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### **THE IRAQI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY MEETS FOR A FIRST SESSION ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE HALABJA ATROCITY**

**T**HE National Assembly, elected on 30 January in the first free election in Iraq for half a century, met on 16 March for the first time. The date of 16 March was chosen to correspond with the anniversary of the chemical attack against the Kurdish town of Halabja, ordered in 1988. This attack

caused 5,000 deaths. March was also the month in which the Shiites, in the South, and the Kurds, in the North, revolted against the Saddam Hussein regime in 15 of Iraq's 18 provinces, in 1991, until they were savagely repressed.

The 275 Members of Parliament first heard several verses of the

Qoran recited, and observed a minute's silence in memory of Saddam's victims. They then heard the members of the interim government and leaders of the various political parties, before being sworn in. Welcomed as an important step forward in the democratic process by US President, G.W. Bush, and UN General Secretary, Kofi Annan, the session was mainly formal in character. The speeches from the rostrum, in Arabic then translated into Kur-

dish, the second official language under the provisional Constitution, all stressed that they were meeting two years after the war. *"We are at the gates of freedom and democracy"*, declared the outgoing Prime Minister Iyad Allawi. Kurdish leader Jalal Talaabani considered that *"Iraq will only enjoy stability if it is built on a consensus between all the components of its people"*. For his part, Ashraf Qazi, the UN General Secretary's special envoy, assured his hearers that his organisation *"would stand beside the Iraqi elected representatives in their efforts to lay the foundations of democracy"*. For the first time since the creation of modern Iraq in 1920, the Shiites and the Kurds, the two communities that had been excluded from the highest positions in the country's power structure, are about to gain entrance to them. The Kurds are aiming at the country's Presidency. Their candidate is the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Jalal Talabani. The Shiite list has put proposed the leader of the Islamic Dawa Party, Ibrahim Jaafari, as candidate for the position of Prime Minister.

The Shiite, Kurdish and Sunni Arab leaders had tried, the day before, to finalise an agreement on the Presidential Council before the inaugural session of Parliament. Leaders of the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) and the Kurdish list met leading Sunni public figures, including the outgoing President, Ghazi al-Yawar, the liberal, Adnan Pashashi and representa-

tives of the Committee of Ulemas, the main organisation of Sunni clergy in Iraq. Discussions also took place between Kurdish leaders and Iyad Allawi, outgoing Prime Minister who is standing for the same position.

The question of ministerial portfolios, however, is far from settled. The Shiite and Kurdish lists – the main winners in the election – can count on having 146 and 77 seats respectively. But they want to integrate to the organs of the state representatives of the Sunni community, which, for its part is far from showing its satisfaction of the offers made. According to Maryam al-Rayes, one of the negotiators for the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), the Shiites are claiming 16 to 17 of the portfolios, in particular those of the Interior, Finance, and Councillor for National Security. The Kurds would have seven or eight Ministries, including Foreign Affairs, and are also claiming the Oil Ministry. The Sunni would have between four and six Ministries, the Christians and the Turcomen one each.

On 29 March the transitional Assembly held its second session in Baghdad, strongly guarded by police and troops and over two hours later than announced. But less than half an hour later, the oldest member of the Assembly, Sheikh Dhari al-Fayyad, announced that *"the four principal lists had asked for postponement of the vote"* to elect the President

(Speaker) of the Assembly, *"to enable the Sunnis to finish their discussions about choosing their candidate"*. A representative on Iyad Allawi's Iraqi List blamed the Sunni Members of Parliament, who had been unable to agree on their candidate for this delay. The Sunnis, who had, to a great extent, boycotted the General Election, could only count on having about 16 M.P.s, scattered amongst several lists. They claim, however, the Ministry of Defence, the post of President of the President of the State and several important Ministries. Negotiations stalled on appointment of the Ministry of Defence and the Oil Ministry in particular. The Kurds, furthermore, demand that the Shiites guarantee that they will not impose an Islamic State, while Iyad Allawi, a secular Sunni, made it a condition of his joining the government that the latter be *"completely independent"* of religious authority. The symbolic religious authority of the Iraqi Shiites, the senior Ayatollah Ali Sistani, assured the UN special envoy to Iraq, Ashraf Qazi, on 27 March that he would only intervene in politics in case of necessity. In principle, the position of President of the Assembly should be held by a Sunni Arab and one of the Vice-Presidents should be a Shiite, the second being to a Kurd. The most likely candidate for President of the Assembly was the outgoing Head of State, Ghazi al-Yawar, but he declined the offer on 28 March. The Shiite UIA pushed for the Sunni Arab tribal Chief Fawaz al-

Jarba, elected on its list. But the Kurdish list argued that it were better to have an independent Sunni Arab than a UIA member. The Kurdish list had put forward several Sunni candidates, including the Minister for Industry, Hajem al-Hassani, former spokesman for the Islamic Party, which is close to the Moslem Brothers, who was elected on President al-Yawar's list.

The National Assembly has also to elect the Presidential Council of three, which has the duty of nominating the Prime Minister. A two-thirds majority being needed to appoint this council, the Shiite and Kurdish lists have been negotiating this issue. Since the position of President is due to go to Jalal Talabani, a Kurd, the UAI list is due to choose as their candidates for the two Vice Presidents one Shiite and one Sunni Arab.

This laboured start to the first parliament has aroused discontent and bitterness amongst the inhabitants of Baghdad, who watched this display of powerlessness on television. According to Iraqi political leaders, these delays run the danger of postponing till later the adopting of a constitution for the country. The transitional National Assembly is due to draw up a permanent Constitution by 15 August. Thus Constitution should then be ratified by referendum before 15 October. In an opinion poll carried out by an organisation close to the US Republican Party and published

on 17 March, the Iraqis are said to set great store by the Moslem identity of their country but do not wish to see the strict application of the Sharia. Questioned on what they did want written into the Constitution, 23.3% wished to see the Moslem identity of the country before Human Rights (13.8%) and a long way before the strict application of the Sharia (3.4%).

Furthermore, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Hoshiyar Zebari, speaking at the Arab summit that opened on 22 March, called on the Arab countries to abandon "this state of inertia and waiting with regard to Iraq and let them supply us

*with clear and solid help*". The Arab leaders, meeting in Algiers, responded sluggishly the next day to this appeal for solidarity from Iraq. They "reaffirmed the respect for the unity and sovereignty" of the country "as well as its independence and non-interference in its internal affairs". According to an expert present in the Algerian capital, Iraq secured "classic stands of support that means very much in practice". "Iraq needs action, in particular from its neighbours, whose laxity is a serious danger to its security, but no serious discussion of this subject took place at the summit", commented the expert at the end of the summit.

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## KIRKUK, THE PESHMERGA AND FEDERALISM SUM UP KURDISH CLAIMS

**O**N 19 March, Jalal Talabani confirmed that an agreement had been reached with the Shiite list on the status of the oil producing city of Kirkuk. "We agreed on Article 58 of the fundamental law and it will be applied a month after the new government is set up" stated the leader of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) after a meeting with Massud Barzani, leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). According to Article 58, the government must favour the return of Kurds expelled by the Arabisation policy of Saddam Hussein and make proposals for a final status of the city. "A State has been destroyed and we

*are going to build another as soon as the government is formed*" he added at Salaeddin. Mr. Talabani also hoped that the government be as broad as possible. "We want a government of unity. We want the participation of all the parties, as much the Sunni Arabs as Allawi's list (the list of outgoing Prime Minister Iyad Allawi) he stressed. A leader of the Shiite dominated United Iraqi Alliance announced, for his part, that an agreement had been reached with the Kurds. "We have agreed that the normalisation of the situation in Kirkuk will begin a month after the formation of the government", declared Ali al-Dabagh, the Alliance's negotiator.

The status of the Kurdish fighters, the peshmergas, and that of the oil producing city of Kirkuk were a problem in the negotiations with the Shiites to form a government, Jalal Talabani had said on 14 March. The Kurds do not want the total integration of peshmergas, the militia of the two major parties, the PUK and the KDP, into the Iraqi Army. They are demanding the incorporation of Kirkuk into the autonomous Kurdistan, whereas the fundamental law only provides for remedying the effects of the forced Arabisation of the city by the fallen Saddam Hussein regime.

At the beginning of March, Mr. Barzani summed up the Kurdish claims: *"The Fundamental law must be the basis of the permanent Constitution, that a solution be found at Kirkuk in the basis of Article 58, that the (oil) wealth be shared out equitably and that the principle of federalism be retained"*. The leaders of the UIA had, at that time, considered that the settlement of the question of Kirkuk fell within the competence of the Assembly, without specifically expressing themselves on the issues of the peshmergas and the sharing of resources. The Shiite list's candidate for Prime Minister, Dr. Ibrahim Jaafari, had met Jalal Talabani on 2 March, after the latter had discussed matters with his partner Massud Barzani near Irbil. *"We have struggled together against the dictatorship and the Kurdish people is very optimistic about its future relations with the UIA list, which has a clear position on*

*a federal, parliamentary, united and independent Iraq"* declared Mr. Talabani, after discussions with the Shiite candidate for the position of Prime Minister at Qalajulah, North of Suleiman. He has considered that Mr. Jaafari's co-listers had also *"a realistic position on the Kurdish demands"*.

Meeting on 13 March to examine the preliminary agreement concluded with the majority Shiite group on the subject of the formation of the executive in Iraq, the Kurdish leaders had demanded that an amendment to the agreement drawn up by the Shiites for the formation of a government and the involvement of political organisations as a whole in the negotiations. The members of the KDP and PUK Political Committees had met in Salahaddin for consultations with their negotiators. Returning from Baghdad the latter had reported on the agreement in principle reached with the UIA list. *"We have secured our claims that we considered most essential: democracy, federalism, Human Rights and women's rights"* the Iraqi Vice President Roj Nuri Shawism one of the negotiators had indicated. The next day the Kurdish and Shiite representatives met to try and *"overcome their divergences"*.

The Kurds insist on their demands for a federal Iraq, invoking the many injustices suffered under Saddam Hussein. Their history was marked by many exactions, such as the Anfal campaign, launched in 1988 by the old

regime, which consisted or razing whole villages or the gassing, in the same year, of thousands of Kurds in Halabja. Under the old regime, tens of thousands of Kurds were robbed of their land and expelled from the oil producing city of Kirkuk and the villages of Ninive, Diyala and Salaheddin provinces in Iraqi Kurdistan. Before the overthrow of Saddam Hussein in April 2003, the Kurds enjoyed a dozen years of autonomy thanks to the air exclusion zone imposed by the Gulf War Allies in 1991.

Elsewhere, on 29 March the Arab and Turcoman elected councillors of the oil producing province of Tamin (the capital of which is Kirkuk) boycotted a session of the Provincial Council to oppose plans by the Kurds to secure, according to them, control of the principal positions in the local administration. This body has 26 Kurds, 15 Arabs and Turcomen. A Kurdish Councillor, Ahmad Askari, considered that *"those who want to reach agreement should stay at the meeting to discuss with us"*. But his Turcoman opposite number, Tahsin Mohamad, explained that neither his community nor the Arabs *"want tot attend meetings so as not to legitimise the claims of the Kurds to secure the positions of Governor and Deputy Governor and head of the Provincial Council"*. According to him, *"there is no problem about the Kurds having the position of governor, but the Turcomen and Arabs should have the other positions"*.

## UNO: THE REPORT OF THE ENQUIRY ON THE "FOOD FOR OIL" PROGRAMME IN IRAQ CRITICISES KOFI ANNAN

**T**HE report of the enquiry into the "Food for Oil" programme in Iraq, handed in on 29 March, criticises the UN General Secretary, Kofi Annan, but does not accuse him of corruption. Kofi Annan is criticised for not having taken stronger measures to avoid a possible conflict of interests during the granting of a contract to the Cotecna Inspection Company, which employed his son, Kojo, in Africa. The report slammed Kojo Annan for having concealed information about his working for Cotecna and for having deceived his father, and criticised the Swiss firm for not having made public the fact that it employed the General Secretary's son.

Kojo Annan, son of UN General Secretary Kofi Annan, received at least \$300,000, from the Cotecna company, which had a contract in the context of the UN "Food for Oil" programme in Iraq. According to the British daily, *The Times*, and the Italian Financial daily *Il Sole* 24 of 23 March, the payments "were made in such a way as to hide the source and destination of the money". The sum of \$300,000 represents the double of the amounts mentioned by various media in the past. The two dailies, that conducted a joint enquiry, also reported that the UN General Secretary met senior representatives of the Swiss company, Cotecna Inspec-

tion SA, before the contract in the context of the "Food for Oil" programme was signed in December 1998. Another meeting is said to have taken place after the signature, according to the two papers.

The independent commission of enquiry, led by former president of the US Federal Reserve Bank, Paul Volker, also considered that Kofi Annan had failed to detect the flaws in the UN bureaucracy that allowed the problems in the "Food for Oil" programme to last till 2003.

Kofi Annan had suspended the former official in charge of the "Food for Oil" programme, Benon Sevan, as well as the man who managed the contracts, Joseph Stephanides, in February. The enquirers accused the two men of serious conflicts of interest. The United Nations had, however, recognised on 22 March that it had promised to cover the legal

expenses of Benon Sevan. Fred Eckhard, the spokesman of the UN General Secretary, Kofi Annan, indicated that the latter, on the advice of his legal advisors, had taken the decision to cover Mr. Sevan's legal costs.

This second report of the Commission of Enquiry was submitted a week after Kofi Annan had argued for the most important reform of the United Nations since its creation. Its publication comes at a time when UNO is facing several scandals, in particular accusations of sexual abuse made against Blue Berets as well as allegations of bad management and of sexual harassment directed at senior members of the UNO personnel.

In operation from 1996 to 2003, the programme enabled Saddam Hussein's Iraq to sell oil under UN control to buy essential goods so as to alleviate the sufferings of the Iraqi population caused by the embargo imposed on the regime after its invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

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## MILITARY BALANCE SHEET ON THE WAR IN IRAQ, TWO YEARS AFTER THE AMERICANO-BRITISH COALITION'S INTERVENTION

**T**WO years ago, three Anglo-American divisions crossed the Iraqi-Kuwait border. US President George Bush had decided to overthrow the Iraqi regime, accused, in particular, of possess-

ing weapons of mass destruction, and to install a democracy. Two years later, Iraq is a sovereign State and advancing on the road to democracy, but stricken by terrorism. At the moment, 150,000 American troops are deployed in

Iraq, 45% of them are reservists and national guardsmen (183,000 are mobilised in total. The coalition forces (25 countries in all) total 23,000 troops, including 8,700 British (another 3,500 are in the Gulf), 3,500 South Koreans, 3,300 Italians, down to 46 Armenians and 10 Norwegians.

Since the intervention in Iraq, 1,526 GIs have been killed and 5,867 seriously injured; moreover 176 allied soldiers have been killed and 528 others wounded. Amongst civilians, 78 American civilians and 133 civilians from coalition countries have been killed and 140 American and 239 coalition civilians have been wounded. It is estimated that 30,000 Iraqi soldiers were killed and 90,000 wounded. According to Iraqi statistics, 3,274 Iraqi civilians were killed between 1 July 2004 and 1 January 2005. Other unofficial estimates vary greatly. According to Body Count, an organisation of academics and pacifists that collects information from media, between 16,231 and 18,509 Iraqis civilians have been killed since the beginning of the war.

As far as the cost of the operation is concerned, \$200 billion were spent on military operations and for reconstructing the country. The Pentagon estimates that, in addition, the cost of replacing or rehabilitating army equipment would come to about \$35 billion more. The US House of Representatives approved, on 16 March, the release

of a further \$81.4 billion dollars to cover the war and reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan. By 388 votes to 43, the House granted President Bush virtually all the extra for which the White House had asked (\$82 billion). The Senate will examine this request in April. If it, in turn, approves this extension, it will bring the combined cost of the Afghani, Iraqi conflicts and the "war against terrorism" to \$310 billion.

As far as March is concerned, the number of victims amongst the coalition forces was the lowest for over a year, /of one believes the figures announced by the US and British Defence Ministries on 1<sup>st</sup> April. In all a total of 39 coalition soldiers, 35 of whom were American, were killed in March. This is the lowest since February 2004, when 23 died. That had been the least bloody month since the beginning of the war – the bloodiest being November 2004 when 141 were killed, mostly during the battle for Fallujah.

On the other hand, one of the most murderous bomb attacks on the Shiite community took place in Mosul, where an attack on 10 March killing 41 Iraqis and wounding 81 others was committed by a suicide bombed who walked into a hall adjoining a Shiite mosque where the funeral of a leader of Moqtada Sadr's Radical Shiite movement was being celebrated.

Several attacks recently have tar-

geted police forces in Kirkuk. A Turcoman General of the Iraqi Army was shot down on 22 March. Three days earlier three Iraqi policemen were killed by a bomb during the funeral of one of their colleagues, assassinated the day before. In addition, on 29 March a car bomb exploded as a five-vehicle convoy was passing which contained the Director of the water distribution service, Abdelkader Zinganeh who, however, was unharmed. Nine people, including three Iraqi soldiers were killed and seventeen injured, including eight of Mr. Zinganeh's bodyguard. He was a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

A cameraman of the satellite television network, Kurdistan TV, Hussam Hilal Sarsam, was also shot down by unknown gunmen on 14 March in a North Mossul quarter. The victim, a Christian, had been kidnapped two weeks earlier.

The month of March was also marked by a macabre discovery in Iraq. Two mass graves, containing a total of forty bodies riddled with bullets and decapitated were discovered in Iraq. The police announced on 9 March that 41 bodies had been found in two places in Iraq. Some bodies were riddled with bullets, the others decapitated. The bodies of 26 people who had been shot were found in a field about 20 Km from the town of Kaim (West of Iraq). A similar discovery was made at Latifiya, South of Baghdad where

Iraqi soldiers found 15 decapitated bodies. The nature of the murders — execution by shooting or decapitation — seems to indicate that they were perpetrated by terrorists.

Another mass grave containing 81 Kurds killed under the Saddam Hussein regime were discovered near Kirkuk announced the head of the province's Public Health authority, Dr. Sabah Zanaqana. *"Information received from the police and expelled Kurdish families (under Saddam Hussein) on the outskirts of Kirkuk show that there was a mass grave of 81 people, including five children"* at Rahimawa, 7 Km North of Kurkuk, Dr. Zanaqana pointed out. According to him, *"36 families have been able to identify their missing relatives while 45 have not been identified"*. The forensic medical examination showed that most of the dead, including eight women and five children, were shot in the 90s he stressed, explaining that the mass grave had been discovered after shepherds had found bones in the ground.

Furthermore the US Army announced on 30 March that their forces were detaining some 16,000 prisoners in Iraq in three permanent prison centres and several temporary camps, which is much more than last autumn. According to the Human Rights First (HRF) organisation, the conditions of their detention were harsh and ill treatment frequent in the temporary centres, which were often just a caravan camp surrounded by

barbed wire. In a communiqué published on 31 March, Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh, acting as Prime Minister in the absence abroad of P.M Iyad Allawi, announced a month's extension of the State of Emergency in the country except for the autonomous Kurdish zone. *"The State of Emergency will be extended for 30 days throughout Iraq except for Kurdistan as from the end of the previous decree"*, (promulgated at the end of February) the communiqué indicated. The document explained that this extension had been decided because of the *"persistence of conditions that justified the state of emergency"*, a reference to the insecurity that continues to reign in the country. The last 30-day extension of the state of emergency was announced on 3 March.

The state of emergency over virtually all the country was decreed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi on 7 November, on the eve of the assault on the town of Fallujah. It has been continually renewed since.

The state of emergency gives the Prime Minister extensive powers going from imposing a curfew, issuing arrest warrants, dissolving organisations, restricting movements and ordering phone tapping. The Prime Minister can, with the approval of the courts, *"issue arrest warrants, searches, and impose restrictions on the freedom of citizens or strangers suspected of crimes"* to quote the decree. It can thus restrict *"movement of money and*

*freeze assets of people suspected of plotting, of armed rebellion or assassinations, of explosions or of those cooperating with the criminals"*. It can check mail, *"order phone tapping"*, *"confiscate telecommunications equipment for a stated period"* and *"limit movements of means of land, air or marine transport in regions for a stated period"*. It can also *"impose restrictions, supervise the activity and even temporarily close down shops, clubs, associations, trade unions and firms if they have any connection with the above mentioned crimes"*. It can also call on the Multinational Force to act alongside the Iraqi forces, after agreement with the Presidential Council, which consists of the Head of State and two Vice Presidents.

On the other hand, the report of an independent Presidential Commission, submitted to US President G.W. Bush on 31 March, slams the US intelligence and their incorrect evaluation of prohibited weapons in Iraq before the launching of the war in March 2003. George W. Bush accepted the criticisms in the report that the intelligence services were *"completely wrong"* about the presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. This report, drawn up by Congressmen, a former CIA chief, some judges and a university president called for far reaching changes in the US intelligence. *"The harm done to the credibility of the United States by the mistakes of our intelligence services in Iraq will take years to correct"* the 600-page report said.

However it stresses that there was no proof that these services had manipulated the information they possessed or that they had been under political pressure to do so. *"What their leaders told you about Saddam Hussein's programmes is what they thought. They were simply wrong"*, it affirms.

Meanwhile, Bulgaria, Italy and the Ukraine have announced the partial or total withdrawal of their troops

from Iraq. Bulgaria confirmed that its 462 soldiers would withdraw on 31 December. Ukraine also confirmed that the departure of its last soldiers from Iraq was set for next October, but without giving a precise date. In Italy, the head of the government, Silvio Berlusconi announced a plan to withdraw 300 troops from Iraq in September if his British and American allies agreed. Italy has had about 3,300 deployed in Southern Iraq since June 2003.

Mr. Barzani stressed that the Kurds did not reject the idea of *"re-instating the monarchy's flag, since it bore two stars, symbolising the Arab and Kurdish communities, nor that of the 14<sup>th</sup> July (1958) Republic that showed a sun as well as a sword and a dagger"*.

The Iraqis had protested against the Transitional Government Council, set up in the summer of 2003 by the coalition in Iraq, when it tried to impose a new banner consisting of two blue bands, symbolising the Tigris and the Euphrates, separated by a yellow band, the emblematic colour of the Kurds topped by a white rectangle containing a crescent, the symbol of Islam. This flag was considered too unrepresentative of Iraqi civilisation and its Arab majority, too pro-Kurdish and too blue, like the Israeli flag.

### **MASSUD BARZANI STATES THAT THE EXISTING IRAQI FLAG, WHICH RECALLS THE BLACKEST PERIODS OF IRAQI HISTORY, WILL NOT BE RAISED IN KURDISTAN**

**O**N 23 March, Massud Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, stated that he refused to raise the present Iraqi flag in Kurdistan as this was the symbol of *"one of the blackest periods in the history of Iraq"*. *"This flag dates from 1963, and it is since then that all the massacres, collective murders and crimes have been committed"*, which is why *"it is impossible to raise this flag in Kurdistan as it reflects one of the blackest periods in our history"* declared Mr. Barzani, as quoted by the daily paper Al-Taakhi (Brotherhood), his party's Arabic language official organ, published in Baghdad.

*"Unless a new flag be designed for Iraq, let it once again adopt the flag of the monarchy or that of the 14<sup>th</sup> July Republic, or any other flag that contains a symbol indicating that the Arab and Kurdish communities are*

*the two principal ethnic groups of Iraq. The present flag will not be raised in Kurdistan"*, he explained. *"In our eyes, the present flag is not the flag of Iraq but that of a dictatorial regime"* he stated.

### **TURKEY SHAKEN BY A WAVE OF ANTI-AMERICANISM AND ANTI-SEMITISM**

**T**HE Turkish authorities have completed the technical work of defining the conditions in which US planes can use the Incirlik air base, in Adana Province (Southern Turkey), and the final decision now rests with the government. Turkey may be able to authorise the United States to use one of its principal bases as a logistics centre for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, a senior Turkish official indicated on 30

March. Ankara and Washington have been negotiating this access for several months in an atmosphere made tense because of their divergences over the Iraqi question.

By the terms of this draft agreement, US civilian and military may transit via Incirlik on condition that they only carry *"non-fatal logistic material"*. They would then be expected to inform the Turkish authorities of their flight plans,

but not obliged to seek authorisation for every flight. The agreement will not require approval by the Turkish Parliament as it is within the government's authority to allow the use of this base for logistic and humanitarian transport to Iraq and Afghanistan, pointed out the official. From the end of the Gulf war, in 1991, till 2003, US and British Air force planes had been authorised to use the base for their control flights of the air exclusion zone over Iraqi Kurdistan.

In March 2003, shortly before the Iraqi war, the Turkish Parliament refused to allow passage of United States troops through its territory to open a second front in Iraqi Kurdistan. The traditionally close links between Ankara and Washington, allies in NATO, also slackened because of the Americans' reluctance to intervene against the Kurdish fighters in Turkey. Ankara is above all worried about the place the Iraqi Kurds might occupy in post-Saddam Iraq.

In this oppressive climate, a sharp anti-American feeling is developing in Turkey, provoking real tensions between Ankara and Washington. A political novel entitled *"Metal Storm"*, relating an invasion of Turkey by the United States in 2007 has thus become a best seller with over 110.000 copies sold. Anti-Americanism sells these days in Turkey and the Akis publishing house plans to print at least 50,000 copies of a second novel involving the Americans. *"America is ours"*

will be distributed with, on its cover, a picture of the Statue of Liberty wearing a large moustache – a symbol of Turkish machismo – and an American flag embossed with three crescents, the emblem of the Turkish ultra-nationalists. The subject of the novel is fairly scatty: exasperated by American intervention in the world, especially after US battle-ships secretly sailed up the Bosphorus to Istanbul, a young Turkish nationalist, was visited, while praying, by an extra-terrestrial who granted his wish to take over the American superpower thanks to a device than controls peoples' minds. *"The environment is favourable"*, explains Adem Ozbay, an executive of the publishing house. *"Anti-American feelings are the basis for this novel, but it is not a war book, because no one gets killed"*, explained one of the authors of the book, Erdogan Ekmekei. He does not hide the fact that the *"situation"* is very favourable for the publication of anti-American lampoons, but states that his book is, in fact, a *"self-criticism"* of the Turks and their way of life.

Furthermore, the US State Department confirmed on 18 March that the American Ambassador to Turkey, Mr. Eric Edelman, was resigning from his post in Ankara. Mr. Edelman intends to resign for personal reasons, stated the official spokesman of the State Department, Adam Ereli, in a communiqué to the press. The Ambassador came to Ankara in

2003, when tension between Ankara and Washington was particularly sharp. During her last visit to Ankara, the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice asked him to do more to cool the anti-Americanism of the Turkish press. Recently Mr. Edelman was the target of criticism for expressing his dissatisfaction over the planned visit to Syria, next month, of Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer. The Turkish press had not missed the opportunity to highlighting his Jewish origins to attack his stand.

A fresh upsurge of anti-Semitism is also noticeable, with craze for *Mein Kampf* in the country. Published for the first time in 1939, Hitler's *Mein Kampf* has become over the last few weeks, a best seller in Turkish bookshops – a popularity that specialists explain is due as much to its low price as by the upsurge of nationalism. Since January, *Mein Kampf* has sold nearly 50,000 copies and on 16 March was listed as the fourth highest selling book, according to the D&R bookshop. *"Mein Kampf used to be a hidden best seller, we have brought it out of the cupboards for commercial reasons"* explained Oguz Tektas, of the Manifesto publishing house, who insisted on making the point that his firm had no other motives than those of *"making money"*.

Published by about a dozen publishers, it used to be freely on sale at about 20 new Turkish lire (YTL) or about 11.6 euros. However, the new edition is on sale at 5.90 YTL

(3.4 euros). *"Those who want to know a person who drenched the world in blood and fire read it"* stated Mr. Tektas, whose publishing house was one of the first to offer the work at such a low price and which sold 23,000 copies in two months. Sami Kilic, owner of Emre Publishing, in Istanbul, who has also published *Mein Kampf* – 31,000 distributed since the end of January, of which 26,000 are already sold – admits that it is mainly the young who buy it. *"Events have an impact on sales"* he declared, alluding to Turkish aspirations to join the European Union, which nationalist circles consider an abandoning of national values.

*"This book, which hasn't a spark of humanity, seems, unfortunately, to be taken seriously here"* deplored, for his part, political analyst Dogu Ergil. *"Nazism, which has sunk into historical oblivion in Europe, has started to appear amongst us"*, regretted Professor Ergil.

Silvyo Ovadya, head of the Jewish community of Turkey, which has 22,00 members out of a population of 71 million, declared he was *"irritated"* by this sudden interest for a book that laid the basis for a racist and anti-Semitic policy and expressed astonishment at *"the fact that a 500-page book could be published at such a low price"*. Mr. Ovadya said he had expressed his concern to the publishing houses, which had not wanted to listen. The majority of Turkish Jews are settled in Istanbul, which has 18

synagogues. In November 2003, two Stambuli synagogues were targeted for Islamist bomb attacks,

resulting in 25 deaths and hundreds of injured.

## STRASBOURG: THE EUROPEAN HUMAN RIGHTS COURT CONDEMNS TURKEY IN SEVERAL CASES FOR A SERIES OF VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AGAINST ITS OWN CITIZENS, MOSTLY KURDS

**H**UMAN Rights are a subject of major concern between the European Union and Turkey and the month of March was marked by a number of condemnations of Turkey by the European Court for Human Rights for breaches of Human Rights.

On 30 March, the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) found Turkey guilty, in two distinct cases, of having violated the freedom of expression of its citizens of Kurdish origin. The Court ruled that the 1996 sentence on Omer Agin, 57, of 13 months and ten days imprisonment for *"propaganda against the integrity of the State"* was *"disproportionate to the ends intended"* and not *"necessary in a democratic society"*. The petitioner's critical analysis regarding the government and its policy towards the populations of Kurdish origin had been published in 1993 in the paper *Demokrat*. The ECHR considered the article painted *"a negative picture of the policy of the Turkish State towards its citizens of Kurdish origin"* but did not, for all that, exhort the use of force or violence. The ECHR granted the peti-

tioner 4,000 € for material damages, 15,000€ for moral damages and 1,500 € costs.

In the second case, Turkey was found guilty for having seized the book of Mahmut Alinuk. He had written a novel that appeared in 1997, inspired by real events, in which he told of the ill treatment suffered by villagers of Kurdish origin during operations by police forces. The Court considered that *"even if the tone of certain passages of the book could appear hostile"* they were only *"the expression of a profound feeling of helplessness in the face of tragic events and did not constitute a call for violence"*. Although a former member of parliament *"the petitioner was, at the time of the events a citizen expressing his views in a novel which only reached a small readership, which limited to a considerable extent any potential impact it on public order"* it added.

In yet another case, the European Court for Human Rights, on 24 March found Turkey guilty of the deaths of three Kurds, killed during a military operation in 1992. On 10 November 1992, during military operations near

Diyarbakir, Mehmet Akkum, Mehmet Akan and Derviş Karadoc, respectively aged 29, 70 and 33, were killed. According to the Turkish government the three men died during an exchange of shots between the army and members of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) and its soldiers were not responsible. The victims' families, for their part, assured that he first of them had been shot at point blank range and that the two others had been killed by the security forces. The European Court, noting that Ankara had not supplied it with *"essential evidence"* firstly condemned Turkey for violation of Article 38 (obligation to facilitate an enquiry of the Court) of the European Convention on Human Rights. Then, considering that Turkey, thus, had *"not furnished any explanations for the homicides"* of the three men, the judges also found it guilty of violation of Article 2 (the right to life).

