, with bombers based in Turkey, Kuwait and Oman and an aircraft carrier in the Indian Ocean.

During what was described by participants as a robust debate on Iraq at the weekly cabinet meeting Thursday, ministers expressed concern over the lack of public support for such a move

and the absence of any strategy for limiting the extent of Britain's involvement.

Some critics see the latest expressions of Blair's support for Washington as a sign that he is being too obedient to the president's wishes. The pro-Labour

tabloid Mirror pictured Blair on Friday on its front page side by side with Bush in a cowboy hat under the headline "Howdy Poodle."

Blair has publicly backed Bush's stance on Iraq, saying the president was right to raise the issue of the threat posed to countries around the world by Saddam Hussein's developing weapons of mass destruction.

"Iraq is plainly in breach of the United Nations Security Council resolution in relation to the accumulation of weapons of mass destruction," he said in the Commons this past week, "and we have to deal with it."

Robin Cook, leader of the House and former foreign secretary, said that the negative reactions were misguided and premature.

"There is a danger that discussion in the press is getting way ahead of where discussion is here and in the United States," he said. "There is no decision. There is no immediate prospect of a decision, and it does not necessarily follow that there will ever be a decision on the use of military action."

A campaign by Blair to prepare pub-

lic opinion for the need to take action will begin Monday when he meets at No. 10 Downing Street with Cheney, who is beginning a journey to the Middle East with a stop in London.

One person scheduled to meet him predicted Friday that the vice president would hear some of Blair's cabinet members' misgivings directly. "I am sure that he'll get dusted up by some of the ministers," he said.

The White House spokesman, Ari Fleischer, described Blair's meeting with Bush next month as a discussion on "the ongoing campaign against terrorism as well as key foreign policy issues." Blair and his wife, Cherie, will be guests April 5 through 7 at Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas.

The prime minister is under pressure from Labour members of Parliament, 62 of whom have signed a motion urging him not to support any U.S. action against Iraq. "Certainly, there is a serious threat that the Labour Party could split down the middle if the government pushed ahead with its support for the U.S.," said David Chaytor, one of the signatories.

But Donald Anderson, chairman of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee, said it would be foolish to rule out the military option against Saddam, adding that tough words could be part of a calculation to get him to comply with United Nations demands to accept arms monitors.

International Herald Tribune
Saturday-Sunday, March 9-10, 2002

Iran denies ties to captured arms smugglers

By Nazila Fathi

The New York Times

TEHRAN: Iran's cabinet spokesman on Sunday rejected reports that 12 Iranians, including a general, were arrested in Afghanistan as they tried to smuggle arms and money to Afghan warlords.

"According to the Foreign Ministry's report today at the cabinet meeting, there are no Iranian nationals among those arrested because we have no military presence in Afghanistan," Abdullah Ramezanzadeh said.

Ramezanzadeh added that Iran has felt no threat stemming from reports that the Pentagon is developing new

types of nuclear weapons to use against it and six other countries.

"The United States is capable of attacking any country and, unfortunately, it does not respect the international law; but we have not felt the threat that Iran is a target yet," he said. "We are willing to have dialogue with all those who are in favor of peace but not with those who propagate violence."

The New York Times reported Saturday that 12 Iranians seeking infiltration and influence in the western parts of Afghanistan were arrested and handed over to the U.S. military at the Khadhar Airport, where the men were held and questioned.

The 12 men, allegedly of the Revolutionary Guards, a conservative military body close to the country's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei, could be the first proof of Iran's involvement in Afghanistan.

U.S. officials have accused Iran of

seeking influence in Afghanistan, especially the western parts ruled by Ismail Khan, a warlord who has had close ties with Iran over the years. Iran has repeatedly denied the charges and has declared that it supports the interim government of Hamid Karzai.

Iran's supreme leader has the last word on foreign policy, including relations with the United States. Despite President Mohammed Khatami's call for détente and dialogue, Khamenei has often expresses hostile remarks toward America.

Although U. S. accusations against Iran have thwarted post-Sept. 11 efforts to bring the two countries closer, they have opened discussion inside Iran concerning the country's foreign policy and its interests. Reform-minded politicians and members of Parliament have questioned how foreign policy decisions are made and whether they serve the country's interests.

International Herald Tribune
Monday, March 11, 2002

U.S. warned by Turkey and Jordan on Iraq war

By Howard Schneider

The Washington Post

CAIRO: Jordan and Turkey warned the United States on Sunday that a military strike against Iraq could destabilize the region and undermine the economies of two of America's closest allies in the Muslim world.

With Vice President Dick Cheney starting a tour of the region, the cautionary warning reflected a near consensus among regional leaders that the risks of an attack on President Saddam Hussein far outweigh the threat that he and his regime are perceived to pose.

Coming from Jordan and Turkey, such warnings are particularly pointed: U.S. planes stationed at Turkey's Incirlik Air Base would be involved in any large-scale assault on Iraq, while the country could also serve as a possible base for Iraqi opposition groups to

move and operate from the north of the country. Along with being a major U.S. ally, Jordan likewise could serve as a possible host for dissident Iraq politicians planning a new government.

President George W. Bush has said he wants to oust Saddam from power, accusing him of pursuing chemical, biological and other weapons of mass destruction, and dubbing his regime part of an "axis of evil" along with Iran and North Korea.

"An attack on Iraq will seriously affect Turkey," Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit said in an interview on state-run television. He added that Turkey's economy was "resting on very sensitive balances," including a \$16 billion International Monetary Fund bailout. "While the Iraq issue hangs over us like some kind of nightmare, you can't expect much new investment to come to Turkey," he said.

Ecevit said he planned to discuss his country's concerns about a war with Iraq "very openly" when the vice president arrives at the end of his trip.

Cheney was due to arrive in Amman on Tuesday.

He was preceded in Amman on Sunday by Izzat Ibrahim, deputy chairman of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council, who briefed King Abdullah II on recent talks that Iraq held with the United Nations about the possibility of weapons inspectors returning to the country, a development that could forestall a U.S. attack.

The Jordanian monarch said afterward that "striking Iraq represents a catastrophe to Iraq and the region in general and threatens the security and stability of the region," the Petra News Agency reported. The king "stressed Jordan's rejection of using force against Iraq," according to the agency.

Cheney is likely to hear a similar refrain throughout the region as he tours nine Arab states, Israel and Turkey in coming days, the highest-level U.S. visit to the Middle East since the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

While Bush has indicated a willingness for the United States to pursue efforts against Saddam without the help of a coalition, regional officials and diplomats have become increasingly vocal in arguing that the safer strategy is to continue containing the regime, and allowing it to atrophy.

Although hardly enamored of Saddam — indeed, many Arab officials agree that the region would be better off without him — they are wary of the popular reaction U.S. military action would spark, at a time when American bombers are still at work in Afghanistan, and Israel and the Palestinians remain at violent odds.

Opposition to a military campaign against Iraq was a key theme of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's recent trip to the U.S., and has also been openly opposed by Saudi Arabia.

Blair supports U.S. on Iraq

In London, Cheney finds an ally favoring a tough stance

By Michael R. Gordon

The New York Times

LONDON: On the first step of a whirlwind tour to drum up support for tough action on Iraq, Vice President Dick Cheney received strong backing on Monday from the British prime minister, Tony Blair.

With Cheney by his side, Blair told a news conference that Saddam Hussein's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction represented a grave threat, although no decisions had yet been made to mount a military campaign to oust the Iraqi leader from power.

"Let us be under no doubt whatever," Blair said. "Saddam Hussein has acquired weapons of mass destruction over a long period of time. He's the only leader in the world that's actually used chemical weapons against his own people. He is in breach of at least nine U.S. Security Council resolutions about weapons of mass destruction."

"He has not allowed weapons inspectors to do the job that the UN wanted them to do in order to make sure that he can't develop them."

Cheney's visit came exactly six

months after two hijacked airliners smashed into the World Trade Center in New York, another slammed into the Pentagon in Washington and a fourth crashed in a field in Pennsylvania.

In Washington, President George W. Bush used the occasion to appeal for the world's nations to keep an unflagging commitment to the fight against terrorism. (Page 4)

Western officials said after the London meeting that the British leadership agreed with the Bush administration assessment of the Iraqi threat and also that it would be desirable if Saddam was removed. Unlike the Bush administration, however, the British prime minister is concerned with bringing public opinion along and managing the issue.

Public support for military action against Iraq in the United States far outstrips European sentiment on the issue. In part, that reflects the fact that the Sept. 11 attacks took place in the United States, but it also reflects a

European preference for diplomacy over confrontation as well as anxiety in Europe over the Bush administration's proclivity for unilateral action.

Even as Blair supports the Bush administration's tough posture on Iraq, he has to contend with fissures within his own cabinet and Labor Party over the prospect of an military offensive against Iraq.

Blair's concerns about managing public opinion at home were visible Monday. Though he was categorical in his assessment of the Iraq threat, he also sought to reassure his own public that any action against Iraq would be decided on "in a calm, measured way."

"No decisions have been made on how we deal with this threat, but that there is a threat from Saddam Hussein and the weapons of mass destruction is not in doubt at all," Blair added. "So what is important, obviously, is that we reflect and consider and deliberate."

London is the only European stop on Cheney's 10-day trip, which is to take him to 12 nations. Britain is not only the

closest American ally in Europe but also the one that can be counted on to give the most sympathetic hearing for the U.S. Iraq policy.

British forces were the only foreign military to fight with the United States in the opening weeks of the war in Af-

International Herald Tribune
Tuesday, March 12, 2002

ghanistan, and Britain might be the Western nation to contribute forces for an Iraq campaign.

Blair and Cheney had a private one-on-one meeting Monday with only note-takers present.

They also had a luncheon meeting with top aides, which touched on how to support the government of Hamid Karzai and bring stability to Afghanistan. Also discussed were the tense situation in the Middle East, North Korea, and the problem of weapons of mass destruction. Iraq was just a small part of this discussion.

Cheney also displayed his style of diplomacy on Monday. American officials have made it clear from the start

that Cheney was not bringing a military plan with him, was not announcing a military decision already made and was making it clear that the Bush administration has not yet settled on a plan.

At the same time, they say, Cheney was not approaching his mission the way Secretary of State Warren Christopher conducted his early soundings on Bosnia policy during the Clinton administration.

Cheney's mission has more to do with how the United States and its allies can eliminate the threat posed by Saddam Hussein than whether such an effort should be undertaken.

If there is a different in emphasis in the British and American positions, it may be on the issue of inspections.

Some British officials said Monday that it would not be possible to build public support for a military campaign unless the West demonstrated that it had made a determined effort to re-

solve its concerns over Iraq's weapons of mass destruction by demanding the admission of UN inspectors.

Conservatives members of the Bush administration, in contrast, have tended to see inspection as a potential snare. Their fear is that Saddam will use them to drag out deliberations in the United Nations and undermine the push for military action. So they have raised the bar of what type of inspections would be acceptable.

The rest of Cheney's trip will be more challenging. He leaves Tuesday for Jordan, which has been broadly supportive of many elements of U.S. foreign policy but which has a large Palestinian population and borders Iraq.

Jordan's King Abdullah II said recently that "striking Iraq represents a catastrophe to Iraq and the region in general and threatens the security and stability of the region."

IRAK

Bush bat le rappel contre Saddam

Washington
de notre correspondant
Jean-Jacques Mével

Six mois après le 11 septembre, le président Bush juge une confrontation avec l'Irak de Saddam Hussein pratiquement inévitable et invite les alliés des États-Unis à ouvrir les yeux sur la réalité du terrorisme d'État.

Hier, à 8 h 46, à la pointe de Manhattan comme sur le bord du Potomac, une minute de silence a marqué le souvenir des 3 000 morts du World Trade Center et du Pentagone.

Devant la Maison-Blanche battue par les couleurs de 170 pays, George W. Bush a aussi rendu hommage à « la puissante coalition » qui participe depuis à la traque anti-terroriste. Il a exprimé sa gratitude aux Européens. La France, « ce bon allié qui a mobilisé près du quart de sa marine en appui de l'opération Enduring Freedom », a même eu l'honneur d'être la première citée.

Mais cette courtoisie transatlantique, assez rare ces dernières semaines, est loin d'être désintéressée : le président américain attend fermement que les alliés se rangent une fois de plus derrière les États-Unis lorsque s'engagera la confrontation annoncée avec l'« axe du Mal ».

Dans son appel, George W. Bush n'a invoqué ni le nom de l'Europe, ni celui de l'Irak. Pourtant, les ambassadeurs présents à la cérémonie n'ont eu aucune difficulté à saisir le message : « Chacun des pays de notre coalition doit appréhender avec sérieux la menace que représente la terreur à grande échelle, celle qui passe par des armes chimiques, biologiques et nucléaires, a dit le président. Les États-Unis consulteront leurs alliés (...) Mais nous, Américains, sommes résolus à la confrontation. Les faits sont irréfutables. » Bref, avec Bagdad, le statu quo n'est plus acceptable.

Visant Saddam Hussein sans le nommer, George W. Bush a aussi donné sa définition du terrorisme d'État : « Il n'est pas possible d'abandonner le contrôle d'une arme absolue à des hommes qui n'ont aucun respect pour la vie humaine. » En substance, le président promet le même destin aux tueurs du 11 septembre et au plus mauvais génie de « l'axe du Mal ». Dans cette « nouvelle phase » du conflit, les États-Unis et le reste du monde civilisé n'auraient plus ni le temps, ni le droit à l'erreur.

Pour la Maison-Blanche, ce discours doit servir de toile de fond politique aux grandes manœuvres de l'Onu. D'ici au 1^{er} juin, le Conseil de sécurité doit

redéfinir les sanctions appliquées à l'Irak. Au bout de douze ans, Washington veut obtenir ce que Saddam Hussein n'a jamais accepté : le droit d'inspecter librement, sans limite ni préavis, toute installation liée à l'arsenal de mort irakien. Si Bagdad devait renâcler, George W. Bush y trouverait, dès l'été, le prétexte d'un règlement plus musclé.

En attendant, les États-Unis sont soucieux de sauver les ap-

parences en jouant le jeu diplomatique. Les réticences des Européens devant une nouvelle aventure militaire ne sont qu'une partie de l'explication. Le soutien de l'opinion ne vient pas à n'importe quel prix. 72 % des Américains souhaitent voir Saddam Hussein délogé, mais c'est à condition que George W. Bush obtienne d'abord le soutien de leurs alliés, d'après un sondage ABC-Washington Post.

Réticences européennes

Bruxelles :
de notre correspondant
Philippe Gélie

Tout prêts à laisser faire les Américains en Palestine, les Européens pourraient leur mettre des bâtons dans les roues en Irak. Louis Michel, le ministre belge des Affaires étrangères, a adressé hier une lettre à la présidence espagnole de l'Union, ainsi qu'à la France et au Royaume-Uni en tant que membres permanents du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. Il y propose une démarche diplomatique des Quinze pour éviter une intervention militaire américaine contre le régime de Saddam Hussein. Il s'agirait d'intervenir auprès du maître de Bagdad pour obtenir des garanties permettant à

tous les inspecteurs de l'ONU, y compris américains, de travailler sans contrainte dans le pays. Hubert Védrine, le chef de la diplomatie française, s'est borné à souligner qu'aucun débat n'avait eu lieu sur la question : « De quoi aurions-nous débattu ? Nous sommes toujours dans la phase où il est demandé à Saddam Hussein de laisser travailler les inspecteurs sans contrainte ni limitation. L'Irak doit mettre en œuvre les résolutions du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU. » Certains Européens ont manifesté leur inquiétude devant l'hypothèse évoquée au Pentagone d'utiliser l'arme nucléaire contre des pays qui ne la possèdent pas. Ils font aussi valoir que, pour que le plan de paix saoudien ait une véritable chance de réussir, il faudrait le soutien de toute la Ligue arabe, Irak compris.

LIBÉRATION
12 MARS 2002

Les opposants irakiens dopés par Bush

12 Réfugiés pour la plupart à Londres, les anti-Saddam se réjouissent du durcissement de ton de Washington. Un signal pour relancer leur lutte.

Londres
de notre correspondant

La télévision s'appelle «Liberté». Sur l'un des écrans de contrôle, un Saddam Hussein, couleur kaki, défile en accéléré. Une rétrospective du dictateur irakien et de son règne implacable se prépare. Presque un quart de siècle d'attente et de déception pour tous ces journalistes en exil. «Après chaque guerre, j'ai cru qu'il allait être renversé. Il est toujours là.» Réfugié à Londres depuis 1977, Qassem n'a pas perdu espoir: «Nous allons bientôt rentrer. Je sens que cette année sera la bonne!» Dopés par les discours musclés de Bush Junior contre «l'axe du mal», les adversaires de Saddam Hussein relèvent la tête. Le Congrès national irakien (CNI), qui regroupe plusieurs partis d'opposition, ne mène pour l'instant qu'une offensive médiatique à partir de ses bureaux ultramodernes de l'Ouest londonien. Sa chaîne satellitaire diffuse depuis septembre trois heures de programme par jour et prévoit d'émettre en continu d'ici à mai. Son journal, *al-Mu'tamar*, circulerait sous le manteau «jusqu'à Bagdad», affirme l'un de ses rédacteurs.

Liens troubles. Tous constatent un ton neuf à Washington. Les autorités américaines ont menacé Saddam à plusieurs reprises. Mais c'est la première fois qu'elles appellent à «changer de régime». «Jamais l'administration Clinton n'avait employé ces termes», souligne un opposant qui, comme beaucoup, préfère conserver l'anonymat. Pendant onze ans, les États-Unis ont isolé l'Irak et attendu une révolution de palais. «Leur politique d'endiguement a échoué. Cela revenait à enfermer le loup dans la bergerie. Seule la population en a payé le prix.»

En juin 1992, à Vienne, cet homme a participé avec un banquier chiite, Ahmed Chalabi, à la fondation du CNI. Un tournant dans l'histoire de l'opposition irakienne. Par le passé, peshmergas (combattants kurdes),



Saddam City, banlieue de Bagdad, février 1999. Depuis onze ans, les États-Unis ont isolé l'Irak, seule la population en a payé le prix.

«Après chaque guerre, j'ai cru que Saddam allait être renversé. Je sens que cette année sera la bonne!» Qassem, réfugié à Londres depuis 1977

chiites (1), libéraux et ex-baassistes (2) avaient toujours combattu en ordre dispersé. Ils ont convenu d'un programme en trois points: le ren-

versement du régime honni, son remplacement par un gouvernement démocratiquement élu et la mise en place d'un État fédéral. «La CIA avait payé tous les frais. La plupart des participants l'ignoraient.» Des liens troubles qui, une fois connus, vont entraîner de nombreuses scissions. Quelques mois plus tard, le CNI s'est installé au nord de l'Irak, dans le sanctuaire kurde protégé par l'Occident. En 1996, quand Saddam a lancé ses troupes à l'assaut de son quartier général, les Américains se sont contentés de bombarder le sud du pays. «Ils ont dû regarder la carte à l'envers», s'écrit cet homme qui a réussi de justesse à s'enfuir. Plusieurs centaines de ses compagnons ont été exécutés. Depuis, la coalition, chassée de son pays, était en léthargie. Son principal leader, Ahmed Chalabi, bien que devenu *persona non grata* à la CIA, continue d'abreuver le Pentagone de projets d'offensive. Ses anciens alliés ré-

publicains occupent aujourd'hui des postes clés dans l'administration Bush et s'appellent Donald Rumsfeld ou Paul Wolfowitz, le ministre de la Défense et son adjoint. Et son dernier plan préconise la création

d'une enclave dans le sud, à Nassiriya, qui servirait de point de départ à un soulèvement des populations chiïtes.

«Le CNI a connu des jours difficiles, reconnaît l'un de ses dirigeants, Latif Rachid. Mais aujourd'hui, le climat a changé.» Il revient d'un voyage à Washington, devenu ces derniers temps une étape obligée pour les Irakiens en exil. Il a eu des entretiens avec des responsables américains. «Nous avons aussi entamé un dialogue avec les autres groupes d'opposition.» Avec d'autres, il prépare la tenue au printemps de deux conférences, une militaire et une politique. La première devrait rassembler une pléiade de généraux qui ont fait défection. La seconde s'apparentera à un nouveau congrès de Vienne. «Ce ne sont pour l'instant que des projets. Aucune date n'a été fixée.»

Méfiance. Latif Rachid appartient aussi à l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), l'un des deux grands partis kurdes. Son beau-frère, Jalal Talabani, dirige un mini-Etat au nord-est de l'Irak. Retranchés dans leurs montagnes, les Kurdes jouissent depuis la guerre du Golfe d'une indépendance *de facto* et d'un parlement. Instruits des échecs du passé, ils hésitent à reprendre la lutte contre Saddam au risque de tout perdre. «Nous ne nous engagerons pas dans une aventure dont les objectifs ne sont pas clairs», a prévenu le leader de l'UPK. Latif Rachid, représentant à Londres de l'UPK, se dit cependant convaincu que le moment venu, les peshmergas ne se déroberont pas. «Nous avons reçu en novembre l'assurance de Colin Powell (le secrétaire d'Etat américain) que nous serons protégés en cas d'attaque.» Un message réitéré lors de sa dernière visite dans la capitale fédérale. Massoud Barzani, le chef de la faction rivale, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), serait en revanche beaucoup plus réticent. Un opposant l'explique ainsi: «N'oubliez pas qu'il fait des affaires avec Saddam.» Sa dîme prélevée sur le pétrole irakien exporté vers la Turquie lui rapporterait 1,5 million de dollars par jour. Chez les opposants chiïtes, l'espoir se double de méfiance. Chacun se



souvent de l'insurrection noyée dans le sang, au lendemain de la guerre du Golfe. «Bush père a appelé les Irakiens au soulèvement, puis a laissé Saddam les massacrer. Nous ne faisons plus confiance aux Américains», s'écrit l'ayatollah Saïd Mohammed Bahr el-Uloom, l'un des plus hauts dignitaires religieux, en égrenant son chapelet. Depuis la répression du printemps 1991, il n'a plus de nouvelles de 18 membres de sa famille. Les récentes attaques du fils Bush contre le «satan» iranien ne facilitent pas non plus une éventuelle coopération

entre les Etats-Unis et les islamistes chiïtes. «On ne peut pas mettre l'Iran et l'Irak dans le même sac. C'est inacceptable», s'exclame le Dr Hamid al-Bayati, représentant de l'Assemblée suprême de la révolution islamique en Irak, une organisation basée à Téhéran. Il n'exclut cependant pas une participation de sa branche armée, al-Badr, à l'effort de guerre et s'empresse de montrer une cassette vidéo filmée «quelque part en Irak». Au son d'une musique martiale, des combattants barbus défilent, la kalach à l'épaule, derrière de vieux chars russes et des bulldozers. «Il ne nous manque que l'aviation», précise-t-il. **Leader.** L'opposition irakienne est plus que jamais à la recherche d'un leader qui fasse l'unanimité. Un nom revient régulièrement, celui de Najib al-Salhi, un ancien général de la garde républicaine, le corps d'élite de Saddam Hussein. Exilé depuis 1995 d'abord en Jordanie, puis aux Etats-Unis, il dirige un Mouvement des officiers libres et affirme avoir conservé de puissants relais au sein de l'armée. Il ne prône pas un coup d'Etat, mais un soulèvement à la fois populaire et militaire qui coïnciderait avec une intervention américaine. Un tel scénario aurait selon lui toutes les chances de réussir: «Une fois la guerre déclenchée, les Américains doivent lancer un appel à la révolte. Si le message est clair, les Irakiens y répondront.» ●

CHRISTOPHE BOLTANSKI

- (1) Sur 22 millions d'habitants, il y a au moins 4 millions de Kurdes et 12 millions de chiïtes.
- (2) Le Baas est le parti de Saddam Hussein.

Tony Blair suit Dick Cheney sur Saddam

Dick Cheney, le vice-président américain, qui a entamé hier à Londres une tournée dans pas moins de 12 pays, a Saddam Hussein dans sa ligne de mire. Officiellement, il vient seulement «discuter» avec les «amis» des Etats-Unis du danger représenté par les «armes de destruction massives» et a commencé son tour de piste par son allié le plus fidèle Tony Blair.

S'il a pris soin de préciser qu'aucune décision concrète ne sera annoncée au cours de son voyage, il va s'efforcer de convaincre le reste de la coalition antiterroriste de la possibilité d'élargir la campagne militaire actuelle à l'Irak. Lors d'une conférence de presse conjointe, le Premier ministre britannique est convenu avec son hôte que Saddam Hussein et son arsenal de mort constituent, «sans le moindre doute, une menace». Un message qu'il réitère depuis plusieurs jours comme pour mieux se

démarrer de ses partenaires européens. Alors que la presse locale fait déjà ses gros titres sur la participation du Royaume-Uni à l'effort de guerre, Downing Street a qualifié de totalement fausse «l'idée selon laquelle M. Cheney viendrait avec, dans sa poche, une demande pour 25000 soldats britanniques». Washington sait qu'elle va se heurter à une forte résistance. Y compris à Londres. Dans un texte commun, 70 députés travaillistes se sont déclarés hostiles à une guerre contre l'Irak. La question divise

même le cabinet. Clare Short, ministre en charge du Développement international, a déclaré publiquement qu'elle ne soutiendra pas une action qui provoquerait davantage de souffrances parmi la population civile irakienne. Le nouvel homme fort du gouvernement, le ministre de l'Intérieur David Blunkett, a reconnu que l'Irak pose à la Grande-Bretagne «un réel dilemme».

CH.B. (à Londres)

TRAIT POUR TRAIT Eren Keskin, militante des droits de l'homme en Turquie

Gardée à vue

Istanbul : Éric Biegala

C'est une chorégraphie bien rodée et elle s'est encore répétée le 20 février dernier... Une petite troupe de quinze manifestants se réunit devant le palais de justice de Sultanahmet, dans le quartier historique d'Istanbul, pour manifester son soutien aux détenus en grève de la faim dans les prisons. Quarante-cinq personnes sont déjà décédées des suites de leur jeûne. Environ 150 policiers antiémeutes et une vingtaine de journalistes attendent les manifestants. Une discussion s'engage pendant quelques secondes et les 15 activistes sont interpellés manu militari puis traînés vers les cars de police sous l'œil interrogateur de quelques touristes. Une garde à vue supplémentaire pour Eren Keskin et ses amis...

« On doit approcher de la centaine », estime dans un sourire l'activiste la plus connue de Turquie. Ses détracteurs assurent qu'elle ambitionne de figurer au Livre des records... Le sujet pourrait être risible s'il n'était aussi grave. Défendre les droits fondamentaux en Turquie revient en effet à passer régulièrement quelques heures en garde à vue, et parfois quelques mois en prison. Mais pour Eren Keskin, le jeu en vaut clairement la chandelle. « Je me suis toujours sentie militante ; à l'âge de 14 ans j'étais proche des socialistes et de la gauche, mais je n'ai jamais milité dans un parti : en Turquie, ça ne sert à rien, explique-t-elle. Les partis d'opposition reproduisent le même schéma que ceux au pouvoir. Les femmes y font de la figuration et l'organisation est quasi militaire. »

Le militantisme en uniforme n'est visiblement pas sa tasse de thé, pas plus que le look « garçon manqué » des militantes de la gauche turque. Eye-liner très prononcé, fond de teint, rouge à lèvres, longue chevelure noire parfois montée en une demi-« choucroute », robes italiennes, talons aiguilles : Eren Keskin ressemble davantage à Geneviève de Fontenay qu'à Arlette

► Cette élégante avocate avait 14 ans lors de sa première interpellation. Elle en a connu une centaine depuis.



Le 20 février dernier, Eren Keskin est interpellée manu militari puis traînée vers les cars de police.

Avec une quinzaine d'autres militants des droits de l'homme, elle était venue devant le palais de justice de Sultanahmet, dans le quartier historique d'Istanbul, pour manifester son soutien aux détenus en grève de la faim.

Laguiller. « C'est vrai que j'aime l'Italie et les années soixante », confesse l'activiste avec un petit sourire de coquetterie.

Le look « Dolce Vita » est d'autant plus étonnant que les atours sont très précisément codifiés en Turquie. Même chez les hommes, la forme de la moustache révèle souvent une appartenance politique.

« C'est vrai qu'on dirait une bourgeoise », admet une militante de base. Mais ce look n'est pas sans avantage : les gardes à vue d'Eren Keskin se déroulent en général sans violence...

Née à Bursa, 250 km au sud d'Istanbul, Eren ne garde pas un souvenir très précis de ses pre-

mières années. Un père fonctionnaire, une mère au foyer... Cette dernière lui donnera toutefois pour références et pour héros les activistes et intellectuels du début des années 70. Entretemps, la famille déménage à Istanbul, et c'est là que se forment la première rencontre avec la politique... et la première garde à vue. « C'était en 1973 à l'époque

des affrontements entre droite et gauche. J'avais 14 ans et j'allais au lycée avec une chaîne autour de la taille en guise d'arme pour me défendre. On m'a interpellée à l'occasion d'une bagarre... Les policiers m'ont traitée en gamine alors que je me prenais pour une grande révolutionnaire. Ils ne m'ont pas touchée et ont simplement appelé ma mère... C'est d'elle que j'ai reçu une solide correction ! »

Dans son petit bureau sommairement meublé, la présidente de l'IHD-Istanbul a posé quelques photos en noir et blanc sur le buffet. Che Guevara côtoie le cinéaste Yilmaz Güney ou d'autres personnalités de la gauche turque historique. Derrière s'étagent les imposants

volumes du Code pénal. Eren Keskin est également avocate. Sa prédilection ? Les affaires politiques, bien sûr, mais aussi le droit des femmes. Son cabinet défend 150 femmes, kurdes en majorité. « Depuis deux ans, les témoignages de viols sont de plus en plus nombreux, notamment en provenance du Kurdistan », explique-t-elle.

passer pour des alliés des « terroristes » kurdes. » Une campagne d'ailleurs couronnée de succès puisque les défenseurs des droits de l'homme sont généralement considérés comme suspects dans le pays. « Le problème fondamental, c'est que tout est déterminé par l'armée. La Turquie est une sorte de République mili-

taire qui a constamment besoin d'ennemis : la gauche, les Kurdes et maintenant les islamistes... »

Sommée de se démocratiser par une Europe qu'elle entend un jour intégrer, la Turquie multiplie les manœuvres dilatoires. Eren Keskin n'en est pas encore à jouer la mouche du coche, mais le régime s'est trouvé en sa personne un adversaire particulièrement déterminé. En talons hauts, certes, mais qui ne laisse rien passer, quitte à multiplier les gardes à vue.

Le mot Kurdistan est lui-même une provocation pour le pouvoir, qui considère son usage comme une preuve de « séparatisme ». Eren Keskin a

d'ailleurs fait six mois de prison pour l'avoir employé dans un article signé de sa main. Une tentative d'enlèvement en 1993, une autre d'assassinat en 1994... « Mon souvenir le plus dur, ce sont les autopsies de la vingtaine de collègues de l'IHD assassinés dans les années 90 ». Eren a insisté pour être présente lors des dissections de manière à vérifier que le légiste n'« oubliait » pas de mentionner les blessures par balles.

En 1999, l'avocate a voulu défendre le chef kurde Abdullah Öcalan mais n'a pas assisté aux audiences. « Une campagne avait été lancée contre moi : l'idée était de décrédibiliser les défenseurs des droits fondamentaux en les faisant

TURQUIE Les eurosceptiques s'opposent aux réformes

Les militaires turcs contre l'adhésion à l'UE

Istanbul : Éric Biegala

« La Turquie n'a jamais obtenu la moindre assistance de l'UE concernant ses intérêts nationaux », accusait, la semaine dernière, le général Tuncer Kilinç... En conséquence de quoi le secrétaire général du tout-puissant Conseil de sécurité nationale estimait que son pays devait chercher d'autres alliés et regarder en direction « notamment de la Russie et de l'Iran »...

Déclarations tonitruantes, campagnes de dénigrement incluant quelques « coups tordus », les eurosceptiques turcs donnent de la voix depuis le début février. En ligne de mire : l'échéance du 19 mars. A cette date, le pays doit avoir mis en œuvre une première vague de réformes politiques auxquelles s'opposent l'extrême droite gouvernementale et l'armée.

Officiellement candidate à l'intégration depuis 1999, la Turquie a été priée de se libéraliser avant de commencer les pourparlers d'accession. Ankara entend de son côté obtenir une date ferme pour entamer ces négociations mais les épisodes des dernières semaines risquent

de ne pas lui faciliter les choses.

La guerre de nerfs a commencé début février, au moment où le gouvernement a soumis au Parlement trois projets de loi censés aider la démocratisation. Surprise : les nouveaux textes sont, en fait, plus répressifs que les anciens. La représentante de l'UE à Ankara monte au créneau : s'invitant chez le premier ministre, l'ambassadeur Karen Fogg obtient que le gouvernement fasse machine arrière.

Une semaine plus tard, une cabale est montée contre elle : un politicien anti-européen fournit à la presse le texte présumé de son courrier électronique. Les journaux se scandalisent du ton « irrespectueux » des « e-mails » tandis que diplomates et hauts fonctionnaires turcs exigent son départ.

Le vice-premier ministre chargé des relations avec l'Eu-

rope Mesut Yilmaz estime, pour sa part, qu'il s'agit là d'une manipulation à mettre au compte d'un « organisme d'État » voulant saboter les relations avec l'UE. Pour tenter de renverser la vapeur, il propose d'abolir la peine de mort. Il s'agit, en effet, d'une des demandes de l'UE, mais qui ne doit pas être mise en œuvre avant 2004. En avançant l'échéance, Mesut Yilmaz espère effacer la mauvaise impression laissée par l'épisode des « e-mails ». Peine perdue : l'extrême droite gouvernementale refuse de suivre.

Le Mouvement de l'action nationaliste (MHP) de Devlet Bahçeli, qui était à l'origine de la tentative de renforcement des lois répressives, n'en démord pas : hors de question de sauver la tête d'Öcalan ! C'est en effet le sort du chef du PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) qui est en jeu. Condamné à mort en

1999, Abdullah Öcalan attend dans l'île-prison d'Imrali que sa sentence soit confirmée par le Parlement avant d'être exécuté.

Le chef du gouvernement s'abstiendra de trancher le débat, laissant ce soin au Conseil de sécurité nationale (CSN) dominé par les militaires. Or ceux-ci avaient annoncé qu'ils s'opposaient à l'abolition de la peine capitale dans l'immédiat.

En s'en remettant au CSN, le chef du gouvernement a incidemment confirmé que les principales décisions de l'exécutif turc sont prises par cette instance et non par le Conseil des ministres. Les déclarations clairement anti-européennes du secrétaire général du CSN, la semaine dernière, doi-

vent être appréciées dans ce contexte. L'extrême droite gouvernementale les a, depuis, reprises à son compte. « Il existe d'autres choix que celui de l'Europe », assène le chef du MHP, le vice-premier ministre Devlet Bahçeli. Les ultranationalistes aiment à l'occasion ressusciter le vieux rêve pantouranien d'une union avec les Républiques turcophones d'Asie centrale.

Quant aux militaires, très présents en politique, dans l'économie, ou dans la diplomatie régionale, ils ne se mêlaient jusqu'à présent que fort peu du dossier européen. Avec les envolées du général Kilinç, c'est chose faite.

Le Conseil de sécurité nationale estime que la Turquie devrait chercher d'autres alliés, comme « la Russie et l'Iran »

IRAN Malgré les déclarations de Bush sur l'« axe du mal », des rencontres auraient eu lieu ces derniers mois à Ankara et Nicosie

Iranien et Américain se reparlent

Les relations irano-américaines, rompues sur le plan diplomatique depuis vingt-deux ans, connaissent de nouveaux frémissements avec la révélation hier de contacts directs entre les deux pays à Ankara et Nicosie et l'invitation lancée par le Sénat américain à des députés iraniens.

Téhéran : Serge Michel

Que se passe-t-il entre l'Iran et les États-Unis ? Une grande confusion, à interpréter les différents signaux émis hier de part et d'autre.

A Téhéran, un chef de file réformateur, Mohsen Armin, vice-prési-

dent du Parlement, a révélé l'existence d'une « sorte de contact », « sans intermédiaires » entre responsables des deux pays, afin de « juguler la crise » régionale, en allusion aux affaires afghanes.

De sources politiques en Iran, des « rencontres » auraient eu lieu ces derniers mois à Ankara et à Nicosie. Au même moment, à Washington, le président de la commission des affaires étrangères du Sénat américain, le démocrate Joseph Biden, a invité des parlementaires iraniens à venir à Washington pour améliorer les relations bilatérales.

« Si les parlementaires iraniens pensent que c'est trop délicat (ici), je suis prêt à les rencontrer ailleurs », a ajouté le sénateur. Or, plus tard

dans la journée, le guide suprême iranien, l'ayatollah Ali Khamenei, a rejeté tout dialogue avec les États-Unis, estimant que « les ennemis (les États-Unis) ont proféré des menaces explicites contre la démocratie islamique de l'Iran et ont dévoilé leurs intentions véritables ».

De son côté, le président réformateur, Mohammad Khatami, en visite en Autriche et en Grèce, a affirmé à un quotidien viennois que, « si les Américains font un geste et montrent leur bonne volonté vis-à-vis de nous, le grand peuple iranien est prêt à des discussions fructueuses, comme avec n'importe quel peuple du monde, sur un pied d'égalité ».

Ce « geste » des Américains, qui pourrait être la levée de certaines

sanctions, semble avoir été très attendu à Téhéran. Mais, en lieu et place, l'Iran s'est retrouvé au cœur de l'« axe du mal » défini par George Bush et en a éprouvé une vive déception, comme en témoigne l'interview accordée mercredi au *Figaro* par le porte-parole des Affaires étrangères, Hamid-Reza Assefi, ancien ambassadeur à Paris.

La Syrie défend l'Irak mais pas Saddam

Damas : de notre envoyé spécial Claude Lorieux

Dans le tir de barrage déclenché par le président américain George W. Bush contre l'« axe du Mal », la Syrie de Bachar el-Assad est miraculeusement épargnée. Washington exerce de vives pressions sur le Liban, dernier abcès de fixation entre Israël et ses voisins arabes, sur l'Iran, coparrain du Hezbollah libanais, et surtout sur l'Irak, partenaire récemment retrouvé et désormais indispensable de l'économie syrienne.

Si les États-Unis ménagent le régime de Damas, c'est que les services de Bachar al-Assad tiennent étroitement en laisse le « Parti de Dieu » et les groupes palestiniens dissidents basés dans la capitale syrienne. On pressent peut-être aussi à Washington qu'« à trop bousculer la Syrie on finirait par créer un front commun Téhéran-Bagdad-Damas », explique un ex-

pert. L'apparition d'un tel « axe » rendrait encore plus hasardeuse une opération américaine contre Saddam Hussein.

L'annonce d'une nouvelle intervention américaine en Irak préoccupe néanmoins les Syriens. Un intellectuel relève même qu'« exercer autant de pressions sur nos voisins est, pour les États-Unis, une façon d'en exercer sur Damas ». D'après lui, « si les Américains frappent l'Irak, la Syrie pourrait être la prochaine sur la liste ».

On n'en est pas là. Mais l'offensive verbale de Bush contre Bagdad a mobilisé l'équipe Assad. Les consultations se sont renforcées avec le Liban, où les puissances étrangères ont pris l'habitude de s'affronter à

moindre frais, ainsi qu'avec Téhéran. Comme la Syrie, l'Iran est voisin de l'Irak et coparrain du Hezbollah, ainsi que l'attestent les portraits des ayatollahs Khomeyni et Khamenei, plus présents que jamais sur les routes de la Bekaa, la région du Liban la plus lourdement contrôlée par Damas. Le vice-président iranien, Mohammad-Reza Aref, était récemment en visite en Syrie. Les deux alliés auraient passé en revue les ripostes envisageables au déclenchement attendu des foudres washingtoniennes sur l'Irak. Nul doute que la question fut également évoquée, début mars, lors des entretiens du prince héritier Abdallah d'Arabie Saoudite et du président Assad. La Syrie accueille sur son

territoire la plupart des partis d'opposition à Saddam Hussein, des chiites aux communistes et aux Kurdes, mais ils n'ont plus le vent en poupe. Quand l'ancien président Hafez el-Assad et Saddam Hussein s'excommuniaient mutuellement, le maître de Damas manipulait ces groupuscules pour énerver son adversaire.

Echappés par l'impitoyable répression contre les chiites et les Kurdes en Irak, les anti-Saddam de Damas ne sont pas pressés de reprendre les armes. Ils multiplient les palabres, mais sans trouver de réponse à deux questions lancinantes : qui remplacerait Saddam Hussein si George Bush parvenait à se débarrasser de lui ? Et que ferait la Turquie si, victorieux grâce à l'Amérique, les Kurdes irakiens proclamaient l'indépendance ?

L'influence des opposants irakiens a chuté depuis qu'à l'instigation du président Bachar el-Assad la Syrie a opté pour la normalisation avec Bagdad. Les échanges de visites gouverne-

« A trop bousculer la Syrie, on finirait par créer un front commun Téhéran-Bagdad-Damas »

mentales ont commencé il y a un an, suivis des visites d'hommes d'affaires, puis de l'autorisation accordée aux citoyens syriens de se rendre en Irak. Une mention sur le passeport le leur interdisait depuis des années !

Le contexte a bien changé depuis qu'Hafez el-Assad rejoignait en 1990 la coalition rassemblée par George Bush père pour libérer le Koweït envahi par l'Irak. Depuis, Irakiens et Syriens ont

« surmonté leurs différences politiques », expliquait récemment Bachar el-Assad au *Corriere della Sera*. A peine rentré de Bagdad avec une délégation d'hommes d'affaires, Issam Zaïm, le ministre de l'Industrie, est presque lyrique quand il parle du marché irakien. « Un habitant d'Alep ne peut pas penser à son environnement régional sans penser à Mossoul, la grande ville du nord de l'Irak, ici, on est à l'étroit. »

« Sans le poumon irakien, l'économie syrienne irait mal », relève un chef d'entreprise

l'Irak, c'est d'abord le pétrole. La normalisation Bagdad-Damas a permis la remise en service, en novembre 2000, de l'oléoduc Kirkouk-Banyas, « à titre expérimental », précise-t-on à l'intention des Américains.

En contrepartie, la Syrie fournit à l'Irak des produits manufacturés, et en particulier « des stocks d'inventés du secteur public », précise-t-on. L'Irak a toujours manqué les commandes commerciales pour récompenser les pays qui lui étaient sympathiques.

Conserver ce courant d'échange est une préoccupation essentielle du gouverne-

ment syrien, au moins autant que les grandes considérations diplomatiques. La perspective d'une opération américaine sur l'Irak l'inquiète, comme un saut de plus dans l'inconnu. Mais ce n'est pas vraiment la chute de Saddam Hussein qui gênerait Damas. L'homme d'affaires reprend, rassurant : « Que Saddam Hussein soit là ou non, les affaires continueront. Avec Bagdad, désormais, on ne parle pas de politique, mais d'échanges commerciaux. C'est plus facile pour s'entendre. » Le Proche-Orient commencerait-il à s'accoutumer à l'après-Saddam ?

Bush veut «s'occuper de Saddam Hussein»

New York de notre correspondant
«Saddam Hussein a visiblement quelque chose à cacher. Il constitue un problème et on va s'occuper de lui.»

Lors d'une conférence de presse, hier à la Maison Blanche, le président George W. Bush a implicitement menacé l'Irak. «Profondément préoccupé», il a précisé que les Etats-Unis consulteraient «leurs amis et alliés» sur leurs intentions vis-à-vis de Bagdad.

Plus tôt dans la journée, la menace était venue de l'ONU. Si Saddam Hussein n'accepte pas rapidement le retour des experts de la commission de désarmement à Bagdad, l'organisation a expliqué qu'elle pourrait montrer «de la compréhension» face à une éventuelle frappe américaine contre l'Irak. Telle est l'analyse qui prévaut dans l'immeuble de verre de New York, alors que le vice-président américain Dick Cheney est en tournée en Europe et au Proche-Orient pour rallier le plus grand nombre de pays possible à une éventuelle offensive contre Saddam Hussein. Depuis quelques jours, les diplomates n'hésitent plus à faire état d'une «évolution» à l'ONU quant au scénario militaire en Irak. Alors que certains pays (dont la France) refusaient de considérer l'hypothèse il y a encore quelques semaines, ils témoignent désormais



Un portrait de Saddam Hussein accroché sur un poste-frontière de l'ONU entre l'Irak et le Koweït.

d'une certaine inflexion dans leurs discours, du moins en privé.

Ton conciliant. Pour l'instant, explique-t-on à l'ONU, l'objectif reste de tout faire pour que Bagdad accepte le retour des experts onusiens de désarmement, qui n'ont pas été autorisés à se rendre en Irak depuis 1998. Les Nations unies ont été encouragées par la visite, il y a deux semaines à New York, du ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères, Naji Sabri, qui a témoigné d'un ton jugé «conciliant». Sabri a laissé une liste de 19 questions, demandant par exemple si un retour des inspecteurs pourrait être

suivi d'une suspension des sanctions pesant actuellement sur Bagdad. Les 18 et 19 avril, il doit repasser par New York pour y récupérer les réponses.

Interrogations. D'ici là, la pression monte. La France estime «qu'il faut empêcher l'Irak d'être une menace» et «exige de Saddam Hussein la reprise sans préalable des inspections des Nations unies». A Paris, en outre, on estime que les informations «des services secrets français suscitent au mieux des interrogations sur ce qu'a pu faire Saddam Hussein ces dernières années» en matière de réarmement. Si peu d'experts croient à un réarmement nucléaire, les interroga-

tions portent sur les armes chimiques et biologiques.

Si le rais irakien n'obtempère pas, toutes les options sont ouvertes. «Il est clair que si les Etats-Unis parviennent à mettre en place un scénario militaire qui ne déstabilise pas la région et qui permet de faire disparaître Saddam, alors tout le monde sera content», résume un diplomate occidental. «C'est une sorte d'ultimatum à Saddam», admet une autre source européenne à Washington, «S'il n'accepte pas, il n'est pas impossible qu'il y ait une action militaire concertée contre l'Irak» ●

FABRICE ROUSSELOT
(avec P.R. à Washington)

Cheney opens toughest part of trip

Jordan's king publicly opposes U.S. plans to oust Saddam

By Michael R. Gordon

The New York Times

AMMAN, Jordan: Vice President Dick Cheney on Tuesday began the most difficult phase of his 12-day mission to elicit allied support for a possible military campaign against Iraq when he encountered open opposition from King Abdullah of Jordan.

In recent days, the king has warned publicly that a U.S. offensive against Iraq would destabilize the region. A Jordanian official said Abdullah would deliver the same message to Cheney in their private meeting Tuesday evening.

"What the King will tell him is that any attack on Iraq will be devastating for the whole region," said an official close to the monarch. "It will be devastating in terms of spreading instability. It will be politically and economically devastating. It will be too much to take. With the Israeli-Palestinian situation the way it is, opening another violent front is not good for this region."

The comments by Jordanian officials are not a surprise for the Bush Administration. In essence, the White House is calculating that, however much Jordan and other Arab nations publicly assail the U.S. effort to overthrow Saddam Hussein, they would privately welcome the move, or at least are prepared to acquiesce to a campaign against him.

The key, American officials say, is to tell Arab leaders that if military action is taken against Iraq, it will be decisive and relatively short. The United States would not leave a wounded Saddam in power nor would the presence of U.S. forces in the region be prolonged.

At the same time, the Bush Administration is seeking to assure Arab leaders that the White House would not be insensitive to an outcry on the Arab street that might follow a U.S. effort to install a new government in Baghdad. To dampen resentment, Washington insists that it is working to stem the violence between Israeli and Palestinians. After arriving here Tuesday,

Cheney said that Washington would do all it could to end to the fighting.

A senior Administration official traveling with Cheney said that Yasser Arafat had met Israeli conditions for being released from house arrest and that the vice president would take up the matter with the Israelis during his coming visit there. Arafat wants to attend an Arab summit meeting in Lebanon this month but has been restricted to the West Bank and Gaza by the Israelis.

Cheney plans to meet in Israel with Anthony Zinni, President George W. Bush's special envoy, to review the situation in the Middle East.

But Iraq remains the driving American concern. Cheney's basic argument is that Saddam's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction is a security threat that is on a par with the terrorist threat posed by Al Qaeda. If UN weapons inspectors are readmitted to Iraq they must have immediate and unrestricted access to any site in the country, Cheney says.

But the unstated and barely disguised assumption behind the argument is that the inspectors will not be allowed to do their work properly and that the only sure way to solve the problem is to topple the Saddam regime through an American-backed insurrection or a U.S. air and ground campaign.

In London, Cheney received a lift when Prime Minister Tony Blair publicly endorsed Washington's argument that Iraq's development of weapons of mass destruction are a major threat. But British officials privately told the Americans that time was needed to build popular support in Britain and international backing.

In Jordan, however, the situation is the reverse. The Jordanians are saying publicly that danger of instability does not arise from Iraq, but from the American plans to take action against Saddam.

The reason for Jordan's anxiety is clear: More than 60 percent of Jordan's population is Palestinian. They view America as a supporter of Israel and

would see an attack on Iraq not as an effort to prevent Saddam from acquiring nuclear weapons but as a war between the West and Islam. Jordan also borders Iraq and has extensive trade with its neighbor.

"Our position is strongly against a military strike for many reasons," said Jordan's foreign minister, Marwan Muasher. "We are concerned about the territorial integrity of Iraq. We are concerned about civilian casualties and the impact that could have on our own population. This is an Arab population and there is a lot of affinity."

Another issue, the foreign minister said, is that Jordan currently gets all of its oil from Iraq under a barter arrangement. "A cutoff would cost us \$500 million in hard currency, money we simply don't have," he said.

Iraq has sought to exploit the Palestinian resentments, hoping to fan political opposition in the Arab world to U.S. action against Baghdad. Iraq recently announced that it was increasing payments to the families of Palestinians killed fighting the Israelis.

Jordanian sensitivities on Iraq have a long history. During the 1991 Gulf War, King Hussein of Jordan essentially sat on the fence. Angry Palestinians in Jordan cheered as Iraqi Scud missiles zoomed overhead toward their targets in Israel. Posters of Saddam were plastered in the streets.

The bad feeling was mutual. But relations between the United States and Jordan are currently quite close. On his flight to Jordan, Cheney's aides made much of a new trade agreement and praised Jordan's efforts to set up a hospital in Afghanistan.

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TEMPÊTE DU DÉSERT II

Les Etats-Unis préparent leur plan de guerre

Pour éliminer Saddam Hussein, il faudra déployer 200 000 à 300 000 hommes en Irak. Certains devront y rester pendant des années !

Le Pentagone apporte la touche finale à un plan de guerre dont les objectifs sont clairs et précis : il s'agit d'éliminer définitivement Saddam Hussein. La date précise du lancement des opérations et l'identité de ceux qui, parmi

les alliés, y participeront sont les seuls points qui restent en suspens pour cette deuxième phase majeure de la guerre contre le terrorisme, sorte de Tempête du désert II, qui, cette fois, pourrait aller jusqu'à Bagdad si nécessaire.

L'opération Tempête du désert - l'offensive allée sous commandement américain contre l'Irak, en 1991 - a montré au monde comment se dérouleraient désormais les guerres modernes : une

campagne intense de bombardements, suivie d'une attaque de type guerre éclair menée par les troupes au sol. En 1991, l'invasion du Koweït par l'Irak avait justifié l'intervention contre Bagdad. Cette fois, c'est la production irakienne d'armes de destruction massive. Tout reste à faire. Malgré les premiers succès enregistrés par les inspecteurs de l'armement des Nations unies dans les années qui ont suivi la guerre du

Golfe, l'arsenal biologique irakien n'a jamais vraiment été mis au jour. D'après les analystes occidentaux, l'Irak poursuivrait ses expérimentations d'armes nucléaires, biologiques et chimiques. Bien que Saddam Hussein ait affirmé que les inspecteurs de l'ONU étaient les bienvenus dans son pays, l'Irak reste difficile à inspecter du fait de mécanismes complexes de dissimulation qui lui permettent de cacher son arsenal dans des laboratoires éparpillés dans des bâtiments administratifs, des résidences privées, des palais présidentiels...

Le président Bush et Tony Blair ont fait part de leur exaspération croissante vis-à-vis du régime irakien. L'un comme l'autre ont exprimé sans ambages que l'heure de l'action contre Bagdad était pratiquement venue. Les responsables militaires ont dressé des plans qui prévoient un renforcement du matériel et des troupes dans la région au cours de l'été prochain. Si les pressions diplo-

matiques échouent à obtenir les résultats espérés, les opérations pourraient débuter cet automne.

A en croire les experts, il faudrait déployer une force de 200 000 à 300 000 hommes pour accomplir la mission, la part britannique se montant probablement à environ 30 000 soldats. Pour Charles Heyman, le rédacteur en chef de *Jane's World Armies*, "nous assisterons vraisemblablement à une campagne aérienne massive, au cours de laquelle les systèmes irakiens de défense antiaérienne et de communications seront pris pour cible par un panache de missiles de croisière et de bombardiers furtifs, et qui entraînera la destruction des centres de commandement politiques et militaires. Cela interdit à la structure militaire d'assurer le commandement de ses troupes, garantit la supériorité aérienne et empêche l'Irak de se défendre. Conformément à la théorie, si les Américains réalisent

cette phase avec succès, l'armée irakienne, équipée de matériels des années 60-70, serait prête à se rendre sans combattre."

Il semblerait en outre que les Etats-Unis soient déjà occupés à remettre en état leurs pistes aériennes dans le Kurdistan irakien en vue de ces préparatifs. Mais l'élimination de Saddam Hussein sera peut-être la partie la plus simple du plan. "Ne nous y trompons pas, il va s'agir d'une opération gigantesque, massive, qui va nécessiter des centaines de milliers d'hommes, explique M. Heyman. Une fois Saddam Hussein éliminé, une fois que les Etats-Unis auront mis en place un gouvernement qui leur est favorable, je pense qu'il faudra maintenir près de 100 000 hommes dans le pays pour assurer la sécurité du nouveau régime. Ces troupes risquent d'être déployées en Irak pendant des années."

Sean Rayment & David Wastell, *The Sunday Telegraph*, Londres

IRAK

Bagdad après la chute de Saddam Hussein

L'élimination physique du président irakien ne réglerait pas les problèmes. Quel qu'il soit, son successeur devra composer avec le parti Baas, les services de sécurité et l'armée, les trois piliers du régime actuel.

AN NAHAR
Beyrouth

L'Occident considère en général que son problème c'est l'Irak et que le problème de l'Irak c'est Saddam Hussein. Dès lors, certains imaginent que si Saddam Hussein venait à mourir, ou était assassiné, ce problème serait résolu comme par enchantement. Il s'agit là d'une analyse plutôt légère de la situation. Ce type d'approche ignore les changements profonds qui sont apparus dans la société irakienne sous la férule de Saddam Hussein et qui affectent désormais toutes ses composantes culturelles, politiques, sociales et économiques. En mettant sur pied un régime extrêmement répressif, Saddam Hussein a procédé à une sorte de "castration" anéantissant les potentialités politiques de la société irakienne, tendance qui ne sera pas facile à corriger dans un avenir proche.

Supposons un instant qu'un régime qualifié de libéral se mette en place à Bagdad et se distingue par un discours empreint de références démocratiques. Ce régime devra alors assumer la gestion d'une période de "post-castration" où il aura à faire face à un Irak divisé en gangs et clans antagonistes. Les Kurdes, par exemple, n'ont certainement pas l'intention

► Dessin de Kahil
paru sur le site
arabia.com.

■ Epuration

En attendant les frappes américaines, Qoussai Saddam Hussein a entrepris une série de limogeages au sein de l'armée irakienne, révèle *Iraq Press*. Des officiers proches de Saddam Hussein seraient en état d'arrestation, et le ministre de la Défense a été prié de prendre sa retraite. Par ailleurs, dix officiers de la garde républicaine, accusés de vouloir renverser le régime, auraient été exécutés.

■ Inspecteurs

L'Irak a repris ses discussions avec les Nations unies au sujet d'un éventuel retour



des inspecteurs de l'armement après trois ans d'absence. Mais, tandis que la presse américaine réclame haut et fort le retour des inspecteurs afin de vérifier l'étendue de l'arsenal de Saddam Hussein, le quotidien irakien *Al Thawra* publie un long document détaillé sur les activités d'espionnage que recouvrent les

missions d'inspection. En dehors de la CIA, les services secrets israéliens, britanniques et australiens auraient aussi profité de ces missions pour espionner Bagdad. Selon *Al Hayat*, une équipe de la CIA s'est installée dans le Kurdistan irakien pour mettre en œuvre les préparatifs d'une attaque contre l'Irak.

d'abandonner une "quasi-indépendance" dont ils jouissent déjà depuis de nombreuses années. De même, les forces politiques irakiennes situées à l'extérieur de l'Irak ne semblent pas prêtes à accepter une solution équitable pour l'avenir du pays qui serait le fruit d'un processus démocratique, auquel elles n'ont jamais été habituées jusque-là. D'autant plus que les formations politiques irakiennes se réclament de la démocratie sont anéanties.

UN PARTI BAAS PLUS OUVERT SUR LE DISCOURS ISLAMISTE

Par ailleurs, ceux qui prétendent que la chute du dictateur irakien serait la solution à tous les problèmes de l'Irak semblent également croire que Sad-

dam Hussein n'a aucun plan d'avenir pour son pays. Ce dernier prépare pourtant les trois piliers sur lesquels repose son pouvoir – le parti Baas, du moins ce qu'il en reste, les forces de sécurité et l'armée – à accepter le principe d'une succession dynastique. Certes, pendant de nombreuses années, Saddam Hussein s'est peu préoccupé de sa succession car, comme tous les dictateurs, il se croyait éternel. Néanmoins, depuis un certain temps, il s'est mis à y penser. Dans sa lutte pour renforcer son pouvoir, il s'est appuyé sur sa famille, plaçant ses frères, ses oncles et ses cousins à tous les postes clés du pouvoir, s'efforçant d'éliminer toute concurrence familiale organisée, comme ce fut le cas avec ses deux gendres, qu'il fit exécuter en 1996. A la fin de l'année 2001, tous les beaux-frères, belles-sœurs et oncles de Saddam Hussein avaient été soit écartés du pouvoir, soit assassinés.