Further more the court stressed the *"suffering"* of the father of Mr. Akkum, whose ears had been cut off after his death, and found Ankara guilty of violation of Article 3 (banning degrading treatment).

Finally, Turkey was found guilty of violating Article 13 (the right to effective recourse) the victims' families having been unable to denounce their deaths to the courts and of Article 1 (protection of property) since Mr. Karadoc's horse and dog were also shot. Ankara must therefore pay 57,000

euros in material damages to Mr. Karadoc's family and 81,000 euros moral damages to the families of the three victims.

On 17 March, the European Court found Turkey guilty of the death of a man taken into detention then killed by shooting during a police operation in 1996. The Court considered that Ankara had violated Articles 2 (right to life) and 13 (right to effective recourse) of the European Convention on Human Rights and granted the petitioner, the deceased suspect's brother, 15,000 euros in moral damages.

Semsettin Gezici was taken in for questioning on 12 August 1996 and placed in detention by the police, the Court recalled in its ruling. Following his statements, a police operation, to which the latter was taken, was conducted on 19 August at the home of a presumed member of the PKK. A shoot-out took place and both Semsettin Gezici and the presumed member of the PKK were killed. *"The authorities have the duty of protecting people in detention who, because of this, are in a vulnerable situation"* stressed the European Court. *"Yet, by placing the man concerned in the presence of the person he had denounced, knowing that he possessed military weapons, the authorities created a potentially dangerous situation and subjected the petitioners brother in an extreme and unjustified danger"*. It nevertheless rejected the allegations that the latter had been *"victim of an extrajudicial execution after being tortured by the*

*police while he was in detention"* as his brother maintained.

Moreover, in another case on the same day, the RCHR also found Turkey guilty of *"not conducting an adequate and effective enquiry into the circumstances"* of the disappearance of a man who, according to his wife, never returned from a journey in April 1996. It considered that *"there was a procedural violation that Article 2 imposes on the State"* and granted 10,000 euros to Talat Turkoglu. The Court, on the other hand, considered that *"it did not have enough evidence to conclude"* as she affirmed, that her husband (who had been several times taken to court before his disappearance for political offences) had been killed by agents of the State or with their complicity.

On 15 March, Turkey was also found guilty by the European Court on for violation of the freedom of expression of five Turkish citizens, sentenced for having written a statement criticising Ankara's policy towards the Kurds. In March 1992, the petitioners, (two lawyers, a professor and two trade unionists) had published, together with twenty other people including former Members of Parliament Leyla Zana and Hatip Dicle, a statement criticising the management of the Kurdish question by Turkey. In 1997, they were sentenced for incitement to hatred and to between one and eight years imprisonment, sentences that they were later excused from serving. The European Court

noted that their condemnation was in pursuit of a "legitimate aim, namely the protection of the territorial integrity" and that the "caustic" remarks and "hostile" tone of the declaration gave "an extremely negative image of the Turkish State". But the judges also considered that there could be found in these remarks "no incitement to violence, to armed resistance or to insurrection" and thus concluded that the sentencing of the petitioners was "disproportionate to the aims pursued". The Court thus found Turkey guilty of violation of Article 10 (freedom of expression) of the European Convention. It was also found guilty of violating Article 6 para. 1 (equitable trial) because of the presence of Army judges in the State Security Court. Ankara must pay 2,000 euros moral damages to each of the five petitioners.

On 31 March, moreover, the European Human Rights Court found Turkey guilty of shortcomings in the enquiry carried out in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus (TRNC) after the murder of a journalist who was very critical of the TRNC authorities and of the Turkish government. A link between the murder and the victim's journalistic activity "is far from improbable", the Strasbourg court considered, expressing its astonishment at the paucity of research into eventual "political motivations" or others linked with the work as a journalist of Kutlu Adali, the author of very critical articles about the Turkish government

and the TRNC authorities. The Court regretted that complementary investigations, which could have helped elucidate the murder, were only carried out after his wife petitioned had to the Strasbourg Court.

It thus concluded there was violation of Article 2 regarding "the lack of effective enquiry into the murder" and of Article 13 (the right to effective recourse), since the widow had been unable to initiate any action for damages. Furthermore Turkey was found guilty of violation of freedom of assembly as the widow was refused authorisation

to go to the South of the island to take part in a bi-communal meeting. The Court granted Ilkay Adali, wife of Kutlu Adali, killed by a bullet in front of his home in 1996, the sum of 20,000 euros damages and 75,000 euros costs and expenses.

Cyprus has been divided since 1974, when the Turkish Army invaded the Northern third of the island in reaction to an (unsuccessful) *coup d'état* by ultra-nationalist Greek Cypriots, backed by the colonels junta in Athens, who wanted to unite Cyprus with Greece.

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### **DAMASCUS: BACHAR AL-ASSAD PARDONS 312 KURDISH PRISONERS, ARRESTED AFTER THE QAMICHLIO INCIDENTS; THE KURDS DENOUNCE THE POLICY OF DISCRIMINATION PRACTICED AGAINST THEM**

**O**N 31 March, the Association for Human Rights in Syria (AHRs) welcomed the release, by the Syrian authorities the day before, of 312 Kurdish prisoners and called for the freeing of all political detainees in the country. "The AHRs appreciates the gesture and calls on the Syrian authorities to free all detainees, political or of conscience, some of whom have been in prison for over twenty years" said the association's communiqué. The movement also called for "the annulment of all the verdicts made by Special Courts in Syria, including those against people in exile".

On 30 March, Syrian President Bachar al-Assad pardoned "all the 312 Kurdish prisoners who had been involved in the Qamichlo disturbances in March 2004" reported the official news agency Sana. From 12 to 17 March 2004 there were clashes between Kurds and police forces or Arab tribes at Qamichlo, near Aleppo, causing 40 deaths according to Kurdish sources but only 25 according to the Syrian authorities. Aziz Daoud, General Secretary of the Kurdish Progressive Democratic Party – banned but tolerated – described this measure as "positive" and giving hope that it would be followed by

*"other similar measures, including all the prisoners of opinion" in Syria.*

Similarly, the Syrian Human Rights lawyer Anouar Bounni welcomed the presidential pardon, considering it as *"a step towards a settlement of the Kurdish problem"*. Mr. Bounni called for *"the freeing of all political detainees"* and asked the Syrian authorities to *"take measures to settle the question of those Kurds whose nationality had been withdrawn"*. He also denounced the arrest of over forty Kurds, including seven women, the day after the Newroz festival, the Kurdish New Year celebrated on 21 March.

For its part, the Syrian Organisation for Human Rights (SOHR), in a communiqué, described the freeing of the Kurds as a *"positive step"*. It asked the Syrian authorities to *"decree a general amnesty covering all detainees, political or of conscience (...) so as to consolidate national unity"*. The SOHR, Presided by Abdel Karim Rihaoui, consists of a group of Syrian intellectuals, including Sadel Jalal Al-Azem, Tayeb Tizini and Mohammad Charhrour. The SOHR, formed in September 2004, published its first communiqué on 16 March. It has still not obtained official authorisation.

On 5 March, in a communiqué distributed in Damascus, some Kurdish parties had denounced the *"chauvinist"* policy of Syria regarding its Kurdish population and called on the authorities for a dia-

logue. *"On the occasion of the first anniversary of the bloody events that occurred in the different Kurdish regions, in Damascus and Aleppo (...) we denounce the policy of discrimination practiced by the authorities towards some Kurdish citizens"* of Syria affirmed several Kurdish parties. The communiqué, signed by several parties, including the Kurdish Progressive Party in Syria, the Kurdish Democratic Alliance in Syria and the Kurdish Democratic Front in Syria called on *"the Syrian democratic forces to a peaceful rally on 12 March next and to consider this date as a day of patriotic and national mourning (...) to denounce the chauvinist practices used by the authorities during those painful events"*. *"The Kurdish people of Syria is determined to face up to attempts to erase its existence and deny its historic role and calls upon the authorities to assume their responsibilities by responding to the calls for dialogue issued by the Kurdish national movement"* the communiqué added.

According to different estimates by Human Rights groups, there are still some 1500 to 2,000 political prisoners in Syria. On 17 March the Association for Human Rights in Syria (AHRs) announced the release of four Syrians accused of being close to the Islamist movements and who had been arrested in the company of 31 others in July 2004. About 800 citizens close to the Islamist trend are still detained in Syria, according to the Association.

Furthermore, on 15 March the Syrian authorities informed the correspondent of the American Arabic language television, *Al-Hurra* that he was forbidden to work in Syria.

The Ministry of Information confirmed this decision, announced by Anouar Bounni and hitting Ammar Moussareh, a journalist who also works for the American Arabic language radio *Sawa* that broadcasts from the United Arab Emirates. *"We have no hostile position to the Al-Hurra network and to Sawa Radio, but their correspondent does not have official accreditation"*, explained a source at the Ministry of Information. Mr. Bounni stated in a communiqué that the journalist did have accreditation that had been withdrawn from him *"because of his covering a sit-in of opponents"* to Damascus. On 10 March, some opponents and Human Rights activists took part in a sit-in in front of the Central Courts in Damascus to demand the *"abrogation of the State of Emergency and the Special Courts"*.

*Al-Hurra* ("free" in Arabic) was started in 2004 to improve America's image and offset in influence of the two very popular networks in the region, *Al-Jazira* of Qatar and its competitor *Al-Arabiya*, based in Dubai. *Sawa* Radio ("together" in Arabic) began broadcasting in 2002. Both are financed by the US Congress and are managed by the American Broadcasting Bureau (BBG).

## IRAN: APART FROM THE IRANIAN NUCLEAR PROGRAMME BEING NEGOTIATED, TEHERAN IS THROWING ITSELF INTO AN ARMS RACE, MAINLY THANKS TO UNO'S STRUGGLE AGAINST DRUG SMUGGLING

**I**RAN and the European Union (EU) will resume negotiations on the Iranian nuclear programme on 10 April, the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran (AEOI) announced on 30 March. Mohammad Saaidi, Assistant Director of the AEOI, quoted by the Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA), indicated that the Iranian delegation would meet representatives of Great Britain, France and Germany in Geneva to discuss new proposals presented by Iran. The Iran-EU negotiations have been under way since 23 March, the two parties making efforts to reach a consensus on the problem of uranium enrichment in Iran. It is up to Teheran to decide whether or not to continue negotiations, added Mr. Saaidi.

On the same day, the Iranian President, Mohammad Khatami, inspected two major nuclear installations in the centre of the country to demonstrate the country's determination and ability to pursue its efforts to acquire nuclear technology. *"Despite pressures from all sides to deprive it of nuclear technology, the Islamic Republic is on the point of producing (nuclear) fuel"*, declared Mr. Khatami after his visit to the two centres. He affirmed that in its negotiations with Great Britain, France and Germany, Iran had

proposed to limit uranium enrichment in the context of a *"pilot phase"*, but *"we are certainly going to continue enrichment"*.

Teheran insists that the sole aim of its nuclear programme is to produce electricity, but the United States affirms that if Iran continues to enrich uranium at any scale whatsoever, it will end up by being capable of equipping itself with an atomic bomb. Iran froze its enrichment activity pending the result of negotiations with the three European states that offered it, if it abandoned enrichment, cooperation in the areas of trade, technology and security. *"We will not abandon nuclear activity for any recompense"*, stated Mr. Khatami, considering it *"intolerable that hundreds of young scientists who have made sacrifices for this technology should abandon their work for a long period"*.

It was after the broadcasting of satellite photos of this plant by US television in December 2002 as well as another not far away at Arak, that the international community became aware of this programme's state of advance. Teheran refuses to renounce enrichment definitely and finally, arguing that the Non-Proliferation Treaty authorises it to produce fuel for its nuclear power stations.

Furthermore, on 10 March, the Pakistani government recognised, for the first time, that the Pakistani scientist Abdul Qadeer Khan, father of the Pakistani nuclear programme, *"delivered centrifuges to Iran"* while stressing that Islamabad was not involved in this transfer of technology.

On another level, Iran is stocking up thousands of high technology weapons and other military equipment, bought thanks to a UN programme of struggle against drug smuggling, according to an internal UN document dated 25 March. In February, Iran received a delivery of hundreds of rifles from an Austrian company, intended for elite sharpshooters, which were capable of piercing armour plate. Wolfgang Fuerlinger, director of Steyr Mannlicher GmbH, who signed the contract for 2,000 rifles with Iran declared that officials of the US Embassy expressed fears about the use of these weapons, evoking the danger that they might fall into the hands of Iraqi insurgents.

The Austrian government approved this sale in November 2004, after deciding that this arms cargo could be used against drug smugglers in Iran. Other European countries have signed similar arms sales contracts with Iran, when they were convinced that Iran would use them for fighting drug smuggling on its own soil, pointed out the Austrian official, off the record.

According to an internal document of the UN programme of struggle against drug smuggling, France and Great Britain have thus supplied Iran with night vision binoculars, GPS systems, computers and bullet-proof equipment to fight drug smuggling in the country.

Iranian officials have confirmed the delivery of this equipment. A diplomat closely concerned with the case considered that there had "probably been hundreds" such deliveries. In London, the Foreign Office confirmed the despatch of 250 night vision binoculars, approved by the British government two years ago for Iranian patrols along the long Afghan border.

Teheran is also, thanks to UN funds, acquiring a satellite network, which it says it needs to track down drug smugglers. Washington, however, fears it might be used to spy on Americans in Iraq or in Afghanistan or even US Army reconnaissance missions on Iranian soil. Moreover, Austrian officials with access to secret service information who wish to remain anonymous have declared that Iranian diplomats in European capitals are routinely signing weapons purchasing contracts.

A major part of the military equipment being acquired by Iran is hard to hide. The American authorities and NGOs have detailed information about the

tank and missile purchases in Byelorussia and China or of helicopters and artillery in Russia. Other weapons may be smuggled into Iran and their presence only discovered by accident, like a cargo of 12 cruise missiles with nuclear capacity, delivered by a Ukrainian arms smuggler to Iran four years ago that was only recently revealed by leaders of the

Ukrainian opposition. Iran says it needs a satellite system and high tech weapons bought on the European market, such as night vision binoculars and advanced communication equipment in the context of the UN programme against drug smuggling in the region, in particular that coming from Afghanistan.

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### **IN DIYARBEKIR, THE SWISS FEDERAL COUNCILLOR, MICHELINE CALMY-REY, ON AN OFFICIAL VISIT TO TURKEY, PROMOTES SWITZERLAND AS A "MULTI-CULTURAL AND MULTILINGUAL" COUNTRY**

**T**HE Swiss Federal Councillor, Micheline Calmy-Rey, started a three-day visit to Turkey this month. On her arrival on 29 March, she was met by Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer and by Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul.

The Swiss Minister called on Turkey to undertake a deep-searching historical work on the Armenian genocide perpetrated by that country during the First World War. *"We think that it is essential that every country carry out deep-searching study of its own past, particularly regarding such a painful subject"* declared Mrs. Calmy-Rey to the press in Ankara after meeting her Turkish opposite number Abdullah Gul. An official visit was due to take place in 2003 but was cancelled after a vote by the national Council, the lower house

of the Swiss parliament, recognising the genocide of the Armenians under the Ottoman Empire. Mr. Gul, for his part, repeated that the accusation of genocide by the Armenian diaspora was *"unacceptable"* for Turkey, while recognising that this question *"poisons our relations with other countries"*.

Mrs. Calmy-Rey welcomed as a "good idea" Ankara's recent proposal to commission historians for a deep study of this question. She pointed out her proposal to Mr. Gul to have international experts take part to make this work more credible.

On the second day of her journey to Turkey, Micheline Calmy-Rey visited Diyarbakir. There she met local authorities and representatives of NGOs. The Swiss Federal Department for Foreign Affairs (DFAE) supports four NGOs in

this region. It devotes 3.7 million Swiss francs (SF) spread over several years to them. These organisations are principally active in the areas of domestic violence, women's education or the ill treatment of children. Mrs. Calmy-Rey visited one of them, KA-MER, which struggles against violence against women. Berne supported it with 38,000 SF in 2004 according to the DFAE. In the course of an interview that appeared on 29 March in the Turkish paper *Türkiye*, the Federal Councillor had indicated that she wanted to see for herself *"living conditions on the spot"*. *"Turkey does not just consist of Istanbul or Ankara"*, she added. Mrs. Calmy-Rey thus argued for observance of women's rights and those of minorities. The Swiss Foreign Minister recognised that the application of the reforms in this area still leave a lot to be desired. *"Over the last few years the Turkish government has made considerable efforts and passed a number of reforms, particularly in the areas of human rights"* remarked the Swiss foreign minister after having met with officials of a local NGO, KA-MER. But *"I hear from all sides that they actual application is not taking place smoothly"*, she stressed. Mrs. Calmy-Rey added that applying these new laws could well take time, since *"attitudes will have to change"*. She hoped for *"the extension and consolidation"* of reforms, particularly in the areas of freedom of expression and women's rights.

Moreover, *"as a Swiss woman, born*

*in a multicultural and multilingual country"* she said she was particularly interested in the rights of minorities. In Switzerland, *"experience has shown us that it is essential for national cohesion that the minorities have the means of defending their cultural rights"*, she pointed out. She insisted on the progress achieved in the areas of education and the media. The Foreign Minister thus judged as positive the fact that Televisions could broadcast in several languages and that education could be given in Kurdish.

However, in contradiction to these remarks, only a single private school gives Kurdish language courses in Diyarbakir, local journalists pointed out. Similarly only one private TV network, Gün-TV offers programmes in this language, and that only for the last year. Before that, it could not even broadcast music or advertising in Kurdish. As for the public television, it only offers two and a half hours a week in Kurdish. And these are devoted to the previous weeks national news, translated into Kurdish.

On her arrival in Diyarbakir, Micheline Calmy-Rey paid a courtesy visit to the local governor, Efkon Ala. She then met Osman Baydemir, the mayor of that city of a million inhabitants, and members of the moderate Kurdish DEHAP party. After having talked to the two local leaders, she said she *"saw clearly the necessity to act"* in favour of economic development of this poor and rural region.

This zone *"has an important economic back log to fill"* she considered.

This part of her visit had caused irritation in Ankara during the planning of the Minister's previous journey in 2003. Shortly after the Turkish authorities had accused Mrs. Calmy-Rey of partiality towards the Kurdish cause because she had talked to a representative of that community during a conference in Lausanne. In 1993, relations between Berne and Ankara had experienced their first cold spell, when a Kurdish demonstrator was shot down in front of the Turkish embassy in Berne. The day before he had asked that the Kurdistan workers Party (PKK) be listed as a terrorist organisation in Switzerland and was refused. Switzerland does not list any organisation as terrorist except for al-Qaida, which is so listed by the United Nations, according to Mrs. Calmy-Rey's diplomatic advisor, Roberto Balzaretti.

Finally, on the last day of her visit, Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey took advantage of her trip to Turkey to look after Swiss trade relations. She spoke before the Switzerland-Turkey Chamber of Commerce in Istanbul. Turkey, Switzerland's principal trade partner in the Middle East, represents an important outlet for Swiss exports. In 2004, they reached 1.9 billion SF – a 17% increase on the year before. Switzerland is Turkey's fourth largest supplier.

The trade balance is slightly in Ankara's favour. Swiss investments, for their part, reached 1.1 billion SF in 2003 an increase of 84 million over the year before, according to the Swiss National Bank. Switzerland ranks sixth amongst foreign investors in Turkey.

Furthermore, the Swiss Federal Council decided on 23 March that export requests for war material to Turkey will again be treated by normal authorisation procedures. Following the warlike conditions in the Kurdish provinces, the Federal Council had decided in 1992 that any demands for the export of war material to Turkey should be submitted to it for vetting. Since then, only a few exports of arms intended for private individuals and used for personal defence or target shooting sports have been authorised.

Gradually a number of EU countries have lifted their restrictions on the delivery of war material to Turkey. They thus authorised, in 2003, arms exports to Turkey amounting to some 780 million euros. Hence the Federal Council has no longer any reason to maintain the special procedures set up in 1992. Hence it has authorised the State Secretariat for the economy (SECO) to again apply the normal procedure with regard to Turkey. According to the latter, SECO decides on export demands in agreement with the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs.

## THE CELEBRATION OF NEWROZ, THE KURDISH NEW YEAR, AROUSES VIRULENT REACTIONS FROM THE ULTRANATIONALISTS



A local incident, presented in the media as *"an outrage to the national symbol"*, provoked a vast demonstration of patriotism throughout Turkey, with flag-waving and a rallies. On 20 March, some Kurdish teenagers took it out on the Turkish flag during a rally in Mersin until a plainclothes policeman intervened. Three of them, aged between 12 and 1 years, were taken into custody and held in the anti-terrorist section of the Turkish police and in all thirty people were arrested in the town. The pictures broadcast by the television networks provoked sporadic demonstrations in reaction, particularly at Erzurum, in which Turkish flags were waved. The press and authorities called it a scandal and a provocation, despite the youth of the suspects.

On 22 March, the Turkish Army sharply attacked the *"authors"*, considering that their act was *"treason"*. *"The Turkish people (...) has never been confronted with such an act of treason by its own alleged citizens"*, stressed a particularly virulent communiqué from the Armed Forces General Staff. *"It's an act of treason"*, the statement continued. The Turkish Army also called on all *"those who want to test the love of the Armed Forces for their*

*country and their flag to look at the pages of history"*. There is a strict law on respect for the flag and any contravention is punishable by a fine or a period in prison. It may not be placed anywhere where people could sit or walk on it. No one may insult, burn tear or throw it in the ground.

The government and the whole political caste, including the principal pro-Kurdish organisation, DEHAP, condemned the event. A fever of nationalism swept the country and the national symbol became omnipresent in the streets. Thousands of flags were freely distributed in the streets and the television channels all put the flag as a vignette in the corner of the screens. Balconies, terraces, municipal buses, taxis and shops were decorated with the national symbol. Istanbul's historic Grand Bazaar, a tourist highlight was not spared.

Some journalists however, launched appeals to the population to show some restraint so as to avoid the possibility of incidents between Kurds and Turks, but nationalist touchiness is always near the surface. Some analysts are worried about this situation in a country that is due to start negotiations in October for membership of the European

Union *"There is a feeling of 'I've had enough' in the population that defines its national identity as Turkish" regarding the aspirations of the Kurds, considered an editorial writer in the daily Radikal. She states that an anti-Kurdish "racism" is resurging in Turkey and that it must henceforth be discussed openly to remedy it.*

The Kurds, who are between 15 and 18 million strong in Turkey, take advantage of Newroz, their traditional New Year that announces the beginning of spring, to claim their rights. About a million people took part in the festivities this year in the various Kurdish provinces and the Turkish cities with a large Kurdish population. In Diyarbakir, 700,000 gathered to celebrate Newroz, which, in the past, has been a source of tension and bloody clashes with the Turkish police. Kurdish leaders who took part in the celebrations in Diyarbakir urged Ankara to extend Kurdish rights and put an end to the conflict that has caused some 36,500 deaths. *"We do not expect a solution from the European Union, nor from the United States but from those who govern Turkey",* declared Tuncer Bakirhan, President of the People's Democratic Party (DEHAP). *"If you decide, the Kurdish people is ready with its projects and the problems can be solved in three months"* he added.

A large police presence — 4,000 strong according to CNN-Turk television Ø was deployed in

Diyarbakir to ensure that the celebrations went off smoothly. The City's exhibition park was full of men and women dancing and singing around bonfires. For many years the Turkish authorities banned Newroz celebrations, which are also celebrated in Iran, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

In Istanbul, a crowd of men and women took part in this demonstration closely watched by hundreds of police and gendarmes in full riot gear. The crowds began to gather as from the early hours of 20 March, in a square of a suburb of this metropolis, for this ancient festival to celebrate the Spring Equinox, which goes back to Zoroastrian times or earlier. Folk songs were sung, and circles formed round a bonfire over which the demonstrators jumped.

For the first time in American history, the US President G.W. Bush sent his greetings for the Newroz festival. *"Newroz marks the arrival of the New Year and the celebration of life. For a long time it has been an occasion for a family gathering with some friends and to enjoy the beauty of nature",* wrote Mr. Bush in a communiqué. *"Many Americans whose origins are in Iran, Iraq and Afghanistan, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Turkey of Central Asia celebrate this festival to preserve their ancient heritage and to ensure that their values and traditions are passed down through the generations"* he added. Newroz was celebrated by various events in all the Kurdish communities of Europe and the Near East, including France, where François Hollande, First Secretary of the Socialist Party, sent a message to the Kurds.

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## ROTTERDAM: THE FIRST HEARING OF THE TRIAL OF A DUTCHMAN ACCUSED OF HAVING SUPPLIED CHEMICAL PRODUCTS TO THE SADDAM HUSSEIN REGIME

**S**EVENTEEN years after the murderous gas attack on the Kurdish town of Halabja, a Dutchman, Frans van Anraat, accused of complicity of genocide for having supplied chemical products to Saddam Hussein, appeared in court on 18 March to answer for his crimes. Frans van Anraat, a 62-year-old trader, is the first Dutchman accused of genocide, the most serious crime in international law. He was arrested on 7

December in Holland, as he was about to flee. His lawyers state that he was protected by the Ministry of the Interior and the Dutch Intelligence Services (AIVD). If found guilty of complicity with genocide and war crimes, he faces a life sentence.

The hearing, which took place before The Hague Court, met exceptionally in a high security courtroom in Rotterdam, was concerned with establishing the evi-

dence collected in the enquiry. The trial itself is not due to start until 21 November. *"There is sufficient evidence to show that van Anraat was fully aware of the fact that the ingredients he was supplying to the Saddam Hussein regime) were being used for chemical attacks"* stressed the Public Prosecutor, Fred Teeven.

Apart from the Halabja attack, which caused 5,000 deaths in one day, the prosecutor accuses him of complicity in several gas attacks in Iraqi Kurdistan, but also in Iran, in the town of Sardasht, in 1987 and 1988.

Dozens of Iraqi, Turkish or Iranian Kurds made the journey to attend this first hearing. Four Kurds residing in Holland came forward as victims of Saddam chemical weapons and associated themselves with the prosecution, each claiming 10,000 euros damages. *"For me, van Anraat's arrest is nearly as important as that of Saddam Hussein"* one of these survivors, Karwan Abdullah admitted. His village, Shanagse, suffered a gas attack on 22 March 1988. Mr. Abdullah still suffers from lesions of the eyes and skin. *"If van Anraat hadn't delivered those chemical products, Saddam Hussein would not have been able to go as far as he did against the Kurdish people"* he added. *"We are here to see this fellow who did so much harm to our people"* declared Sherzad Rozbayani, a Kurd from Iraq now living in Holland and a member of the Union of Kurdish Students. *"He helped Saddam to secure arms to kill the Kurds"* he

added. *"It is not just the trial of a single person but also of the responsibility of the Dutch State, because van Anraat worked with the AIVD"* explained, for his part, a Kurd from Turkey.

The businessman, who has not spoken himself during the hearing, does not deny the sale of these chemical products but insists that he did not know their final use. *"It was simply a side line, not the heart of my business"*, he had stated in the Dutch television broadcast that made his case publicly known. The Prosecutor cast doubt on these arguments by stating that Mr. van Anraat had *"continued delivering these products even after the Halabja attack"*.

According to the prosecution, the businessman was at the head of eleven companies, based on different countries, which supplied ingredients, coming from the United States and Japan, which went into the making of mustard gas. Targeted by an American enquiry, Mr. van Anraat was arrested in Italy in 1989 but escaped to Iraq where he remained till the American-led coalition attack in 2003, at which date he sought refuge in Holland. According to the prosecution, the US customs opened an enquiry on Mr. van Anraat several years ago. The United States concluded that he was implicated in the supply of four deliveries of thiodiglycol, a basic chemical in the production of mustard gas, from the United States to Europe. For unexplained reasons, the US

withdrew their demand for the trader's extradition in the year 2000. Consequently the Dutch authorities, who were aware of his presence in the kingdom ever since 2003, had no legal grounds for arresting him. It required the charges of genocide and war crimes for them to act.

According to several Dutch media, Frans van Anraat lived for a while, after his flight from Iraq, in accommodation provided by the Dutch government to protect certain people. The Minister of the Interior, Johan Remkes, has refused to comment on this information, arguing that any indications regarding these "safe houses" were confidential. On 27 December last, the Hague Court of Appeal ordered Mr. van Anraat's release, without giving any grounds for this decision, thereby strengthening speculations on the links between the accused and the AVID. The prosecutor had appealed against this decision and the release was quashed on 2 February.

His lawyer, Jan Willem van Schalk, insisted that the Minister of the Interior and the AVID had protected him, providing accommodation and a mobile phone, on his arrival from Iraq in 2003. He stated that these services had encouraged him to grant the television interview that had started the enquiry on 6 November 2003.

At the end of the hearing, the judges rejected a demand for release on bail, a decision greeted

with loud applause from the public benches. A further technical hearing is due on 10 June.

On 16 March 1988, in the middle of the war against Iran, Saddam Hussein's armed forces spread military type gases on Halabja, 250 Km North of Baghdad and 11 Km from the Iranian border, the day after the town was taken by fighters of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, at that time supported by Teheran. The artillery and Air Force began by bombing this large rural township of over 40,000 inhabitants. The fighters and most of the men retreated to the hills around, leaving the old and the women and children in the town when, soon after noon, the planes dropped chemical bombs.

The Iraqi forces were under the command of Ali Hassan al-Majid, the first cousin of dictator Saddam Hussein, since then nicknamed "Chemical Ali". Arrested by the coalition forces on 21 August 2003, he is one of the 11 former leaders of the overthrown regime being tried by the Iraqi Special Court on capital charges.

There were about 5,000 killed, 75% of whom were women and children, and some 7,000 injured according to the assessment made by the Kurdish authorities. According to experts, this was the biggest ever attack with war gasses against civilians. The massacre was rapidly known because the fighters, coming down from the hills sounded the alarm and

foreign journalists rapidly came to the scene and filmed and photographed the dozens of Kurds lying lifeless in front of their houses, fallen trying to flee, often with their respiratory tracts full of blood.

The experts consider that the planes had dropped a range of different chemicals, including mustard gas, tear gas and Agent VX, which is a nerve gas. Iraq, at that time was being supplied and armed by the Western powers, in particular France, the United States and Great Britain. Even today, people affected are dying of cancer and leukaemia, are suffering from asthma or sterility and women are having premature or abortive births. Mustard gas affects the genes and its effects can still be felt for several generations, according to doctors.

In 1998 the US State Department, on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the attack on Halabja stated that the massacre "*was not the only time that the Baghdad regime used chemical weapons. It is estimated that 20,000 Iranian soldiers were killed by this sort of attack between 1983 and 88, during the war*". Giving evidence before the US Senate, Christine Gosden, a specialist in genetic medicine from Liverpool (UK) who visited Halabja in 1998, revealed that the number of cancers and leukaemia cases were three to four times the average as well as the number of deformities amongst new born babies. "*The genetic mutations and cancers amongst this population are comparable with those amongst the victims of the atom bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki who were one or two km from point zero*" she said.