Si Saddam Hussein n'a pas encore tranché entre son fils aîné Oudaï et son fils cadet Qoussaï, de nombreux

éléments laissent à penser que le second serait le favori pour lui succéder. En effet, à l'inverse d'Oudaï, qui s'est distingué par ses frasques et les assassinats qu'il a commis, Qoussaï apparaît comme étant encore sous la protection de son père, même s'il est accusé d'avoir organisé la liquidation de plus de 2 000 prisonniers en 1998 !

Le parti Baas, pilier du régime de Saddam Hussein, a beaucoup changé, notamment sur le plan idéologique. Il a connu son heure de gloire au cours des années 70, lorsque *"tous les Irakiens [étaient] baasistes"*, par conviction, par opportunisme ou parce qu'ils y étaient obligés. Au cours des années 90, le Baas a opéré un tournant idéologique en se montrant plus ouvert au discours islamiste. Il a notamment été décidé que chaque membre du parti devrait connaître par cœur des passages du Coran, sans doute dans le but de gagner les faveurs de la rue. Cette stratégie ne s'est toutefois pas révélée payante à cause de la méfiance populaire à l'égard d'un parti complètement

discrédité – qui contrôle néanmoins toute l'administration et qui, dans la perspective de changements futurs, se contenterait de changer de nom.

Dès lors, le Baas demeurera un parti disposant de relais, d'autant plus qu'il est le seul à avoir été actif pendant ces quarante dernières années. Les forces de sécurité et les services secrets constituent le soutien le plus solide du régime irakien actuel. Les observateurs politiques irakiens ont bien décrit les méthodes de ces nombreux services aux intérêts souvent divergents et qui se distinguent par des pratiques extrêmement cruelles. L'armée constitue donc le troisième pilier du pouvoir irakien actuel. Elle a été à la source de plusieurs tentatives de renversement du régime, mais elle a aussi été régulièrement soumise à une épuration de ses cadres supérieurs. Le mécontentement se fait sentir dans les rangs de ses officiers et attire les sympathies d'un grand nombre de hauts gradés.

Mohammad Roumahi

IRAK

Pourquoi les Etats-Unis vont attaquer

Il n'existe pas de preuve de l'implication de l'Irak dans les attentats du 11 septembre 2001. Il n'empêche, Washington veut faire de ce pays proche de l'Asie centrale une zone d'influence.

AL HAYAT
Londres

Cela ne fait à présent aucun doute : les Etats-Unis vont frapper l'Irak. Ce que l'on ignore encore, c'est à quel moment. Selon un commentateur occidental, lorsqu'on interroge les sphères liées à la Maison-Blanche à propos de l'Iran et de la Corée du Nord, désignés avec l'Irak comme les pays de l'"axe du mal", on s'entend répondre que les Etats-Unis n'ont *"nulle intention"* d'affronter ces deux pays : en revanche, quand la question concerne le seul Irak, les milieux autorisés déclarent que *"le président n'a pris aucune décision..."* Autrement dit, les Etats-Unis sont sur le pied de guerre et il leur reste à fixer le déclenchement des hostilités.

Washington, donc, envisage d'attaquer l'Irak. Selon une source européenne, les décideurs de la Maison-Blanche ont déclaré que, du point de vue de l'administration américaine et de ses conseillers, quatre facteurs au moins seraient propices à une intervention militaire :

1. le conflit serait bref et l'armée irakienne succomberait rapidement aux frappes américaines

► Dessin de Garland paru dans The Daily Telegraph, Londres.



■ L'exception

Si l'Irak est le pays le plus menacé parmi ceux de l'"axe du mal", c'est parce que c'est le seul qui n'a connu aucun changement de direction au cours des vingt dernières années, constate Al Hayat. Aux Etats-Unis, George

W. Bush est un post-reaganien. Sa politique internationale est matée d'un peu plus d'idéologie que celle du pragmatique Reagan et n'affronte pas une superpuissance comme l'URSS.

L'Iran actuel est réellement dans le post-khomeynisme. Enfin, la mort de Kim Il-sung a ouvert la brèche à quelques changements en Corée du Nord. Seul l'Irak ne connaît pas les délices de l'après-Saddam.

2. une bonne partie de la population irakienne accueillerait avec enthousiasme la chute de son dictateur, tout comme l'Afghanistan a salué avec soulagement la chute du régime taliban ;

3. la brièveté de l'affrontement permettrait aux pays arabes de contrôler les réactions populaires et les troubles intérieurs pouvant en résulter ;

4. du côté européen, les protestations seraient tout aussi frileuses que celles qui ont accueilli nombre

d'initiatives américaines unilatérales (accords de Kyoto sur l'environnement, bouclier antimissile, etc.).

Ces considérations, pour la plupart, émanent de l'expérience afghane. Il reste que celle-ci ne peut être décalquée de façon mécanique et "simpliste" sur la situation de l'Irak – même si Washington aborde habituellement de manière "simpliste" les questions internationales. C'est là un argument que les opposants aux décisions américaines ne manqueront pas d'avancer, mais en pure perte. On alléguera, par exemple, que, pour attaquer l'Irak, il faut une raison légitime et que le régime de Saddam Hussein, malgré tous les reproches qu'on peut lui adresser, n'est pas impliqué de façon certaine dans les attentats du 11 septembre 2001, dont Washington a fait le tremplin de sa campagne universelle "contre le terrorisme". Une guerre contre l'Irak ne peut donc s'inscrire dans cette campagne que de manière artificielle.

En fait, les justifications avancées jusqu'à présent par les Etats-Unis ne sont guère plausibles – à supposer qu'ils se donnent la peine de se justifier. Car ce qui est remarquable de leur part, c'est que, s'ils n'ont guère à se préoccuper de l'opinion publique américaine, qui a subi l'attentat du 11 septembre et, à ce titre, est déjà acquise à la cause dès qu'on parle de combattre le terrorisme, ils ne se soucient pas davantage de s'assurer le soutien de la communauté internationale.

Pourquoi, dès lors, les Etats-Unis s'obstinent-ils à vouloir faire la guerre à l'Irak et pourquoi ont-ils décidé de donner le coup de grâce à un régime qu'ils se contentaient de contrôler jus-

qu'à présent ? Qu'est-ce qui les a poussés à changer de politique ? Est-ce la lassitude qui se fait jour à propos de l'embargo imposé à Bagdad ? Il faut dire que le nombre de pays qui violent cet embargo ne cesse de croître ; certains Etats de l'Alliance [antiterroriste] eux-mêmes ont poursuivi leurs échanges avec l'Irak, au grand jour et sous de multiples aspects ; peut-être les Etats-Unis craignent-ils que cela n'aboutisse à réhabiliter le régime irakien et favorise son retour sur la scène internationale, cela à leur insu.

Et si la raison de ce changement, dont les attentats du 11 septembre ne sont que le prétexte, était de "libérer" le pétrole irakien ? Répondant aux réserves émises par les écologistes concernant sa décision d'exploiter des forages en Alaska, George W. Bush a déclaré que son pays ne pouvait compter, pour ses besoins énergétiques, sur des nations "qui ne nous portent pas dans leur cœur".

Mais le pétrole de l'Alaska ne peut rendre les Etats-Unis autosuffisants. Aussi faut-il considérer sous un autre angle la déclaration présidentielle : désormais, Washington n'entend plus compter sur des Etats alliés qui jouissent d'une certaine marge de manœuvre, mais sur des régimes vassaux qui lui vouent une allégeance absolue ; l'instauration d'un tel régime au sein d'un pays producteur d'énergie comme l'Irak serait le premier pas dans cette direction.

Toutes les raisons citées plus haut peuvent justifier, jusqu'à un certain point, la transformation de l'attitude américaine vis-à-vis de l'Irak. Mais il

y a un autre facteur, peut-être plus décisif encore : les Etats-Unis se préoccupent aujourd'hui d'ancrer leur présence et leur influence en Asie centrale et aux portes de la Chine, de la Russie et du sous-continent indien, obéissant en cela à des considérations politiques et militaires liées, dans une certaine mesure, à la question énergétique. Peut-être convoitent-ils de faire du Moyen-Orient et de l'Asie centrale une aire géostratégique unique et une zone d'influence américaine étendue, d'autant que ces deux régions, qui sont dans le prolongement l'une de l'autre, ont également en commun, côté profits, les sources d'énergie et, côté périls, l'islam politique.

S'il en est vraiment ainsi, le renforcement de l'hégémonie sur l'Irak et sa transformation en axe et noyau de l'influence américaine deviennent une affaire de première importance, car l'Irak est à la jonction des deux aires mentionnées : "extrême orient" du monde arabe, c'est aussi un "balcon" qui domine l'Asie centrale. Sur cet échiquier, les Etats et leurs frontières, leurs peuples, leur destinée, ne sont que des pions. Pis, il n'y a qu'un seul joueur...

Salah Bachir

OPINION

"Bombarder, c'est faire preuve d'ignorance"

En Irak, Washington joue avec le feu, explique un ancien responsable de la CIA.

Quand Robert Baer s'oppose aux frappes sur l'Irak, on est en droit de se demander si c'est pour une question de principe. Il a quand même été le spécialiste de l'Irak pour la CIA et, à ce titre, a encouragé les groupes dissidents irakiens à croire que Washington voulait effectivement provoquer la chute de Saddam Hussein, voire sa mort. Pourtant, M. Baer, dont les mémoires, *See No Evil* [La chute de la CIA, éd. J.-C. Lattès, 2002], ont été récemment publiés, est horrifié à l'idée que Washington pourrait bientôt frapper Bagdad. "Si les Etats-Unis bombardent Saddam Hussein et son armée jusqu'à ce que cette dernière n'existe plus, que se passera-t-il ensuite ? Personne ne s'intéresse à la composition ethnique de l'Irak ni à ce que l'Iran risque de faire." Rares sont ceux qui, outre-Atlantique, prennent

aussi bien que M. Baer la mesure des lignes de fracture tribales, ethniques et religieuses qui traversent le Moyen-Orient. L'Irak est particulièrement divisé. Au sud se trouve une majorité chiite qui se tourne vers l'Iran en quête d'appui. Occupant le centre géographique et politique du pays, il y a les sunnites, dont fait partie la tribu de Saddam Hussein. Et au nord se tiennent les Kurdes, eux-mêmes scindés en deux partis ennemis. "Les Etats-Unis ne sont pas en mesure de réorganiser tout cela parce que nous ne comprenons rien à ce pays. Si j'étais Téhéran, par exemple, je chercherais à créer un Etat dans le sud de l'Irak et, comme ça, j'ajouterais 3 millions de barils par jour à ma production. De quoi commencer à faire de l'ombre à l'Arabie Saoudite." Robert Baer a travaillé durant vingt-cinq ans à la direction des opérations de la CIA. Sa description impitoyable d'une agence en plein déclin permet de mieux comprendre comment les Etats-Unis ont pu être pris par surprise le

11 septembre 2001. Après un quart de siècle passé à l'étranger, c'est tout juste si M. Baer reconnaît encore son pays. Et il se dit terrifié par le niveau d'ignorance de l'opinion publique. A l'occasion d'un déjeuner, nous avons passé en revue le problème irakien. Pour lui, Saddam Hussein a largement les moyens de se prémunir contre les frappes annoncées à partir des bases américaines de Diego Garcia [dans l'océan Indien]. Selon M. Baer, il lui suffit de "faire entrer ses chars en Syrie" et de "proclamer qu'il compte libérer la Palestine", poussant ainsi Israël à la guerre avec un Etat arabe. S'il admet que Saddam Hussein est prêt à utiliser la force contre des civils, il ne pense pas en revanche que les armes de destruction massive qu'il accumule aient d'autre vocation que défensive. Il conclut en nous invitant à considérer la région du point de vue du dictateur irakien, lequel n'a jamais eu qu'un seul souci : l'Iran.

Henry Porter, *The Observer* (extraits), Londres

Entretiens du chef kurde irakien Jalal Talabani à Damas

DAMAS, 13 mars (AFP) - 19h12 - Le chef kurde irakien Jalal Talabani a effectué mercredi, au lendemain de son arrivée à Damas, des entretiens avec des responsables syriens, a-t-on appris dans son entourage.

M. Talabani, qui dirige l'Union Patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), une formation d'opposition, a rencontré le vice-président syrien Abdel Halim Khaddam et devait être reçu par le secrétaire général adjoint du parti Baas au pouvoir en Syrie, Abdallah al-Ahmar, a-t-on ajouté de même source.

M. Talabani s'est refusé à tout commentaire sur sa visite, qui intervient alors que les menaces américaines de frappe contre l'Irak se font plus précises.

Un responsable de l'UPK à Damas a affirmé mardi que son organisation n'était pas favorable à des frappes contre l'Irak, qu'il a assimilé à un "complot étranger pour renverser le régime" du président Saddam Hussein.

La Syrie est également opposée à une frappe américaine contre l'Irak.

Le Kurdistan irakien est contrôlé depuis 1991 par l'UPK et le Parti Démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de Massoud Barzani.

Les libertés de la presse toujours bafouées dans le sud-est turc



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 22 mars (AFP) - 9h54 - Seul un sursis de dernière minute a évité à la chaîne Gun-tv, condamnée à un an d'écran noir pour diffusion de chansons en langue kurde, d'être coupée par la police à partir de ce vendredi, nouvelle preuve de l'étouffement des media dans le sud-est turc.

La décision frappant Gun-tv, sous réserve qu'elle soit confirmée en appel sous quinzaine, est la plus lourde jamais décrétée par le Haut Conseil de la Radio et de la Télévision (RTUK).

Préparant sa revue de presse quotidienne, le propriétaire Nevzat Bingol découvre dans le journal que sa petite chaîne locale fait l'objet d'un mois de suspension, en plus de la condamnation à un an. Une bonne dizaine de radios et de télévisions de la région écoperont de la même peine.

"Après la fermeture de ma radio, parce qu'elle +brouillait les talkies-walkies de la police+, m'a-t-on dit, je ne suis pas surpris de cette énième condamnation, car il y a déjà 17 procédures à mon encontre", sourit M. Bingol, dont la précédente chaîne, Metro, avait subi le même sort.

"Le prétexte est ridicule", explique-t-il : "la chanson incriminée est vieille de deux siècles, et il arrive même à la télévision nationale de la diffuser, mais on me reproche de mentionner le fait que des Kurdes habitent cette région, comme si c'était faux", s'insurge-t-il.

Dans le sud-est de la Turquie, à majorité kurde et régi par des lois d'exception depuis un quart de siècle, les media sont soumis à un régime particulièrement contraignant, principalement pour ce qui concerne l'utilisation du kurde.

"Même sous l'administration ottomane, il n'y a jamais eu ici de journal kurdophone, et je crains qu'il n'y en ait pas de sitôt", reconnaît Naci Sapan, président de l'Association des journalistes du sud-est.

Ainsi 29 journaux, hebdomadaires et mensuels en langue kurde ou trop favorables à la cause kurde sont purement et simplement bannis des provinces sous état d'urgence, même s'ils sont en vente libre dans le reste de la Turquie, recense l'Association des Droits de l'Homme (IHD).

Il existe deux journaux indépendants dans la province de Diyarbakir, qui veillent à ne pas franchir la ligne rouge pour subsister, et deux autres chaînes de télévision locales, très prudentes elles aussi.

"Il est clair que je suis dans le collimateur parce que je milite ouvertement pour la levée de l'état d'urgence, je suis donc persécuté pour l'expression de mes opinions", martèle le patron de Gun-tv.

Alors qu'une véritable censure frappe déjà d'interdiction plus de 400 cassettes, il ne reste plus beaucoup d'espace de liberté à ces chaînes, présentant essentiellement des programmes culturels sans avoir le droit de parler en kurde.

"Nous vivons derrière un véritable rideau de fer, où la torture psychologique est quotidienne", dit, amer, M. Bingol.

"Toutes ces interdictions ne conviennent pas un pays candidat à l'Union Européenne", souligne Naci Sapan.

Le gouvernement étudie néanmoins actuellement la possibilité pour la télévision nationale TRT de diffuser une heure de nouvelles en kurde, pour se conformer aux recommandations de l'Union Européenne à laquelle la Turquie veut adhérer.

Pourtant, la pression sur les journalistes, turcs et étrangers, qui doivent tous se munir d'une carte de presse spéciale à cette région, s'est réduite, à mettre en parallèle avec le fait que les accrochages militaires ont quasiment disparu depuis le dépôt des armes de la rébellion kurde, en septembre 1999.

"Il n'y a quasiment plus de zones totalement isolées et interdites aux journalistes", affirme Naci Sapan.

Autre signe de décrispation, peut-être aussi parce que le contrôle s'avère de plus en plus difficile à effectuer : la large tolérance accordée à la chaîne satellite Medya-tv, réputée proche de l'ex-rébellion kurde.

Des émissions de télévision en kurde à l'agenda du gouvernement



ANKARA, 14 mars (AFP) - 11h34 - Le Premier ministre Bulent Ecevit a indiqué jeudi qu'un projet de son gouvernement sur des émissions en langue kurde sur l'une des chaînes de la télévision publique TRT devrait figurer à l'agenda du prochain Conseil national de sécurité (MGK).

"Cette question figurera probablement à l'agenda du MGK", a-t-il dit lors d'une conférence de presse à l'aéroport avant de partir pour l'Espagne où il représentera son pays, candidat à l'intégration de l'Union européenne (UE), au sommet européen de Barcelone vendredi et samedi.

Il s'est refusé à tout autre commentaire "car le sujet n'a pas encore été discuté au MGK", dont la prochaine réunion est fixée au 29 mars.

Cet organe, dominé par l'armée, réunit chaque mois les plus hauts responsables civils et militaires et trace les grandes lignes de conduite du pays.

M. Ecevit confirmait ainsi implicitement des informations parues jeudi dans certains journaux turcs selon lesquelles le ministre d'Etat chargé de la presse Yilmaz Karakoyunlu aurait préparé un projet prévoyant une heure d'émissions par jour en kurde sur l'une des cinq chaînes publiques de la société de radio-télévision turque TRT.

Ces "émissions test" prendront la forme de bulletins d'information, selon le journal libéral Radikal, sans préciser dans quel dialecte kurde elles seront présentées.

Pour réaliser ce projet, des modifications dans les statuts de la TRT et du Haut conseil de l'audiovisuel turc (RTUK) sont toutefois nécessaires, ajoute notamment le journal.

Des émissions dans une autre langue que le turc sont interdites en Turquie.

L'UE réclame à la Turquie plus de droits culturels pour sa population kurde, notamment une télévision et un enseignement en kurde. Les autorités turques refusent catégoriquement un enseignement en kurde, craignant qu'il réveille les velléités séparatistes de sa population kurde.

Manifestation pour l'enseignement en kurde, une centaine d'interpellations



ISTANBUL, 27 mars (AFP) - 14h41 - La police turque a interpellé mercredi une centaine de manifestants à Istanbul qui réclamaient un enseignement en langue kurde, interdit en Turquie, a indiqué le parti de la Démocratie du Peuple (HADEP, pro-kurde) qui a organisé la manifestation.

Environ un millier de manifestants ont été interdit d'accès à la poste centrale de Sirkeci, dans la partie européenne de la métropole, d'où ils voulaient envoyer des télécopies au parlement turc à Ankara pour réclamer un enseignement en kurde, a dit à l'AFP un porte-parole du parti.

Les forces de sécurité sont intervenues pour disperser la foule, procédant à de nombreuses interpellations, dont l'avocat Dogan Erbas, responsable provincial du HADEP, et une dizaine d'autres dirigeants de la formation, a-t-il ajouté.

L'éducation dans une autre langue que le turc, donc le kurde, est interdite.

La campagne pour demander l'enseignement en kurde a débuté en novembre et des centaines d'étudiants dans le pays ont été interpellés pour avoir signé des pétitions en ce sens.

Les autorités turques, qui rejettent catégoriquement cette revendication, considèrent cette campagne politique est inspirée par le Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK, séparatistes kurdes de Turquie), qui a mis fin en 1999 à sa lutte armée pour la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant dans le sud-est du pays.

L'Union européenne à laquelle la Turquie souhaite adhérer lui réclame plus de droits culturels pour sa population kurde, notamment une télévision et un enseignement en kurde.

Alors que la France et la Russie se montrent réservées

Contre l'Irak, Bush compte ses alliés

Engagés dans une vaste campagne pour mobiliser leurs alliés de la coalition antiterroriste sur le thème d'une opération militaire contre Saddam Hussein, les Américains sont en train de gagner des points. En Europe, où la fermeté des Etats-Unis impressionne, c'est aujourd'hui au tour de l'Allemagne, après la Grande-Bretagne et l'Italie, de faire savoir qu'elle pourrait soutenir une éventuelle intervention. Mais à la condition expresse que celle-ci se fasse « sous mandat de l'ONU », a déclaré le chancelier Schröder. La France reste réservée. La Russie paraît s'interroger.

Le refus persistant de l'Irak d'accueillir les inspecteurs en désarmement de l'ONU pourrait

fournir à Washington le prétexte à l'action, même si rien n'est envisagé dans l'immédiat. Des négociations entre l'Irak et l'ONU sont toujours en cours, et le Conseil de sécurité doit examiner le dossier au mois de mai. Les Américains multiplient les déclarations belliqueuses. « Nous ne laisserons pas les régimes les plus dangereux du monde s'allier à des tueurs pour prendre la grande nation qu'est l'Amérique en otage », a martelé hier le président George W. Bush.

Contrairement aux Américains, le renversement du régime de Saddam n'est pas un objectif affiché par les Européens. Malgré cette nuance, les Européens veulent éviter de se dissocier des Etats-Unis à un moment où le retour des Américains sur la scène

diplomatique du Proche-Orient correspond aux vœux des Quinze.

Dans les pays arabes, où le vice-président américain Dick Cheney est actuellement en tournée diplomatique pour mobiliser contre l'« axe du mal », les réactions sont beaucoup plus tièdes. « J'ai dit à Cheney que le Moyen-Orient ne peut pas supporter deux guerres en même temps : les affrontements israélo-palestiniens et une intervention américaine contre l'Irak », déclare aujourd'hui Abdallah II, roi de Jordanie, dans un entretien avec *Le Figaro*. Soufflant le chaud et le froid, le secrétaire d'Etat américain Colin Powell a déclaré, hier : « Nous n'avons aucun plan d'attaque sur le bureau du président des Etats-Unis. »

Soucieux d'engranger des soutiens pour l'éventuelle utilisation des installations militaires régionales, les Américains semblent s'engager un peu plus activement sur le dossier israélo-palestinien, se démarquant de la politique d'Ariel Sharon. L'envoyé spécial de la Maison-Blanche Anthony Zinni a demandé dès son arrivée à Jérusalem le retrait de l'armée israélienne des zones autonomes. M. Zinni s'est entretenu pendant plus d'une heure, hier soir, avec Yasser Arafat à Ramallah, après avoir vu depuis jeudi Ariel Sharon et son ministre de la Défense, Benyamin Ben Eliezer. L'émisnaire a qualifié de « positifs » tous les entretiens qu'il a eus avec les deux parties.

IRAK Les États-Unis enregistrent des ralliements dans leur mobilisation contre le régime de Saddam Hussein

L'Europe se résigne à une opération américaine

Le président George W. Bush a de nouveau promis hier de ne pas laisser « les régimes les plus dangereux du monde », en tête desquels il classe l'Irak de Saddam Hussein, menacer l'Amérique ou ses alliés avec des armes de destruction massive. « Le monde civilisé doit prendre au sérieux la menace croissante de la terreur à échelle catastrophique », a-t-il dit. La mobilisation des Etats-Unis contre l'Irak commence à porter ses fruits.

Luc de Barochez

Pour les États-Unis, le feu n'est pas encore vert pour une opération militaire en Irak. Mais il est déjà à l'orange. Les Européens s'accrochent peu à peu de la perspective d'une action américaine contre Saddam Hussein. Les Arabes traînent des pieds mais ont peu de moyens de s'y opposer.

Les images du vice-président américain Dick Cheney, hier, sur un porte-avions en mer d'Arabie, s'inscrivent dans une gesticulation diplomatique contre l'Irak. Cheney, en tournée au Proche-Orient pour mobiliser les pays arabes contre Saddam, s'est rendu sur le USS John Stennis où il a vu décoller des avions de combat F-18 vers l'Afghanistan. Il a prévenu les militaires que les opérations ne s'arrêteraient pas là. « Cette guerre

cessera (...) lorsqu'aucun groupe terroriste ou gouvernement ne menacera la paix du monde », a affirmé le vice-président.

La détermination des États-Unis balaie les réticences de leurs alliés. Les Européens ont longtemps compté sur le secrétaire d'Etat Colin Powell pour modérer l'Administration Bush. Ils ont compris que celle-ci avait refait son unité sur une ligne intransigeante. La Grande-Bretagne, puis l'Italie, se sont alignées derrière Washington. Hier, c'était au tour de Berlin de faire savoir qu'à la condition expresse que les Etats-Unis obtiennent un mandat de l'ONU, l'Allemagne soutiendrait une opération militaire en Irak. Le chancelier Gerhard Schröder a

tenu ces propos lors d'une rencontre mercredi avec des intellectuels, a confirmé un porte-parole du gouvernement. La France ne pourra plus longtemps rester dans son attitude d'expectative (voir encadré).

Seule la Russie persiste à s'opposer à toute intervention. Hier soir Moscou a démenti des informations publiées dans le *Times* selon lesquelles le ministre russe des Affaires étrangères, Igor Ivanov, aurait déclaré : « Il ne serait pas opportun de lancer des ultimatums affirmant que nous nous retirerions de la coalition » en cas de frappes contre l'Irak par les Etats-Unis. Le porte-parole du ministère russe des Affaires étrangères Sergei Yakovenko a précisé que M. Ivanov « s'est prononcé sans aucune

ambiguïté contre toute action armée unilatérale contre l'Irak».

Malgré le frein russe, l'idée d'une opération américaine s'impose petit à petit, même si on n'en est pas encore là. Les prix du pétrole ont déjà anticipé une crise avec l'Irak par un renchérissement d'environ 3 à 4 dollars le baril, selon les experts. Les énormes réserves pétrolières de l'Irak, les deuxième du monde après celles de l'Arabie Saoudite, et le malaise dans la situation Al-Qaïda et l'Irak. Mais les risques de prolifération bactériologique et chimique, et dans une moindre mesure nucléaire, sont jugés suffisamment graves par Washington pour justifier une intervention.

Le refus persistant de l'Irak d'accueillir les inspecteurs en désarmement de l'ONU, qui ne peuvent plus revenir depuis leur départ en 1998, pourrait fournir à Washington un prétexte d'action. Rien ne laisse prévoir une capitulation irakienne devant les exigences du Conseil de sécurité. Lors de leur dernier entretien à New York, le ministre irakien des Affaires étrangères Naji Sabri a fourni au secrétaire général de l'ONU Kofi Annan une liste de 19 conditions au retour des inspecteurs.

Un prochain round de pour-parlers entre l'Irak et l'ONU est prévu à la mi-avril. En mai, le Conseil de sécurité doit réviser les sanctions contre l'Irak. Il pourrait être amené à poser un ultimatum à Bagdad. En attendant, pour maximiser les pressions sur l'Irak, les Européens veulent prouver qu'un règlement à l'amiable est encore possible. « *L'Irak a encore le temps de se mettre en conformité avec les exigences de la communauté internationale* », a déclaré l'ambassadeur britannique à l'ONU, sir Jeremy Greenstock.

Mais même si les inspecteurs onusiens revenaient en Irak, pourraient-ils travailler librement ? Auraient-ils un accès sans aucune entrave aux sites suspects ? Washington emploie une rhétorique de plus en plus guerrière. La conseillère de Bush pour la sécurité nationale, Condoleezza Rice, a prévenu que les Etats-Unis ne se « *focalisent pas exclusivement* » sur un retour des inspecteurs.

Certains pays européens veulent s'entremettre. La Belgique a proposé sans succès à ses partenaires d'envoyer un émissaire à Bagdad pour exhorter Saddam à la raison. Les collègues de Louis Michel ne veulent pas en-



Le vice-président américain Dick Cheney était hier sur le porte-avions USS John Stennis, en mer d'Arabie. (Photo U.S. Navy/AP.)

tendre parler, estimant qu'il n'y a rien à négocier avec l'Irak.

Contrairement aux Américains, le renversement du régime de Saddam n'est pas un objectif affiché par les Européens. Malgré cette nuance, les Européens veulent éviter de se dissocier de Washington à un moment où le retour des Américains sur la scène diplomatique du Proche-Orient correspond aux vœux des Quinze. « *Il y a là un levier. Si les Américains veulent attaquer l'Irak, ils ne pourront pas laisser Ariel Sharon faire n'importe quoi* », confie un diplomate.

La tournée de Dick Cheney a montré que les Etats-Unis étaient loin d'avoir convaincu les Arabes de leur bonne foi, malgré les gages qu'ils viennent de donner sur le conflit israélo-palestinien. En Jordanie, en Egypte ou dans le Golfe, le vice-président a entendu un message de retenue. Le Yémen, où les Etats-Unis s'apprêtent à envoyer une centaine de conseillers militaires pour aider dans la lutte contre Al-Qaïda, a demandé à Cheney de ne pas jeter d'huile sur le feu. Les Arabes craignent qu'une attaque contre Bagdad ne déstabilise non seulement l'Irak mais aussi toute la région. Mais la vieille rancune du Koweït garantit que le sommet arabe de Beyrouth, les 27 et 28 mars, ne pourra pas déboucher sur un front commun arabe autour de Saddam. Les Etats-Unis jouent sur du velours.

La France circonspecte

Pour Paris, l'essentiel est d'exiger l'application inconditionnelle par Bagdad de toutes les résolutions de l'ONU la concernant, et d'obtenir un retour en Irak des inspecteurs en désarmement de l'ONU. C'est pourquoi la diplomatie française estime qu'il n'y a, à ce stade, rien à négocier avec l'Irak. En cas de refus persistant de Bagdad d'autoriser le retour des inspecteurs, le premier ministre Lionel Jospin a affirmé jeudi dernier sur TV5 que la France se laisserait guider par la « *prudence* ». « *L'Irak, a-t-il dit, doit obéir à ses obligations internationales, respecter les sanctions et l'opération de contrôle de ses armements. Le problème est de savoir comment on le fait. On ne peut pas choisir des solutions dont les conséquences pourraient être pires que la situation actuelle. (...)* » En tout cas, c'est sans doute après les élections présidentielles qu'une éventuelle participation française serait sollicitée par les Etats-Unis. La réponse française sera aussi fonction du résultat du scrutin.

After Saddam ■ By Siyamend Othman

The right way to choose a successor regime

LONDON
Judging by the rhetoric heard in Washington, it appears that President George W. Bush has finally opted for a change of regime in Iraq. But administration officials are paying scant attention to the one option that has a chance of working in Iraq and that can win the overwhelming support of the country's 22 million people. That is the option of working to replace Saddam Hussein's atrocity-laden regime with a federal and democratic state.

Instead, many in the CIA and the State Department seem to be focusing on replacing Saddam by former army officers in an effort to perpetuate the ascendancy of Sunni Arabs who constitute less than 20 per cent of Iraq's population. This is a recipe for civil war and the dismemberment of the country.

Hardly a week passes by without some seemingly new blueprint being proposed. If Washington looks confused, the people of Iraq are even more so. Iraqis need no reminding that their country has no future while Saddam remains in power. They also recognize they cannot get rid of his regime without U.S. assistance. Although some are still skeptical about true U.S. intentions, there is new hope that this time Uncle Sam intends to go the distance.

But many Iraqis do not understand the U.S. obsession with preserving Sunni Arab minority rule, which presupposes continued dominance by Saddam's army, a force that has been victorious solely in repressing its own people. There are no Iraqi Eisenhowers. The Iraqi people distrust all their generals. Iraqis also fail to comprehend why different power centers in Washington have been keeping the Iraqi opposition divided by pitting one group against another.

For all its shortcomings, the Iraqi opposition is far less fractured and more politically sophisticated than its Afghan counterpart. Yet, under U.S. pressure, the Afghans met in Germany and came up with a formula that was accepted by all but a few who have since been marginalized. Why couldn't the same be done in the Iraqi case?

We are rightly being told that Iraq is not Afghanistan. But this is exactly why laying the foundations of democracy in Iraq is eminently more feasible

than it would be in Afghanistan. Iraq has the financial resources, the institutions and a highly professional cadre needed to rebuild the country.

It now appears that the United States will support the convening of an enlarged conference of the Iraqi opposition. However, this opportunity should not become a platform for promoting Saddam's former generals and civilian henchmen.

To unite the opposition to Saddam, the United States must speak with one powerful and clear voice that has the authority of the president. Nothing will come of the noises made by competing bureaucracies in Washington. Iraqis have had earfuls of these for far too long. No wonder so many inside Iraq continue to sit on the fence. Before risking their lives, they understandably want to be convinced of U.S. commitment at the highest level.

The United States can impress upon all components of the Iraqi opposition that they will only be guaranteed U.S. and international support if they uphold democratic values and respect the electoral principle of majority rule. For its part, the Iraqi opposition, eviscerated by Saddam's savagery, must grasp this opportunity to rise above its petty feuding and show the maturity needed at this critical juncture in its country's history. It will not get a second chance.

The United States should also cease pandering to Iraq's neighbors. Iraqis are justifiably concerned by the emphasis being placed in Washington on these states' involvement in decisions affecting the shape of their future government. None of these neighbors has an interest in what Iraqis really yearn for: freedom and prosperity.

In July 2000, Hamid Karzai, then a little known Afghan and now his nation's interim leader, testifying before a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee, implored the U.S. government "to look at Afghanistan from the perspective of Afghanistan and not that of its neighbors. The time to watch is over and the responsibility to act is long overdue," he said. Iraqis have been pleading for precisely this treatment for more than a decade now.

The writer, an independent Iraqi analyst, contributed this comment to the International Herald Tribune

Magazine reopens debate in U.S. on Qaeda-Iraq link

By John Mintz

The Washington Post

WASHINGTON: A report in the New Yorker magazine suggests that Iraqi intelligence has been in close touch with top officials in Osama bin Laden's network for years and that the two organizations jointly run a terrorist group that operates in the Kurdish area of northern Iraq.

The CIA has largely discounted the proposition that the Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, has maintained links with the network, Al Qaeda.

A hawkish faction within the Bush administration that favors military action against Iraq, centered mostly in the

top ranks of the Defense Department, has scoured the world for connections between Saddam and Al Qaeda. On Sunday, some people in this camp hailed the New Yorker article as significant new evidence buttressing their viewpoint.

The article focuses in part on a Muslim extremist guerrilla group in the Kurdish zone of Iraq, Ansar al Islam, which it said was made up of Iraqi Kurds and Arabs trained in bin Laden's camps.

The article's author, Jeffrey Goldberg, wrote that he had interviewed several operatives of the group who had been captured by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, a pro-American Kurdish group

that controls one province in northern Iraq.

The captives said that Saddam and Al Qaeda ran Ansar, that a number of Qaeda fighters fleeing Afghanistan had escaped to Iraqi Kurdish territory controlled by Ansar, and that Iraq was host to a senior Egyptian leader of Al Qaeda in Baghdad in 1992.

American officials warned that the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan had an interest in making this case because it could help justify an American incursion to remove Saddam.

The article asserted that U.S. intelligence agencies apparently had not adequately looked into what the Ansar captives have to say, and have not completely debriefed the leaders of the Kurdish group, who have assembled a dossier on the alleged Iraq-Qaeda ties. A spokesman for the Central Intelligence Agency declined to comment, citing the complications in responding

to such complex assertions over a week-end.

James Woolsey, an ex-director of central intelligence who favors military action against Iraq and is critical of his former agency's performance on Middle East terrorism, called the New Yorker article "a blockbuster."

"The CIA has over recent years not been real enthusiastic about the Iraqi resistance, and I think that's a shame," Woolsey said on CNN. "If they got beat on this story by the New Yorker and Jeff Goldberg, three cheers for the fourth estate."

A former senior U.S. official with deep experience in U.S. policy toward Iraq, said, "This is clearly a very important story." He added that it was likely that Saddam would try to destabilize the Kurdish areas by using Ansar al Islam and that was possible Al Qaeda could have ties to the group, known by its acronym, PUK.

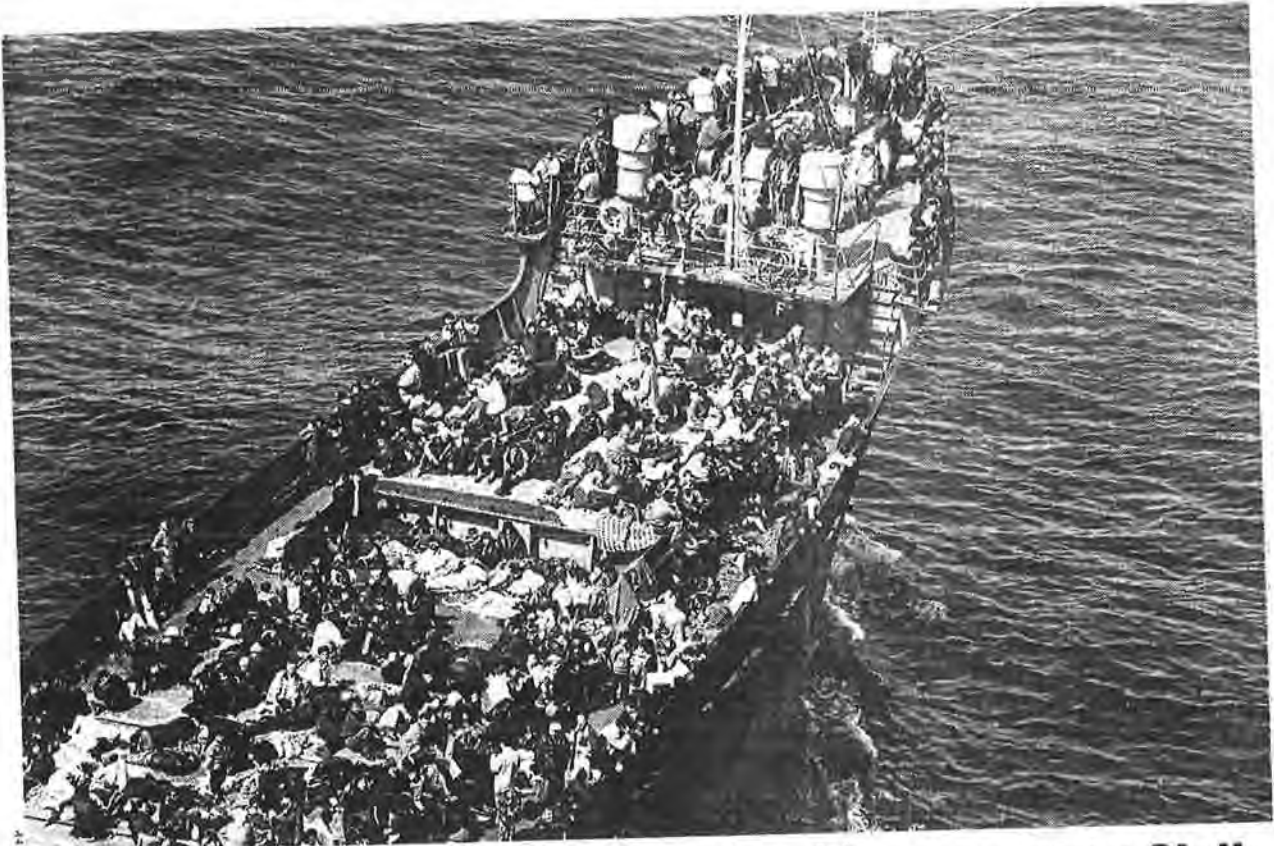
But he expressed skepticism about the idea that U.S. intelligence agencies did not know what these Ansar captives were saying, given the high priority the Bush administration has placed on finding any connections between Saddam

and bin Laden.

"I'd be surprised if our intelligence people haven't picked up on this, if in fact these guys have been held by the PUK for months," he said.

Under an 11-year-old arrangement after the Gulf War, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and a rival Kurdish faction control three semiautonomous provinces in northern Iraq, and are protected from Iraqi attack by U.S. and British combat jets.

ITALIE Une majorité des clandestins sont des Kurdes fuyant le régime de Saddam Hussein



Un millier de clandestins kurdes débarquent en Sicile

Rome :
de notre correspondant
Richard Heuzé

Nouveau débarquement massif d'immigrants en Sicile, le dixième depuis le début de l'année : un millier de clandestins, en majorité kurdes, a rallié hier le port de Catane. Leur arrivée a provoqué une violente passe d'armes entre ministres de Silvio Berlusconi : Umberto Bossi, leader de la Ligue du Nord, estime que le gouvernement fait preuve « d'impuissance » pour enrayer « le complot international de ceux qui prétendent détruire la souveraineté natio-

nale ». L'un de ses lieutenants, Giancarlo Giorgetti, pose ouvertement la question de savoir si la Ligue « doit rester dans ce gouvernement ». Une prise de position qualifiée de « provinciale » par Claudio Scajoia, ministre de l'Intérieur et membre de Forza Italia : « Nous avons le devoir d'accorder l'asile politique aux Kurdes qui fuient la dictature de Saddam Hussein. » Pour faire bonne mesure, M. Scajoia a toutefois dé-

crété « l'état d'urgence » contre l'immigration dans tout le pays.

Les 928 immigrants qui ont débarqué au port de Catane étaient entassés à bord du *Monica*, un rafiot de soixante mètres de long aux bastingages

Le trajet du Monica



rouillés. Ils ont fait toute la traversée à fond de cale, sans jamais voir l'équipage. Le navire était parti il y a dix jours du port libanais de Saïda selon certains, du port turc de Mersin selon d'autres, filant sept nœuds dans un panache de fumée. C'est une frégate française, l'*Aconit*, qui l'a aperçu dimanche à son entrée en Méditerranée occidentale. Le commandant français a aussitôt avisé les garde-côtes italiens : « Il y a un grand nombre de personnes à bord ». Contacté par radio par une frégate italienne, le commandant du cargo a affirmé que son navire battait pavillon de Tonga et faisait route sur Tunis.

Dimanche soir cependant, il s'est présenté au large de la

Sicile. Vers une heure du matin, des patrouilleurs italiens l'ont intercepté à quarante milles au sud de Capo Passero, la pointe la plus méridionale de la Sicile et se sont approchés, à peine entré dans les eaux territoriales. L'équipage, composé de huit marins, a d'abord menacé de jeter des enfants à la mer. Après des tractations fébriles, un remorqueur italien l'a pris en remorque tandis qu'un peloton de militaires montait à bord. Une femme venant d'accoucher a été évacuée sur Catane avec son bébé. Trois femmes enceintes et vingt-trois passagers en mauvaise santé ont été hospitalisés.

La moitié des immigrants sont des femmes et de jeunes

enfants. Une présence aussi massive est inhabituelle. Elle témoigne des craintes qu'inspire la nouvelle législation sur la régulation des flux migratoires en cours de discussion à la Chambre des députés. Si cette loi devait être approuvée dans sa formulation actuelle, le regroupement familial deviendrait plus difficile, y compris pour des ayants droit à l'asile politique comme les Kurdes. C'est l'un des points que le président de la Conférence épiscopale italienne, le cardinal Camillo Ruini, a demandé la semaine dernière au gouvernement de modifier.

Ce nouvel exode a pris de court les services sociaux siciliens, déjà saturés par l'afflux d'un demi-millier de clandestins

depuis le début de l'année. La semaine dernière, quelque deux cents Sri Lankais ont pris pied sur la côte, à bord de deux barques de pêche d'un autre âge. Chacun avait payé son passage trois mille dollars aux trafiquants. Les passagers du *Monica* ont été accueillis dans un centre sportif hâtivement aménagé en dortoir. Sans doute seront-ils transférés dès aujourd'hui dans les Pouilles où les structures d'accueil sont plus importantes.

Hier, la police a bloqué sur une plage de Calabre 160 Sri Lankais, qui venaient de débarquer d'un vieux chalutier échoué sur le littoral entre Siderno et Locri, deux ports sur la mer Ionienne.

CIA CLAIM COMES AMID CALLS FOR ACTION AGAINST BAGHDAD

US accuses Iraq of having links to al-Qaeda network

By Richard Wolffe in Washington

US intelligence has traced a series of "contacts and linkages" between the al-Qaeda terrorist network and Saddam Hussein, it was claimed yesterday as the Bush administration continued to seek international support to overthrow the Iraqi leader.

George Tenet, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, told senators the administration was still investigating whether either Iraq or Iran had sponsored the September 11 terrorist attacks.

He also said the animosity between Sunni Muslims of Iraq and Iran's Shia Muslims was being set aside as al-Qaeda planned attacks on their common enemies, the US and the Saudi regime. "Baghdad has a long history of supporting terrorism, altering its targets to reflect changing priorities and goals," he told the Senate armed services committee. "It has also had contacts with al-Qaeda.

"Their ties may be limited by

divergent ideologies, but the two sides' mutual antipathy toward the United States and the Saudi royal family suggests that tactical co-operation between them is possible, even though Saddam is well aware that such activity would carry serious consequences."

Mr Tenet's warnings represent the clearest statement of the administration's fear that Iraq could be supporting international terrorists seeking to acquire its nuclear, chemical and biological technologies. His testimony will lend weight to calls for action against Iraq.

His analysis was echoed by another senior US official, who drew parallels between the evidence found in Afghanistan and what the US discovered after the Gulf war against Iraq.

Carl Ford, assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research, said US officials were surprised by the evidence they had unearthed at al-Qaeda locations in Afghanistan.

"They had an almost insatiable appetite for information on biological and chemical weapons, both how to do it and how to deliver it," he told the Senate foreign relations committee. "They also were interested in talking to a wide range of experts from neighbouring countries or co-religionists."

Dick Cheney, vice-president, nearing the end of his tour of the Middle East, arrived in Turkey yesterday to continue to build international support against Iraq. Turkey's military bases could prove critical in any action against Baghdad.

Mr Cheney insisted the administration had made no decision about military action. "I have said repeatedly no such decision has been made and secondly we never speculate about prospective, future operations," he said.

Les pays arabes s'opposent à une attaque américaine contre l'Irak

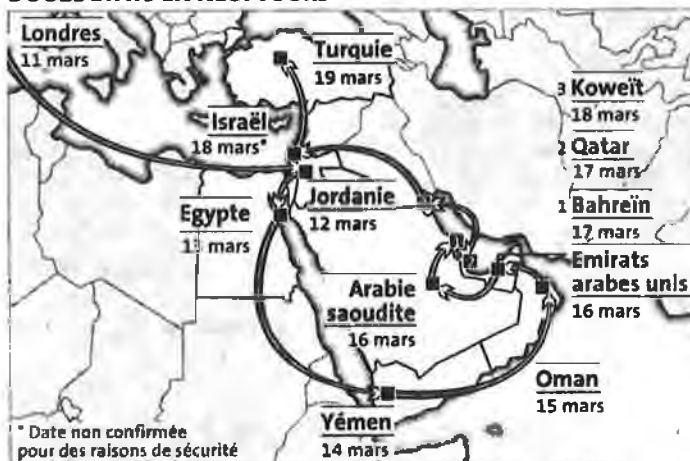
De Riyad à Amman, le vice-président Dick Cheney a entendu les mêmes objections. « Les gens qui meurent dans les rues aujourd'hui ne sont pas victimes d'une quelconque action irakienne, a résumé le prince héritier de Bahrein, mais d'une action israélienne »

LES ÉTATS-UNIS ne parviennent pas à convaincre les pays arabes de leurs vues concernant l'Irak. Dans les neuf Etats arabes tous « amis » des Etats-Unis, inclus dans une tournée commencée à Londres et qui doit encore le conduire en Turquie et en Israël, le vice-président américain, Dick Cheney, a pu constater de grandes réserves, sinon le refus, d'une éventuelle action militaire contre Bagdad, à laquelle pousse au moins une partie de l'administration américaine. En août 2001, d'autres émissaires américains n'avaient déjà pas réussi à persuader les pays voisins de l'Irak d'établir une sorte de cordon sanitaire autour de ce pays, pour circonscrire la contrebande à laquelle se livre le régime et dont les revenus peuvent éventuellement lui permettre de relancer des programmes d'armes de destruction massive.

M. Cheney était attendu lundi 18 mars au Koweït, dernière étape arabe de sa tournée, qui l'a déjà mené en Jordanie, en Egypte, au Yémen et à Oman, ainsi que dans les Emirats arabes unis, en Arabie saoudite, à Bahrein et au Qatar. Partout il a eu droit à la même antienne, diversement formulée ici et là : il faut tout faire pour que l'Irak autorise les experts du désarmement de l'ONU à revenir sur son territoire, mais il faut éviter une intervention militaire aux conséquences imprévisibles tant en Irak – nul ne pleurera Saddam Hussein s'il est renversé, mais nul ne sait qui prendra alors le pouvoir – qu'au plan régional, déjà passablement perturbé par le conflit israélo-palestinien.

C'est en tout cas le ton général des déclarations faites par des personnalités officielles ou rapportées par la presse selon des sources diverses. M. Cheney a néanmoins parfois laissé entendre que ces comptes rendus ne reflétaient pas avec exactitude ce qui s'est dit lors d'entretiens entre quatre murs avec ses hôtes. « J'ai l'impression que certains veulent croire qu'il n'y a qu'une seule chose qui compte pour moi ou que, d'une certaine manière, je suis ici pour organiser une aventure militaire contre l'Irak. C'est faux. Il est vrai que l'Irak nous préoccupe, mais ce n'est qu'un sujet parmi d'autres », a déclaré M. Cheney au terme de sa visite à Bahrein.

DOUZE ÉTATS EN NEUF JOURS



MÊME LE KOWEÏT

« Je ne pense pas qu'il serait dans l'intérêt des Etats-Unis ou de quiconque dans la région ou dans le monde » que les Etats-Unis lancent une action militaire contre l'Irak, et « je ne pense pas [qu'une telle action] aboutira aux résultats souhaités », a déclaré le prince héritier saoudien Abdallah Ben Abdel-Aziz dans un entretien à la chaîne de télévision américaine NBC. Et, à en croire le quotidien saoudien à grand tirage Al-Watan, le prince Abdallah aurait mis en garde son interlocuteur contre les conséquences « catastrophiques [d'une telle intervention], lourde de menaces pour la sécurité régionale, d'autant que d'après certaines informations Bagdad serait disposé à accepter le retour des inspecteurs du désarmement ». « Plutôt que de frapper l'Irak, des efforts doivent être déployés au plan international pour le convaincre d'accepter le retour des inspecteurs du désarmement de l'ONU », aurait-il ajouté.

Dans un entretien publié samedi 16 mars par le quotidien Le Figaro, Le roi Abdallah II de Jordanie a lui aussi prévenu qu'une « éventuelle confrontation armée » entre l'Irak et « l'Occident » et une perpétuation du conflit israélo-palestinien plongeraient la région « dans une instabilité incontrôlable ». La Jordanie en particulier en souffrirait « terriblement », à cause, notamment, de sa dépendance à l'égard du pétrole à bon marché que lui livre Bagdad. « J'espère que le bon sens l'emportera » à Washington, a ajouté le roi.

L'Egypte et les Emirats arabes unis sont sur la même longueur d'onde et le Qatar – où sont prépositionnées des armes américaines et qui est l'auteur d'une récente suggestion de dialogue direct entre le Conseil de coopération du Golfe et l'Irak – souhaite lui aussi circonscrire toute attaque. Publiquement, même le Koweït, dont l'Irak avait envahi et annexé le territoire en août 1990, s'est récemment encore prononcé contre une intervention armée. Bahrein, où se trouve le commandement de la cinquième flotte américaine et qui vient d'être hissé par Washington au rang d'« allié essentiel [des Etats-Unis] hors OTAN », partage cet avis. Le Yémen n'est pas en reste, malgré la coopération de plus en plus étroite dans la lutte contre le terrorisme qui s'est établie entre Washington et Sanaa.

De fait, les forces spéciales yéménites ont déjà commencé à être entraînées par des instructeurs américains, et Sanaa va recevoir des équipements militaires adaptés à la lutte contre les terroristes. Quelques heures après la visite éclair de M. Cheney, un attentat à la grenade a visé l'ambassade des Etats-Unis à Sanaa. Pour les autorités yéménites, l'incident est un acte isolé sans gravité, dont l'auteur, un jeune chômeur de 25 ans, n'a pas d'affiliation politique.

Mouna Naïm



19 MARS 2002

Sivan Perwer, 46 ans, monument de la chanson kurde, souvent interdit en Turquie, en exil depuis 1976.

La clé du sol

SIVAN PERWER
EN 5 DATES
Décembre 1955
Naissance près de Urfa, au sud de la Turquie.
Juillet 1976
Exil en Allemagne, près de Cologne.
Juin 1983
Installation en Suède.
Juillet 2001
Grande tournée dans la zone kurde en Irak du Nord.
24 mars 2002
Concert pour Newroz à la Plaine-Saint-Denis.



«Depuis vingt-six ans, je n'ai pu revoir ma terre natale.»

L veut n'être rien d'autre qu'un *dengbêj*, littéralement «une voix qui dit», un de ces bardes-conteurs itinérants qui, comme ses ancêtres, parcouraient les montagnes et les hauts plateaux du pays kurde transmettant de génération en génération la mémoire d'un peuple. «Grâce aux chansons, les Kurdes se souviennent du fait que Saladin était des

leurs», souligne volontiers Sivan Perwer qui, lui, sillonne l'Europe chantant pour les siens dans les salles polyvalentes des périphéries de Düsseldorf, Hambourg, Malmö, Strasbourg ou Paris. Il lui arrive aussi de donner des récitals au Théâtre de la Ville pour un public différent, mais tout aussi fasciné par cette voix chaude, sensuelle, incantatoire qui évoque les tragé-

dies et les espoirs des Kurdes – au moins 30 millions de personnes – toujours écartelés entre la Turquie, l'Irak, la Syrie et l'Iran. «Je crois que comme artiste je suis recordman de l'exil. Depuis vingt-six ans, je n'ai pu revoir ma terre natale et mon village près d'Urfa», explique le chanteur. Toujours, il est accompagné de deux ou trois amis ou musiciens de son groupe qui lui

servent de gardes du corps car son parler vrai et son indépendance lui valent une haine tenace de certains groupes politiques kurdes. Quand il se promène dans les petites rues du IX^e ou X^e arrondissement, fief de la diaspora kurde parisienne, les visages s'éclairent d'un sourire de connivence. Certains l'arrêtent et l'embrassent. D'autres n'arrivent pas à croire que c'est bien lui. Aux yeux des siens, Sivan Perwer représente en effet une espèce de monument national.

«Pour une population qui souvent ne sait ni lire, ni écrire dans sa langue, la musique représente quelque chose d'essentiel et d'immédiat», explique le chanteur, né dans une famille de paysans très musiciens. C'est évidemment en musique que les Kurdes célèbrent chaque 21 mars le Newroz, le nouvel an, fête du feu et de la renaissance. Chaque année, ce barde aux semelles de vent donne à cette occasion un grand concert. *«Viscéralement kurde, Sivan Perwer est le symbole de la flamme identitaire qui brûle le cœur des citoyens de cette nation sans Etat»,* explique Kendal Nezan, président de l'Institut kurde de Paris. L'écrivain Yachar Kemal, le plus célèbre romancier turc, lui-même d'origine kurde, ne cache pas son admiration pour le chanteur. Il n'y a pas une famille kurde qui ne possède au moins quelques-unes de ses cassettes audio qui circulent le plus souvent sous le manteau. En Turquie, ses chansons sont tolérées mais souvent interdites, notamment quand les autorités les jugent trop politiques. *«Dans les moments difficiles, on enterrait ses cassettes dans le jardin après les avoir soigneusement enveloppées dans des sacs en plastique»,* raconte un Kurde d'Istanbul. En Syrie comme en Iran, Perwer est tout aussi suspect que ses chansons. Dans l'Irak de Saddam Hussein, le simple fait d'être en possession d'une de ses cassettes est passible de la peine de mort. En revanche dans la zone autonome kurde, créée au nord du pays après la guerre du Golfe sous protection de l'ONU, il est accueilli à chacune de ses tournées par des foules enthousiastes de dizaines de mil-

liers de personnes, sous les youyous des femmes et les applaudissements – ou les tirs en l'air – des hommes. Tous dansent inlassablement jusqu'à la fin du concert qui ne dure jamais moins de trois ou quatre heures.

Ses textes ne sont pas des proclamations militantes. Il interprète un répertoire traditionnel, des ballades ou des poèmes. Il chante les travaux et les jours, les montagnes et les fleuves du pays kurde, mais aussi les innombrables révoltes écrasées dans le sang qui ont jalonné l'histoire de son peuple. L'une de ses chansons les plus célèbres commémore le massacre de Halabja en 1988, où des milliers de villageois furent victimes des armes chimiques de Saddam Hussein. Musicien engagé, Sivan Perwer l'est au premier chef parce qu'il chante et a toujours chanté en kurde. En Turquie, cela signifie un défi ouvert au pouvoir. *«C'était comme mettre une chemise enflammée, mes auditeurs étaient stupéfaits de cette audace»,* raconte Sivan Perwer qui avait commencé à pousser la chansonnette au début des années 70, s'accompagnant d'un luth alors qu'il étudiait les mathématiques à l'université d'Ankara. Les groupes d'extrême gauche marxiste-léniniste, alors tout-puissants dans la fac, appréciaient peu ce «nationalisme petit-bourgeois». Mais dans la famille Perwer, on s'est toujours sentis kurdes en priorité. *«Souvent les gendarmes faisaient des descentes et des perquisitions à la maison, parfois mon père réussissait à partir à temps et à se cacher dans les champs. D'autres fois, il était arrêté et revenait quelques jours plus tard le visage tuméfié»,* se souvient le chanteur. La voie était toute tracée. Ses chansons lui valent ses premières interpellations et ses premiers passages à tabac. *«Je vivais dès lors dans une semi-clandestinité, mais je savais qu'il était impossible de continuer comme ça longtemps»,* raconte Sivan Perwer, qui en juillet 1976 décide de quitter le pays. Il passe clandestinement en Syrie, puis de là gagne l'Allemagne. Il y reste jusqu'en 1983 puis il s'installe en Suède avant de revenir en Allemagne. Son seul

fil, lui, est en Angleterre.

En exil, il a complété ses connaissances musicales, puis il est devenu chanteur professionnel. Peu à peu, il s'impose comme un symbole. *«C'est le peuple qui m'a fait, car il sentait que je me donnais totalement»,* raconte Perwer qui refuse tout embrigadement partisan. C'est alors que commencent ses premiers conflits avec le PKK (Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan) d'Abdullah Öcalan, surnommé «Apo», qui, en 1984, a lancé la lutte armée contre Ankara. Cette «sale guerre», qui a fait plus de 30 000 morts et deux millions de déplacés, s'achèvera en 1999 après l'arrestation du chef rebelle qui, lors de son procès, dans une île-prison du Bosphore appellera ses partisans à déposer les armes afin de sauver sa tête. Le leader de ce parti armé stalinien-nationaliste n'apprécie guère la liberté d'esprit du chanteur. *«Le PKK refuse tout ce qu'il ne contrôle pas»,* ironise Perwer. Des militants viennent le huer à ses concerts et il y a parfois des incidents violents. Lui critique avec virulence la *«langue de bois et le culte de la personnalité»*, pratiqués par Med TV, l'une des principales télévisions satellitaires de la communauté, de fait dans la mouvance du PKK. Au moment de l'arrestation d'Öcalan, Perwer participe aux concerts de solidarité, puis le conflit reprend. Avant ses spectacles, les militants arrachent les affiches et tentent d'intimider ceux qui veulent s'y rendre. Mais le public est là, toujours aussi nombreux. *«Cela me fait mal qu'ils se battent contre moi alors qu'il y a tellement d'autres choses à faire»,* souligne Sivan Perwer. Qui ne cédera pas ●

Marc SEMO

photo DENIS DAILLEUX

L'Europe dément l'existence d'un accord avec Washington

Berlin place « tout engagement militaire supplémentaire sous condition d'un mandat de l'ONU »

BRUXELLES

de notre envoyé spécial

Parce qu'ils sentent que les Etats-Unis sont décidés à agir, les contrainçant à se déterminer, les Européens ont entamé une réflexion, ainsi que des consultations informelles, à propos de la perspective d'une action militaire contre l'Irak décidée par Washington. Le sujet n'a pas été officiellement évoqué au cours du sommet européen de Barcelone, mais l'insistance avec laquelle les chefs d'Etat et de gouvernement ont tour à tour démenti les rumeurs sur un accord européen informel à ce sujet a montré que la question irakienne est d'actualité. Au cours du dîner qui a réuni les Quinze samedi soir, Guy Verhofstadt, le premier ministre belge, a bien tenté d'ouvrir un débat à ce sujet, pour être immédiatement prié de n'en rien faire par son voisin, Jacques Chirac...

La Belgique, par la voix de son ministre des affaires étrangères, Louis Michel, avait suggéré que l'Union européenne entreprenne une démarche auprès de Saddam Hussein. Il s'agissait d'inciter celui-ci

à accepter le retour des inspecteurs des Nations unies chargés de vérifier que Bagdad n'a pas repris la production d'armes de destruction massive. Si personne n'a souhaité reprendre la balle au bond, c'est par souci de ne pas ouvrir un débat qui ne peut que diviser.

Gerhard Schröder, Tony Blair et

Les Quinze préféreraient que l'Irak ne provoque pas une intervention

Jacques Chirac ont *de facto* démenti la rumeur insistante selon laquelle plusieurs capitales se seraient mises d'accord pour soutenir le principe d'une intervention militaire « ciblée et limitée dans le temps ». A ce stade, les responsables européens veulent se borner à adresser des avertissements au président irakien. C'est ce qu'a fait Jacques Chirac samedi : « Les diri-

geants irakiens seraient bien avisés de prendre au sérieux les prescriptions du Conseil de sécurité et les conseils donnés par le secrétaire général de l'ONU, Kofi Annan. Ils seraient bien inspirés de le faire », a répété le président français.

Les Quinze préféreraient que l'Irak ne provoque pas, par son obstination, une intervention américaine, laquelle déclencherait nécessairement des réactions diplomatiques en cascade. Au sein de l'Union, le Royaume-Uni fait, comme d'habitude, figure d'allié inconditionnel de Washington, à tel point que Tony Blair est réputé se faire l'avocat de George Bush auprès des Européens, tout en essayant de convaincre le chef de la Maison Blanche de la nécessité de ne pas s'engager dans une nouvelle opération contre Bagdad sans les Européens.

A Barcelone, le premier ministre britannique s'est efforcé de sonder ses partenaires. La position de Gerhard Schröder serait celle qu'il a développée le 13 mars lors d'une rencontre avec des intellectuels allemands, dont Günter Grass. Le chancelier a placé « tout engagement

militaire supplémentaire du gouvernement allemand sous condition d'un mandat de l'ONU », a expliqué sa porte-parole. Pas question, autrement dit, de soutenir une « guerre du Golfe-bis » sans une résolution de l'ONU. Son ministre des affaires étrangères, Joschka Fischer, devant le congrès des Verts, a rappelé dimanche qu'il « n'existe pas actuellement au Bundestag de majorité pour la participation de l'Allemagne à la guerre en Irak ».

Mais M. Blair lui-même n'a pas les coudées franches : il doit compter avec une minorité du Parti travailliste, incarnée par Clare Short, ministre chargée du développement, foncièrement hostile à une telle « aventure » irakienne, rappelle un responsable de l'Union européenne. Lequel indique que deux dates restent présentes à l'esprit : en mai, les Nations unies doivent renouveler le régime de sanctions contre l'Irak ; en novembre, l'actualité américaine sera dominée par les élections parlementaires à mi-mandat pour le président Bush...

Laurent Zecchini

TURQUIE • Les autorités turques pourraient soutenir une opération américaine contre leur voisin et demander en retour une partie du pétrole du Kurdistan irakien comme le prévoit un accord de 1926

Ankara opposé à une offensive contre l'Irak, à moins que...

Comme les autres pays du Moyen-Orient, la Turquie s'apprête également à signifier aux Américains son opposition au lancement d'une offensive contre Saddam. Toutefois, certains cercles turcs calculent le bénéfice que la Turquie pourrait tirer d'une opération américaine si celle-ci devait finalement avoir lieu et louchent avec envie sur le pétrole d'Irak du Nord. Cela au moment où le vice-président américain, Dick Cheney, est attendu ce mardi à Ankara.

« Nous devons négocier notre participation à une action américaine et demander la réactivation des accords de 1926, c'est-à-dire un accès au pétrole de Kirkuk et de Mossoul », explique ainsi une source proche de l'état-major. Les accords en question prévoyaient la cession de 10% du pétrole nord-irakien à la Turquie. La grande peur des généraux reste que l'administration kurde autonome installée depuis 1992 en Irak du Nord se transforme un jour en un Kurdistan indépendant. « C'est la première chose que nous devons exiger des Américains : l'assurance qu'il n'y aura pas démembrement de l'Irak. De toute façon,

nous avons déjà les moyens d'empêcher une indépendance du Kurdistan irakien, poursuit la même source.

Depuis 1997, les troupes turques sont en effet présentes de manière quasi permanente dans la région. Les estimations varient entre quelques milliers d'hommes de troupe et jusqu'à deux divisions (15 000 à 20 000 hommes). La menace que ferait peser un Kurdistan indépendant sur la Turquie semble toutefois bien ténue, surtout au regard des vues parfois ouvertement irrédentistes des dirigeants turcs sur l'ancienne province ottomane (« vilayet ») de Mossoul.

Irrédentisme turc

Concernant le pétrole, les prétentions turques ne sont pas nouvelles. L'accord de 1926 a réglé le tracé des frontières entre l'Irak, alors sous tutelle britannique, et la Turquie. Ankara, estimant que l'ancien vilayet kurde de Mossoul lui revenait de plein droit, acceptait de s'en défaire moyennant un partage de ses ressources pétrolières. Bagdad et Ankara s'accorderont toutefois sur une compensa-

tion financière annuelle de 500 000 livres sterling au profit de la Turquie.

Mais si l'irrédentisme turc réapparaît de temps à autre, ce sont bien les cercles conservateurs américains qui ont, dès novembre dernier, plaidé pour qu'Ankara fasse main basse sur le pétrole nord-irakien. William Safire, l'ancien conseiller de Richard Nixon, dans le *New York Times*, l'ancien directeur de la CIA, James Woolsey, dans le *Washington Post* ou Steve Forbes dans le magazine qui porte son nom ont chacun appelé à une guerre contre Saddam Hussein avec l'aide d'Ankara, cette dernière étant « rémunérée » par l'octroi d'un rôle de garant de la stabilité du Nord irakien ainsi qu'un accès aux puits de pétrole.

A l'occasion d'un colloque sur la Turquie en 1995, l'universitaire Habib Ishow se demandait si le pays ne serait pas tenté d'annexer tout simplement l'ancien vilayet de Mossoul (« le jour où » des circonstances particulières se produiront). La « guerre contre le terrorisme » des Etats-Unis n'était guère prévisible en 1995, mais la question méritait déjà d'être posée.

Eric Biegala, Istanbul

LE TEMPS • Mardi 19 mars 2002

Sanctions aren't the way ■ By Stanley A. Weiss

How to promote people power in Iran

GSTAAD, Switzerland
I realized that America was missing the main event in Iran when I saw the mullah hailing a taxi. When I had met him days earlier, he wore the unmistakable uniform of the clerics who rule the Islamic Republic. But there on a busy Tehran street he blended with the masses. No turban, no flowing robe. I asked him why. "Because," he answered, "no cab driver would pick me up."

The pivotal battle in Iran is not between "good" and "bad" mullahs. It is between the mullahs and the people.

A proverb says: "Do not step on Persian carpets or mullahs, for they will increase in value." Iran's rulers must satisfy both its Persian and its Islamic cultures. But the shah stepped all over the mullahs, which led to the Islamic revolution of 1979. Since then the mullahs have been stepping all over the carpets.

Today's Iranians want a modern, moderate Islamic society which preserves the country's Persian identity.

How best can the outside world encourage those Iranians who want to moderate their society and modernize their economy? A few suggestions:

Don't waste time favoring the reformers. The Battle of the Mullahs is a sideshow. A grassroots reform movement created President Mohammed Khatami, not the other way around. He has a mandate but no power.

It seems that the indecisive struggles of the past five years will continue so long as power — the courts, the Revolutionary Guards, the state radio and television, the Islamic business conglomerates — rests with the "supreme leader," Ayatollah Sayed Ali Khamenei. Only Iranian people power, not Washington, can change that.

Don't play into the hands of the extremists. Confrontation with the Great Satan is all the tired revolutionaries have left. Every time the reformers and the White House start talking about talking, the old guard stirs things up (arresting reformist parliamentarians) to provoke Washington ("axis of evil") and whip Iranians into another anti-American frenzy (the recent state-sponsored demonstrations were the biggest since the revolution).

These are desperate old men taking desperate measures, the last gasps of their dying regime.

Engage the real force in Iranian politics. The technocrat-pragmatists and clerics from the upper social classes have been keen to direct the government away from an all-consuming

commitment to Islam and toward Iran's national interests, including deeper ties with the West. They are allied to Iran's class of bazaari merchants, with their strong entrepreneurial spirit.

Chief in this camp is Hashemi Rafsanjani, heir to a pistachio family fortune, a former president (1989-1997) and now head of the powerful Expediency Council, which resolves disputes between competing branches of government. The West could do business with the likes of Rafsanjani, who keeps his finger to the wind and has shown an ability to be all things to all people.

Tehran legend holds that he was riding with the president and the prime minister when they came to a junction in the road and the driver asked which way to turn. The president said "right" and the prime minister said "left." Said Rafsanjani, "Signal left but go right."

He has suggested that Tehran and Washington will one day bridge their differences. Nixon opened the door to Red China. Reagan negotiated with the Evil Empire. Bush should reach out to the Islamic Republic.

Unleash Ronald Reagan's "forward strategy for freedom." Reagan recognized that trading with the enemy could help tear down walls and unravel totalitarian regimes from within. Bush recognizes that trade "reinforces the habits of liberty that sustain democracy."

If contact and commerce are the thin end of the democratic wedge in China, then why not in Iran? Why veto Iran's application to join the WTO, which the United States did again last month? Secretary of State Colin Powell says it is because "we can talk to China — we have ways of dealing with China in a sensible way; with Iran, no."

Of course, you can't really talk to a nation when you are busy damning it as evil. Instead of tirades, try trade.

The ayatollahs love Washington's trade embargo, which aids and abets their increasingly vulnerable grip on economic power. They have repeatedly shot down reform bills that would have encouraged foreign investment.

A million youngsters join the labor force each year looking for jobs that don't exist. Greater U.S. investment and trade would transform one of the mullahs' main constituencies, the bazaari merchants, into a powerful influence for greater openness and freedom.

Winston Churchill once remarked that Americans always do the right thing, after they've tried everything else. Loosening the embargo three years ago to allow import of Iranian caviar,

pistachios and carpets was a small step forward. Iran has since become a major customer for American corn.

In contrast, continuing the embargo and secondary sanctions against foreign companies doing business in Iran was a leap backward.

When Vice President Dick Cheney was chief executive of the world's largest oil field service company, he called for an end to the ban on investment by U.S. companies in Iran, calling the policy a "mistake."

Not enforcing the secondary sanctions only makes matters worse. European and Asian oil companies invest in Iran with impunity, leaving U.S. companies out in the cold. Even Israel — whose destruction Rafsanjani recently said could be achieved with "one nuclear bomb" — trades with Iran, under European cover. An old lesson is learned anew: Unilateral trade sanctions hurt only America.

It is not too late to do the right thing. While working to keep weapons of mass destruction from falling into Iranian hands, the United States should lift all nonmilitary trade sanctions. A wave of blue jeans and videos could do more to loosen the grip of the extremists than two decades of weak sanctions and strong rhetoric.

Finally, embrace what Bush has called "the Iranian people's hope for freedom," especially that of the young. Sixty-five percent of Iranians are under 25 with no memory of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Iranian youth are more interested in "Made in the USA" than in "Death to America." They wear Michael Jordan T-shirts and Nike sneakers.

A young man I met during my visit said he wanted to go dancing, hold hands with his girlfriend and watch movies. In a nation where the voting age is 16, these young men and women surfing the Internet with one hand and holding their cell phones with the other will decide Iran's fate.

It is time for America to help the Iranians get the mullahs off their back. Time to help free Iran with free trade.

The writer is founder and chairman of Business Executives for National Security and former chairman of American Premier, a mining and chemicals company. He contributed this personal comment to the International Herald Tribune.

International Herald Tribune
Wednesday, March 20, 2002

Un chef kurde irakien en Turquie pour évoquer l'avenir du régime de Bagdad



ANKARA, 19 mars (AFP) - 11h27 - Le chef kurde irakien Jalal Talabani est arrivé mardi à Istanbul en provenance de Damas pour une deuxième visite en moins de deux semaines afin d'évoquer avec les autorités turques un changement du régime irakien, rapporte l'agence Anatolie.

M. Talabani, chef de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), l'une des deux factions qui contrôlent le nord de l'Irak échappant à Bagdad depuis la guerre du Golfe en 1991, doit rencontrer mercredi à Ankara le sous-secrétaire d'Etat turc aux Affaires étrangères Ugur Ziyal.

Sa visite en Turquie coïncide avec celle du vice-président américain Dick Cheney, attendu vers en milieu de journée à Ankara pour conclure une tournée au Proche-Orient, axée sur une possible extension de la campagne antiterroriste américaine à l'Irak.

L'UPK et son rival le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK de Massoud Barzani) se partagent le contrôle du Kurdistan irakien.

M. Talabani s'était déjà rendu début mars à Ankara et s'était exprimé en faveur d'un changement démocratique du régime irakien, se déclarant "préoccupé" pour l'unité de ce pays dans le cas d'une extension de la lutte antiterroriste américaine.

Il s'était ensuite rendu en Syrie.

La Turquie, pays musulman de l'OTAN et alliée des Etats Unis, redoute qu'une attaque contre son voisin du sud n'aggrave la situation de son économie en crise et craint une déstabilisation de l'Irak qui permettrait la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant dans le nord du pays.

M. Talabani n'a pas exclu un changement du régime en Irak avant le 11 septembre prochain, dans une interview publiée dimanche par le quotidien arabe al-Hayat.

Plusieurs centaines de Kurdes refoulés vers la Hongrie



BUCAREST, 20 mars (AFP) - 10h29 - Quelque 250 Kurdes en provenance d'Europe occidentale, bloqués depuis plus de 24 heures au poste frontière de Nadlac (ouest de la Roumanie), ont été refoulés vers la Hongrie, ont indiqué mercredi leurs représentants dans un communiqué.

Les Kurdes, qui voulaient participer à un rassemblement en faveur de l'utilisation de la langue kurde, ont été "victimes de pressions physiques et psychiques, avant d'être refoulés vers la Hongrie", ont affirmé les organisateurs de cette manifestation.

Six autocars transportant environ 250 Kurdes étaient arrivés lundi soir à la frontière roumano-hongroise et avaient dans un premier temps été autorisés à transiter par la Roumanie, en route vers la Bulgarie.

Mais après avoir laissé passer le premier autocar, le gouvernement a été informé que la Bulgarie avait interdit le transit des Kurdes par son territoire.

Les six autocars avaient par la suite été bloqués à Nadlac, sous la stricte surveillance de quelque 250 gendarmes.

Cette affaire, qui intervient alors que le ministre turc de l'Intérieur effectue une visite en Roumanie, embarrasse Bucarest d'autant plus que le gouvernement roumain compte sur le soutien d'Ankara pour être invité à rejoindre l'Otan lors du sommet de Prague en novembre.

L'opposition kurde: un groupe proche d'al-Qaïda dans le nord de l'Irak



HAMBOURG (Allemagne), 20 mars (AFP) - 0h14 - Un groupe proche de l'organisation terroriste islamiste al-Qaïda de l'ex-milliardaire saoudien Oussama ben Laden opère dans le nord de l'Irak, affirme le représentant en Allemagne de l'une des organisations de la minorité kurde, l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), Ahmad Berwani.

Dans une interview au Financial Times Deutschland (FTD) à paraître mercredi, Ahmad Berwani déclare: "Le groupe Ansar al-Islam est dans le nord de l'Irak un dangereux groupe extrémiste et une filiale d'al-Qaïda". En revanche, il a précisé n'être pas en mesure de confirmer qu'Ansar al-Islam était en relations avec les services secrets irakiens, ainsi que l'a affirmé la revue américaine New Yorker.

Interrogé sur une éventuelle intervention militaire américaine contre le régime du chef de l'Etat irakien, Saddam Hussein, le dirigeant de l'UPK a déclaré:

"Nous ne sommes pas des mercenaires des USA". Si les Kurdes décident de participer à une telle intervention, Washington devra donner des garanties: "Autonomie et protection des populations civiles contre des attaques avec des armes chimiques ou biologiques".

"Nous ne ferons rien qui puisse aggraver notre situation" car, en fin de compte, "dans l'histoire de l'Irak, nous n'avons jamais été aussi bien que maintenant", a-t-il ajouté.

Les Etats-Unis savent quelle force les Kurdes représentent dans le nord de l'Irak en cas de participation à une attaque US: "Une partie de l'armée irakienne sera immobilisée face à nous un bon bout de temps", a conclu Ahmad Berwani.

L'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), dirigée par Jalal Talabani, est l'une des deux organisations kurdes, avec le mouvement rival, le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan de Massoud Barzani (PDK), qui contrôlent le nord de l'Irak échappant à Bagdad depuis la guerre du Golfe en 1991.

Newroz: deux morts et une soixantaine de blessés, des centaines d'interpellations



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 21 mars (AFP) - 20h58 - Les manifestations pour célébrer le Newroz, le Nouvel An kurde, ont dégénéré jeudi à Mersin (sud de la Turquie), faisant deux morts et une soixantaine de blessés, mais se sont déroulées dans le calme à Diyarbakir, chef-lieu de la région du sud-est à majorité kurde.

Un manifestant a été écrasé contre un mur par un véhicule blindé de la police au cours de violents incidents qui ont fait 61 blessés --41 policiers et 20 manifestants-- à Mersin, ville à forte communauté kurde, où 80 manifestants ont été interpellés, selon l'agence Anatolie.

La victime, un homme âgé de 34 ans, se trouvait au milieu d'une foule qui scandait des slogans favorables aux rebelles kurdes du Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), a précisé l'agence.

Un autre homme, Omar Aydin, âgé de 39 ans, est mort écrasé à Mersin, selon Anatolie, qui n'a toutefois pas précisé les circonstances exactes de son décès.

Les manifestants ont refusé de se disperser et la police est intervenue, après avoir tiré en l'air, avec des canons à eau et des gaz lacrymogènes.

Des incidents opposaient depuis mercredi soir forces de l'ordre et manifestants dans cette ville.

Les manifestations pour le Newroz ont été autorisées pour la troisième année consécutive dans le Sud-Est, à l'exception de Bitlis, mais interdites à Istanbul et Mersin, selon le Parti de la démocratie du peuplepro-kurde, l'un des organisateurs.

Aucun mort n'avait été à déplorer ces dernières années.

A Istanbul, 354 personnes ont été interpellées, dont une grande partie au cours d'une manifestation dans le quartier de Topkapi, dans la partie européenne de la ville, organisée notamment par l'association des droits de l'homme IHD et le HADEP.

"Nous ne permettrons pas que cette fête soit exploitée pour des raisons politiques", a mis en garde le ministre de l'Intérieur Rustu Kazim Yucelen, cité par Anatolie.

A Diyarbakir, un vaste rassemblement s'est déroulé sans incident à l'extérieur de la ville. Plusieurs dizaines de milliers de personnes ont bravé la pluie, les barrages policiers et les mises en gardes de leur hiérarchie pour fêter avec force musique et discours pacifiques cette fête symbole du nationalisme kurde.

Quelques slogans demandant la "Liberté pour Apo" (Abdullah Ocalan, chef du PKK, emprisonné en Turquie et condamné à mort pour trahison et séparatisme) ont été scandés, sans susciter de tension avec les forces de sécurité. Les couleurs rouge, jaune et vert, symbole pourtant interdit du nationalisme kurde, étaient largement visibles dans la foule, a constaté un correspondant de l'AFP.

"Soyez sûrs que nos revendications se réaliseront un jour prochain", a lancé le maire HADEP de Diyarbakir, Feridun Celik.

Après avoir allumé un bûcher symbolisant le Newroz, le président du HADEP, Murat Bozlak, a souhaité vivre "en fraternité" avec le reste de la population turque.

Il a appelé les autorités turques à inclure les militants du PKK dans une loi d'amnistie pour mettre un terme à toute velléité sécessionniste. "Il y a toujours des jeunes en armes dans les montagnes, faites en sorte qu'ils les déposent définitivement", a-t-il déclaré.

La célèbre chanteuse Sezen Aksu, non originaire de la région, a clos une série de concerts de musique kurde avant que la foule ne se disperse.

Le Newroz a été émaillé dans le passé par des incidents sanglants entre rebelles kurdes et forces de l'ordre, faisant 50 morts en 1992 dans le Sud-Est.

Fête païenne d'origine zoroastrienne, elle annonce le réveil de la nature avec l'équinoxe de printemps.

Le PKK en avait fait un symbole de sa rébellion lancée en 1984 pour la création d'un Etat kurde indépendant. Mais l'Etat turc a récupéré le Newroz depuis 1995 en le présentant comme un Nouvel An traditionnel pour de nombreux peuples de la région, y compris les Turcs.

Le PKK a annoncé en 1999 l'arrêt de sa lutte armée, à l'appel d'Ocalan. Depuis, les combats ont quasiment cessé dans le Sud-Est.

CDCA: ELECTION PRESIDENTIELLES

LIONEL JOSPIN: RÉPONSE AUX ARMÉNIENS DE FRANCE

2002

MARS



Monsieur le Président,

Vous m'avez adressé une série de questions au nom du Comité de défense de la Cause Arménienne.

Je vous en remercie, vos questions me permettent de m'adresser aux Arméniens de France tout en précisant ma position à l'égard des sujets qui vous préoccupent.

Cette campagne électorale me donne aussi l'occasion de souligner le rôle irremplaçable joué par les Associations qui s'inscrivent dans le cadre républicain et qui contribuent au débat démocratique ; dans ce sens, je veux - en particulier - saluer la récente création du Conseil de Coordination des Organisations Arméniennes de France (CCAF).

Le génocide dont les Arméniens ont été victimes en 1915 est un fait historique discuté par certains, mais que je n'ai jamais mis en cause. Ma famille politique a, depuis longtemps, reconnu un droit à la mémoire pour le peuple arménien. François Mitterrand déclarait, le 29 avril 1981, " Il n'est pas possible d'effacer les traces du génocide (...) Il faut que cela s'inscrive dans la mémoire des hommes (...) que ce sacrifice (...) puisse servir d'enseignement ". Députés et sénateurs socialistes ont œuvré de concert lors de la dernière législature pour donner, malgré l'opposition de la droite sénatoriale, un caractère solennel à la reconnaissance du génocide. La proposition de loi a, vous le savez, été adoptée le 18 janvier 2001. La loi a été publiée dans le Journal officiel, Lois et décrets, du 30 janvier 2001. Elle porte le n° 2001-70.

Cette initiative parlementaire française s'inscrit dans un mouvement favorable à une reconnaissance internationale. Les Sénats argentin et belge, la Chambre des députés italienne, ont en effet discuté et adopté des initiatives voisines. En donnant une dimension parlementaire à la reconnaissance du génocide arménien, un signal fort a été ainsi envoyé à la communauté internationale et bien sûr à la Turquie.

Ces faits, si je suis élu, détermineront le cadre des initiatives susceptibles d'être prises en France et par la France pour contribuer au devoir de mémoire dans un esprit de justice mais aussi de réconciliation. En aucun cas, le souvenir du génocide, la mémoire des terribles événements survenus dans l'Empire Ottoman en 1915, ne saurait être utilisé à d'autres fins que celles-là. Le moment venu, le Parlement, c'est dans ses attributions, pourra travailler à compléter utilement la législation en vigueur pour prévenir et si nécessaire réprimer la négation, sur le territoire national, des génocides reconnus par la France.

La Turquie a posé sa candidature pour adhérer à l'Union européenne. Cette candidature doit être examinée comme toutes les autres, avec un esprit de rigueur et d'ouverture. Tout pays souhaitant entrer dans l'Union européenne doit en assumer les acquis et les principes fondateurs. Depuis 1997, la France a souligné que la Turquie devait mettre en œuvre des réformes significatives afin d'améliorer la situation des droits de l'homme, conformément aux critères dits de Copenhague qu'elle a acceptés en déposant sa candidature. Aujourd'hui encore, cette adhésion à l'Union européenne soulève de graves questions relatives au respect des droits de minorités, parmi lesquelles la reconnaissance du génocide arménien perpétré avant la naissance de la Turquie moderne.

une issue négociée au conflit du Haut-Karabagh. La priorité aujourd'hui est la préservation du cessez-le-feu et l'incitation faite aux parties de renoncer à la force. Mais, si ce préalable est incontournable, je suis bien conscient qu'il ne s'agit que d'un premier pas vers une solution supposant - pour être durable - un compromis accepté par les Intéressés. La France doit poursuivre demain, avec opiniâtreté et discrétion, le travail déjà commencé pour trouver un compromis équitable et acceptable par les deux parties. Cela suppose le maintien d'une relation fluide et régulière avec l'ensemble des représentants, arméniens et azerbaïdjanais, à Erévan, Bakou, Stépanakert et Paris. Je m'emploierai dans cette tâche.

La France a été la première à envoyer un ambassadeur dans la nouvelle Arménie indépendante. Très vite, ce geste du cœur a été inséré dans un réseau d'accords de toute nature unissant la France à la République arménienne. Depuis 1997, j'ai veillé à que ces échanges s'approfondissent, nos relations économiques et commerciales se sont ainsi considérablement accrues. La poursuite de cette politique volontaire est la meilleure réponse que la France peut donner à des mesures de rétorsion économique prises contre l'Arménie. Par ailleurs, l'aide et la coopération de l'Union européenne à l'égard de l'Arménie doivent se poursuivre ; cette politique a été fortement encouragée pendant la présidence française de l'Union. A l'avenir, une attention particulière doit être apportée au développement des relations avec le tissu des PME arméniennes.

La France a, par ailleurs, favorisé l'existence de ponts culturels avec l'Arménie. Je pense en particulier au soutien apporté à la création d'une université franco-arménienne qui a ouvert ses portes en 2001.

Les thèmes culturels revêtent pour moi une importance cruciale, la mondialisation ne doit pas entraîner une uniformisation des cultures et des savoirs. Ainsi, dans le cadre de la République, nous devons assurer le plein épanouissement des apports des civilisations différentes.

Je peux vous signaler que, depuis 1981, la culture arménienne a fait l'objet d'une préoccupation particulière. Ces dernières années encore, le ministère de la culture a aidé plusieurs institutions culturelles arméniennes. Des grandes expositions artistiques ont aidé le public français à mieux connaître le riche passé culturel de l'Arménie ; à Nantes en 1995 puis à Lyon en 1998. Il y a quelques mois une grande exposition consacrée à Ani, capitale de l'Arménie en l'an mille, a été inaugurée à Paris. Je pense que la culture et l'identité arménienne doivent être préservées en soutenant les associations arméniennes représentatives.

Or, l'enseignement de la langue arménienne à l'école de la République est un chantier encore ouvert. Je considère que, avec une concertation préalable, l'arménien doit pouvoir être proposé aux élèves de nos écoles.

J'espère vous avoir apporté les éléments de réponse sur les enjeux qui vous tiennent à cœur, sur mes orientations et sur la volonté qui m'anime de les mettre en œuvre.

Je vous prie de croire, Monsieur le Président, à l'assurance de mes sentiments les meilleurs.

CDCA : ÉLECTIONS PRÉSIDENTIELLES (*)

Réponses de Jacques Chirac

2002

MARS

21



Question n°1 : Quelles mesures entendez-vous prendre pour empêcher la négation du génocide des Arméniens, pour organiser le devoir de mémoire et pour contribuer à sa reconnaissance internationale ?

Le Parlement français s'est prononcé solennellement sur la reconnaissance du génocide arménien de 1915. Ce geste de la représentation nationale a été salué par toutes les communautés arméniennes dans le monde comme répondant au devoir de mémoire.

Question n°2 : Quelles sont pour vous les conditions préalables à l'entrée de la Turquie dans l'Union européenne ?

Le Conseil européen d'Helsinki a accepté, en décembre 1999, le principe de la candidature de la Turquie.

Si cette décision a permis de rapprocher la Turquie de l'Union européenne et a ouvert de nouvelles perspectives aux aspirations européennes de ce pays, encore faut-il, cela va de soi, que les critères économiques et démocratiques qui constituent un préalable à son adhésion soient remplis.

Or, dans l'état actuel des choses, la Turquie ne remplit pas les critères de Copenhague et ne peut donc pas commencer à négocier son entrée dans l'Union européenne. Comme je l'ai clairement affirmé à plusieurs reprises, celles-ci ne pourront commencer que lorsque la Turquie respectera ces critères.

L'adhésion n'est donc pas pour demain, mais l'admission de sa candidature, assortie d'un cadre contraignant, donnera la faculté de juger sur pièces et d'en tirer les conséquences sur la possibilité, pour ce pays, de rejoindre un jour l'Union.

C'est pourquoi, j'encourage instamment la Turquie à continuer à progresser sur la voie du respect des critères tant économiques que politiques, notamment en matière des droits de l'homme.

Question n°3 : La France en tant que co-présidente du Groupe MINSK de l'OSCE a pris des initiatives récentes pour un règlement pacifique du conflit du Haut-Karabagh. Quelles mesures entendez-vous prendre afin d'aboutir à un règlement rapide de ce conflit ?

Naturellement, je souhaite qu'une solution durable soit trouvée à ce conflit qui endeuille depuis trop longtemps l'Arménie et l'Azerbaïdjan.

Je m'efforce, comme vous le savez, au sein du groupe Minsk, de favoriser les rencontres entre les parties afin que puisse être enfin envisagé un avenir de paix et de prospérité auquel aspire le peuple arménien.

A mon initiative personnelle, deux sommets se sont d'ailleurs tenus à Paris, réunissant les présidents Kotcharian et Aliiev. Je pense qu'ils en sont reconnaissants à la France car des principes ont été définis qui permettront, je l'espère, de trouver un accord de paix acceptable par les deux parties.

Mais j'estime qu'il faut aller bien au-delà. Il nous faudra du courage, de la détermination et de l'audace. Je ne ménagerai pas mes efforts, si je suis élu, pour qu'enfin la paix revienne dans le Caucase du Sud. J'y travaillerai, comme je l'ai toujours fait, avec les deux autres co-présidents du groupe Minsk. La France saura, j'en suis sûr, convaincre les insti-

tutions internationales et ses partenaires de l'Union européenne en vue d'accompagner un accord de paix par une aide à la reconstruction des zones dévastées pendant le conflit et à la relance de vos économies.

Question n°4 : Compte tenu des liens historiques privilégiés qu'entretiennent la France et l'Arménie et du blocus illégal exercé à l'encontre de l'Arménie par la Turquie et l'Azerbaïdjan depuis maintenant une décennie, quelles actions comptez-vous entreprendre pour développer les échanges économiques et culturels avec l'Arménie et pour mettre fin rapidement à ce blocus ?

Mon engagement en faveur d'une solution d'apaisement entre l'Arménie et l'Azerbaïdjan va de pair avec une détente dans l'ensemble de la région, notamment entre l'Arménie et la Turquie. Au-delà des aspects politiques, cela doit naturellement passer par la restauration et le développement des échanges. J'en profite pour souligner que des entreprises françaises sont présentes en Arménie et saluer l'activité inlassable des Français d'origine arménienne pour favoriser les échanges économiques et culturels.

Question n°5 : La France semble évoluer vers une société multi-culturelle. Quelles impulsions comptez-vous donner pour en assurer un développement harmonieux ? Dans ce cadre, comment comptez-vous préserver la culture et l'identité arménienne et renforcer l'enseignement de la langue arménienne.

Plutôt qu'à une société multiculturelle, j'aspire à ce que la communauté des citoyens Français se reconnaisse dans un projet civique partagé, riche des apports de toutes ses composantes. Sur ce point, je tiens à dire combien la France s'enorgueillit de la présence active et talentueuse en son sein de quelques 450 000 Français d'origine arménienne.

En effet, leur histoire est exemplaire. Arrivés dans notre pays encore traumatisés par la tragédie qu'ils venaient de vivre, ils ont eu à cœur de développer en France de nouvelles racines. Par leur courage et leur énergie, par les vertus du travail, et de la solidarité, par la volonté de se montrer dignes des sacrifices des aînés en assurant le meilleur destin aux enfants, ils sont devenus les artisans parmi les plus actifs du développement de notre pays, de sa démocratie, de sa vitalité au seuil du nouveau siècle.

Ces Français, modèles d'intégration, s'illustrent dans tous les domaines : les arts, la recherche, l'université, le sport, l'économie.

Aussi, il me paraît fondamental que chacun puisse encore mieux apprécier et admirer la riche et singulière culture arménienne et tout ce qu'elle a apporté et apporte au monde. C'est pourquoi, si je suis élu, je souhaite que soit créé en France, un institut culturel, lieu d'échanges et de création, consacré à l'histoire, à l'art, à la culture arménienne. Pour devenir un véritable projet, cette idée a besoin du soutien de l'État mais aussi de l'ensemble des institutions et associations arméniennes, de toutes tendances, et également de l'accord d'une collectivité territoriale susceptible de l'accueillir. Enfin, vous le savez, mon souci de préserver l'identité historique arménienne m'a par ailleurs conduit à encourager, depuis de longues années, les travaux de confortation du site et de la cathédrale d'Ani, projet emblématique dont j'espère qu'il aboutira dans un proche avenir.

Ankara marchande son soutien à Bush contre l'Irak

Le vice-président américain Dick Cheney est arrivé hier à Ankara, dernière étape d'une tournée au Proche-Orient, pour évoquer une éventuelle extension de la campagne antiterroriste à l'Irak. Un millier de policiers anti-émeutes ont été déployés dans la capitale pour empêcher d'éventuelles manifestations antiaméricaines. Quelque 80 personnes « suspectes » ont été interpellées. La base turque d'Incirlik, dans le sud du pays, avait été massivement utilisée par les Etats-Unis lors de la guerre du Golfe pour frapper l'Irak. Elle abrite des appareils américains et britanniques chargés de surveiller la zone d'exclusion aérienne au nord de l'Irak.

Istanbul :
de notre correspondant
Éric Biegala

« L'Irak a les mains liées et il n'y a aucun besoin d'entreprendre une action militaire » contre Bagdad... Cette thèse, répétée ce week-end à Barcelone par le premier ministre Bülent Ecevit, était celle qu'il comptait défendre hier face à Dick Cheney. Mettant en avant les conséquences économicopolitiques d'un affrontement américano-irakien, les Turcs veulent éviter toute opération à leurs frontières qui pourrait faire dérailler leur économie encore convalescente... Reste que la détermination de l'administration Bush pousse certains à imaginer de monnayer un éventuel soutien au puissant allié américain, quitte à loucher avec appétit sur le pétrole du Kurdistan d'Irak...

« Il ne faut pas dire « non » aux États-Unis, ce serait une erreur. Nous devons négocier notre participation à une action américaine et demander la revitalisation des accords de 1926 », explique une source proche de l'état-major. Ces accords, signés au début du siècle entre la toute jeune Turquie kémaliste et l'Angleterre, alors puissance tutélaire en Irak, prévoyaient la cession à la Turquie de 10 % des royalties issues de l'exploitation des puits de pétrole de Kirkuk et Mossoul pendant vingt-cinq ans. « La Turquie doit exiger un droit de regard sur l'après-Saddam et notamment sur l'organisation du territoire irakien », précise la même source. Les militaires turcs ont clairement averti qu'un Kurdistan indépendant

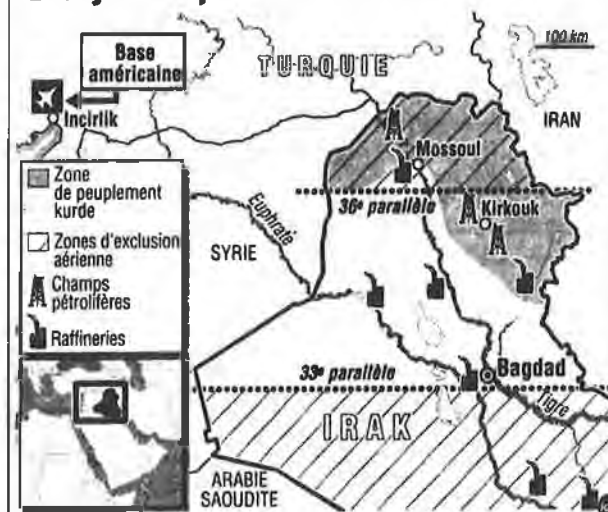
en Irak du Nord serait pour eux un « casus belli »...

Autonomes depuis 1991 et protégés par l'aviation anglo-américaine, les Kurdes irakiens ont établi dans le nord du pays une administration indépendante du régime de Bagdad. Elle s'autofinance grâce aux taxes prélevées sur les échanges avec la Turquie et les Nations unies lui versent également une quote-part du revenu pétrolier irakien autorisé.

Depuis 1997, l'armée d'Ankara est implantée en Irak du Nord et empêche la presse de s'y rendre. Les estimations quant au nombre de soldats turcs varient entre un millier d'hommes et deux divisions. « Nous avons suffisamment de puissance de feu sur place pour empêcher un Kurdistan indépendant. Nous voulons pouvoir continuer d'y garantir l'autonomie des Kurdes et des Turcomans », explique encore la même source. Ankara a organisé les Turcomans irakiens pour soutenir ses ambitions locales et surtout saboter l'embryon d'état kurde en train de se constituer.

Quant à la revendication « pétrolière », elle répond en fait à une suggestion avancée dès novembre dernier par les Américains eux-mêmes. William Safire, ancien conseiller de Richard Nixon, plaide dans le *New York Times* pour qu'Ankara annexe le nord de l'Irak et fasse main basse sur son pétrole en guise de rétribution : « L'Irak du Nord, c'est 2 millions de barils par jour et l'Union européenne serait trop heureuse d'accueillir une Turquie nantie d'une telle manne. » Quelques semaines plus tard, l'ancien directeur de la CIA James Woolsey appelait à son tour à

L'enjeu du pétrole kurde



Liens possibles entre l'Iran, l'Irak et Al Qaida

Les agences de renseignement américaines n'ont pas exclu l'hypothèse d'une implication de l'Irak et de l'Iran dans les attentats du 11 septembre, a indiqué hier le directeur de la CIA George Tenet. « Il ne fait aucun doute qu'il y ait eu des contacts (irakiens) et des rapports avec l'organisation Al Qaida », a-t-il déclaré devant une commission du Sénat américain. « Ce serait une erreur que d'exclure la possibilité d'un soutien étatique de la part de l'Iran ou de l'Irak. Nous verrons où les preuves nous mèneront », a-t-il poursuivi.

une guerre contre Saddam avec l'aide d'Ankara. Selon lui, la peur de voir s'établir un Kurdistan indépendant pourrait être circonscrite « en donnant à la Turquie un rôle de garant de la stabilité du Nord irakien et en lui octroyant un accès aux puits de pétrole ».

Le régime de Saddam Hussein semble lui-même prêt à monnayer son pétrole. Selon la presse kurde irakienne, des négociations se seraient ainsi déroulées en janvier entre la Turquie et l'Irak, Bagdad offrant une partie de son or noir pour acheter la neutralité turque en cas de conflit avec les États-Unis.

Pour Hasan Köni, spécialiste du Proche-Orient à l'université d'Ankara, les conséquences d'une appropriation du pétrole irakien seraient immédiates : « si la Turquie concrétisait ce genre de prétentions, elle se

mettrait à dos tous les pays arabes, comme les pays européens... Réactiver les accords de 1926, c'est un rêve, une vision issue tout droit du passé », ajoute-t-il.

Pour le moment, le premier ministre Bülent Ecevit, qui a longtemps entretenu d'excellents rapports avec le régime de Saddam Hussein, refuse obstinément d'envisager toute action contre l'Irak. « Il faudrait que les généraux arrivent à lui faire changer d'avis », poursuit-on du côté des faucons. De façon significative, Dick Cheney a demandé, et obtenu, de pouvoir s'entretenir avec le chef d'état-major turc, ce qui n'était pas prévu par le protocole.

L'Odyssée des Kurdes du « Monica »

Catane :
de notre envoyé spécial

Insouciance du va-et-vient autour de son berceau, Marina dort à poings fermés. Son abondante chevelure noire s'étale sur l'oreiller. Le nouveau-né porte une grenouillère crème à fleurs roses. Les yeux cernés, les joues creusées par la fatigue, sa mère Leila esquisse un mince sourire. Deux autres réfugiées kurdes, en état de grossesse avancée, lui tiennent compagnie. Cette chambre du grand hôpital Vittorio Emanuele de Catane, d'une propreté étincelante, ressemble au paradis, après l'enfer qu'elle vient de vivre.

En pleine nuit, Leila et Marina, la mère allongée dans une civière ballottée dans le vent, le bébé sanglé par un gilet de sauvetage, ont été hélitreuillées du pont d'un cargo qui les amenait de Turquie. Marina avait vu le jour une heure plus tôt, au moment où ce rafiot dégingué de toutes parts entraînait dans les eaux territoriales italiennes. « Elle était en excellente condition. La mère, en revanche, était fortement déshydratée », explique un responsable de l'hôpital, Rosario Consolo.

Pendant sept jours, 928 immigrés, en majorité kurdes, dont 200 femmes et 361 enfants, ont traversé toute la Méditerranée, entassés dans les cabines, les coursives, la cale, et même la salle des machines d'un bateau, dans des conditions d'hygiène épouvantables.

Long de 70 mètres, rouillé de partout et empestant le mazout, le cargo était parti de Mersin en Anatolie. Il a d'abord fait relâche à Chypre, dans la partie turque, puis, semble-t-il, à Saïda au Liban. Repéré par les services de renseignement français, il a été approché samedi dernier, par la frégate *Aconit* battant pavillon tricolore. Par radio, l'équipage a affirmé que le bâtiment était immatriculé sous le nom de *Monica* dans l'île de Tonga, et faisait route sur Tunis. Refusant tout contrôle en haute mer, il a louvoyé pour interdire à l'*Aconit* d'approcher.

La marine italienne, alertée par la France, a pris la relève. « Il a fait un crochet de 90°, mettant le cap sur la Sicile. C'est à ce moment que mon quartier général m'a ordonné de l'intercepter », explique le capitaine Melchiorre Di Gregori, qui commande la section navale de la Garde des finances en Sicile orientale.

L'ordre final d'abordage a été donné par Silvio Berlusconi : le navire se trouvait à quarante milles de Capo Passero, la pointe sud-orientale de la Sicile.

Le capitaine Sebastiano Scandurra a été le premier à monter à bord. Ce militaire de 42 ans à la démarche souple raconte l'opération : « Nous avons intimé au bâtiment de mettre en panne. L'équipage n'a pas obtempéré. A son entrée dans les eaux territoriales, notre vedette s'est rangée sur le flanc gauche et j'ai tenté d'enjamber le bastingage. Les immigrés ont fait un mur pour m'empêcher de passer, tandis que l'un d'eux prenait un enfant à bout de bras et menaçait de le jeter à la mer. Ils ont fini par comprendre que nous étions de la Garde des finances italienne. »

Quand le premier peloton, composé de quatre hommes, monte à bord, il est déjà une heure du matin : « Tout de suite, nous avons été pris à la gorge par la puanteur. Pour gagner les entreponts, on devait prendre garde à ne pas piétiner les corps », explique l'adjudant Massimiliano Masela.

Des Kurdes le conduisent par une échelle verticale et glissante à une petite cabine sous le poste de pilotage. Sur un lit étroit est allongée Leila, encore en proie aux douleurs de l'accouchement. A côté d'elle, Marina braille. Une trentaine de femmes et d'enfants s'entassent dans la chambrée. La fré-

gate *Perseo*, toute proche, hélicoptère un médecin militaire qui fait évacuer par les airs la mère et son bébé.

Lundi vers 15 heures, le cargo escorté par une douzaine de vedettes militaires et tiré par un remorqueur entre dans le port de Catane. Quatre cents

policiers, militaires et volontaires attendent sur le quai. Les immigrés débarquent en un rien de temps. Comme s'ils avaient hâte de changer de peau, ils abandonnent derrière eux une montagne de couvertures, sacs de voyage et vêtements souillés de cambouis et d'excréments. « Une humanité en haillons ! Pauvres gens », dit un officier.

Les réfugiés sont conduits dans un centre d'accueil aménagé dans un gymnase. La Sicile ne dispose d'aucune structure pour en héberger un aussi grand nombre. Le soir même, ils sont embarqués à bord d'autocars et conduits sous forte escorte de police dans un camp d'hébergement des Pouilles, à 400 km de là. Ils y resteront deux mois, le temps d'obtenir l'asile politique pour ceux qui y ont droit, la plupart sans doute. Leur objectif, comme pour tout Kurde, est de gagner l'Allemagne.

Le lendemain, Catane a retrouvé son profil habituel. De sa terrasse qui donne sur le port, l'archevêque Luigi Pommarito montre du doigt le navire de l'exode. Il rend grâce à « l'émouvante solidarité » des Catanais qui ont porté secours aux immigrés. Le préfet Alberto Di Pace souligne le succès de l'opération humani-

taire. Ce haut fonctionnaire aux manières policées se félicite que le Conseil des ministres ait décrété l'état d'urgence : « Il ne s'agit nullement d'influer sur la politique d'immigration. Cette mesure permettra à la Protection civile d'obtenir des fonds spéciaux et de réquisitionner des structures en dérogation aux lois ordinaires. »

Dans le bassin principal, le cargo se balance sur les flots bleus encadré par deux vedettes militaires. La brise printanière emporte au loin une odeur fétide. A bord, un chaos de mobilier cassé. Les cuisines sont un cloaque. L'unique canot de sauvetage orange suffirait à peine pour dix personnes. A la passerelle, aucun feu de signalisation. A l'évidence le cargo n'était pas fait pour naviguer longtemps. Le livre de bord révélera que son inscription au registre mari-

time expirait lundi, date de son arrivée à Catane.

Dans l'enceinte du port, d'autres bâtiments dansent dans l'enceinte protégée de la Garde des finances. Ce sont six petits chalutiers d'une vingtaine de mètres aux couleurs bariolées et au nom écrit en indien. Ils sont arrivés après avoir franchi le canal de Suez. Chacun transportait une centaine de Sri Lankais. Déjà quatre autres barques de pêche sont signalées en provenance d'Égypte tandis qu'un cargo transportant six cents émigrés aurait doublé Gibraltar. La Sicile se prépare à un nouvel « assaut ».

R. H.

LE FIGARO

22 MARS 2002

Kurdish leader Talabani opposes military action against Iraq

20 Mar 2002

Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, PUK, leader Jalal Talabani has said that he opposed military action against Iraq. In an interview with Turkish commercial NTV, Talabani said: "I am against a military operation. The Iraqi forces and people should bring about the change democratically." The following is text of a recorded interview by Didem Tuncay - in English with superimposed translation into Turkish, broadcast - by Turkish commercial NTV television on 20 March:

[Tuncay] Our host is Jalal Talabani, Iraqi Patriotic Union of Kurdistan leader. Welcome, Mr Talabani.

[Talabani] Thank you.

[Tuncay] Two weeks ago you were in Turkey, and you returned after a very short time. What is the purpose of this second visit?

[Talabani] Actually, this visit was decided at the beginning of previous one. It was decided that I would visit Syria after my Ankara visit and return to Ankara before going home.

[Tuncay] You came to Ankara on the same day as US Vice-President Dick Cheney. According to reports, you are not going to meet Cheney. Will you meet with the officials in Cheney's delegation?

[Talabani] No, I have not requested a meeting with Cheney or a meeting with an official from his delegation. My goal in this visit is to meet with my brothers in Turkey before returning to my country. I have no plans to meet any officials from Cheney's delegation.

[Tuncay] You had said, in the course of your last visit to Ankara, that there should not be any external intervention in Iraq and that this issue should be settled democratically. It seems that Washington failed to gain the support of regional countries as regards a possible operation in Iraq. What are your views on this issue?

[Talabani] Actually, I am not very sure that Cheney was not extended support.

[Tuncay] Are you saying that he was extended support?

[Talabani] In my opinion, the reality is different to that reported in the media and the disseminated propaganda. I do not think that the United States is totally isolated from the Arab countries. In my opinion, the United States has very good relations with the Arab countries. There are certain doubts as to when and how the Iraqi regime will be removed, however. It is known that the United States adopted a bill to define the Iraqi administration. The US Congress adopted a decision, which later became a bill during the term of Bill Clinton. However, there are no decisions as to when and how this should be carried out.

[Tuncay] In one of your statements, you said that there is a possibility of a change of regime in Iraq, especially before the anniversary of the 11 September attacks.

[Talabani] No. This is not true, actually. One of the journalists asked me whether I expect a change of regime in Iraq before the anniversary of the 11 September attacks. I said, yes, it is a possibility. I said that maybe it could happen. This is exactly what I said. You know we have explained our stance on a change of regime in Iraq. We want a democratic change of regime in Iraq. We want a change of regime with the support of the Iraqi nation. We want a change of regime to reunite Iraq, which is divided at present. Only a democratic and independent regime can reunite Iraq. We except all the Iraqis - the Turkomans and Kurds - to contribute towards this end. A democratic government should be established and it should include all the Iraqi people, the Shi'is, Sunnis, Kurds, Arabs and the Turkomans.

[Tuncay] Do you think that the United States will launch a strike against Iraq before 11 September?

[Talabani] I am not an American policy maker. From what I hear and watch, the United States will try in one way or another to change the regime in Iraq. Not even the Americans themselves can tell when and how this operation will be launched. There are rumours. There are those who say the end of May, others say the end of summer, and still others say the end of the year. There are also those who say the operation will be launched before 11 September. These are nothing but rumours. In my personal opinion, the United States has not decided when and how it will change the regime in Iraq.

[Tuncay] Do you support a military operation against Iraq?

[Talabani] As I explained, I am against a military operation. The Iraqi forces and people should bring about the change democratically.

[Tuncay] What if they cannot?

[Talabani] We are not ready to support a foreign invasion and interference in the internal affairs of Iraq.

[Tuncay] You will have a meeting with Ugur Ziya, the undersecretary to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Which issues will you raise at the meeting?

[Talabani] I do not know exactly. I will remind him of the issues we discussed at the last meeting. I will ask him to support and encourage the Turkish businessmen and contractors to go to northern Iraq - Kurdistan - and make contributions to the reconstruction of the region. In this way, our relations will be strengthened. Perhaps, we will discuss our relations with Syria.

[Tuncay] You were in Syria before you arrived in Turkey. At your arrival, you said that you did not bring any message from Damascus to Ankara. What are the Syrian views on a possible military operation against Iraq?

[Talabani] I think that the relations between Turkey and Syria are so good that they do not need any mediators, especially not a mediator from Kurdistan. I think that the relations are good and improving with each passing day. Our Syrian brothers are sensitive about the interests of the Iraqi people and the territorial integrity of Iraq. They also said that a change of regime in Iraq should be democratic and that unity should be secured. We are a democratic and patriotic force in Iraq. It is our duty to protect and defend Iraq's national unity. The Syrians, in turn, said that they are against a military operation against Baghdad.

[Tuncay] Did you discuss the PKK [Workers Party of Kurdistan] issue when in Syria?

[Talabani] No.

[Tuncay] Do you think there can be cooperation between PKK and Syria? Did you bring any message from Turkey to Syria on the PKK issue?

[Talabani] No. As I said beforehand, no one asked me to carry any messages. This is an issue between Syria and Turkey. Their relations are so strong that they can settle the issue between them. There is no reason for mediation and there is no need for me to carry a message from Turkey to Syria. I think that the PKK does not have any relations with Syria at present. There is no question of a PKK presence in Syria at present. As I understood, the Syrians think that there should not be any relations between the PKK and Syria.

[Tuncay] What is the latest situation of the PKK in northern Iraq?

[Talabani] What I know, according to reports coming from the region, is that the PKK is trying to change the name of the party and adopt a name like democratic republic. They will eliminate the words Kurds and Kurdistan from their programmes and change their strategies and tactics. The information we receive say that they will ask for general amnesty. The PKK seeks to lay down its arms if this general amnesty is declared.

[Tuncay] How many militants are there in northern Iraq?

[Talabani] I do not know the exact number, but the local people think there are some 5,000 militants.

[Tuncay] What are your views on the PKK desire to be a political power? Is this realistic?

[Talabani] They have a military not a political presence in our region. Now, they are busy with other issues. They are not aggressive like before and they are not trying to interfere in the internal affairs of the region. We have heard that they are trying to create a new image and some of them want to work for Iran, Iraq or Syria. We do not know what they want exactly.

[Tuncay] Thank you.

Source: NTV television, Istanbul, in Turkish 0945 gmt 20 Mar 02

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VIEW ON THE REPORT:

THE SITUATION IN IRAQ
11 YEARS AFTER THE GULF WAR

Rapporteur : Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne

The Administration of Iraqi Kurdistan supports the whole report presented by R.H Baroness Nicholson of Winterbourne, on the situation in Iraq 11 years after the gulf war.

Although we appreciate Baroness Emma Nicholson's objective report on the situation in Iraq, we feel that specific reference should be made to the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is our hope that the European Parliament will welcome the progress realised in the last ten years with regard to democratisation and the improvement of human rights in the region.

A show of solidarity and support by the European Parliament for the Kurdish Administration in its efforts to establish a democratic and civic society in accordance with the wishes of the Kurdish people would send out an important signal to the international community.

SITUATION IN IRAQI KURDISTAN

For several decades, Iraqi Kurdistan was the target of military attacks led by Saddam Hussein's regime. More than 4500 villages and small towns were destroyed and more than 1 million Kurdish people were deported. In march 1998, the town of Halabja and the Balisan valley were the object of chemical bombardments. More than 8 bombardments took place between November, 2000 and October 2001.

The Kurds in Iraqi Kurdistan occupy what is now a "de facto" federal region, with the main administration based in the capital, Erbil, led by the KDP and another one based in the province of Suleymania, led by the PUK. The Kurdish National Assembly, based in the capital Erbil, has 115 members, 100 for Kurds, 5 for Assyrians and 10 for Turcomans.

The Washington agreement, signed on September 17, 1998 terminated the conflict which had set the KDP and the PUK apart. A common position was notably adopted on January 16, 2002 to underline the will of Iraqi Kurdistan to live in a democratic and federal Iraqi Republic.

Within the framework of the "oil for food" program, the Administration of Iraqi Kurdistan worked in close cooperation with the agencies of the United Nations. As its

own expense, it supported the program with the services of thousands of government staff (teachers, health workers, electricity staff, water and sanitation workers).

Furthermore, it also provided warehousing and other building facilities, telecommunication, transport, and security services to UN agencies.

The ICRC has always had access to all the prisons in the region, and freedom of expression and freedom of the media are now better guaranteed by law. In Iraqi Kurdistan, there are women teachers, judges and government ministers, which signifies the rights, role, and importance of women in Kurdish civil society.

SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS

Therefore, the Government of Iraqi Kurdistan would be grateful if you will consider adopting the following amendments to the mention for a resolution contained within Emma Nicholson's report:

Introduction of new paragraphs

- champions the will of Iraqi Kurdistan to live in a democratic and federal Iraqi Republic;
- takes note of the progress realised in respect of human rights and democratisation; and encourages Iraqi Kurdistan to pursue the democratisation process it has initiated in the last 10 years;
- encourages the people of Iraqi Kurdistan to form, according to the Washington agreement, a unified administration which will have to organize new general elections;
- calls the Iraqi government to recognize the national and democratic rights of the Kurds of Iraq within a federal and democratic Iraq.