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## AS WELL AS ...

• **A CALL FOR AN AUTONOMOUS SHIITE REGION IN IRAQ.** On 10 March, an Iraqi tribal chief and member of parliament, Abdel Karim al-Mohammadawi issued a call for the setting up of an autonomous Shiite region in the South, following the example of Iraqi Kurdistan. "*An autonomous Shiite region must be recognised in the next Constitution*" declared Mr. Mohammadawi, elected on the Shiite list that has a majority in the new Parliament and nicknamed "*prince of the marshes*" because of his opposition to Saddam

Hussein's regime in the marshy region of South-East Iraq. He launched this call during a meeting of co-ordination at Nassiriyah, 375 Km Southeast of Baghdad, assembling political and religious public figures of the Shiite South and central provinces. "*Such a zone would give the Shiites the possibility of organising themselves better and of enjoying the natural resources of the country that must be better shared*" he added with reference to the oil riches of the South.

Mr. Mohammadawi, who leads the

Iraqi Hezbollah, withdrew from the Shiite parliamentary group on 4 March in protest at the slowness of the negotiations for forming the executive. The meeting only brought together representatives of the Southern provinces of Zi Qar, of which Nassiriyah is the capital, Missane and Basra.

On 6 December, 600 representatives and public figures of five Shiite provinces of the Centre of Iraq had announced their intention of forming joint institutions, laying the foundations of an autonomous region comparable to that of the Kurds. After a congress of several hours in the holy city of Najaf, South of Baghdad, those taking part had indicated the intention of setting up a security commission for these provinces. They had also decided to create a regional Council charged with the task of reviving economic activity in this relatively disadvantaged region that is the heartland of Shiite Iraq.

The Fundamental Law, or provisional Constitution, recognises the federal character of Iraq, in which the majority of the Kurdish population lives in three Kurdish provinces that already enjoy a wide degree of autonomy. Article 53 states that a maximum of three provinces can form an autonomous region.

• **THE NEW TURKISH PENAL CODE POSTPONED TO 1 JUNE AFTER THE STORM OF PROTEST FROM JOURNALISTS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ATTACKING THE PENALTIES IT PROVIDES FOR THOSE WHO**

**"INSULT" THE STATE.** On 31 March the Turkish parliament adopted a law postponing the entering into effect of the new "pro-European" Penal Code till 1 June (originally planned for 1 April) but the government insists that this is for purely technical reasons. The reason put forward by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), in office, is that certain articles could, amongst other, create failings in the struggle against smuggling.

The reform, that profoundly alters the 78-year-old Penal Code, borrowed from Fascist Italy, was adopted in September 2004 so as to align the country on the standards of the European Union, which Turkey hopes to join. It was welcomed mainly for strengthening penalties against people guilty of violations of human rights and for measures improving women's rights. It had been considered the last major modification of Turkish legislation needed for Turkey to secure a date for stating negotiations for membership of the E.U. These negotiations are due to begin on 3 October next, in line with the decision taken at the European summit in December 2004.

The part of the new Penal Code that aroused the storm of protest amongst journalists and human rights defenders is that which provides prison sentences for those who "insult" the Turkish state, publish confidential information and keep silent about cases of rape and euthanasia. The new code could result in "a number of arbitrary legal proceedings (...) and fill the prisons with journalists" stated sev-

eral press groups in a letter sent to the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, on 16 March. "The major media groups were bewitched by the campaign to join the E.U. and did not see, or want to see, the dangers in this law" stated Oral Calislar, a leading member of the Turkish Journalists Association. Recent attacks on the press by Prime Minister Erdogan, however, have led the journalists to examine more closely the new code. "The Musa Kart incident was the spark that inflamed suspicions", declared Mr. Calislar, with reference to a caricaturist sued by Mr. Erdogan for having drawn the Prime Minister as a cat entangled in a ball of wool.

An article provides for up to 15 years imprisonment for persons who spread, through media and in exchange for any material benefits coming from abroad, any propaganda running counter to "fundamental national interests". This article in particular is sowing anxiety — explanatory notes attached to the Bill reveal that it could be aimed at those who argue in favour of the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Northern Cyprus or favour recognition of the genocidal character of the massacres perpetrated on the Armenians in 1915 by the Ottoman Empire. "What would happen, for example, to an institution that receives E.U. funds and criticises Turkey's Cyprus policy?" asked Mr. Calislar. Adem Sozuer, a jurist who had taken part in the drafting of the Penal Code, recognised that certain measures should be amended, but maintained that the document guaranteed freedom of the press and opinion. The government has reject-

ed the possibility of suspending the application of the new penal code, considering that amendments could be adopted later if serious problems arose in practice. "I do not think that the journalists' suspicions will be confirmed once the law has come into force", declared Koksall Toptan, head of the parliamentary legal commission. According to experts, the measures regarding the media contain sufficiently vague terms to enable judges or prosecutors arbitrarily to start proceedings and to reintroduce prison sentences for journalists, writers and intellectuals, although abolished by an earlier reform. Hundreds of journalists, writers and intellectuals have been jailed in Turkey for having expressed their opinions.

Even if it is not openly raised by members of the government, the vast campaign led by the media would have an effect on the government's decision. Abdullah Gul, for his part, wanting to reassure the E.U., indicated that this postponement was "purely for technical reasons". "There is no question of not honouring our commitments (towards the E.U.). We are pursuing the reform process", he stressed to a group of journalists.

The Minister of Justice, Cemil Cisek, was opposed to the postponement, considering that a fresh delay would change nothing. "Everyone, including the press, has had time to think about the code", he said in the NTV private network. "It would be a waste of time".

#### • A WOMAN CORRESPONDENT OF AN AUSTRIAN RADIO, WHO

**HAS BEEN IN DETENTION FOR A MONTH AND A HALF, RELEASED ON BAIL BY A TURKISH COURT.** On 30 March, a Turkish Court released on bail an Austrian woman accused of being a member of an illegal extreme left Turkish group, pending her trial. Sandra Bakutz, correspondent of the Austrian radio Orange 94.0 and of the German weekly *Junge Welt*, had been arrested by the police on 10 February on her arrival in Turkey. She had gone to Istanbul to cover the trial of 82 activists arrested last year in the context of an international police operation against the People's Revolutionary Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C). This extreme left movement is classed by the United States and the European Union as a terrorist organisation.

Mrs. Bakutz had been locked up the next day on the basis of a warrant for her arrest issued by an Ankara court in 2000. The warrant was based on information by a Turkish paper, which had reported that the journalist had helped a group of DHKP-C activists during a demonstration in Brussels against the visit of the former Foreign Minister Ismail Cem.

The journalist was released during her first hearing. The trial was adjourned till 1 June, declared one of the lawyers, Behic Asci. "We are insisting on her acquittal. The evidence against her is really extremely weak", he added. Sandra Bakutz should be able to return home in the course of the week, according to the lawyer.

The journalist denied belonging to

DHKP-C and denied having played any role whatsoever in the demonstration against the Turkish Minister. She pointed out that she was a human rights activist and had supported the campaign against the conditions of detention in Turkish prisons, which this movement had supported.

*Reporters sans Frontières* expressed its relief at the decision to release her on bail. "We are glad at this decision, but expect of the Turkish authorities that they continue this route by abandoning all charges against this young Austrian journalist. She has already served enough days in prison for nothing. This release must not just be on bail but final, because the Turkish authorities have been unable to show Sandra Bakutz's responsibility for any of the things with which she has been charged" declared the organisation. According to *Reporters sans Frontières* she still faces the danger of a 10 to 15 year sentence.

**• NEW FOREIGN ACQUISITIONS OF TV NETWORKS AND REAL ESTATE BLOCKED IN TURKEY.** On 31 March, the Turkish President, Ahmet Necdet Sezer, vetoed a law authorising the complete sale of a private TV network to foreign investors, considering that this would be contrary to "national interests", his press service announced.

The law, passed by the National Assembly on 16 March, amended an earlier law stipulating that foreign companies could only own 25% of the shares in a television network. By the new law, foreign companies could own all the shares of a TV net-

work. *"This situation is incompatible with national and public interests"*, the Head of State considered in a twelve page statement detailing his opposition to this law proposed by the Justice and Development Party (AKP), in office.

During the debate on the Bill, some of the AKP members of parliament had voted against it, arguing that the acquisition of the totality of the shares of a TV network by one or more foreign companies could cause problems.

The government pushed this law through mainly to enable the sale of the *Star* network, which belonged to the Uzan family, which was involved in a major financial scandal. This network, which has a national coverage, is today under State stewardship. *Magic Box*, renamed *Star*, had been the first Turkish private network.

The President of the Republic can only veto a law that has been presented to him once. If Parliament then passes the law again in the same terms, Mr. Sezer will then be obliged to sign it though he may submit the case to the Constitutional Court

Moreover, on 14 March, the Vice-President of the Constitutional Court annulled measures in a law allowing foreigners to acquire land and buildings in Turkey. The Court judged unsatisfactory the restrictions and guarantees provided by the law, which was adopted by parliament in

July 2003, he declared to journalists. The principal opposition party in the Turkish Assembly, the Republican People's Party (CHP – social democratic) had referred the case to the Constitutional Court, demanding cancellation of certain measures that provided, in particular, that foreign individuals or firms could buy property in Turkey, that aspires to join the European Union.

The legislation will remain in force for three months, giving the members of parliament time to adopt new measures to fill the *"legal vacuum"* due to transactions in process, stressed Mr. Kilic. He affirmed that the decision of the Court did not mean that *"strangers cannot buy anything in Turkey"*.

The Turkish press had highlighted the increase in the number of foreigners buying land or houses in Turkey. Information about Israeli companies buying property, particularly in the water-rich Kurdish provinces, had provoked sharp reaction in nationalist circles.

• **IRAQ GOES BACK ON ITS ADHERENCE TO THE ROME TREATY SETTING UP THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC).** On 3 March the public television announced that the Iraqi government had gone back on its decision, announced on 17 February, to adhere to the Rome treaty setting up the International Criminal Court (ICC). The latter did not explain this

about turn. In a brief news item, the Channel indicated that the Council of Ministers, presided by the outgoing Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, had decided to *"annul its decision to adhere to the Rome treaty"*.

In a legal decree published on 17 February, the government had announced Iraq's adherence to this treaty, stressing that the measures of this treaty *"represent the common values of humanity as a whole"*. The ICC is the first permanent Court charged with the curbing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide throughout the world. Although Iraq has not ratified the Rome statutes, which seal its recognition of the ICC's jurisdiction, the Court's statutes allow it, like all the countries that have not ratified the treaty, to submit cases to the Court.

The Rome Treaty allows signatory States themselves to start legal proceedings against people involved in war crimes or crimes against humanity. Iraq is preparing the trial of Saddam Hussein and eleven former senior leaders of the old regime in detention, on charges of crimes against humanity. The United States has been waging a vast diplomatic campaign for the last two years to shield its citizens, and particularly its soldiers engaged in operations overseas, from the eventuality of any possible charges before the ICC. It has signed bilateral agreements in this sense with about a hundred countries.



# M. Al-Jaafari se dit opposé au maintien de bases militaires étrangères permanentes en Irak

Interrogé par « Le Monde », le probable futur premier ministre affirme que les troupes multinationales devront rentrer chez elles « peut-être d'ici un an, peut-être plus »

BAGDAD

de notre envoyé spécial

Le département de la défense américain, qui dispose, aujourd'hui encore, de plus de 150 000 soldats en Irak, ne s'est jamais prononcé clairement sur le devenir des multiples bases et fortins militaires qu'il a implantés un peu partout dans le pays. La presse locale et internationale affirme régulièrement que le Pentagone a d'ores et déjà décidé de conserver, y compris après la stabilisation espérée du « pays des deux fleuves », une vingtaine de bases permanentes, qui seraient déjà en construction.

Pour Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, probable successeur d'Iyad Allaoui à la tête du nouveau gouvernement transitoire en voie de formation, il n'en est pas question. « Dès que les forces irakiennes seront capables de maîtriser la sécurité dans notre pays, peut-être d'ici un an, peut-être un peu plus, déclare-t-il au Monde, nous demanderons à toutes les forces multinationales de rentrer chez elles : accepter des bases militaires étrangères permanentes en Irak ne serait pas sain pour le pays. »

Candidat officiel de la liste islamique victorieuse des élections du 30 janvier pour occuper le poste de premier ministre du nouveau gouvernement transitoire, qui pilotera les affaires du pays jusqu'aux prochaines élections, prévues pour la fin 2005, Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, contrairement à l'actuel chef du gouvernement sortant, ne s'est jamais répandu outre mesure en éloges pour l'armée américaine. Question de tempérament peut-être – l'homme est plutôt sobre dans son expression et assez avare de grandes déclarations à l'emporte-pièce –, question d'identité politique sûrement.

## « SOCIÉTÉ PLURALISTE »

Fort de ce qu'il appelle le « soutien » du chef spirituel incontesté de la majorité chiite du pays, le grand ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani – qu'il est allé rencontrer à Nadjaf, vendredi 25 février –, et chef de l'une des deux grandes formations islamiques victorieuses, le parti Al-Daawa, il ne renie pas ses convictions islamiques, mais tente d'apaiser les craintes que cette victoire a fait naître, notamment parmi les laïques et les libéraux irakiens que M. Allaoui, qui tente de constituer



Ibrahim Al-Jaafari (au centre) lors de la visite qu'il a rendue, vendredi 25 février, au grand ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, dans la ville de Nadjaf. Le chef du parti chiite Al-Daawa tient à rassurer les laïques irakiens sur la future Constitution du pays. « L'islam sera l'une des sources de notre droit, et non la seule », affirme-t-il au « Monde ».

une nouvelle coalition politique autour de lui, prétend incarner.

« J'appartiens à un mouvement islamique, certes. L'islam devra être la religion de notre Etat puisque plus des trois quarts de notre peuple sont musulmans. Mais c'est à l'établissement d'un système démocratique et pluraliste que nous travaillons : un système dans lequel l'islam sera l'une des sources de notre droit, et non la seule source. Il n'est pas question d'imposer la charia. Nous devons tenir compte des impératifs de notre époque et du caractère pluraliste, aussi bien religieux qu'ethnique, de notre société. Nous voulons une démocratie qui respectera les droits de l'homme et ceux de la femme, et qui établira une véritable séparation entre les pouvoirs judiciaire, législatif et exécutif. Il faudra que la nouvelle Constitution [qui devrait être soumise à référendum en octobre] soit acceptable pour tous les Irakiens, quelles que soient leurs croyances religieuses et politiques », affirme-t-il.

Cette profession de foi suffira-t-elle à convaincre, notamment, les Kurdes, qui contrôlent un quart des sièges de la nouvelle Assemblée et dont Ibrahim Al-Jaafari a besoin pour atteindre les 60 % nécessaires à la formation du prochain gouvernement ? Les tractations vont bon train. Pour prix de leur soutien, les Kurdes ont formulé diverses exigences, parmi lesquelles certaines – comme l'élection de Jalal Talabani à la présidence de

l'Etat par le Parlement – sont, a priori, acceptables par M. Al-Jaafari. D'autres demandes, émises par d'autres représentants kurdes, comme le rattachement de la ville de Kirkouk – et de ses riches gisements pétroliers – aux trois provinces qui forment le Kurdistan autonome, dans le nord du pays, devront attendre.

« Cette question ne peut être de pure tactique politicienne ou de circonstance. C'est un problème stratégique qui, à ce titre, devra être débattu par le Parlement. La population de Kirkouk est très diverse, ethniquement et confessionnellement », souligne M. Al-Jaafari. Il se dit « personnellement pas opposé au fédéralisme » exigé, entre autres, par les Kurdes, qui disposent déjà d'un Parlement et d'un gouvernement.

## DROIT DE VETO « INACCEPTABLE »

« C'est probablement une bonne idée pour un pays divers comme le nôtre. Encore faut-il définir ce que sera cette fédération. Il y a beaucoup de modèles de par le monde dont nous pouvons nous inspirer », précise-t-il. Mais pas question, en revanche, de céder aux Kurdes, qui réclament que soit conservé, dans la Constitution définitive, l'essentiel de la loi administrative transitoire (TAL) imposée, en 2004, au défunt Conseil de gouvernement par les Américains. « Le Parlement décidera, mais je n'y suis pas favorable », tranche-t-il. Et il affiche la même fermeté à l'égard de l'article de cette loi qui a fait couler le plus d'en-

cre et provoqué le plus d'opposition de la part du grand ayatollah Al-Sistani. Pour lui, ce texte, qui permet à trois provinces – sur dix-huit – d'exercer un droit de veto sur toute nouvelle législation parlementaire dès lors qu'au moins 60 % des élus de ces provinces en sont d'accord, « n'est pas acceptable ». « Je l'ai dit franchement à mes collègues. Citez-moi un pays où cela existe », insiste M. Al-Jaafari.

Les Kurdes, comme d'ailleurs les Arabes sunnites qui contrôlent – au moins en théorie pour ces derniers – trois provinces, ne seront sûrement pas ravis de cette position. Celle que défend Ibrahim Al-Jaafari quant au possible dialogue entre les autorités et ceux qu'on appelle les « insurgés » risque en revanche de lui valoir des oppositions à l'intérieur même de sa propre formation.

M. Al-Jaafari « n'ignore pas » pas que les Américains, de même d'ailleurs que M. Allaoui et ses collègues, essaient de nouer des pourparlers avec certains groupes de la « résistance nationale ». Mais, pour lui, il faut faire une distinction. « On ne doit pas discuter avec les terroristes du type d'Al-Zarkaoui. Ceux qui continuent d'assassiner notre peuple ne peuvent être associés à rien : ils doivent être éradiqués. En revanche, avec ceux qui acceptent de déposer les armes, d'échanger le fusil contre un stylo ou l'explosif contre le verbe, on peut négocier », conclut-il.

Patrice Claude

# Suicide bomb kills at least 122 Iraqis

By Warzer Jaff and Robert F. Worth

**HILLA, Iraq:** A suicide bomber steered a sedan full of explosives into a thick crowd of Iraqi police and army recruits here Monday morning, killing at least 122 in the deadliest single bombing since the U.S.-led invasion nearly two years ago.

The bombing in Hilla, 100 kilometers, or 60 miles, south of Baghdad, tore into a crowd of several hundred recruits who were waiting for mandatory checkups at a medical clinic in the city center, across from the mayor's office and a large outdoor market.

The bomb went off at 8:35 a.m., just as the street was also filling with residents shopping for food and making their way to work.

The blast, which wounded at least 170 people, was so powerful it set fire to shops across the street.

Witnesses described a scene of horrific carnage, with huge pools of blood visible on the pavement and corpses being loaded onto wooden handcarts shortly after the bombing. Outside the clinic, blood could be seen splashed on a wall above a first-floor window. Nearby, a large pile of bloody shoes and clothes lay in a heap.

"I was standing inside the door when I saw a car coming fast down the road opposite the clinic," said Alaa Sami, a guard who was inside the medical center and escaped unhurt. "All of a sudden the glass and shrapnel started coming down all around my head. When I got outside I couldn't believe it: There were dead bodies everywhere, and blood on the walls and the street."

The attack, the latest of dozens aimed at Iraq's fledgling security forces, demonstrated once again that the insurgency has not lost its power to

launch deadly strikes at will, despite relatively peaceful elections in January

and the recent capture of several important figures in the resistance.

Indeed, the deadliness of the attacks appears to have increased recently, said Falah al-Naqib, Iraq's interior minister, speaking at a news conference in Baghdad on Monday. In recent car bombings, "the number of casualties is much more than before," Naqib said.

Over the last 10 days, a rash of suicide attacks — including more than half a dozen aimed at disrupting the Shiite holy day of Ashura — killed more than 100 Iraqis besides those Monday.

Other days have seen higher death tolls, such as the coordinated attacks in March 2004 that left at least 181 dead in Baghdad and Karbala. But the attack in Hilla was by far the deadliest single bomb attack of the war.

The second deadliest took place on Aug. 29, 2003, when a car bomb exploded outside a mosque in Najaf, killing at least 95.

The bombing in Hilla came a day after Iraqi officials said Syria had captured and handed over Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hassan al-Tikriti, a half brother of the deposed president, Saddam Hussein, and a man who has been accused of playing an important role in organizing and financing the insurgency.

Citing a need for secrecy about ongoing operations, Iraqi officials declined on Monday to provide any details about Hassan's capture or about reports that Syria handed over 29 additional suspected insurgents.

Kassim Daoud, Iraq's national security adviser, said Iraqi and Syrian officials had formed a committee to work on security issues four months ago, although he would not say whether the commit-



tee was linked to Hassan's capture.

American and Iraqi officials have rounded up dozens of other suspected militants in recent days, including two aides to the Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, whose network has waged a campaign of bombings and beheadings that has left hundreds dead.

Despite those signs of progress, Iraqi police officers and recruits clearly remain vulnerable targets. Many attacks have been similar to the one in Hilla, with bombers steering their vehicles into crowds of hopeful applicants gathered outside police stations and national guard compounds.

One attack took place in Hilla in January, when a suicide bomber drove into the city's police academy, killing at least 10 people and wounding 36.

American officials have refused to provide the total number of Iraqi security officers killed in the attacks, but they say they have been keeping tabs, and the number exceeds 1,300, not counting the Hilla attack on Monday.

In recent weeks, a number of insurgent attacks have been aimed at Shiite holy sites and celebrations. It was not clear whether that was a factor in the attack in Hilla, a city of 1.2 million whose population is 85 percent Shiite.

The insurgency is led by Sunnis, who dominated the government under Saddam and largely boycotted the national elections in January.

One of the challenges facing the Shiites and Kurds, who won the majority of seats in the new national assembly, will be persuading the recalcitrant Sunnis to lay down their arms and accept a minority status in the new Iraq.

Violence continued to flare elsewhere in Iraq on Monday.

In southern Baghdad, a suicide bomber struck an Iraqi police patrol, killing one officer and injuring four, Interior Ministry officials said.

Also in the capital, an American soldier died Sunday night after being shot while manning a traffic control point, military officials said Monday.



Iraqi security forces walking through a blood-soaked street after a suicide bomber blasted a crowd of police and national guard recruits in Hilla on Monday.

In Baquba, an Iraqi civilian was killed and two were wounded when Iraqi police officers exchanged fire with insurgents near a traffic circle, officials said.

In the northern city of Mosul, two police officers were killed in heavy clashes with insurgents Monday morning in the city's volatile eastern area, witnesses said.

## ■ Slaying of Kurd reported

An Iraqi militant group said it had abducted and shot a member of a Kurdish political party, and it posted a video of the apparent killing on the Internet on Monday, Reuters reported from Dubai.

The video, from the Army of Ansar al-Sunna, posted on an Islamic Web

site, showed a man it said was a Patriotic Union of Kurdistan member being blindfolded and shot in the back of the head by a masked man.

The authenticity of the tape could not be verified.

# En Irak, chiïtes et Kurdes négocient

Un mois après les élections, Jaafari s'est rendu hier au Kurdistan en vue d'une coalition.

**L**e pluralisme politique s'annonce un exercice compliqué dans un Irak toujours sortant de trente ans de dictature, ravagé par la violence et les attentats de la guérilla sunnite. Un mois après les élections marquées par la victoire de l'Alliance irakienne unifiée, la liste chiïte soutenue par le grand ayatollah Ali Sistani, les négociations continuent. Pressenti comme Premier ministre par la liste chiïte, Ibrahim Jaafari, islamiste et leader du Dawa, le plus ancien parti chiïte irakien, s'est rendu hier dans la zone kurde qui échappait au contrôle de Bagdad depuis 1991. «*Il y a eu un rapprochement de nos points de vue et nous sommes convenus de poursuivre les discussions*», a déclaré le leader chiïte après plusieurs heures de discussion avec le chef du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) Massoud Barzani près d'Erbil, la capitale du Kurdistan irakien. Le PDK est, avec l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) de Jalal Talabani, le pilier de la liste d'alliance kurde arrivée en deuxième position (75 sièges sur 275). La liste chiïte en compte 140 mais il lui faut arriver à la majorité des deux tiers prévue par la Constitution provisoire mise au point l'an dernier sous contrôle de la coalition.

«**Positif**». «*Ce verrou a été mis en place pour éviter de donner automatiquement le pouvoir à un groupe dans une société où les divisions ethniques et confessionnelles sont très marquées*», explique Hosham Dawood, spécialiste de l'Irak et chercheur au CNRS. Il souligne que «*cette disposition a pour effet d'obliger les diverses*

*forces à chercher un consensus et à partager le pouvoir, ce qui est très positif dans un pays sortant de décennies de terreur et de dictature. La liste chiïte est hétérogène mais nombre de ses leaders ont commencé à devoir reconnaître que l'Irak est pluriel ou que l'islam ne peut être l'unique source de la législation*». La nouvelle assemblée élue doit d'abord choisir un chef de l'Etat et deux vice-présidents. Ce conseil présidentiel de trois membres aura ensuite à désigner à l'unanimité le chef du prochain gouvernement. Le fonctionnement de ces institutions provisoires – qui doivent décider d'une nouvelle Constitution – implique un accord préalable entre les parties. Une coalition autour du Premier ministre sortant Iyad Allaoui, chiïte laïc et protégé des Américains, dont la liste arrive en troisième position, est difficile. La liste chiïte privilégie la recherche d'un accord avec les Kurdes qui revendiquent le poste de chef de l'Etat pour Jalal Talabani. «*Dans la nouvelle démocratie irakienne, je suis un citoyen comme les autres et j'ai le droit de revendiquer n'importe quel poste y compris celui de Président. La plupart des Irakiens me connaissent et ils savent que j'ai passé ma vie à combattre pour la démocratie*», déclarait récemment le leader de l'UPK, créée il y a trente ans

comme alternative moderne et socialisante au pouvoir trop féodal du général Mustapha Barzani, père de Massoud.

**Unisson.** Après des années de conflits, les deux grands chefs kurdes font bloc. Ils comptent bien profiter pleinement de leur situation de complément

obligé de toute majorité. «*Nous voulons la reconnaissance du système fédéral dans un Irak démocratique, le retour*

*de la ville de Kirkouk au sein du Kurdistan et le maintien des peshmergas (les combattants kurdes,*

*ndlr)*», déclarait hier Mohammed Ihsane du PDK. Les deux partis kurdes sont à l'unisson notamment sur la question de la riche ville pétrolière de Kirkouk, peuplée en majorité de Kurdes et de Turcomans, que le régime de Saddam avait tenté d'arabiser de force. Lors des dernières élections, les partis kurdes y ont triomphé grâce aux voix des réfugiés qui en avaient été chassés. Avec Kirkouk et ses champs de pétrole, la zone autonome kurde aurait les moyens d'une future indépendance. C'est déjà ce qui inquiète les pays voisins, notamment la Turquie. ◆

MARC SEMO

«**Il y a eu un rapprochement de nos points de vue et nous sommes convenus de poursuivre les discussions.**»

Ibrahim Jaafari, de l'Alliance irakienne unifiée



2 MARS 2005

# Le massacre d'Hilla relance les craintes de guerre civile en Irak

BAGDAD

de notre envoyé spécial

Jamais, depuis l'invasion américaine en avril 2003, jamais un seul fanatique décidé à mourir n'avait tué autant de gens en une seule attaque que ne l'a fait le kamikaze non identifié qui a lancé, lundi 28 février, sa voiture bourrée d'explosifs au beau milieu de la foule à Hilla. Un authentique carnage – plus de 110 corps déchiquetés et 132 blessés en une seconde –, que les Irakiens ne sont sans doute pas près d'oublier. Le dernier bilan dénombrait mardi matin 114 morts et 129 blessés. Mais pourquoi ? Pourquoi s'en prendre à une ville agricole moyenne et sans histoire ? C'est évidemment la question que chacun se pose.

Hilla, province de Babylone, à 100 kilomètres au sud de Bagdad, c'est un peu plus d'un demi-million d'habitants – le double avec les villages alentour. Rien d'extraordinaire dans son architecture, pas de sanctuaire sacré, pas d'événements historiques très marquants dans cette ville chiite. Ce sont donc sans doute les dizaines de jeunes aspirants à la fonction publique, à l'armée et à la police qui, au moment de l'attentat, attendaient sagement leur tour devant un cabinet médical pour obtenir le certificat de bonne santé nécessaire à leur recrutement qui étaient la cible du kamikaze.

« J'attendais dans la file d'attente et puis il y a eu cette énorme explosion. J'ai été projeté à plusieurs mètres et je me suis réveillé ici avec toutes ces brûlures sur mes jambes et mes bras », explique, sur son lit d'hôpital,

le jeune Abdullah Saleh, 22 ans. Abdullah a eu de la chance. Autour de lui, dans ce quartier du centre-ville où des centaines de badauds faisaient leur marché, discutant les prix des marchands de quatre saisons, ou faisant la causette avec les vendeurs, assis par terre, de savates en plastique, de vêtements bon marché, de casseroles en fer blanc et autres ustensiles ménagers, ce fut le massacre.

## « UN COUP D'AL-ZARCAOUI »

La télévision irakienne a rapidement retransmis les images insoutenables de l'attaque, survenue au lendemain de l'annonce de la capture d'un demi-frère de Saddam Hus-

sein : des membres arrachés posés par des témoins sur un coin de trottoir, des corps empilés sur des charrettes à légumes et puis ces centaines de chaussures, de djellabas et de tee-shirts ensanglantés entassés au pied d'un mur criblé d'impacts. Scènes d'horreur d'un « nouvel Irak démocratique » que certains ont voulu imposer par la force et que d'autres rejettent en recourant régulièrement à l'abomination.

Le général Mohammed Al-Askari, que nous rencontrons quelques heures plus tard dans un hôtel de Bagdad, n'a pas le moindre doute sur l'origine de cette nouvelle attaque. « C'est encore un coup d'Al-Zarkaoui, nous dit-il. Chacun sait que ce fou

furieux jordanien cherche à déclencher une guerre civile entre nous autres, les chiites, et la minorité sunnite de ce pays. »

Ce jeune général de 44 ans, qui se flatte d'avoir « résisté à l'invasion américaine, pour l'honneur de [son] pays et de [sa] fonction, jusqu'à la dernière minute », n'a plus endossé l'uniforme militaire depuis le 9 avril 2003, date de l'entrée des troupes étrangères à Bagdad. Il est aujourd'hui la vedette des chaînes de télévision arabes, qui se disputent ses analyses militaires et ses commentaires politiques.

Ancien délinquant des faubourgs d'Amman, Abou Moussab Al-Zarkaoui, qui a fait le coup de feu en Afghanistan pour les talibans, est désormais, depuis décembre 2004, le chef, reconnu et adoubé par Oussama Ben Laden, d'Al-Qaida en Irak. Le gouvernement transitoire de Bagdad annonce régulièrement sa capture « imminente », et les Américains, qui annoncent eux aussi régulière-

Au centre-ville d'Hilla, quelques habitants observent les restes de la voiture du kamikaze qui s'est fait exploser, lundi 28 février, au milieu de la foule. Cet attentat est le plus meurtrier depuis la chute de Saddam Hussein, en avril 2003. Il intervient un mois après les élections générales. Le dernier bilan faisait état, mardi matin, de 114 morts et 129 blessés.