"OIL FOR FOOD" PROGRAMM

Modification of paragraph 11

- notes, however, that the "oil for food" program has been effective only in *Iraqi Kurdistan*, where it has been managed by the United Nations directly and *supported by the full and whole cooperation offered by the Iraqi Kurdistan Administration;*

Introduction of new paragraph

- clarifies that the revision of the current system of sanctions should accompany measures intended to protect and foster democratic progress realised in Iraqi Kurdistan;
- stresses therefore that the substantial amounts of unspent 986 funds should not be forfeited when the program comes to an end;
- insists on the need to include permanent arrangements for the 13% share of Iraqi revenues for the Kurdistan Region in a post "oil for food" program environment, and recognises that those incomes are indispensable to the administration of Kurdistan to pursue the progress realised in the field of human rights and democratisation;
- urges that those measures must be guaranteed by an agreement at the international level.

Bagdad interroge l'ONU sur ses conditions

Le processus de négociation continue sur le retour des inspecteurs en Irak

BAGDAD a remis au secrétaire général de l'ONU, Kofi Annan, une liste de vingt questions auxquelles les Nations unies devront répondre avant que ce pays ne se prononce sur un retour - réclamé avec insistance par George W. Bush - des inspecteurs « onusiens » chargés de contrôler le désarmement irakien.

Les membres du Conseil de sécurité ont commencé, mercredi 20 mars, d'étudier cette liste. Outre les points soulevés dans ce document, l'Irak veut que l'ONU examine la conformité des menaces de Washington contre Bagdad et, à son tour, il appelle les Etats-Unis à éliminer les armes de destruction massive dans l'arsenal américain.

M. Annan a indiqué à la presse que les questions soulevées par les irakiens « l'avaient été en termes de recherche d'une clarification » et qu'elles ne pouvaient pas être assimi-

lées à « des pré-conditions ».

Pour autant, le document de Bagdad, que certains diplomates jugent « provocant », risque de diviser les membres du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, s'agissant aussi bien des menaces, brandies par les Etats-Unis, de renverser le régime de Saddam Hussein que de la composition des équipes d'inspection ou la durée de leur mission. « Les questions irakiennes, estime un diplomate américain, posent des conditions inacceptables et l'Irak doit autoriser, sans entraves, le retour des contrôleurs de l'ONU ». Certaines des questions sont techniques, d'autres sont jugées plus politiques si l'on en croit des confidences d'autres diplomates.

Bagdad demande, par exemple, comment l'ONU peut certifier que les nouveaux inspecteurs n'espionneront pas au profit des Etats-Unis et il s'interroge sur le versement

d'éventuelles compensations pour les dégâts occasionnés par les bombardements des avions de patrouille américains et britanniques qui assurent le respect des zones d'exclusion aérienne.

De même, comme le président Saddam Hussein l'a lui-même indiqué en recevant, mercredi, à Bagdad des experts en pharmacologie, l'Irak réclame que les Etats-Unis éliminent, les premiers, les armes de destruction massive avant de chercher à l'obtenir du reste du monde. Et cela pour éviter que ces armes tombent dans les mains de terroristes « comme ce fut le cas d'un terroriste américain qui a produit le bacille de charbon ». A ses interlocuteurs, Saddam Hussein a dit regretter que des dirigeants américains aient récemment suggéré de faire usage de l'arme nucléaire contre certains pays et c'est pourquoi, explique-t-il, « il faut placer ceux qui ont proféré de telles

menaces sous surveillance psychiatrique ».

Les membres du conseil de sécurité ont prévu d'aider M. Annan à préparer les prochaines discussions, fin mai ou début juin, avec Bagdad.

Par ailleurs, Washington a annoncé qu'il refusera cette année de « certifier » que la Corée du Nord respecte l'accord de 1994 de geler son projet de mise au point de l'arme nucléaire, en échange de la fourniture de deux réacteurs destinés à produire de l'électricité. Washington reproche aussi à la Corée du Nord de ne pas autoriser des inspections internationales de son centre de recherche nucléaire à Yongbyon. Le refus de certification peut entraîner le blocage par le Congrès de fonds à Pyongyang. - (AFP, Reuters.)

Cheney's Skills Failed to Shift Focus Of Arab Leaders to Iraq From Israel

By JEANNE CUMMINGS

Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

JERUSALEM—U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney took his dry, unadorned style on tour for 10 days in the Middle East, and returned to Washington with only mixed results to show for it.

Mr. Cheney has spent most of his 16 months in office as President George W. Bush's understated Mr. Fix-it, a Washington veteran who has always drawn rave reviews for competence. But the diplomatic stage he has occupied for most of the last two weeks—filled with conflict over Iraq and Israeli-Palestinian violence—sternly tested both his public and private political skills.

Mr. Cheney endured repeated public expressions of Arab resistance to a potential U.S. confrontation with Iraq, which Mr. Bush has placed at the heart of the world's "axis of evil." In private meetings with Arab leaders, administration officials maintain, Mr. Cheney made headway in the matter. The vice president was also compelled to wade into the escalating warfare between Israel and Palestinian militants, though the administration believes that Mr. Cheney's involvement may produce a cease-fire as he prepares for a possible return trip to the region next week.

Mr. Cheney worked on both sensitive fronts with the sort of low-key style that has long marked him as better suited to performance in government than in

campaign settings. That style produced its share of awkward moments, as well as endearing ones.

Two days into the tour, the vice president bumped his head getting into the presidential limousine and wound up sporting a red half-moon bruise on his noggin for days. He nearly mowed down two little girls in Jordan who were trying to give flowers to his wife during a red-carpet arrival ceremony. He once waved to the cameras from the top of the Air Force Two stairs with his pants leg tangled up in his sock.



Dick Cheney

In an age of 24-hour television coverage, presidents rarely risk even a single not-ready-for-prime-time moment. That Mr. Cheney was willing to do so may be a sign of his self-assurance after high-level government jobs spanning more than a quarter-century.

Some common hazards of diplomatic missions proved less problematic for him. Unlike Mr. Bush, the vice president almost never misspeaks. In fact, he sometimes speaks so softly that he can barely be heard. And he isn't reluctant to stop an unwelcome question cold, replying, "I'm not going to answer

that," to queries that he thinks veer into indiscreet diplomatic or national-security territory.

Mr. Cheney's habitual discretion leads some listeners to underestimate the gravity of what he says. His simple vow that the U.S. will use "all means" to defend itself against terrorists or rogue states, for example, includes the possible use of nuclear weapons. One of his chief assignments was to make Arab leaders understand how serious the administration is about dealing with Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein and his ability to sponsor an attack using weapons of mass destruction against the U.S. or its allies.

Yet Mr. Cheney, who helped direct the 1991 Gulf War against Iraq as secretary of defense in the administration of the current president's father, encountered Arab governments publicly opposed to reopening hostilities with Iraq when violence raged next door in Israel. In holding their ground, the Arab leaders essentially made implementation of a cease-fire there as important to the Bush White House as it is to them and the residents in Gaza and West Bank.

Le Monde

23 MARS 2002

Deux morts en Turquie lors du Nouvel An kurde

ISTANBUL. Les célébrations du Nevruz, le Nouvel An kurde, en Turquie ont été marquées, jeudi 21 mars, par des affrontements violents entre manifestants et la police dans le port méditerranéen de Mersin (photo), où deux personnes ont trouvé la mort, une soixantaine ont été blessées, dont de nombreux policiers, et des centaines d'autres ont été arrêtées. A Istanbul également, les forces de l'ordre sont intervenues avec des canons à eau et des matraques pour disperser des manifestants qui n'avaient pas obtenu d'autorisation officielle pour se réunir. Près de 500 personnes ont été arrêtées. Dans d'autres localités où les autorités avaient adopté une attitude plus flexible, la fête s'est déroulée sans incident autour des feux de joie traditionnels. - (Corresp.)



IRAN

La menace américaine ? Une aubaine pour les conservateurs

Puisque Washington inclut l'Iran parmi les pays à combattre, les "durs" du régime iranien réclament l'installation de l'état d'urgence pour poursuivre à leur aise leur politique de répression.

ASSR-E NOU

Francfort

<<http://asre-nou.net>>

Depuis que M. Bush a placé l'Iran aux côtés de l'Irak et de la Corée du Nord sur l'"axe du mal", les spécialistes des rafles au sein du pouvoir iranien ont les mains libres. Le Grand Satan [les États-Unis] jaillit tel un sauveur au milieu des slogans "Mort à l'Amérique". Il offre une occasion en or à des brigands qui, brandissant l'excuse de la menace extérieure, se permettent à nouveau toutes les exactions. Parler d'état d'urgence s'inscrit dans ce contexte. Il faudrait savoir si la République islamique a jamais connu une situation normale pour que l'on puisse instaurer aujourd'hui l'état d'urgence.

Depuis des années, des centaines de milliers d'hommes armés arpentent régulièrement les rues, les milices contrôlent jour et nuit les allées et venues et réduisent les espaces de

liberté de la population. Prenons simplement ces deux ou trois dernières années. La situation a été à tel point "normale" qu'un tribunal de Téhéran a pu en une seule session interdire provisoirement dix-neuf journaux et revues. Cette censure "provisoire" est toujours en vigueur deux ans après le verdict ! Et les

exemples ne manquent pas. Un seul "cercle" à la tête du ministère de l'Intérieur – dont les membres étaient des conseillers et vice-ministres – a pu organiser l'assassinat de plusieurs écrivains et activistes politiques en l'espace de quelques mois.

LES DÉPUTÉS N'OSENT PAS S'EXPRIMER AU PARLEMENT

Comment oublier le cas du commandant des forces de l'ordre qui a mobilisé ses hommes habillés en civil pour attaquer et saccager un dortoir d'étudiants à Téhéran, tabassant des milliers d'entre eux parce qu'ils s'étaient permis de protester contre l'interdiction d'un journal ?

■ Indécision
Alors que le gouvernement de Téhéran avait donné son aval à des discussions entre parlementaires iraniens et américains, le Guide

de la révolution, l'ayatollah Khamenei, a pris le contre-pied de son gouvernement, en déclarant son opposition à un dialogue avec le Grand Satan.

Ce distingué personnage a été relaxé par la justice – acquitté d'avance, car les véritables commanditaires des actions "d'urgence" ne gravitent pas dans cette sphère.

Malgré l'état de "non-urgence" actuel, les députés n'osent pas s'exprimer, même au sein du Parlement, par peur d'être arrêtés et accusés de diffamation... La volonté des conservateurs d'instaurer l'état d'urgence ne répond pas à la situation politique interne du pays, mais au besoin d'une partie du pouvoir de conserver sa mainmise sur la société. Pour ce courant politique, parler d'"état d'urgence" reflète la gravité de la situation et sa peur de l'avenir. ■

Courrier International

DU 21 AU 27 MARS 2002

A coalition for Iraq

The Washington Post

Vice President Dick Cheney's recent tour of the Middle East created the public impression that the Arab governments in the area are united and unmovable in their opposition to a U.S. military campaign to oust Saddam Hussein. Such a campaign, they declare, would be a catastrophe for the region; moreover, the Bush administration should not even consider it unless and until it can put an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. No doubt the Arab summit meeting scheduled for this week will propel this rhetoric to its highest pitch — and cause some in Washington to conclude that it will be impossible to build a coalition to confront the Iraqi regime. That conclusion would be wrong. The United States can, and should, create a consensus over the course of the next few months for freeing Iraqis from the Saddam Hussein dictatorship. To do so, however, it must patiently pursue several intermediate steps, including one or two it is unreasonably resisting.

The first trick, which administration officials already know well, is to ignore most of the Arab public rhetoric, while making clear in private meetings that the United States can no longer tolerate the status quo in Baghdad. Arab governments shout their opposition to confronting Saddam Hussein in part

because they fear that the Bush administration, like its predecessors, will not follow up on its threats, or will content itself with military half-measures that leave the dictator in power. If they are assured that any U.S. campaign will not stop short of destroying the Iraqi regime, and that it will be accomplished with an overwhelming force that can quickly achieve a military victory, one of their largest concerns will be assuaged.

While insisting on its goal, the administration must also avoid falling into the trap of accepting an Israeli-Palestinian settlement as a precondition to action. Such a settlement is worth pursuing on its own merits, and the ad-

ministration has been right to step up its efforts. Yet the sad fact is that while some kind of truce may be patched together, a larger Israeli-Palestinian peace may not be achievable in the near future. Linking progress there to Iraq might even worsen the already dim prospects for a settlement, since Saddam Hussein enjoys strong support among the Palestinians and their leaders. Conversely, if the Iraqi regime were finally replaced by a moderate government that renounced terrorism, Palestinian hard-liners might be more inclined to abandon their destructive quest to achieve statehood by violent means.

□

The hardest part of building a coalition for change in Iraq is forging a plausible vision of what kind of government would replace Saddam Hussein and how such a government would be put together. Once the news conferences are over and the doors are closed, this is the subject of greatest concern to Iraq's neighbors — and the one where the administration has been slowest to offer answers. That is partly because answers are not easy; there are no readily available and credible alternatives. Still, the administration can commit itself to a process. It can offer — in public — a vision of Iraq as a state that is united, but respectful of minorities, and pledged to peace with its neighbors. It can build confidence in the likelihood of that outcome by fully developing and embracing a post-Saddam scheme of reconstruction, peacekeeping and — yes — nation-building. As a start, that would mean dropping the pointless resistance to such a project in Afghanistan and using greater U.S. engagement in civil affairs and peacekeeping there as a model of what could be done in Iraq. If the Bush administration would commit itself not just to destroying rogue regimes but to a long-term effort to help build better ones, winning support in the Middle East might turn out to be relatively easy — even if some leaders never say so in public.

International Herald Tribune
Monday, March 25, 2002

TURQUIE

“Notre armée, un produit d'exportation ?”

En visite à Istanbul, le financier George Soros a expliqué que le seul bien turc compétitif sur les marchés extérieurs est le soldat. Ce rôle de “petit gendarme” soulève l'indignation du quotidien Cumhuriyet.

Lors de sa visite à Istanbul, George Soros a prodigué des conseils en or à une brochette de grandes plumes de la presse turque réunis autour d'un banquet au domicile de Can Paker, président de la TESEV (Fondation d'études sociales et économiques de Turquie). Le lendemain, il devait les répéter aux étudiants de l'université Sabanci, fondée par le grand groupe industriel du même nom pour devenir le “Harvard de Turquie”. Au moment où Soros faisait savoir aux Turcs que les Mehmetçiks* étaient leurs “meilleurs produits d'exportation”, des corps sans tête déambulaient dans les villes de l'Afghanistan. Un curieux coup de hasard ? Et quel hasard !... George Soros est un homme très important. Ce magicien du sys-

tème mondial des finances, ce Sindbad des places boursières à travers la planète, parvient à voir ce qui va se passer dans l'économie britannique, devine avant le Premier ministre de la Malaisie la crise qui va secouer ce pays et prévoit même avant le président russe la grande dévaluation à laquelle devra procéder la Russie.

Voilà notre homme invité en Turquie. On lui a demandé d'exposer ses vues. Mais l'idée qu'il a lancée a fait l'effet d'une grosse pierre dans les estomacs, tellement elle était indigeste. “Votre secteur privé, les compétences de vos hommes d'affaires, les choses que vous produisez conformément aux objectifs de vos programmes économiques n'ont pas beaucoup de compétitivité et, donc, pas tellement de chances de se vendre sur les marchés extérieurs”, disait Soros en substance, et il poursuivait : “Votre meilleur produit d'exportation, ce devra être votre armée !”

Le jour où cette idée de Soros était diffusée en grande pompe dans les médias, un jour-

naliste turc, Tuncay Özkan, décrivait dans son reportage d'Afghanistan les corps sans tête déambulant dans les rues. “Des scènes d'une sauvagerie inouïe, d'une folie inimaginable ! Les vainqueurs afghans, qui croient avoir gagné une victoire avec le soutien américain, regroupent sur les places publiques des prisonniers talibans. Dans une euphorie de fête, ils allument de grands feux et installent des plaques de tôle par-dessus. Quand les plaques sont chauffées à blanc, les vainqueurs posent sur celles-ci les têtes tranchées des vaincus. Les cerveaux qui se trouvent à l'intérieur de ces têtes, coupées au ras du cou et cautérisées sur les plaques brûlantes, continuent à fonctionner pendant quelques instants encore et voient même ce qui se passe. Et que voient-ils ? Les corps qui en sont détachés, également cautérisés au fer rouge à l'endroit de la mutilation. Mais le sang continue à circuler pendant un certain moment, faisant bouger le corps. Ainsi, des corps sans tête font mécaniquement quelques pas, avant de

heurter un mur et de s'effondrer. Les têtes coupées regardent cette scène. Et les vainqueurs éclatent de rire..." Sur la terre afghane où grandit une haine irrésistible contre les vainqueurs, on essaie d'attirer les Mehmetçiks afin qu'ils contiennent les affrontements qui ne manqueront pas d'éclater. Tout cela avec la bénédiction de Soros, qui distille ses

conseils sur notre "meilleur produit d'exportation". Les hommes d'affaires, les grandes plumes des journaux, les membres exécutifs du patronat, le président de la TESEV, tous écoutent, béats d'admiration, le discours de Soros, qui leur explique en substance : l'habileté de vos hommes d'affaires, vos holdings, vos banques, les produits fabriqués par votre

secteur privé n'ont pas beaucoup de chance sur les marchés mondiaux. Pas autant que les Mehmetçiks en tout cas... à exporter contre paiement. **Necati Dogru, Cumhuriyet, Istanbul**

* Mehmetçiks : surnom donné aux recrues dans l'armée turque.

The Milosevic precedent ■ By Nicholas D. Kristof

To get rid of Saddam, indict him now for war crimes

NEW YORK

Whether or not the United States invades Iraq to topple Saddam Hussein, let's go about this the American way. Let's sue him.

The United States should launch an effort to prosecute Saddam for crimes against humanity. This would destabilize his regime at home, encourage more defections of Iraqi officials and military officers, and increase the prospect of a coup that, in the best-case scenario, would render an invasion unnecessary.

I came across this idea in references in books by Richard Butler, who led the UN inspection effort in Iraq, and by Kanan Makiya, author of the leading account of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. It also turns out that a British organization, Indict, is already pursuing an indictment against Saddam for war crimes.

Makiya writes that the best way to topple an Iraqi leader is to make him lose face. As an example, he cites the Ottoman-era practice of the people of Takrit (Saddam's hometown) of seizing the governor for the area, humiliating him (often by sexually abusing his women) and then releasing him unharmed.

I would not recommend this precise approach. But a drive to indict Saddam for genocide against the Kurds, along with other crimes, suggesting that he will end his days in a prison cell, will humiliate him in a similar way, squeezing him and encouraging those around him to look for an exit while there is still time.

"In Washington, you either have the war hounds who want to bomb Iraq and take Saddam out, or the folks who just want to contain Saddam because at least he keeps Iraq together," said Joost Hiltermann, who has examined 18 tons of Iraqi documents seized in Kurdistan and brought to the United States, and who is now writing a book about Iraq and its use of chemical weapons. "But there is a third option" — a legal case, with or without a military attack.

Along with those 18 tons of documents were audio tapes of speeches by Ali Hassan Majid, a cousin of Saddam and his former lieutenant for northern Iraq. In one tape he



says of the Kurds: "I will kill them all with chemical weapons!"

The Bush administration is interested in the idea of prosecuting Saddam, and it has two lawyers sitting in the State Department gathering evidence against him. But the thinking there has been that the prosecution would begin after Saddam is in custody, rather than before.

Why? An administration official, acknowledging that there may be advantages to a preemptive indictment and adding that no decision has been made, expressed concern that a legal effort might distract from the task of "regime change," a term that means "squash Saddam like a bug."

It's a fair concern. But in Yugoslavia Slobodan Milosevic was indicted when he was still in power, in 1999. The indictment was one factor that helped result in his ouster from power in 2000. And in 2001 he was sent to The Hague for trial.

In short, firing lawyers at Saddam would bolster the military options, not weaken them.

One of the constraints that Washington faces in organizing an attack on Iraq is cold feet everywhere else on the planet except

those under Tony Blair. To forge a coalition against Saddam, the United States must build a case against him very publicly to demonstrate that he is not just another two-bit tyrant but a monster almost without parallel in recent decades.

The police in other countries use torture, but there are credible reports that Saddam's police cut out tongues and use electric drills.

Other countries gouge out the eyes of dissidents; Saddam's interrogators have been accused of gouging out the eyes of hundreds of children to get their parents to talk. Plus, he has tons of VX gas and defies the United Nations.

There are three ways the United States can pursue legal action against Saddam:

- An international tribunal can be established, like the one now trying Milosevic. This would require Security Council approval, which would be difficult.

- Several countries could launch a case before the International Court of Justice, without Security Council agreement. This would be against Iraq as a country, not Saddam as a person.

- An individual country could indict Saddam. This would be a country claiming universal jurisdiction in genocide cases.

Now is the time. Let's throw the book at Saddam.

The New York Times

La télévision par satellite, nouvelle arme de Saddam Hussein

A MAINTES reprises, l'opposition irakienne et des organisations de défense des droits de l'homme ont dénoncé les sévices infligés par le régime de Bagdad aux familles de ses opposants en exil. Samedi 23 mars, le quotidien britannique *The Independent* a rapporté un témoignage qui montre que le régime a découvert un nouveau moyen, la télévision par satellite, pour réduire au silence ses détracteurs. Les familles sont ainsi forcées de dénoncer publiquement les activités de leur(s) fils, laissant entendre qu'elles risquent d'en payer le prix par la mort ou le viol.

Faïq Cheikh Ali, un chiite originaire de la ville sainte de Najaf, dans le sud de l'Irak, où il exerçait la profession d'avocat avant de fuir son pays en 1991, a ainsi raconté au journal qu'il avait été surpris, récemment, de voir sa mère, ses deux sœurs et son frère interviewés par la télévision irakienne, le dénoncer tour à tour et lui demander de cesser ses activités. « Ton père est mort à cause de tes activités. Tu

dois y réfléchir », a dit sa mère, tandis que son jeune frère Fouad affirmait : « Je ne veux pas sauver mon frère. Je ne le connais pas. »

A un moment de l'entretien de vingt-cinq minutes, la plus jeune sœur de Faïq, Amel, l'a supplié : « S'il te plaît, Faïq, tu dois te souvenir que tu as une sœur dans ce pays avant de faire quoi que ce soit. » Faïq Cheikh Ali craint que sa sœur ne soit victime de viol si lui-même continue de critiquer le président Saddam Hussein. En 1996, son père est décédé subitement après avoir été emprisonné puis libéré à quatre reprises. La famille soupçonne qu'il a été empoisonné.

L'acharnement contre les membres de la famille Cheikh Ali s'est accentué après que Faïq eut déclaré, en décembre 2001, lors d'un débat sur la télévision qatarie par satellite Al Jazeera, que « le premier terroriste au monde est Saddam et non pas Ben Laden ». « J'ai dit qu'il était un boucher », a-t-il déclaré au quotidien britannique. Peu après, sa mère, ses deux

sœurs et son frère ont été arrêtés à Najaf et emmenés à Bagdad, où ils ont été détenus pendant cinq jours, avant d'être remis en liberté avec l'obligation de se présenter au quartier général de la sécurité à Bagdad une fois par semaine.

A la mi-janvier, un convoi de Mercedes noires et de Land Rover, qui transportaient des hommes en armes, dont certains cagoulés, s'est brusquement arrêté devant le domicile des Cheikh Ali à Najaf. Les hommes armés ont forcé tous les membres de la famille à se rassembler. Deux équipes de télévision les ont interrogés et, lorsque les réponses ne les satisfaisaient pas, elles les forçaient à recommencer. La scène a duré cinq heures. « C'est un message adressé à l'ensemble de l'opposition irakienne dans le monde », a déclaré Faïq Cheikh Ali à *The Independent*. Ce message dit : « Tenez-vous tranquilles ou on tue vos familles. »

Mouna Naim

Le sud-est à majorité kurde veut en finir avec 25 ans de loi d'airain



DIYARBAKIR (Turquie), 26 mars (AFP) - 9h08 - L'histoire des défenseurs des Droits de l'Homme Ridvan Kizgin et Fevzi Akbulut, incarcérés deux mois sans raison, est symptomatique des entraves persistantes aux libertés fondamentales imposées dans le sud-est turc par des lois d'exception.

Le président et le secrétaire de la section de Bingöl de l'Association turque des Droits de l'Homme (IHD) ont été relâchés mercredi dernier contre caution après deux mois d'emprisonnement pour s'être rendus à une conférence de presse du Parti de la Démocratie du Peuple (HADEP, pro-kurde). Leur procès continue.

Le HADEP marquait l'anniversaire de la disparition de deux de ses membres, le 15 janvier 2001 dans la ville voisine de Silopi après leur convocation au poste de gendarmerie, mais a été qualifié de "rassemblement interdit" et la police a interpellé une centaine de personnes.

"Défendre les Droits de l'Homme est une tâche difficile en Turquie, et beaucoup plus encore dans la région sous état d'urgence, car c'est celle qui connaît le plus de violations", constate l'avocat Osman Baydemir, président de la section de Diyarbakir.

S'il fallait une illustration de cet euphémisme, il n'est qu'à relever l'impressionnant casier judiciaire de M. Baydemir: rien qu'en 2001, il a fait l'objet de 115 poursuites judiciaires lui faisant risquer en tout 88 ans et 8 mois de prison.

La branche de Diyarbakir, chef-lieu de la région, fut fermée d'autorité durant trois ans, un des membres fondateurs avait été assassiné peu après son inauguration en 1988, et les principaux dirigeants avaient été jetés en prison après la publication d'un rapport annuel, en 1994.

Aujourd'hui, sur 9 sections provinciales, les bureaux de Malatya et de Gaziantep demeurent fermés depuis deux ans.

Au coeur de ce régime d'airain, la puissante administration du super-gouverneur en charge des provinces sous état d'urgence, dont le nombre a été progressivement ramené de 10 à 4 aujourd'hui.

Après la loi martiale imposée en 1977, l'état d'urgence, à nouveau reconduit le 13 mars pour 4 mois, régit une bonne partie du sud-est à majorité kurde, maintenant depuis 25 ans la région sous législation d'exception.

"L'état d'urgence n'a plus de raison d'être, deux ans et demi après le dépôt des armes par la rébellion du Parti des Travailleurs du Kurdistan, mais il est pourtant reconduit sans que l'on sache pourquoi". S'étonne Seyhmuz Diken, ancien sous-préfet, aujourd'hui conseiller à la mairie de Diyarbakir, tenue par le HADEP.

"Ici, tout demeure soumis à un régime exceptionnel", explique le bâtonnier de Diyarbakir, Mustafa Ozer: "les conditions de vie, la législation en vigueur, les procès, (...) et tout ce qui peut être considéré comme dirigé contre l'Etat est sanctionné sans guère d'enquête", dénonce-t-il.

"La spécificité de cette administration, renchérit Me Baydemir, c'est qu'on ne peut ni faire appel, ni ouvrir une procédure contre les décisions du super-gouverneur".

Ainsi le super-gouverneur peut-il décréter l'interdiction de 29 journaux et magazines, empêcher la représentation de 99 pièces de théâtre en 2001, octroyer comme bon lui semble des laissez-passer ou des autorisations de filmer dans la région.

"Le super-gouverneur décide même du bannissement de fonctionnaires, 168 l'an dernier, sans recours possible", fulmine Abdullah Demirbas, qui dirige la section locale du syndicat enseignant Egitim-Sen.

Autre survivance de 15 ans de lutte anti-guérilla: le système des gardiens de village, enrôlés par Ankara pour lutter contre le PKK et associés à nombre de meurtres et disparitions inexplicables, mais qui ne peuvent être poursuivis devant la justice.

THE GREAT TERROR

In northern Iraq, there is new evidence of Saddam Hussein's genocidal war on the Kurds—and of his possible ties to Al Qaeda.

By JEFFER GOLDBERG

THE NEW YORKER

Issue of 2002-03-25

In the late morning of March 16, 1988, an Iraqi Air Force helicopter appeared over the city of Halabja, which is about fifteen miles from the border with Iran. The Iran-Iraq War was then in its eighth year, and Halabja was near the front lines. At the time, the city was home to roughly eighty thousand Kurds, who were well accustomed to the proximity of violence to ordinary life. Like most of Iraqi Kurdistan, Halabja was in perpetual revolt against the regime of Saddam Hussein, and its inhabitants were supporters of the *peshmerga*, the Kurdish fighters whose name means "those who face death."

A young woman named Nasreen Abdel Qadir Muhammad was outside her family's house, preparing food, when she saw the helicopter. The Iranians and the *peshmerga* had just attacked Iraqi military outposts around Halabja, forcing Saddam's soldiers to retreat. Iranian Revolutionary Guards then infiltrated the city, and the residents assumed that an Iraqi counterattack was imminent. Nasreen and her family expected to spend yet another day in their cellar, which was crude and dark but solid enough to withstand artillery shelling, and even napalm.

"At about ten o'clock, maybe closer to ten-thirty, I saw the helicopter," Nasreen told me. "It was not attacking, though. There were men inside it, taking pictures. One had a regular camera, and the other held what looked like a video camera. They were coming very close. Then they went away."

Nasreen thought that the sight was strange, but she was preoccupied with lunch; she and her sister Rangeen were preparing rice, bread, and beans for the thirty or forty relatives who were taking shelter in the cellar. Rangeen was fifteen at the time. Nasreen was just sixteen, but her father had married her off several months earlier, to a cousin, a thirty-year-old physician's assistant named Bakhtiar Abdul Aziz. Halabja is a conservative place, and many more women wear the veil than in the more cosmopolitan Kurdish cities to the northwest and the Arab cities to the south.

The bombardment began shortly before eleven. The Iraqi Army, positioned on the main road from the nearby town of Sayid Sadiq, fired artillery shells into Halabja, and the Air Force began dropping what is thought to have been napalm on the town, especially the northern area. Nasreen and Rangeen rushed to the cellar. Nasreen prayed that Bakhtiar, who was then outside the city, would find shelter.

The attack had ebbed by about two o'clock, and Nasreen made her way carefully upstairs to the kitchen, to get the food for the family. "At the end of the bombing, the sound changed," she said. "It wasn't so loud. It was like pieces of metal just dropping without exploding. We didn't know why it was so quiet."

A short distance away, in a neighborhood still called the Julakan, or Jewish quarter, even though Halabja's Jews left for Israel in the nineteen-fifties, a middle-aged man named Muhammad came up from his own cellar and saw an unusual sight: "A helicopter had come back to the town, and the soldiers were throwing white pieces of paper out the side." In retrospect, he understood that they were measuring wind speed and direction. Nearby, a man named Awat Omer, who was twenty at the time, was overwhelmed by a smell of garlic and apples.

Nasreen gathered the food quickly, but she, too, noticed a series of odd smells carried into the house by the wind. "At first, it smelled bad, like garbage," she said. "And then it was a good smell, like sweet apples. Then like eggs." Before she went downstairs, she happened to check on a caged partridge that her father kept in the house. "The bird was dying," she said. "It was on its side." She looked out the window. "It was very quiet, but the animals were dying. The sheep and goats were dying." Nasreen ran to the cellar. "I told everybody there was something wrong. There was something wrong with the air."

The people in the cellar were panicked. They had fled downstairs to escape the bombardment, and it was difficult to abandon their shelter. Only splinters of light penetrated the basement, but the dark provided a strange comfort. "We wanted to stay in hiding, even though we were getting sick," Nasreen said. She felt a sharp pain in her eyes, like stabbing needles. "My sister came close to my face and said, 'Your eyes are very red.' Then the children started throwing up. They kept throwing up. They were in so much pain, and crying so much. They were crying all the time. My mother was crying. Then the old people started throwing up."

Chemical weapons had been dropped on Halabja by the Iraqi Air Force, which understood that any underground shelter would become a gas chamber. "My uncle said we should go outside," Nasreen said. "We knew there were chemicals in the air. We were getting red eyes, and some of us had liquid coming out of them. We decided to run." Nasreen and her relatives stepped outside gingerly. "Our cow was lying on its side," she recalled. "It was breathing very fast, as if it had been running. The leaves were falling off the trees, even though it was spring. The partridge was dead. There were smoke clouds around, clinging to the ground. The gas was heavier than the air, and it was finding the wells and going down the wells."

The family judged the direction of the wind, and decided to run the opposite way. Running proved difficult. "The children couldn't walk, they were so sick," Nasreen said. "They were exhausted from throwing up. We carried them in our arms."

Across the city, other families were making similar decisions. Nouri Hama Ali, who lived in the northern part of town, decided to lead his family in the direction of Anab, a collective settlement on the outskirts of Halabja that housed Kurds displaced when the Iraqi Army destroyed their villages. "On the road to Anab, many of the women and children began to die," Nouri told me. "The chemical clouds were on the ground. They were heavy. We could see them." People were dying all around, he said. When a child could not go on, the parents, becoming hysterical with fear, abandoned him. "Many children were left on the ground, by the side of the road. Old people as well. They were running, then they would stop breathing and die."

Nasreen's family did not move quickly. "We wanted to wash ourselves off and find water to drink," she said. "We wanted to wash the faces of the children who were vomiting. The children were crying for water. There was powder on the ground, white. We

couldn't decide whether to drink the water or not, but some people drank the water from the well they were so thirsty."

They ran in a panic through the city, Nasreen recalled, in the direction of Anab. The bombardment continued intermittently, Air Force planes circling overhead. "People were showing different symptoms. One person touched some of the powder, and her skin started bubbling."

A truck came by, driven by a neighbor. People threw themselves aboard. "We saw people lying frozen on the ground," Nasreen told me. "There was a small baby on the ground, away from her mother. I thought they were both sleeping. But she had dropped the baby and then died. And I think the baby tried to crawl away, but it died, too. It looked like everyone was sleeping."

At that moment, Nasreen believed that she and her family would make it to high ground and live. Then the truck stopped. "The driver said he couldn't go on, and he wandered away. He left his wife in the back of the truck. He told us to flee if we could. The chemicals affected his brain, because why else would someone abandon his family?"

As heavy clouds of gas smothered the city, people became sick and confused. Awat Omer was trapped in his cellar with his family; he said that his brother began laughing uncontrollably and then stripped off his clothes, and soon afterward he died. As night fell, the family's children grew sicker—too sick to move.

Nasreen's husband could not be found, and she began to think that all was lost. She led the children who were able to walk up the road.

In another neighborhood, Muhammad Ahmed Fattah, who was twenty, was overwhelmed by an oddly sweet odor of sulfur, and he, too, realized that he must evacuate his family; there were about a hundred and sixty people wedged into the cellar. "I saw the bomb drop," Muhammad told me. "It was about thirty metres from the house. I shut the door to the cellar. There was shouting and crying in the cellar, and then people became short of breath." One of the first to be stricken by the gas was Muhammad's brother Salah. "His eyes were pink," Muhammad recalled. "There was something coming out of his eyes. He was so thirsty he was demanding water." Others in the basement began suffering tremors.

March 16th was supposed to be Muhammad's wedding day. "Every preparation was done," he said. His fiancée, a woman named Bahar Jamal, was among the first in the cellar to die. "She was crying very hard," Muhammad recalled. "I tried to calm her down. I told her it was just the usual artillery shells, but it didn't smell the usual way weapons smelled. She was smart, she knew what was happening. She died on the stairs. Her father tried to help her, but it was too late."

Death came quickly to others as well. A woman named Hamida Mahmoud tried to save her two-year-old daughter by allowing her to nurse from her breast. Hamida thought that the baby wouldn't breathe in the gas if she was nursing, Muhammad said, adding, "The baby's name was Dashneh. She nursed for a long time. Her mother died while she was nursing. But she kept nursing." By the time Muhammad decided to go outside, most of the people in the basement were unconscious; many were dead, including his parents and three of his siblings.

Nasreen said that on the road to Anab all was confusion. She and the children were running toward the hills, but they were going blind. "The children were crying, 'We can't see! My eyes are bleeding!'" In the chaos, the family got separated. Nasreen's mother and father were both lost. Nasreen and several of her cousins and siblings inadvertently led the younger children in a circle, back into the city. Someone—she doesn't know who—led them away from the city again and up a hill, to a small mosque, where they sought shelter. "But we didn't stay in the mosque, because we thought it would be a target," Nasreen said. They went to a small house nearby, and Nasreen scrambled to find food and water for the children. By then, it was night, and she was exhausted.

Bakhtiar, Nasreen's husband, was frantic. Outside the city when the attacks started, he had spent much of the day searching for his wife and the rest of his family. He had acquired from a clinic two syringes of atropine, a drug that helps to counter the effects of nerve agents. He injected himself with one of the syringes, and set out to find Nasreen. He had no hope. "My plan was to bury her," he said. "At least I should bury my new wife."

After hours of searching, Bakhtiar met some neighbors, who remembered seeing Nasreen and the children moving toward the mosque on the hill. "I called out the name Nasreen," he said. "I heard crying, and I went inside the house. When I got there, I found that Nasreen was alive but blind. Everybody was blind."

Nasreen had lost her sight about an hour or two before Bakhtiar found her. She had been searching the house for food, so that she could feed the children, when her eyesight failed. "I found some milk and I felt my way to them and then I found their mouths and gave them milk," she said.

Bakhtiar organized the children. "I wanted to bring them to the well. I washed their heads. I took them two by two and washed their heads. Some of them couldn't come. They couldn't control their muscles."

Bakhtiar still had one syringe of atropine, but he did not inject his wife; she was not the worst off in the group. "There was a woman named Asme, who was my neighbor," Bakhtiar recalled. "She was not able to breathe. She was yelling and she was running into a wall, crashing her head into a wall. I gave the atropine to this woman." Asme died soon afterward. "I could have used it for Nasreen," Bakhtiar said. "I could have."

After the Iraqi bombardment subsided, the Iranians managed to retake Halabja, and they evacuated many of the sick, including Nasreen and the others in her family, to hospitals in Tehran.

Nasreen was blind for twenty days. "I was thinking the whole time, Where is my family? But I was blind. I couldn't do anything. I asked my husband about my mother, but he said he didn't know anything. He was looking in hospitals, he said. He was avoiding the question."

The Iranian Red Crescent Society, the equivalent of the Red Cross, began compiling books of photographs, pictures of the dead in Halabja. "The Red Crescent has an album of the people who were buried in Iran," Nasreen said. "And we found my mother in one of the albums." Her father, she discovered, was alive but permanently blinded. Five of her siblings, including Rangeen, had died.

Nasreen would live, the doctors said, but she kept a secret from Bakhtiar: "When I was in the hospital, I started menstruating. It wouldn't stop. I kept bleeding. We don't talk about this in our society, but eventually a lot of women in the hospital confessed they were also menstruating and couldn't stop." Doctors gave her drugs that stopped the bleeding, but they told her that she would be unable to bear children.

Nasreen stayed in Iran for several months, but eventually she and Bakhtiar returned to Kurdistan. She didn't believe the doctors who told her that she would be infertile, and in 1991 she gave birth to a boy. "We named him Arazoo," she said. Arazoo means hope in Kurdish. "He was healthy at first, but he had a hole in his heart. He died at the age of three months."

I met Nasreen last month in Erbil, the largest city in Iraqi Kurdistan. She is thirty now, a pretty woman with brown eyes and high cheekbones, but her face is expressionless. She doesn't seek pity; she would, however, like a doctor to help her with a cough that she's had ever since the attack, fourteen years ago. Like many of Saddam Hussein's victims, she tells her story without emotion.

During my visit to Kurdistan, I talked with more than a hundred victims of Saddam's campaign against the Kurds. Saddam has been persecuting the Kurds ever since he took power, more than twenty years ago. Several old women whose husbands were killed by Saddam's security services expressed a kind of animal hatred toward him, but most people, like Nasreen, told stories of horrific cruelty with a dispassion and a precision that underscored their credibility. Credibility is important to the Kurds; after all this time, they still feel that the world does not believe their story.

A week after I met Nasreen, I visited a small village called Goktapa, situated in a green valley that is ringed by snow-covered mountains. Goktapa came under poison-gas attack six weeks after Halabja. The village consists of low mud-brick houses along dirt paths. In Goktapa, an old man named Ahmed Raza Sharif told me that on the day of the attack on Goktapa, May 3, 1988, he was in the fields outside the village. He saw the shells explode and smelled the sweet-apple odor as poison filled the air. His son, Osman Ahmed, who was sixteen at the time, was near the village mosque when he was felled by the gas. He crawled down a hill and died among the reeds on the banks of the Lesser Zab, the river that flows by the village. His father knew that he was dead, but he couldn't reach the body. As many as a hundred and fifty people died in the attack; the survivors fled before the advancing Iraqi Army, which levelled the village. Ahmed Raza Sharif did not return for three years. When he did, he said, he immediately began searching for his son's body. He found it still lying in the reeds. "I recognized his body right away," he said.

The summer sun in Iraq is blisteringly hot, and a corpse would be unidentifiable three years after death. I tried to find a gentle way to express my doubts, but my translator made it clear to Sharif that I didn't believe him.

We were standing in the mud yard of another old man, Ibrahim Abdul Rahman. Twenty or thirty people, a dozen boys among them, had gathered. Some of them seemed upset that I appeared to doubt the story, but Ahmed hushed them. "It's true, he lost all the flesh on his body," he said. "He was just a skeleton. But the clothes were his, and they were still on the skeleton, a belt and a shirt. In the pocket of his shirt I found the key to our tractor. That's where he always kept the key."

Some of the men still seemed concerned that I would leave Goktapa doubting their truthfulness. Ibrahim, the man in whose yard we were standing, called out a series of orders to the boys gathered around us. They dispersed, to houses and storerooms, returning moments later holding jagged pieces of metal, the remnants of the bombs that poisoned Goktapa. Ceremoniously, the boys dropped the pieces of metal at my feet. "Here are the mercies of Uncle Saddam," Ibrahim said.

2. THE AFTERMATH

The story of Halabja did not end the night the Iraqi Air Force planes returned to their bases. The Iranians invited the foreign press to record the devastation. Photographs of the victims, supine, bleached of color, littering the gutters and alleys of the town, horrified the world. Saddam Hussein's attacks on his own citizens mark the only time since the Holocaust that poison gas has been used to exterminate women and children.

Saddam's cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, who led the campaigns against the Kurds in the late eighties, was heard on a tape captured by rebels, and later obtained by Human Rights Watch, addressing members of Iraq's ruling Baath Party on the subject of the Kurds. "I will kill them all with chemical weapons!" he said. "Who is going to say anything? The international community? Fuck them! The international community and those who listen to them."

Attempts by Congress in 1988 to impose sanctions on Iraq were stifled by the Reagan and Bush Administrations, and the story of Saddam's surviving victims might have vanished completely had it not been for the reporting of people like Randal and the work of a British documentary filmmaker named Gwynne Roberts, who, after hearing stories about a sudden spike in the incidence of birth defects and cancers, not only in Halabja but also in other parts of Kurdistan, had made some disturbing films on the subject. However, no Western government or United Nations agency took up the cause.

In 1998, Roberts brought an Englishwoman named Christine Gosden to Kurdistan. Gosden is a medical geneticist and a professor at the medical school of the University of Liverpool. She spent three weeks in the hospitals in Kurdistan, and came away determined to help the Kurds. To the best of my knowledge, Gosden is the only Western scientist who has even begun making a systematic study of what took place in northern Iraq.

Gosden told me that her father was a high-ranking officer in the Royal Air Force, and that as a child she lived in Germany, near Bergen-Belsen. "It's tremendously influential in your early years to live near a concentration camp," she said. In Kurdistan, she heard echoes of the German campaign to destroy the Jews. "The Iraqi government was using chemistry to reduce the population of Kurds," she said. "The Holocaust is still having its effect. The Jews are fewer in number now than they were in 1939. That's not natural. Now, if you take out two hundred thousand men and boys from Kurdistan—an estimate of the number of Kurds who were gassed or otherwise murdered in the campaign, most of whom were men and boys—"you've affected the population structure. There are a lot of widows who are not having children."

Richard Butler, an Australian diplomat who chaired the United Nations weapons-inspection team in Iraq, describes Gosden as "a classic English, old-school-tie kind of person." Butler has tracked her research since she began studying the attacks, four years ago, and finds it credible. "Occasionally, people say that this is Christine's obsession, but obsession is not a bad thing," he added.

Before I went to Kurdistan, in January, I spent a day in London with Gosden. We gossiped a bit, and she scolded me for having visited a Washington shopping mall without appropriate protective equipment. Whenever she goes to a mall, she brings along a polyurethane bag "big enough to step into" and a bottle of bleach. "I can detoxify myself immediately," she said.

Gosden believes it is quite possible that the countries of the West will soon experience chemical- and biological-weapons attacks far more serious and of greater lasting effect than the anthrax incidents of last autumn and the nerve-agent attack on the Tokyo subway system several years ago—that what happened in Kurdistan was only the beginning. "For Saddam's scientists, the Kurds were a test population," she said. "They were the human guinea pigs. It was a way of identifying the most effective chemical agents for use on civilian populations, and the most effective means of delivery."

The charge is supported by others. An Iraqi defector, Khidhir Hamza, who is the former director of Saddam's nuclear-weapons program, told me earlier this year that before the attack on Halabja military doctors had mapped the city, and that afterward they entered it wearing protective clothing, in order to study the dispersal of the dead. "These were field tests, an experiment on a town," Hamza told me. He said that he had direct knowledge of the Army's procedures that day in Halabja. "The doctors were given sheets with grids on them, and they had to answer questions such as 'How far are the dead from the cannisters?'"

Gosden said that she cannot understand why the West has not been more eager to investigate the chemical attacks in Kurdistan. "It seems a matter of enlightened self-interest that the West would want to study the long-term effects of chemical weapons on civilians, on the DNA," she told me. "I've seen Europe's worst cancers, but, believe me, I have never seen cancers like the ones I saw in Kurdistan."

According to an ongoing survey conducted by a team of Kurdish physicians and organized by Gosden and a small advocacy group called the Washington Kurdish Institute, more than two hundred towns and villages across Kurdistan were attacked by poison gas—far more than was previously thought—in the course of seventeen months. The number of victims is unknown, but doctors I met in Kurdistan believe that up to ten per cent of the population of northern Iraq—nearly four million people—has been exposed to chemical weapons. "Saddam Hussein poisoned northern Iraq," Gosden said when I left for Halabja. "The questions, then, are what to do? And what comes next?"

3. HALABJA'S DOCTORS

The Kurdish people, it is often said, make up the largest stateless nation in the world. They have been widely despised by their neighbors for centuries. There are roughly twenty-five million Kurds, most of them spread across four countries in southwestern Asia: Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. The Kurds are neither Arab, Persian, nor Turkish; they are a distinct ethnic group, with their own culture and language. Most Kurds are Muslim (the most famous Muslim hero of all, Saladin, who defeated the Crusaders, was of Kurdish origin), but there are Jewish and Christian Kurds, and also followers of the Yezidi religion, which has its roots in Sufism and Zoroastrianism. The Kurds are experienced mountain fighters, who tend toward stubbornness and have frequent bouts of destructive infighting.

After centuries of domination by foreign powers, the Kurds had their best chance at independence after the First World War, when President Woodrow Wilson promised the Kurds, along with other groups left drifting and exposed by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a large measure of autonomy. But the machinations of the great powers, who were becoming interested in Kurdistan's vast oil deposits, in Mosul and Kirkuk, quickly did the Kurds out of a state.

In the nineteen-seventies, the Iraqi Kurds allied themselves with the Shah of Iran in a territorial dispute with Iraq. America, the Shah's patron, once again became the Kurds' patron, too, supplying them with arms for a revolt against Baghdad. But a secret deal between the Iraqis and the Shah, arranged in 1975 by Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, cut off the Kurds and brought about their instant collapse; for the Kurds, it was an ugly betrayal.

The Kurdish safe haven, in northern Iraq, was born of another American betrayal. In 1991, after the United States helped drive Iraq out of Kuwait, President George Bush ignored an uprising that he himself had stoked, and Kurds and Shiites in Iraq were slaughtered by the thousands. Thousands more fled the country, the Kurds going to Turkey, and almost immediately creating a humanitarian disaster. The Bush Administration, faced with a televised catastrophe, declared northern Iraq a no-fly zone and thus a safe haven, a tactic that allowed the refugees to return home. And so, under the protective shield of the United States and British Air Forces, the unplanned Kurdish experiment in self-government began. Although the Kurdish safe haven is only a virtual state, it is an incipient democracy, a home of progressive Islamic thought and pro-American feeling.

Today, Iraqi Kurdistan is split between two dominant parties: the Kurdistan Democratic Party, led by Massoud Barzani, and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, whose General Secretary is Jalal Talabani. The two parties have had an often angry relationship, and in the mid-nineties they fought a war that left about a thousand soldiers dead. The parties, realizing that they could not rule together, decided to rule apart, dividing Kurdistan into two zones. The internal political divisions have not aided the Kurds' cause, but neighboring states also have fomented disunity, fearing that a unified Kurdish population would agitate for independence.

Turkey, with a Kurdish population of between fifteen and twenty million, has repressed the Kurds in the eastern part of the country,

politically and militarily, on and off since the founding of the modern Turkish state. In 1924, the government of Atatürk restricted the use of the Kurdish language (a law not lifted until 1991) and expressions of Kurdish culture; to this day, the Kurds are referred to in nationalist circles as "mountain Turks."

Turkey is not eager to see Kurds anywhere draw attention to themselves, which is why the authorities in Ankara refused to let me cross the border into Iraqi Kurdistan. Iran, whose Kurdish population numbers between six and eight million, was not helpful, either, and my only option for gaining entrance to Kurdistan was through its third neighbor, Syria. The Kurdistan Democratic Party arranged for me to be met in Damascus and taken to the eastern desert city of El Qamishli. From there, I was driven in a Land Cruiser to the banks of the Tigris River, where a small wooden boat, with a crew of one and an outboard motor, was waiting. The engine spluttered; when I learned that the forward lines of the Iraqi Army were two miles downstream, I began to paddle, too. On the other side of the river were representatives of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the *peshmerga*, the Kurdish guerrillas, who wore pantaloons and turbans and were armed with AK-47s.

"Welcome to Kurdistan" read a sign at the water's edge greeting visitors to a country that does not exist.

Halabja is a couple of hundred miles from the Syrian border, and I spent a week crossing northern Iraq, making stops in the cities of Dahuk and Erbil on the way. I was handed over to representatives of the Patriotic Union, which controls Halabja, at a demilitarized zone west of the town of Koysinjak. From there, it was a two-hour drive over steep mountains to Sulaimaniya, a city of six hundred and fifty thousand, which is the cultural capital of Iraqi Kurdistan. In Sulaimaniya, I met Fouad Baban, one of Kurdistan's leading physicians, who promised to guide me through the scientific and political thickets of Halabja.

Baban, a pulmonary and cardiac specialist who has survived three terms in Iraqi prisons, is sixty years old, and a man of impish good humor. He is the Kurdistan coordinator of the Halabja Medical Institute, which was founded by Gosden, Michael Amitay, the executive director of the Washington Kurdish Institute, and a coalition of Kurdish doctors; for the doctors, it is an act of bravery to be publicly associated with a project whose scientific findings could be used as evidence if Saddam Hussein faced a war-crimes tribunal. Saddam's agents are everywhere in the Kurdish zone, and his tanks sit forty miles from Baban's office.

Soon after I arrived in Sulaimaniya, Baban and I headed out in his Toyota Camry for Halabja. On a rough road we crossed the plains of Sharazoor, a region of black earth and honey-colored wheat ringed by jagged, snow-topped mountains. We were not travelling alone. The Mukhabarat, the Iraqi intelligence service, is widely reported to have placed a bounty on the heads of Western journalists caught in Kurdistan (either ten thousand dollars or twenty thousand dollars, depending on the source of the information). The areas around the border with Iran are filled with Tehran's spies, and members of Ansar al-Islam, an Islamist terror group, were said to be decapitating people in the Halabja area. So the Kurds had laid on a rather elaborate security detail. A Land Cruiser carrying *peshmerga* guerrillas led the way, and we were followed by another Land Cruiser, on whose bed was mounted an anti-aircraft weapon manned by six *peshmerga*, some of whom wore black balaclavas. We were just south of the American- and British-enforced no-fly zone. I had been told that, at the beginning of the safe-haven experiment, the Americans had warned Saddam's forces to stay away; a threat from the air, though unlikely, was, I deduced, not out of the question.

"It seems very important to know the immediate and long-term effects of chemical and biological weapons," Baban said, beginning my tutorial. "Here is a civilian population exposed to chemical and possibly biological weapons, and people are developing many varieties of cancers and congenital abnormalities. The Americans are vulnerable to these weapons—they are cheap, and terrorists possess them. So, after the anthrax attacks in the States, I think it is urgent for scientific research to be done here."

Experts now believe that Halabja and other places in Kurdistan were struck by a combination of mustard gas and nerve agents, including sarin (the agent used in the Tokyo subway attack) and VX, a potent nerve agent. Baban's suggestion that biological weapons may also have been used surprised me. One possible biological weapon that Baban mentioned was aflatoxin, which causes long-term liver damage.

A colleague of Baban's, a surgeon who practices in Dahuk, in northwestern Kurdistan, and who is a member of the Halabja Medical Institute team, told me more about the institute's survey, which was conducted in the Dahuk region in 1999. The surveyors began, he said, by asking elementary questions; eleven years after the attacks, they did not even know which villages had been attacked.

"The team went to almost every village," the surgeon said. "At first, we thought that the Dahuk governorate was the least affected. We knew of only two villages that were hit by the attacks. But we came up with twenty-nine in total. This is eleven years after the fact."

The surgeon is professorial in appearance, but he is deeply angry. He doubles as a pediatric surgeon, because there are no pediatric surgeons in Kurdistan. He has performed more than a hundred operations for cleft palate on children born since 1988. Most of the agents believed to have been dropped on Halabja have short half-lives, but, as Baban told me, "physicians are unsure how long these toxins will affect the population. How can we know agent half-life if we don't know the agent?" He added, "If we knew the toxins that were used, we could follow them and see actions on spermatogenesis and ovogenesis."

Increased rates of infertility, he said, are having a profound effect on Kurdish society, which places great importance on large families. "You have men divorcing their wives because they could not give birth, and then marrying again, and then their second wives can't give birth, either," he said. "Still, they don't blame their own problem with spermatogenesis."

Baban told me that the initial results of the Halabja Medical Institute-sponsored survey show abnormally high rates of many diseases. He said that he compared rates of colon cancer in Halabja with those in the city of Chamchamal, which was not attacked with chemical weapons. "We are seeing rates of colon cancer five times higher in Halabja than in Chamchamal," he said.

There are other anomalies as well, Baban said. The rate of miscarriage in Halabja, according to initial survey results, is fourteen times the rate of miscarriage in Chamchamal; rates of infertility among men and women in the affected population are many times higher than normal. "We're finding Hiroshima levels of sterility," he said.

Then, there is the suspicion about snakes. "Have you heard about the snakes?" he asked as we drove. I told him that I had heard rumors. "We don't know if a genetic mutation in the snakes has made them more toxic," Baban went on. "or if the birds that eat the

snakes were killed off in the attacks, but there seem to be more snakebites, of greater toxicity, in Halabja now than before." (I asked Richard Spertzel, a scientist and a former member of the United Nations Special Commission inspections team, if this was possible. Yes, he said, but such a rise in snakebites was more likely due to "environmental imbalances" than to mutations.)

My conversation with Baban was suddenly interrupted by our guerrilla escorts, who stopped the car and asked me to join them in one of the Land Cruisers; we veered off across a wheat field, without explanation. I was later told that we had been passing a mountain area that had recently had problems with Islamic terrorists.

We arrived in Halabja half an hour later. As you enter the city, you see a small statue modelled on the most famous photographic image of the Halabja massacre: an old man, prone and lifeless, shielding his dead grandson with his body.

A torpor seems to afflict Halabja; even its bazaar is listless and somewhat empty, in marked contrast to those of other Kurdish cities, which are well stocked with imported goods (history and circumstance have made the Kurds enthusiastic smugglers) and are full of noise and activity. "Everyone here is sick," a Halabja doctor told me. "The people who aren't sick are depressed." He practices at the Martyrs' Hospital, which is situated on the outskirts of the city. The hospital has no heat and little advanced equipment; like the city itself, it is in a dilapidated state.

The doctor is a thin, jumpy man in a tweed jacket, and he smokes without pause. He and Baban took me on a tour of the hospital. Afterward, we sat in a bare office, and a woman was wheeled in. She looked seventy but said that she was fifty; doctors told me she suffers from lung scarring so serious that only a lung transplant could help, but there are no transplant centers in Kurdistan. The woman, whose name is Jayran Muhammad, lost eight relatives during the attack. Her voice was almost inaudible. "I was disturbed psychologically for a long time," she told me as Baban translated. "I believed my children were alive." Baban told me that her lungs would fail soon, that she could barely breathe. "She is waiting to die," he said. I met another woman, Chia Hammassat, who was eight at the time of the attacks and has been blind ever since. Her mother, she said, died of colon cancer several years ago, and her brother suffers from chronic shortness of breath. "There is no hope to correct my vision," she said, her voice flat. "I was married, but I couldn't fulfill the responsibilities of a wife because I'm blind. My husband left me."

Baban said that in Halabja "there are more abnormal births than normal ones," and other Kurdish doctors told me that they regularly see children born with neural-tube defects and undescended testes and without anal openings. They are seeing—and they showed me—children born with six or seven toes on each foot, children whose fingers and toes are fused, and children who suffer from leukemia and liver cancer.

I met Sarkar, a shy and intelligent boy with a harelip, a cleft palate, and a growth on his spine. Sarkar had a brother born with the same set of malformations, the doctor told me, but the brother choked to death, while still a baby, on a grain of rice.

Meanwhile, more victims had gathered in the hallway; the people of Halabja do not often have a chance to tell their stories to foreigners. Some of them wanted to know if I was a surgeon, who had come to repair their children's deformities, and they were disappointed to learn that I was a journalist. The doctor and I soon left the hospital for a walk through the northern neighborhoods of Halabja, which were hardest hit in the attack. We were trailed by *peshmerga* carrying AK-47s. The doctor smoked as we talked, and I teased him about his habit. "Smoking has some good effect on the lungs," he said, without irony. "In the attacks, there was less effect on smokers. Their lungs were better equipped for the mustard gas, maybe."

We walked through the alleyways of the Jewish quarter, past a former synagogue in which eighty or so Halabjans died during the attack. Underfed cows wandered the paths. The doctor showed me several cellars where clusters of people had died. We knocked on the gate of one house, and were let in by an old woman with a wide smile and few teeth. In the Kurdish tradition, she immediately invited us for lunch.

She told us the recent history of the house. "Everyone who was in this house died," she said. "The whole family. We heard there were one hundred people." She led us to the cellar, which was damp and close. Rusted yellow cans of vegetable ghee littered the floor. The room seemed too small to hold a hundred people, but the doctor said that the estimate sounded accurate. I asked him if cellars like this one had ever been decontaminated. He smiled. "Nothing in Kurdistan has been decontaminated," he said.

4. AL—ANFAL

The chemical attacks on Halabja and Goktapa and perhaps two hundred other villages and towns were only a small part of the cataclysm that Saddam's cousin, the man known as Ali Chemical, arranged for the Kurds. The Kurds say that about two hundred thousand were killed. (Human Rights Watch, which in the early nineties published "Iraq's Crime of Genocide," a definitive study of the attacks, gives a figure of between fifty thousand and a hundred thousand.)

The campaign against the Kurds was dubbed al-Anfal by Saddam, after a chapter in the Koran that allows conquering Muslim armies to seize the spoils of their foes. It reads, in part, "Against them"—your enemies—"make ready your strength to the utmost of your power, including steeds of war, to strike terror into the hearts of the enemies of Allah and your enemies, and others besides, whom ye may not know, but whom Allah doth know. Whatever ye shall spend in the cause of Allah, shall be repaid unto you, and ye shall not be treated unjustly."

The Anfal campaign was not an end in itself, like the Holocaust, but a means to an end—an instance of a policy that Samantha Power, who runs the Carr Center for Human Rights, at Harvard, calls "instrumental genocide." Power has just published "A Problem from Hell," a study of American responses to genocide. "There are regimes that set out to murder every citizen of a race," she said. "Saddam achieved what he had to do without exterminating every last Kurd." What he had to do, Power and others say, was to break the Kurds' morale and convince them that a desire for independence was foolish.

Most of the Kurds who were murdered in the Anfal were not killed by poison gas; rather, the genocide was carried out, in large part, in the traditional manner, with roundups at night, mass executions, and anonymous burials. The bodies of most of the victims of the Anfal—mainly men and boys—have never been found.

One day, I met one of the thousands of Kurdish women known as Anfal widows: Salma Aziz Baban. She lives outside Chamchamal, in

a settlement made up almost entirely of displaced families, in cinder-block houses. Her house was nearly empty—no furniture, no heat, just a ragged carpet. We sat on the carpet as she told me about her family. She comes from the Kirkuk region, and in 1987 her village was uprooted by the Army, and the inhabitants, with thousands of other Kurds, were forced into a collective town. Then, one night in April of 1988, soldiers went into the village and seized the men and older boys. Baban's husband and her three oldest sons were put on trucks. The mothers of the village began to plead with the soldiers. "We were screaming, 'Do what you want to us, do what you want!'" Baban told me. "They were so scared, my sons. My sons were crying." She tried to bring them coats for the journey. "It was raining. I wanted them to have coats. I begged the soldiers to let me give them bread. They took them without coats." Baban remembered that a high-ranking Iraqi officer named Bareq orchestrated the separation; according to "Iraq's Crime of Genocide," the Human Rights Watch report, the man in charge of this phase was a brigadier general named Bareq Abdullah al-Haj Hunta.

After the men were taken away, the women and children were herded onto trucks. They were given little water or food, and were crammed so tightly into the vehicles that they had to defecate where they stood. Baban, her three daughters, and her six-year-old son were taken to the Topzawa Army base and then to the prison of Nugra Salman, the Pit of Salman, which Human Rights Watch in 1995 described this way: "It was an old building, dating back to the days of the Iraqi monarchy and perhaps earlier. It had been abandoned for years, used by Arab nomads to shelter their herds. The bare walls were scrawled with the diaries of political prisoners. On the door of one cell, a guard had daubed 'Khomeini eats shit.' Over the main gate, someone else had written, 'Welcome to Hell.'"

"We arrived at midnight," Baban told me. "They put us in a very big room, with more than two thousand people, women and children, and they closed the door. Then the starvation started."

The prisoners were given almost nothing to eat, and a single standpipe spat out brackish water for drinking. People began to die from hunger and illness. When someone died, the Iraqi guards would demand that the body be passed through a window in the main door. "The bodies couldn't stay in the hall," Baban told me. In the first days at Nugra Salman, "thirty people died, maybe more." Her six-year-old son, Rebwar, fell ill. "He had diarrhea," she said. "He was very sick. He knew he was dying. There was no medicine or doctor. He started to cry so much." Baban's son died on her lap. "I was screaming and crying," she said. "My daughters were crying. We gave them the body. It was passed outside, and the soldiers took it."

Soon after Baban's son died, she pulled herself up and went to the window, to see if the soldiers had taken her son to be buried. "There were twenty dogs outside the prison. A big black dog was the leader," she said. The soldiers had dumped the bodies of the dead outside the prison, in a field. "I looked outside and saw the legs and hands of my son in the mouths of the dogs. The dogs were eating my son." She stopped talking for a moment. "Then I lost my mind."

She described herself as catatonic; her daughters scraped around for food and water. They kept her alive, she said, until she could function again. "This was during Ramadan. We were kept in Nugra Salman for a few more months."

In September, when the war with Iran was over, Saddam issued a general amnesty to the Kurds, the people he believed had betrayed him by siding with Tehran. The women, children, and elderly in Nugra Salman were freed. But, in most cases, they could not go home; the Iraqi Army had bulldozed some four thousand villages, Baban's among them. She was finally resettled in the Chamchamal district.

In the days after her release, she tried to learn the fate of her husband and three older sons. But the men who disappeared in the Anfal roundups have never been found. It is said that they were killed and then buried in mass graves in the desert along the Kuwaiti border, but little is actually known. A great number of Anfal widows, I was told, still believe that their sons and husbands and brothers are locked away in Saddam's jails. "We are thinking they are alive," Baban said, referring to her husband and sons. "Twenty-four hours a day, we are thinking maybe they are alive. If they are alive, they are being tortured, I know it."

Baban said that she has not slept well since her sons were taken from her. "We are thinking, Please let us know they are dead, I will sleep in peace," she said. "My head is filled with terrible thoughts. The day I die is the day I will not remember that the dogs ate my son."

Before I left, Baban asked me to write down the names of her three older sons. They are Sherzad, who would be forty now; Rizgar, who would be thirty-one; and Muhammad, who would be thirty. She asked me to find her sons, or to ask President Bush to find them. "One would be sufficient," she said. "If just one comes back, that would be enough."

5. WHAT THE KURDS FEAR

In a conversation not long ago with Richard Butler, the former weapons inspector, I suggested a possible explanation for the world's indifference to Saddam Hussein's use of chemical weapons to commit genocide—that the people he had killed were his own citizens, not those of another sovereign state. (The main chemical-weapons treaty does not ban a country's use of such weapons against its own people, perhaps because at the time the convention was drafted no one could imagine such a thing.) Butler reminded me, however, that Iraq had used chemical weapons against another country—Iran—during the eight-year Iran-Iraq War. He offered a simpler rationale. "The problems are just too awful and too hard," he said. "History is replete with such things. Go back to the grand example of the Holocaust. It sounded too hard to do anything about it."

The Kurds have grown sanguine about the world's lack of interest. "I've learned not to be surprised by the indifference of the civilized world," Barham Salih told me one evening in Sulaimaniya. Salih is the Prime Minister of the area of Kurdistan administered by the Patriotic Union, and he spoke in such a way as to suggest that it would be best if I, too, stopped acting surprised. "Given the scale of the tragedy—we're talking about large numbers of victims—I suppose I'm surprised that the international community has not come in to help the survivors," he continued. "It's politically indecent not to help. But, as a Kurd, I live with the terrible hand history and geography have dealt my people."

Salih's home is not prime ministerial, but it has many Western comforts. He had a satellite television and a satellite telephone, yet the house was frigid; in a land of cheap oil, the Kurds, who are cut off the Iraqi electric grid by Saddam on a regular basis, survive on generator power and kerosene heat.

Over dinner one night, Salih argued that the Kurds should not be regarded with pity. "I don't think one has to tap into the Wilsonian streak in American foreign policy in order to find a rationale for helping the Kurds," he said. "Helping the Kurds would mean an opportunity to study the problems caused by weapons of mass destruction."

Salih, who is forty-one, often speaks bluntly, and is savvy about Washington's enduring interest in ending the reign of Saddam Hussein. Unwilling publicly to exhort the United States to take military action, Salih is aware that the *peshmerga* would be obvious allies of an American military strike against Iraq; other Kurds have been making that argument for years. It is not often noted in Washington policy circles, but the Kurds already hold a vast swath of territory inside the country—including two important dams whose destruction could flood Baghdad—and have at least seventy thousand men under arms. In addition, the two main Kurdish parties are members of the Iraqi opposition group, the Iraqi National Congress, which is headed by Ahmad Chalabi, a London-based Shiite businessman; at the moment, though, relations between Chalabi and the Kurdish leaders are contentious.

Kurds I talked to throughout Kurdistan were enthusiastic about the idea of joining an American-led alliance against Saddam Hussein, and serving as the northern-Iraqi equivalent of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance. President Bush's State of the Union Message, in which he denounced Iraq as the linchpin of an "axis of evil," had had an electric effect on every Kurd I met who heard the speech. In the same speech, President Bush made reference to Iraq's murder of "thousands of its own citizens—leaving the bodies of mothers huddled over their dead children." General Simko Dizayee, the chief of staff of the *peshmerga*, told me, "Bush's speech filled our hearts with hope."

Prime Minister Salih expressed his views diplomatically. "We support democratic transformation in Iraq," he said—half smiling, because he knows that there is no chance of that occurring unless Saddam is removed. But until America commits itself to removing Saddam, he said, "we're living on the razor's edge. Before Washington even wakes up in the morning, we could have ten thousand dead." This is the Kurdish conundrum: the Iraqi military is weaker than the American military, but the Iraqis are stronger than the Kurds. Seven hundred Iraqi tanks face the Kurdish safe haven, according to *peshmerga* commanders.

General Mustafa Said Qadir, the *peshmerga* leader, put it this way: "We have a problem. If the Americans attack Saddam and don't get him, we're going to get gassed. If the Americans decided to do it, we would be thankful. This is the Kurdish dream. But it has to be done carefully."

The Kurdish leadership worries, in short, that an American mistake could cost the Kurds what they have created, however inadvertently: a nearly independent state for themselves in northern Iraq. "We would like to be our own nation," Salih told me. "But we are realists. All we want is to be partners of the Arabs of Iraq in building a secular, democratic, federal country." Later, he added, "We are proud of ourselves. We have inherited a devastated country. It's not easy what we are trying to achieve. We had no democratic institutions, we didn't have a legal culture, we did not have a strong military. From that situation, this is a remarkable success story."

The Kurdish regional government, to be sure, is not a Vermont town meeting. The leaders of the two parties, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, are safe in their jobs. But there is a free press here, and separation of mosque and state, and schools are being built and pensions are being paid. In Erbil and in Sulaimaniya, the Kurds have built playgrounds on the ruins of Iraqi Army torture centers. "If America is indeed looking for Muslims who are eager to become democratic and are eager to counter the effects of Islamic fundamentalism, then it should be looking here," Salih said.

Massoud Barzani is the son of the late Mustafa Barzani, a legendary guerrilla, who built the Democratic Party, and who entered into the ill-fated alliance with Iran and America. I met Barzani in his headquarters, above the town of Salahuddin. He is a short man, pale and quiet; he wore the red turban of the Barzani clan and a wide cummerbund across his baggy trousers—the outfit of a *peshmerga*. Like Salih, he chooses his words carefully when talking about the possibility of helping America bring down Saddam. "It is not enough to tell us the U.S. will respond at a certain time and place of its choosing," Barzani said. "We're in artillery range. Iraq's Army is weak, but it is still strong enough to crush us. We don't make assumptions about the American response."

One day, I drove to the Kurdish front lines near Erbil, to see the forward positions of the Iraqi Army. The border between the Army-controlled territory and the Kurdish region is porous; Baghdad allows some Kurds—nonpolitical Kurds—to travel back and forth between zones.

My *peshmerga* escort took me to the roof of a building overlooking the Kalak Bridge and, beyond it, the Iraqi lines. Without binoculars, we could see Iraqi tanks on the hills in front of us. A local official named Muhammad Najar joined us; he told me that the Iraqi forces arrayed there were elements of the Army's Jerusalem brigade, a reserve unit established by Saddam with the stated purpose of liberating Jerusalem from the Israelis. Other *peshmerga* joined us. It was a brilliantly sunny day, and we were enjoying the weather. A man named Aziz Khader, gazing at the plain before us, said, "When I look across here, I imagine American tanks coming down across this plain going to Baghdad." His friends smiled and said, "*Inshallah*"—God willing. Another man said, "The U.S. is the lord of the world."

6. THE PRISONERS

A week later, I was at Shinwe, a mountain range outside Halabja, with another group of *peshmerga*. My escorts and I had driven most of the way up, and then slogged through fresh snow. From one peak, we could see the village of Biyara, which sits in a valley between Halabja and a wall of mountains that mark the Iranian border. Saddam's tanks were an hour's drive away to the south, and Iran filled the vista before us. Biyara and nine other villages near it are occupied by the terrorist group Ansar al-Islam, or Supporters of Islam. Shinwe, in fact, might be called the axis of the axis of evil.

We were close enough to see trucks belonging to Ansar al-Islam making their way from village to village. The commander of the *peshmerga* forces surrounding Biyara, a veteran guerrilla named Ramadan Dekone, said that Ansar al-Islam is made up of Kurdish Islamists and an unknown number of so-called Arab Afghans—Arabs, from southern Iraq and elsewhere, who trained in the camps of Al Qaeda.

"They believe that people must be terrorized," Dekone said, shaking his head. "They believe that the Koran says this is permissible."

He pointed to an abandoned village in the middle distance, a place called Kheli Hama. "That is where the massacre took place," he said. In late September, forty-two of his men were killed by Ansar al-Islam, and now Dekone and his forces seemed ready for revenge. I asked him what he would do if he captured the men responsible for the killing.

"I would take them to court," he said.

When I got to Sulaimaniya, I visited a prison run by the intelligence service of the Patriotic Union. The prison is attached to the intelligence-service headquarters. It appears to be well kept and humane; the communal cells hold twenty or so men each, and they have kerosene heat, and even satellite television. For two days, the intelligence agency permitted me to speak with any prisoner who agreed to be interviewed. I was wary; the Kurds have an obvious interest in lining up on the American side in the war against terror. But the officials did not, as far as I know, compel anyone to speak to me, and I did not get the sense that allegations made by prisoners were shaped by their captors. The stories, which I later checked with experts on the region, seemed at least worth the attention of America and other countries in the West.

The allegations include charges that Ansar al-Islam has received funds directly from Al Qaeda; that the intelligence service of Saddam Hussein has joint control, with Al Qaeda operatives, over Ansar al-Islam; that Saddam Hussein hosted a senior leader of Al Qaeda in Baghdad in 1992; that a number of Al Qaeda members fleeing Afghanistan have been secretly brought into territory controlled by Ansar al-Islam; and that Iraqi intelligence agents smuggled conventional weapons, and possibly even chemical and biological weapons, into Afghanistan. If these charges are true, it would mean that the relationship between Saddam's regime and Al Qaeda is far closer than previously thought.

When I asked the director of the twenty-four-hundred-man Patriotic Union intelligence service why he was allowing me to interview his prisoners, he told me that he hoped I would carry this information to American intelligence officials. "The F.B.I. and the C.I.A. haven't come out yet," he told me. His deputy added, "Americans are going to Somalia, the Philippines, I don't know where else, to look for terrorists. But this is the field, here." Anya Guilsher, a spokeswoman for the C.I.A., told me last week that as a matter of policy the agency would not comment on the activities of its officers. James Woolsey, a former C.I.A. director and an advocate of overthrowing the Iraqi regime, said, "It would be a real shame if the C.I.A.'s substantial institutional hostility to Iraqi democratic resistance groups was keeping it from learning about Saddam's ties to Al Qaeda in northern Iraq."

The possibility that Saddam could supply weapons of mass destruction to anti-American terror groups is a powerful argument among advocates of "regime change," as the removal of Saddam is known in Washington. These critics of Saddam argue that his chemical and biological capabilities, his record of support for terrorist organizations, and the cruelty of his regime make him a threat that reaches far beyond the citizens of Iraq.

"He's the home address for anyone wanting to make or use chemical or biological weapons," Kanan Makiya, an Iraqi dissident, said. Makiya is the author of "Republic of Fear," a study of Saddam's regime. "He's going to be the person to worry about. He's got the labs and the know-how. He's hellbent on trying to find a way into the fight, without announcing it."

On the surface, a marriage of Saddam's secular Baath Party regime with the fundamentalist Al Qaeda seems unlikely. His relationship with secular Palestinian groups is well known; both Abu Nidal and Abul Abbas, two prominent Palestinian terrorists, are currently believed to be in Baghdad. But about ten years ago Saddam underwent something of a battlefield conversion to a fundamentalist brand of Islam.

"It was gradual, starting the moment he decided on the invasion of Kuwait," in June of 1990, according to Amatzia Baram, an Iraq expert at the University of Haifa. "His calculation was that he needed people in Iraq and the Arab world—as well as God—to be on his side when he invaded. After he invaded, the Islamic rhetorical style became overwhelming"—so overwhelming, Baram continued, that a radical group in Jordan began calling Saddam "the New Caliph Marching from the East." This conversion, cynical though it may be, has opened doors to Saddam in the fundamentalist world. He is now a prime supporter of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and of Hamas, paying families of suicide bombers ten thousand dollars in exchange for their sons' martyrdom. This is part of Saddam's attempt to harness the power of Islamic extremism and direct it against his enemies.

Kurdish culture, on the other hand, has traditionally been immune to religious extremism. According to Kurdish officials, Ansar al-Islam grew out of an idea spread by Ayman al-Zawahiri, the former chief of the Egyptian Islamic Jihad and now Osama bin Laden's deputy in Al Qaeda. "There are two schools of thought" in Al Qaeda, Karim Sinjari, the Interior Minister of Kurdistan's Democratic Party-controlled region, told me. "Osama bin Laden believes that the infidels should be beaten in the head, meaning the United States. Zawahiri's philosophy is that you should fight the infidel even in the smallest village, that you should try to form Islamic armies everywhere. The Kurdish fundamentalists were influenced by Zawahiri."

Kurds were among those who travelled to Afghanistan from all over the Muslim world, first to fight the Soviets, in the early nineteen-eighties, then to join Al Qaeda. The members of the groups that eventually became Ansar al-Islam spent a great deal of time in Afghanistan, according to Kurdish intelligence officials. One Kurd who went to Afghanistan was Mala Krekar, an early leader of the Islamist movement in Kurdistan; according to Sinjari, he now holds the title of "emir" of Ansar al-Islam.

In 1998, the first force of Islamist terrorists crossed the Iranian border into Kurdistan, and immediately tried to seize the town of Haj Omran. Kurdish officials said that the terrorists were helped by Iran, which also has an interest in undermining a secular Muslim government. "The terrorists blocked the road, they killed Kurdish Democratic Party cadres, they threatened the villagers," Sinjari said. "We fought them and they fled."

The terrorist groups splintered repeatedly. According to a report in the Arabic newspaper *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*, which is published in London, Ansar al-Islam came into being, on September 1st of last year, with the merger of two factions: Al Tawhid, which helped to arrange the assassination of Kurdistan's most prominent Christian politician, and whose operatives initiated an acid-throwing campaign against unveiled women; and a faction called the Second Soran Unit, which had been affiliated with one of the Kurdish Islamic parties. In a statement issued to mark the merger, the group, which originally called itself Jund al-Islam, or Soldiers of Islam, declared its intention to "undertake jihad in this region" in order to carry out "God's will." According to Kurdish officials, the group had between five hundred and six hundred members, including Arab Afghans and at least thirty Iraqi Kurds who were trained in Afghanistan.

Kurdish officials say that the merger took place in a ceremony overseen by three Arabs trained in bin Laden's camps in Afghanistan, and that these men supplied Ansar al-Islam with three hundred thousand dollars in seed money. Soon after the merger, a unit of Ansar al-Islam called the Victory Squad attacked and killed the *peshmerga* in Kheli Hama.

Among the Islamic fighters who were there that day was Rekut Hiwa Hussein, a slender, boyish twenty-year-old who was captured by the *peshmerga* after the massacre, and whom I met in the prison in Sulaimaniya. He was exceedingly shy, never looking up from his hands as he spoke. He was not handcuffed, and had no marks on the visible parts of his body. We were seated in an investigator's office inside the intelligence complex. Like most buildings in Sulaimaniya, this one was warmed by a single kerosene heater, and the room temperature seemed barely above freezing. Rekut told me how he and his comrades in Ansar al-Islam overcame the *peshmerga*.

"They thought there was a ceasefire, so we came into the village and fired on them by surprise," he said. "They didn't know what happened. We used grenades and machine guns. We killed a lot of them and then the others surrendered." The terrorists trussed their prisoners, ignoring pleas from the few civilians remaining in the town to leave them alone. "The villagers asked us not to slaughter them," Rekut said. One of the leaders of Ansar al-Islam, a man named Abdullah al-Shafi, became incensed. "He said, 'Who is saying this? Let me kill them.'"

Rekut said that the *peshmerga* were killed in ritual fashion: "We put cloths in their mouths. We then laid them down like sheep, in a line. Then we cut their throats." After the men were killed, *peshmerga* commanders say, the corpses were beheaded. Rekut denied this. "Some of their heads had been blown off by grenades, but we didn't behead them," he said.

I asked Rekut why he had joined Ansar al-Islam. "A friend of mine joined," he said quietly. "I don't have a good reason why I joined." A guard then took him by the elbow and returned him to his cell.

The Kurdish intelligence officials I spoke to were careful not to oversell their case; they said that they have no proof that Ansar al-Islam was ever involved in international terrorism or that Saddam's agents were involved in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. But they do have proof, they said, that Ansar al-Islam is shielding Al Qaeda members, and that it is doing so with the approval of Saddam's agents.

Kurdish officials said that, according to their intelligence, several men associated with Al Qaeda have been smuggled over the Iranian border into an Ansar al-Islam stronghold near Halabja. The Kurds believe that two of them, who go by the names Abu Yasir and Abu Muzaham, are high-ranking Al Qaeda members. "We don't have any information about them," one official told me. "We know that they don't want anybody to see them. They are sleeping in the same room as Mala Krekar and Abdullah al-Shafi"—the nominal leaders of Ansar al-Islam.

The real leader, these officials say, is an Iraqi who goes by the name Abu Wa'el, and who, like the others, spent a great deal of time in bin Laden's training camps. But he is also, they say, a high-ranking officer of the Mukhabarat. One senior official added, "A man named Abu Agab is in charge of the northern bureau of the Mukhabarat. And he is Abu Wa'el's control officer."

Abu Agab, the official said, is based in the city of Kirkuk, which is predominantly Kurdish but is under the control of Baghdad. According to intelligence officials, Abu Agab and Abu Wa'el met last July 7th, in Germany. From there, they say, Abu Wa'el travelled to Afghanistan and then, in August, to Kurdistan, sneaking across the Iranian border.

The Kurdish officials told me that they learned a lot about Abu Wa'el's movements from one of their prisoners, an Iraqi intelligence officer named Qassem Hussein Muhammad, and they invited me to speak with him. Qassem, the Kurds said, is a Shiite from Basra, in southern Iraq, and a twenty-year veteran of Iraqi intelligence.

Qassem, shambling and bearded, was brought into the room, and he genially agreed to be interviewed. One guard stayed in the room, along with my translator. Qassem lit a cigarette, and leaned back in his chair. I started by asking him if he had been tortured by his captors. His eyes widened. "By God, no," he said. "There is nothing like torture here." Then he told me that his involvement in Islamic radicalism began in 1992 in Baghdad, when he met Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Qassem said that he was one of seventeen bodyguards assigned to protect Zawahiri, who stayed at Baghdad's Al Rashid Hotel, but who, he said, moved around surreptitiously. The guards had no idea why Zawahiri was in Baghdad, but one day Qassem escorted him to one of Saddam's palaces for what he later learned was a meeting with Saddam himself.

Qassem's capture by the Kurds grew out of his last assignment from the Mukhabarat. The Iraqi intelligence service received word that Abu Wa'el had been captured by American agents. "I was sent by the Mukhabarat to Kurdistan to find Abu Wa'el or, at least, information about him," Qassem told me. "That's when I was captured, before I reached Biyara."

I asked him if he was sure that Abu Wa'el was on Saddam's side. "He's an employee of the Mukhabarat," Qassem said. "He's the actual decision-maker in the group"—Ansar al-Islam—"but he's an employee of the Mukhabarat." According to the Kurdish intelligence officials, Abu Wa'el is not in American hands; rather, he is still with Ansar al-Islam. American officials declined to comment.

The Kurdish intelligence officials told me that they have Al Qaeda members in custody, and they introduced me to another prisoner, a young Iraqi Arab named Haqi Ismail, whom they described as a middle- to high-ranking member of Al Qaeda. He was, they said, captured by the *peshmerga* as he tried to get into Kurdistan three weeks after the start of the American attack on Afghanistan. Ismail, they said, comes from a Mosul family with deep connections to the Mukhabarat; his uncle is the top Mukhabarat official in the south of Iraq. They said they believe that Haqi Ismail is a liaison between Saddam's intelligence service and Al Qaeda.

Ismail wore slippers and a blanket around his shoulders. He was ascetic in appearance and, at the same time, ostentatiously smug. He appeared to be amused by the presence of an American. He told the investigators that he would not talk to the C.I.A. The Kurdish investigators laughed and said they wished that I were from the C.I.A.

Ismail said that he was once a student at the University of Mosul but grew tired of life in Iraq under Saddam Hussein. Luckily, he said, in 1999 he met an Afghan man who persuaded him to seek work in Afghanistan. The Kurdish investigators smiled as Ismail went on to say that he found himself in Kandahar, then in Kabul, and then somehow—here he was exceedingly vague—in an Al Qaeda

camp. When I asked him how enrollment in an Al Qaeda camp squared with his wish to seek work in Afghanistan, he replied, "Being a soldier is a job." After his training, he said, he took a post in the Taliban Foreign Ministry. I asked him if he was an employee of Saddam's intelligence service. "I prefer not to talk about that," he replied.

Later, I asked the Kurdish officials if they believed that Saddam provides aid to Al Qaeda-affiliated terror groups or simply maintains channels of communication with them. It was getting late, and the room was growing even colder. "Come back tomorrow," the senior official in the room said, "and we'll introduce you to someone who will answer that question."

7. THE AL QAEDA LINK

The man they introduced me to the next afternoon was a twenty-nine-year-old Iranian Arab, a smuggler and bandit from the city of Ahvaz. The intelligence officials told me that his most recent employer was bin Laden. When they arrested him, last year, they said, they found a roll of film in his possession. They had the film developed, and the photographs, which they showed me, depicted their prisoner murdering a man with a knife, slicing his ear off and then plunging the knife into the top of the man's head.

The Iranian had a thin face, thick black hair, and a mustache; he wore an army jacket, sandals, and Western-style sweatpants. Speaking in an almost casual tone, he told me that he was born in 1973, that his real name was Muhammad Mansour Shahab, and that he had been a smuggler most of his adult life.

"I met a group of drug traffickers," he said. "They gave us drugs and we got them weapons," which they took from Iran into Afghanistan. In 1996, he met an Arab Afghan. "His name was Othman," the man went on. "He gave me drugs, and I got him a hundred and fifty Kalashnikovs. Then he said to me, 'You should come visit Afghanistan.' So we went to Afghanistan in 1996. We stayed for a while, I came back, did a lot of smuggling jobs. My brother-in-law tried to send weapons to Afghanistan, but the Iranians ambushed us. I killed some of the Iranians."

He soon returned with Othman to Afghanistan, where, he said, Othman gave him the name Muhammad Jawad to use while he was there. "Othman said to me, 'You will meet Sheikh Osama soon.' We were in Kandahar. One night, they gave me a sleeping pill. We got into a car and we drove for an hour and a half into the mountains. We went to a tent they said was Osama's tent." The man now called Jawad did not meet Osama bin Laden that night. "They said to me, 'You're the guy who killed the Iranian officer.' Then they said they needed information about me, my real name. They told Othman to take me back to Kandahar and hold me in jail for twenty-one days while they investigated me."

The Al Qaeda men completed their investigation and called him back to the mountains. "They told me that Osama said I should work with them," Jawad said. "They told me to bring my wife to Afghanistan." They made him swear on a Koran that he would never betray them. Jawad said that he became one of Al Qaeda's principal weapons smugglers. Iraqi opposition sources told me that the Baghdad regime frequently smuggled weapons to Al Qaeda by air through Dubai to Pakistan and then overland into Afghanistan. But Jawad told me that the Iraqis often used land routes through Iran as well. Othman ordered him to establish a smuggling route across the Iraq-Iran border. The smugglers would pose as shepherds to find the best routes. "We started to go into Iraq with the sheep and cows," Jawad told me, and added that they initiated this route by smuggling tape recorders from Iraq to Iran. They opened a store, a front, in Ahvaz, to sell electronics, "just to establish relationships with smugglers."

One day in 1999, Othman got a message to Jawad, who was then in Iran. He was to smuggle himself across the Iraqi border at Fao, where a car would meet him and take him to a village near Tikrit, the headquarters of Saddam Hussein's clan. Jawad was then taken to a meeting at the house of a man called Luay, whom he described as the son of Saddam's father-in-law, Khayr Allah Talfah. (Professor Baram, who has long followed Saddam's family, later told me he believes that Luay, who is about forty years old, is close to Saddam's inner circle.) At the meeting, with Othman present, Mukhabarat officials instructed Jawad to go to Baghdad, where he was to retrieve several canisters filled with explosives. Then, he said, he was to arrange to smuggle the explosives into Iran, where they would be used to kill anti-Iraqi activists. After this assignment was completed, Jawad said, he was given a thousand Kalashnikov rifles by Iraqi intelligence and told to smuggle them into Afghanistan.

A year later, there was a new development: Othman told Jawad to smuggle several dozen refrigerator motors into Afghanistan for the Iraqi Mukhabarat; a canister filled with liquid was attached to each motor. Jawad said that he asked Othman for more information. "I said, 'Othman, what does this contain?' He said, 'My life and your life.' He said they"—the Iraqi agents—"were going to kill us if we didn't do this. That's all I'll say."

"I was given a book of dollars," Jawad went on, meaning ten thousand dollars—a hundred American hundred-dollar bills. "I was told to arrange to smuggle the motors. Othman told me to kill any of the smugglers who helped us once we got there." Vehicles belonging to the Taliban were waiting at the border, and Jawad said that he turned over the liquid-filled refrigerator motors to the Taliban, and then killed the smugglers who had helped him.

Jawad said that he had no idea what liquid was inside the motors, but he assumed that it was some type of chemical or biological

weapon. I asked the Kurdish officials who remained in the room if they believed that, as late as 2000, the Mukhabarat was transferring chemical or biological weapons to Al Qaeda. They spoke carefully. "We have no idea what was in the canisters," the senior official said. "This is something that is worth an American investigation."

When I asked Jawad to tell me why he worked for Al Qaeda, he replied, "Money." He would not say how much money he had been paid, but he suggested that it was quite a bit. I had one more question: How many years has Al Qaeda maintained a relationship with Saddam Hussein's regime? "There's been a relationship between the Mukhabarat and the people of Al Qaeda since 1992," he replied.

Carole O'Leary, a Middle Eastern expert at American University, in Washington, and a specialist on the Kurds, said it is likely that Saddam would seek an alliance with Islamic terrorists to serve his own interests. "I know that there are Mukhabarat agents throughout Kurdistan," O'Leary said, and went on, "One way the Mukhabarat could destabilize the Kurdish experiment in democracy is to link up with Islamic radical groups. Their interests dovetail completely. They both have much to fear from the democratic, secular experiment of the Kurds in the safe haven, and they both obviously share a hatred for America."

8. THE PRESENT DANGER

A paradox of life in northern Iraq is that, while hundreds, perhaps thousands, of children suffer from the effects of chemical attacks, the child-mortality rate in the Kurdish zone has improved over the past ten years. Prime Minister Salih credits this to, of all things, sanctions placed on the Iraqi regime by the United Nations after the Gulf War because of Iraq's refusal to dismantle its nonconventional-weapons program. He credits in particular the program begun in 1997, known as oil-for-food, which was meant to mitigate the effects of sanctions on civilians by allowing the profits from Iraqi oil sales to buy food and medicine. Calling this program a "fantastic concept," Salih said, "For the first time in our history, Iraqi citizens—all citizens—are insured a portion of the country's oil wealth. The north is a testament to the success of the program. Oil is sold and food is bought."

I asked Salih to respond to the criticism, widely aired in the West, that the sanctions have led to the death of thousands of children. "Sanctions don't kill Iraqi children," he said. "The regime kills children."

This puzzled me. If it was true, then why were the victims of the gas attacks still suffering from a lack of health care? Across Kurdistan, in every hospital I visited, the complaints were the same: no CT scans, no MRIs, no pediatric surgery, no advanced diagnostic equipment, not even surgical gloves. I asked Salih why the money designated by the U.N. for the Kurds wasn't being used for advanced medical treatment. The oil-for-food program has one enormous flaw, he replied. When the program was introduced, the Kurds were promised thirteen per cent of the country's oil revenue, but because of the terms of the agreement between Baghdad and the U.N.—a "defect," Salih said—the government controls the flow of food, medicine, and medical equipment to the very people it slaughtered. Food does arrive, he conceded, and basic medicines as well, but at Saddam's pace.

On this question of the work of the United Nations and its agencies, the rival Kurdish parties agree. "We've been asking for a four-hundred-bed hospital for Sulaimaniya for three years," said Nurchivan Barzani, the Prime Minister of the region controlled by the Kurdish Democratic Party, and Salih's counterpart. Sulaimaniya is in Salih's territory, but in this case geography doesn't matter. "It's our money," Barzani said. "But we need the approval of the Iraqis. They get to decide. The World Health Organization is taking its orders from the Iraqis. It's crazy."

Barzani and Salih accused the World Health Organization, in particular, of rewarding with lucrative contracts only companies favored by Saddam. "Every time I interact with the U.N.," Salih said, "I think, My God, Jesse Helms is right. If the U.N. can't help us, this poor, dispossessed Muslim nation, then who is it for?"

Many Kurds believe that Iraq's friends in the U.N. system, particularly members of the Arab bloc, have worked to keep the Kurds' cause from being addressed. The Kurds face an institutional disadvantage at the U.N., where, unlike the Palestinians, they have not even been granted official observer status. Salih grew acerbic: "Compare us to other liberation movements around the world. We are very mature. We don't engage in terror. We don't condone extremist nationalist notions that can only burden our people. Please compare what we have achieved in the Kurdistan national-authority areas to the Palestinian national authority of Mr. Arafat. We have spent the last ten years building a secular, democratic society, a civil society. What has he built?"

Last week, in New York, I met with Benon Sevan, the United Nations undersecretary-general who oversees the oil-for-food program. He quickly let me know that he was unmoved by the demands of the Kurds. "If they had a theme song, it would be 'Give Me, Give Me, Give Me,'" Sevan said. "I'm getting fed up with their complaints. You can tell them that." He said that under the oil-for-food program the "three northern governorates"—U.N. officials avoid the word "Kurdistan"—have been allocated billions of dollars in goods and services. "I don't know if they've ever had it so good," he said.

I mentioned the Kurds' complaint that they have been denied access to advanced medical equipment, and he said, "Nobody prevents them from asking. They should go ask the World Health Organization"—which reports to Sevan on matters related to Iraq. When I told Sevan that the Kurds have repeatedly asked the W.H.O., he said, "I'm not going to pass judgment on the W.H.O." As the interview ended, I asked Sevan about the morality of allowing the Iraqi regime to control the flow of food and medicine into Kurdistan. "Nobody's innocent," he said. "Please don't talk about morals with me."

When I went to Kurdistan in January to report on the 1988 genocide of the Kurds, I did not expect to be sidetracked by a debate over U.N. sanctions. And I certainly didn't expect to be sidetracked by crimes that Saddam is committing against the Kurds now—in particular "nationality correction," the law that Saddam's security services are using to implement a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Large-scale operations against the Kurds in Kirkuk, a city southeast of Erbil, and in other parts of Iraqi Kurdistan under Saddam's control, have received scant press attention in the West; there have been few news accounts and no Security Council condemnations drafted in righteous anger.

Saddam's security services have been demanding that Kurds "correct" their nationality by signing papers to indicate that their birth records are false—that they are in fact Arab. Those who don't sign have their property seized. Many have been evicted, often to Kurdish-controlled regions, to make room for Arab families. According to both the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, more than a hundred thousand Kurds have been expelled from the Kirkuk area over the past two years.

Nationality correction is one technique that the Baghdad regime is using in an over-all "Arabization" campaign, whose aim is to replace the inhabitants of Kurdish cities, especially the oil-rich Kirkuk, with Arabs from central and southern Iraq, and even, according to persistent reports, with Palestinians. Arabization is not new, Peter Galbraith, a professor at the National Defense University and a former senior adviser to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, says. Galbraith has monitored Saddam's anti-Kurdish activities since before the Gulf War. "It's been going on for twenty years," he told me. "Maybe it's picked up speed, but it is certainly nothing new."

To my mind, it's part of a larger process that has been under way for many years, and is aimed at reducing the territory occupied by the Kurds and at destroying rural Kurdistan.

"This is the apotheosis of cultural genocide," said Saedi Barzinji, the president of Salahaddin University, in Erbil, who is a human-rights lawyer and Massoud Barzani's legal adviser. Barzinji and other Kurdish leaders believe that Saddam is trying to set up a buffer zone between Arab Iraq and Kurdistan, just in case the Kurds win their independence. To help with this, Barzinji told me last month, Saddam is trying to rewrite Kirkuk's history, to give it an "Arab" past. If Kurds, Barzinji went on, "don't change their ethnic origin, they are given no food rations, no positions in government, no right to register the names of their new babies. In the last three to four weeks, hospitals have been ordered, the maternity wards ordered, not to register any Kurdish name." New parents are "obliged to choose an Arab name." Barzinji said that the nationality-correction campaign extends even to the dead. "Saddam is razing the

gravestones, erasing the past, putting in new ones with Arab names," he said. "He wants to show that Kirkuk has always been Arab."

Some of the Kurds crossing the demarcation line between Saddam's forces and the Kurdish zone, it is said, are not being expelled but are fleeing for economic reasons. But in camps across Kurdistan I met refugees who told me stories of visits from the secret police in the middle of the night.

Many of the refugees from Kirkuk live in tent camps built on boggy fields. I visited one such camp at Beneslaw, not far from Erbil, where the mud was so thick that it nearly pulled off my shoes. The people at the camp—several hundred, according to two estimates I heard—are ragged and sick. A man named Howar told me that his suffering could not have been avoided even if he had agreed to change his ethnic identity.

"When you agree to change your nationality, the police write on your identity documents 'second-degree Arab,' which they know means Kurd," he told me. "So they always know you're a Kurd." (In a twist characteristic of Saddam's regime, Kurdish leaders told me, Kurds who agree to "change" their nationality are fined for having once claimed falsely to be Kurdish.)

Another refugee, Shawqat Hamid Muhammad, said that her son had gone to jail for two months for having a photograph of Mustafa Barzani in his possession. She said that she and her family had been in the Beneslaw camp for two months. "The police came and knocked on our door and told us we have to leave Kirkuk," she said. "We had to rent a truck to take our things out. We were given one day to leave. We have no idea who is in our house." Another refugee, a man named Ibrahim Jamil, wandered over to listen to the conversation. "The Arabs are winning Kirkuk," he said. "Soon the only people there will be Arabs, and Kurds who call themselves Arabs. They say we should be Arab. But I'm a Kurd. It would be easier for me to die than be an Arab. How can I not be a Kurd?"

Peter Galbraith told me that in 1987 he witnessed the destruction of Kurdish villages and cemeteries—"anything that was related to Kurdish identity," he said. "This was one of the factors that led me to conclude that it is a policy of genocide, a crime of intent, destroying a group whole or in part."

9. IRAQ'S ARMS RACE

In a series of meetings in the summer and fall of 1995, Charles Duelfer, the deputy executive chairman of the United Nations Special Commission, or UNSCOM—the now defunct arms-inspection team—met in Baghdad with Iraqi government delegations. The subject was the status of Iraq's nonconventional-weapons programs, and Duelfer, an American diplomat on loan to the United Nations, was close to a breakthrough.

In early August, Saddam's son-in-law Hussein Kamel had defected to Jordan, and had then spoken publicly about Iraq's offensive biological, chemical, and nuclear capabilities. (Kamel later returned to Iraq and was killed almost immediately, on his father-in-law's orders.) The regime's credibility was badly damaged by Kamel's revelations, and during these meetings the Iraqi representatives decided to tell Duelfer and his team more than they had ever revealed before. "This was the first time Iraq actually agreed to discuss the Presidential origins of these programs," Duelfer recalled. Among the most startling admissions made by the Iraqi scientists was that they had weaponized the biological agent aflatoxin.

Aflatoxin, which is produced from types of fungi that occur in moldy grains, is the biological agent that some Kurdish physicians suspect was mixed with chemical weapons and dropped on Kurdistan. Christine Gosden, the English geneticist, told me, "There is absolutely no forensic evidence whatsoever that aflatoxins have ever been used in northern Iraq, but this may be because no systematic testing has been carried out in the region, to my knowledge."

Duelfer told me, "We kept pressing the Iraqis to discuss the concept of use for aflatoxin. We learned that the origin of the biological-weapons program is in the security services, not in the military—meaning that it really came out of the assassinations program." The Iraqis, Duelfer said, admitted something else: they had loaded aflatoxin into two Scud-ready warheads, and also mixed aflatoxin with tear gas. They wouldn't say why.

In an op-ed article that Duelfer wrote for the *Los Angeles Times* last year about Iraqi programs to develop weapons of mass destruction, he offered this hypothesis: "If a regime wished to conceal a biological attack, what better way than this? Victims would suffer the short-term effects of inhaling tear gas and would assume that this was the totality of the attack: Subsequent cancers would not be linked to the prior event."

United Nations inspectors were alarmed to learn about the aflatoxin program. Richard Spertzel, the chief biological-weapons inspector for UNSCOM, put it this way: "It is a devilish weapon. Iraq was quite clearly aware of the long-term carcinogenic effect of aflatoxin. Aflatoxin can only do one thing—destroy people's livers. And I suspect that children are more susceptible. From a moral standpoint, aflatoxin is the cruellest weapon—it means watching children die slowly of liver cancer."

Spertzel believes that if aflatoxin were to be used as a weapon it would not be delivered by a missile. "Aflatoxin is a little tricky," he said. "I don't know if a single dose at one point in time is going to give you the long-term effects. Continuous, repeated exposure—through food—would be more effective." When I asked Spertzel if other countries have weaponized aflatoxin, he replied, "I don't know any other country that did it. I don't know any country that would."

It is unclear what biological and chemical weapons Saddam possesses today. When he maneuvered UNSCOM out of his country in 1998, weapons inspectors had found a sizable portion of his arsenal but were vexed by what they couldn't find. His scientists certainly have produced and weaponized anthrax, and they have manufactured botulinum toxin, which causes muscular paralysis and death. They've made *Clostridium perfringens*, a bacterium that causes gas gangrene, a condition in which the flesh rots. They have also made wheat-cover smut, which can be used to poison crops, and ricin, which, when absorbed into the lungs, causes hemorrhagic pneumonia.

According to Gary Milhollin, the director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, whose Iraq Watch project monitors Saddam's weapons capabilities, inspectors could not account for a great deal of weaponry believed to be in Iraq's possession, including almost four tons of the nerve agent VX; six hundred tons of ingredients for VX; as much as three thousand tons of other poison-gas agents; and at least five hundred and fifty artillery shells filled with mustard gas. Nor did the inspectors find any stores of aflatoxin.

Saddam's motives are unclear, too. For the past decade, the development of these weapons has caused nothing but trouble for him; his international isolation grows not from his past crimes but from his refusal to let weapons inspectors dismantle his

nonconventional-weapons programs. When I asked the Iraqi dissident Kanan Makiya why Saddam is so committed to these programs, he said, "I think this regime developed a very specific ideology associated with power, and how to extend that power, and these weapons play a very important psychological and political part." Makiya added, "They are seen as essential to the security and longevity of the regime."

Certainly, the threat of another Halabja has kept Iraq's citizens terrorized and compliant. Amatzia Baram, the Iraq expert at the University of Haifa, told me that in 1999 Iraqi troops in white biohazard suits suddenly surrounded the Shiite holy city of Karbala, in southern Iraq, which has been the scene of frequent uprisings against Saddam. (The Shiites make up about sixty per cent of Iraq's population, and the regime is preoccupied with the threat of another rebellion.) The men in the white suits did nothing; they just stood there. "But the message was clear," Baram said. "What we did to the Kurds in Halabja we can do to you." It's a very effective psychological weapon. From the information I saw, people were really panicky. They ran into their homes and shut their windows. It worked extremely well."

Saddam's weapons of mass destruction clearly are not meant solely for domestic use. Several years ago in Baghdad, Richard Butler, who was then the chairman of UNSCOM, fell into conversation with Tariq Aziz, Saddam's confidant and Iraq's deputy Prime Minister. Butler asked Aziz to explain the rationale for Iraq's biological-weapons project, and he recalled Aziz's answer: "He said, 'We made bioweapons in order to deal with the Persians and the Jews.'"

Iraqi dissidents agree that Iraq's programs to build weapons of mass destruction are focussed on Israel. "Israel is the whole game," Ahmad Chalabi, the leader of the Iraqi National Congress, told me. "Saddam is always saying publicly, 'Who is going to fire the fortieth missile?'"—a reference to the thirty-nine Scud missiles he fired at Israel during the Gulf War. "He thinks he can kill one hundred thousand Israelis in a day with biological weapons." Chalabi added, "This is the only way he can be Saladin"—the Muslim hero who defeated the Crusaders. Students of Iraq and its government generally agree that Saddam would like to project himself as a leader of all the Arabs, and that the one sure way to do that is by confronting Israel.

In the Gulf War, when Saddam attacked Israel, he was hoping to provoke an Israeli response, which would drive America's Arab friends out of the allied coalition. Today, the experts say, Saddam's desire is to expel the Jews from history. In October of 2000, at an Arab summit in Cairo, I heard the vice-chairman of Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council, a man named Izzat Ibrahim al-Douri, deliver a speech on Saddam's behalf, saying, "Jihad alone is capable of liberating Palestine and the rest of the Arab territories occupied by dirty Jews in their distorted Zionist entity."

Amatzia Baram said, "Saddam can absolve himself of all sins in the eyes of the Arab and Muslim worlds by bringing Israel to its knees. He not only wants to be a hero in his own press, which already recognizes him as a Saladin, but wants to make sure that a thousand years from now children in the fourth grade will know that he is the one who destroyed Israel."

It is no comfort to the Kurds that the Jews are now Saddam's main preoccupation. The Kurds I spoke with, even those who agree that Saddam is aiming his remaining Scuds at Israel, believe that he is saving some of his "special weapons"—a popular euphemism inside the Iraqi regime—for a return visit to Halabja. The day I visited the Kalak Bridge, which divides the Kurds from the Iraqi Army's Jerusalem brigade, I asked Muhammad Najjar, the local official, why the brigade was not facing west, toward its target. "The road to Jerusalem," he replied, "goes through Kurdistan."

A few weeks ago, after my return from Iraq, I stopped by the Israeli Embassy in Washington to see the Ambassador, David Ivry. In 1981, Ivry, who then led Israel's Air Force, commanded Operation Opera, the strike against the Osirak nuclear reactor near Baghdad. The action was ordered by Prime Minister Menachem Begin, who believed that by hitting the reactor shortly before it went online he could stop Iraq from building an atomic bomb. After the attack, Israel was condemned for what the *Times* called "inexcusable and short-sighted aggression." Today, though, Israel's action is widely regarded as an act of muscular arms control. "In retrospect, the Israeli strike bought us a decade," Gary Milhollin, of the Wisconsin Project, said. "I think if the Israelis had not hit the reactor the Iraqis would have had bombs by 1990"—the year Iraq invaded Kuwait.

Today, a satellite photograph of the Osirak site hangs on a wall in Ivry's office. The inscription reads, "For General David Ivry—With thanks and appreciation for the outstanding job he did on the Iraqi nuclear program in 1981, which made our job much easier in Desert Storm." It is signed "Dick Cheney."

"Preemption is always a positive," Ivry said.

Saddam Hussein never gave up his hope of turning Iraq into a nuclear power. After the Osirak attack, he rebuilt, redoubled his efforts, and dispersed his facilities. Those who have followed Saddam's progress believe that no single strike today would eradicate his nuclear program. I talked about this prospect last fall with August Hanning, the chief of the B.N.D., the German intelligence agency, in Berlin. We met in the new glass-and-steel Chancellery, overlooking the renovated Reichstag.

The Germans have a special interest in Saddam's intentions. German industry is well represented in the ranks of foreign companies that have aided Saddam's nonconventional-weapons programs, and the German government has been publicly regretful. Hanning told me that his agency had taken the lead in exposing the companies that helped Iraq build a poison-gas factory at Samarra. The Germans also feel, for the most obvious reasons, a special responsibility to Israel's security, and this, too, motivates their desire to expose Iraq's weapons-of-mass-destruction programs. Hanning is tall, thin, and almost translucently white. He is sparing with words, but he does not equivocate. "It is our estimate that Iraq will have an atomic bomb in three years," he said.

There is some debate among arms-control experts about exactly when Saddam will have nuclear capabilities. But there is no disagreement that Iraq, if unchecked, will have them soon, and a nuclear-armed Iraq would alter forever the balance of power in the Middle East. "The first thing that occurs to any military planner is force protection," Charles Duelfer told me. "If your assessment of the threat is chemical or biological, you can get individual protective equipment and warning systems. If you think he's going to use a nuclear weapon, where are you going to concentrate your forces?"

There is little doubt what Saddam might do with an atomic bomb or with his stocks of biological and chemical weapons. When I talked about Saddam's past with the medical geneticist Christine Gosden, she said, "Please understand, the Kurds were for practice."

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IRAQ IN THE BALANCE



The Bush team is looking for some former Iraqi generals to help oust Saddam Hussein. NEWSWEEK has tracked down the top candidates. They're all veterans of war—and a few may be war criminals. BY EVAN THOMAS AND ROY GUTMAN

War on Terror

GEN. NIZAR AL-KHAZRAJI

Defected from Iraq in 1996, now residing in Solør, Denmark

Best known for: Was Iraqi Army chief of staff

Asset to United States: Respected by other Iraqi exiles

Liability to United States: Faces war-crimes investigation



LT. GEN. MAHDI AL-DULEIMI

Defected from Iraq in 1996, now residing in Wuppertal, Germany

Best known for: Leading Iraqi Third Corps

Asset to United States: Has been named as a potential candidate to oust Saddam

Liability to United States: The plan remains on paper only

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH'S DESCRIPTION OF IRAQ, Iran and North Korea as an "axis of evil" was dismissed as macho bluster in many capitals around the world. But inside Iraq, Bush's tough talk has been taken seriously by Saddam Hussein's own Army, judging from the steady stream of Iraqi Army officers who have been switching sides recently. About three weeks ago 36 officers, including a colonel in Saddam's elite special Republican Guard, showed up in neighboring Turkey, according to one former Iraqi general (a State Department source puts the Iraqi officer defection rate at about a half dozen per week). They brought two messages. One was that Saddam, fearing disloyalty, has been executing officers in his supposedly loyal Republican Guard. The second is "we are

ready to revolt," says Fawzi al-Shamari, the former Iraqi Army general who has been in contact with the new émigrés. Some officers fleeing Iraq may actually be spies, planted by Saddam. But most seem to be trying to get on the winning side.

In Washington last week, Bush signaled more firmly than ever his determination to oust Saddam. "He is a problem," the president said at a press conference. "And we're going to deal with him." On an eight-day tour of Middle Eastern capitals, Vice President Dick Cheney was trying to line up support for U.S. intervention in Iraq. Publicly, Arab leaders raised strong objections. Privately, at least one key Arab leader was more pliable. A knowledgeable source tells NEWSWEEK that King Abdullah of Jordan indicated to Cheney that if the Israeli-Palestinian crisis eased and the United States moved swiftly and decisively against Saddam, then Jordan would raise no objec-

tions. Indeed, the Jordanians are already stockpiling fuel to prepare for the disruptions of war.

Behind closed doors in Washington, in secret diplomatic cables and inside CIA safe houses from suburban Virginia to Kurdistan, the search for solutions—for a plan and a leader—is on. As the vice president and the Jordanian king talked over a sumptuous meal of seared scallops, grilled beef and berries with mascarpone at the royal palace in Amman, the hard question about overthrowing Saddam was not if, but how and when. And just as vexing: who would replace Saddam? According to the knowledgeable source, Abdullah was contemptuous of Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress, which has the highest profile of the exile opposition groups. Abdullah's scorn for Chalabi is widely shared in the United States government. The elegant, London-based former banker is pop-

ular among top civilian aides at the Defense Department, but he is widely derided as an ineffectual showboat just about everywhere else in the U.S. national-security establishment.

At the CIA, State Department and among the uniformed military, specialists are trying to find the proverbial Man on a White Horse, a respected military officer who can ride in, take control and unite Iraq's fractious tribes and religious groups. Mythology is sometimes more powerful than history: the last general who successfully returned from exile to restore his nation to greatness was Charles de Gaulle in France—more than 50 years ago. Still, the United States will need some kind of military strongman to foment a coup, or head a rebel army that could work alongside U.S. forces, or run the Iraqi military after Saddam is gone. There are a number of former high-ranking officers from Saddam's Army who are waiting in the wings and deserve to be taken seriously. But interviews with five of the most prominently mentioned Iraqi ex-generals, reached by NEWSWEEK at their homes in Europe and northern Virginia, raised questions about their readiness, willingness and fitness to lead.

The good news is that the generals are all very experienced war fighters. The bad news is the way they fought—sometimes, with chemical weapons. Nizar al-Khazraji, for instance, has impressive credentials: a

BRIG. GEN. NAJIB AL-SALHI

Defected from Iraq in 1995; now residing in northern Virginia

Best known for:

Heads the Free Officers Movement

Asset to United States:

Says he can raise 30,000 fighters

Liability to United States:

Critics say he's not a 'team player'

GEN. FAWZI AL-SHAMARI

Defected from Iraq in 1988; now residing in northern Virginia

Best known for:

Corps commander in Iran-Iraq War

Asset to United States:

Serious strategist

Liability to United States:

Used chemical weapons

four-star general, he was the top commander of the Iraqi Army from 1980 until 1991. He led the Army through the Iran-Iraq War and the invasion of Kuwait in 1990, though he says he was sidelined because he didn't support that adventure. Sitting in his apartment in the town of Soloe on the North Sea outside Copenhagen, al-Khazraji, 64, says he has no doubt that the Iraqi military is ready to rise up against Saddam. All it will take is a lot of American firepower, carefully targeted, and some organizing by military exiles like himself who have contact with serving Iraqi officers back home. "And then it will snowball," he says. How can he be so sure? "I was the chief of my Army and I know my men very well," he says, puffing on a cigarette.

Al-Khazraji could be the man to lead them again. But there's at least one catch: the Danish government is investigating the former Iraqi general for possible war crimes. It is trying to determine if al-Khazraji ordered poison-gas attacks that killed 5,000 Kurds in northern Iraq in 1988. Al-Khazraji bristles at the charges. He says he's the victim of a put-up job by Saddam loyalists among the Kurds. In fact, he claims, the chemical-warfare attacks against the Kurds were run by Saddam's secret military intelligence.

As it turns out, the head of that intelligence unit, Maj. Gen. Wafiq al-Samarrai, is another contender to lead the revolt against Saddam. Al-Samarrai and other generals

fled in the mid-1990s, when Saddam began to suspect them of plotting against him. (A CIA-backed uprising failed in 1996.) Suspected plotters understood that entire families to the third generation could be killed for suspicion of lesser offenses by a single relative. Al-Samarrai now lives in north London, where he was recently approached by a delegation of U.S. State Department officials. In an interview with

SOME OF THE DEFECTING IRAQI SOLDIERS MAY ACTUALLY BE SPIES. BUT MOST SEEM TO BE TRYING TO GET TO THE WINNING SIDE.



NEWSWEEK, al-Samarrai appeared skeptical about an exile-led revolt by the Army: "This is nonsense, mounting an operation from outside by exiles." Al-Samarrai, ever the spook, says he is in favor of a "quick covert operation," run by the CIA, to eliminate Saddam. Once Saddam is gone, he says, then the exiles can move in and set up a new regime.

A third general contacted by NEWSWEEK, Mahdi al-Duleimi, believes that a

combination of rebel troops and U.S. air power can work to take down Saddam, much as the combination of Northern Alliance ground troops and American warplanes dropping precision-guided weapons drove the Taliban out of Afghanistan. Sitting with his wife and daughter in a tiny apartment in the German city of Wuppertal, al-Duleimi unfolded a large map of Iraq on his coffee table. He pointed to the locations of the headquarters of Saddam's three defensive corps in the north. The first step, explained al-Duleimi, is to build up opposition forces outside these headquarters. The rebels, mostly armed Kurds already in the area and some returning exiles, would foment unrest among Iraqi units and encourage defections. Provoked, the Iraqis would attack—and U.S. air power would pounce on their massed forces. The air war would go after Saddam himself and other regional headquarters, encouraging units farther down the chain of command to revolt. Al-Duleimi claims

his plan has won high marks in Washington. "The time frame is in months, not in years," he says. "We can't wait a long time, we have to do it very fast." Al-Duleimi, 62, appears eager, confident. He says he's looking forward to returning with the whole family to Baghdad. "Not me, no way," interjects his 17-year-old daughter, Sama. In exile since 1996, she looks and acts like a German teenager. "As long as you're underage, you'll have to do what I say," says her father.