ALI ABU CH/REUTERS



## Ibrahim Jaafari en visite au Kurdistan

Ibrahim Jaafari, le candidat de la liste chiite au poste de premier ministre, était attendu au Kurdistan, mardi 1<sup>er</sup> mars, pour des entretiens sur la répartition des postes au sommet de l'Etat, selon Mohammed Ihsane, chargé des droits de l'homme au sein du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK). La liste chiite est sortie victorieuse des élections du 30 janvier et la liste d'alliance kurde, du PDK de Massoud Barzani et de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) de Jalal Talabani, est arrivée en deuxième position. Si elles s'entendent, l'Alliance unifiée irakienne de M. Jaafari (140 élus) et l'Alliance kurde (75 sièges) peuvent réunir la majorité des deux tiers de l'Assemblée (275 élus), et désigner un conseil présidentiel, qui aura ensuite à nommer à l'unanimité le chef du gouvernement irakien. Les Kurdes ont posé la candidature de Jalal Talabani au poste de président. Mais M. Ihsane a déclaré qu'aucune entente n'avait encore été conclue, concernant « la reconnaissance du système fédéral, le retour de la ville de Kirkouk au sein du Kurdistan et le maintien des peshmergas [combattants kurdes] ». — (AFP)

ment l'arrestation de tel ou tel de ses « lieutenants » sans jamais les montrer, ont mis un contrat de 25 millions de dollars sur sa tête. « Mort ou vif », précise l'affiche placardée à l'entrée de toutes les bases militaires et stations de police d'Irak. Mais le terroriste islamiste salafiste, « dont la résistance nationale irakienne aimerait bien se débarrasser », selon le général Al-Askari, demeure introuvable.

Lundi, un site islamiste s'est même permis de diffuser un message attribué – sans confirmation officielle – à « l'adjoint de l'émir d'Al-Qaida au pays du Rafidain [Irak] »

exhortant « les moudjahidins à persévérer dans le djihad et à ne pas se soumettre (...). Nous allons tuer tous ces juifs, ces croisés et leurs chiens d'agents locaux », menace le communiqué.

On le sait, depuis la saisie l'an dernier sur l'un de ses messages d'une lettre de « l'émir » au chef suprême

d'Al-Qaida, les « chiens d'agents » dont il est question sont d'abord les chiites, présentés comme des infidèles et des apostats par la doctrine salafiste la plus rigoriste. « Si nous prenons ces serpents retors pour cible, écrivait Zarkaoui, si nous les frappons au cœur de leurs structures religieuses, politiques et militaires, nous les contraindrons à la rage contre les sunnites (...), ce qui arrachera [ces

derniers] à leur insouciance. »

Si tant est que la lettre soit authentique, l'idée générale développée dans ce long texte de 14 pages est bien de déclencher une guerre civile. « A mort les wahhabites ! », criait la foule d'Hilla peu après le carnage. « Wahhabites », dans la vulgate locale, signifie « salafistes ». Mais jusqu'ici les grands ayatollahs qui siègent dans la ville sainte chiite de

Nadjaf, à commencer par le premier d'entre eux, l'Iranien Ali Al-Sistani, ont résisté aux multiples appels à la vengeance qui émanent des foules chiites en colère.

« En fait, estime le général Al-Askari, et il n'est pas seul de cet avis, une guerre civile qui ne dit pas son nom a déjà commencé en Irak. » Certaines milices chiites en armes ne se gênent pas pour assassiner des

sunnites et attaquer leurs mosquées. « Mais grâce à Al-Sistani, qui appelle au contraire régulièrement à la réconciliation avec « les frères sunnites », et qui freine toutes les volontés guerrières, la guerre est encore de faible intensité », poursuit le jeune général. Pour combien de temps et après combien d'« Hilla », c'est toute la question.

Patrice Claude

# Iran blocks inquiry, UN nuclear unit says Many questions are left unresolved

By Richard Bernstein

**VIENNA:** The UN nuclear monitoring agency on Tuesday listed several instances in which Iran has blocked key areas of the investigation of Tehran's nuclear development program or failed to provide information about aspects of the program that have been sought by the agency for months.

In a statement to its 35-member board, the International Atomic Energy Agency, which is based in Vienna, did not provide new disclosures about Iran's nuclear program, but it indicated that it had not been able to get further information to help it resolve some long unanswered questions, specifically on the source of Iran's more advanced centri-

whose delegation was expected to speak to the IAEA board on Wednesday, as further evidence of what Washington characterizes as Iranian duplicity in concealing what the United States believes to be a secret nuclear weapons program.

"It's another failure to disclose activities, which fits a disturbing pattern," a Western diplomat said of the IAEA statement, foreshadowing what the American delegation was likely to argue. "It's more evidence that the Iranians are unwilling to provide full disclosure."

But other officials interpreted the UN agency's statement more cautiously, saying that, while Iran has not answered all of the IAEA's questions, nothing has been discovered in two years of near constant on-site inspections to show that Iran is engaged in an active weapons program.

"The facts don't support an innocent or guilty verdict at this point," an official at the agency said.

The statement read Tuesday was one in a series of reports made to the International Atomic Energy Agency since

Iran agreed to allow inspections of its previously concealed nuclear program two years ago. Iran maintains that its nuclear program is aimed at electrical power generation and not nuclear weapons; the purpose of the IAEA inspections is to determine whether the Iranian claim is true.

Iranian credibility has been harmed by several instances, described in earlier IAEA reports and statements, where Tehran has made important disclosures of nuclear-related activity only after being confronted by the IAEA with strong evidence of such activities.

The statement Tuesday summarized a disclosure reported in the American press over the weekend that as long ago as 1987, the now disgraced Pakistan nuclear weapons chief A.Q. Khan had offered Iran what the IAEA called "drawings, specifications, and calculations for a 'complete plant,' and materials for 2,000 centrifuge machines."

The statement said that it was now asking that "all documentation relevant to the offer be made available for the Agency's review."

The statement was a follow-up to a full report issued by the director general of the IAEA, Mohamed ElBaradei, in November, which included a long list of Iranian failures to report on activities whose disclosure is required by the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, of which Iran is a signatory.

For example, the November report disclosed that Iran had obtained what are known as P-2 centrifuges, an advanced centrifuge for uranium enrichment that can be used in both civilian and military applications of nuclear power.

In November, the IAEA said that it was continuing to investigate "all of the information available to it concerning the P-2 centrifuge issue," but in its statement on Tuesday referring to the P-2 centrifuges, the agency said it had obtained "no new information."

In another potentially important area, Iran has essentially closed the door to further cooperation on the efforts it has made at one site, known as Lavisan, to acquire dual-use material and equipment that, the IAEA has determined, could be used to produce weapons grade nuclear materials.

The IAEA said that, in response to its requests for further information on the dual-use materials at the Lavisan site, Iran argued that the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty and additional agreements that Iran had signed did not obligate it to disclose further information, a position that the IAEA clearly disputes.

In yet another area, Iran has also refused to allow IAEA inspectors to revisit Parchin, a military base where the United States believes nuclear research may be taking place.

The Iranians allowed a limited visit to Parchin by the IAEA this year, and inspectors took environmental samples that are still being analyzed. But the inspectors were limited to one of four areas that the agency had identified as of potential interest.

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL  
**Herald Tribune**  
March 2, 2005

**'The facts don't  
support an innocent  
or guilty verdict  
at this point.'**

fuge equipment or the reasons for nuclear contamination discovered in earlier inspections.

In addition, the IAEA said, Iran has turned down requests for further visits to a military base that the United States has identified as a possible nuclear research site, and it has flatly refused to provide requested information on so-called dual use technology that the UN agency has determined could be useful for uranium enrichment or conversion.

The dry, often technical statement on Iran draws no conclusions as to whether Iran is in violation of its pledge to stop all enrichment activities, made during ongoing negotiations with Britain, France, and Germany, which the European hope will persuade Iran to permanently give up a weapons program.

But the Tuesday statement was certain to be seized by the United States,

# Ibrahim al-Jaafari joue la carte de la modération

Deux voitures piégées ont explosé hier matin à Bagdad, faisant au moins 13 morts, l'une visant une base militaire servant de centre de recrutement à l'armée irakienne et l'autre déclenchée au passage d'un convoi militaire. Les deux attaques ont été revendiquées sur des sites Internet islamistes par l'organisation « al-Qaïda pour la guerre sainte en Irak », le groupe du Jordanien Abou Moussab al-Zarqawi. La veille, un juge irakien travaillant pour le tribunal spécial chargé de juger l'ancien président irakien Saddam Hussein et les piliers de son régime avait été assassiné en plein Bagdad, en compagnie de son fils avocat alors qu'ils quittaient leur domicile du quartier d'Adhamiah, le lendemain de la formulation par le tribunal spécial de ses premières inculpations.



Les entretiens entre chiïtes et Kurdes se poursuivent. Le candidat des premiers, Ibrahim al-Jaafari (au centre), a rencontré hier le chef de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) sur la formation du prochain exécutif. (Photo Alaa Al-Marjani/AFP.)

Avec ses costumes de bonne coupe et ses manières affables, le probable prochain premier ministre irakien Ibrahim al-Jaafari apparaît comme un modéré sur la nouvelle scène politique irakienne. Mais l'homme est moins lisse qu'il n'y paraît, et incarne à lui seul le long chemin parcouru par les chiïtes d'Irak vers une reconnaissance politique qui leur a longtemps été refusée.

Né à Karbala en 1947, dans un Irak monarchique déjà dominé par la minorité sunnite, Ibrahim al-Jaafari rejoint clandestinement le Dawa en 1966, alors qu'il n'est encore qu'un jeune étudiant en médecine à l'université de Mossoul.

Le Dawa, ancêtre de tous les partis fondamentalistes chiïtes, a été formé au début des années 50, et s'engage dans une lutte implacable contre le régime Baas dès son avènement. Inventeurs musulmans de l'attentat suicide, les membres du Dawa sont impitoyablement pourchassés par les services de Saddam Hussein.

La répression lancée contre ses membres atteint des sommets pendant la guerre Iran-Irak, où le Dawa est accusé de trahison au profit du régime des ayatollahs. Al-Jaafari, haut responsable du parti, fuit alors à Téhéran, puis à Londres en 1989, où il devient une figure de l'opposition irakienne en exil.

À son retour dans son pays, au lendemain de l'invasion américaine de 2003, il manœuvre avec l'habileté des dirigeants chiïtes, adeptes de la « takkiya », la dissimulation rituelle prônée par cette branche de l'islam. Alors que le grand ayatollah al-Sistani distille ses fatwas depuis sa retraite de Najaf, figure mystérieuse et

*Il incarne à lui seul le long chemin parcouru par les chiïtes d'Irak vers une reconnaissance politique qui leur a longtemps été refusée*

tutélaire, al-Jaafari endosse le rôle du technocrate moderne, offrant une image moins marquée religieusement que le vieil ecclésiastique, qui prône d'ailleurs le retrait des religieux de la sphère politique.

Jouant lui aussi la carte d'un soutien discret aux Américains tout en ayant soin de leur manifester une hostilité de façade, al-Jaafari rejoint le très contesté Conseil de gouvernement mis en place par le consul américain Paul Bremer, dont il occupe le premier la présidence tournante.

Avec ses costumes à rayures de banquier londonien, il se façonne une image de modéré et de pragmatique. Il se distancie des partisans d'une application pure et dure de la charia, la loi islamique. Il s'efforce d'amadouer les Kurdes, dont le ralliement est indispensable aux chiïtes au sein de la nouvelle Assemblée. Il

multiplie aussi les déclarations à l'intention de la minorité sunnite, ulcérée de se voir écartée d'un pouvoir qu'elle avait reçu en apanage dès la création du pays, au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale. « Nous devons leur ouvrir la porte, et leur offrir un bon nombre de postes de

responsabilité de haut niveau », dit-il notamment des sunnites.

Mais il ne perd pas de vue les objectifs de conquête du pouvoir que se sont fixés les chiïtes au lendemain de la chute de Saddam Hussein.

Alors que Washington préférerait l'économiste libéral et francophone Adel Abdul Mahdi, ministre des Finances dans le gouvernement d'Iyad Allaoui, il manœuvre avec le soutien de l'ayatollah al-Sistani et s'impose comme le probable futur premier ministre du nouvel Irak. Ses détracteurs mettent quant à eux en garde contre les capacités de dissimulation du très consensuel docteur, et préviennent qu'il pourrait bien laisser tomber son masque une fois en place.

A. J.

# Iraq must choose on oil — produce or repair?

By James Glanz

**BASRA, Iraq:** The five spindly towers, each 100 meters tall, were silent, with no flames burning at their collapsed and blackened tips.

But Abdul Raof Ibraheem, production manager at this huge propane and butane plant, knew very well what could happen if, say, a military helicopter flew over.

"Any spark," Ibraheem said, motioning with his hands. "Explode."

The heating-fuel plant spews out invisible, odorless, but extremely inflammable waste gases because officials do not want to shut down the damaged equipment for repairs. Properly functioning, the plant would burn off those gases in flares at the tops of the towers. But if engineers tried lighting the damaged tips now, they could blow up the entire complex.

"Of course," Ibraheem said sheepishly, "it's dangerous."

Iraq is facing enormous pressure to convert its rich oil inheritance into a measure of comfort and prosperity. Despite having 100 billion to 200 billion barrels of oil reserves, the third largest in the world by some estimates, Iraq still must import half its gasoline and thousands of tons of heating oil, cooking gas, and other refined products.

And with the petroleum infrastructure crumbling, Iraqi officials must soon decide whether to invest in time-consuming repairs and upgrades, or try to extract everything they can from the creaky equipment, as Saddam Hussein did. It is a tricky decision.

Because the rebuilding effort is financed from oil revenue, shutting down the system for desperately needed repairs cuts back on the money available for further repairs.

A journey last week to a number of the vital organs in Iraq's critical, but often derelict southern petroleum industry — wells, pipelines, pumping stations, ports, and plants for things like heating fuel — underscored how difficult those decisions are likely to be. It showed, as well, the depths of the industry's distress after decades of neglect, the looting and sabotage that followed

**Many Iraqis are calling for a push to extract as much crude as possible.**

the U.S.-led invasion in 2003 and continuing attacks by insurgents.

About \$3 billion has been set aside for the Ministry of Oil, Thamir Ghadhban, the head of the ministry, said. But the fi-



Fig Althaus, a manager with Kellogg, Brown & Root, at an Iraqi oil plant where an oil byproduct that could be turned into liquified gas is simply burned off instead.

nal level of financing depends on revenue, which in turn depends almost entirely on the security situation.

Losses due to sabotage exceeded \$6 billion last year, cutting revenue by nearly a third, Ghadhban said. The pace of attacks has dropped recently in the south, but continues unabated in the north.

Washington has set aside \$1.7 billion for Iraq's oil industry, although as much as 40 percent of that money is projected to go to overhead costs, including security, said Julian O'Connell, a manager at the Project and Contracting Office, a Pentagon agency that is administering the program.

Given the political pressures and the conflict between the competing needs for repairs and production, it is not sur-

prising that with production levels hovering in the same range as before the U.S.-led invasion — 2 million to 2.2 million barrels a day — many Iraqis are calling for an all-out push to extract as much crude as possible.

"Any extra barrel for this country, I encourage it, providing the interests of the Iraqis are kept," said Jabbar A.H. al-Ueibi, director general of the government-owned South Oil Co. "We should work day and night to increase our production."

The plants and refineries that turn those barrels into usable products will have to increase their output at the same time. Twenty-three months after the invasion and the looting that followed, for example, the damaged heating-fuel plant managed by Ibraheem has still achieved only about a third of its production level during the last days of Saddam's rule, when the plant put out 3,000 tons a day of liquified petroleum gas.

The postwar destruction at many petroleum installations like that fuel plant went beyond simple looting, said Jim Humphries, a project manager at Kel-

logg, Brown & Root, the Halliburton subsidiary that won the contract to repair Iraq's oil fields.

Shortfalls like the ones caused by such damage force Iraq, in spite of its vast oil reserves, into the irksome position of having to import enormous quantities of refined products.

A drive through the back roads threading the oil fields around Basra is an eye-opening introduction to other, more daunting challenges.

Dotting the landscape are towering flames and black plumes of smoke so thick that they look like oil-well fires.

The flames rise from gas-oil separation

plants, which are designed to remove gases that are dissolved in freshly extracted crude oil before it is shipped to refineries, power plants and export terminals. In most oil-producing countries, those gases are captured and turned into usable products. But in Iraq, where there is still little room for such niceties, most of the gases are simply burned.

"Yeah, it makes you want to cry," said Alton Braudaway, an engineer in plant services with Kellogg.

The problems with the liquefied gas heating-fuel plant, though, immediately caught the attention of Kellogg engineers as they drove up in a convoy of sport utility vehicles.

"It is very dangerous," Humphries said of the gas streaming from the broken towers. "You're just pushing it off into the atmosphere."

Ibraheem, the production manager, said the British military, which has responsibility for the south of Iraq, had been warned not to fly in the area. And as he began to lead a tour through the plant, he asked a photographer not to use his flash. "Camera makes sparks," Ibraheem said.

The tour passed without incident, but as the visitors were leaving, they encountered five big metal cylinders lying

on the ground next to a road — new tips for the towers that the plant had been storing since before the war.

Standing next to the replacements

was Hassan Monsour Fadher, a retired safety manager at the plant. When asked how the tips would work, Fadher demurred and said, chuckling: "You are

giving me exam."

Then he lit a cigarette and took a couple of long drags.

The New York Times

## Detention centers crowded

By Edward Wong

**ABU GHRAIB, Iraq:** The U.S. military's major detention centers in Iraq have swelled to capacity and are holding more people than ever, senior military officials say.

The growing detainee population reflects recent changes in how the military has been waging the war and in its policies toward detainees, the officials say.

The military swept up many Iraqis before the Jan. 30 elections in an attempt to curb violence and halted all releases before the vote. Other detainees have been captured in ambitious recent offensives across the Sunni Triangle, from Samarrato to Falluja to the Euphrates River Valley south of Baghdad.

The Abu Ghraib abuse scandal also forced changes in the system, with the military working quickly last summer to try to weed out detainees who obviously did not belong in prison. Many of the ones remaining are more likely to be denied release by review boards, military officials say.

As of this week, the military was holding at least 8,900 detainees in the three major prisons, 1,000 more than in late January. In Abu Ghraib, where eight U.S. soldiers were charged last year with abusing detainees, 3,160 people were being kept, considerably more than the 2,500 considered ideal, said Lieutenant Colonel Barry Johnson, a spokesman for the detainee system. The largest center, Camp Bucca in the south, had at least 5,640 detainees.

One hundred so-called high-value detainees, including Saddam Hussein and his aides, were being held at Camp Cropper, near the Baghdad airport.

"We're very close to capacity now," Johnson said.

The surging numbers of prisoners pose important challenges for the military. The Abu Ghraib scandal showed

that the military was using poorly trained interrogators, even as more detainees were swept into prison in the autumn of 2003.

The military must hire enough effective interrogators and military intelligence officers to process detainees quickly, said Bruce Hoffman, an analyst at the RAND Corporation who has worked in Iraq with U.S. policymakers. Otherwise, innocent people languishing in the prisons, a fertile recruiting ground for the insurgents, could take up arms when they were freed.

Throughout the war, the U.S. military has struggled to construct a detainee system that can handle a widespread and sophisticated insurgency, but never before has the system had to grapple with so many detainees.

On a recent morning at Abu Ghraib, military policemen marched 50 handcuffed men from a convoy that had just arrived from Tikrit, Saddam's hometown. Old and young, the detainees wore thin shirts or robes.

A sign on a concrete blast wall read, "No Parking: Detainee Drop Off Zone." Guards stood watch in towers along walls laced with razor wire. The detainees huddled quietly on the ground out-

side a squat building where they would be processed. Soon they would be asked to put on orange jumpsuits.

At the main gate, minibuses took families in for visits. Many of the visitors were solemn young children and unsmiling women in black robes.

Some military policemen complain of understaffing and of being overworked.

While the military has turned to soldiers to perform police work, Johnson said the soldiers have been trained.

A senior U.S. commander said there was little danger of "serious overcrowding" in the system. At Abu Ghraib, the military has erected additional quarters for detainees and has increased troop levels.

Although this reporter arrived at Abu Ghraib on the military police convoy from Tikrit, soldiers at the prison did not allow the reporter to look inside any of the compounds. The colonel later apologized and said he would eventually arrange a tour.

The New York Times



Shawn Baldwin for The New York Times

A soldier guarding relatives waiting to see family members held in Abu Ghraib.

Herald INTERNATIONAL Tribune

March 5-6, 2005

## Word for Word / Cultural Intelligence

# How to Shake Hands Or Share a Meal With an Iraqi

**A**S the United States struggles against the insurgency in Iraq, it is also battling for the hearts and minds of ordinary Iraqis — without whom there can be no democratic state. That's a tough assignment for the soldiers who, while policing a culture about as different as could be imagined from the one they left behind, must also avoid antagonizing the people they are trying to help.

To that end, the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity (MCIA), a branch of the Marines' intelligence service, has over the past two years distributed thousands of

"Iraq Culture Smart Cards" to American servicemen in Iraq. "They are meant for the 19- or 20-year-old soldier, moving door to door in a hostile environment," said Col. Keith Lawless, the commanding officer of the MCIA. "This will help him stay out of trouble."

The card is a laminated, fold-up guide to the country's geography, history, ethnography, religious traditions, cultural norms and language. The MCIA has created a similar card for American service people in Afghanistan, and it is considering preparing cards for other nations. Excerpts from the Iraq card follow. **PETER EDIDIN**

### Do This

#### IN GENERAL

- Shake hands gently in greeting and departure, but always with your right hand.
- Respond to a woman's greeting only when she initiates the contact. Allow her to shake hands using only her fingertips.
- Refer to the entire family when making inquiries, well wishes, or blessings.

#### IN IRAQI HOMES

- Try all food offered to you, even if in small portions.
- Appear relaxed and friendly; social interaction is critical in building trust.

#### AS A GUEST

- Be gracious; do not appear anxious to leave.
- Offer profuse thanks to host and wish his family well.

personal interaction is customary and distance is considered rude.

- Don't engage in religious discussions.
- Don't make the "OK" or "thumbs up" signs; they are considered obscene.
- Don't praise an Iraqi's possessions too much. He may give them to you and expect something of equal value in return.

### Religion

Five Pillars of Islam: The Practice of Islam is based upon five pillars:

1. **Shahada** Faith: Allah is the one true god.
2. **Salat** Prayer: Pray five times a day.
3. **Zakat** Alms/Charity: Assistance to needy.
4. **Sawn** Fasting: Ramadan-month of fasting from sunrise to sunset.
5. **Hajj** Pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia.

### Cultural Customs

#### HONOR AND SHAME

- Admitting "I don't know" is shameful for an Iraqi.
- Constructive criticism can be taken as an insult.

#### FAMILY

- Family is the center of honor, loyalty, and reputation.
- Men are always the head of the family. No direct attention should be given to female relatives.

#### PERSONAL SPACE

- Iraqis do not share an American concept of "personal space" in public situations, and in private meetings or conversation. It is considered offensive to step or lean away from an Iraqi.
- Women are an exception to this rule. One should not stand close to, stare at or touch women.

#### SOCIALIZATION AND TRUST

- When conducting business, it is customary to first shake the hand of all the males present, taking care to grip neither too firmly nor too meekly.
- Allocate plenty of time for refreshments before attempting to engage in Iraqi in business conversation. It is important to first establish respect and trust.



From Aljazeera/The New York Times

### Cultural Attitudes

#### ARABS

Arabs view Kurds as separatists within Iraq and are wary of their desire for autonomy. Arabs look down upon the Turkoman because Arabs generally view Turkish culture as inferior. Arabs view Iranian Persians negatively and fear the historically strong political and cultural influence of Persia.

#### SHIA AND SUNNI ARAB

Tension exists between the Shia and Sunni Arabs over access to political and economic power. Sunnis blame Shia for undermining the mythical unity of Islam and they view them as less loyal to Iraq. Shia blame Sunnis for marginalizing the Shia majority and resent Sunni attempt to question their loyalty to Iraq.

#### KURDS

Kurds are openly hostile toward the Iraqi Arabs and seek to assert their political and cultural independence.

TIME

MARCH 7, 2005



Jubilant Kurds, some dressed in traditional clothing, celebrate their strong showing in the elections

FRANCO PAGETTI—POLARIS FOR TIME

MIDDLE EAST

# Revenge of the Kurds

Buoyed by election success, an Iraqi minority aims to expand its influence. Could it fracture the country?

By **ANDREW LEE BUTTERS** SULAIMANIYAH

**J**ALAL TALABANI KNOWS WHAT IT'S LIKE to be a marked man. In 1989, after Saddam Hussein's army had ravaged the Kurdish population of northern Iraq with chemical weapons, the dictator offered amnesty to all Kurdish soldiers who fought against him—except one. Saddam ordered his minions to hunt down Talabani, a chief of the Kurdish separatist guerrillas known as the *peshmerga*. If Talabani was caught, Saddam vowed, he would put him to death.

It's a testament to Talabani's knack for survival that he not only managed to elude Saddam's forces but also is now poised to assume the job of his former nemesis. A coalition of Kurdish political parties, which Talabani helped lead, came in a strong second in Iraq's national elections, winning 75 of the new Assembly's 275 seats. That gave the Kurds, who make up 17% of Iraq's population, enough clout to demand top jobs in the new government. While the victorious Shi'ites last week

tapped Ibrahim al-Jaafari for Iraq's most powerful position of Prime Minister, Talabani, 72, has emerged as the most likely successor to Saddam as Iraq's President. And though the post is intended to be largely symbolic, Talabani plans to use the position of titular head of state to protect Kurdish interests. "I must have the right to participate with the government in ruling

**LAST WORD**  
Saddam once wanted Talabani dead. Now the Kurdish leader is poised to become Iraq's President



the country," he told TIME in an interview at his headquarters in the northern Iraq mountain stronghold of Qala Chwala. "We want to be partners in reshaping Iraq."

The question is, How much of the country do Talabani and the Kurds want to reshape? The Kurds are holding out for at least six Cabinet posts, including head of the crucial Oil Ministry. They also say they are owed money from the U.N.'s oil-for-food program. A U.N. spokesman told TIME that \$3.7 billion in Kurdish money was handed to the Coalition Provisional Authority. So far the Kurds have collected about \$1.4 billion of that. They also want assurances that the Kurdish-dominated north will retain the autonomy it has enjoyed since the end of the first Gulf War, when the U.S. established a no-fly zone to protect the Kurds, and that the new Iraqi constitution will not impose Islamic law, as some prominent Shi'ite clerics have demanded. But some Kurdish ambitions could trigger ethnic disputes that would reverberate beyond Iraq's borders. The Kurds' election success has emboldened those who want to expand the southern boundaries of Kurdistan to include Kirkuk, the oil-rich city that is home to Kurds, Arabs and Turkomans. For U.S. officials, the nightmare scenario is that the Kurds break away from Iraq altogether—splintering the nation and inciting restive Kurdish minorities in such neighboring countries as Iran, Syria and especially Turkey, which has threat-

SASA KRALJ—JINAPOTG FOR TIME

# MIDDLE EAST

ened to intervene to prevent the establishment of an independent Kurdish state.

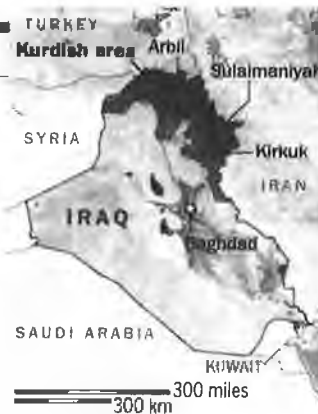
In his interview with *TIME*, Talabani played down the possibility of Kurdish secession. "If you asked the Kurds, 'Do you want independence?' of course everyone will say yes," he said. "But if you ask, 'Do you want independence now?' the answer would be no." A U.S. official says Talabani, a former lawyer with close ties to Washington, "knows how far he can push, and he's not likely to push further than that, even if a lot of Kurds want him to."

There's little dispute that the results of the Jan. 30 election have given Kurdish nationalism fresh momentum. Although they are predominantly Muslim, the Kurds of Iraq have long favored a more secular form of government than most Shi'ites do. The Kurdistan Referendum Movement, a grass-roots organization of intellectuals and junior political officials, says that of the 2 million who took part in an informal Election Day referendum on independence, 99% voted in favor. Kurds control their *peshmerga* militia soldiers and their own borders and are determined to preserve their sanctuary. Officially, Kurdistan exists only north of the "green line," the area where U.S. forces halted the Iraqi army's advance when Saddam moved to crush yet another Kurdish uprising in 1991. But since the fall of Saddam in 2003, the size of Kurdish-held territory has expanded 20%, according to coalition

officials in northern Iraq.

Kurdish leaders are pushing to gain control of Kirkuk—known as the Jerusalem of Kurdistan—the capital of one of Iraq's most productive oil regions. Under Saddam, Kirkuk was subjected to a massive demographic reordering, as Saddam moved large numbers of Arabs into the city and tossed many Kurds out. The interim Iraqi government headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi agreed that Kirkuk should be normalized—meaning displaced Kurds would be allowed to return while the so-called new Arabs would be moved out and compensated. But though some 100,000 Kurdish refugees returned to Kirkuk in time to vote in the election, the Iraqi government has yet to begin deporting the new Arabs.

For U.S. commanders in Iraq, an even more pressing concern is the status of the 80,000-strong *peshmerga*. In insurgent hot spots like Mosul, U.S. commanders have praised Kurdish troops for their willingness to stand and fight. But the *peshmerga's* continued assaults on insurgents run the risk of exacerbating tribal rivalries and sparking an anti-Kurdish backlash by Iraq's Arabs. The U.S. hopes to defuse the potential for conflict by folding the *peshmerga* into a new, unified Iraqi army. But the



Kurds have so far refused to place their soldiers under the command of Baghdad. "The *peshmerga* must remain a force of the regional government," says Talabani, a former *peshmerga* commander. "The Kurdish people need them as protection against terrorism and to secure the boundaries of

Iraqi Kurdistan."