War on Terror

If al-Duleimi or some other general marches into Baghdad, what is to guarantee that they won't just seize Saddam's weapons of mass destruction—and keep them? As an Iraqi general in the Iran-Iraq War, al-Duleimi commanded the Third Corps in Basra at a time when the Iranians accused the Iraqis of using chemical gas on the southern front. Al-Duleimi maintains that it was the Fourth Corps that used the chemical weapons, not him. Although he headed the armed forces scientific and technical department, he denies any involvement in weapons of mass destruction programs.

One general interviewed by NEWSWEEK made no bones about his use of chemical weapons. General al-Shamari commanded nine divisions in the Iran-Iraq War before he defected in 1986. (Now 56, he runs a small restaurant in northern Virginia.) He says he carried out Saddam's orders to gas the Iranians, firing chemical weapons from howitzers. The impact was devastating. "It created a state of chaos," said al-Shamari. Given that he was miles from the target, how did he know that? From U.S. intelligence. "We got information from American satellites," said al-Shamari. (A former CIA official confirmed that the United States, which was backing Iraq against Iran, provided intelligence to the Iraqis. "Included in that, I'm sure, would have been some feedback, intended or unintended, to the Iraqis on their use of chemical warfare," said the official.)

Al-Shamari's strategy to take down Saddam would be to run a guerrilla war. He would attack bridges and roads to freeze Saddam's Republican Guard in place, then jam his communications while targeting the Iraqi populace with an aggressive propaganda campaign. "You must make people unafraid of him. Right now he acts like a king in a palace surrounded by a strong fence and stray dogs. If you want to reach Saddam Hussein, the question is: how do I deal with those dogs? Some, you poison. Some, you give a sleeping potion. Some, you don't deal with." But al-Shamari says that so far he has had no discussions with U.S. officials. "Iraqis and Americans must plan jointly. This has not happened yet."

Yet another Iraqi ex-general interviewed by NEWSWEEK, Najib al-Salhi, says he could bring down Saddam without the aid of any U.S. ground troops. He would stage a three-pronged infantry assault on Baghdad from Kurdistan in the north, Kuwait in the south and, if possible, Jordan from the west. "Give us a chance to train our own force," he says. Al-Salhi, 50, who has run an exile group called the Free Officers Movement

since 1996, claims he can easily raise 30,000 fighters. He keenly appreciates the risks of defying the regime. Al-Salhi was operating out of Jordan in 2000 when he received a package at his home. Inside was a note from Iraqi intelligence. "We've been tracking you down," it said. "We know you are very active. We have captured some of your cells in Iraq." The package included a videocassette. It showed an Iraqi intelligence officer raping an immediate member of al-Salhi's family.

Saddam's ruthless security service has not lost its bite. He is protected by a particularly fearsome palace guard, the 999 Unit. But his Army, while large—some 400,000 troops—is weak. After Saddam's supposedly vaunted Republican Guard put up less than a do-or-die defense in the 1991 gulf war, Saddam created a special Republican Guard, whose 16 divisions are dedicated to the defense of Baghdad. The now ordinary Republican Guard has been plagued by defections. Walid (not his real name) is a 36-year-old captain in the Republican Guard who ran away into Kurdish territory. Of his nine fellow officers in a Guard battalion, all were against the regime, he says—though months passed before they dared whisper their seditious thoughts in the officers' mess. "The only people who still support the regime are those who have a financial interest or an official position," says Walid, who has a Ph.D. in engineering. "That's about 2 percent of the population."

Walid's experience, however, shows the difficulty of uniting the other 98 percent. Walid is ready to join an opposition force in Kurdistan. But he says he was coldly received when he defected. Checking into a hotel, he was arrested and kept with common criminals in a communal cell for five months. He has since found a warmer welcome with a different Kurdish faction.

Iraq is badly divided by tribes and sects. Most of the generals who would like to replace Saddam are, like him, Sunni Muslims. But about 60 percent of Iraqis are Shiites. (The Sunnis account for roughly 20 percent, the Kurds 15 percent.) While the INC's Chalabi may be far from the ideal unifying figure, he has about as much claim as anyone to being able to build coalitions. One thing is clear: the Bush administration is going to have to work hard to bring everyone together. Before another year passes, it's likely that American soldiers, spies and diplomats will be playing hardball, making payoffs, sliding around in the swamps of local Iraqi politics and possibly engaging in real combat.

With ROD NORDLAND in London, DANIEL KLAIDMAN with CHENEY, OWEN MATTHEWS in Kurdistan and CHRISTOPHER DICKEY in Paris



Part of Iraq is happy—the autonomous region without Saddam

REBEL-HELD TERRITORY" HAS rarely, if ever, looked so good as the Kurdish region of northern Iraq. The Franso Hariri football stadium stands in downtown Arbil among a forest of construction cranes, the rising skeletons of new buildings and a vast new mosque. Across the road is a large marble-floored LG electronics showroom and Internet center, and the traffic out front is packed with BMWs, Land Cruisers and Mercedeses. Above the stadium gates is a large, hand-painted advertisement for McDonald's featuring the golden arches. "We don't actually have a McDonald's here yet," says Fawzi Hariri, son of the



SOMETHING TO LOSE: Another war with Saddam could ruin what the Kurds have built, like this supermarket

WELCOME TO KURDISTAN

stadium's founder, "but we pretend we do."

Iraqi Kurdistan is a place in a hurry. The 11 years since the Kurds won de facto independence from Baghdad has been the longest experience of pseudo statehood in their history, and they're determined to make a success of it. It may not have McDonald's, but Erbil already boasts a marble Central Bank building (designed by a Kurdish woman), a Kurdish-studies academy, an Institute of Democracy and a vast new park with amphitheaters, where local musicians perform Bach and Kurdish traditional music. Given that 4,000 of 5,000 Kurdish villages and towns were ruined by the Iraqi Army in a quarter-century of intermittent war, the achievements are remarkable. Inevitably, success engenders ambivalence about prospects for a new war with Saddam. "We have really created something here, against all the odds," says Nasreen Barwari, the female, Harvard-

educated minister of Reconstruction and Development. "We have a lot to lose."

But the Kurds have a lot to gain, too. The current Kurdish statelet, which makes up about 15 percent of Iraq's population and land area, depends on a single road crossing to Turkey and another to Iran for all its trade. Turkey recently cut down on the number of trucks crossing the border, a reminder that it can strangle Kurdistan if it chooses. Saddam's Army is dug in just 12 miles from Kurdistan's two largest cities, and could easily hit them with artillery. Only the U.S. and British enforcement of the no-flight zone prevents Saddam from driving the Kurds into the mountains, as he did in 1991, killing 180,000.

"We are not in a secure situation," says Masoud Barzani, leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party, or KDP, which controls two thirds of Iraqi Kurdistan. "Our future lies with Iraq—but a democratic, federal

Iraq where we are not second-class citizens." In some ways, Kurdistan is just a declaration away from independence—it has its own army, flag, TV stations, school curriculum and language, plus a WELCOME TO KURDISTAN sign on the border. But at the same time, Kurds use Iraqi money—albeit pre-Saddam dinars, printed in Switzerland—and carry Iraqi passports drawn from a dwindling stock of pre-1991 blanks.

Kurdistan isn't a full-fledged democracy—the KDP and rivals from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan control the government and the Army. The parties claim to have made up after four years of civil war, but some tensions remain. Still, there is an elected Parliament that includes opposition parties, such as the Communist Party of Kurdistan. Minorities like the Turkmen and the Christian Assyrians have their own TV programs and guaranteed seats in Parliament. "Imagine what a place Iraq could be if it were like Kurdistan," says Refiq, a retired schoolteacher from Baghdad who moved to Kurdistan in 1992. Some war planners in Washington are doing just that.

OWEN MATTHEWS in Kurdistan

Devant la volonté exprimée par la Maison-Blanche d'en finir avec le régime de Bagdad

Les Arabes s'interrogent sur l'après-Saddam

Claude Lorieux

Soucieux d'épargner à une région déjà meurtrie, les affres d'un choc frontal George Bush-Saddam Hussein, les négociateurs s'efforcent en effet de concilier les exigences occidentales – retour à Bagdad des inspecteurs du désarmement – et celles du régime irakien, qui veut se débarrasser d'un embargo en place depuis dix ans. « Les discussions engagées à l'ONU sont importantes. Chacun doit garder son sang-froid ! », affirme un diplomate occidental. Les représentants irakiens et onusiens se retrouveront à la mi-avril.

Mais le chef de la Maison-Blanche a trop proclamé sa volonté d'abattre le régime irakien pour que nombre de responsables arabes ne sautent le pas et n'envisagent pas déjà les conditions et les conséquences d'une opération anti-Saddam.

Publiquement, les dirigeants arabes condamnent toute réédition de la guerre du Golfe. Ils doivent cela à leurs opinions publiques déjà ulcérées par le soutien de Washington à Israël. La Jordanie, la Syrie et l'Égypte sont d'ailleurs si dépendantes du commerce avec l'Irak qu'elles s'inquiètent des conséquences d'un nouveau conflit.

Un observateur chevronné assure qu'en privé le message est autre : « Épargnez-nous un nouveau coup pour rien comme en 1991. Mais si vous êtes résolus à en finir avec Saddam, allez-y ! et allez-y jusqu'au bout ! » Mais comment ? Si tout le monde est convaincu que les États-Unis agiront, personne ne sait comment George Bush s'y prendra pour achever l'œuvre entreprise par son père.

La tournée de Dick Cheney au Proche-Orient a confirmé les réticences des pays de la région. Cela vaut pour ceux que le vice-président a visités (l'Arabie Saoudite refuse que les bombardiers US s'envolent de ses bases vers l'Irak) et

pour ceux qu'il a ostensiblement évités : Syrie et Iran notamment, deux pays alliés entre eux et voisins de l'Irak.

Aucune capitale ne pleurerait la disparition de Saddam Hussein, mais toutes « redoutent que son remplacement se fasse à leur détriment », résume un diplomate occidental. Un intellectuel syrien explique que « si l'Irak tombe, l'Iran et la Syrie pourraient se trouver encerclés par les protégés de l'Amérique ». L'omniprésence politico-militaire des États-Unis est la hantise de Téhéran.

Ben Laden leur a permis de prendre pied en Afghanistan, en Asie centrale et même en Géorgie. Un homme d'affaires, qui connaît autant l'Amérique que le Proche-Orient, doute que les Américains s'arrêtent en chemin : « La guerre du Golfe leur sert de prétexte pour s'implanter dans la région. Ils sont restés au Koweït et en Arabie. Ils vont aborder la seconde étape ! »

Comment ? Soit en provoquant le démembrement de l'Irak entre ses composantes kurdes, sunnites et chiïtes, soit en tentant de placer un homme à eux à Bagdad. « Pour les voisins le pire serait l'éclatement », reprend l'intellectuel syrien. On parle déjà d'une possible offensive de l'armée turque pour empêcher

la naissance d'un État kurde d'Irak du Nord. « Une telle intervention ouvrirait la porte à celle d'autres pays, l'Iran ou la Syrie par exemple », ajoute un responsable kurde irakien. Une insurrection des Chiïtes du sud mettrait en émoi tout le Golfe, à commencer par l'Arabie Saoudite qui compte une forte minorité chiïte en province orientale.

Pourtant, ni les Chiïtes, fustillés sous les yeux des GI en

1991, ni les Kurdes, lâchés par la CIA en 1996, ne sont prêts à risquer leur peau pour servir George W. Bush ! Ils attendront que l'affaire soit bien engagée, et, selon certains, que l'armée irakienne ait basculé. Basma Kodmani, directrice à la Ford Foundation au Caire, estime toutefois que « les États-Unis sont si enhardis par l'opération afghane qu'il n'est pas prématuré d'envisager l'après-Saddam ».

Les spécialistes en sont d'ailleurs à dresser une sorte de portrait-robot du « général X », l'homme susceptible de succéder au président Hussein. Il devra être musulman sunnite (comme Saddam Hussein), proches des tribus et bien introduit auprès des services, entend-on généralement.

Plusieurs noms circulent : le général Wafic Samaraï, ancien

patron des Moukharabats (police politique), le général Najib Salahi, un ancien de la Garde républicaine, le général Najib Saleh, installé en Caroline du Nord, et le général Nizar al-Khasragi, qui vit au Danemark. L'un serait hors circuit parce qu'exilé depuis trop longtemps, un autre compromis dans des actes de répression. « Il n'avait pas le choix. Les Irakiens savent qu'un officier qui renâcle à exécuter un ordre est aussitôt pendu », plaide un intellectuel. Le nom d'Ahmad Chalabi, ancien banquier failli et président du Congrès national irakien, est encore cité malgré le peu d'estime où le tiennent certains généraux américains. La presse arabe a même évoqué le prince Ali, un frère du roi Abdallah II de Jordanie, dont les aïeux régnèrent sur l'Irak.

La difficulté vient du fait que « tous les proches de Saddam Hussein que les États-Unis ont tenté d'approcher ont été éliminés », relève Basma Kodmani. Des méthodes aussi radicales ne facilitent pas le recrutement des comploteurs !

L'armée irakienne pourrait faire la différence. Contrairement à la Garde républicaine, qui est choyée par le régime, le gros de l'armée a souvent été mis à la portion congrue. Témoins, ce colonel qui, le visage masqué par un keffieh, faisait le taxi pour nourrir sa famille. « Après Saddam, tout le monde devra être réaliste. C'est avec les chefs de l'armée qu'il faudra traiter », explique un opposant.

Londres menace Bagdad de l'arme nucléaire

La Grande-Bretagne se réserve le droit de lancer une attaque nucléaire contre l'Irak si des armes chimiques ou biologiques sont dirigées contre les troupes ou le public britanniques, a répété dimanche le secrétaire à la défense, Geoff Hoon. La Grande-Bretagne peut en outre faire usage de la force contre l'Irak sans mandat des Nations unies si le président Saddam Hussein est considéré comme une menace, a estimé le ministre britannique, qui s'exprimait dans une interview télévisée. Le secrétaire au Foreign Office, Jack Straw, a déclaré hier que la Grande-Bretagne devait, pour éviter la répétition d'attentats comme ceux du 11 septembre, « se dresser face à des tyrans tels que Saddam » Hussein.

(AFP)

La vaste majorité des Turcs souhaitent l'adhésion de leur pays à l'Europe

ISTANBUL

de notre correspondante

Alors que le gouvernement turc met hâtivement la dernière touche à une série de réformes politiques, qui faisaient partie des engagements, à court terme, pris le 19 mars 2001 dans le cadre du Programme national pour l'adhésion, une polémique fait rage en Turquie sur les conditions d'entrée à l'Union européenne. Le 7 mars, le général Tuncer Kilinç, secrétaire général du Conseil national de sécurité (MGK) – l'organe composé essentiellement de militaires, qui décide des grandes orientations du pays –, a jeté un pavé dans la mare. Déplorant le fait que « la Turquie n'a jamais reçu la moindre assistance de l'Union européenne » et que « l'UE a une vue négative des problèmes qui préoccupent la Turquie », le général a suggéré un rapprochement avec « la Russie et même l'Iran, sans oublier les Etats-Unis », avant de se rétracter en évoquant « un point de vue personnel ».

Ces déclarations sont intervenues quelques semaines après l'interception illégale et la publication – par le magazine *Aydinlik* – du courrier électronique de Karen Fogg, représentante à Ankara de l'Union européenne. La correspondance de M^{me} Fogg a donné lieu à un flot d'éditoriaux nationalistes qui révélaient le ressentiment de leurs auteurs à l'égard de l'Europe et une ignorance profonde de ce qu'est l'Union européenne.

Les critères de Copenhague, qui s'appliquent à tous les pays candidats, sont perçus comme des obsta-

cles dressés spécialement à l'intention d'Ankara. D'où des sentiments souvent contradictoires : le désir d'être acceptés par l'UE tout en soupçonnant les Européens de vouloir diviser la Turquie, comme à l'époque de la première guerre mondiale.

Au sein de la coalition gouvernementale, le débat est tendu. Le premier ministre Bülent Ecevit, converti à la cause européenne, affirme que l'entrée à l'UE est un « droit inaliénable de la Turquie ». Il joue un rôle d'arbitre et fait fréquemment usage de son sifflet pour mettre fin aux échanges hostiles entre le vice-premier ministre, Mesut Yilmaz, dirigeant du Parti de la Mère patrie (ANAP, droite libérale), qui veut accélérer les réformes, et le dirigeant du Parti de l'action nationaliste MHP, Devlet Bahçeli, qui freine des quatre fers. Le MHP souhaite que la Turquie impose ses propres conditions en tenant compte de ses « sensibilités » locales afin d'entrer dans l'UE avec sa « fierté nationale » intacte. « Le MHP ne peut pas faire de compromis sur l'éducation en langue kurde ou l'abolition de la peine de mort », a déclaré M. Bahçeli. Mesut Yilmaz a suggéré d'organiser un référendum, mais sa proposition a été rejetée.

Un récent sondage effectué par Strateji Mori pour CNN-Türk indique que 75 % des Turcs souhaitent l'adhésion de leur pays à l'Europe, même si 25,3 % seulement croient que ce but pourra être atteint dans les cinq prochaines années et 45 % sont convaincus que l'Europe ne

veut pas d'eux. Le manque de confiance des Turcs à l'égard de leurs propres politiciens explique en partie cette attitude : l'enquête Eurobaromètre publiée par la Commission européenne indique que les Turcs ont une vision très pessimiste de leur futur. 56 % d'entre eux estiment que leurs conditions de vie sont moins bonnes aujourd'hui qu'elles ne l'étaient il y a 5 ans et 41 % craignent qu'elles empirent dans les cinq ans à venir. « Les politiciens parlent d'honneur national, mais regardez dans quel état est le pays, déclare une femme de ménage de 40 ans. Nous voulons des conditions de vie meilleures pour nos enfants. »

Secouée par une crise financière sérieuse qui l'avait amenée au bord de la faillite, la Turquie a été forcée de se tourner vers le FMI, à qui elle a emprunté la somme record de 31 milliards de dollars. Les partisans de l'UE se plaignent que leur tâche soit rendue plus difficile par les maladresses des Européens dans leurs relations avec Ankara. « Nous avons l'impression que les besoins de la Turquie ne sont pas pris en considération », affirme Volkan Vural, qui dirige le secrétariat général pour les affaires européennes. « Les Européens ont une approche négative sur Chypre », se plaint également M. Vural. Bruxelles a déjà annoncé que l'île méditerranéenne figurerait parmi les prochains candidats admis au sein de l'Union, même si les négociations en vue de mettre fin à la division de l'île n'aboutissent pas. Pourtant des changements s'opèrent lentement. Mais surtout,

« même ceux qui l'expriment de façon contradictoire ne souhaitent pas la suspension du processus d'adhésion », affirme Volkan Vural. Ces débats ont lieu alors que nous faisons de réels progrès. »

RÉTICENCES DES AUTORITÉS

Des changements, impensables récemment, sont en cours. Ainsi le premier ministre Ecevit vient d'annoncer que la possibilité d'introduire des émissions en kurde sur les chaînes de télévision étatiques serait discutée lors de la prochaine réunion du Conseil national de sécurité (MGK). Les amendements constitutionnels adoptés en octobre sont un modeste pas en avant.

Mais la réticence des autorités, qui crée l'impression que ces réformes sont imposées à la Turquie plutôt qu'adoptées pour le bien de ses citoyens, n'encourage pas l'application des nouvelles lois. « Pour que le processus se fasse plus aisément, il est essentiel que les milieux concernés se penchent de plus près sur ce qu'est l'Union européenne, comment elle fonctionne et comme elle se vit, en visitant par exemple leurs homologues dans les pays membres. Cela permettra à l'UE de mieux connaître la Turquie et cela atténuera les inquiétudes de la Turquie », explique Karen Fogg. Il y a encore beaucoup à faire sur ce plan. »

Nicole Pope

Le Monde

MERCREDI 27 MARS 2002

L'armée turque est divisée

OÙ SE SITUE L'ARMÉE TURQUE face au processus d'adhésion à l'Union européenne ? C'est la question qui se pose après l'attaque virulente contre Bruxelles lancée récemment par le général Tuncer Kilinç, qui est à la tête du Conseil national de sécurité, l'arbitre du jeu politique turc.

Les « vues personnelles » du général Kilinç, pour le moins surprenantes puisque Ankara a souvent accusé Téhéran d'encourager les organisations islamistes locales et de soutenir le PKK, ont fait l'effet d'un pavé dans la mare en Turquie, où les propos d'officiers de haut rang sont rarement pris à la légère. Bien que les militaires jouent désormais leur rôle en coulisse après avoir pris le pouvoir à trois reprises entre 1960 et 1980, l'armée continue d'exercer une influence considérable sur la politique du pays par le biais du Conseil national de sécurité, qui réunit les dirigeants civils et militaires du pays et soumet ses « recommandations » au gouvernement. En 1997, le premier ministre Necmettin Erbakan avait été forcé de démissionner après avoir refusé d'appliquer des mesures anti-islamistes exigées par les généraux.

Avertissement voilé à Bruxelles ? Signe d'une division interne au sein des forces armées ? Le message du général a donné une nouvelle ampleur à la controverse sur l'adhésion d'Ankara à l'UE. Contredisant les propos de son collègue, le chef de l'état-major, le général Huseyin Kivrikoglu, a réaffirmé que l'adhésion à l'UE était une « nécessité géostratégique » pour la Turquie. Mais dans un récent article, le chef de l'armée turque avait lui aussi donné libre cours à sa frustration, affirmant que « de nombreux pays européens continuent d'abriter, de soutenir et de protéger les membres d'organisations qui opèrent contre la Turquie ». Les autorités turques critiquent Bruxelles pour n'avoir pas inclus le PKK et l'organisation d'extrême gauche DHKP-C sur la liste des organisations terroristes. Fidèle à la mission d'Atatürk, l'armée soutient en principe le projet européen tout en sachant que l'adhésion affecterait sa position privilégiée dans la société. Les généraux perçoivent certaines réformes comme un danger pour le pays.

N. P.

Turquie | Ankara maintient la pression sur la région indépendantiste

Les rebelles kurdes tendent la main en changeant de nom

Le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK) est devenu, ce mois-ci, le **Parti de la Libération du peuple** — *Partiya Azadîya Gelan*. Un changement de nom qui traduit aussi une nouvelle option stratégique.

ÉRIC BIEGALA

COLOGNE / ISTANBUL

Le PKK est mort, vive le PAG ! Les rebelles kurdes de Turquie ont effectivement changé le nom de leur organisation courant mars. Objectif : amadouer l'appareil sécuritaire turc — qui se dresse sur ses ergots à la simple mention du mot « Kurdistan » — et se cantonner à une défense strictement politique de la cause kurde.

Changer de nom pour le PKK, c'est parfaitement normal : c'est la suite logique de l'arrêt de la lutte armée, analyse Yasar Kaya, président du « Parlement kurde en exil » qui partage son temps entre Bruxelles et Cologne. Le PKK a effectivement choisi de déposer les armes en 1999, suite à la capture puis à la condamnation à mort de son chef Abdullah Öcalan. La Turquie n'a pas encore exécuté la sentence et l'Europe presse Ankara d'abolir purement et simplement la peine capitale. Les combattants du PKK se sont par ailleurs repliés en Irak du Nord et pratiquement aucune opération n'a plus été menée en Turquie depuis deux ans et demi...

Confortablement installé à la terrasse d'un restaurant de Cologne, juste en face du Rhin en crue, Yasar Kaya

plaide pour une approche pacifique, assortie toutefois de quelques « garanties » : *ce ne sont plus les armes qu'il faut faire parler aujourd'hui... mais les militants refuseront d'abandonner complètement leurs fusils tant qu'il n'y aura pas de solution au problème kurde. Pour eux, c'est une garantie.*

Les rebelles ont également averti qu'ils repartiraient à l'attaque au cas où leur chef emprisonné serait exécuté. Mais l'ordre du jour ne semble vraiment pas à la reprise des hostilités. *Je pense que les militants [qui sont dans les montagnes irakiennes] pourraient même se rendre, à condition de pouvoir bénéficier d'une amnistie*, estime l'infatigable activiste de la cause kurde dont l'engagement remonte aux années 60. En signe de bonne volonté, un groupe de 12 rebelles dont 4 membres du « Parlement en exil » s'étaient rendus aux autorités turques en 1999. Ils ont été condamnés à 24 ans de prison, remarque encore Yasar Kaya d'un ton las.

Du côté du régime en effet, le ton n'est guère conciliant, même si on assiste à quelques timides avancées. Le Premier ministre turc comme l'état-major ont chacun dénoncé l'« opération de camouflage » du changement d'appellation. Il est vrai que la Turquie mène actuellement campagne pour que l'Union européenne révise sa liste des organisations terroristes définie après le 11 septembre et y inclue le PKK. Le débat sur l'abolition de la peine de mort, qui avait commencé au début du mois, a même été gelé sur avis de l'état-major, les géné-

raux préférant attendre de voir si l'UE pouvait leur donner satisfaction...

Les autres demandes de l'Union concernant le respect du droit des minorités ont été traitées à l'avenant. D'ici 2004, la Turquie doit ainsi avoir libéralisé ses textes pour permettre l'apprentissage de la langue kurde.

Cette perspective a été platement écartée par le Premier ministre. En revanche, la possibilité de diffuser des émissions télévisées en kurde a été remise à l'ordre du jour. Conscient des réticences des militaires, qui avaient une première fois tué le débat dans l'œuf il y a un an, le gouvernement a cette fois demandé leur avis aux généraux avant de se lancer dans un projet de loi. Réponse de l'état-major : une télévision en kurde peut être autorisée sur le modèle de la station régionale France 3 - Corse. Cet avis favorable devra toutefois être entériné par le Conseil de sécurité nationale, dominé par les militaires, de ce vendredi.

Si elle se concrétise, cette mesure serait l'une des plus importantes en matière de libéralisation depuis l'autorisation de la langue kurde en 1991, mais les modalités d'application risquent de faire toute la différence entre une véritable réforme et un simple rideau de fumée. Si les publications en kurde sont par exemple effectivement autorisées depuis 10 ans, leur diffusion est régulièrement interdite dans les zones de langue kurde, soumises à un régime d'exception. Quant aux noms kurdes eux-mêmes ils sont subordonnés à l'arbitraire administratif. Le gouverneur des provinces kurdes sous état d'urgence vient par exemple d'interdire certains prénoms kurdes au motif qu'ils étaient également utilisés par le PKK. •

Téhéran et Ankara qualifient les Moudjahidine et le PKK de "terroristes"

TEHÉRAN, 28 mars (AFP) - L'Irak - L'Iran et la Turquie ont qualifié pour la première fois les Moudjahidine du peuple, mouvement iranien d'opposition armée basé en Irak, et le Parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan (PKK), opposition kurde illégale en Turquie, de "terroristes", a annoncé jeudi la radio iranienne.

"Cette décision de considérer comme terroristes les MKO (Moudjahidine) et le PKK a été prise lors d'une réunion récente et permettra un développement des relations de confiance entre Téhéran et Ankara", a indiqué l'ambassadeur d'Iran à Ankara, Mohammad-Hossein Lavasani, cité par la radio.

Cette réunion comptait des responsables de haut niveau des deux pays, selon la radio, qui n'a pas donné plus de précisions.

L'Iran a été accusé dans le passé d'abriter des camps du PKK, le parti dont le dirigeant, Abdullah Öcalan, a été condamné à mort en Turquie. Mais Téhéran a toujours rejeté cette accusation.

Selon le diplomate iranien, le président du Parlement Mehdi Karubi doit se rendre "très bientôt" en Turquie, en réponse à la récente visite en Iran de son homologue Omer Izgi.

The war summit ■ By David Ignatius

Blair and Bush to focus on Saddam's weapons

The fog of words surrounding Iraq should begin to clear a bit next week when British Prime Minister Tony Blair visits America, carrying with him detailed intelligence about Saddam Hussein's efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Blair will call on President George W. Bush at his ranch in Crawford, Texas, for what the British press has described as a "war summit." Blair will be bringing a dossier on the Iraqi military threat. Reprising the role he played after Sept. 11 in gathering evidence about Osama bin Laden to build public support for military action, he will make much of the Iraq material public — probably in a speech next week.

It is this problem — Iraq's continuing and relentless efforts to develop weapons of mass destruction — that explains the Bush administration's obsession with Saddam. Thus far, Blair is the only European who seems to agree about the seriousness of the threat, but even he doesn't seem sure what to do about it.

(I must caution my fellow scribe William Safire, grande plume of the New York Times op-ed page, that Blair will not be bringing evidence confirming secret meetings in Prague between al Qaeda operatives and Iraqi intelligence officers to plan the Sept. 11 attacks. The British, along with senior CIA officials, think that particular Iraqi conspiracy theory doesn't hold water.)

British and American officials are now sifting the evidence that Blair will make public. Though the investigation isn't finished, here are some of the areas that Blair is likely to discuss:

- **Biological weapons.** The Iraqis were forced to admit in 1995 that they had produced at least three biological agents: anthrax spores, botulinum toxin and aflatoxin. The Iraqis "weaponized" at least one of these biological agents, so that it could be used effectively against civilians or military forces. They tested devices that could spray biological agents in aerosol form, for example.

- **Chemical weapons.** The Iraqis admitted in 1991 that they had produced mustard gas and the nerve agents tabun, sarin and "GF." The Iraqis also tried to hide four tons of the nerve agent known as "VX," until it was found by UN inspectors.

What worries the British and Americans is that the Iraqis appear to be continuing a covert biological and chemical weapons program at Tareq, in central Iraq near Baghdad.

- **Nuclear weapons.** Despite having signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Saddam was secretly racing before the Gulf War to build a nuclear bomb.

Analysts estimate that he would have had an Iraqi nuke in less than three years, if the West hadn't gone to war after he invaded Kuwait in 1990.

Because it involved so many complex technologies, this nuclear program was severely disrupted by the Gulf War. Saddam doubtless still has nuclear ambitions, but analysts doubt he can build an actual bomb of his own anytime soon.

- **Ballistic missiles.** At the end of the Gulf War, Iraq was able to hide about a dozen of its Al-Hussein Scud missiles. That's a relatively small number — compared with the 500 Scuds Iraq fired at Iran during the Iraq-Iran war, and the 93 Scuds it shot during the 1991 Gulf War.

The problem is, analysts don't seem to know where these dozen remaining Scuds are. Even one of them, armed with a biological or chemical warhead, could do catastrophic damage to Israel, Turkey,

Saudi Arabia or any other target within the Al-Hussein's 650-kilometer (400-mile) range.

Given Iraq's predilection for weapons of mass destruction, how should the world respond? That's the real issue before Bush and Blair. The standard answer given by most European and Arab governments is to send UN weapons inspectors back into Iraq to find and destroy what's left of Hussein's deadly arsenal. The problem with this approach can be summed up in two words: Saddam cheats. A good illustration comes from a defector who recently provided details about how Iraq is cheating on existing UN rules for oil sales.

The Iraqis are operating a kind of shell game, according to the defector's reports to an opposition group called the Iraqi National Accord. Legal oil exports come from the Al Shuaiba refinery in Basra and are sent to the Al Bakr and Al Ameeq loading ports — all in compliance with UN rules.

Meanwhile, other oil products — mainly diesel and heavy oil — are secretly pumped from the Al Shuaiba refinery to two ports known as Abu Flous and Khor Al Zubair. From there, the oil products are illegally smuggled out of Iraq by tanker and sold abroad — with the profits going to Saddam and his secret police.

If the United Nations is unable to stop this simple smuggling operation, it's hard to imagine that it can wrest the weapons of Armageddon from Saddam's hands.

That's why Bush and Blair will be looking next week for tougher measures — and thinking about how to convince skeptical allies of the need to take action.

International Herald Tribune
The Washington Post

Turquie : la corru

Au moment où le Fonds monétaire international exige des réformes, un rapport met en évidence l'ampleur et la banalisation de cette pratique. Les politiques en sont les principaux responsables

De notre envoyée spéciale

Véritable enfant chéri du Fonds monétaire international, la Turquie devrait absorber cette année, à elle seule, le quart des prêts accordés par cette institution. Le nouveau crédit de 16,3 milliards de dollars (18,6 milliards d'euros) obtenu le 5 février dernier par le gouvernement d'Ankara porte à 31 milliards le montant total de l'addition depuis 1999. Un record ! Il s'agit évidemment là d'une « générosité » très politique. Fidèle allié de Washington, la Turquie est un pays clef pour les stratégies de la Maison-Blanche et du Pentagone. Mais le FMI a cette fois décidé d'exiger, en échange de ce ballon d'oxygène, un train de réformes. En particulier des mesures visant à combattre la corruption qui gangrène l'économie du pays et qui est aujourd'hui perçue comme le deuxième fléau

— après l'inflation — par les milieux d'affaires. Les experts du Fonds ont trouvé un allié sur place : le lobby pro-européen, appuyé par les grandes entreprises, soucieuses de voir s'opérer une mise à niveau qu'elles savent indispensable.

Un institut de recherches économiques et sociales proche du patronat, le Tesev, vient pour la première fois de réaliser une enquête de terrain entièrement consacrée à la corruption. Financée en partie par la Banque mondiale, cette étude se présente en deux volets : le premier, publié l'an dernier, concernait les particuliers ; le second, rendu public il y a quelques semaines, les chefs d'entreprise. Au total, 3 000 ménages et 1 200 dirigeants de sociétés, petites et grandes, ont été interrogés. « J'ai été étonné par l'ampleur du phénomène, et surtout par sa banalisation », confie Ali Carkoglu, un professeur de sciences politiques de l'université du Bosphore qui a fait partie de l'équipe de chercheurs du Tesev. 18 % des particuliers et 46 % des chefs d'entreprise admettent avoir au moins une fois au cours des deux dernières années payé un fonctionnaire pour obtenir quelque chose. Et plus de la moitié des ménages avouent être prêts à recourir, au besoin, à ce genre de pratique. Les deux enquêtes livrent aussi un classement des administrations les plus corrompues. Sans surprise, la police de la route fait figure de championne toutes catégories... Viennent ensuite les douanes, régulièrement citées par les chefs d'entreprise, les hôpitaux, les municipalités, les administrations scolaires. Les trois quarts des hommes d'affaires estiment en outre que les adjudications

sont systématiquement truquées, et les deux tiers d'entre eux sont convaincus que les dons aux partis politiques peuvent avoir une influence directe sur la marche de leur entreprise. « Ici, il est impossible de poursuivre un fonctionnaire sans l'autorisation de son supérieur hiérarchique. Notre système protège non l'individu, mais l'Etat », commente Can Paker, patron du Tesev et président du groupe chimique Henkel-Turquie. « La corruption est liée au contrôle qu'exerce l'Etat sur une bonne partie de l'économie et du secteur financier », estime pour sa part Meral Gezgin Eris, présidente de la Fondation pour le développement économique, une autre association qui milite pour l'intégration de la Turquie à l'Union européenne. Mais universitaires ou hommes d'affaires sont unanimes à penser que le rapport du Tesev ne décrit que la partie visible de l'iceberg. Car, comme le souligne Can Paker, « le gros de la corruption est dû aux partis politiques ».

« Une tradition qui a la vie dure »

Clientélisme, trafic d'influence, passe-droits en tous genres : les hommes politiques utilisent les deniers publics pour s'assurer des appuis, remercier leurs électeurs, leurs proches, leurs amis ou leurs affidés... « C'est une tradition qui, depuis l'Empire ottoman, a la vie dure. Le sultan distribuait ses faveurs en puisant dans la cassette de l'Etat. Nos dirigeants actuels ne font pas autre chose. En Turquie, on ne se lance pas dans la politique pour faire triompher ses idées, mais pour s'assurer le contrôle du robinet. Il s'agit d'être celui qui distribuera

l'argent public », assure Eser Karakas, professeur de finances publiques et doyen de la faculté de sciences administratives de l'université de Bahçesehir, dans la banlieue d'Istanbul. L'argent va aux appareils des partis, aux circonscriptions qui ont « bien » voté, aux entreprises « amies », assurées d'obtenir les meilleurs contrats. « Les autres, commente un observateur, réduisent la toile en attendant leur tour. » Ce système, qu'Eser Karakas qualifie de « corruption légale », est à l'origine du crash du secteur bancaire qui a frappé le pays il y a un an et demi, entraînant la faillite d'une vingtaine de banques privées, tandis que les établissements publics affichaient des déficits record. Plombées par des crédits accordés massivement, à des taux souvent préférentiels, aux protégés des politiques, les banques n'ont pas supporté la hausse des taux d'intérêt. Un rapport publié au début de 2001 par le Crédit lyonnais estimait à 50 milliards de dollars le total des pertes du secteur, dont 20 milliards pour les banques publiques. Il faut dire que ce système, qui fait des institutions bancaires les vaches à lait des politiques, est quasi institutionnalisé. Au printemps de 1999, lors de la formation de l'actuel gouvernement — une coalition hétéroclite dont l'équivalent français rassemblerait le Parti socialiste, le RPR et le Front national — les discussions les plus vives portaient ouvertement sur le « partage » des banques publiques. Jusqu'à ce que chacun des partis obtienne le contrôle de l'un des trois grands établissements... Autre objet rituel de marchandages : la répartition des ministères « dépensiers ».

ption au pouvoir



Policiers turcs
à Istanbul.
Police de la route
et douanes sont en
tête du classement
des administrations
les plus corrompues.

Depuis la crise de février 2001 – qui a éclaté après que le président de la République, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, eut accusé son Premier ministre, Bülent Ecevit, d'être « assis sur

un tas de boue » – le ministre de l'Economie, Kemal Dervis, s'efforce de remettre un peu d'ordre dans la maison. En se servant, pour faire passer la pilule, des injonctions

du FMI, il est arrivé à obtenir le vote de plusieurs textes qui, s'ils sont appliqués, devraient changer la donne : restructuration de l'activité bancaire, indépendance de la Banque

centrale, création d'organes de régulation dans certains secteurs comme les télécommunications, l'énergie ou les marchés publics. Son collègue des douanes n'est pas en reste. Un programme d'informatisation, presque achevé, devrait limiter les occasions de fraude. Et, il y a quelques semaines, les douaniers se sont vu remettre un fascicule leur rappelant leurs obligations de serviteurs de l'Etat.

« Changer les mentalités, et les gens qui sont en place »

Reste que les résistances sont profondes. En juin 2001, le ministre de l'Intérieur, Sadettin Tantan, était évincé de son poste pour avoir « trahi » son parti en autorisant la gendarmerie à enquêter sur une grosse affaire de corruption au ministère de l'Energie, obligeant le ministre à démissionner. Depuis, ce dernier a échappé aux poursuites grâce au refus de l'Assemblée nationale de lever son immunité parlementaire... « Une entreprise qui refuse la corruption est ostracisée. Modifier les textes ne suffit pas. Il faudrait changer les mentalités, et les gens qui sont en place », estime Ishak Alaton, un homme d'affaires, membre de la direction du Tesev. Selon lui, le refus d'abandonner ce système de prébendes et de passe-droits expliquerait, bien plus que les considérations politiques, le discours antieuropéen d'une partie des dirigeants turcs. « Derrière le refus, affiché, des critères de Copenhague [NDLR : les conditions politiques mises par l'Union européenne à l'entrée de la Turquie], affirme-t-il, il y a surtout le désir de continuer à puiser dans les caisses de l'Etat. » ●

**Dominique Lagarde,
avec Nükte V. Ortaç**

The respected Kurdish-born writer and political activist Yachar Kemal talked to Chris Kutschera.



THE LIFE OF A MAN IS MORE VALUABLE THAN THE SURVIVAL OF A COUNTRY

A few months after the death of his wife Thilda, with whom he lived for 50 years, Yachar Kemal is a man overwhelmed by grief. His feelings are understandable; few wives play such an important role in the life of a writer.

The daughter of Sultan Abdul Hamid's Jewish doctor, Thilda spoke perfect English and French and was Yachar Kemal's eyes and ears on the world. She kept him informed of the new literary publications, translated his books and protected him from intruders. But, despite his sadness and the physical drawbacks of his 80 years, Yachar Kemal is remarkably alert and continues his writing in the big sitting room and office that he shared with Thilda.

Kemal is working on the second volume of a trilogy and remains an inexhaustible story-

The Middle East March 2002

teller. Still concerned by current affairs — currently the hunger-strike of more than 200 prisoners and their relatives over the infamous incarceration of political prisoners in F-type (high security) prisons debacle — Yachar Kemal continually mulls over his past. He is frequently thinking through the memoirs he will write when his trilogy is complete — his 'Letters to Thilda'.

Kemal has not stopped fighting, in one way or another, since he was 17, when his meeting with the brothers Abidine and Arif Dino "opened his eyes on the world" and put him on the track which resulted in him becoming a member of the central committee of the Turkish Communist Party.

Kemal's published work found no favour with the Turkish authorities

He has worked as a journalist, among many other things, earning himself considerable political notoriety through his articles. At 22, he was working for a gas company, when he got to know a group of Turkish workers who had lived in Germany and been influenced by the ideas of Spartakus. He personally witnessed their struggle to organise one of the first railway worker's strikes in Turkey and watched the execution of one of their leaders in 1927, when things went wrong.

Kemal's published work found no favour with the Turkish authorities. "I did many jobs, and everywhere I went, the government did everything possible to have me dismissed," he recalls. It was about this time that he wrote his famous article, *The Wolf with the Bells*, which was published in the prestigious *New French*



The police maintain a highly visible presence in Turkish cities and Yachar Kemal is kept silent by the threat of a prison sentence

Review. He explains the basis of his theme: "Exasperated by the wolves, which intrude into the sheepfolds of Anatolian villages and slaughter many sheep, the peasants set traps. When they catch a wolf, rather than killing it outright, they fix a collar with bells around its neck and release the animal back into the wild. Of course, the wolf is doomed to die because it can no longer approach its prey without being heard ... Turkish writers are treated like that," he concludes.

Kemal calculates that the Turkish authorities have condemned at least 114 writers to prison

for varying lengths of time. He, too, has spent three or four terms behind bars, but luckily, for fairly brief periods of only three or four months.

However, on one of these occasions, he was subjected to physical torture. "It was in 1950," he recalls. "For seven years I did not tell anybody, because I was ashamed. I didn't think one man could behave like that to another. But one day, a Communist Party leader started talking about torture, and I began to open up about my own experiences.

"For 48 hours, after binding my legs to the back of a chair, they hit the soles of my feet. The pain was terrible. They struck me almost continuously, especially at night, with one policeman taking over when his colleague was tired. I resisted but it did no good.

"Later, when they took me to court, my mother was there. I did not want her to see how much I was suffering. But the judge must have seen it because he said to me: 'Sit down, my son' ... Three months later I was free."

It is clear the Turkish authorities consider this one-time rebel is still a man with considerable political influence

From 1951 to 1963, Kemal was employed as a journalist at *Jumhuriyet*. But even before he worked as a reporter, he had started writing short stories and was working on his book *Mehmet*. Since 1963, he has lived on the proceeds of his books and has become one of Turkey's most highly-regarded wordsmiths. His books have been published in a multitude of languages and his name mentioned several



Yachar Kemal is at a loss to understand the apparent indifference of the Turkish public to this current drama

times in connection with the Nobel Prize for literature. But, despite his success, Kemal is somewhat bitter, believing "he is not taken seriously anymore".

However, it is clear the Turkish authorities consider this one-time rebel is still a man with considerable political influence. Last year, the minister of justice asked him, and his friends the writers Orhan Pamuk and Züfi Livaneli, to visit the prisoners who were on hunger-strike and help find a solution to the crisis, as they had done successfully in similar circumstances in 1996. So Yachar Kemal went to the prisons where he visited the bedsides of the hunger-strikers and spoke to their representatives, but to no avail.

The mediators asked the prisoners to suspend their hunger-strike, telling them that in exchange for their co-operation, the authorities were prepared to offer a series of attractive inducements. Unconvinced, the prisoners rejected the offer. Kemal recalls: "The prisoners told us: 'We cannot believe the authorities, even if they promise something'..."

I wondered what Kemal felt might explain the apparent indifference of the Turkish public to this current drama, which has already claimed several dozen lives.

"At the beginning, explains Yachar Kemal, the press published stories about it. But the government issued orders, and it is now forbidden to give the topic any prominence in the newspapers. Obviously, if the press does not provide the information... the people are not informed.

I would prefer that the country be entirely dislocated rather than see people dying

"I cannot explain to myself why this time the press and the public are not more involved in the crisis. In 1996, dozens of journalists came from Europe to interview me; this time, even those journalists I know personally, have not called me.

"In 1996, the whole of Turkey, not only the Left, was for mediation, for a humanitarian solution. This time also, until we tried to mediate, all opinion was against the incarceration of the prisoners in F-type (high security) jails. But after the failure of our mission, the matter 'cooled down'."

Yachar Kemal does not mention it, but the failure of mediation is partly due to the intransigence of Dursun Karatas, the DHKP-C leader who lives as a refugee in western Europe. Kemal will only say that after his first mediation, in 1996, he received death threats from both the Left and the Right and, as a result, went to live in exile, in Sweden, for a few months.

And the distance which prevails between the public opinion and the Left? "Even with



In spite of his 80 years, Yachar Kemal remains concerned by current affairs

me, there has been a distancing," claims Yachar Kemal, who immediately adds: "I will never be with a terrorist; everybody in Turkey knows I am against the death of people... I am a bit of an extremist, but I would prefer that the country be entirely dislocated rather than see people dying. The life of a man is more valuable than the survival of a country. In 1996, the press and public opinion were sensitised, not because the people who were dying were Leftist but because they were human beings."

Yachar Kemal cannot foresee the end of this current hunger-strike dilemma, which looks like claiming many more victims. He believes his words no longer carry the power they once did. "Because I no longer have anywhere to write, I no longer have any influence."

Later, he produces the front page of the newspaper *Hurriyet*, which published an interview with him under the headline: "Since the death of Thilda, Yachar Kemal has not written a single line".

Why, I wondered, did he not seize the opportunity of the *Hurriyet* interview to take a political stand; to say what he thought about the deaths of the hunger-strikers?

He shrugs. "I did not say anything on this matter because it is useless."

In fact, like many other Turkish intellectuals, Yachar Kemal is kept silent by the threat of a prison sentence if he defies the State. After publishing an article on the Turkish question in the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, he was given a suspended sentence of 20 months in jail. Should he commit a new 'offence' within five years, he will automatically be returned to prison.

Yachar Kemal makes no attempt to deny

his Kurdish identity: "Since I came to Istanbul in 1951, I have always said I was of Kurdish origin, and that I had been sentenced to jail for being a communist. Later on, in interviews, I continued to say the same thing. I was one of the first writers to claim his Kurdish heritage. In 1997, I was questioned on this matter in Germany. I confirmed I am a writer writing in the Turkish language. I have never written a line in Kurdish, but I am Kurd.

"In many of my books, the heroes carry Kurdish names or nicknames, like Mehmet the Kurd.

"I never repudiated my Kurdish identity, part of my family comes from the Caucasus; they are Turkmens who fought against the (Russian) Tsar and later came as refugees to Turkey, first to Bursa, then to Van, where one of my grandfathers married the daughter of a Kurdish bey.

"As if that were not enough, there is also some Assyrian blood in my family, but all of Anatolia is like that. My advantage is that although many people in Anatolia don't know the Kurdish language, I know it and speak it. But I cannot read and write it. When the writer Mehmet Uzun read me his book written in Kurdish, I understood everything, but I could not have read it for myself."

A trilogy on the population exchanges that followed the carving out of the Ottoman Empire, after World War I

Speaking of his current work in progress, Yachar Kemal describes a trilogy on the population exchanges that followed the carving out of the Ottoman Empire, after World War I, when one and a half million Greeks were forced to leave Turkey, while half a million Muslims entered the country from the Balkans. "What is scandalous," claims an indignant Yachar Kemal, "is that this forced exile, among the most important in history, was approved by all in Europe; yet those people were never asked if they wanted to leave and abandon their land. To separate somebody from the land where he or she was born, it is like pulling out his or her heart."

In the first volume, *A story of an island*, Yachar Kemal tells the story of the departure of the Christians who lived on an island of the Euphrates. The second volume of the trilogy, almost completed, tells of the arrival of the new Muslim inhabitants to the island. The third volume involves the desertification of the island.

When the final volume is complete, then, and only then, Yachar Kemal will start writing his memoirs, his 'Letters to Thilda' which he will write in the office he shared with his wife of more than 50 years, before her death last year, working in pencil, as he has since he began his life's work in his 20's. ■

Iraqi Kurds cautious on new US war

BBC by Hiwa Osman 26 March, 2002

The leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party in northern Iraq, Mas'ud Barzani, has said the question of whether the Kurds will support an American strike against Iraq or not "is not a simple one".

"We need many answers before we are able to answer such a question," he added. Mr Barzani told the Kurdish regional parliament in Arbil on Monday that many changes had taken place in the world since 11 September and that "our region is expected to witness big events". His remarks come amid increasing speculation that the US-led "war on terror" is going to extend to Iraq.

If this happens, the Kurdish region will have a key role to play, as it could become a base for attacks against Baghdad.

So far, the Kurds have been wary of stating any position for fear of provoking reprisals by Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Kurds and Iraqis

Before taking any steps, the Kurds - who have been in control of their area since 1991 - seem to be demanding answers to a number of questions. "Is it going to be an attack for the sake of attacking? Is there an alternative? Is there a plan for that?" Mr Barzani asked.

He said they would not take any decisions that might have negative consequences for the Iraqi people.

"As far as we are concerned, it is very important for us to safeguard and improve this [Kurdish] experience," said the KDP leader. "We hold the same position towards the Iraqi people. We will not hesitate to protect them from any harm. It is our duty to do so."

He ruled out any scenario in which Iraq might disintegrate into a number of power centres in the event of an attack.

Mr Barzani said: "I think this analysis is very wrong. Neither we nor the Iraqi people will accept that or accept the mandate of any country."

Federal state

Turkish officials have said in the past that if the US attacks Iraq, the Kurds in the north will establish a state of their own - which Turkey would consider an "act of war". Since 1992, Iraqi Kurds have been asking for a relationship with Baghdad that would be based on federalism.

"We have not asked for the establishment of a Kurdish state," Mr Barzani said. "This does not mean that it is not our right to do so, but we know that it is not realistic, and we do not have the power to do so."

"We are asking for the rights of the Kurds, which can be realised in a federal solution for Iraq, as declared by our parliament in 1992." Mr Barzani's KDP shared power in northern Iraq with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan until 1994.

The two parties began a protracted armed conflict that lasted until September 1998, when a ceasefire was announced and they signed an agreement in Washington.

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Turkey, Kurds Might Consider Status Quo As Lesser Of Evils

Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty By Jean-Christophe Peuch 26 March 2002

(RFE/RL) -- In the early 1990s, NATO member Turkey was the first country in the Middle East to join the U.S.-led coalition to drive Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Despite fierce resistance from the army's top officers, then-President Turgut Ozal opened Turkey's airspace and military bases to U.S. and allied war planes. The late Turkish leader hoped

that endorsing the U.S.-led operation against Iraqi President Saddam Hussein would help Ankara boost its role as a Western stronghold in the region and accelerate its admission into the European Union.

Yet the political dividends imagined by Ozal did not materialize. In addition, the war cost Turkey an estimated \$40 billion in lost revenue, despite subsequent compensation from the United Nations.

Eleven years later, the situation inside and outside Turkey has changed. Leaders in Ankara do not support the idea of strikes against Iraq, which U.S. President George W. Bush lists as among countries sponsoring terrorism and attempting to produce weapons of mass destruction. Turkey does not want Washington to solve the Iraqi issue by force and says it favors diplomatic efforts to force Saddam to allow UN weapons inspectors back into the country.

Officials in Ankara say a war near Turkey's southern border might jeopardize the government's efforts to sort out the current economic crisis. They also say attempts to force Saddam out might create a political vacuum that could stir unrest in Iraq's ethnic Kurdish northern provinces and impact Turkey's own restive Kurdish regions, reviving the specter of an independent Kurdish state.

Yet analysts believe there might be other, more structural, reasons behind Turkey's reluctance to endorse U.S. military action against Iraq.

Hamit Bozarslan is a Turkey expert at the Paris-based School of Higher Studies in the Social Sciences, better known under its French acronym of EHESS. He told RFE/RL that, in his view, Ankara wants to preserve the regional balance of forces, fearing any disruption could affect its national interests.

"True, Turkey today is much more frightened by the Iraqi Kurd experiment and its possible impact on its own Kurdish regions today than it was in 1991. But I think that [it] is also very, very strongly committed to preserving the existing status quo, the existence of states in their present form, and to preventing any possible change, any possible re-mapping [of the region] that could result from an outside intervention."

Bozarslan says this commitment originates from the "nationalist" trends he says have re-emerged in Turkish politics over the past few years, even though Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit's cabinet has been trying to bring Turkey closer to the West. This trend explains why Turkish politicians and military leaders are so concerned by what Bozarslan describes as "imaginary threats."

"The Turks [also] fear that, if an attack on Iraq or on any other country is decided, states would no longer remain free to decide for themselves, and that the policy of interference might someday become common practice and -- who knows -- applied against Turkey itself."

Northern Iraq is covered by one of the two "no-fly" zones imposed on Baghdad by the U.S. and Britain after the Gulf War. Controlled by two rival Kurdish factions -- Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and Masood Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) -- the region has been enjoying de facto autonomy for most of the past decade. After years of infighting, the two groups have progressively normalized their relations, creating calm in the region for the first time since the 1960s.

Northern Iraq's 3 million Kurds have been living under relative economic self-sufficiency since 1991, receiving a 13.5 percent share of Baghdad's export revenue under the UN-supervised oil-for-food program and levying taxes on cross-border trade.

The fact that the area is off-limits to Baghdad has proved a valuable asset for Ankara, as well. Turkish contractors are helping Kurds build much-needed infrastructure, Turkish businessmen are involved in illicit cross-border trade with Iraq and Iran transiting through Iraqi Kurdistan, and Ankara's armed forces conduct regular incursions in the area in pursuit of militants of the Turkish-based Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) who fled there three years ago after the arrest of their leader, Abdullah Ocalan.

Although Ankara maintains alternatively good relations with both the PUK and the KDP, which have helped Turkish troops crush the PKK, it fears a change in leadership in Baghdad might result in the Kurds being granted a say in Iraqi politics. Although Kurds are formally opposed to Saddam, they are also against any U.S. attempt to remove the Iraqi leader from power, fearing an uncertain future.

David McDowell is a U.K.-based historian and an expert on Kurdish affairs. He told our correspondent that there

is no guarantee the situation will change for the better under new Iraqi leaders, even if they are backed by Washington.

"Although I am sure [the Kurds] would be very happy to see Saddam's regime disappear, they also have to be very realistic. And realism implies quite strongly that even if [Saddam] personally disappears, his apparatus is unlikely to. And that's because the [ruling] Baath [Party] regime under Saddam Hussein is not really replaceable. It's only replaceable in terms of changing a few names. But basically, the intelligence network [and] the armed forces will remain [no matter] who takes control in Baghdad. And [the Kurds] know perfectly well that any ruler in Baghdad will view [them] with immense distrust."

In an interview broadcast on Turkey's NTV private television channel last month (8 February), KDP leader Barzani - who says he is negotiating with Baghdad to create a federative state that would legitimate Kurdish autonomy -- said he saw "no guarantee that the alternative will be better than Saddam."

In comments aired on NTV that same day, PUK leader Talabani said: "We prefer the current situation to a change we cannot accept. At least, Saddam is now under pressure and contained, isolated, and powerless, and we are under international protection."

Bozarslan of EHESS believes that four decades of war have exhausted the Kurds' fighting spirit and that the population of northern Iraq longs for peace. Therefore, he says, they might consider relinquishing their dream of an independent state, provided they can secure their autonomy.

"They [now] consider the creation of a Kurdish state with extreme caution. My impression is that they would content themselves with changes in Iraq -- not [necessarily] democratic changes, because I think they're not the kind of people to be fooled -- but with more or less pacific changes, provided their current status is preserved. I believe they would prefer to live in a modified Iraq rather than in an independent state squeezed between Turkey and Iran."

McDowell also dismisses the possibility of a landlocked independent Kurdistan coming into reality because of the stiff opposition such an outcome would raise in neighboring countries, which he says would not allow the new state to survive.

"Although I am very sympathetic to the Kurdish feelings about self-determination, I actually think that if they would have a state of their own, that would turn into a nightmare. And, ultimately, it would be a nightmare because Iraq, Turkey, and Iran would, in fact, compete to dominate this rather weak -- economically weak -- state and to control it. The pressure would be absolutely intolerable. I think life might be easier for Kurds, quite honestly, within the states that exist if only they could achieve a kind of recognized basis, on which they would be allowed to operate as Kurds."

Bitter past experience might be another reason to explain the reluctance of Iraqi Kurds to back a U.S. military operation against Saddam. During the 1991 Gulf War, then-U.S. President George Bush encouraged the PUK and the KDP to launch a joint insurrection against Baghdad to support the allied offensive in southern Iraq. But Washington decided to stop its advance on Baghdad, leaving the Kurds to their fate and allowing Iraqi troops to suppress the rebellion.

McDowell says wounds inflicted on Iraqi Kurds in the past have not healed: "I think that [the Kurds] know that the U.S. is a very perfidious ally. They also know that the U.S. will be there as a matter of convenience in United States policy, but not for the sake of the Kurds. The permanent reality for the Kurds of Iraqi Kurdistan is Baghdad, not Washington. So, very simply, they are not going to compromise their long-term future on behalf of Washington."

In a clear reference to the Gulf War, both Barzani and Talabani have said that, this time, they would not take orders from outside powers. They have also made it clear that they do not want to be assigned the same role as the anti-Taliban opposition in Afghanistan -- a mere auxiliary force in a U.S. operation to depose Saddam.

Bozarslan says Iraqi Kurds are unlikely to participate in an operation to remove Saddam. Yet he believes that, should Washington ask them to allow U.S. soldiers or members of the Iraqi opposition through their territory, they would have no other choice but to comply.

(Correspondent Sami Shores of Radio Free Iraq contributed to this report.)

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Post-Saddam Period

Sabah

25 March 2002 by Sukru Elekdag

Retired Ambassador Sukru Elekdag writes on Turkish-Iraqi relations and what may be done in case of an operation against Iraq.