The Kurds may be willing to cede control of their militia in exchange for assurances that they will be given a large role in the new government and a share of oil revenues from the south. "The more they participate in the central government, the less fear they'll have that they're going to be attacked," says Phebe Marr, an Iraq expert at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Some Iraqis hope that Talabani's ascent to the presidency will be seen as an important first step toward Kurds and Arabs living peacefully with each other. "For years, we've been told that Kurds are Iraqis and not a separate people," says Hoshiyar Zebari, a Kurd who is Iraq's interim Foreign Minister. "Well, this is a chance to prove that—a chance to show that no position in the new Iraq, not even the presidency, is denied to a Kurd." —*With reporting by Aparisim Ghosh/Baghdad and Timothy J. Burger and Mark Thompson/Washington*

**BREAKING OUT:**  
Peshmerga fighters  
working with the Iraqi  
National Guard patrol  
near the Iranian border



**Bakhtiar Amin**, ministre irakien des Droits de l'homme, met en cause les partisans du dictateur déchu :

# Florence Aubenas détenue par d'ex-saddamistes ?

Bruxelles envoyé spécial

**M**inistre des Droits de l'homme dans le gouvernement d'Iyad Allaoui, Bakhtiar Amin est un homme plutôt bien informé. Mais sa conviction se fonde aussi sur l'expérience d'années passées à disséquer la machine de la terreur baasiste, et à dénoncer les crimes du régime de Saddam Hussein devant une communauté internationale longtemps indifférente. «*Je pense que ceux qui détiennent Florence Aubenas sont d'ex-moukhabarats, c'est-à-dire des anciens des services secrets de Saddam, qui ont gardé des contacts en France. Selon les informations dont nous disposons, des associations d'anciens saddamistes s'réorganisent, comme dans d'autres pays occidentaux. Didier Julia est un de ces lobbyistes pro-Saddam, mais en France les partisans de l'ex-dictateur peuvent compter sur de nombreux autres relais politiques*», estime ce juriste kurde longtemps réfugié à Paris, qui occupe son poste depuis juin. Un portefeuille difficile dans un pays sortant de trois décennies de dictature et ravagé par la violence, les attentats et les combats.

**Réseaux.** «*Les filières des islamistes et celles des saddamistes sont certes différentes, mais elles coopèrent de plus en plus étroitement, y compris à l'étranger. Il est nécessaire que les autorités françaises agissent pour démanteler ces réseaux qui représentent un dan-*

**«Les autorités françaises commencent à changer d'attitude face à l'Irak en prenant acte du succès des élections.»**

*ger réel pour nous, mais aussi pour vous*», insiste Bakhtiar Amin, rappelant que trois ressortissants français venus

combattre avec la ~~guérilla~~ islamiste sont détenus en Irak. De nombreux autres combattants étrangers ont été appréhendés, notamment 57 Saoudiens, 66 Egyptiens et 60 Syriens. La télévision irakienne Iraqla a diffusé le 25 février les témoignages de plusieurs «terroristes» ou présumés tels, venus de Syrie. Et le gouvernement irakien a plusieurs fois dénoncé le soutien de Damas à ces groupes. Mais les choses semblent bouger. La Syrie, de plus en plus isolée, est sous pression (lire aussi page 11). En témoigne l'arrestation, fin février, à la frontière syro-irakienne, de Sabaoui al-Hassan, demi-frère de Saddam Hussein, soupçonné de financer la rébellion.

Bakhtiar Amin se refuse à toute hypothèse sur les raisons de l'enlèvement de Florence Aubenas et de son interprète Hussein Hanoun. A Bagdad, certains évoquent des suites de l'enlèvement de Christian Chesnot et Georges Malbrunot et des questions financières restées en plan, tout en s'étonnant de la durée du rapt car ce genre de problèmes peut se résoudre assez rapidement. D'autres pensent plutôt à des pressions politiques sur Paris. «*On peut s'interroger sur les motivations de ces ex-saddamistes, au moment où les autorités françaises commencent à changer d'attitude face à l'Irak en prenant acte du succès des élections, et alors qu'il y a un rapprochement franco-américain sur l'ensemble du dossier*

*du Proche-Orient*», dit le ministre irakien, soulignant la volonté des autorités de Bagdad «*de tourner la page sur les différends du passé*».

Lors de sa tournée régionale, juste après l'enlèvement de Georges Malbrunot et Christian Chesnot, début sep-



tembre, le ministre des Affaires étrangères, Michel Barnier, avait ostensiblement ignoré les autorités de Bagdad. Attitude jugée «irrespectueuse» par nombre de responsables irakiens, d'autant que Paris avait annulé peu après une visite prévue du Premier ministre Allaoui. En novembre, le président Jacques Chirac avait même précipitamment quitté Bruxelles alors qu'Allaoui venait y rencontrer les chefs d'Etat ou de gouvernements de l'Union européenne. Un (timide) réchauffement a commencé en janvier, avec la visite du président intérimaire Ghazi al-Yaouar qui avait été repoussée deux fois l'automne précédent.

**Séances.** Militant connu des droits de l'homme et animateur d'Alliance pour la justice, une ONG qui a œuvré après les bombardements à l'arme chimique contre les Kurdes en 1988 et les massacres de l'opération Al-Anfal (au moins 200 000 morts) pour la mise en accusation de Saddam Hussein devant un tribunal international, Bakhtiar Amin reconnaît volontiers les difficultés de sa tâche. «*Avant d'accepter ce poste, en juin, je me suis rendu dans la prison d'Abou Ghraib, où à l'automne précédent des gardes américains avaient infligé aux prisonniers des sévices ignobles. Je voulais voir si je pourrais réel-*

*lement exercer mes fonctions. J'ai pu faire cette inspection surprise. Là, comme dans d'autres centres de détention tenus par les forces de la coalition, nous avons créé des antennes où les prisonniers peuvent venir rapporter les sévices subis. Cela ne les empêchera pas à 100 %, mais ça se*

*saura, et nous pourrions intervenir*», assure-t-il.

**Procès.** De par ses fonctions, il s'occupe du droit des victimes de la dictature. En Irak, il y a quatre millions de réfugiés hors du pays, 1,5 million de déplacés, 1 million de disparus, victimes de la terreur ou des guerres, et 1,5 million d'handicapés. De nombreux sites de charniers ont été identifiés. Des milliers de dépouilles ont été mises à jour, mais il n'y a pas en Irak un seul laboratoire à même de faire les tests ADN qui permettraient d'identifier les victimes. Le pays manque aussi de médecins légistes à même de mener les expertises. Cela est pourtant essentiel comme élément de preuve dans les prochains procès où seront jugés les plus hauts responsables du défunt régime – dont Saddam Hussein. «*C'est une gageure d'occuper un tel poste dans un pays qui ne peut ni chérir un passé hanté par les séquelles de la dictature et de la terreur, ni aimer un présent hypothéqué par un terrorisme aveugle et les défis sécuritaires*», reconnaît le ministre des Droits de l'homme, qui ajoute avec un sourire : «*Mais raison de plus pour construire l'avenir.*»

MARC SEMO



**TURQUIE** *Le matraquage de manifestantes à Istanbul a choqué Bruxelles à sept mois de l'ouverture des discussions avec le pays candidat*

# Les ratés turcs de la marche vers la démocratie

LE FIGARO MARDI 8 MARS 2005

Des images diffusées par les chaînes de télévision ont montré dimanche des policiers anti-émeutes matraquer des manifestantes rassemblées à Istanbul à l'occasion de la Journée internationale des femmes. L'Union européenne s'est déclarée hier « *choquée* » par l'intervention des forces de l'ordre dont la violence a été jugée disproportionnée. Confronté aux critiques, le ministre turc des Affaires étrangères, Abdullah Gul, a demandé l'ouverture d'une enquête. Le ministre s'adressait à la presse aux côtés de représentants de la « *troïka* » européenne, avec lesquels il venait d'achever plusieurs heures d'entretiens sur la demande d'adhésion de la Turquie à l'Union. Le chef de la diplomatie luxembourgeoise, Jean Asselborn, le ministre britannique délégué aux Affaires européennes, Denis MacShane, et le commissaire européen à l'Élargissement, Olli Rehn, ont affirmé leur souhait de ne pas voir de tels incidents se reproduire.

Thierry Oberlé

Est-il permis de caricaturer Recep Tayyip Erdogan en chat empêtré dans une pelote de laine ? Ou en cheval obéissant à son dresseur ? Les poursuites engagées récemment contre des dessinateurs de presse ont écorné l'image d'un premier ministre, champion de la liberté d'expression. « *Les jours noirs semblaient appartenir au passé et voilà qu'ils reviennent* », a déploré l'association des caricaturistes turcs. Quant au département d'État américain, il a estimé dans son rapport annuel que l'« *État et le gouvernement continue à limiter la liberté de parole* ».

C'est qu'en dépit d'avancées considérables, la marche turque vers la démocratie a quelques ratés. Un colloque qui s'est tenu hier à Paris, au Palais Bourbon, l'a fort opportunément rappelé. À l'initiative d'organisations non gouvernementales, il a présenté

— en marge des polémiques soulevées par la perspective d'une entrée de la Turquie en Europe — un état plutôt sévère des droits de l'homme. Les participants ont jugé les progrès « *insuffisants* » et ont mis l'accent sur les imperfections des chantiers engagés par le gouvernement de Recep Tayyip Erdogan. « *Une vigilance critique est nécessaire* »,

ont-ils assuré. En 2004, cinq prisonniers sont morts sous la torture dans des locaux de police. S'ils touchent moins les militants politiques, les passages à tabac n'épargnent pas les délinquants ordinaires, qu'ils soient trafiquants de drogue ou simple voleur à la tire. Et les enquêtes engagées pour dénoncer les tortionnaires aboutissent rarement à des sanctions. « *Le gouvernement parle de tolérance zéro mais il y a eu, au cours des*

*derniers mois, 925 cas d'allégations de torture et 918 personnes ont demandé des soins après être passées entre les mains de la police* », a dénoncé Yavuz Önen, le président de la Fondation pour les droits de

l'homme en Turquie (TIHV). « *On rencontre encore aujourd'hui des épisodes de torture. Elle est diffuse et préméditée* », affirme-t-il. Plus généralement, Yavuz Önen dénonce le « *manque de réalité du proces-*

*sus de libéralisation* » : « *On continue à prononcer des jugements sans procès alors que les exécutions extrajudiciaires se poursuivent* », précise-il.

Onze exécutions sommaires ont été comptabilisées l'an passé dans le Sud-Est anatolien où l'administration conserve des « *reflexes de guerre* » malgré le retour à la paix civile. « *Les plaies des combats ne sont pas pansées car l'État a tracé pour la question kurde et celle des minorités des lignes à ne pas franchir* », commente Yusuf Atalay, le président de l'association des droits de l'homme en Turquie (IHD). L'avocat évoque aussi les modifications apportées à la terminologie scientifique avec la « *purge du terme armenicus dans la terminologie botanique et animale* ». Considérés comme idéologique-



Des manifestantes, rassemblées dimanche à Istanbul à l'occasion de la Journée internationale des femmes, ont été brutalisées par les forces de l'ordre. (Photo Murad Sezer/AP.)

ment suspects, le goéland (*Iarus armenicus*) et l'abricot d'Arménie (*prunus armenicus*) se sont vus débaptisés.

En acceptant d'engager des discussions avec la Turquie le

3 octobre prochain, les dirigeants de l'Union européenne ont fait le pari que la Turquie poursuivra ses efforts pour satisfaire l'ensemble des critères à remplir pour entrer dans le club

des démocraties européennes. Ils n'ont pas pour autant donné un chèque en blanc puisque, comme l'explique Jean-François Bayart du CNRS, des mécanismes de contrôle existent. Et

force est de constater que, quelle que soit l'issue du processus d'intégration, le projet européen donne un souffle nouveau à la société civile turque.

## Ankara déçu par le scepticisme européen

Istanbul :  
Marie-Michèle Martinet

La Turquie aurait-elle perdu son élan ? Serait-elle fatiguée ? Le mot fut lâché, la semaine dernière, quand à la veille d'une rencontre avec son homologue turc, Abdullah Gül, le ministre des Affaires étrangères luxembourgeois, Nicolas Schmit, s'inquiéta des signes de « fatigue » manifestés ces derniers temps par Ankara. Abdullah Gül a évoqué un changement d'état d'esprit, justifié, selon lui, par la froideur et le scepticisme des

Européens. Plusieurs éditorialistes lui ont emboîté le pas, dénonçant l'attitude intransigeante de Bruxelles. Pour Fikret Bila, du quotidien *Milliyet*, « les négociations avec l'Europe n'auront rien à voir avec de vraies négociations... On se contentera de dire à la Turquie : c'est à prendre, ou à laisser ». Et Sedat Ergin, du quotidien *Hürriyet*, de vitupérer contre la France et cette dangereuse « épée de Damoclès » menaçant la candidature turque.

Les Turcs se sentiraient incompris et contre-attaquent. Ankara n'hésite pas à retourner les reproches qui lui sont adressés,

accusant l'Europe de ne pas avoir tenu ses engagements, notamment sur l'allègement des sanctions économiques promises aux Chypriotes turcs après le référendum d'avril 2004. Au retour de sa visite au Luxembourg, Abdullah Gül a invité l'Europe à « accélérer le pas » afin de respecter son

propre calendrier. Lors d'un récent déplacement en Chine, il a glissé ce commentaire en forme de menace : « L'Europe n'est pas indispensable à la Turquie ». Et, pendant ce temps, le premier ministre turc multipliait les voyages à l'étranger, laissant entendre que les perspectives de développement de son pays dépassaient largement les frontières européennes.

Le gouvernement turc semble surtout soucieux de gagner du temps, notamment par rapport à la reconnaissance de la république de Chypre. D'ici au 3 octobre, la Turquie doit signer un protocole attendant aux dix nouveaux pays membres l'accord

d'union douanière qui la rattache, depuis 1963, au club européen... dont la République de Chypre fait désormais partie.

En préambule à sa visite à Ankara, le commissaire à l'Élargissement, Olli Rehn, a appelé la Turquie à signer ce protocole au plus vite : « Cela créera une meilleure atmosphère avant l'ouverture des négociations. » Olli Rehn affirme avoir reçu des assurances du gouvernement turc. Mais, pour le moment, les responsables d'Ankara sont restés évasifs. Ils ne semblent pas pressés non plus de désigner le négociateur qui sera chargé de représenter la Turquie tout au long des négociations d'adhésion. Interrogé, Recep Tayyip Erdogan ne s'est pas montré très pressé de fournir un nom à ceux qui considèrent que le temps presse : « Deux semaines ou deux mois... », a-t-il lâché, visiblement ravi de faire patienter son auditoire.

FINANCIAL TIMES TUESDAY MARCH 8 2005

## Kurds seek written pledge from Iraq on return to Kirkuk

By Steve Negus and Dhiya Rasan  
in Baghdad

Kurdish parties have asked for a written promise that Iraq's next government will promote the resettlement of Kurds in the disputed province of Kirkuk as the price of their support for a new governing coalition.

In a sign that such a promise may be forthcoming and that a government may soon be formed, members of the United Iraqi Alliance, which won 140 of 275 seats in the next parliament, expressed sympathy for the Kurds' demands. The Shia-dominated Alliance needs the Kurds' 75 parliamentary seats to get the two-thirds

majority needed to form a new government.

"We hope that the deportees and immigrants can be returned [to their respective places of origin] in less than six months," said Jawad Talab, political counsel to Ibrahim al-Jaafari, a Shia politician likely to become the country's next prime minister.

Hoshiyar Zebari, Iraq's current foreign minister and a

negotiator for the Kurdish bloc, said yesterday that Iraq's next government should offer "written assurances" that it would adhere to Iraq's transitional administrative law (TAL), which requires the reversal of

deportation of Kurds from Kirkuk which occurred under the rule of Saddam Hussein.

The TAL was promulgated under US occupation, and contained several controversial articles in addition to the resettlement of Kurds. Most important, it granted Iraq's three Kurdish provinces an effective veto over a draft constitution to be put to referendum later this year – a requirement that has been questioned by Shia and Sunni Arabs.

Kurdish politicians said that without such guarantees in writing, the Kurds would not give their support to a national unity government led by the Shia.

Resettlement is opposed by some Turkoman and Sunni Arab leaders from Kirkuk, who fear Kurds will pour in and seize control of the oil-rich province.

## **Kurdish Towns Benefit From Iraq Insurgency**

By SCHEHEREZADE FARAMARZI

Associated Press - March 6, 2005

SULAYMANIYAH, Iraq - The contrast between Iraq's Kurdish provinces and the insurgency-wracked cities to the south is evident in the 100 or so laborers gathered at the main square of this Kurdish town, looking for work.

They are among many Iraqi Arabs who have come from unemployment-stricken Baghdad and other cities to earn \$10 for eight hours of work in a relatively safe environment. That they are Arabs among historically hostile Kurds suggests that ethnic coexistence is not dead in the new Iraq. What draws the laborers, some as young as 14, as well as legions of investors, is a Kurdish economy that is flourishing on investment and capital that has been driven out of the insurgency areas. "We expect terrorism to continue for another year or two," said Mohammed Karim, director of the Board for Promoting Investment in Sulaymaniyah. "We don't hope for this to happen, but if it does continue, the economy of the north will continue to flourish."

He said foreign investment, Iraqi capital and laborers continue to flow in. In contrast to the rest of the country, hotels, offices, villas and high-rise apartment buildings are going up at a frenzied pace. An international airport is up and running in Irbil its first flight took Muslim pilgrims to Saudi Arabia and Sulaymaniyah's airport is to open this spring.

Sulaymaniyah, a city believed to have more than half a million people, has big plans for a free-trade zone with offices, hotels and motels for foreign investors.

The advantage for Iraq's three Kurdish provinces is their 13 years of semi-autonomy under Western protection, during which time they have gained political and diplomatic savvy, economic knowhow and a semblance of democracy. The two main Kurdish groups the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan ran their territories under their own governments under a joint parliament. The Kurds, allies in the U.S.-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein, won enormous influence in postwar Baghdad and received the second-biggest vote total in the Jan. 30 election. Their two parties also have decided to merge into one power-sharing administration based in Irbil. "For Kurds, it's only been getting better," Kurdish columnist Hiwa Osman said.

The PUK administration in Sulaymaniyah offers free land leases for big projects and the right to take all profits out of the country. Its Board for Promoting Investment, set up 10 months ago to provide investors with security and guide them through red tape, has overseen the signing of 59 projects worth \$500 million, Karim said.

Thirty of those projects are in the service sector, eight in industry, six in agriculture and four in housing construction. More than 2,000 apartment and office building projects are being undertaken by investors from the United Arab Emirates, Karim said.

Land prices have quadrupled, and most factories have been rented to foreigners, including British and Dutch companies, said Shilan Khaneqa, the board's head of public relations. Kurds are returning from exile, and Arabs are moving in from the rest of Iraq, many of them professionals seeking escape from being targeted for kidnapping and murder.

The result: "We have a housing crisis," Khaneqa said.

The industrial projects include a cement factory managed by Lebanon's GRD company and financed by European banks, with a production capacity of 4,000 tons a day. American investors are building an electricity generator that will boost output in northern Iraq by two-thirds of the current amount. To the west, Turkey is the gateway for Kurdistan exports to Europe. To reach the rest of Iraq, traders turn east, shipping goods such as marble and fruit through Iran to bypass the insurgency areas.

"Because of the security situation, business in Baghdad is dead, so we provide them with goods," Karim said. The Kurdish provinces still have a long way to go. Despite the present boom, roads and basic services are poor, and corruption pervades senior levels of government. But to the laborers waiting for prospective employers at Misgowtif Gawra Square, a job in Kurdistan is better than staying home. "There's no work in Baghdad because the situation is no good there," said Dhafar Qassem, 26.

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## **New Strategy for Turkoman Bloc**

After losing badly in the Iraqi elections, the Turkoman Front signals a more nuanced approach to the Kurds's federalism demands. - Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR)

By Soran Dawde in Kirkuk - March 9, 2005

The main Turkoman political group in Kirkuk is rethinking its strategy as a result of its failure to make gains in the January elections. In a dramatic turnaround, a leading official in the Turkoman Front indicated the group was now willing to countenance a federal Kurdistan, as long as the disputed city of

Kirkuk retained a special separate status that gave all ethnic groups a say in how it is governed.

The front, a major Turkoman political force which is aligned with Turkey, has come under pressure to change since the January 30 ballot, and now looks set to reform itself. The oil-producing area around Kirkuk makes the city a highly desirable

asset, and many Kurds view it as the future capital and economic heart of a future autonomous Kurdish entity. But as Iraq's boundary lines are currently drawn, the city lies outside the three governorates that together make up the Kurdish-administered region. Besides the Kurds – tens of thousands of whom have returned to the area after being forced to move by Saddam Hussein's ethnic policy of "Arabisation" – there are significant Turkoman, Arab and Assyrian communities who all have an interest in the city's future.

Leading Turkoman political groups, in particular, have always opposed the Kurds, plan to win more autonomy and to claim Kirkuk as their own.

Like other Iraqis, Kirkuk voters took part in two ballots on January 30 – one for the National Assembly and for the governorate council, in this case of Taamim province.

The latter was won by the Kirkuk Brotherhood List – a 12-member coalition that was set up specifically for this region and included the two main Kurdish parties plus Turkoman and Arab representatives. The list got 26 of the 41 seats in the provincial council. The major Turkoman political bloc, the Turkoman Front, performed worse than it had hoped at both provincial and national levels, winning only eight seats on the local council.

In the National Assembly vote, the front won only three seats in the 275-member body, making it an insignificant player compared with the victorious Shia-led United Iraqi Alliance and the Kurdish Alliance List, which came second with 75 seats.

Riyadh Sari Kahya, who heads Turkmen Eli, a leading party in the Turkoman Front and one of the winning candidates, admits that he had been hoping to see the bloc win 30 seats in the national legislature. With these hopes dashed, Kahya now says the Turkoman Front would accept a federal arrangement when the National Assembly drafts the new constitution. The Kurds have been pressing for Iraq to be reorganised so that large federal units such as a Kurdish region – possibly expanded to take in Kirkuk – would become the basic sub-national entity, rather than the current 18 governorates.

"The Turkoman now accept a federal solution," said Kahya, "but they want Kirkuk to be a [separate] federal entity, administered by Kurds, Turkoman and Arabs." In terms of national strategy, Kahya said the Turkoman Front had decided to join forces with the United Iraqi Alliance in the transitional parliament, having turned down a coalition offer from the Iraqi List, the group led by interim prime minister Ayad Allawi which came third in the ballot.

But he said the front would also be seeking to open up a dialogue with the Kurdish parties in the hope of building a new relationship with them.

He said it was now up to those parties to take the initiative, especially the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan led by Jalal Talabani, who is tipped to become Iraqi president. While still advocating separate status for Kirkuk rather than accepting

that it should be incorporated into a Kurdish federal entity, Kahya's comments signal a significant softening of the Turkoman Front's line because it embraces the idea of a federal Iraq in which the Kurds would get their own region. That change of position may have been prompted by a new policy in Turkey, which has lent the Turkoman Front political and diplomatic support since the group emerged in 1995.

The Turks have until recently opposed Kurdish demands for a federal entity in northern Iraq, for fear it could inspire secessionists at home to push for parts of southeast Turkey to be attached to an emerging state of Kurdistan.

As well as its concerns about the political future of the Kurds and Kirkuk, Turkey has maintained a strong relationship with the Turkoman minority in Iraq because of common ethnic bonds. Last week, Talabani met a visiting high-ranking Turkish delegation headed by the country's special envoy to Iraq, Fahri Koruturk. According to the Turkish newspaper Zaman, delegation members told Talabani that Turkey no longer objects to the Kurds' call for federalism, as long as there are guarantees that Iraq's territorial integrity is maintained and Kirkuk is given special status.

Apart from forcing a radical change of tack, the election outcome could prove to have far-reaching consequences for the Turkoman Front itself. Media reports have circulated in both Iraq and Turkey that the bloc is considering dissolving itself in the wake of its ballot-box failure. But Kahya denied the rumours, saying that plan was instead to go back to the drawing board. A wide-ranging Turkoman Congress scheduled for April 22 would discuss "all options", he said.

He added that in all likelihood the umbrella group's constituent parties – his own Turkmen Eli plus the Turkoman National Party, the Independent Turkoman Movement, and Turkmen Ocagi – would coalesce into a single political party. Although there appears to be greater flexibility on the issue of Kurdish self-rule, Turkoman politicians outside the front as well as in it appear determined to prevent Kirkuk being subsumed into a future Kurdistan. Younis Bairaqqdar, a political independent who was a member of the outgoing provincial assembly, highlighted his community's wish to maintain its own identity, especially given widespread fears that Kirkuk could be vulnerable to "Kurdification".

Tahseen Kahya, a former head of the same regional council who represents the Islamic Union of Iraqi Turkoman – which was part of the United Iraqi Alliance in the national-level ballot – underlined that the question of who governs Kirkuk remains highly sensitive because of the area's complex mix of ethnicities and sects.

The only way that the city could be merged into the Kurdish region to the north, he insisted, would be through a democratic and constitution-writing process that involved all of Iraq's citizens. In that case, he said, "We will accept the people's decision no matter what it is."

Soran Dawde is a correspondent for al-Hurrah Television.

## **The Iraqi election and the ,Kurdish Question,**

Hofstra Chronicle

By Mansour Bonakdarian - 05 March 2005

With the approach of the second anniversary of U.S.-led invasion of Iraq (March 20), the outcome of the Iraqi "national" election of January 30 has altered the dynamics of internal Iraqi politics and the Bush administration's vision of post-Saddam Iraq. The overall turnout for the election was around 58 percent of eligible voters, with at best miniscule participation in the predominantly Sunni Arab regions of the country. The heterogeneous Iraqi insurgency groups have continued their attacks, with some groups increasingly targeting Shi'i Arabs who represent around 60 percent of Iraq's population and were the major victors in the election. While a substantial segment of the Iraqi population also regards the election as a success, the long-term consequences of the election for U.S. objectives and various Iraqi groups backing the election remain uncertain.

With 8.5 million votes cast, the clerically-backed Shi'i United Iraqi Alliance/United Iraqi Coalition, enjoying the support of the most senior Iraqi Shi'i religious authority, the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, secured 48 percent of the votes cast, capturing 140 of the 275 seats in the national assembly. The predominantly Kurdish bloc in the north (the Kurdish Alliance List/United Kurdistan Coalition) won 75 seats in, and the unelected interim prime minister Ayad Allawi's chiefly-secular Iraqi List coalition garnered 40 seats. The election in Iraq undoubtedly marks a new chapter in Iraq's internal politics and the U.S. occupation. At the same time, the election poses numerous fresh predicaments for the Bush administration, notwithstanding the administration's repeated "freedom is on the march" mantra.

Among the many potential post-Iraqi election difficulties now facing the United States and Iraqis at large, and which can plunge Iraq into more widespread and deadly armed conflicts and directly or indirectly involve Iraq's neighboring countries is the "Kurdish Question." As a group, the Kurds, a non-Arab (predominantly Sunni Muslim) ethnic group who constitute around 20 percent of Iraq's population (over 5 million) and are heavily concentrated in the north of the country, were Saddam Hussein's principal ethnic victims. After the first Gulf War and Saddam's bloody suppression of the Kurdish insurgency in the north when the promised American assistance to the Kurds failed to materialize, the Kurds eventually succeeded in establishing their own autonomous provincial control in parts of northern Iraq with U.S.-backing in 1992. The major Kurdish armed political factions (The Kurdistan Democratic Party/KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan/PUK) also welcomed and assisted the United States-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, and were among the most eager enthusiasts of the January election. However, continued future Kurdish cooperation with the United States-led occupation force in Iraq is by no means guaranteed.

The history of relations between Kurdish political groups and various U.S. administrations since the 1970s is fraught with

numerous instances of what the Kurds consider "betrayals." The post-1992 "cooperation" between the two sides has simply been necessitated by "pragmatic" convergence of otherwise disparate American and Kurdish objectives and policy calculations, rather than by any underlying shared vision of long-term U.S. goals in the region or of Kurdish political ambitions. The "collective" Iraqi Kurdish memory of American acts of duplicity in the past include the 1972 encouragement and material support by the Nixon administration and the Shah of Iran for an uprising against the Iraqi regime by the KDP. It was only in 1975 after the sudden halt to United States-Iranian support of the insurgency and Iran's rearguard assistance to the Iraqi regime in attacking the Kurds once Tehran obtained its desired territorial concessions from Baghdad, which had been the underlying United States-Iranian motive in exerting military pressure on Baghdad through Iraqi Kurds, that the Kurds realized they had been manipulated by outside powers. Left to their own device, the Kurds not only had lost the chance for attaining conditional autonomous control of their provinces as previously promised by the government in Baghdad, but faced a brutal slaughter. In the face of criticisms for denying humanitarian assistance to the Kurds (armed groups and civilians alike) who were fleeing the wrath of the Baghdad regime, Kissinger would state: "Covert action should not be mistaken for missionary work." Other examples of U.S. betrayal include such events as Saddam Hussein's gassing of the Kurdish town of Helebja in 1988 during the Iran-Iraq War, with the Iraqi government not only using American-supplied weapons and chemicals but also relying on U.S. military intelligence. What made the United States role in this massacre even more nefarious was its public denials of Baghdad's responsibility for the slaughter at the time. This was followed by Washington's silent reaction to Saddam's "Anfal Campaign," during which 4,000 Kurdish villages were destroyed and nearly 180,000 Kurdish civilians "disappeared." The list goes on and on.

The two most important and immediate goals of the Kurdish alliance (despite the KDP's and PUK's own history of interne-cine factional rivalries and violence) are the status and ethnic composition of the northern city of Kirkuk and the creation of a federated Iraq. This latter objective, seen as a first step towards the creation of a future "independent" Kurdistan-an aspiration shared by 95 percent of the Kurds participating in a separate referendum on the status of Kurdistan during the Iraqi election-should not necessarily pose an impediment to the Kurdish alliance's cooperation with either the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA) or the Iraqi List (IL) in the national assembly or in drafting the constitution. The IL, given its smaller share of the votes in the election and its desire to prevent the implementation of religious laws and edicts by the UIA will need to work with the Kurdish alliance. In the meantime, the UIA is not necessarily opposed to a federated system that will enable the Shi'i majority to reap the benefits of oil revenues in the south as the Kurds enjoy a larger share of oil profits in the north (an area which is believed to hold 40 percent of Iraq's oil reserves).

Moreover, given that the election has created an opportunity for the Shi'i Arab majority and the Sunni Kurdish minority to finally have a voice in Iraqi national politics, neither side is likely to promote open political division that can harm their chances of augmenting their leverage in Iraqi politics. Furthermore, the UIA and the IL can jointly block any expansive autonomous control by the Kurdish alliance in the north, particularly as the Bush administration has ruled out the creation of a separate Kurdistan. The U.S. stance has been in reaction to both domestic Iraqi Arab opposition to a separate Kurdish state and Turkey's concerns.

Turkey, which has the largest Kurdish population in the Middle East, has faced its own Kurdish separatist insurgency movement since the 1980s in the form of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK). Because of this, Turkey fears that the creation of an independent Kurdistan south of its border will serve as further incentive to its own Kurdish population's separatist ambitions and recently demanded and received reassurances from the United States of Washington's opposition to Kurdish separatism. The Iraqi Kurdish leadership, aware of the alienating effect of separatist ambitions on other Iraqi groups represented in the national assembly, and fearful of Turkey's military intervention in Iraqi Kurdistan (where more than 4,000 PKK fighters fleeing the Turkish military are currently based), has acknowledged that independence will have to be postponed.

Rather, it is the topic of Kirkuk that poses the more immediate threat of spinning out of control and inciting ethnic and regional civil strife. Although, in some ways the spread of civil turmoil in Iraq can aid the objective of prolonged U.S. military presence in Iraq (for providing "security"), it can also trigger a spiraling armed conflict which may bring about the deployment of thousands of armed fighters belonging to various Shi'i and Sunni Arab factions along with the 50,000 to 60,000 Kurdish fighters and outside intervention, particularly by Turkey. Kirkuk, a city in the oil-rich region located outside the existing autonomous Kurdish provinces in the north, has been declared by the Kurdish alliance as the capital of a future federated Kurdish region.

While the Kurds claim Kirkuk was a predominantly Kurdish city before Saddam Hussein's forced expulsion of thousands of Kurds, and Kurdish armed groups since the United States-led invasion of Iraq have been "reclaiming" former Kurdish homes from the ethnic Arab and Turcomen populations of the city, the Arab population claim a right to remain in the city, while Turcomens maintain the city is and was predominantly Turcomen and Turkey has pledged to defend the rights of Iraqi Turcomens in the name of pan-Turkic solidarity.

In effect, not all is well in post-election Iraq. While various existing insurgency movements continue to plague the American occupation and kill and maim other Iraqis and foreign military personnel, there remain other serious potential threats of widespread civil strife in Iraq that need to be resolved if additional ethnic and regional conflicts are to be avoided.

"We always said we would make no concessions on ... the Kurdish identity of Kirkuk," leading Kurdish politician Massoud Barzani said in an interview with a Turkish newspaper last month.

Interim Deputy Prime Minister Barham Saleh said the Kurds were prepared to wait for Kirkuk's inclusion in their autonomous region in northern Iraq until after a referendum on a new constitution in October but demanded guarantees the new government would take clear steps to rectify Saddam's Arabisation policy.

"We will certainly be looking to some very specific outlines and measures that need to be taken to normalise the situation in Kirkuk," he said.

The Shiite list won 140 of the assembly's 275 seats but needs a two-thirds majority to elect a president and two vice presidents, who will in turn choose a prime minister.

However, the United Iraqi Alliance is refusing to give the Kurds any firm commitments before the constitutional referendum for fear of driving the tens of thousands of Arabs who were settled in the city by Saddam in the late 1970s and 1980s into the hands of the insurgents.

Complicating matters, many of the Arabs Saddam lured to Kirkuk were poor Shiites from southern Iraq.

"Forming a coalition with the Kurds will not be at the expense of any other group in Iraqi society," leading Shiite politician Abdul Aziz al-Hakim said Thursday.

"Matters like this (Kirkuk) must be examined in the national assembly. That's the right forum for dealing with this issue and the people must be consulted about it."

The agreement of the Iraqi electoral commission to register some 100,000 displaced Kurds for January's polls helped the community to a landslide victory in Tamim province, centred on Kirkuk.

The main Kurdish alliance won 58.4 percent of the 405,951 ballots cast, with the main party of the city's Turkmen minority in second place on 16 percent. Most Arab factions — both Sunni and Shiite — boycotted the poll in the province in protest at the registration of displaced Kurds.

But little progress has been made on the divisive issue of rival property claims in the city, despite the presence of large number of Kurdish returnees in makeshift camps.

A property claims commission set up under the US-led occupation to arbitrate disputes between the returnees and the Arab settlers has moved at a snail's pace, making its first adjudications only last autumn.

Neighbouring Turkey, a diehard opponent of any move to extend Kurdish autonomy, has meanwhile kept up its pressure on its US ally for the city's status to be left unchanged.

FINANCIAL TIMES TUESDAY, MARCH 8 2005

# Turkey launches probe into police break-up of rally

By Vincent Boland in Ankara

With a European Union delegation watching closely, Abdullah Gul, Turkey's foreign minister, yesterday promised a "sensitive" investigation into alleged police brutality against women demonstrators on Sunday.

The violence overshadowed a visit by Olli Rehn, the EU enlargement commis-

sioner who must assess Turkey's preparations for accession talks with the EU scheduled for October.

The visiting EU representatives condemned the "disproportionate" police action, and Mr Gul said the interior ministry would undertake the probe into the violent break-up of a demonstration by women in Istanbul.

"The interior ministry has

begun the necessary [investigation] procedures and I am sure they will be sensitive about this," Mr Gul said after meeting Mr Rehn.

Mr Rehn was accompanied by Jean Asselborn, foreign minister of Luxembourg, which holds the rotating EU presidency, and Denis MacShane, minister for Europe in the UK, which takes over

the presidency in July. They are on a two-day visit to Turkey to assess the preparations for the accession talks.

Concern is growing in Brussels and among diplomats in Ankara that the government has slowed the pace of reforms and of implementation of reforms already passed, including an extensive overhaul of the criminal justice system.

But the visit has been dominated by reaction to the sight of police officers using truncheons and tear gas to break up the demonstration, which was being held to mark International Women's Day. The demonstration was unauthorised; a legal one had taken place peacefully in the city on Saturday.

The visiting EU representatives said: "We were

shocked by images of the police beating women and young people... We are concerned to see such disproportionate force used against demonstrators. We ask the Turkish authorities to carry out an investigation into this event to prevent similar incidents in the future."

The incident has embarrassed the government,

which has passed a modernised penal code under which heavyhanded police tactics are supposed to be outlawed. It coincided with the release of a report by Human Rights Watch attacking the government's record in resettling Kurdish refugees and alleging that the wider reform drive had slowed down.

"Turkey still has much to do on the protection of freedom of expression, freedom of religion, language rights and protection against torture," Human Rights Watch said.

The Turkish police often use force to break up even legal demonstrations and are a regular focus of criticism by human rights organisations and diplomats. It is one of many areas of Turkey's human rights record that will be under scrutiny when the country begins its accession negotiations.

The government's failure to comment on the incident until 24 hours after it occurred, and after the EU delegation condemned it, is part of a longstanding pattern of official silence about incidents that would prompt outrage in other countries.



## ANKARA ACCUSED OF MISLEADING EU OVER REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

Turkey's government was accused yesterday of misleading the European Union about progress made in resettling nearly 400,000 people displaced by the civil war between the army and Kurdish separatists in the 1980s and 1990s, writes Vincent Boland in Ankara.

Human Rights Watch alleged the government had exaggerated the number of people returning to their villages and farms in the south-east of the country last year, just as EU political leaders were deciding whether to invite Turkey to join the EU.

The organisation said the government's claim that a third of

the estimated 378,000 mainly Kurdish refugees were being helped to return home was "unreliable". It said its own investigation showed that, in some places, the number was less than a fifth of the official estimates.

"Our analysis found that the official statistics are not entirely reliable, and that permanent returns are running at a much lower rate than indicated," Human Rights Watch said in a report yesterday.

It said many villagers were reluctant to return because their homes and villages had been destroyed and were often without

electricity, telephone lines, education or health facilities. Assistance with reconstruction was "minimal or non-existent".

Rachel Denber, acting executive director of the organisation's Europe and central Asia division, accused paramilitary village guards of "attacking and killing" returnees in some parts. She said a visiting EU delegation should put the issue at the top of its agenda.

The resettlement of people displaced by the civil war is a benchmark of Turkey's chances of joining the EU, and the government has promised to facilitate their return.

## IRAK

### Un attentat antichiite à Mossoul fait 47 morts

Quarante-sept personnes ont été tuées et 81 blessées hier dans un attentat suicide antichiite dans la ville sunnite de Mossoul (nord de l'Irak) lors des funérailles d'un chef éminent du courant du dirigeant radical chiite Moqtada Sadr, auxquelles assistaient de très nombreuses personnes. La section irakienne d'al-Qaida, dirigée par le Jordanien al-Zarqaoui, a revendiqué l'attaque sur un site Internet. Sur le plan politique, les groupes chiite et kurde sont parvenus à un accord préliminaire sur la formation de l'exécutif. Un consensus a été réalisé sur le choix de M. Jaafari comme premier ministre et le dirigeant kurde Jalal Talabani, chef de l'UPK, comme président, fonction davantage honorifique. L'Assemblée nationale élue a été officiellement convoquée pour le 16 mars.

## Bomber kills 40 at mosque in Mosul

### Attack at funeral comes as Shiites and Kurds set coalition

By Robert F. Worth and Edward Wong

**BAGHDAD:** A suicide bomber went into a Shiite mosque in Mosul on Thursday and detonated explosives strapped to his body, killing about 40 people and wounding at least 60, officials and witnesses said.

The suicide attack took place in mid-

afternoon as the Sadaan mosque in Mosul's Al Tamin neighborhood was packed with mourners gathered for the funeral of a man who had died two days earlier, said Sadi Ahmed Pire, head of the Mosul office of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. The union is one of the two main Kurdish political parties.

The attack came as senior Shiite and Kurdish officials said in interviews that they had reached an agreement on the principles of forming a coalition government, though they were still in negotiations over some sticking points.

If the main Shiite umbrella group and the Kurdish alliance hammer out a final agreement, they will have the two-thirds vote in the constitutional assembly that is needed to install a new government.

The bombing was the latest in a bloody insurgent campaign to sow civil conflict by striking at Shiite holy sites and celebrations.

Last month about 70 people were killed in a series of suicide bombing attacks on worshippers celebrating the Shiite holiday of Ashura.

Witnesses said the attacker set off his bomb almost immediately upon entering the mosque, sending up a huge fireball that shook the building and knocked down bystanders outside.

"I was just walking out, and the explosion was so loud I was thrown onto my car," said Muqdad Yunis, 33, who escaped unhurt.

Most of those killed in the bombing were Shiite Kurds and Turkmen, Pire said. Mosul, a city of two million, is a cauldron of ethnic groups, with the eastern part of the city mainly controlled by Kurds.

The insurgency in Mosul is believed to be led by Sunni Arabs, who live mostly in the city's western quarters.

The winners of the Jan. 30 elections, particularly the Shiites, have come under intense criticism recently for allowing negotiations over a new government to drag on.

Adnan Ali, a deputy of the Dawa Islamic Party, whose leader is the Shiite nominee for prime minister, said that the Shiites and Kurds drafted a document Wednesday that sets out the guiding principles under which they will form a coalition.

The two sides have agreed that the transitional law approved last spring will be the underlying foundation of the government, Ali said. Among other things, the transitional law states that Islam should be only a source of legislation rather than the sole source, contrary to what some religious Shiite leaders prefer.

The two groups have also agreed that Sunni Arabs who boycotted the election should be given prominent posts, including in the cabinet, he said.

Getting Sunni Arab leaders involved in the political process is seen as crucial to dampening the insurgency and uprooting the drive behind attacks such as the one in Mosul.

If the former governing Sunnis continue to feel disenfranchised, then the chances of a full-scale civil war breaking out will grow.

The New York Times



A woman fleeing the scene Wednesday after a suicide bomber drove a garbage truck full of explosives into a parking lot near a hotel in Baghdad, killing one person and wounding at least 22. Nine other people, including a U.S. soldier, were killed in other attacks.

# UN VENT DE CHANGEMENT DE L'IRAK AU LIBAN

La libéralisation et la démocratie qui pointent au Moyen-Orient restent fragiles. Et l'impact de la stratégie de George W. Bush demeure controversé.

SAMEDI 12 ET DIMANCHE 13 MARS 2005



**C**ontraints et forcés, les dirigeants arabes ne se sont jamais autant préoccupés d'afficher leur intérêt pour le changement et la démocratie. De quoi faire pavoiser les Américains. Depuis les manifestations contre la tutelle de Damas au Liban (lire ci-contre) qui ont accéléré le retrait syrien et suscité un grand espoir, ils ont tenté de mettre le moindre frémissement de liberté dans une zone qui s'étire du Maroc au Pakistan sur le compte de la campagne pour la «démocratisation du Grand Moyen-Orient» lancée par George Bush début 2004. **Evidence.** Après les attentats du 11 septembre, le discours américain a pris en compte une évidence: tant que cette

région resterait sous le joug de régimes autoritaires n'offrant aucune perspective de liberté, de travail et de prospérité à leurs populations, les frustrations, notamment des jeunes, s'exacerberaient et constitueraient un inépuisable vivier pour les terroristes. *«Les peuples musulmans ont droit à la liberté, à la démocratie et au développement»*, a martelé l'administration Bush. *«La force de Bush, remarque néanmoins un intellectuel libanais, a été de savoir que ce message était parfaitement audible par des dirigeants arabes si dépendants des Etats-Unis mais ne l'était guère de leurs opinions publiques, violemment antiaméricaines.»*

Le résultat est évidemment plus nuancé que l'éclosion

d'un «printemps arabe» annoncée par une partie des médias américains qui citent sans distinguer des élections régulières et avec une forte participation en Afghanistan, puis en Irak en dépit des menaces terroristes, des municipales en Arabie Saoudite, l'annonce d'une présidentielle au suffrage universel direct en Egypte, sans parler de la relance du processus de paix israélo-palestinien, manière pour Bush d'atténuer la colère arabe liée à sa guerre contre l'Irak... Si les néoconservateurs pavoisent, affirmant que *«ce sont les élections irakiennes qui ont fait sauter le couvercle»*, l'hommage du *New York Times* est plus inattendu: Bush a *«hardiment proclamé la cause de la démocratie au Moyen-Orient à un*

*moment où peu en Occident lui donnaient des chances»*, estime le grand quotidien libéral, hostile à la guerre d'Irak.

**«Pression».** L'administration Bush tente d'attribuer tous les changements dans la zone à sa stratégie. C'est de bonne guerre, à défaut de relever du réel. Les émirats du Golfe – Koweït, Qatar, Oman et Bahreïn – ont en effet entrepris un lent processus de libéralisation depuis des années, Bahreïn s'étant même transformé en monarchie constitutionnelle dès 2002... Quant à l'Arabie Saoudite et l'Egypte, les réformes annoncées sont parfaitement cosmétiques. Le président égyptien sait pertinemment qu'aucun candidat ne pourra lui tenir tête; les municipales saoudiennes ont été plus que

## L'évolution démocratique dans la région



### LIBAN

Après l'assassinat de l'ex-Premier ministre Rafic Hariri, des manifestations de rue ont demandé et obtenu la démission d'un gouvernement qui pourrait finalement être reconduit. D'autres demandes, comme le retrait des troupes syriennes et le limogeage des chefs des services de renseignement, ont été partiellement ou pas satisfaites. Des législatives sont prévues en mai.



### PALESTINE

Après le décès de Yasser Arafat, la transition s'est déroulée dans le calme et conformément à la Loi fondamentale. Mahmoud Abbas a été élu président de l'Autorité palestinienne à l'issue d'un scrutin démocratique, bien que sous occupation. Les législatives sont prévues le 27 juillet.



### EGYPTE

Le président Hosni Moubarak, au pouvoir depuis 1981, a annoncé une réforme constitutionnelle qui permettra désormais la multiplicité des candidatures et l'élection du chef de l'Etat au suffrage universel direct. Il a rejeté l'idée d'une succession dynastique en faveur de son fils Gamal.



### ARABIE SAOUDITE

Le 10 février, des élections municipales partielles ont eu lieu, premières élections dans le royaume. Elles se poursuivent progressivement dans l'ensemble du pays, même si la moitié des conseils municipaux sont nommés par le roi. Les femmes sont complètement exclues du scrutin.



### IRAK

Malgré la faible participation sunnite et les menaces terroristes, les Irakiens ont massivement voté le 30 janvier. L'Assemblée élue va rédiger une Constitution qui sera soumise à l'approbation par référendum à l'automne. De nouvelles législatives doivent suivre immédiatement après.



### BAHREÏN

En octobre 2002, Bahreïn a renoué avec les élections législatives. Le Parlement dissous en 1975 a été restauré.



### QATAR

Avec Al-Jezira, le Qatar est le pionnier de la liberté d'information. Après avoir déposé son père en 1995, l'émir Hamad ben Khalifa al-Thani a doté son pays d'une nouvelle Constitution.

«balisées». N'empêche: l'opposition égyptienne demandait en vain depuis des années qu'on aille vers le suffrage universel. Et la pression américaine a sans doute accéléré la tenue d'un premier scrutin au royaume wahhabite.

«Si ça bouge, c'est aussi que la pression monte depuis longtemps dans la région. Et que le discours américain correspond à une aspiration profonde de nos peuples», estime une journaliste algérienne, regrettant que ce discours soit «rhétorique et à géométrie variable, car il exclut certains pays, comme l'Algérie ou la Tunisie». Viscéralement opposée à la guerre contre l'Irak et profondément nationaliste, elle le considère cependant «essentiel, car il permet aux gens de penser qu'ils auront un allié

s'ils descendent dans la rue».

**Divergence.** L'attribution à Washington de ce vent de démocratisation a le don d'exaspérer les Européens en général et la France en particulier, qui voient une concurrence à leur «processus de Barcelone», vieux de dix ans et au point mort. Du coup, Paris rejoint de facto l'argumentaire des régimes arabes: «Les réformes doivent venir de l'intérieur», et il faut d'abord régler le conflit israélo-palestinien – pour rejeter les demandes de réformes.

«Nous ne voulons pas que la recherche de la stabilité se confonde avec le maintien du statu quo. Nous sommes soucieux d'une stabilité à long terme que ces régimes ne peuvent pas fournir», répliquait, cette semaine, lors d'une visite à Paris, Scott Carpenter, sous-secrétaire d'Etat

adjoint, chargé de l'initiative sur le Moyen-Orient.

En réalité, la divergence avec la France est ailleurs: Paris considère que la priorité se situe dans les relations d'Etat à Etat et n'est pas loin de penser que les ONG indépendantes ne font que compliquer ces rapports, quand elles ne «sapent pas l'autorité des Etats», selon les termes d'un ex-ministre français. Pour un banquier maghrébin, c'est ce «scepticisme à l'égard de toute dynamique démocratique arabe qui conduit Paris à voir une seule alternative: les gouvernements en place ou les islamistes, comme si les sociétés n'existaient pas».

Paris, qui se défend d'être un gardien du statu quo autoritaire, argue que la «démocratie est le fruit d'un long chemine-

ment» et reproche mezza voce aux Américains de «jouer la société civile contre les Etats». Les Français n'ont avalisé le projet américain lors du G8 de juin qu'après avoir obtenu la suppression de toute référence à une aide aux ONG.

Péripéties? Le débat est en tout cas lancé dans le monde arabe où nombre d'intellectuels, très méfiants à l'égard de «l'impérialisme américain», commencent à voir les espaces que cette initiative peut leur ouvrir. ♦

JOSÉ GARÇON

# U.S. and EU forge joint strategy on Iran talks

## If negotiations fail, nuclear issue would go to Security Council

By David E. Sanger and Steven R. Weisman

**WASHINGTON:** The United States will drop objections to Iran's eventual membership in the World Trade Organization, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced Friday in a shift toward Europe's stance in the efforts to curb the Iranian nuclear program.

The European Union and the United States have agreed on a joint approach toward Iran over its nuclear program after months of dispute, with the Bush administration agreeing to offer modest economic incentives.

Rice said the United States would also allow some sales of civilian aircraft parts to Iran on a case-by-case basis.

In return, senior American officials said, the Europeans have agreed to take the nuclear issue to the United Nations Security Council if negotiations fail.

Rice's statement said, "In order to

support the EU3 diplomacy, the president has decided that the United States will drop its objection to Iran's application to the World Trade Organization and will consider on a case-by-case basis the licensing of spare parts for Iranian civil aircraft, in particular from the European Union to Iran."

The term EU3 refers to Britain, France and Germany, the three European nations negotiating with Iran.

The agreement represents a major shift for both the Bush administration, which has refused for years to offer Iran incentives to give up its program, and for Europe, which had been reluctant to discuss penalties.

"We share the desire of European governments to secure Iran's adherence to its obligations through peace and diplomatic means," the State Department statement said.

The American incentives would go into effect only if Iran agreed to halt the enrichment of uranium permanently, senior American officials said.

Asked whether the incentives to Iran might be increased, Richard Boucher, the State Department spokesman, said: "We're not negotiating with Iran. We are supporting the Europeans. The Europeans thought that these were good steps for them, so that as they presented their position to Iran, they would be able to present credible commitments or credible possibilities that they could carry through on."

"Iran can't get into the WTO without the consent of all the parties," Boucher added. "So for one party or a few parties to say, 'You know, we'll help you in the WTO,' they can't deliver on it without the support of people like the United States."

The agreement has been widely anticipated since President George W. Bush returned from Europe late last month.

Bush did not announce the change

himself, just as he did not announce a similar offer to North Korea last June. But he has been closely involved in the administration's change of direction, officials said.

But while the United States is a party to negotiations with North Korea, it does not plan to join the talks with Iran directly, officials said, leaving that to the Europeans.

Until now, the president has insisted he would never "reward" Iran for giving up activities that he has insisted are a cover for a weapons program. That position hardened after Iran admitted that it had hidden facilities and enrichment activities from international inspectors for 18 years.

Iran has voluntarily halted its enrichment activities while it engaged in negotiations with Britain, France and Germany.

But its leaders have repeatedly declared that it would never give up its right to enrich uranium for what it insists are peaceful purposes.

The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which Iran has ratified, gives all signers the right to enrich uranium as long as the work is peaceful, declared and fully monitored by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The monitoring is intended to assure that a country is only producing low-enriched uranium capable of fueling commercial nuclear reactors, rather than high-enriched uranium for nuclear weapons.

Iran's senior negotiator, Hassan Rowhani, said at a news conference in Tehran last weekend that the country would never agree to a permanent cessation of enrichment. But the senior American official involved in the administration's negotiations with Europe said that, after some heated internal debate, "the Europeans are now with us in the view that we could never monitor their enrichment activity reliably

enough" to ensure that Iran was not producing bomb-grade uranium.

Some European diplomats have argued that point in recent weeks, saying that Iran could not be prohibited from enrichment while other signers of the treaty were permitted to produce nuclear fuel. But the American official insisted "that argument is now over." Some officials in the Bush administration have said they believe that Iran would not agree to give up enrichment, no matter what incentives Bush offered.

They see the president's decision to dangle what amount to modest American economic incentives as part of an effort to speed along the negotiating process so that Iran's intentions become clear.

At that point, in the view of hawks on the issue inside the White House and

the Pentagon, the Europeans would be bound to take the issue to the Security Council. These officials would only speak anonymously because such delicate negotiations hang in the balance.

When she served as national security adviser, Rice often said that the question of stopping Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon should be put before the Security Council, but the United States could never muster the votes among the board of the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Vienna-based nuclear watchdog.

The Europeans, in contrast, have argued that unless the United States joined in the incentives they offered, Iran would never seriously consider giving up control of what is called the "nuclear fuel cycle," the ability to produce nuclear fuel itself.

American officials have said they would insist on a timetable so that talks would not drag on for months or years. Whether the Europeans will announce such a timetable is unclear. Several weeks ago, the new director of central intelligence, Porter Goss, said that Iran was judged to be several years away from producing an actual weapon.

Iran could see benefits from the offer of aircraft parts relatively soon, officials said. Its aging craft need parts for engines and American-made avionics equipment. But entry into the World Trade Organization is far more complex, requiring huge changes in a nation's economy and vast openings to foreign investors.

The New York Times

# Hazardous assignment in Iraq

H. D. S. Greenway

BOSTON

On one thing, the Italian government and the White House agree. The killing of the intelligence officer Nicola Calipari and the wounding of the journalist Giuliana Sgrena by American soldiers was a "horrific accident." But beyond that there is little agreement as to what happened.

The Americans say the car the Italians were traveling in was going 60 miles an hour. The Italians say it was going 25. The Americans say they gave hand signals, flashed lights and fired warning shots to get the car to slow down approaching their checkpoint.

The Italians say there was no obvious checkpoint, no warning shots and that the bright light that illuminated their car came on virtually as the bullets began to pour. The Italians say the Americans were told the car was on its way to the airport. The Americans say they were not.

Giuliana Sgrena's suggestion that the Americans might have targeted her car isn't credible. But given that she had just been released from a harrowing month in captivity only to be shot at by Americans, a little emotional hyperbole is understandable. After all, Eason Jordan of CNN made similar charges that the military targeted journalists — charges that brought about his resignation.

For journalists, there is simply no more dangerous assignment than Iraq. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, 37 journalists have been killed there in the two years since the war began. Only three lost their lives during the invasion itself. The rest were killed after President George W. Bush announced mission accomplished.

This compares with 66 journalists killed in Vietnam, according to Freedom Forum — but that was for a 20-year period, 1955 to 1975, not just two years.

In addition, 27 journalists have been abducted beginning in 2004. Twenty-four of them, like Giuliana Sgrena, were eventually released, but two were murdered. One, the French journalist Florence Aubenas, is still being held.

The majority of journalists killed in Iraq, 19, have been Iraqis, and they are the unsung heroes of the

Baghdad press corps. As the assignment has gotten more and more dangerous, Western reporters, who cannot blend into the scenery, have become almost prisoners in their compounds and hotels, unable to go out and cover stories as much as they used to do.

As a result, Iraqi reporters have taken up the slack, going into dangerous situations and reporting back to their home bureaus. Add to that the deaths of media workers — 18 Iraqis and one Lebanese — who have lost their lives as drivers, interpreters and fixers without whom Western journalists could not operate. Aubenas's interpreter, Hussein Hanoun al-Saadi, was kidnapped with her.

In addition, a lively Iraqi press has arisen in post-Saddam Iraq, and Iraqis have lost their lives reporting for their own media.

But for the purposes of this story the most interesting statistic is that while 20 journalists have been

killed by "insurgent action" in Iraq, including cross-fire, suicide bombings and targeted killings, according to CPJ, nearly half as many — nine — were killed by American soldiers in what the military, in that most ironic of euphemisms, calls "friendly fire."

And it was friendly fire that has so injured relations between Italy and the United States, killed a Bulgarian sergeant and mowed down uncounted numbers of Iraqi civilians at checkpoints and barricades.

"Next to the scandal of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib, no other aspect of the American military presence in Iraq has caused such widespread dismay and anger among Iraqis," wrote veteran Baghdad correspondent John F. Burns in The New York Times.

One has to sympathize that young American soldiers have to make split-second decisions as to whether an approaching car is full of children, an Italian journalist or a suicide bomber. And the reality is

**Iraqi journalists  
are the unsung heroes  
of the Baghdad  
press corps.**

that for much of the country there is no security even two years after Washington's decision to invade Iraq.

The senior U.S. general in Iraq, George Casey, has ordered a review of all the checkpoint incidents in the past six months. He is likely to turn up dozens upon dozens of "horrific accidents" that need not,

and should not, have happened. Whether that will ever be admitted is another matter.

*H. D.S. Greenway's column appears in The Boston Globe.*

# Insurgents in Iraq hone propaganda offensive

By Robert F. Worth

**BAGHDAD:** It is an all too familiar ritual. Hours after an attack on an American convoy or an Iraqi police patrol, a brief statement begins appearing on Islamist Web sites claiming the attack was carried out by fighters loyal to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Iraq's most wanted man.

But in the last two weeks something has changed. Every day now, new messages appear on the Web offering encouragement to resistance fighters, and last week Zarqawi's group started an Internet magazine.

Other Islamist groups are joining the effort, including one calling itself the

Jihadist Information Brigade.

The Iraqi insurgency appears to have mounted a full-scale propaganda war.

And while the methods are not new — most militant groups now rely on the Web to recruit new adherents — the recent flurry of propaganda from Iraq has a distinctly defensive sound. The violence here has not let up, but the relatively peaceful elections, and the new movements toward democracy in other Arab countries, appear to have had a dispiriting effect on the insurgents, terrorism analysts say.

"I think they feel they are losing the battle," said Rita Katz, director of the SITE Institute, an American nonprofit group that monitors Islamist Web sites

and news operations. "They realize there will be a new government soon, and they seem very nervous about the future."

One recent Web posting, for instance, angrily disputed "the infidels' claim that the mujahedeen are weakened and their attacks are fewer." Another insisted that Zarqawi is "in good health" and still planning operations. Yet another warned against recent entreaties to insurgents to "sit down at the bargaining table" with Americans and their allies.

It is hard, of course, to be certain of the authenticity of Internet postings.

But American officials say those that appear with the Zarqawi logo seem to be credible, and that has led them to conclude that he does indeed have a news operation.

Even before the January election, Zarqawi released a tape of a lengthy didactic speech explaining why democracy was heretical. The new Internet magazine repeats some of that material and makes further efforts to persuade Iraqis that when it is finally formed, the new elected government will not be legitimate.

Zarqawi's group, Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia, is also making efforts to cast itself as a defender of Muslim lives. After an attack Wednesday on a hotel in central Baghdad, the group quickly released an Internet statement taking responsibility.

It noted, "As for the time, the deadly attack should always be before the start of the working day so that it won't harm Muslims who are passing by."

Last week, the Zarqawi group quickly denied news reports that it was responsible for a suicide car bomb in Hilla that killed 136 people. The attack was aimed at police and army recruits gathering outside a clinic, but many civilians, including women and children, were also killed. Residents of Hilla staged large and angry demonstrations against the violence that was featured on Arabic satellite television stations and Web sites.

The Zarqawi group's denial noted, correctly, that it had taken responsibility for a separate attack on the same day aimed at American soldiers in southern Baghdad, not for the Hilla attack.

Terrorist groups around the world rely increasingly on Internet chat rooms, more anonymous than traditional Web sites, to recruit fighters and to communicate with one another.

Zarqawi became widely known last year after his group released a videotape of the beheading of an American hostage, Nicholas Berg, and in a sense he is simply bringing his news operation up a notch. But the jihadists seem highly sensitive to perceptions that they have been weakened or demoralized in recent weeks.

Many of the groups' new messages, for instance, refer to American claims that some of Zarqawi's loyalists have been captured, and that the noose is tightening around him.

The jihadists often complain that their own successes are not getting enough play. "Where are the media correspondents in Iraq, and where is the media coverage in Mosul, Anbar, Diyala, Samarra, Basra and southern Baghdad?" they demanded in a statement Monday.

To some extent, the insurgents are creating their own media coverage, and successfully. After the hotel attack Wednesday in Baghdad, for instance, the group quickly issued their own videotape of the bombing, along with statements explaining why and how they chose their target. Within hours, all of it was appearing not only on Arabic Web sites and chat rooms, but on television stations and even in some Western news reports.

But just in case, they are adding a forum of their own as well. The new Internet magazine is called *Zurwat Al Samam*, Arabic for "the top of the camel's hump," a metaphorical phrase meaning the ideal of Islamic belief and practice.

Like other Qaeda-linked Web publications, the new magazine is partly a reaction against the Arab state media, which often refuse to acknowledge terrorist attacks, said Michael Doran, a professor of Near East Studies at Princeton University who monitors traffic on Islamist Web sites and chat rooms.

But the new propaganda effort may also be motivated by a belief that as the war grinds on, it may get harder to recruit foreign fighters, said Katz, of SITE, or Search for International Terrorist Entities. For that reason, the insurgent groups appear to be focusing more on winning and retaining the sympathies of Iraqis, she added.

It is impossible to say how successful these Internet appeals will be. But one thing is clear: the Internet is a two-way mirror, allowing outsiders a fuller view of the insurgents' ideas.

On Wednesday, for example, a message was posted on an Islamist Internet message board pointing out that the recent shooting of a newly freed Italian hostage had increased political pressures on Italy to withdraw its troops from Iraq. The writer proposed taking another Italian hostage in Iraq to "add fuel to the fire while it is hot" and perhaps force Italy out of Iraq.

That posting drew a response from Abu Maysar al-Iraqi, the pen name of the spokesman for Zarqawi's group. He promised to "repeat the nightmare, again and again."