Even as Turkey's strategy towards Iraq should be focused on the post- Saddam period, we see that it is benig bogged down in dealing with issues saving the day. With this near-sighted approach, it is impossible for Turkey to defend its national interests in the post-Saddam period when the cards will be dealt anew. In fact, just like the other states in the region, Turkey has also pointed out to the US the dangers of a military operation and asked Bush to solve the feud between him and Saddam within the framework of the UN. However, if despite all warnings, the US insists on toppling Saddam, Turkey has three alternatives to choose from.

First, it may decline participate in any way in a military operation. Second, it may open up Incirlik and other bases for the use of the US and help in supplying logistical support. Third, it may not limit its contributions to the operation to bases and logistical support but actually participate in the military operation. Reportedly, both civilian and military officials are both a taking realpolitik approach in not dwelling on the first option, but instead are in favor of limiting Turkey's contribution in line with the second. I believe that such a line of action would create serious threats for Turkey's national interests as a war against Saddam will lead to a natural alliance between the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) led by Barzani, the Kurdistan Patriotic Union (KPU) led by Talabani and the United States. Thus, when new political restructuring and arrangements are taken up, Barzani and Talabani will have a say on the matter, and opportunities will be created for the establishment of a Kurdish state.

That is why Turkey has to take its place in the operation against Iraq to protect its vital interests and not leave the field in northern Iraq to Barzani, Talabani or other opposition leaders. However, if Turkey actively participates in an operation against Iraq, it has to reach an accord with the US on the following issues apart from the compensation of the financial losses it may suffer: In the post-Saddam period, Ankara must have a say in the new Iraqi political restructuring on constitutional arrangements and all doors for the establishment of a Kurdish state should be closed. Musul and Kirkuk, where Turkmens live, should be left in an autonomous Turkmen region and the rights and security of Turkmens should be constitutionally guaranteed on an equal basis with Arabs and Kurds. In addition, the US must be able to end Israel's stance regarding Palestine and gather the sides around a negotiation table. Thus it will soften the opposition in the Arab world against a military operation and reduce the tension in the region. In such a climate some Arab states may participate in the operation and the problems which could emerge on Turkey's participation as the only Muslim state will be averted.

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F-16s Bomb Turk Kurd Rebels in Iraq - Kurd

Sources Reuters March 23, 2002 By Ferit Demir

TUNCELLI, Turkey - Warplanes have hammered Turkish Kurdish guerrilla encampments in northern Iraq, killing about 25 rebels, but it was not immediately clear where the aircraft were from, Iraqi Kurdish sources said on Saturday.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which administers northern Iraq, said it saw the aircraft bombing areas on Kandil Mountain in the region late on Thursday. "Four F-16s flying from the direction of Turkey bombed four separate points as PKK guerrillas celebrated Newroz," PUK sources in northern Iraq told Reuters in Tunceli, eastern Turkey, by telephone. "A high number of PKK were killed."

The PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) has thousands of rebels based in the area. On Thursday, they celebrated the traditional new year holiday Newroz.

They had lit fires for the festival, making them easily identifiable, the PUK official said.

Mezopotamya TV, a Europe-based satellite broadcaster, reported 25 rebels had been killed in the bombing, quoting PKK sources.

Turkish military sources based near Tunceli declined comment on the PUK and PKK reports, but said there had been military action in the region. Turkish troops regularly cross the border in pursuit of PKK rebels encamped in northern Iraq, which Iraqi Kurds wrested from Baghdad's control in the wake of the 1991 Gulf War (news - web sites).

U.S. and British warplanes based in Turkey have since patrolled a no-fly zone over northern Iraq to protect the enclave administered by the rival PUK and Kurdistan Democratic Party.

The Turkish military says some 5,000 PKK fighters have been based in the region since Turkish special forces captured rebel commander Abdullah Ocalan in 1999. Ocalan has ordered his followers to withdraw from Turkey and abandon their armed struggle for a Kurdish homeland in southeastern Turkey.

More than 30,000 people have died since fighting between the PKK and Turkish troops erupted in southeastern Turkey in 1984.

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Over 1,200 Detained in Illegal Nevruz Demos

Anatolia March 22, 2002

ANKARA - Feyzullah Arslan, the spokesman of the Directorate General of Security and Deputy Director General of Security, said on Friday that 1,201 people were detained in the illegal demonstrations staged upon Nevruz festival on Thursday.

Arslan told a press conference that a total of 66 demonstrations, including 26 illegal demonstrations, were staged in 44 provinces on Thursday within the scope of Nevruz festival.

A total of 200 thousand 364 people joined the demonstrations, Arslan said and noted that 1,201 people were taken into custody in the illegal demonstrations.

Arslan stated that two people died in the incidents while six others were injured.

Two policemen died while 46 others were injured in the demonstrations, Arslan added.

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'We should face the events with a united policy and stance' says Nechirvan Barzani

Iraqi Kurdistan Dispatch 27 March 2002

In an address on the occasion of the Kurdish New Year, Nawroz, the head of Arbil-based Kurdistan Regional Government, Nechirvan Barzani said "we all should exert effort to unite the rank of the people, their institutions and adopt a united political and diplomatic stance in order to face [possible] internal and world developments" as reported by Brayati newspaper on 25 March. "As the Kurdish people pass through an extremely sensitive moment [marked by possible major developments in Iraq], we should all think of our people's interest away from narrow interests of political parties, and stand united in dealing with the issues which are currently debated on the world's arena.

This is how we could achieve a greater step towards victory", said Nechirvan Barzani

He said there is a resolute move which is underway to eradicate terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, and that Iraq is concerned by it; a matter which involves Iraqi Kurdistan region. While he reiterated the Kurdish anti-terrorist stance, Nechirvan Barzani said, "the Kurdistan Regional Government advocates the settlement of the Iraqi issue by the United Nations through diplomatic, political and peaceful means. We hope that the Iraqi regime would cooperate with the United Nations regarding the implementation of the international resolutions in order to avoid war and tragedy to be inflicted upon our country".

Regarding the Future of Iraq, he said "we are for a fundamental change towards a parliamentary and federal [system in] Iraq, and for a just representation of Kurdistan people in the [future Iraqi] central authority".

As far as Kurdistan region is concerned, which is out of Baghdad control since 1991, Nechirvan Barzani said that it should be "recognized as a federal political entity [region] within the framework of the Iraqi federal state, and be established as such in the [future] constitution of Iraq".

He also advocated the fulfilment of cultural and political rights of Turkoman, Assyrian and Chaldean minorities, and their participation in the administration of the federal Iraq.

As for the internal situation, Nechirvan Barzani said "we all should exert effort to implement the Washington [peace] agreement and make the peace process [between the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and Kurdistan Democratic Party] succeed"

Between 1994 and 1997, intermittent fighting took place between KDP and PUK. Since Washington peace agreement was reached in 1998 between both sides, with US backing, a relative political and economic stability has been prevailing in Iraqi Kurdistan region.

In his address, Nechirvan Barzani said "We have built our local political system on the basis of freedom, democracy, political pluralism, ethnic diversity and religious tolerance, a situation which is well understood by the international community which also supports it. This means that the basic issue is to consolidate this experience and develop it; an issue which depends entirely on us".

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Mas'ud Barzani Addresses the Iraqi Kurdistan Regional Parliament

Kurdistan Satellite TV (courtesy of Iraqi Kurdistan Dispatch) 25 March 2002

[News presenter] In the presence of leader [Mas'ud] Barzani the Kurdistan National Assembly convened its first session of the 11th year [in the regional capital Arbil].

In an address to the parliament, leader Barzani pointed to the issues that emerged after 11 September and said that Iraqi Kurdistan region will have its place in the new developments. He also expressed the stance of the Kurdistan Democratic Party towards these developments. He reaffirmed that he supports any change that brings a democratic alternative for Iraq and solves the Kurdish issue on the basis of federalism ... [correspondent reporting]:

[Reporter voice over images of the parliament meeting] Leader Barzani addressed the session upon the request of the parliament ... He said, 11 September is the hot topic of the world today which is sometimes referred to as the [start of the] third world war. It is expected that our region be affected by changes that are currently debated. At the time when the war to eradicate terrorism is under way, I deem it necessary to say that despite the oppression and the use of weapons of mass destruction [that have been used] against us [the Kurds], we never resorted to terrorism throughout our history and this very thing resulted in the positive outcomes [for the reputation of the Kurdish cause] and gains that we have achieved ... Leader Barzani explained the unchanged stance of the KDP regarding possible attacks on Iraq and said that we support a change that brings about a democratic alternative to Iraq and solve the Kurdish issue on the basis of federalism. Barzani sees this as the factor for the prosperity and security for the whole of the Iraqi people.

On changes in Iraq and federal solution

[Masoud Barzani] Our view is very clear. It might be good to repeat it here. We are not with any decision or step that harms the people of Iraq. As far as we are concerned, it is very important to know what is the alternative. Is it just an attack [on Iraq]? Or is it an attack that has an alternative and plan [for regime change]? This is an important question which is still unanswered. The important thing for us is to preserve this [Iraqi Kurdish political] experience [of self-rule, since 1991] and whether we can improve it or not. The more we can preserve this experience and keep it in our hands, we will have the same attitude towards [the rest of] Iraq. If we could safeguard the Iraqi people from harm, we will not hesitate to do so and we see it as our duty to do so.

The question here is not whether the [Iraqi] regime is going to be attacked or not or whether we support it or not. Such a short question does not have an answer as far as we are concerned. There are scores of other questions that emerges from this main question and that we demand answers to, before we give our answer to the main question. All of the questions are centred around the question of whether our situation [as Iraqi Kurds] and the situation of the Iraqi people would become better or not. We will support a step that improves the situation of the Iraqi people and the people of Kurdistan.

Denial of accusation of seeking the Establishment of a Kurdish state in Iraq

[Reporter] [The Turkish allegation that the Iraqi Kurds would seek] the establishment of a Kurdish state [in Northern Iraq, in the event of a US strike against Iraq] which was reported recently, was another part of leader [Barzani's] speech. In this regard he said that although we consider this as our right, we have not raised this slogan at this stage. We deal with the issues in a realistic way. We are asking for our natural rights and freedoms for the Kurds. He also said that at a time when we consider dialogue and coexistence as the only way for a settlement, we will not compromise these natural rights and will not allow anyone to use a violent or a military language to deal with us or provoke us or deny our existence.

[Barzani] They [Turkey] often threaten us from here and there. [They say] we do not accept the establishment of a Kurdish state. But, we have not asked for a Kurdish state. I reaffirm here that the reason for us for not asking for a state is not because we do not see it as our right or not because we do not want it. We are realistic. We know that there are circumstances that will make it impossible for us to have such claim. We do not have the power to implement it. Nobody will support us. Hence it would do more damage than benefit for the people of Kurdistan. For this reason, we have not asked for a Kurdish state, we have asked for the rights of the Kurds. We see this right being fulfilled in a federal solution according to the resolution of [Iraqi Kurdistan regional] parliament that has been elected by the Kurdish people [in 1992] and expresses their will.

Ethnic minorities

[Reporter] Barzani addressed the nationalities [minorities] of Iraq and Kurdistan and said that they should deal with the [political] experience in Kurdistan, by which the future of all is bound. They should not decide under the influence of other powers and apply the principles of Kurdistanism and coexistence [between Kurds and other minorities]. Doing otherwise will not have good outcome.

[Barzani] We tell the states that have a Kurdish problem to have a look at their situation over the past 100 years. How many billions of dollars they had spent to oppress the Kurdish nation? Despite this, the issue was not resolved and it will not be resolved. All these millions [of Kurds] can not be killed. It is impossible. They can never be eradicated. Even if there were 10 people left, they would be enough to destabilize their peace and security. Neither they had peace nor did they let the Kurds live in peace.

The other point is the people who live in Iraq, Arabs, Kurds, Turkomans, Assyrians and Chaldeans; either ethnic or religious groups. The situation should be studied better. Only us can benefit each other. This country is our country. It is much better if we live like brothers. They should not be so simple to become a tool in the hand of other people who might not be knowledgeable about the nature of this society.

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INTERNATIONAL PEN Writers in Prison Committee

Case List – July to December 2001

TURKEY

Main cases

Fikret BASKAYA

Profession: writer. **DoB:** 1940. **Sentence:** 1 year and four months. **Sentence expires:** 28 October 2002

Trial details: Sentenced on 13 June 2000 by the Istanbul State Security court under Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law for his article published in *Özgür Bakis* in 1999 entitled *A Question of History?* Accused of "disseminating separatist propaganda through the press". Sentence upheld on 21 January 2001 although he was granted a stay of sentence until 29 June 2001. **Professional details:** Studied Economics in Ankara University and holds a professorship at Gazi University. Has written several books on development economics. Founder member of the Turkey and Middle East Forum Foundation. **Other charges pending:** On 24 July 2001, the Adana State Security Court opened proceedings against Baskaya and two others (see Mehmet Boncuk and Halil Sahin below) for an interview entitled "New Means for Apolitizing: Civil Society". **Previous political harassment:** Imprisoned between March 1994 to July 1995 under Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law for his book *The Bankruptcy of Paradigm*. **Current place of detention:** Kalecik Kefali, Ankara. **Honorary Member:** English and Canadian PEN

Zeynel Abidin KIZILYAPRAK

Profession: journalist. **Sentence:** 1 year and four months. **Sentence expires:** c. February 2003

Trial details: Originally sentenced on 25 December 2000, and upheld on 14 May 2001 on charges under Article 8 of the Anti-terror Law for an article published in the now defunct *Özgür Bakis* entitled "1900'den 2000'e Kronolojik Abum Kurtler (Chronological Album of Kurds form 1900 to 2000)" Published February 2000. Sentence delayed for four months. Expected to enter prison in October 2001. **Professional details:** former editor of *Özgür Bakis*. Reportedly the owner of a publishing house which was forced to close as a result of heavy fines. **Previous Political harassment:** Given a six-month suspended sentence in 1993 for his writings. Briefly detained in 1997.

The Freedom of Expression (FoX) Case

Since 1998, a campaign challenging the numerous laws that penalise free expression has been running in Turkey, headed by the musician and composer, Sanar Yurdatapan. The campaign centres around the publication of a series of booklets, entitled "Freedom of Expression" containing articles written by intellectuals, human rights and labour activists,

lawyers, writers, artists, etc, to which sometimes over 1,000 other activists sign their names as joint publishers. Turkish legislation demands that such acts be brought to the courts. The complex Turkish legal system means that each booklet – several are published each year – entails lengthy trial processes. In most cases individual FoX activists brought to the courts are served with short prison terms, fines or acquittal. Occasionally some have entered prison, most notably the FoX leader, Sanar Yurdatapan. The following is a summary of the present status of the campaign, naming some of those involved, and restricted to those who fall within PEN's mandate of writers and journalists. For further information, contact the WIPC office.

FoX 2000: pamphlet containing 60 articles in breach of Articles 7 and 8 of the Anti-Terror Law and article 312 of the Penal Code. These are being heard by the State Security Courts. Others are in breach of article 159 of the Penal Code and are being handled by the Heavy Criminal Court. Still others relate to Article 155 only dealt with by the Military Court, and finally others relating to "insulting Atatürk or religions" must be dealt with by the Asliye Ceza criminal courts dealing lesser offences than those handled by the Heavy Criminal Courts. (1) State Security Court hearings under Article 162 of the Turkish Penal Code were held in February, and resulted in acquittals. However, on 18 June 2001, the acquittals of all but one of the 16 accused were reversed. Trial restarted on 19 October 2001 and next hearing due 26 March 2002. (2) Uskudar Asliye Ceza court hearings started in February 2001 to hear charges under Article 159 of "insulting the quality of being a Turk, the Republic, Parliament, Government, Ministries, Jurisdiction or the forces of the government related to the military" opened in May and was adjourned to 19 September 2001. Trial ongoing. (3) Penal Court hearings opened in February to hear charges of insult to religions which carry up to 6 years in prison. A 9 May hearing adjourned proceedings until 14 September 2001. Trial ongoing. (4) On 23 May 2001, the Military Court of the Chief Office of the General Staff No 3 opened hearings of charges against the pamphlet under Article 155 of the Turkish Penal Code. The 16 writers, intellectuals, human rights and labour activists were accused of publishing statements deemed to discourage people from carrying out military service. The trial was held in camera with access only to relatives. A second hearing was held on 29 June 2001. At this hearing, several international observers, including PEN, requested that they be allowed to observe the trial, but were refused and turned away despite the lawyer's argument that this was in denial of Turkish law. On 7 September 2001, all the defendants were acquitted. An appeal against the acquittal was heard 27 September 2001, and adjourned to another date.

Key figures in the Fox 2000 case:

Yavuz ÖNEN: President of the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey

Cengiz BEKTAS: writer, and chair of the Turkish Writers' Union

Mehmet Atilla MARAS: writer, chair of the Turkish Writers' Association

Erdal ÖZ: writer

Etyan MAHÇUPYAN: writer

Sanar YURDATAPAN: composer, leader of FoX

FoX: For All: Booklet published in October 2000, of which 550 copies were presented to members of parliament. Contains statements by dissidents, political activists, human rights activists. Includes one by writer **Esber Yagmurdereli**. 77,663 people allegedly signed onto the pamphlet as co-publisher. A number of MPs, activists, writers, artists, etc presented

themselves for prosecution as publishers of the book on 16 and 22 January 2001. Those relevant to PEN are:

Abdurrahman DİLİPAK: journalist and writer

Ayşe ÖNAL: journalist

Emine SENLİKOĞLU: writer and journalist

Meryem CANAN CEYLAN: writer and journalist

Mustafa İSLAMOĞLU: writer and journalist

Sabiha ÜNLÜ: writer and journalist

Turgut BALABAN: journalist and cartoonist

Sanar YURDATAPAN: composer, leader of FoX

Centres with special interest in FoX campaign: San Miguel, English and Perth PEN.

Investigation cases

***Nevin BERKTAS (f), Elif CAMYHAR (f):** political prisoner detained since 1994 on charges of membership of a terrorist organisation and publisher respectively. Berktaş wrote a book on her prison experiences called *The Cells* which was prosecuted under Article 169 of the Penal Code for "supporting terrorists". Thought to be for comments in the book supporting prison protests denouncing the F-Type Prisons. Berktaş and Camyhar, publisher of the book, appeared at the State Security Court Istanbul on 7 November 2001. Berktaş was subsequently given an additional 45 months in prison. Camyhar received a fine. **Background of Berktaş:** Berktaş was first arrested in 1978, and was imprisoned on a number of other occasions for her radical political activities from then until she was amnestied in 1991. However she was re-arrested on 16 December 1994 and convicted for membership of an illegal organisation accused of extremist activities. Prior to the trial for her book, she was serving a twelve and a half year sentence, to which the 45 month sentence for the book was added. She is not due to be freed until is held in Istanbul-Gebze Prison. Adding on the new sentence, Berktaş is not due to be freed until early 2011.

***Halil AKGÜNLER:** journalist for *Yeni Asya*. Trial concluded on 24 January 2001 when he was sentenced to 20 months in prison for an article published 7 October 1999. The sentence was finalised following an appeal hearing on 10 September 2001. It is not clear whether Akgünler is in prison. Also sentenced was chief editor **Mustafa Döküler**, whose sentence was converted to a fine but his acquittal was quashed in November 2001 and he will have to stand retrial. See below.
Mesut BOZKURT: Journalist for *Atılım* (Élan). Arrested 19 June 1995 under Article 168 (2) of the Penal Code. Sentenced on 17 October 1996 to 12 years 6 months. Accused of membership of an illegal organisation.
Cihan ÇAPAN, Haydar ERGÜL: editor-in-chief of *Özgür Bakış* and writer respectively. On trial in April 2000 on charges of "aiding and abetting the PKK" by publishing an article on 8 November 1999, author Haydar Ergül. Charged under Article 169 of the Penal Code. Çapan was sentenced 6 June 2001 to 45 months in prison. Not clear if he is in prison. Sentence on Ergül not yet known. WiPC seeking confirmation of details.
Erdal DOĞAN: Journalist for *Alinteri* [Toil]. Arrested 10 July 1995 under Article 168 (2) of the Penal Code. Sentenced on 23 January 1996 to 12 years 6 months. Accused of membership of an illegal organisation, the Revolutionary Communists Union of Turkey, for which *Alinteri* is seen as a mouthpiece. Was last heard of in Bursa Prison, but no updates on current situation. WiPC seeking confirmation of details..
Ali FERSATOĞLU: a journalist for daily *Yeni Asya*, was sentenced to twenty months imprisonment and a fine of TL 152 million in February

2001 for an article that appeared in the newspaper on 8 June 2000. Not clear if imprisoned.

Serdar GELİR: journalist for *Mücadele*. Arrested in April 1994 when covering a demonstration in Ankara. Accused of membership of Dev Yol, affiliated with Dev Sol (Revolutionary Left). Although released due to lack of evidence, the case was reopened under article 168/2 of the Penal Code and the Anti Terror Law under which he was convicted to 15 years in prison. Gelir denies membership of the organisation. Said to have suffered acute ill health following a prison hunger strike in 1996. Said to be among many prisoners forcibly transferred to solitary confinement cells by police in December 2000. Also said to be taking part in hunger-strike protests against prison conditions as of 19 January 2001. WiPC seeking confirmation of details.

Kamber İNAN: Journalist for *Kurtuluş*. Arrested 21 July 1995 under Article 168 (2) of the Penal Code. Sentenced on 17 December 1996 to 12 years 6 months. Accused of membership of an illegal organisation, the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front. Case thought to be under appeal to the Supreme Court. Evidence against him said to be based on statements made under alleged torture, and his work for his newspaper. Believed held in Afyon Prison. WiPC seeking confirmation of details of imprisonment.

Memik KORUZ: editor-in-chief of *İsci-Köylü*. Reportedly arrested on charges of membership of an illegal organisation on 25 June 2001. Not clear if still detained. WiPC seeking confirmation of details..

Bülent ÖNER, Fatma HARMAN(f) and Mesut BOZKURT: Journalists for *Atılım* in Mersin. Each sentenced to 12 years and six months in prison on 17 October 1996 under article 168 of the Penal Code. Accused of being members of an illegal organisation, the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. Were originally detained on 15 June 1995. Indictment against them included posting placards protesting the kidnap and killing, allegedly by police, of a leading member of the MLKP, distributing leaflets and documents seized from the *Atılım* offices. Öner is thought to be in Kürekçüler Prison, Adana. Bozkurt and Harman are in Sakarya prison. WiPC seeking confirmation of details of imprisonment.

Hasan ÖZGÜN

Profession: Reporter for *Özgür Gündem* in Diyarbakir. **Date of Arrest:** 9 December 1993 **Sentence:** 12 1/2 years. **Details of trial:** Reported to have been formally charged at Diyarbakir State Security Court with 'membership of an armed group'. Reportedly sentenced on 16 January 1996 to 12 and a half years in prison for membership of the PKK under Art. 168/2 of the Penal Code. Defence alleged little firm evidence was produced at trial regarding allegations that Özgün had arranged medical treatment for PKK guerrillas or had communicated with PKK prisoners in detention. Part of the evidence said to relate to interview with PKK leader published in 'Özgür Gündem'. Defence says the interview was run in other Turkish newspapers without charges being brought. Sentence of 12 and a half years was upheld on appeal around 23 October 1996. **Health:** In November 1997 there were reports that Özgün was having health problems including a stomach ulcer and possible TB. **Place of detention:** Aydin E Type prison. **Other Information:** On 10 February 1998, representatives of the German organisation Assistance for Journalists, had their request to meet Özgün in prison rejected. With remission, he could have been released, taking into account his pre-trial detention, but the WiPC has received no confirmation. WiPC seeking confirmation of details.

Yazgül Güder ÖZTÜRK (f): Reporter for *Kurtuluş*. Arrested 21 July 1995 under Article 168 (2) of the Penal Code. Sentenced to 12 years 6 months. Accused of membership of an illegal organisation. Conviction said to be based solely on statements she made allegedly under torture, and her work for her newspaper. WiPC seeking confirmation of details.
Kasım TIRPANCI: Owner of the local newspaper *23 February* in Ardahan. Arrested on 2 May 2001 allegedly on charges of "insulting a civil servant" following comments he had made about a court prosecutor. On 2 July 2001 he was sentenced to one year and a day's imprisonment. Not clear if detained.

Nazan YILMAZ (f), Sadik ÇELİK: Journalists for *Kurtuluş*, Zonguldak. Arrested 29 December 1995 under Article 168 (2) of the Penal Code. Sentenced on 17 October 1996 to 12 years 6 months. Accused of membership of an illegal organisation. Supporters claim there is no evidence to back this charge. Charges against Çelik based on his own confession with no other supporting evidence. Yılmaz was last heard of in Sakarya Prison, Çelik in Bursa Prison. WiPC seeking confirmation of details.

Asiye Güzel ZEYBEK (f) arrested 21 or 22 February 1997 during a demonstration protesting alleged links between Mafia and government. Zeybek, (born 1970) editor-in-chief of *Atılım*, is specifically accused under Article 168 of the Penal Code with connections with the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. The indictment dated from 21 June 1994 accused her of running and distributing the MLCP journal *İşçinin Yolu* [Worker's Path]. During a trial hearing on 8 October 1997, Zeybek claimed to have been raped while under interrogation at the Istanbul Security Directorate Political Department. On 24 October 1997 her complaint against 8 policemen was accepted following a report confirming the attack from the Psycho-Social Traumatology Centre in Istanbul. The officers were brought to trial in November 1998 in Istanbul. In a hearing of the case on 1 December 1999, all those charged alongside Zeybek were reported to be remanded in custody. At a trial on 1 November 2000, it was decided not to proceed with the prosecution of the eight policemen. Her lawyers said they would take the case to the European Court of Human Rights. Zeybek is being tried on charges under Article 168 of the Turkish Penal Code - membership of an "illegal organisation" the MLCP. Trial hearings held 29 June 2001 21 September 2001 and 7 December 2001. Trial postponed to 27 March 2002. **Health:** Zeybek was reportedly hit by bullets in her back and leg during a police raid on her prison in December 2000. She suffered temporary paralysis and retains injuries. **Place of detention:** Gebze Prison. **Zeybek is an Honorary Member of:** Swedish PEN, English PEN, Netherlands, San Miguel Allende, Ghanaian, American

Free, but either sentenced and awaiting imprisonment, or sentenced pending appeal, or free but facing charges:

Fehmi KORU, Mehmet KUTLULAR: journalist for *Yeni Safak* and owner of the *Yeni Asya* media group respectively. Kutlular was sentenced to two years in prison in mid-2001 for a public statement in which he claimed that the August 1999 earthquake was divine retribution. He was convicted under Article 312 of the Turkish Criminal Code. Koru was charged under the same article for having defended Kutlular in an October 1999 television interview in which he stated that "Everyone is entitled to their own beliefs" and allegedly went on to criticise Prime Minister Ecevit for his approach on the case. Trial adjourned on 28 November 2001 to 5 March 2002.

Coskun AK: former co-ordinator of a Forum on the Superonline web-site. Sentenced on 27 March 2001 by the Istanbul Criminal Court under Article 159 of the Turkish Penal Code for insult to state authorities. The charge related to a message posted on the site anonymously. The defence

argued that Ak did not know the author and did not share the views contained in the article. Presumed free pending appeal.

***Sevki AKGÜNLER, Mustafa DÖKÜLER, Ali FERSADOĞLU, Kazım GÜLECYÜZ, Cevher İLHAN, Mustafa ÖZCAN:** writers, editor in chief (Döküler) and managing editor (Gülecüüz) of *Yeni Asya*. On trial in May 2001, postponed to August. Akgünler and Fersadoğlu had been sentenced to 20 months in prison earlier. Accused under article 312 of the Penal Code with inciting people to enmity" for an article claiming that the 1999 earthquake was a warning from God. The hearing was adjourned to 8 February 2002. WiPC seeking confirmation of details of imprisonment.

Ahmet ALTAN, Murat TUNALI: writer and editor-in-chief of *Aktüel* respectively. The Istanbul Public Prosecutor levied charges against the two men c. 29 June 2001, demanding 12 years in prison for two articles appearing in *Aktüel* in November 2000. They are entitled "All generals in Turkey should turn back to their barracks" and "Try the Generals, Name the Authors". Both are accused of "having insulted the armed forces". A 12 October 2001 trial hearing in Istanbul Penal Court was adjourned to a later date after the defence lawyer requested further information. **Other cases against Altan:** 1) Case opened at the Istanbul Criminal Court on 8

December 2000 for Altan's article "To Be Afraid One Morning" published in *Aktuel*. Charged with "insulting the army". The article is accused of having criticized army generals for refusing to acknowledge abuses, and for the immunity they enjoyed. Altan was subsequently acquitted on this charge. An appeal against the acquittal by the prosecution services was rejected on 25 July 2001. 2) another similar charge is pending for an article entitled 'Political Adultery and Murder', before the Istanbul Bakirköy Criminal Court. This trial opened on 2 July 2001 on charges of "insulting the government and the armed forces". He was acquitted of this charge in early December 2001.

Fatih ALTAYLI and **Dogan SATMIS**: A columnist and the chief editor respectively of the daily *Hürriyet* [Liberty]. A trial was launched against them by the Ankara Public Prosecution office, demanding prison terms between 6 months and 3 years on accusations that Altayli had insulted the members of the Supreme Election Board in one of his articles. Fatih Altayli faces fresh charges for "insulting the state minister A. Sami Türk" in his column in December 1999. *Satmis* was also on trial in April 2001 among several other newspaper editors who had published letters by mafia leaders. All are accused of aiding gang members. A 24 April 2001 hearing was adjourned to a later date.

***Celal BASLANGIÇ**, **Osman Nihat TUNA**: Journalist for the centre-left daily *Radikal* and writer; representative of the İletişim Publishing House. On 21 August 2001, a third edition of Baslangic's book *Temple of Fear* was seized and proceedings initiated against him and his publisher. Accused under Article 159 of the Penal Code of insulting the Turkish armed forces. The book contains testimonies that suggest that human rights violations were carried out by the military against the Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK) in the late 80s and 90s. He faces up to six years in prison. Born in 1956, Baslangic started work as a journalist after graduating in Public Relations from Ege University in 1971. He is the founder and first editor in chief of *Evrensel* and since 1996 has concentrated on writing. He has published 5 books and has won numerous awards for his journalism. Trial to start on 25 January 2002.

***Burak BEKDİL**: journalist for *Turkish Daily News* and some western publications. Called to hear charges of "insult" to the Turkish judiciary c. 26 September 2001. Relates to article published in the TDN on 28 August 2001, entitled "Turkey's de jure Untouchables". A first trial hearing was held on 21 December 2001, adjourned to 14 February 2002.

Akin BIRDAL: former President of the Turkish Human Rights Association and writer. Started a one year sentence in June 1999 but released on medical grounds in September that year. Returned to prison in March 2000. Freed in September after completion of sentence less remission. However, on 1 March 2001, trial opened on charges under Article 159/1 for the Penal Code for "insulting the Turkish Nation" for articles published in *Gözcü* and *Hürriyet* in October 2000. May also be linked to his speeches on abuse of democracy and human rights. On 18 September 2001, an Ankara court heard charges against him related to speeches made in Germany on the Armenian genocide. Court adjourned to 23 October and again to 4 December.

***Mehmet BONCUK**, **Halil SAHİN**: reporter and editor in chief of *Life at the Euphrates*. Judicial proceedings opened 24 July 2001 against the two men, alongside Professor Fikret Baskaya currently detained on different charges (see above) for an interview entitled "New Means for Apolitizing: Civil Society", deemed to contain "separatist propaganda".

Ahmet BULUT, **Mehmet EREN**: correspondent and representative of the Kurdish daily *Dema Nu*. Trial started against them at Diyarbakir Penal Court for "entering banned publications to the State of Emergency region". They were originally detained in March 2001. The case continues.

Sami CEBECİ, **Saban DÖĞEN**, **Cemil TOKPINAR**, **Abdil YILDARIM**: four writers for *Yeni Asya*. Convicted to 20 months in prison each on 30 May 2001 by the Istanbul State Security Court for an article stated "the earthquake is a warning for religion". The are free pending appeal.

***Mugades ÇELİK** (f): publisher. Currently on trial for 1) Asiye Guzel Zeybek (see below) book *Rape Under Torture* under Article 168 of the Turkish Penal Code. 2) *Our Cakir. The Life of A Revolutionary*, about Çelik's husband, killed in 1980. Charged under Article 169 of the Turkish Penal Code for "disseminating enemy propaganda". Next hearing due 16 November 2001. PEN seeking information on trial progress.

***Mustafa DÖKÜLER**: editor in chief of *Yeni Asya International*. Originally acquitted in October 2001 of the charge of incitement to hatred and enmity by religious discrimination. However, this decision overturned by the prosecutors and trial to re-open. Charges linked to an article published in the 19 September-5 October 2000 edition of his newspaper entitled "A Catastrophe Close to an Earthquake" by Sükrü Bulut.

***Can DÜNDAR**, **Hazim Oktay BASER**, **Eren GÜVENER**, **Selam ÇALISKAN**: writer for *Milliyet* and *Milli Gazete*, owner of *Milliyet*, owner of *Milli Gazete*, and journalists respectively. Trial started on 13

November 2001 at the Istanbul State Security Court for articles appearing in *Milliyet* and *Milli Gazete*. All are accused for an article by Dündar published in April 2001 seen to breach the Anti-Terror Law. The article entitled "European Call on the Turks: Be Flexible" is seen to have "shown the Justice Minister Hikmet Sami Türk as a target for illegal organisations". [For more on Güvener and Çaliskan see elsewhere]

Nese DÜZEL (f) and **Hasan ÇAKKALKURT**: columnist and editor-in-chief of *Radikal* respectively. Appeared before the Istanbul State Security Court No. 6 on 27 June 2001. Charged for an article published 8 January 2001 containing an interview with the chair of the Pir Sultan Abdal Foundation. The prosecution referred to the statements "young Alevites are driven towards terrorism", "during ... 1970 the Alevites were tortured and thrown into prison", and "Alevites are under pressure because of their identity and there is high unemployment among them". These statements are deemed to breach Article 312 of the Turkish Penal

Code (inciting the people to hatred and enmity). Carries sentences of between 2-6 years. In her defence, Düzel stated that the interview was on problems faced by the Alevite population that needed to be solved. The court was adjourned to a later date. 2) **Düzel** the trial started on 22 October 2001 following investigation into her book *The Hidden Face of Turkey* published in 1996. Specifically an article included in the book which had been published in *Yeni Yüzyıl*, also on the Alevite community. Also to be called is its publisher **Nihat Tuna**, of the İletişim Publishing House.

Sükrü ERBAS: poet and writer. 1) On 6 July 2000 a trial was launched under Article 159 of the Penal Code for a book by Vedat Cetin (see above) entitled *Villages Destroyed/Evacuated and Migration*, which included an article by Erbas. See also Vedat Cetin above) 2) Indicted in mid-December 2001 for readings of his poetry at an event in Hakkari held 21-25 June 2001 entitled "An Art Bridge Between Istanbul to Hakkari". Accused of "disseminating separatist propaganda" under Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code.

Muzaffer İlhan ERDOST:

D.o.b: 1932 **Profession:** Writer and publisher. Author of *Uc Sivas* (Three Sivas) and about 19 other titles, including poems and non-fiction. **Date of Arrest:** Not yet arrested. His sentence was ratified in March 1999. The Chief Prosecutor of the Supreme Court appealed against the sentence, but the General Penal Board of the Supreme Court again upheld the sentence on 20 April 1999. **Sentence:** 12 months in prison and a fine of 100 million Turkish lira. **Details of trial:** He was convicted of "spreading propaganda which questions the indivisible integrity of the Turkish State" under the Anti-Terror Law. His sentence was ratified by the Supreme Court of Appeal despite reservations expressed by the Attorney General's office on his case. The charges were based on his book *Three Sivas*, which examined three occasions in recent history when there were killings of civilians in the town of Sivas. His sentence was confirmed by the Supreme Court in late 1999 but as yet he has not been required to enter prison. **Professional details:** Erdost is one of Turkey's most prominent opposition activists in the literary arena. Many of his books question the Turkish authorities' human rights record. He has written columns in many newspapers. **Previous political imprisonment/problems:** Erdost was imprisoned for three years during the 1970s for his publishing activities with Sol Publishing House. In 1980, he was re-imprisoned with his brother, the director of Onur Publishing House and witnessed his brother being beaten to death (see extract in the PEN anthology *This Prison Where I Live*). WiPC seeking confirmation of details.

Bülent FALAKOĞLU: editor in chief of *Evrensel*. Has had several trials against him since 2000 for articles in his newspaper most recently fined on 10 September 2001 for an article entitled "Newroz, a Shirt of Fire" written by **Ender Imrek** published on 17 March 2000.

Memik HORUZ: Editor-in-chief of *Özgür Gelecek* and *İsci-Köylü*. Arrested on 6 June 2001 and held for 6 days before being freed to stand trial on charges of membership of an "illegal" organisation. Trial started at Istanbul State Security Court on 3 September 2001. A 1 October 2001 hearing adjourned the trial to 30 November, which again forwarded the trial to 26 December. At this last hearing, the prosecutor reportedly requested that Horuz be freed. However the court did not take up this recommendation and scheduled another hearing for 23 January 2002. Charges linked to an interview that appeared in *Özgür Gelecek*. Horuz is accused of membership of the Turkish Communist Party/ML-Workers' and Peasants' Liberation Army of Turkey (TKP/ML TIKKO) for his interview with two members of the organisation.

***Ali Kemal KAHRAMAN**: editor in chief of *Özgür Gelecek*. On trial in September 2001 under article 169 of the Penal Code. Charges linked to Memik Horuz (above)

Gulcan KAYA (f): editor of the MEM publishing house. 1) On trial in June 2001 for publishing **Mahsun Safak's** book *Uluslararası Komplote ve Ounderliksel Gelisme* (*The International Plot and the Development of Leadership*). 2) Also on trial in June 2001 for publishing essays by Ali

- Sapan**, entitled *Ykiz Kizel Ates (Twin Red Fires)*. 3) briefly detained in late November 2001 when her publishing house was searched as part of a crackdown on leftist publications.
- ***Gülkin KAYA, Ugur YILDIRIM**: editor-in-chief and reporter respectively of *Yeni Aydinlik*. Trial started on 9 November 2001 before the Istanbul Criminal Court No. 2 alongside noted lawyer **Eren Keskin**. All three are charged under article 159 of the Penal Code for an interview given for the newspaper be Keskin deemed to be "insulting the armed forces".
- ***Abdullah KESKIN, Rukan KESKIN (F)**: Publishers (husband and wife) on trial for **Celile Celil's Kürt Aydinlanmasi (Kurdish Enlightenment)** under article Penal Code Article 86 and the Law 5680. Next hearing set 4 October 2001. (See Songül Keskin below)WiPC seekign confirmation of details.
- Songül KESKIN (F)**: editor at the Avesta Publishing House, Diyarbakir. 1) On trial in June 2001 for *Kurdistan Tarihi (A History of Kurdistan)*. Prepared by the Russian Science Academy by a group of academicians. (see Abdullah and Rukan Keskin above – sister of Abdullah Keskin) 2) Also on trial in June 2001 for **Celile Celil's Kürt Aydinlanmasi (Kurdish Enlightenment)**.
- ***Nahide KILIÇ (F)**: publisher of the book *Voices of Courage* published by the Women Workers' Union Bulletin, of which Kiliç is editor. Book seized in August 2001 and case opened c. 17 September 2001. The book contains texts of speeches given during the conference "Against Sexual Harassment and Rape in Custody" 2000.
- ***Ersen KORKMAZ**: editor-in-chief of *Demokrat Isenderun* indicted 24 July 2001 for an article published 10 October 2000 entitled "US Betrayal". Trial set to start 25 September 2001.PEN seekign further details.
- Metin MUNIR, Semra UNCU (f)**: Free-lance journalist and editor of *Yenibinyil Gazetesi* respectively. Charged in early February 2001 for an article appearing in the now defunct daily *Yeni Binyil*. Accused under Article 159/1 of the Penal Code with insult to the judiciary. The article criticised the appointment of Oktar Cakir to thepost of Chief Prosecutor of the State Security Court while there are allegations that Cakir had connections with criminal elements. He appeared in court to hear the charges on 6 February 2001 and judicial proceedings are due to start in May 2001. **Semra Uncu** was also on trial in April 2001 among several other newspaper editors who had published letters by mafia leaders. All are accused of aiding gang members. A 24 April 2001 hearing was adjourned to a later date. (Also see **Semra Uncu** below.)PEN seeking updates.
- Ahmet ÖNAL**: owner of the Peri Publishing House. 1) On trial in June 2000 at the Istanbul Beyoglu Heavy PenalCourt No. 2 for publishing a book by Mahmut Baksi *Bir Kürt Isadami: Hüseyin Baybasin (A Kurdish Businessman: Hüseyin Baybasin)*. Charged under Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law for "disseminating separatist propaganda". The book is an account of the businessman's role in alleged drug smuggling. Both the author, Baksi, and the businessman, Baybasin, live abroad. 2) On trial in June 2001 for publishing a collection of interviews with people in exile compiled by human rights activist **Ms Evin Aydar Cicek** entitled *Tutkular ve Tutsaklar (The Passions and the Prisoners)*. Accused of insulting the memory of Atatürk. 3) Sentenced to a year's imprisonment converted to a fine at the Istanbul State Security Court on 24 October 2001 for publishing a bookby **Hayri Argav** entitled *The New Eastern Crusade of the West*.
- ***Sinami ORHAN**: Writer for the Islamic *Akademya*, closed down in 1999. Arrested on 17 August 2001 and faces trial on charges of "separatist propaganda" for articles appearing in the 9th edition of *Isçi-Köyü*.
- ***Mehmet ÖZER**: poet and photographer. On trial in September 2001 in relation to 2000 event protesting the situation in Turkish prisons. Charged with "aiding and abetting members of illegal organisations". Özer had given readings of his poetry at the event but the charges are apparently not linked to this. 22 other artists, members of the Initiative of Conscientious Artists went to the Prosecutor's office in Ankara to denounce themselves as accomplices.
- ***Erol ÖZKORAY**: Owner and editor of the magazine *Idea Politika*. Indicted on 24 September 2001 under Article 159 of the Turkish Penal Code for "insult to the army" in 3 articles published in his journal. The articles are said to analyse the Turkish army's influence in key Turkish institutions. The first hearing was due before the Istanbul Criminal Court on 9 November 2001 to +hear case against the article "Permanent Coup d'état and Democracy 'alla turca' for which Özkoray could receive a 12 year sentence. Two other legal processes have been initiated against Özkoray for his writings and if successful, would mean a total of 30 years in prison.
- ***Melih PEKDEMİR**
D.o.b: 1953 Profession: author and publisher Sentence: Three and a half years imprisonment Expires: on appeal. 1) On trial in June 2001 for *Öcalan Devlet mi? (Is the State a Revenger?)*. This is the second edition, the first published in 2000 is not affected. Accused for comments on the government policy on the Kurdish community and criticising human rights abuses against Kurds. On 13 September 2001, found guilty and sentenced to three years and nine months in prison. Currently remains free as he is appealing against the sentence to the Supreme Court. 2) trial also against the book *Fethullahin Coptari (Fetullah's Truncheons)* by **Zübeyir Kindira** which Pekdemir edited for the Su Yayinlari publishing house on 30 counts. This book critiques Muslim fundamentalists. 3) unknown persons attempted to break into his home following the August 2001 his company's publication of *Yeni Basayalar için Ülkücülük (The Idealism of Fascism for Beginners)*. This book by **R Bayraktar** is on the pro-fascist movement aimed at teenagers and is highly critical of Turkish fascists, through satire and cartoons. Details of the publishers were published on the fascist website www.otuken.net. When Pekdemir complained to the police, he was informed that as the site is based in the USA, it is outside Turkish control. Pekdemir has since had to move his offices to a secret address. 4) Appeal to be heard on 25 January 2001 against a decision to re-imprison Pekdemir re offences for which he has already served over eight years in the 1980s. Other details: Member of the Writers Union of Turkey. Member of the party assembly of the Party of Solidarity and Freedom in Turkey. Author of six books. Married with son aged six. Previous political imprisonment: Arrested in 1980 and sentenced to eight and a half years for his membership of Revolutionary Way (Devrimci Sol). Released in 1989.
- ***Aykut SAHİN**: editor in chief of *Özgür Üniversite (Free University)*. Arrested in Zonguldak on 17 December 2001 with regards to a trial to start on 24 December 2001.
- ***Emine SENLİKOGLU (F)**: writer. 1) An appeal court on 4 October 2001 confirmed a 20-month sentence served against the writer by the Izmir State Security Court. She is convicted under Article 312 of the Turkish Penal Code for a speech made on Klas TV on 15 May 2000 said to be an "incitement to enmity and hatred". 2) a second charge was levied against her under Article 159 of the Penal Code in November 2001 for the same article. This charge relates to a reference to the wearing of headscarves.
- ***Erdal TAN**: owner and editor in chief of the journal *Genç Direnışçi*. Sentenced to four years, 10 months, and ten days in prison for an article published in May 1999. No further details and unclear if free pending appeal.
- Eylem TANDOĞAN**: Owner of the Mem Publishing House. Charges laid against him c. 12 March 2001 for publication of detained PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan entitled *How to Live?*. Apparently charged under Article 169 of the Turkish Penal Code for "aiding and sheltering members of an illegal organisation" and Article 8 of the Anti-Terror Law for "disseminating separatist propaganda".
- Erdal TAS**: editor-in-chief of the banned *Yeni Gündem*. Trial started against him and human rights lawyer **Ms Eren Keskin** at the Beyoğlu Criminal Court No 2 on 15 June 2001. They are charged with insulting the army in relation to a report by Keskin on allegations of torture. Keskin told the court "torture is applied in Turkey systematically as a State policy. The report that I prepared concerning the Peace Mothers, who were tortured in Silopi was not aimed at insulting the armed forces." The trial continued on 16 August 2001.WiPC seeking confirmation of details.
- ***Fatih TAS**: editor of the Aram publishing house. 1) On trial in June 2001 for publishing a collection of essays by **Hüseyin Kaytan** entitled *Amara*. 2) Charged in November 2001 by the Istanbul State Security Court for publishing a book of articles by American author **Noam Chomsky** entitled *US Interventions*. Trial set to start on 13 February 2002. Chomsky has written to the authorities to protest the charges, adding that all his articles were based on material readily available in the West.
- ***Nejdet TATLİCAN, Fulya Çigdem AYDOĞAN, Eren GÜVENER, Semra UNCU, Nejdet ÇOKAN, Mustafa DOLU, Mülğan AKKUS, Saffet Serdar AKBIYIK, Atilla DISBUDAK**: Journalists and editors working for *Hürriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Aksam* and *Star*. Went on trial on 21 August 2001 at the Istanbul State Security Court for having made "propaganda" for criminal groups. The defendants claim only to have used quotations. They could get sentences of up to 4 years in prison. **Güvener** was acquitted on 10 October 2001. Not clear the result for the other defendants. [see other references to Güvener elsewhere] Also see **Semra Uncu** above.
- ***Mehmed UZUN, Hassan ÖZTOPRAK**: writer and publisher respectively. Facing trial following the 3 October 2001 seizure of Uzun's book *To Create a Language* in which Uzun comments on Kurdish literature and language. Charges of separatism are apparently being considered. Also under threat is the author of the book's introduction **Omer Türkes** and two of its editors.
- ***Fakir YILMAZ**: owner of *Northeast Anatolia* newspaper published in Ardahan. Sentenced by the Ardahan Criminal Court on 25 December 2001 to two years in prison for insult to the armed forces under Article 159 of the Penal Code. The article in question is entitled "The Dawn may

Enlighten Darkness" and was published on 10 August 2001. It is thought that Yilmaz remains free pending appeal.

Ayşe Nur ZARAKOLU (f): Publisher. Has been tried and sentenced to fines on a number of occasions for publishing books which fell foul of

the Anti-Terror Law. It is thought that a number of legal processes remain outstanding. On 31 December 2001, Zarakolu was informed that she is to appear in court on 21 March 2002 to hear charges related to her publication of the Kurdish author **Hüseyin Turhali's** book *The Song of Freedom*. Turhali fled Diyakabir in Turkey, to Syria after receiving threats. Was imprisoned and held for a year in Syria, and is now in exile in France. Zarakolu is the recipient of the 1997 Hellman/Hammett award for free expression. Recipient of the 1998 International Freedom to Publish Award at the Frankfurt Book Fair. **Health:** suffering from acute cancer. **Honorary member:** of Swedish, East German, Danish, Ghana, American, USA West and Canadian PEN. [Ayşe Nur Zarakolu died in hospital on 28 January 2002.]

Attacked

***Akay AKTAS, Alpaslan SIFTAS, Aydın DENİZ:** owners of and reporter for the Igdu daily *Dilucu* respectively. Allegedly set upon on 4 August 2001 by three persons carrying knives. All sustained injuries. The attack was said to be linked to a report on allegations of agricultural corruption. One attacker, a former worker for the agricultural directorate, has been detained.

***Hüseyin LİKOGLU:** journalist for *Yeni Safak*. Allegedly beaten by police on 14 October 2001 as he attempted to cover a demonstration in Istanbul against military action in Afghanistan.

***Ahmet SIK:** journalist for *Radikal*. Allegedly beaten by police as he attempted to cover a demonstration in Istanbul on 12 October 2001 against the bombings in Afghanistan.

Briefly Detained

***Baris ACIKEL:** editor in chief of *Partizan*. Arrested during a raid on the Umut Publishing House on 5 September 2001 along with three others.

***Ufuk BAÇIK, Murat DENİZ, Sema GÜL, Selma KAN, Seza HORUZ and Kamil TAS** – all with *İşçi Köylü* and **Julien BEHAL, Alia BRUNO, and Kitty HOLLAND (f)** – of *The Irish Times*: all briefly detained on 4 September 2001 in Istanbul following a raid on the Umut Publishing House. Behal and Holland were subsequently extradited. Bruno was released, but the others remained in custody as of 7 September.

***Emin DUMAN:** Journalist for *Özgür Halk*. Reportedly detained on 19 August 2001 in Adana.

***Yücel FİLİZLER:** reporter for *Alinteri*. On 29 November 2001 was one of a number of people arrested during a police raid on several pro-Kurdish and left-wing publications in Istanbul. Thought to have been freed shortly after.

***Erdal GÜLER, Ertans ÖZTÜRK, Fekir Ali DOĞAN, Tehvide AKINCA:** All working for *Devrimci Demokrasi*. Briefly detained in late November 2001 as part of a crackdown on leftist publications.

***Hatice Ruken KILIÇ, İsmail ÖZMEN:** editor-in-chief and reporter respectively for *Vatan*. Among a number of people detained during a raid on the newspaper's offices in Istanbul on 8 August 2001.

***Sefagül KESKİN, Lütfiye ULUK:** journalists for *İşçi-Köylü*. Briefly detained c. 5 October 2001. Appeared at the Ankara State Security Court on 20 November 2001 to hear charges of "membership of an illegal organisation" for their alleged contacts with a lawyer who is in hiding.

Threatened

***Adnan KESKİN:** journalist for *Radikal*. Claims to have received telephoned threats on 19 October 2001 from the former minister of interior. Related to the publication on 17 October of an article entitled *Susurluk*

affair buried which claimed that senior officials had been treated leniently for their alleged involvement in criminal activities.

Released

***Bedri BAYKAM:** writer and painter. Case started at the Istanbul Penal Court on 25 September 2001. Charged under Articles 419, 426 and 427 of the Turkish Penal Code for his book entitled *Kemik (Bone)* seen to be damaging to children's morals. Acquitted on 28 November 2001 and the ban on the book lifted.

***Ali BAYRAMOĞLU:** journalist accused on 24 July 2001 for two articles published in February 2001 in *Sabah*. Charged with "insult" to the army under Article 159 of the Turkish Penal Code. Acquitted on 2 November 2001.

Selami CALISKAN, Mehmet Sevkî EYGI: editor-in-chief of *Millî Gazete* and columnist respectively. On trial on 12 June 2001 at Istanbul State Security Court No 2 under article 312/2 of the Penal Code for "inciting people to enmity and hatred" for an article entitled "Turkey

during Ramadan". Both were acquitted on 25 July 2001. [See reference to Caliskan above]

Turan FEYİZOĞLU, Mustafa DEMİR: biographer and editor of the Ozan publishing house respectively. On trial for Feyizoglu's book *İBO/The Story of İbrahim Kaypakkaya* under Article 169 of the Penal Code, and Anti Terror Law article 5 (the latter for membership of an illegal organisation). Face up to seven and a half years in prison. Acquitted on 23 September 2001 by the State Security Court.

***Gülay GÖKTÜRK:** reporter accused on 24 July 2001 for an article of 8 February 2001 published in *Sabah* deemed to contravene article 159 of the Turkish Penal Code – "insult" to the army. Acquitted on 23 November 2001.

Case Closed

Rahman ÇELİK: editor-in-chief of *Jiyana Rewsên Journal*. Arrested 17 November 2000 during a raid on the Mesopotamia Cultural Centre during the performance of the play *Ta*. Taken to Istanbul State Security prison. No further details.

Vedat CETİN: Sentenced to 1 year and 8 months in prison and a fine of 2,500,000 in a trial that ended 15 May 1999. He was charged in connection with his article "Women Should be Free" in the (now closed down) daily *Gündem* on 10 March 1998. Not detained as of June 2000 but on 6 July 2000 a second trial was launched under Article 159 of the Penal Code for his book *Villages Destroyed/Evacuated and Migration*. No further details.

Abdurrahman DİLİPAK: Islamist writer and journalist facing many charges. i) Charged with "inciting the people to enmity" in an interview published in *Le Figaro*. The Istanbul SSC had acquitted him but the Supreme Court overturned this decision. ii) On 7 October 1999, the Malatya State security court ordered his arrest after he failed to appear in court to face charges for a speech he made in October 1998 urging people to join protests against the banning of headscarves for female students at universities. He was accused of violating article 312 of the penal code by propagating "separatist propaganda on religious grounds" and faces between one to three years' imprisonment term on this charge. On 19 January 2000 he was sentenced to one year in prison on this charge. Believed to remain free.

Sakine DÖNMEZ: reporter for *Yeni Demokrat Genclik*. Arrested 7 May 2001. No further details.

Ayşe DÜZKAN (f), Sevil EROY (f), Semra SOMERSAN (f), Suzan SAMANCI: journalists. Arrested in connection with a panel discussion

entitled "Women in Life. Women on 8 March [Women's Day]" organised on 8 March in Diyakabir. Some speeches were considered are seen to breach the Anti-Terror Law as "promoting separatism". Trial opened in Diyakabir in December 2000. No news since.

İhsan ELİAÇIK: journalist reportedly sentenced to a year in prison on 27 January 2000. Said to have been convicted under Article 312/2 of the Turkish Penal Code in connection with speeches made at a meeting in Kayseri on 13 June 1998. Not known if detained.

Erdal GÜLMÜŞ: Antep representative of the daily *Atilim*, was detained on 27 February 2001. The newspaper's Antep office was reportedly raided the same day by police. No further details.

Hasan KUCUKOBA: editor of the newspaper *Ozgür Ülke* [Free Country], arrested on 14 January 1999, sentenced to 13 months in prison under article 8 of the anti-terrorist law and 20 months under article 159 of the penal code following two trials. He has also been ordered to pay 60 billion Turkish pounds in fines for 300 press offences. If he cannot pay, he faces another three years in jail. Not clear if still detained.

Ayşe OYMAN (f): journalist for *Yeni Gündem*. Arrested on 12 December 2000 following a raid on the People's Democracy Party (HADEP)Malatya office. Previously briefly detained in 1998 on political charges. No further details.

Songül ÖZKAN: owner of the Evrensel Publishing House. Sentenced to two years in prison and a TL 182,000 fine by the Istanbul State Security Court on 11 July 2000 for the book *Kurdish Problems and Democratisation*. Not clear if detained.

Özgür TÜZÜN: journalist for *Özgür Halk* had his 4-year and 6 month sentence on charges of insulting Atatürk upheld by the appeal court. Linked to an article entitled "The Republic crumbling in its 73rd Year" published in June 1996. No further details.

Muharrem YIGİTŞOY: Malatya representative of *Özgür Gelecek* arrested on 13 April 2001 after observing a trial at Beyoğlu. He had previously been detained in January 2000. No further details.

Solmaz YILMAZ: reporter for *Devrimci Demokrat*. Arrested in Ankara around 8 June 2000 following raids on the newspaper. Not clear if still detained or reason for arrest.

Isik YURTÇU: editor-in-chief of the now banned *Özgür Gündem*. Detained in Istanbul on 5 April 2000. Said to be connected to long-standing arrest warrants issued in absentia and not deleted from police records.

IRAN

Main Cases

Emadeddin BAQI

Profession: Journalist with the now suspended daily *Fath*. **Date of arrest:** 29 May 2000 **Sentence:** Five-and-a-half years in prison, commuted to three years on appeal. **Expires:** 28 May 2003 **Details of arrest:** Emadeddin Baqi was imprisoned on 29 May 2000 after a hearing before the press court. The Ministry of Information is believed to have begun legal proceedings against Baqi on 19 March 2000 for publishing information about the 12 March 2000 assassination attempt on Said Hajjarian, editor of the reformist daily *Sohb-e Emrouz*. Baqi is said to have appeared before the Revolutionary Press Court on 2 April 2000 and charged for acting against an order issued by the Ministry of Information forbidding the press from publishing "any unofficial information, rumours, as well as the foreign press' tendentious analyses of Hajjarian's attackers". Baqi had been out on bail since the trial began in a closed court on 1 May 2000. **Details of trial:** He was reportedly convicted on 17 July 2000 on a number of charges stemming from his critical writings, including articles that "questioned the validity of ...Islamic law", "threatening national security", and "spreading unsubstantiated news stories". The charges are believed to be based on complaints lodged by a number of government agencies, including the Intelligence Ministry, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), and former security officials, concerning a series of articles published by Baqi in *Neshat* implicating Iranian officials in the murders in recent years of a number of intellectuals and dissidents. The daily *Neshat* was replaced by *Fath* when the former was closed down in September 1999. His sentence was commuted to three years on appeal on 22 October 2000. **Place of detention:** Evin Prison, Tehran. Reported to have been granted five days home leave from jail on 5 December 2001.