The New York Times

INTERNATIONAL  
**Herald Tribune**  
March 12-13, 2005

# Washington rejoint l'Europe face à l'Iran

« Nous examinons quels moyens nous pourrions utiliser pour contribuer au succès des efforts et soutenir la diplomatie » des trois membres de l'Union européenne – France, Allemagne, Grande-Bretagne – engagés dans de difficiles négociations avec Téhéran, a déclaré hier Condoleezza Rice lors d'une visite au Mexique. « La question n'est pas de savoir ce que l'on devrait donner à l'Iran, mais de maintenir le projecteur braqué sur l'Iran pour qu'il se conforme à ses obligations internationales », a toutefois ajouté le secrétaire d'Etat américain.

**Washington :**  
**De notre correspondant**  
**Philippe Gélle**

La réconciliation transatlantique ne pouvait prendre de forme plus explicite que le rapprochement formalisé hier sur l'Iran. Dans une évolution majeure de sa politique à l'égard de Téhéran, Washington a pour la première fois fait miroiter des « récompenses » au régime des mollahs, s'il renonce pour de bon à se doter de l'arme atomique.

L'annonce de ce virage à 180° a été faite hier par le secrétaire d'Etat, Condoleezza Rice, dans une interview à l'agence Reuter. « La décision prise par le président (Bush) est de soutenir activement les négociations des trois Européens avec les Iraniens », a-t-elle expliqué en référence aux démarches diplomatiques entreprises depuis l'automne 2003 par l'Allemagne, la Grande-Bretagne et la France pour amener l'Iran à respecter ses obligations nucléaires. « Nous allons clarifier notre intention de lever nos objections à une candidature de

*l'Iran à l'OMC (Organisation mondiale du commerce) et nous examinerons au cas par cas la vente de pièces détachées pour les avions civils iraniens, en particulier de l'Union européenne », a-t-elle précisé. « Il n'y aura pas d'autres gestes » tant que les Iraniens n'auront pas obtenu, a prévenu le chef de la diplomatie américaine.*

Avant la substance, c'est le principe qui importe : jusqu'ici, Washington était raidi dans une posture de confrontation avec les Iraniens, pressant l'Europe de transférer le dossier au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU pour imposer des sanctions au régime islamiste. Trois décennies après la rupture des relations diplomatiques entre les deux pays, Washington n'a pas soudainement décidé de participer aux pourparlers engagés par les trois Européens. Mais ceux-ci obtiennent pour la première fois son appui explicite, qu'ils sollicitaient en vain depuis des mois. La récente visite du président Bush en Europe a servi d'élément déclencheur. Ce qui a été rendu public hier est le fruit d'un marchandage complexe, qui donne corps aux pro-

clamations sur le réchauffement euro-américain et relance véritablement ce partenariat sur la scène internationale.

Dans un ballet soigneusement orchestré, Condoleezza Rice a attendu hier la publication par les Européens d'une lettre dont le contenu avait été étroitement négocié avec les Américains (voir ci-contre). Une dernière réunion a eu lieu mardi avec Robert Zoellick, le secrétaire d'Etat adjoint, pour s'accorder sur la façon dont les trois pays négociateurs allaient effectuer leur part du chemin : ils y soulignent, en particulier,

qu'en cas d'échec de la diplomatie, ils n'auront « d'autre choix que de soutenir le renvoi du programme nucléaire iranien devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU ». Le mot de « sanctions » n'est pas prononcé, aucun calendrier n'est précisé, mais l'essentiel est dit : pour les sceptiques qui, à Wa-

shington, continuent de juger futil les efforts de la troïka, les concessions américaines comptent moins que cet engagement européen.

Le vice-président, Dick Cheney, et le camp des « faucons » ont particulièrement insisté pour obtenir cette contrepartie, après que George W. Bush est revenu d'Europe décidé à faire un geste. « Je veux être très claire, a souligné Condoleezza Rice. La question n'est pas de savoir ce que l'on cède, mais de maintenir la pression sur l'Iran, qui doit respecter ses obligations internationales. » Les « raisons positives » don-

nées aux mollahs d'abandonner leurs ambitions nucléaires sont présentées à Washington comme un reniement « limité », en contrepartie de la fermeté réaffirmée des Européens. Les experts prédisent d'ailleurs qu'elles ne suffiront pas à convaincre un régime qui souhaite avant tout des garanties pour sa sécurité, entouré de puissances nucléaires

(Inde, Pakistan, Russie, Israël) et par les forces américaines (Irak, Afghanistan).

C'est donc peut-être un jeu de dupes qui s'est mis en place hier, les uns croyant avoir attiré Washington dans une logique diplomatique, les autres estimant avoir ouvert la voie à des sanctions inéluctables, voire, à terme, à une action par la force. Même la perspective d'une entrée à l'OMC n'a finalement été retenue par l'Administration américaine que parce qu'elle implique des réformes en profondeur, susceptibles de favoriser un changement de régime en Iran. Mais, sans doute, toute bonne diplomatie est-elle faite de ces ambiguïtés. Le résultat escompté, de part et d'autre, consiste à accélérer le moment de vérité pour Téhéran. Dans le bras de fer engagé par la communauté internationale, il ne sera pas dit que Washington n'a pas voulu donner sa chance à la diplomatie ou a mis des bâtons dans les roues des négociateurs européens.

## L'avertissement de la troïka

L'Allemagne, la France et la Grande-Bretagne, qui mènent au nom de l'Union européenne les négociations avec l'Iran sur le dossier nucléaire, ont menacé hier de déférer Téhéran devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU s'il reprenait des activités d'enrichissement d'uranium. Dans un rapport remis hier à leurs partenaires de l'Union, les trois pays ont regretté le manque de progrès dans les négociations, dont une session de quatre jours vient de s'achever sans résultat probant à Genève. « Si les progrès ne sont pas aussi rapides que nous le souhaiterions, nous croyons que nous avançons dans la bonne direction »,

indiquent dans ce document les ministres des Affaires étrangères des trois pays, Joschka Fischer, Michel Barnier et Jack Straw. « Le soutien que nous avons reçu de nos partenaires de l'UE, du G 8... et en particulier des Etats-Unis et de la Russie a renforcé les perspectives de résultats satisfaisants ». Les trois Européens avertissent Téhéran qu'en cas d'échec ils n'auront « pas d'autre choix que de soutenir le renvoi du programme nucléaire iranien devant le Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU », ce qui pourrait conduire à l'imposition de sanctions contre l'Iran. (AFP.)

**LE FIGARO**

SAMEDI 12 - DIMANCHE 13 MARS 2005

Pour la République islamique, le renoncement définitif à l'enrichissement d'uranium n'est pas justifié

# Téhéran crispé sur ses positions nationalistes

Téhéran :  
Delphine Minoui

Sous pression, à la fois européenne et américaine, la République islamique d'Iran n'a cessé de multiplier les déclarations menaçantes au cours de ces derniers jours. « *Même si le problème nucléaire iranien est finalement soumis au Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, l'Iran n'abandonnera jamais ses droits légitimes relatifs à l'utilisation pacifique des énergies nucléaires. Sur ce point-là, nous ne céderons jamais, malgré les séductions et les menaces* », martelait cette semaine Hamid Reza Assefi, le porte-parole du ministère des Affaires étrangères.

Depuis décembre, le trio européen (Allemagne, France et Grande-Bretagne) négocie péniblement avec l'Iran pour le convaincre de donner des « *garanties objectives* » qu'il ne fabrique pas l'arme nucléaire, en échange d'une coopération nucléaire, technologique et commerciale, doublée d'un dialogue politique et de sécurité. Mais en coulisses, les Européens n'ont cessé de répéter que les contreparties souhaitées par les Iraniens (notamment la garantie d'une adhésion de l'Iran à l'OMC, la possibilité d'acheter des avions contenant des pièces détachées américaines et l'assu-

rance que les sites nucléaires ne soient pas attaqués) ne pouvaient être obtenues sans une participation américaine aux négociations. L'annonce, faite hier par Washington, d'accepter certaines mesures incitatives, risque de changer la donne.

Reste pourtant à convaincre Téhéran. Car aux yeux de la République islamique, le renoncement définitif à l'enrichissement d'uranium n'est pas justifié. Après avoir accepté, en novembre dernier, de suspendre leur programme d'enrichissement, les Iraniens estiment qu'ils ont le droit de le poursuivre à des fins civiles. Or, selon les experts, l'uranium enrichi peut fournir la matière première pour fabriquer la bombe atomique. Et c'est aujourd'hui un point sur lequel refusent de cé-

der les Européens.

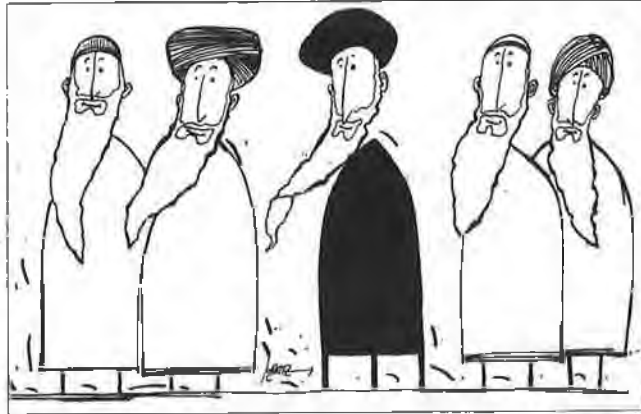
Nasser Hadian, professeur de sciences politiques à l'université de Téhéran, se dit pourtant confiant sur l'avancée des négociations.

« *J'ai l'impression que l'Iran va accepter de se lancer sur la voie du compromis, car ce n'est dans l'intérêt de personne d'aller au clash* », dit-il. Mais le contexte politique actuel de l'Iran ne facilite guère la prise de décision. A l'approche de l'élection présidentielle, prévue le 17 juin, où les conservateurs espèrent bien l'emporter sur les réformateurs, aucun candidat ne veut prendre le risque de se prononcer, de peur d'être accusé de brader le pays aux étrangers.

Selon Nasser Hadian, les décideurs politiques gravitant autour du dossier nucléaire sont divisés en quatre groupes. « *Le premier groupe, très minoritaire, dit-il, se positionne contre le nucléaire dans son ensemble. Le deuxième estime que la connaissance nucléaire est un droit légitime, et qu'on peut l'utiliser à des fins civiles. Le troisième considère que l'Iran est en droit de se doter d'un pouvoir nucléaire, pour être en mesure de montrer sa capacité à réagir face aux ennemis potentiels. Enfin, le quatrième groupe, également minoritaire, opte pour une solution plus radicale : ne céder à aucune forme de pression, se retirer du traité de non-prolifération et pour-*

*suivre le programme nucléaire, loin des regards étrangers.* »

D'après Nasser Hadian, le deuxième et le troisième groupe sont aujourd'hui majoritaires et en mesure de négocier. Pour ce spécialiste, comme pour beaucoup d'Iraniens, les rumeurs d'une possible attaque chirurgicale américaine sur certains sites ne sont pourtant pas infondées. Mais, d'après lui, il serait préférable de résoudre le dossier du nucléaire par la voie du dialogue. « *Attaquer l'Iran n'est pas la solution*, dit-il. *Au contraire, une frappe américaine pourrait aggraver la situation, car elle permettrait au quatrième groupe de prendre la situation en main, de fermer les portes de l'Iran, de poursuivre secrètement ses activités nucléaires, de durcir sa politique interne et de justifier ses actes en brandissant la doctrine protectionniste.* »



## Des Iraniens manifestent dans un avion

Une soixantaine de manifestants se disant d'« origine iranienne » se sont retranchés pendant près de seize heures dans un appareil de la compagnie allemande Lufthansa à l'aéroport de Bruxelles. Les protestataires se sont finalement rendus sans incident hier à l'aube aux autorités belges. Ils s'étaient vu proposer juste auparavant un ultimatum : quitter l'avion sans encombre ou se voir signifier une « *arrestation administrative* ». Les revendications des manifestants sont restées floues mais portaient sur un abandon de la politique de dialogue avec l'Iran conduite par l'Union européenne.

(AFP.)

**IRAK** *Le statut de la ville de Kirkouk, pomme de discorde*

# Entre Kurdes et chiites, l'accord reste à trouver

LE FIGARO MARDI 15 MARS 2005

Thierry Oberlé

L'union politique entre les chiites de l'Alliance unifiée irakienne (AUI) soutenue par le clergé et les Kurdes laïques s'annonce difficile. Les représentants des deux communautés ne parviennent pas à conclure les pourparlers engagés il y a maintenant un mois pour former un gouvernement. Selon l'entourage de l'un des négociateurs, les tractations qui ont repris hier à Bagdad ne devraient pas aboutir avant la première réunion de l'Assemblée nationale prévue mercredi.

Les discussions achoppent en raison du refus des chiites de céder aux exigences kurdes. Peu flexibles, les dirigeants des deux grandes formations locales, le Parti démocrate du Kurdistan (PDK) de Massoud Barzani et l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) de Jalal Talabani, ne veulent pas rater l'occasion de ren-

forcer l'autonomie de leur région. Ils exigent, pêle-mêle, le rattachement de la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk au Kurdistan, la création d'une armée indépendante et une meilleure répartition des richesses nationales. « *Il y a des divergences sur certains points comme celui de l'avenir des pechmergas (NDLR : les miliciens kurdes) et certains articles de la Constitution provisoire* », confirme Jalal Talabani qui est lui-même candidat au poste de président.

Le futur statut de Kirkouk est aux yeux des Kurdes la question prioritaire. Considérée par eux comme leur capitale, la ville est

divisée entre communautés ethniques antagonistes. Depuis la chute de l'ancien régime, le statu quo entre Kurdes, Arabes et Turkmènes prévaut. Les Kurdes souhaitent y mettre fin en « *expulsant 280 000 Arabes* ».

La mesure concernerait les populations envoyées par Saddam dans le Nord pour repeupler la région après le déplacement des autochtones chassées vers les montagnes. Elle s'appuie sur l'article 58 de la Loi fondamentale, la Constitution provisoire qui régit l'Irak pendant la période transitoire. Le texte prévoit de corriger les effets de l'arabisation forcée de la cité pétrolière.

Attirées par des logements et le cadeau empoisonné d'aides spéciales, des dizaines de milliers de familles venues de l'intérieur du pays avaient accepté de s'installer dans des cités nouvelles. Surnommés par les Kurdes les « Arabes d'intérêts », leur départ est aujourd'hui réclamé. Vivant dans la peur, les victimes de cette future épuration ethnique à rebours s'accommoderaient d'un changement d'adresse en échange d'un dédommagement. Ils toucheraient environ 33 000 dollars pour décamper. « *Ils sont prêts à s'en aller contre des compensations financières* », assure un responsable du PDK.

Les « Arabes d'intérêt » devraient être remplacés par plus de 100 000 « déplacés » kurdes, au nom du droit au retour. L'objectif affiché est de rekurdiser Kirkouk après des décennies de campagne d'arabisation. « *Un recensement sera organisé après le retour des réfugiés. Nous pourrions alors organiser un référendum en faveur du rattachement de Kirkouk au Kurdistan* », poursuit le responsable du PDK. Les Kurdes tentent également d'étendre la région autonome kurde à des localités qui faisaient partie de la collectivité territoriale kurde avant 1975.

L'avenir des pechmergas est une autre source de discorde.

Car, pour les Kurdes, ces combattants doivent être regroupés dans une armée régulière kurde. Le pou-

voir central serait représenté dans la région autonome par la police ainsi que par

des unités de gardes-frontières. Quant à l'armée nationale, elle ne serait autorisée à pénétrer en zone kurde qu'avec l'aval du Parlement kurde. Les chiites rejettent ces propositions en invoquant les risques d'affrontements entre les deux armées et les risques de dérive vers une guerre civile.

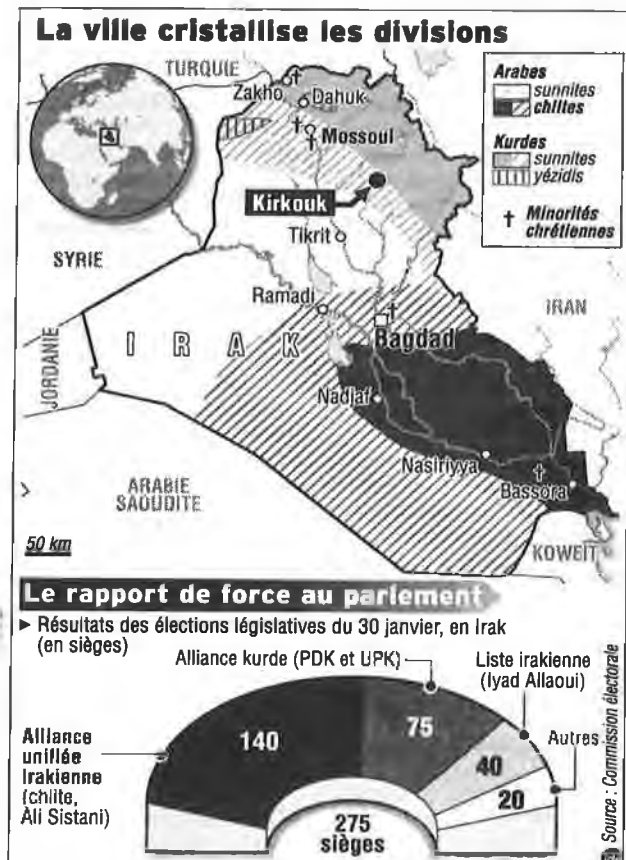
Sur le plan financier, les Kurdes demandent le passage de leur part de la manne pétrolière de 17 à 25 %. Et ils revendiquent un droit de regard sur le fonctionnement de la Compagnie du pétrole du Nord, qui exploite les gisements pétroliers de Kirkouk.

Plus généralement, les deux partis kurdes, qui ne sont pas toujours sur la même longueur d'onde, ont en commun une conception identique de la place des femmes dans la société, opposée à celle des chiites, d'où d'inévitables frictions. Ils espèrent aussi élargir l'union politique à de petites formations, et *in fine*, obtenir un ministère de souveraineté comme l'Intérieur, les Finances ou la Défense.

En attendant, la mésentente entre les vainqueurs des législatives rend perplexes de nombreux Irakiens qui ont pris des risques pour se rendre aux urnes le 30 janvier. Ils craignent non sans raison que la phase d'incertitude joue en faveur des partisans du chaos.

Marginalisés au profit de la minorité sunnite sous Saddam, les blocs chiites et kurdes, qui disposent d'une majorité des deux tiers au Parlement, serviraient, s'ils ne parviennent pas à un accord, les intérêts du premier ministre chiite modéré laïque, Iyad Allaoui, le perdant du scrutin du 30 janvier. Son gouvernement pourrait, en l'absence de solution, expédier les affaires courantes plus longtemps que prévu.

*Les Irakiens craignent que l'incertitude joue en faveur des partisans du chaos*



# U.S. officials cool on Iran's hot response

By Brian Knowlton

**WASHINGTON:** Top U.S. officials responded with aplomb on Sunday to developments in the Middle East, saying that Tehran's heated reply to the effort to persuade Iran to halt nuclear work was simply part of negotiations, and that a new Syrian plan to withdraw from Lebanon had "positive elements."

At a time of ferment in the region being encouraged by the White House, the new U.S. national security adviser, Stephen Hadley, described the Syrian withdrawal plan as "good news," while saying he wanted to hear more details and to watch Syrian actions.

Hadley and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice also said that the issue of how to deal with Hezbollah, the militant group that brought half a million pro-Syrian demonstrators to the streets of Beirut last week, but which Washington calls a terrorist organization, could be dealt with after elections set for May.

"Very often," Rice said on ABC television, "elections themselves have a changing impact on people and on the balance of forces."

But she said that a democratic society could not coexist with groups "committed to violence outside of that border."

Both officials seemed untroubled by a fierce Iranian response to the new U.S.-European plan to influence its nuclear policy. The parties agreed to offer incentives — in trade, security, diplomacy and technology — to Tehran for dropping any nuclear weapons work, but to take the matter to the United Nations if Iran persists.

In Tehran, a Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hamid Reza Asefi, said bluntly Saturday that Iran was determined to develop peaceful nuclear technology and that "no pressure, intimidation or threat can make Iran give up its right."

But Rice suggested that Iran had been rattled by its inability to pit the United States against Europe.

"What we've forged with Europe is a common front, a common approach to dealing with Iran that says Iran must not develop a nuclear weapon," she said. "I'm sure it makes the Iranians uncomfortable."

Offsetting the comment from the Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hadley said, was one from President Mohammad Khatami of Iran, who said Tehran was "willing to work with the world to give more security that Iran is not moving toward construction of nuclear weapons."

Rice, who appeared on three morning political programs, was pressed repeatedly about how long Iran should be given to accept U.S.-European proposals.



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Sunday that Iran had been rattled by its inability to pit the United States against Europe.

"We don't have a timeline," she said on ABC, adding that Tehran would be

wise to act "sooner rather than later."

She was also asked about a report in The Sunday Times of London that said that Israel had developed secret plans to attack Iran if the U.S.-European efforts failed.

The newspaper said that American officials had "indicated provisionally that they would not stand in Israel's way if all international efforts to halt Iranian nuclear projects failed."

"Well," Rice replied, "the United States administration is not going to authorize anything here."

"Obviously, the president of the United States always has his options open" — a phrase generally understood to include military action — "but we really do believe that this can be resolved diplomatically."

"It really is now up to the Iranians to do what they need to do," Rice said.

The United States agreed last week to drop its opposition to European plans to use incentives in the talks with Tehran that could include help on membership in the World Trade Organization and sales of civilian aircraft parts.

Hadley, the national security adviser, declined to describe this as a concession to a government that President George W. Bush has called the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism.

"What we are doing is removing some objections to something the Europeans are doing," Hadley said on Fox television. "But I do not think that the Iranian regime can take much comfort," because the Europeans were toughening their own position.

Rice, who was about to leave on her first major trip to Asia as secretary of state — to South Asia, then to Japan, South Korea and China — urged both

**Rice said Tehran would be wise to act 'sooner rather than later.'**

Beijing and Taipei to step back from recent moves that have heightened tensions.

China is expected to pass legislation on Monday stipulating that any change in the Taiwanese Constitution that would move it closer to formal independence could be a trigger for military action.

"We have said to both parties that it is not helpful to have unilateral steps that raise tensions," Rice said.

Asked if that included the Chinese legislation, she said, "Oh, clearly it raises tensions."

Rice would not be drawn by an ABC interviewer into speculating on whether China, as its economic might grows, could become a growing military threat. "They are a rising force in international politics," she said, "and there are both healthy aspects and troubling aspects to that."

She said China had played a useful role in fighting terrorism and in cooperating in the six-party talks on North Korean efforts to acquire nuclear weapons, an important issue of her visit.

Rice also declined to be drawn into much of a discussion of her own political future. The Washington Times news-

paper said on Saturday that Rice, in an interview, had repeatedly declined to rule out speculation that she might run for president in 2008.

On Sunday she laughingly noted that she had never run for any office — not even high school class president — and

said, "I don't have any desire to run for president."

But tentative recent steps toward Middle Eastern democracy have drawn praise in Washington even from some Democrats, and Rice has received considerable credit.

"The secretary's doing a first-rate job," said Senator Joseph Biden, Democrat of Delaware, on CBS television. "If we stay this course we've got a shot of literally affecting the course of history."

International Herald Tribune

# Bomb kills 3 U.S. workers in Iraq

By Edward Wong

**BAGHDAD:** A string of attacks and an accident involving an American convoy left at least three Americans and several Iraqis dead over the weekend, including the chief engineer of Baghdad International Airport, Iraqi and American officials said Sunday.

The deadliest attack on Americans took place Saturday, when two American security contractors were killed by a roadside bomb that exploded next to their vehicle south of Baghdad, the U.S. Embassy said. The Americans were employees of Blackwater Security Consulting, based in North Carolina.

Last April, a mob in Falluja mutilated the bodies of four Blackwater employees killed in an insurgent ambush.

The American military said a soldier was killed by small-arms fire on Friday night in the northern city of Mosul. The soldier was part of Task Force Freedom, which last month took over responsibility for the security of Mosul, a city of two million and the third-largest in Iraq.

The chief engineer of the Baghdad airport, Moiyad Ibrahim, was killed Saturday when he went up to the roof of his home in the Ghazaliya neighborhood to check on a strange noise, Interior Ministry officials said. As Ibrahim emerged onto the roof, someone shot him in the head. The officials said the police had arrested the two men responsible, and they said the shooting appeared to be over a personal dispute rather than a planned assassination.

Two Iraqis were killed and a third was injured in an automobile accident on Saturday, when a fuel tanker traveling fast in an American convoy crashed at 8:30 p.m. along a highway in Baghdad, the ministry officials said. Six civilian cars were involved in the accident.

A mortar shell aimed at a security checkpoint in Baghdad killed one Iraqi on Sunday and wounded two, the Interior Ministry said.

The deaths came as the main Kurdish and Shiite political parties continued heated negotiations to form a coalition government, with the issue of the northern city of Kirkuk at the center of disagreements between the two sides.

Last week, officials said they had drafted a document stating the principles under which the new government would operate. The document said the new government would follow the guidelines of the transitional basic



A helicopter for the Blackwater Security firm over Baghdad on Sunday after a bomb killed two of the firm's employees.

## Kurdish and Shiite parties continued negotiations to form a government.

law, written with the help of Americans and approved last spring.

The basic law calls for a restitution of property for tens of thousands of Kurds banished from Kirkuk under Saddam Hussein's government. That process has been slow, and the Kurds are demanding that it be quickened, and that the Shiites commit to letting the Kurds administer the oil-rich area.

A senior official with the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, whose leader is the Kurdish nominee for president, said that the Kurds are fed up with putting off the issue of the future of Kirkuk.

A top official with the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, a powerful Shiite party, said Kurdish leaders in the north were reviewing a draft of the document of principles. The Shiites are awaiting word of changes the Kurds might want to make, the official said.

"We want to reinforce the agreement, form a national unity government and hold a successful meeting of the National Assembly," he said.

The winners of the elections on Jan. 30 have come under criticism for delaying the formation of a government as the insurgency continues, the confidence of the Iraqi people in their elected leaders is slowly ebbing. The first meeting of the National Assembly is scheduled for Wednesday, but it was unclear whether the body would make any significant announcements about a new government.

If the main Shiite and Kurdish blocs band together, they will have the two-thirds vote in the assembly needed to form a government.

The discussions between the Shiites and Kurds have also underscored the political powerlessness of the Sunni Arabs. The ethnic and sectarian rift has also been highlighted by recent attacks, including a suicide bombing last week in a Shiite mosque in Mosul that killed more than 50 people.

A Sunni militant group claimed responsibility Sunday for the assault. The group, calling itself the Soldiers of the Prophet's Companions, said in an Internet posting that the attack in Mosul was the first of its operations, and that it would escalate attacks on Shiites "unless they stop their aggression against us."

The New York Times

# In oil-rich Iraq region, an ethnic chasm grows

## Kurds and Arabs both covet Kirkuk

By Edward Wong

**KIRKUK, Iraq:** Muhammad Ahmed realized how wide the chasm between Kurds and Arabs here had grown when he recently ran into a former classmate on the serpentine streets of this troubled city.

Ahmed, a Kurd, and his friend, an Arab, studied together at Kirkuk's oil institute nearly two decades ago. But shortly after Ahmed started work at the state-owned company North Oil in the late 1980s, the government of Saddam Hussein, intent on solidifying Arab control of Kirkuk, forced him out of his job and made him and his family move north, where they joined tens of thousands of other exiled Kurds.

That mass relocation planted the seeds for a bitter ethnic antagonism that has grown into the most incendiary political issue in Iraq, outside of the Sunni-led insurgency, and the one that more than any other is delaying formation of a new government. When Ahmed met his classmate again, he discovered that his friend was still working for North Oil, one of as many as 10,000 employees helping to tap the region's vast troves of oil, estimated at 10 percent to 20 percent of the country's reserves.

"He had a great salary and a good job all these years," said Ahmed, 41, musing on the luxuries of his old friend's house. "Arabs, Turkmen and Christians were hired, and Kurds were not."

Ahmed spoke from his own home, a concrete-block building hastily erected in a squatter camp inside the city's soccer stadium, where he and his family have been living alongside thousands of other returning Kurds since the fall of Saddam's government.

"We wish we didn't have oil in Kirkuk," he said. "If the oil wasn't here, we'd have a comfortable life now. All our problems are because of this damned oil."

Ahmed's plight encapsulates the growing struggle over Kirkuk, a drab city of 700,000 on the windswept northern plains. Efforts to restore Kurds to their jobs and property without disenfranchising Arabs are fraught with the possibility of igniting a civil war. The debate has so inflamed passions that Kurdish and Shiite Arab negotiators trying to form a coalition government in Baghdad may have to put off any real decision on Kirkuk's future.

"As far as Kirkuk is concerned, be-

cause of the different ethnic groups in it, we have to apply a permanent solution, not a temporary solution," said Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the Shiite nominee for prime minister.

Kurdish leaders call Kirkuk their Jerusalem, saying they should control it — and its oil fields — because it was historically Kurdish.

The Kurds are pushing Shiite leaders like Jaafari to help give property back quickly to Kurdish returnees, evict Arab settlers and employ more Kurds at North Oil, the only major government institution here that the Kurds have been unable to dominate since the U.S. invasion.

The Kurdish political parties have huge leverage. Kurds turned out in large numbers to vote on Jan. 30, securing more than a quarter of the seats in the 275-member National Assembly and making themselves a necessary partner for the Shiite bloc that won the largest number of seats.

But with the oil in Kirkuk at stake, the Kurdish and Shiite parties have

been unable to agree on how to carry out Article 58 of the interim constitution, which provides vague guidelines for settling the property disputes here. Equally vexing is the question of who will administer Kirkuk — the national government or the autonomous regional government of Iraqi Kurdistan.

In the 1960s, Baath Party officials began packing Kurds and, to a lesser degree, Turkmen into trucks and evicting

them from Kirkuk. As the displacement continued, the Kurds who worked for North Oil, like Ahmed, rose to the top of the relocation list. The government, dominated by Sunni Arabs, imported mostly Shiite Arabs from the impoverished south into the Kirkuk area.

Kurds began returning in large numbers nearly two years ago, after the U.S. invasion. Some Arab families fled, but most heeded the reassurances of U.S. soldiers who, trying to avert an ethnic war, urged them to stay and urged the Kurds to await a legal solution.

"From my perspective, the Arab settlers who were brought into Kirkuk were also victims of Saddam Hussein," said Barham Salih, the deputy prime

minister and a top Kurd. "But the question is, if we're talking about a new Iraq, does this mean the elite of Iraq, the democratically elected elite of Iraq, are willing to acknowledge the terrible mistake that was made and put it right?"

In April 2004, the Americans created the Iraqi Property Claims Commission to rule on restitution. By the end of 2004, the commission had received 10,044 claims from Kirkuk's province, Tamin. The commission's statistics show that judges have decided only 25 cases.

The head of the commission said in an interview that only two judges, both Kurds, were working on cases in Kirkuk. The commission has been unable to assign more judges because Kurdish political parties insist that only Kurds review the claims, said the commission head, who declined to be identified by name because one colleague had been assassinated and another kidnapped.

Turkmen and Arab officials accuse major Kurdish parties of having moved people pretending to be returnees into Kirkuk before the Jan. 30 elections in order to strengthen the Kurdish vote.

The New York Times



Shawn Baldwin for The New York Times

A Kurd in a refugee camp in the soccer stadium of the northern Iraqi city of Kirkuk.

## Irak : les Kurdes formulent de nouvelles exigences sur la composition de l'exécutif

► Les dirigeants kurdes irakiens ont formulé, dimanche 13 mars, de nouvelles conditions à un accord avec la principale formation chiite, l'Alliance irakienne unifiée (AIU), qui a remporté les élections du 20 janvier. Ce qui risque de compromettre les chances d'aboutir à un consensus pour la formation d'un nouvel exécutif prévu pour le 16 mars. Les dirigeants de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (l'UPK de Jalal Talabani) et du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (le PDK de Massoud Barzani) ont exigé la révision du projet d'accord mis au point la semaine dernière et l'implication de l'ensemble des forces politiques aux négociations : « Le projet d'accord nécessite une réécriture et la participation d'autres forces politiques aux négociations pour former un gouvernement et en élargir la base », a déclaré Fouad Maassoum, prési-

dent du Conseil national, l'actuelle Assemblée provisoire mise sur pied en août. « Le caractère particulier de la période que nous traversons nécessite la participation au gouvernement des différentes forces et pas seulement de deux ou trois », a-t-il insisté à l'issue de la réunion au quartier général du PDK à Salaheddine, dans le Kurdistan.

Les conversations vont se poursuivre à Bagdad avec l'AIU ainsi que les autres partis. « Nous avons des revendications essentielles auxquelles nous tenons : la démocratie, le fédéralisme, les droits de l'homme et les droits des femmes », a indiqué le vice-président irakien, Roj Nouri Shawis. L'élection par les deux tiers des députés d'un Conseil présidentiel de trois membres, qui choisit à l'unanimité le premier ministre, oblige l'AIU, soutenue par une majorité d'au moins 146 députés sur 275, à nouer des

alliances. Le groupe kurde est le deuxième au Parlement, avec 77 députés, devant la liste du premier ministre sortant, Iyad Allaoui, qui contrôle 40 sièges. « Nous allons examiner, dans les prochains jours, la répartition des postes ministériels », a précisé le

ministre des affaires étrangères, Hoshyar Zebari. Néanmoins, M. Shawis a assuré que la première séance de l'Assemblée aura lieu à la date prévue.

► Serge July, directeur du *Journal Libération*, a lancé, dimanche, devant les télévisions irakiennes, un appel aux ravisseurs de Florence Aubenas et de son guide irakien, Hussein Hanoun, enlevés le 5 janvier, afin qu'ils ouvrent des négociations avec l'ambassade de France. Serge July a indiqué avoir rencontré, dans la matinée, des responsables du Comité des oulémas, la principale association de religieux sunnites en Irak, ainsi que de nombreux directeurs de journaux irakiens. Il a également rendu visite à la famille de Hussein Hanoun. Il doit aussi rencontrer le président, Ghazi Al-Yaouar, et le ministre des affaires étrangères, Hoshyar Zebari.

Le premier ministre français, Jean-Pierre Raffarin, a fait état, dimanche, sur Radio J, d'une « accélération des contacts et des informations, qui nous permettent aujourd'hui d'avoir quelque espoir ». « Je reste très prudent mais je garde espoir et tous les services officiels français sont mobilisés après avoir été renforcés », a-t-il ajouté.

► Les violences ont fait au moins 25 morts au cours du week-end. Deux Américains travaillant pour la firme de sécurité Blackwater ont été tués, samedi, lors d'une attaque à la bombe à la sortie de Bagdad. Ils étaient affectés à la protection de diplomates américains. A Mossoul, l'armée américaine a indiqué que 5 rebelles avaient été tués, tandis que 4 civils sont morts dans l'explosion d'une voiture piégée à Tikrit. Enfin, à Tall Afar, au nord de Mossoul, 3 civils ont été tués et 7 autres blessés dans des accrochages entre rebelles et soldats irakiens. En outre, 12 corps, dont ceux de 3 soldats, ont été retrouvés au sud de Bagdad, près de Latifiyah, à 40 km de la capitale. Tous ont été tués par balles. - (AFP.)

## L'Iran annonce qu'il poursuivra ses activités nucléaires

L'ANNONCE, vendredi 11 mars, par les Etats-Unis de quelques prudentes ouvertures en direction de Téhéran n'a pas changé la donne du problème nucléaire, si l'on en juge par les premières réactions des autorités iraniennes. Manifestement, c'est trop peu.

La position des dirigeants iraniens, qui se sont exprimés pendant le week-end, n'a pas bougé : pas question de renoncer définitivement à des activités nucléaires (celles qui portent sur l'enrichissement de l'uranium) que l'Iran, ont-ils répété, mène à des fins civiles, et pas à des fins militaires. « Nous n'allons pas renoncer à nos droits », a déclaré, samedi, le président Mohammad Khatami. « La République islamique d'Iran est déterminée à utiliser la technologie nucléaire civile et aucune pression, aucune menace ni aucune mesure incitative ne peut l'amener à renoncer à ses droits légitimes », a renchéri le porte-parole du ministère des affaires étrangères, Hamid Reza Asséfi.

Du côté européen, aucun commentaire. Ce sont les Européens qui, depuis des semaines, pressent Washington de faire un geste pour soutenir les négociations dans lesquelles ils se sont lancés avec l'Iran, afin de le pousser à renon-

cer par la voie diplomatique, moyennant des contreparties économiques et politiques, à tout projet d'armement nucléaire, et afin d'obtenir qu'il accepte tous les contrôles que cela suppose de la part de l'Agence internationale pour l'énergie atomique (l'AIEA).

La France, la Grande-Bretagne et l'Allemagne, qui mènent ces négociations avec Téhéran, avaient présenté deux requêtes précises au président américain, George Bush, quand il est venu en Europe le mois dernier : la levée du veto que les Etats-Unis

opposent à l'entrée de l'Iran à l'Organisation mondiale du commerce (OMC) et la levée partielle de l'embargo américain, afin de permettre à l'Iran de renouveler les appareils de sa flotte aérienne civile qui atteignent un état d'obsolescence critique. Cet embargo interdit y compris la vente à Téhéran d'avions européens Airbus, dans lesquels entrent pour partie des pièces détachées américaines Rolls Royce. Au terme de longues tergiversations,

l'administration américaine a acquiescé, vendredi, à ces deux

demandes.

« L'entrée à l'OMC est un droit absolu de tous les pays », a rétorqué sèchement le lendemain M. Asséfi, au nom du ministère des affaires étrangères iranien. Quant aux restrictions à l'exportation de pièces détachées pour les avions civils, elles n'auraient jamais dû exister et leur levée « ne constitue donc pas un avantage ». Parallèlement à ces commentaires hautains, certains responsables iraniens procédaient à un petit rappel d'anti-américanisme. La secrétaire d'Etat, Condoleezza « Rice, Bush et leurs comparses doivent être traînés devant un tribunal international pour leurs crimes contre les peuples », déclarait un des ministres du gouvernement, Ali Yousseni, en tournant en dérision les mesures annoncées par les Etats-Unis.

### SUCCÈS RELATIF

A Washington, le Département d'Etat s'est surtout efforcé pendant le week-end d'apaiser les partisans de la manière forte, en assurant que rien n'avait été concédé à l'Iran et qu'il s'agissait de tester la pertinence de la démarche européenne. « Nous avons obtenu que les Européens rejoignent nos préoccupations, qu'ils ne parlent pas seulement du nucléaire mais aussi du

## Israël est prêt à bombarder des sites nucléaires

Israël a mis au point des plans d'attaques aériennes et terrestres contre des installations nucléaires, au cas où les efforts diplomatiques ne déboucheraient pas sur un arrêt du programme nucléaire iranien, a affirmé, dimanche 13 mars, le *Sunday Times*. Le premier ministre israélien, Ariel Sharon, et son cabinet restreint auraient donné « le feu vert initial » à une attaque unilatérale contre des sites iraniens, lors d'une réunion tenue en février, indique le journal britannique, et les autorités américaines auraient laissé entendre qu'elles ne feraient pas obstacle aux plans israéliens si les efforts diplomatiques de la communauté internationale échouaient.

Les plans israéliens prévoient, toujours selon le journal, l'entrée en action de commandos d'élite et des frappes aériennes effectuées par des F-15 utilisant des bombes « antibunker », à même de percer le blindage d'installations souterraines. La secrétaire d'Etat américaine, Condoleezza Rice, a déclaré, dimanche, à la chaîne de télévision CBS qu'elle n'était pas au courant des plans israéliens. - (Reuters.)

soutien iranien au terrorisme, des entraves iraniennes au processus de paix au Proche-Orient, de l'incapacité de Téhéran à apporter liberté et démocratie à son peuple », affirmait, dimanche sur Fox News, le conseiller à la sécurité nationale, Stephen Hadley.

Vrai ou faux ? La démarche européenne n'était pas, à l'origine, de cette nature. « Les Américains sont toujours dans la même optique

depuis la crise des otages en 1982, celle d'un changement de régime, expliquait récemment un diplomate européen ; nous, nous pensons qu'il ne faut pas tout mélanger. Les droits de l'homme, le terrorisme, les problèmes du Moyen-Orient, nous en parlons avec les Iraniens dans un

dirigeants iraniens ont, en effet, fait savoir que les « ambiguïtés » européennes les lassent, qu'ils préféreraient avoir directement à faire aux Américains et que les gestes consentis par ces derniers restent très loin du compte.

« Si les Etats-Unis sont intéressés autre cadre. Les négociations à trois avec Téhéran doivent rester concentrées sur le nucléaire. »

L'éventualité que l'Iran se dote un jour de l'arme nucléaire « est impossible à admettre ». Mais, poursuivait ce diplomate « la vindicte permanente n'a pour effet que de renforcer le nationalisme iranien autour du régime », il faut au contraire permettre à ses dirigeants de convaincre les Iraniens

des avantages de renoncer à l'arme atomique. L'administration Bush ne voulait a priori faire aucun cadeau de popularité à ce régime, dont elle souhaite ouvertement la fin. Les mesures qu'elle a fini par annoncer, vendredi, sont donc un succès à l'actif des Européens.

Mais un succès très relatif. Les par une coopération multilatérale aux côtés de l'Union européenne et de l'AIEA, à propos du nucléaire et des affaires régionales et internationales, cela peut être examiné », déclarait, samedi, le député conservateur Mohammad Mohammadi. Le fil du dialogue n'est donc pas rompu. Les négociations techniques sur le nucléaire pientent,

avec un rendez-vous d'évaluation le 23 mars à Paris, mais leur principe n'est pas récuse par l'Iran. Reste aux Européens à chercher ce qu'ils pourraient obtenir de plus de Washington, afin d'éviter encore une fois que le Conseil de sécurité soit saisi du problème iranien et qu'on entre dans la phase des sanctions et de l'escalade.

Claire Tréan

# Iraqi report details looting at arms sites

## Stolen items had nuclear capabilities

By James Glanz and William J. Broad

**BAGHDAD:** In the weeks after Baghdad fell in April 2003, looters systematically dismantled and removed tons of machinery from Saddam Hussein's most important weapons installations, including some with high-precision equipment capable of making parts for nuclear arms, a senior Iraqi official said last week in the government's first extensive comments on the looting.

The Iraqi official, Sami al-Araji, the deputy minister of industry, said it appeared that a highly organized operation had pinpointed specific plants looking for valuable equipment, some of which could be used for both military and civilian applications, and carted the machinery away.

Araji said his account was based largely on observations by government employees and officials who either worked at the sites or lived near them.

"They came in with the cranes and the lorries, and they depleted the whole sites," Araji said. "They knew what they were doing; they knew what they want. This was sophisticated looting."

These types of facilities were cited by the Bush administration as a reason for invading Iraq, but they were left largely unguarded by coalition forces in the chaotic months after the invasion.

Araji's statements came just a week after a UN agency revealed that about 90 key sites in Iraq had been looted or razed after the U.S.-led invasion. Satellite imagery analyzed by two UN groups — the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission — confirm that some of the sites identified

by Araji appear to be totally or partly stripped, according to senior officials at those agencies. Those officials said that they could not comment on all of Araji's assertions, because they had been barred by the United States from Iraq since the invasion.

For nearly a year, the two agencies have sent regular reports to the UN Security Council detailing evidence of the dismantlement of Iraqi military installations and, in a few cases, the movement of Iraqi gear to other countries. In addition, a report issued last October by the chief U.S. arms inspector in Iraq, Charles Duelfer, told of evidence of looting at crucial sites.

The disclosures by the Iraqi Industry Ministry, however, added new information about the thefts, detailing the timing, the material that was taken and the apparent skill of the operations.

Araji said equipment capable of making parts for missiles, as well as chemical, biological and nuclear arms, was missing from eight or 10 sites that were the heart of Iraq's dormant program on unconventional weapons. That program was the rationale for the U.S.-led invasion, but occupation forces found no unconventional arms and CIA inspectors concluded that the effort had been largely abandoned after the 1991 Gulf War.

Araji said he had no evidence where the equipment had gone. But his account raises the possibility that the specialized machinery from the arms establishment, which the war was aimed at neutralizing, had made its way to the black market or was in the hands of other countries.

"Targeted looting of this kind of

equipment has to be seen as a proliferation threat," said Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control, a private nonprofit organization that tracks the spread of unconventional weapons.

Araji said he believed the looters were more interested in making money than making weapons.

The United Nations, worried that the material could be used in the clandestine production of bombs, has been hunting for the equipment across the Middle East.

U.S. military officials in Baghdad did not respond to repeated requests for comment on the findings.

Many of Iraq's weapons sites are clustered in an area ranging from Baghdad's southern outskirts to roughly the town of Iskandariya, about 48 kilometers, or 30 miles, south. Araji, who like many others at the Industry Ministry kept coming to work immediately after the invasion, was able to collect observations of the organized looting from witnesses who came to the ministry in Baghdad each day.

The Industry Ministry also sent teams of engineers to the looted sites in August and September 2003 as part of an assessment undertaken for the Coalition Provisional Authority, the interim U.S.-led administrative apparatus. By then, virtually all of the most refined equipment was gone, Araji said.

The peak of the organized looting, Araji estimates, came over a four-week period from mid-April to mid-May 2003 as teams with trucks moved systematically from site to site. That operation was followed by rounds of less discriminating thievery.

The New York Times

James Glanz reported from Baghdad for this article and William J. Broad from New York. David E. Sanger contributed reporting from Washington.

## Les Kurdes veulent réviser l'accord passé avec les Chiites

Les dirigeants kurdes ont exigé hier la révision de l'accord de principe avec les Chiites sur la formation du prochain exécutif en Irak.

« Il y a de grands progrès, mais le projet d'accord nécessite une réécriture et la participation d'autres forces politiques aux négociations pour former un gouvernement et en élargir la base », a déclaré hier Fouad Maassoum, président de l'Assemblée provisoire, après une rencontre à Salaheddine, à 370 km au nord de Bagdad. « Il y a eu des objections au projet d'accord, nous allons retourner à Bagdad avec un esprit ouvert pour parvenir à un accord avec l'Alliance irakienne unifiée (AUI, chiite, majoritaire) et les autres partis », a indiqué en outre le vice président irakien Roj Nouri Shawis.

**Alliances obligatoires**  
L'élection par les deux tiers des



Le vice-président irakien Roj Nouri Shawis (à gauche) et le Kurde Fouad Maassoum (à droite), à l'issue de la conférence de Salaheddine

députés d'un Conseil présidentiel de trois membres, qui choisit à l'unanimité le Premier ministre, oblige l'AUI à nouer des alliances. Le groupe kurde est le deuxième au Parlement, avec 77 députés. Les négociations n'ont pas été rompues et la répartition des postes minis-

tériels sera examinée dans les prochains jours. Interrogé sur la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk, dont les Kurdes réclament le rattachement à leur région autonome, Fouad Maassoum a répondu : « L'accord s'est fait sur certains points, mais d'autres doivent être discutés ».

PRESSE Océan  
14 MARS 2005

## Chronique de guerre

### Turcs et Kurdes sont dans un bateau

Depuis Mustapha Kemal, le Kurdistan est une pierre dans la botte turque : l'existence même des Kurdes vient contrecarrer les fondements du nationalisme kémaliste. Leurs premières révoltes des années 1925, 1930 et 1936, sévèrement réprimées, avaient servi de prétexte à la négation de leur identité et à leur oppression systématique. Il a fallu attendre les années 1980 pour voir apparaître une nouvelle vague de résistance. La lourde poigne des militaires turcs, arrivés au pouvoir par un coup d'État en 1980, provoque un sursaut identitaire et donne une base populaire au PKK, parti des travailleurs du Kurdistan, créé par des intellectuels d'Ankara en 1978. Ces derniers avaient opté pour le marxisme-léninisme pour des raisons stratégiques autant qu'idéologiques : avec ses missiles pointés vers l'URSS, la Turquie

était en effet une proche alliée des États-Unis, qui lui fournissent armes, conseillers et subsides. Abdullah Öcalan, le leader du PKK, mise donc sur le soutien de l'URSS, que pourtant il n'obtiendra jamais. La deuxième erreur du PKK est d'avoir mis en place une organisation autoritaire basée sur le culte du chef et s'opposant aux structures sociales traditionnelles. Sans soutien de l'extérieur, despotique à l'intérieur, le PKK doit progressivement abandonner la lutte armée. L'arrestation d'Öcalan en 1999 et la pusillanimité dont il fait preuve lors de son procès mettront un terme au pouvoir exclusif du chef et du parti.

### Débloquer le verrou

Le début des années 90 voit naître un embryon de compréhension à l'égard du peuple kurde, sous l'impulsion du président Turgut Özal, dont la mère était kurde. Tout en infléchissant la politique de négation entre 1989 et 1993, Turgut Özal contribue cependant à l'anéantissement de la rébellion par des moyens militaires. Ces années sont aussi celles de la médiatisation de l'opposition kurde, à l'exemple de la députée Leyla Zana, qui obtient le prix Sakharov en 1995 au Parlement européen. Dès lors, continuer d'abattre ou d'emprisonner les intellectuels kurdes devient un exercice diplomatiquement délicat.

Depuis 1999, l'état d'urgence a été levé et la trêve décrétée, ce qui a permis le retour à une certaine stabilité. Mais celle-ci ne doit pas occulter le fait que les libertés sont attribuées au compte-goutte, que la langue kurde est toujours interdite à l'université et que la Turquie refuse obstinément de reconnaître une zone géographique kurde. Difficile aussi d'oublier les trente mille morts et les trois mille villages rasés durant les années noires. Rebaptisé Kronga-Gel (Congrès du peuple kurde), ce qui reste du PKK décrète la fin de la trêve et la reprise de la lutte armée en juin 2004. On ne jurera pas que cet appel martial obtiendra un soutien populaire franc et massif. Néanmoins, il reste de nombreux problèmes en suspens, dont celui des combattants restés dans les montagnes.

Des voix de plus en plus nombreuses s'élèvent pour débloquer le verrou qui depuis des décennies meurtrit la vie de milliers d'hommes et de femmes. On ne peut que se réjouir de l'action menée par des membres de la société civile en plusieurs points d'Europe, qui ont décidé de faire campagne pour une reconnaissance mutuelle des peuples kurde et turc par le biais d'un processus de paix excluant le mépris, les treillis et la mitraille. Leur initiative est encore trop mal connue.

Une pétition a été lancée sur le site <http://www.placeauxdroits.net>. Elle mérite amplement d'être signée.

JEAN-PHILIPPE TURPIN

TIME

MARCH 14, 2005

I N T H E A R E N A

Joe Klein

## Appointment in Damascus

**T**HE OFFICIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF SYRIAN PRESIDENT BASHAR ASSAD IS EXTREMELY STERN. THE PHOTOS and murals of his father and predecessor Hafez Assad, still festooned throughout Syria, are leavened by the confident gaze and beneficent smile possible only for a dictator in total control. Bashar, however, stares off into the middle distance, working hard to convey vision and strength but avoiding direct eye contact with his subjects. Indeed, the younger Assad, an ophthalmologist by trade who became heir apparent only when his older brother was killed in an automobile crash, remains something of a mystery to just about everyone. "The question is, Is he really in charge?" a U.S. intelligence expert told me. "Is Syria singular or plural?"

I spent a few hours with Assad last week at his private office in the hills overlooking Damascus and found the singular-or-plural question unanswerable. It was a terrible day for Syria's President. Thousands of people were in the streets of Lebanon demanding that his troops withdraw from the country they have occupied since the mid-'70s. A few hours after our meeting, the pro-Syrian Lebanese government resigned. Damascus-based leaders of Palestinian Islamic Jihad had taken credit for a Tel Aviv nightclub bombing that had killed five. Saddam Hussein's half-brother had just been arrested, perhaps with Syrian cooperation, and Assad had to decide whether he wanted to take credit for helping the U.S.

Assad greeted me at the door, a tall but unassuming man with clear blue eyes. We sat down and I tried a joke: "Mr. President, you've done the impossible. You've brought the United States and France together against you in Lebanon." He laughed. "It's not me, actually," he said, then added ruefully, "but that's what people think." His tone was easy, conversational. He did not bellow or lecture, not even when he attempted to dispense patently ridiculous propaganda. But it was an odd conversation nonetheless, reflecting the jittery uncertainty of the Syrian regime in the face of massive international pressure. On Lebanon, Assad clearly indicated that a political decision had been made to withdraw Syria's troops and the only questions now were "technical": how much time it would take to move heavy equipment and rebuild fortifications on the border. He said he had not yet met with his generals about that. At the end of the interview, I asked again when Syrian troops would withdraw, and he responded, "Out completely?" I said yes. "It should be very soon and maybe in the next few months, not after that," he said. "I can't give you the technical answer. The point is, the next few months."

Two days later, however, the Syrian government issued a correction: the President hadn't really been talking about a total withdrawal but about compliance with the 1989 Taif Agreement ending Lebanon's long civil war. This wasn't the first time the Syrian government retracted or corrected or denied things that the President had said. In the days after last month's assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, Assad told Arab League President Amr Moussa that he was planning to withdraw from Lebanon, only to have the Syrian Information Minister later say that Moussa had got it wrong—Syria was only redeploying its troops to the Bekaa Valley. The tap dance con-

tinued all week, culminating in Assad's speech to the Syrian Parliament on Saturday, in which he scuttled back to his pre-Moussa position: no mention of complete withdrawal but the promise of gradual redeployment to the Bekaa Valley. "It is an embarrassment," said Ayman Abdul Nour, founder of the All4Syria website and an Assad supporter who is hoping for reform of the ruling Baath Party. "We always hope for delay. If we can delay withdrawal, the Lebanese will start to fight among themselves, the Americans will turn their attention to Iran, the French will be caught in internal politics. But this situation is different. The spotlight is on us. The President has to make some big decisions, both externally and about internal reform."

### “Send this message: I am

Unfortunately, Assad seems unable to make them. In our interview, he evaded the question of closing Palestinian "rejectionist" group offices in Damascus. "If you're an American and I don't want you here, should I send you to Africa or to the U.S., your country? ... That's what I told [Assistant Secretary of State William] Burns: Where should I send [the Palestinian radicals]? To the Mediterranean, on a boat?" But he also claimed there were no Palestinian extremist offices in Damascus. "They have houses. They live in the houses, meet with people in the houses. That's what they call offices ... They don't have members in Syria; all their members are in Palestine. The only thing they used to do was call in the media to express their position."

Assad was also firmly evasive about cooperating with the U.S. in rounding up Iraqis supporting the insurgency from Syrian territory. In January the U.S. had given Assad a list of 34 wanted men assumed to be in Syria. "Many of these names we don't know," Assad told me. "What does his face look like? What's his real name? Maybe he's using a fake name or a fake passport. You should give us precise information because we can't find them."

This turned out to be a creatively incomplete answer. A few hours earlier, the Iraqis had announced that Saddam's half-brother Sabawi Ibrahim al-Hassan al-Tikriti had been captured in Syria, reportedly with the cooperation of Syrian authorities. Unaware of the Iraqi announcement during the interview, I later tried—unsuccessfully—to get a response from the President. The Syrian Information Ministry denied the Iraqi account, but a prominent Syrian official told me that al-Hassan was "personally



Bashar Assad stands on a balcony above Damascus

## not Saddam Hussein. I want to cooperate.” —BASHAR ASSAD

responsible for the killing of thousands of Syrians during the 1980s, when he was associated with Iraqi intelligence. He was found hiding with a tribe near the Iraqi border and expelled from Syria. He was arrested in Iraq by Iraqis.” Perhaps. But why the elaborate public gymnastics by the Syrian government to avoid the appearance of cooperation with the U.S.? A succession of Syrians offered me the same explanation: Assad—or perhaps the necklace of security and Baath Party officials who surround Assad—didn’t want to appear to be caving to U.S. pressure. “The only way for Bashar to show strength now,” said a close associate of the President, “is to be extremely decisive. Leave Lebanon. Reform our government. It’s time for leadership.”

Enlightened leadership seemed a possibility when Bashar Assad inherited office in 2000. He promised a more open society. He brought intellectuals and free-market economists into the government, but they were quickly overwhelmed by the Baathist old guard. Soon the multiple, overlapping Syrian police and intelligence agencies—a Byzantine web that entangles both Syria and Lebanon—seemed to regain control of the President as well. Dozens of “Damascus Spring” democracy advocates were tossed in jail. “Reform is not like pushing a button,” Assad told me. “When there’s trouble externally, it will affect Syria ... If you don’t have peace, you have to spend most of your money on the army and security issues. All these factors won’t make reform fast. It will definitely be slow. We are living under tension ... You can’t have reform under tension.”

But it isn’t easy to repeal the promise of freedom, especially

in a country where satellite dishes sprout from almost every rooftop. People speak more openly in Syria than they have in the past. The President’s allies are candid, if not yet quotable, about their disappointment in him. Yet even Assad’s reform-minded opponents seem to believe that he remains the best hope for change. “I am a doctor,” said Kamal Labwani, a Damascus Spring activist recently released from jail. “The President is a doctor. Does he think we’ll be able to live like this another 40 years? I don’t think so.”

Labwani wanted me to ask Assad why he had been imprisoned. “I didn’t throw him in jail,” Assad told me. “I don’t do everything in this country.” It was an admission his father never would have made. The President’s body language was more ophthalmologist than dictator. He sat hunched deep in a black leather couch. There was no physical sense of power or menace to the man, no sociopathic cool, just consternation. When I asked him who killed Rafiq Hariri, he seemed stricken: “The most important question is, Who had the benefit of it? As President, I can’t tell you this country or that. But who suffered most from it? Syria. Syria was the biggest loser. The Lebanese, definitely, they lost ... But Syria lost more.” And later, as he was escorting me to the door, he said, “Please send this message: I am not Saddam Hussein. I want to cooperate.” The plea was at least partly believable. Obviously, he is not Saddam Hussein. It was also plausible that he wants to cooperate. It just didn’t seem very likely that he could. —With reporting by George Baghdadli/Damascus

**The New York Times** MARCH 14, 2005

# Kurds' Return to City Shakes Iraq Politics as They Press Property Claims

By EDWARD WONG

KIRKUK, Iraq — Muhammad Ahmed realized how wide the chasm between Kurds and Arabs here had grown when he recently ran into a former classmate on the serpentine streets of this troubled city.

Mr. Ahmed, a Kurd, and his friend, an Arab, had studied together at Kirkuk's oil institute nearly two decades ago. But shortly after Mr. Ahmed started work at the state-owned North Oil Company in the late 1980's, the government of Saddam Hussein, intent on solidifying Arab control of Kirkuk, forced him out of his job and made him and his family move north, where they joined tens of thousands of other Kurds exiled from this city.

That mass relocation planted the seeds for a bitter ethnic antagonism that has grown into the most incendiary political issue in Iraq outside of the Sunni-led insurgency, and the one that more than any other is delaying formation of a new government. When Mr. Ahmed met his classmate again, he discovered his friend was still working for North Oil, one of as many as 10,000 employees helping to tap the region's vast troves of oil, estimated at 10 to 20 percent of the country's reserves.

"He had a great salary and a good job all these years," said Mr. Ahmed, 41, musing on the luxuries of his old friend's house. "Arabs, Turkmen and Christians were hired, and Kurds were not." He spoke from his own home: a cinder-block building hastily erected in a squatter camp inside the city's soccer stadium, where he and his family have been living alongside thousands of other returning Kurds since the fall of Mr. Hussein's rule. "We wish we didn't have oil in Kirkuk," he said. "If the oil wasn't here, we'd have a comfortable life now. All our problems are because of this damned oil."

Mr. Ahmed's plight encapsulates the growing struggle over Kirkuk, a drab city of 700,000 on the windswept northern plains. Efforts to restore Kurds to their jobs and property without disenfranchising Arabs are fraught with the possibility of igniting a civil war. The debate has so inflamed passions that Kurdish and Shiite Arab negotiators trying to form a coalition government in



Formerly exiled Kurdish families live in squalor inside a soccer stadium in Kirkuk as many seek restitution for property taken from them.

Baghdad may have to put off any real decision on Kirkuk's future.

"As far as Kirkuk is concerned, because of the different ethnic groups in it, we have to apply a permanent solution, not a temporary solution," Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the Shiite nominee for prime minister, said.

Kurdish leaders call Kirkuk their Jerusalem, saying they should control it — and its oil fields — because it was historically Kurdish. The Kurds are pushing Shiite leaders like Dr. Jaafari to help quickly give property back to Kurdish returnees, evict Arab settlers and employ more Kurds at North Oil, the only major government institution here that the Kurds have been unable to dominate since the American invasion.

The Kurdish political parties have huge leverage. Kurds turned out in large numbers to vote on Jan. 30, securing more than a quarter of the seats in the 275-member national assembly and making themselves a necessary partner for the Shiite bloc that won the largest number of seats.

But with the oil in Kirkuk at stake, the Kurdish and Shiite parties have been unable to agree on how to carry out Article 58 of the interim constitu-

tion, which provides vague guidelines for settling the property disputes here. Equally vexing is the question of who will administer Kirkuk — the national government or the autonomous regional government of Iraqi Kurdistan.

In the 1960's, Baath Party officials began packing Kurds and, to a lesser degree, Turkmen into trucks and evicting them from Kirkuk. As the displacement continued, the Kurds who worked for North Oil, like Mr. Ahmed, rose to the top of the relocation list. The government, dominated by Sunni Arabs, imported mostly Shiite Arabs from the impoverished south into the Kirkuk area.

Kurds began returning in large numbers nearly two years ago, when the Hussein government was toppled. Some Arab families fled, but most heeded the reassurances of American soldiers who, trying to avert an ethnic war, urged them to stay and urged the Kurds to await a legal solution.

"From my perspective, the Arab settlers who were brought into Kirkuk were also victims of Saddam Hussein," said Barham Salih, the

deputy prime minister and a top Kurd. "But the question is, if we're talking about a new Iraq, does this mean the elite of Iraq, the democratically elected elite of