Hojatolislam Hasan Yousefi ESHKEVARI

D.o.b.: 1950 **Profession:** Researcher and journalist. Director of the Ali Shariati Research Centre and contributing editor of the newspaper *Iran-e Farda*, which was banned in April 2000. **Date of arrest:** 5 August 2000

Details of arrest: Eshkevari was arrested at his home, a few hours after he flew into Tehran from a trip to Europe. He was one of a number of Iranian writers, journalists and academics who attended a conference at the Heinrich Böll Institute in Berlin on 7-9 April 2000 entitled "Iran after the elections", at which political and social reform in Iran were publicly debated. The conference was marked by strong protests by Iranian political groups in exile, and members of the Iranian judiciary apparently consider attendance at the conference to be "harmful to national security". Eshkevari reportedly learned that a warrant had been issued for his arrest shortly after the conference, and had since been staying in Germany and France. Many other prominent Iranian intellectuals who attended the Berlin conference were arrested and charged, including journalist Akbar Ganji, writer, lawyer and human rights activist Mehrangiz Kar, publisher Shahla Lahiji, translator and journalist Khalil Rostamkhani, editor Ezatollah Sahabi, and publisher Shahla Sherkat, who have all been sentenced and are main cases of International PEN (see below). **Details of trial:** Eshkevari's trial began behind closed doors on 7 October 2000 in the Special Court for the Clergy. He is believed to have been charged with "acting against national security" in connection with a speech he gave at the conference, "defaming government officials in articles", "starting a campaign against the system", and "denying and insulting the holy religion of Islam". He was also additionally charged with "declaring war on God", "being corrupt on earth", and apostasy, and these latter three charges carry the death penalty. His trial ended on 17 October 2000 and he was reportedly convicted but to date no information has been made public about what sentence was passed on him. The outcome of an appeal scheduled for 26 November 2000 has also not been disclosed, although his death sentence is believed to have been commuted. On 10 July 2001, after eighty days of being held incommunicado, he was permitted a meeting with his family, who reported that new charges appear to have been filed against him at the Special Court for the Clergy, although no further details are known at this stage. **Health concerns:** Eshkevari is an insulin-dependent diabetic, and there are unconfirmed reports that he has been unable to obtain insulin in custody. **Place of detention:** Transferred from Evin Prison to another detention centre on or around 12 April 2001. The court said he would be moved back to Evin Prison in mid-July 2001. Said to have been allowed to spend two days with his family in early December 2001. **Honorary member of:** Canadian, Danish, Ghanaian, American and English PEN Centres.

Akbar GANJI

Profession: Journalist. **Date of arrest:** 22 April 2000 **Sentence:** 6 years'

imprisonment. **Expires:** 21 April 2006 **Details of arrest:** Arrested following his participation in an academic and cultural conference held in Berlin on 7-9 April 2000 entitled "Iran after the elections", at which political and social reform in Iran were publicly debated. **Place of detention:** Evin Prison. **Treatment in prison:** Detained incommunicado for 80 days, and allegedly tortured in detention. Reportedly staged a hunger strike in protest at his treatment in prison. Reported to have been allowed home on parole for five days on 5 December 2001. **Details of trial:** Trial started on 9 November 2000 at the Revolutionary Court in Tehran. On 13 January 2001 he was sentenced by Bench 3 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court to ten years' imprisonment plus five years' internal exile, four years for his attendance at the conference and six years for other charges, including "spreading propaganda against the Islamic regime", for a series of articles he had written implicating leading figures in the murders of several dissidents and intellectuals in the mid-late 90's. On 15 May 2001 an appeal court reduced his 10-year sentence to six months and overturned his additional sentence of five years internal exile. However, although he had served the entire sentence, the Tehran judiciary challenged the appeal court decision and brought new charges against him in connection with newspaper articles he wrote prior to April 2000. Sentenced on 16 July 2001 to six years' imprisonment on charges of collecting confidential information harmful to national security and spreading propaganda against the Islamic system. **Professional details:** Author of the best-selling book *Dungeon of Ghosts*, a collection of Ganji's newspaper articles published in early 2000, in which he implicated the former president, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, and other leading conservative figures in the "serial murders" of 1998. The book is said to have seriously damaged the reputation of Rafsanjani, and is thought to have been a major factor in the conservative defeat in the parliamentary elections of February 2000. **Health concerns:** Reported on 21 May 2001 to have been taken to hospital for medical tests. His condition is believed to be poor, but not serious. **Other information:** Recipient of the Canadian Journalists for Free Expression (CJFE) 2000 International Press Freedom Award. **Honorary member of:** Canadian, American and English PEN Centres.

Abdollah NOURI

Profession: Managing director of daily *Khordad*. **Date of Arrest:** 28 November 1999. **Sentence:** Sentenced to five years' imprisonment and fined 15 million rials (about US\$8,600). **Expires:** 27 November 2004. **Details of arrest:** Sent to prison the day after his sentence was handed down. **Details of Trial:** Tried by the Special Court for the Clergy. Accused of insulting officials of the Islamic Republic, spreading false reports and propagating against the Islamic system in *Khordad's* news coverage. Also accused of promoting friendly relations with the U.S. On 1-4 November 1999 appeared in a special clerical court to face these charges. On November 11 1999 it was reported by the jury that he had been found guilty on 15 out of 20 charges. He was sentenced on 27 November 1999. **Professional Details:** A former Minister of the Interior and Vice President; a close ally of President Khatami's. Had resigned from the Tehran city Council and had declared his intention to run in the Parliamentary elections in February 2000. **Other Information:** AI Prisoner of Conscience.

*Siamak POURZAND

D.o.b.: 1930 **Profession:** Journalist and film critic. **Date of arrest:** 24 November 2001. **Details of arrest:** Siamak Pourzand went missing on 24 November 2001, and there are unconfirmed reports that he has been arrested by the Iranian intelligence services. It is thought that his disappearance may be connected to his position as manager of the *Majmue-ye Farrhangi-ye Honari-ye Tehran*, a cultural centre for writers, artists, and intellectuals. Pourzand is also known for his articles critical of the Islamic regime, and is said to have been recently working with Iranian foreign-based media. His detention has not to date been officially acknowledged by the authorities, although on 7 December 2001 his sister was reportedly told to bring a change of clothes for him to the Ostad Motahari Street Office of the Committee for Propagation of Virtue and Prohibition of Vice. This organisation maintains discipline on matters of morality, such as dress codes, consumption of alcohol and mixing of the sexes. **Health concerns:** Pourzand suffers from diabetes and a heart complaint. **Other information:** Siamak Pourzand is the husband of writer and lawyer Mehrangiz Kar (see below).

Khalil ROSTAMKHANI

D.o.b.: 1953 **Profession:** Translator and journalist with the *Daily News* and *Iran Echo*. **Date of arrest:** 8 May 2000 **Sentence:** 9 years' imprisonment, reduced to eight years on appeal. **Details of arrest:** Detained for his involvement in the Berlin conference held on 7-9 April 2000 at the Heinrich Böll Institute. **Details of trial:** Rostamkhani appeared in court on 9 November 2000. He is thought to be charged with being a 'mohareb' ('fighter against god'), having 'received and distributed

leaflets and press releases from opposition groups based abroad and of having participated in the organisation of the Berlin conference, which posed a threat to the country's security'. He was reportedly released on bail on 15 November 2000. On 13 January 2001 Bench 3 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court announced that he had been convicted and sentenced for organising the Berlin conference. He remained free on bail pending appeal. His appeal was heard at Branch 31 of the Supreme Court on 27 August 2001, and his conviction was upheld though his sentence was reduced by one year. He was immediately taken into custody. He is said to be seeking a re-trial. **Place of detention:** Bandar Abbas prison, southern Iran. **Other information:** Has a wife and child in Germany. **Previous political imprisonment/problems:** Previously arrested in June 1990 for his membership of the Organisation for Communist Unity, and sentenced to three years' imprisonment. Released in May 1992 under amnesty. **Honorary member of:** PEN Canada.

Latif SAFARI

Profession: Director of the daily *Neshat* (Joy) which was banned indefinitely on 5 September 1999. **Date of arrest:** May 2000 **Sentence:** Two and a half years imprisonment **Expires:** 20 November 2002 **Details of arrest:** Charges against Safari were pressed after the *Neshat* printed articles opposing capital punishment. **Details of trial:** Sentenced on 21 November 1999 to a two-and-a-half-year suspended jail term and banned from practising journalism for five years. In May 2000 Branch 34 of the Supreme Court rejected Safari's appeal for a re-trial, and he was jailed. Reportedly acquitted in June 2001 but has not been released. WiPC seeking further details.

Ezzatollah SAHABI

D.o.b.: 1930 **Profession:** Managing editor of the journal *Iran-e Farda* (*The Iran of Tomorrow*). **Date of arrest:** 26 June 2000 **Sentence:** Four-and-a-half-years' imprisonment **Expires:** 22 April 2005 **Details of arrest:** Detained for his participation in the Berlin conference held on 7-9 April 2000 at the Heinrich Böll Institute. Released on bail on 21 August 2000 pending trial, but reportedly re-arrested on 17 December 2000 on charges of "insulting the Guide [of the Islamic Republic], Ayatollah Ali Khamenei" and "propaganda against the regime" for statements he made during an address at Amir-Kabir Technical University in Tehran on 26 November 2000. **Details of trial:** His trial started on 14 November 2000 at Tehran's Revolutionary Court, and on 13 January 2001 it was announced that he had been convicted and sentenced on charges of acting against national security and disseminating propaganda against the Islamic regime for his participation at the Berlin conference. He is also believed to be amongst fifteen members of the National Religious Alliance to stand trial in camera on 8 January 2002 on charges of "subversive activities against the state" and "blasphemy", both of which carry the death penalty. Details of these new charges against him are not clear. **Place of detention:** Evin prison. **Treatment in prison:** There are serious concerns that he may be subjected to psychological torture in prison. Denied access to legal representation since his

December re-arrest. Allowed a family visit on 12 June and 15 July 2001. Believed to have been held in solitary confinement since his December arrest. **Previous political imprisonment/problems:** Fined and banned from journalism for one year in December 1998 for publishing "slandorous material". Previously detained in 1995. **Honorary member of:** English and American PEN.

Free on bail pending trial or appeal

Reza ALIJANI

Profession: Editor-in-chief of the now-banned *Iran-é-Farda*. **Date of arrest:** 24 February 2001 **Details of arrest:** Arrested for acting "against state security" and held incommunicado in an unknown place of detention without access to his family or lawyer until October 2001. Reportedly 'confessed' to the charges under psychological pressure. Released on bail on 16 December 2001. He is one of ten journalists to be tried in camera on 8 January 2002 on charges of "subversive activities against the state" and "blasphemy". Both these charges carry the death penalty. **Previous political imprisonment/problems:** Alijani has been under pressure from the conservatives for many years. In January 1999, following the 1998 assassinations of several intellectuals, he received death threats; he has been summoned before the revolutionary courts on several occasions for his articles supporting press freedom and political reform; he was detained in the 1980's for contributing to a clandestine publication.

Massoud BEHNOUD

D.o.b.: 1946 **Profession:** Journalist with the newspaper *Asr-e Azadegan* (*Era of the Free*), which was banned in 1999, and the recently banned *Danestani-ha* (*Worth Knowing*). **Date of arrest:** 9 August 2000 **Sentence:** nineteen months' imprisonment and a fine of 20 million Riyals (approx. \$US 11,500) **Details of arrest:** Reportedly arrested by

officials from the Press Court on the basis of more than 50 complaints about his writing, some of which date from 1997. Detained until 16 December 2000, when he was released on bail. **Details of trial:** According to press reports of 28 February 2001 he has been sentenced to nineteen months' imprisonment and a fine of 20 million Riyals (approx. \$US 11,500) on charges of "spreading lies", "insulting government officials, and public morality and alcohol-related charges. He remains free on bail pending appeal. **Health concerns:** Said to be suffering from an ulcer and a heart condition.

Abbas DALVAND

Profession: Head of *Lorestan* magazine. **Date of arrest:** 14 February 2001 **Details of arrest:** Reportedly arrested in Khorramabad (south-western Iran) and charged with defamation, "publishing deceitful articles" and "insult against the revolutionary and judicial institutions of the state". **Details of trial:** Released on bail on 18 February 2001, and reportedly sentenced to nine years' imprisonment and banned from practising his profession for three years on 9 May 2001. He is thought to remain free on bail pending appeal.

*Fateme GOVARAI (f)

Profession: Journalist with the now-banned weekly *Omid-é-Zangan*. **Sentence:** Six months in prison and fifty lashes. **Details of trial:** Sentenced on 12 October 2001 for "lies and defamation". The charges are believed to relate to an interview she gave to the weekly *Vlayat*. She has appealed the sentence. **Previous political imprisonment/problems:** Arrested on 11 March 2001 when security agents raided a gathering at the home of journalist Mohammad Bastehneghar (see below). Govarai was released the following day.

Mohrangiz KAR (f)

D.o.b.: 1947 **Profession:** Human rights lawyer, writer and editor of the now-banned *Zan* literary review. **Date of arrest:** 29 April 2000 **Sentence:** 4 years' imprisonment **Details of arrest:** Arrested with publisher Shahla Lahiji (see below) and accused of "acting against national security" for participating in the Berlin conference held on 7-9 April 2000 at the Heinrich Böll Institute. Held in Evin Prison until 21 June 2000, when she was released on bail. **Details of trial:** Tried in a closed hearing at Iran's Revolutionary Court. On 13 January 2001 it was announced that she had been convicted and sentenced on charges of acting against national security and disseminating propaganda against the Islamic regime. Kar is also believed to be facing three additional charges at the Civil Court, those of violating the observance of hejab (the full head and body covering required of women), denying the Islamic necessity of hejab, and propagating against the Islamic Republic of Iran. Her appeal hearing is thought to have concluded in November 2001 but the verdict has yet to be confirmed. Kar is currently in the U.S. receiving medical treatment. **Professional details:** Publications include *Children of Addiction: Social and Legal Position of the Children of Addicted Parents in Iran* (1990); *The Quest for Identity: the Image of Iranian Women in Prehistory and History Vol.1 and 11*, co-edited with Shahla Lahiji (see below) (Vol.1 1992, volume 11 compiled and ready for print); *Angel of Justice and Patches of Hell*, a collection of essays which look at the status and position of women in pre- and post-revolutionary Iran (date of publication not known); *Women in the Iranian Labour Market* (1994) and *Legal Structure of the Family System in Iran* (publication date not known). **Health concerns:** Diagnosed with breast cancer following her release from detention, and was initially denied permission to seek medical care overseas. She underwent a mastectomy and a course of chemotherapy in Iran, before being finally permitted to travel abroad for medical treatment in February 2001. She initially went to Europe, and in September 2001 she started a prolonged course of medical treatment in the U.S. She is expected to return to Iran when the treatment is completed. **Previous political imprisonment/problems:** Mehrangiz Kar has been previously targeted by the Iranian authorities in connection with her women's rights activism. **Other information:** Married with two daughters, one living in Canada and one a teenager still living at home. **Honorary member of:** Canadian, American and English PEN.

Shahla LAHIJI (f)

D.o.b.: April 1942 **Profession:** Writer-publisher, translator, and Director of Roshangaran, a prominent publishing house of women's books. **Date of arrest:** 29 April 2000 **Sentence:** 4 years' imprisonment **Details of arrest:** Arrested on charges of "acting against national security" for participating in the Berlin conference held on 7-9 April 2000 at the Heinrich Böll Institute. Held at Evin Prison until she was released on bail on 21 June 2000. **Details of trial:** Tried in a closed court in November 2000. On 13 January 2001 Bench 3 of Tehran's Revolutionary Court announced that she had been convicted and sentenced on charges of acting against national security and disseminating propaganda against the Islamic regime for her participation at the Berlin conference. Her

appeal hearing is thought to have concluded in November 2001 but the verdict has yet to be confirmed. Lahiji remains free. **Professional details:** Iran's first woman publisher. Her own publications include *Portrait of Women in the Works of Bahram Beizaie, Film Maker and*

Script Writer (1989); *The Quest for Identity: the Image of Iranian Women in Prehistory and History Vol.1 and 11*, co-edited with Mehrangiz Kar (see above) (Vol.1 1992, volume 11 compiled and ready for print); *Women Writers and Iranian Literature* (compiled, ready for print); *Women in Iranian Dramatic Arts* (compiled, ready for print). She has also translated a number of works. Awarded the Pandora Prize 2001 by 'Women in Publishing' in London. **Previous political imprisonment/problems:** Shahla Lahiji has reportedly been previously targeted by the Iranian authorities in connection with her women's rights activism. **Other information:** Widowed in 1994 after 34 years of marriage. She has a daughter and a son, both of whom now live in the U.S. Lahiji lives and works in Tehran. **Honorary member of:** Canadian, English and American PEN.

*Tahmineh MILANI (f)

D.o.b.: 1960 **Profession:** Film director and screen-writer. **Date of arrest:** 27 August 2001 **Details of arrest:** Detained by Tehran's Revolutionary Court for "abusing the arts as a tool for actions which will suit the taste of counter-revolutionary and mohareb groups". The charges relate to her new film 'The Hidden Half', which reportedly focuses on rebel activists during the political turmoil of the 1980's following the Iranian revolution. She was released on bail 2 September 2001. No date has been set for her trial. **Honorary member of:** PEN Canada.

Ibrahim NABAVI

Profession: Journalist for the now-banned publications *Jameh, Tous*, and *Asr-e-Azadegan*. **Date of arrest:** 12 August 2000 **Sentence:** Eight months' imprisonment **Details of arrest:** Reportedly detained after being interrogated by the Press Court. Released on bail on 18 November 2000. **Details of trial:** Sentenced on 10 January 2001 by the press court for "deceptive publications, insults against officials of the regime and unfounded accusations". He is thought to remain free pending appeal. WiPC seeking an update. **Previous political imprisonment/problems:** Previously detained in 1999 for his writings.

*Mohammad SALAMATI

Profession: Publisher of the now-banned reformist weekly *Asr-e-Ma*. Sentenced to twenty-six months' imprisonment on 15 December 2001 for allegedly spreading a rumour in December 2000 that an attempt had been made to overthrow President Khatami. Salamati is secretary general of the Organisation of the Islamic Revolution's Mujahedin, a member of the coalition supporting reformist President Mohammad Khatami. He remains free pending appeal.

Shahla SHERKAT (f)

Profession: Publisher and editor of the feminist monthly *Zanan* magazine, set up in 1991 to discuss women's rights issues. **Sentence:** 4 months' imprisonment **Details of trial:** Charged in connection with her participation in the Berlin conference held at the Heinrich Böll Institute on 7-9 April 2000. On 13 January 2001 the verdicts of the Berlin conference trials were announced, and she was sentenced to four months' imprisonment for "propaganda against the Islamic system during the Berlin conference". She was also convicted of acting against national security for her participation at the Berlin conference, but the two year prison sentence she was handed down for this charge was commuted to a fine. Her appeal hearing is believed to have concluded in November 2001 but the verdict has yet to be confirmed. She remains free.

Facing trial

Mohammad BASTEHNEGAR: Journalist with the banned daily *Asr-e-Azadegan*. Arrested on 11 March 2001 when security agents raided a gathering at his home. The gathering constituted 20-30 supporters of the 'Iran Freedom Movement' ('Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran') and Milli Mazhabi (National Religious Alliance), a broad and informal group of individuals advocating reform in Iran. According to the head of Tehran's Revolutionary Court, the group were "conspiring to overthrow the Islamic government". Over twenty members of the group were arrested, but most were released the following day. Bastehnegar is among fifteen members of the National Religious Alliance (Melli Mazhabi) to face trial in camera on 8 January 2002. Other writers or journalists in the group are Dr. Reza Raïs-Toussi, Taghi Rahmani, Hoda Saber and Ahmad Zeidabadi (see below) and Ezatollah Sahabi (see 'main case' above). They are believed to face charges of "subversive activities against the state" and "blasphemy", both of which carry the death penalty. Has been held in solitary confinement, without access to a lawyer, since his arrest. There are concerns that he has been mistreated in prison. Held in Prison

59, an unregulated detention centre in central Tehran.

Taghi RAHMANI: Journalist with *Omid-é-Zangan*. Reportedly arrested on 11 March 2001 when security agents raided a gathering at the home of journalist Mohammad Bastehnegar (see above). Still detained as of end of December 2001, and said to be held in Tehran's Prison 59. Among fifteen members of the National Religious Alliance to face trial in camera on 8 January 2002 on charges of "subversive activities against the state" and "blasphemy", both of which carry the death penalty. Reported to have confessed to the charges against him under psychological pressure.

Dr. Reza RAÏS-TOUSSI: D.o.b.: 1936. Journalist with the banned daily *Fath*. Reportedly arrested on 11 March 2001 when security agents raided a gathering at the home of journalist Mohammad Bastehnegar (see above). Raïs-Toussi is among fifteen members of the National Religious Alliance to face trial in camera on 8 January 2002 on charges of "subversive activities against the state" and "blasphemy", both of which carry the death penalty. He is reportedly held in Prison 59, central Tehran. He reportedly suffers from arthritis and a slipped disc, and his health is said to have worsened considerably in prison. His wife reported after visiting him in prison in July 2001 that he was suffering from exhaustion. She has not been permitted to visit him since. He is kept in solitary confinement, and has been denied access to his lawyer.

Hoda SABER: Co-editor of the now-banned monthly *Iran-é-Farda*. Reportedly arrested on 28 January 2001 and detained incommunicado. One of fifteen members of the National Religious Alliance to face trial in camera on 8 January 2002 on charges of "subversive activities against the state" and "blasphemy", both of which carry the death penalty. Detained in Prison 59, an unregulated detention centre in central Tehran. Said to have confessed under psychological pressure.

Ahmad ZEIDABADI: Journalist for the moderate weekly *Hamshahri* (*The Citizen*) and the now-banned bi-weekly *Iran-é-Farda*. Reportedly arrested on 11 March 2001 when security agents raided a gathering at the home of journalist Mohammad Bastehnegar (see above). Released on 12 or 13 March. At the time of his arrest he was on bail in a separate case. He is among fifteen members of the National Religious Alliance to face trial in camera on 8 January 2002 on charges of "subversive activities against the state" and "blasphemy", both of which carry the death penalty. Remains free on bail. Previously detained on 7 August 2000, apparently in connection with articles he wrote for newspapers that have since been banned. He was released on bail on 28 February 2001.

Sentenced, suspended

*Jafar KARAMI

Profession: Director of the newspaper *Amin-é-Zanjan*. **Sentence:** Two-year suspended prison sentence. **Details of trial:** Charged in connection with the publication of articles allegedly "insulting to the highest dignitaries and the Islamic government" and which allegedly incited "social dissent". Sentenced on 30 October 2001 to ninety-one days in jail, commuted to a two-year suspended sentence because of severe health problems due to injuries sustained during the Iran-Iraq war. He is believed to be appealing his sentence.

Investigation

***Ahmad GABEL:** Journalist for *Hayat-é-No*. Gabel is also believed to have written editorials for many reformist publications and regularly gave interviews to foreign radio stations. Reportedly arrested on 31 December 2001 on the orders of the Special Court for the Clergy. He had been interviewed by Radio Freedom several hours before his arrest. Gabel is known for his criticism of the conservative guard, particularly of the leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

***Ali Hamed IMAN:** Director of the *Shams-e-Tabrizi* newspaper, published in Tabriz, north-western Iran. Imprisoned following a court appearance on 17 December 2001. He was reportedly prosecuted on 17 charges, including "offending religious beliefs" and "publishing untrue and libellous articles". WiPC seeking details of sentence.

Jafari NASRABADI, Mahmoud MOJDAYI, Reza NADIMI and Mehdi AMINI: Editor and correspondents respectively of the student magazine *Kavir*. Nasrabadi and Mojdayi were reportedly arrested on 9 May 2001, and Nadimi and Amini on 28 May 2001, after being interrogated by the Tehran press court. They are all accused of publishing a "blasphemous" article in which they had used an "indecent tone" against several state institutions. WiPC seeking an update on current status.

Reza TEHRANI and Fazlollah SALAVATI: Editor-in-chief of the banned magazine *Kian*, and editor-in-chief of the banned weekly *Navid-é-Esfahan* respectively. Reportedly detained on 7 April 2001 along with forty-two others associated with the 'Iran Freedom Movement' ('Nehzat-e Azadi-ye Iran'). Believed to have been charged with "collaborating with counter-revolutionary groups". WiPC seeking an update.

Briefly detained

***Narghues MOHAMMADI (f):** Journalist with the now-banned weekly *Peyam Ajar*. Reportedly arrested on 28 August 2001 after appearing at the Revolutionary Court in Tehran as a "witness". Accused of giving

interviews to foreign radio stations. Released on 2 September 2001. She is the wife of Taghi Rahmani, journalist with *Omid-é-Zangan* (see above).

Amid NAINI: Editor-in-chief of the now-banned monthly *Peyam-é-Emrouz*. Reportedly arrested on 21 April 2001 by Tehran's Press Court for publishing an article denouncing the recital of verses from the Koran as a "superstitious practice", and for publishing another article describing the angel Gabriel as an "imaginary creature". Reported in July 2001 to have been recently released.

Released

Morteza FIROOZI: Editor of English-language newspaper *Iran News*, reported to have been held on a charge of spying for the U.S. since June 1997. On 28 January 1998, the official news agency IRNA announced that he had been sentenced to death. Ayatollah Khamenei is said to have ordered a retrial on the advice of the Iranian National Security Council. Reported in July 2001 to have been recently released.

IRAQ

Main case

Aziz AL-SYED JASIM

Profession: Journalist and author **Date of Arrest:** 14 April 1991 **Sentence:** Not known **Details of Arrest:** Detained without charge in Baghdad on 14 April 1991 by plainclothes members of Iraqi security forces. Reported to have been taken to General Security Directorate in Baghdad, held in solitary confinement and tortured. He is thought to have been detained after being repeatedly asked by members of the Iraqi secret service to write a book on Saddam Hussein. He persistently resisted this pressure and was arrested with his brother, Dr Muhsin Al-Musawi, editor-in-chief of *Afaq Arabia*. Muhsin was released in July 1991 and allowed to go into exile. Jasim reported to have been charged with treason for refusing to write the book. Iraqi authorities reported in November 1991 that the case had been investigated and that Jasim was never arrested or charged, that he was last seen in Karbala City in March 1991 and has since disappeared. The government claimed he was a firm supporter of the President and enclosed a cover of *Saddam Hussein: a giant on the Rafidain*, a book they said he had written and which proved his loyalty to the government. AI report in March 1993 indicated that the government had then acknowledged his arrest, but refused to disclose why or where he is held. AI has apparently unconfirmed reports that Jasim was transferred to Iraqi intelligence headquarters in Baghdad in July 1992 and that he may have been allowed regular family visits since, although this has not been confirmed. In 1998, the WiPC heard from another source that Jasim was still alive and still in prison. **Professional Details:** Jasim was editor-

in-chief of *Al-Thrawa* newspaper (1969-70), editor of *Al-Ghad* magazine (1969-70) and acting editor of *Labour Voices* (1971-78). Author of many books on women's rights, Kurds, etc. Member of Ba'th Party since 1963. Author of a collection *The Rooster and Other Stories*, and, after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, he wrote an open letter criticising Iraq's role in the crisis. **Health Concerns:** Said to have been in poor health, suffering from diabetes and heart condition at time of arrest and reports in 1994 that he had been hospitalised. In 1998 there were unconfirmed reports that "he suffers from paralysis." **Previous Political Imprisonment/Problems:** Previously detained on a number of occasions, most recently in 1989 when he was held for over a year. **Other Details:** Married with seven children. **Honorary Member of:** German PEN.

Case closed

Hachem HASAN: Reported arrested in late September 1999 in El Kadissia near the border with Jordan. He is the editor-in-chief of the newspaper *Azzaoura*, owned by Saddam Hussein's son Ouddai. One report suggests that Ouddai Hussain asked him to edit another of his newspapers and Hasan refused. Then, fearing for his life, he tried to flee the country but was apprehended in the attempt. He was reportedly sentenced to three years' imprisonment for attempting to leave the country illegally. Case closed for lack of further information.

Saad SAYEL: Poet. Reportedly arrested on 5 March 2000 at the border point Tribel by Iraqi security forces after being forcibly returned to Iraq from Jordan. One report suggests he may have been arrested for having made an application for asylum to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). Case closed for lack of further information.

IRAQI KURDISTAN

Investigation Case

Hiwa AHMAD: Member of the executive committee of the Iraqi Workers' Communist Party (IWCP). Reportedly arrested on 16 October 2000 by the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) security and intelligence service for writing an article in an IWCP publication criticising the PUK's human rights record. Still detained at the Security Directorate in Sulaimaniya as of 17 November 2000. WiPC seeking an update.

SYRIA

Main case

Nu'man 'Ali 'ABDU

Profession: Journalist for Lebanese monthly *Al-Tarik*. **Date of arrest:** 1992 **Sentence:** 15 years **Expires:** 2007 **Details of trial:** Apparently sentenced in 1993 to fifteen years' imprisonment for his membership of the Party for Communist Action. **Place of detention:** Reportedly transferred from Seydnaya prison to a detention centre in Damascus on 16 November 2000. **Health concerns:** He is said to suffer from a chronic open leg wound, according to reports from former prisoners.

Facing charges

*Nizar NAYYUF

Profession: Writer, sociologist and human rights activist. **Details of charges:** Charged in absentia on 3 September 2001 with "trying to change the constitution by illegal means and issuing false reports from a foreign country". The charges are believed to relate to critical statements made by Nayyuf whilst in France, where he is currently receiving medical treatment. Nayyuf has given numerous interviews to the Arab press since his release in which he has criticised the human rights situation in Syria. Nayyuf's family were given an ultimatum by the authorities to either condemn Nizar Nayyuf's statements by 22 November 2001 or

face exile, and at the end of November 2001 the Syrian authorities were preparing to exile the family. Nayyuf's brothers Amjad and Mamdouh Nayyuf have been dismissed from their positions as teachers, his youngest brother Hayyan Nayyuf - a student - has been threatened with expulsion by university officials, and land belonging to their parents, Ali and Douha Nayyuf, has been seized by the authorities. **Previous political imprisonment/problems:** Nizar Nayyuf was previously arrested in January 1992 and sentenced to 10 years imprisonment for his membership of the banned Committee for the Defence of Democratic Freedoms and Human Rights (CDF), and for "disseminating false information" via its monthly newsletter *Sawt al-Democratiyya (Democracy's Voice)*, of which he was editor-in-chief. He was a PEN main case. Nizar Nayyuf was held in solitary confinement in Mezze Prison, Damascus, and throughout his detention has suffered from serious medical problems, some of them reportedly related to torture under interrogation following his arrest. He was released from prison on 6 May 2001 after serving nine years of his ten-year sentence, and was permitted to travel to France on 22 June 2001 to receive urgent medical treatment. **Honorary member of:** American, English, Finnish, and Slovak PEN Centres.

Brief detention

***Muhammad HAMO:** Kurdish writer living in Syria and member of Syrian PEN. Reportedly arrested in Syria on 29 August 2001. At the time of his arrest he had reportedly been taking part in meetings with other Kurdish writers to explore the possibility of setting up a Kurdish PEN centre in Syria. Released on 1 September 2001.

Released

Adel ISMA'IL: Journalist with the Lebanese daily *Al Rata*, contributor to the underground newsletter *El Democrati* and professor of journalism. Arrested in 1996 and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for "spreading false information" and membership of the banned Baas Democratic Party. Released on 18 November 2001 under a presidential amnesty.

Culture

L'Iran avant l'islam

Quand régnait le grand Zarathoustra

par Shideh Jandaghian

Dans la vie il est des moments où l'homme se sent désespéré. Peut-être parce qu'aucun de ses désirs n'a pu être satisfait ou quand il arrive au but il s'aperçoit que ce n'était qu'un mirage. Il se demande alors pourquoi tous ces efforts ? Il n'y aura aucun sens à ce que l'on fait si on ne comprend pas ce qui se passe et si on ne peut jamais contrôler même une petite partie de sa vie : pourquoi apprendre, pourquoi chercher, pourquoi se battre et pourquoi vivre ? Est-ce que tout cela est pour rien ? Est-ce que nous n'allons pas croire aux légendes parce que nous n'avons pas vu la vérité ?

Près de 700 ans avant Jésus Christ, à une époque où les Iraniens croyaient (comme les Grecs et les bouddhistes) à des dieux divers comme Mithras (le pacte), Mâh (la lune), *Ahura Mazda* (la lumière) Vâyû (le dieu du vent), un jeune homme persan de la famille Sepitama s'est posé les mêmes questions et s'est révolté pour trouver des réponses. Son nom était Zarathoustra. Il était né dans la région de Hérat, au nord-est de l'Iran, aux confins de l'Afghanistan. Bien que le nom de son père, Pourshâspa (qui signifie possesseur d'un cheval tacheté) puisse évoquer une ascendance princière, Zarathoustra était issu d'une famille de prêtres. Sa mère, Dugdâv, elle, était connue pour ses idées éclairées. Dès son adolescence, Zarathoustra apprit durant sa formation une quantité considérable de textes.

Zarathoustra a ainsi commencé un long voyage, intérieur et extérieur, pour trouver le secret de l'existence. Il voyait un monde où tout change, évolue. Tout est vivant, rien ne reste sans bouger, sans penser et sans sentir. Il a compris qu'il y avait un langage commun entre les créatures. On n'a pas besoin de mots parce que tout est énergie. Zarathoustra a constaté que ces énergies sont toujours mises entre deux forces : Ahura Mazda, la force positive qui est le bien, l'amour, la lumière et Ahriman, la force négative qui est le mal, la haine et l'obscurité.

Une philosophie de liberté

Selon Zarathoustra chaque moment de l'existence donne la liberté, qui est le droit pour chaque individu de choisir ce qui le place dans un conflit entre le bien et le mal. L'homme est appelé à gérer ce conflit et décider en toute liberté. Pour lui, l'existence a créé l'individu avec le bonheur mais l'a laissé libre de choisir d'aller vers la lumière ou de rester dans l'obscurité.



Zarathoustra a aussi compris qu'il n'y aura aucune lumière si celle-ci ne se heurte à un obstacle, l'obscurité. Car il faut qu'il existe un mal pour qu'on connaisse le bien. Chaque force sera connue par la force opposée. Un des grands ennemis de l'individu est l'oubli, l'absence de l'esprit. C'est à ce moment là que l'individu perd son combat.

Dans la cosmogonie zoroastrienne, l'Esprit Saint Ahura Mazda occupe une place centrale. Il crée le monde par la pensée, mais ceci ne constitue en rien l'acte fondateur de son propre statut divin.

Par ailleurs, le zoroastrisme est un vrai

monothéisme. Dieu n'y est pas confronté à un anti-Dieu car il se situe entre l'esprit bienfaisant et l'esprit destructeur (l'esprit du mal, Ahriman). Mais Dieu, qui est conscient de ce conflit ne l'a pas empêché, ce qui signifie que l'existence du mal est la condition sine qua non de la liberté humaine. Il invite donc les fidèles à imiter l'acte initial d'Ahura Mazda : le choix du bien. Dans sa philosophie, les hommes ne sont pas des serviteurs de Dieu comme les fidèles de Yahvé, de Varura ou d'Allah,

mais des créatures libres de suivre Ahura Mazda ou non. Zarathoustra a compris que l'existence est faite par les énergies qui nous entourent et créent une lutte entre deux forces celle du bien et celle du mal.

Zarathoustra était en outre un réformateur. Il ne refusait pas complètement la religion et les formes traditionnelles qu'elle avait de son temps, mais y puisait de nombreuses idées en leur donnant une nouvelle valeur morale. Il reprend notamment le thème de la résurrection cyclique du monde, déjà présent dans les traditions liées au nouvel an. Par-là, même, il explique la survie de l'Homme : comme la nature, celui-ci se réveillera après sa mort. Des thèmes que l'on retrouve plus tard dans le judaïsme, le christianisme et l'islam.

La réforme sociale

Son message n'avait pas seulement une portée métaphysique : il critiquait aussi les aspects traditionnels de la société. En se présentant, lui-même comme prêtre dans un cadre social et religieux, ses paroles faisaient trembler les autres prêtres de son temps qui s'appelaient les Kâvâns et sacrifiaient les animaux pour leurs dieux. Car Zarathoustra critiquait les pratiques des religions anciennes (notamment le sacrifice rituel des animaux) ce qui lui vaut les foudres des lévites. Ce sacrifice, qui était un contrat entre les hommes et Dieu, donnait une grande place à l'agriculture dont le déve-

loppement est constamment mis en valeur dans les textes zoroastriens qui mettent avant tout l'accent sur le respect de la vie animale et humaine.

Dans son discours Zarathoustra dénonce l'obéissance aveugle. Il insiste sur la réflexion, le libre choix ; ce qui montre qu'il était démocrate et pour le respect des droits de l'Homme avant l'heure.

Zarathoustra lorsqu'il a 40 ans apprend toujours et enseigne ; il répond aux questions et raconte ce qu'il a vécu. Il voyageait aussi beaucoup ce qui lui a permis de rencontrer Vistâspa (ce qui se traduit par le "possesseur de chevaux") roi des Bakhtarian et de gagner son soutien contre la caste des anciens religieux. Ce souverain après sa conversion, a aidé ensuite Zarathoustra à surmonter tous les obstacles. C'est désormais l'étape du succès, succès qui a duré toute sa vie, jusqu'à sa mort à l'âge de 76 ans.

A sa mort, 600 ans av. J.C. les Iraniens (dont les Afghans) étaient devenus massivement zoroastriens et ont, à leur tour influencé la plupart des philosophies religieuses comme le judaïsme, le christianisme et l'islam.

Présence de Zoroastre

La voix de Zarathoustra parle encore à travers ses confidences, ses plaintes, ses joies, son enseignement, ses poèmes (les Gâthâ) ou l'Avesta, le livre sacré de cette religion qui regroupe toujours ses fidèles. Les Gâthâ, des hymnes en vieux persan, datant de trois millénaires, sont liés à la tradition poétique indo-européenne que l'on retrouve aussi dans les textes védiques indiens. Hélas, seul un quart de ceux-ci sont parvenus jusqu'à nous puisqu'une partie a été détruite lors de l'invasion d'Alexandre le grand qui fit brûler la bibliothèque de Persépolis et le reste lors de l'invasion arabe, au VII^e siècle de notre ère.

Mais comment les Iraniens, qui avaient vécu dans cette atmosphère religieuse fondée sur le libre arbitre ont-ils pu accepter son remplacement par l'islam monolithique ?

L'invasion arabo-musulmane provoqua la chute de l'empire des Sassanides. Les vaincus qui n'étaient pas aristocrates n'eurent la liberté de choix qu'entre se convertir à l'islam ou devenir esclaves. Quant aux riches, eux, leur choix fut entre payer un impôt lourd ou la conversion selon la méthode qui fut employée

aussi pour tous les peuples christianisés du Proche-Orient et d'Afrique.

Dès lors, les zoroastriens furent totalement isolés, même s'il fallut trois cents ans à l'islam pour assurer sa domination. Cela provoqua d'ailleurs l'exil de nombre d'entre eux, en Inde notamment où ils fondèrent une communauté (les "Parsis"-Perses) qui existe encore de nos jours.

Au début de XXI^e siècle, le zoroastrisme demeure encore présent en Iran, dans la culture, de manière diffuse, malgré 1300 ans d'islam et bien qu'il n'y ait guère plus que 40 000 adeptes du maître. C'est tout d'abord la farouche envie de liberté du peuple. C'est aussi dans la survivance des traditions d'antan, comme à l'occasion du mariage ou dans la célébration du nouvel an iranien (Norouz), selon le calendrier de Zoroastre, toujours officiellement en vigueur.

Au-delà du faible nombre de fidèles dans le monde (20 000) dispersés en Inde, États-Unis, Grande-Bretagne, il faut surtout avoir conscience de l'influence de cette philosophie sur celles qui devaient la remplacer, dont elle fut la matrice dans tout le Proche-Orient d'où partirent les trois religions du Livre.

En tous cas, le zoroastrisme n'est pas mort et il doit jouer un rôle dans la renaissance démocratique en Iran pour peu que ce pays veuille retourner à ses racines idéologiques traditionnelles. C'est un ferment démocratique à développer. Car ce qui est éternel, perpétuel : le bien (Ahura Mazda), tôt ou tard, doit l'emporter sur l'obscurantisme (Ahriman).

Nietzsche était un précurseur lorsqu'il écrivit son célèbre *"Ainsi parlait Zarathoustra"*. Zarathoustra ? "La bonne pensée, la bonne parole, la bonne action". ■

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Le « Printemps de Damas » : déjà du passé

La poudre aux yeux n'aura servi qu'un temps. « Le printemps de Damas » est bel et bien terminé. Deux députés qui ont osé demander la levée de l'état d'urgence en vigueur depuis les années 60, Riad Seif et Maamoun Homsî, sont actuellement en prison, en attente de jugement pour... « demande de modification de la Constitution ».

Depuis l'accession au pouvoir de Bachar el Assad, on a voulu croire à une modernisation et à une libéralisation du système. Des débats publics critiquant le régime se sont, certes, tenus depuis juillet 2000, débats souvent noyautés par des cadres du parti gouvernemental Baas. Et, à l'occasion de la visite du président syrien à Paris, fin juin 2000, le journaliste dissident Nizar Nayyuf a été libéré puis a pu venir se faire soigner à Paris.

Cette relative détente, hélas, a pris brusquement fin. Selon Le Monde (daté du 9 novembre 2001) dix opposants ont



été arrêtés depuis fin août. On se souvient en outre de la tentative d'enlèvement dont a été victime Nizar Nayyuf. Les frères de ce dernier, d'ailleurs (dont un universitaire), subissent encore actuellement des pressions diverses.

En fait, la vieille garde syrienne (emmenée par le général Mustapha Tlass, ministre de la Défense, antisémite notoire) semble avoir réussi à s'imposer. Toujours au nom de la lutte anti-sioniste...

Un tel constat n'apparaît négatif cependant (arrestations arbitraires, simulacres de jugement) que si on ne retenait pas de ces événements qu'un noyau d'intellectuels syriens (journalistes, médecins, hommes d'affaires et avocats) existe bel et bien et se bat pour la démocratie et les droits de l'Homme. En Syrie une élite progressiste défend les valeurs dont NDH se réclame. Ses membres illustrent la résurgence d'une société civile vivace, relève crédible du vieux régime stalinien instauré par Hafez el Assad décédé il y a près de deux ans.

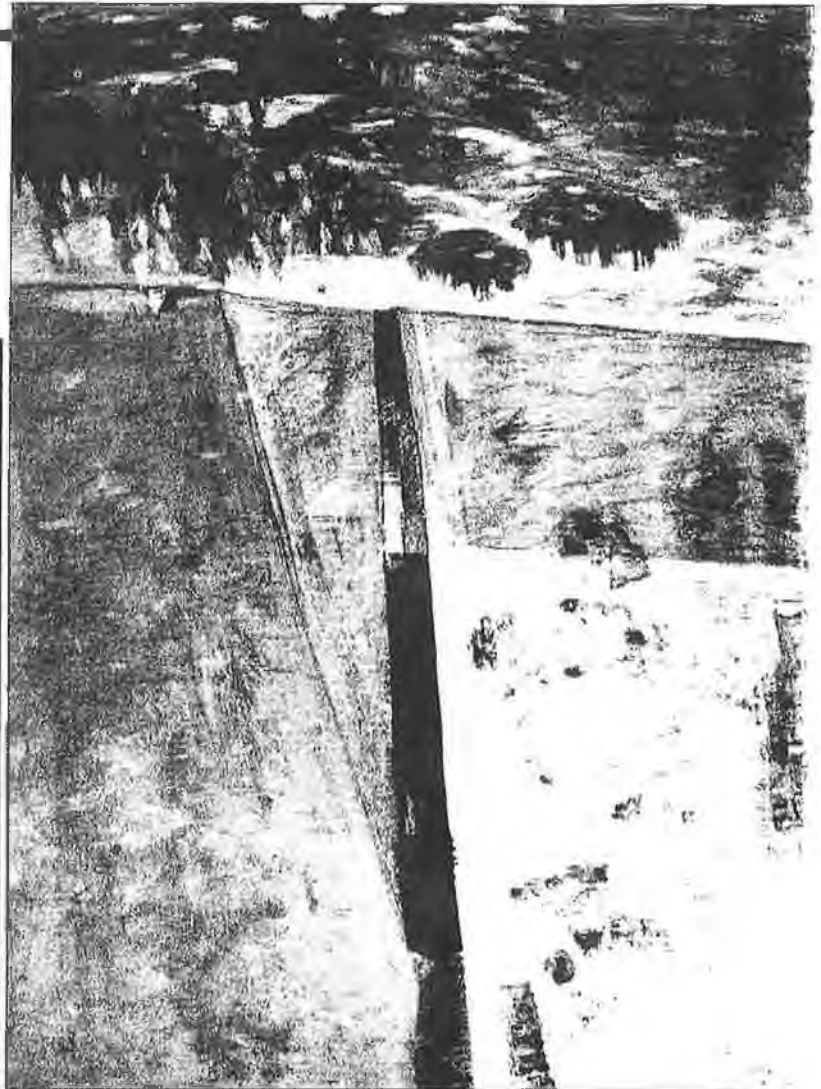
E.H.

في درجات لونية أخرى تمنح للجسد صيغة
ماضٍ سحق ممتد وحاضر في الراهن. وفيما
تظهر تفاصيل وجه المرأة وجسدها الملون،
يظهر جسد الرجل غامقاً من دون ملامح واقفاً
في الخلف.
أما خلفية اللوحة التي يفصل بينها وبين
مقدمتها خط الأفق المعهود في لوحة العيسى
فقد شكل من أجساد كثيرة متناثرة ومجموعة في



بشار العيسى
ولوحته له
ومشهد
من داخل الغاليري
الذي افتتحه.

ساحات أو أمام ما يشبه بيوتاً ونوافذ وأبواباً
وبسطاً ممتدة بألوان مضيئة تشكل عالماً
بأكمله هو العالم الذي تدمج إليه الأم، عالم
الطفولة، عالم القرية.
وفي مكان آخر تبدو اللوحة عامرة بألوان
الشمس الساطعة ولون الحصاد المضيء يعلو
اللوحة النارية الدافئة متشكلاً في درجات
الأصفر التي تمتزج بالليموني وفيها شخوص
مجتمعة كما في حقل كبير أقرب هي أيضاً إلى
شخوص التاريخ أو الأسطورة تحت سماء بعيدة
ملونة لعلها الجنة. ■



لهما حيناً آخر، جسد أشبه بتمثال صغير خرج
لتوه من حفائر أثرية ويزيد في ذلك الألوان التي
يغلف بها الفنان الهيكل والتي تتراوح بين
الليموني والبني والرمادي الأزرق كلها مجتمعة

"جازية" التي تحوات إلى رمز أو علامة: "إنها
ملكتي" يقول الفنان.
يظهر جسد المرأة في مقدمة اللوحة
مستقيماً واقفاً ممدود اليدين حيناً أو ضاماً

تشكيل



وبشخصه، يرسمه، اعتماداً على حدسه وعلى إحساسه المرتبط بالطفولة والمتبني ارتباطه بالعمل الفني الذي يبدو أنه حلقة مستعادة على درب الحاضر. حلقة تغني وتغير وترحل بالفنان إلى أمكنة أخرى غير المكان الباريقي وإلى زمان ماضٍ لكن مملوء في حاضر اللوحة كأنه ماضٍ لا يريد أن ينتهي.

تغدر اللوحة شجرة محملة، مثقلة بوقائع عاطفية كثيفة تمضي بالعمل نحو ما نسيه التاريخ، نحو ذلك الجانب المهمل في مسار الإنسان والذي لم يحدثنا عنه أحد، ولم يعرضه علينا أحد... إنه العيش البسيط والشعر في اليومي العابر وأصالة الإنسان في المكان الأصل.

من هنا فإن شخوص اللوحة تبدو عملاقة. من تلك القادرة على قطع المسافات كلها على السير والترحال على امتداد الحلم والسهوب المعشوشبة أو الجافة. شخوص قوية حاضرة بأبعادها وطقوسها في الملبس وفي السكنى وفي كينونة تنتشي بعيق النكبة الأولى في عراء المكان.

محكوماً بذاكرة مفرقة تفوح بضوع البرية وانبثاق أصواتها أو تنفطر بسحر الأسطورة المخفية في ثوب امرأة أو في ظل شهورها، في انحناءة ربوة خضراء أو في ارتفاع قمة، في سهيل الطبيعة الشاملة وحيرة الطفولة وانبهارها بسحر الأشياء الجمّة حين كان لها طعمها الأول قبل البلوغ وقبل الرحيل، يرسم الفنان اللوحة تلو اللوحة في تسلسل يروح بزمان آخر، أيام كان الحلم يشبه الواقع، أو أيام كان الواقع حلماً.

يحلم العيسى بيئته ويعيد إنتاجها في ضوء الابتعاد عنها. يقيم بينه وبين كائناته، التي تبدو هائلة ممتدة منتشرة في فضاء اللوحة كشعب يهوى في أرض يحبها، علاقات صورية وذهنية. لا يلبث الثراء الصوري الذي يقترب باللوحة من التعبيرية أن يندحر منحنى التجريد. تخون اللوحة ذاتها في سبيل انكشاف أكبر. تجنح الكائنات نحو احتمالاتها. تضيق الشخوص في اتساع اللوحة أو تبرز في المقدم كما في "روكسان" أو "فينوس" أو "الكسندر".

هناك، في اللوحة، الكثير من الثراء الصوري المأفوف بالحدود المستدعى باللون وبالعناصر تتدفق حارة ومتوقدة كنبيح، كصورة الأم التي لا تبارح لوحته، كهاجس مقيم، كولادة.

وهو حين يخوض مخاض اللوحة يتفجر وعيه بالذات البعيدة يستجلبها في حالات طقس متحولة. يصيغ الفنان مهاراته الفنية العالوية بأسلوب يعكس خلاصات جمالية معاصرة ويجسد تجربة حديثة يحكمها إيقاع روحي صاف وواثق. يكون العيسى جمالية مغايرة ترتفع بالعمل إلى آفاق أخرى.

تتحول البيئة إلى كون صغير متكامل بكل عناصره وكائناته.

الأعمال لا تكف في الواقع عن استعادة المشهد الأول كلفة تشكيلية. المشهد البكر في الذاكرة الطافحة به. تفيض الذاكرة على اللوحة وتشتبك في تجريد يستمد كنهه من عالم الطفولة الذي لا يغيب عن لوحة العيسى التي

يعترف العيسى:

"اللوحة مساحة

أعيد عليها

ترتيب ذاتي

لأدري قلبي

وخجلي

في مهب رغباتي

التي لم أكتشف

لها حدوداً بعد،

لكن المساحة تقدم

باستمرار عالماً

مسطحاً فضائياً

قليل العمق،

كأنه يهبنا

كل سره

وكل انبساطه

في عمل يملك طعم

اللامنتهي.

الذي يفصل بين السماء وبين الأرض هو سيد الكون ومن هذا الحيز تستمد الموجودات وجودها، فالمسافات والزمن وتعاقب الليل والنهار كله نتاج هذا الخط. إنه الخط الذي يجلب التوازن إلى لوحته.

أكثر من ذلك فإن لوحة العيسى عملية استحضار دائمة المشهد البعيد زمناً ومكاناً. عمالية محاورة المشهد ذاته منذ السبعينات وإلى اليوم، كان عمله تنويعات على نفس المقام، تقاسيم لا تشيع من استعادة ذاتها، ما يشبهها أو ما يقوم مقامها في محاولة لإحكام السيطرة على المشهد: "أحياناً اضطر لرسم لوحات عدة لأسيطر على هذا الجموح للموجودات التي تتراجع في المشهد الذي أقف أمامه محتاراً في أكثر الأحيان".

بالنسبة له الفنان لا يتغير ولا تتغير علاقته باللوحة، فقط الخبرة هي التي تختلف والمشهد البشري يفتني بموجودات أخرى.

ولكن لماذا يرسم الفنان بشار العيسى؟ يرسم تعبيراً عن الروح القافة التي تحاول أن تتوازن في محيطها وفي حاضرها. تصبح الاستعادة نوعاً من إعادة الاعتبار للذات المغترية ويصبح الإحاح على الذاكرة ضرورياً لانقار الراحل والالتقاء به أو التصالح معه قبل الانطلاق به إلى ذلك العالم الذي لا يخلو، أصلاً والذي لم يعد ربما.

يمنح بشار العيسى المرأة في لوحته مكانة معتبرة، يصور المرأة الريفية الكردية البسيطة أكثر كائنات الكون معاناة للحرمان فكل شيء محرم عليها من ولادتها إلى موتها. يصور الأم

هي في النهاية "صياغة لعلاقة الفنان

بالوجود".

ولا يكتفي الفنان بالفولكلوري العادي من بيئته بل هو ينصب العوالم في مدار تاريخي خارج على الزمان متزهد عليه. يقدم بيوتنا وناساً وعلامات بيئية عدة في لوحة مكثفة الخافية عامرة بالعناصر التي تؤسس لكوسموس صغير متوار وحاضر بكثافة. أما مقدمة اللوحة فهي أكثر بروزاً لكن أيضاً أكثر صموتا وشخوصها يبدون وكأنهم في حيرة من أمرهم أو كمن ينتظر وصول أحد...

يعترف العيسى: "اللوحة مساحة أعيد عليها ترتيب ذاتي لأدري قلبي وخجلي في مهب رغباتي التي لم أكتشف لها حدوداً بعد، لكن المساحة تقدم باستمرار عالماً مسطحاً فضائياً قليل العمق، كأنه يهبنا كل سره وكل انبساطه في عمل يملك طعم اللامنتهي".

أحياناً تنوء اللوحة بثقل نهارات الصيف والقيظ لكنها تبقى محتفظة بتلك الحرية التي تمتلكها البراري الصاخبة الممتدة وأيضاً العناصر كالشجيرات والأشجار ولون الحصاد ولون السهوب وكل الأشياء التي تتداعى في الذاكرة. يقف الفنان شاهداً وحيداً عبر لوحته على تلك الأشياء العابرة في طلع الأمكنة وتسع الأصيل ورائحة الحقول وحيث تألف الحواس ألف عطر وألف لون وألف رائحة.

إلا أن أشد ما يميز لوحة العيسى استخداماً لخط الأفق كعلامة لا بد منها تقسم اللوحة إلى فضاءين: السماء والأرض. "خط الأفق هو المشهد الذي تعرضت عليه أغنيتي. هذا الخط



لوحات للفنان
بشار العيسى.

Alhadath Addawli

الحدث
مجلة سياسية ثقافية

العدد 18 - نيسان/أيار 2002

تشكيل

بشار العيسى:

أرسم لأداري خجلي وقلقي في مهب رغباتي



يقيم الفنان بشار العيسى في باريس

مدينة النور والفنون منذ حوالي العشرين عاماً وهو تمكن أخيراً من تحقيق أمنية غالية عليه: افتتاح غاليري فني في حي "سان بول" في قلب العاصمة الفرنسية وحيث تتبارى صالات العرض الفنية في تقديم كل ما لديها من جديد انجزته ريشة الفنانين المحدثين. يعرض العيسى في صالته "كوريون" إلى جانب لوحاته، لوحات فنانين عرب وأجانب من مثل لبنى الأمين وعباس يوسف وجبار غضبان من البحرين وسيتا مانوكيان من لبنان وقاسم الساعدي من العراق إضافة إلى الفرنسيين فانيسا مونلاي وأنغريد ويبر. وهو يريد لصالته أن تكون، إضافة لاحتوائها أعمال الفنانين المذكورين أنفاً، مساحة للتواصل واللقاء والحوية بين المبدعين في مختلف المجالات. باختصار مكاناً للالتقاء بين الأصدقاء.

بدأ بشار العيسى الرسم مطلع السبعينات من دون أن يتعلم في أكاديمية مكونا عوالم خاصة مسطحة وخطوطاً أفقية تعود به إلى أصوله الكردية في الجزيرة السورية، وهي تجسدت في أعمال توالي عرض مرابا الذاكرة المتقلبة من لوحة إلى لوحة كما تعيد إنتاج الوجوه والأمكنة في تجليات ملونة كانت موضوعاً لحوالي خمس وعشرين معرضاً فردياً عدا المعارض الجماعية.

منذ أقام بشار العيسى معرضه الأول في صالة الشعب في دمشق عام 1972 وهو يرسم نفس اللوحة وعلى الرغم من سنواته الباريسية الطويلة ظل يرسم لوحته، لوحة طفولته، على الهامش، بعيداً عما يفرضه السوق من شروط وحجومات.

ريشته تتوثب باستمرار في محاولة لالتقاط روح القلق الذي يعتريه ليقوده على درب الفن. أما لوحته في باريس فهي نوع من استلزام للملامح وجمعها في وجوه يفوح من تعابيرها عميق التاريخ، التاريخ الذي درسه الفنان في فترة شبابه بالمراسلة، والساكن أيضاً في عناوين اللوحات التي تأتي إلا أن تعيد تكوين



هدى ابراهيم

جاء من أبقتها من سباتها العميق. في مجموعة "طريق الحرير" التي أنجزها الفنان في السنوات الأخيرة، نفع على جملة من التداخيلات التاريخية تعزج فيها الأسطورة بالواقع في لوحة حاشدة بحلقات وفرسان وأمكنة وأشخاص لا عمر لهم، لكنهم يسبحون في فضاء اللوحة مستنامين كمن يطوف فوق ماء ساكن. وهو إذ يرسم المشهد، التاريخي

البيئة الأولى الجامعة التي ينحدر من صلبها كل شيء: اللون والمكان والكائنات والمكونات. غير أن الذاكرة في مفهوم ووعي الفنان تظل مرتبطة باستمرار بنوع من الالتفات إلى الحضارة التي عاشتها منطقتهم في فترة ماضية، هذه الحضارة التي تطبع أعماله وتضفي عليها زخماً شحيحاً قائماً في الأجسام الممتصية بفاماتها الميثولوجية وهباتها التي تعزج بثواب المكان كأنها هبت لثوبها بعد أن

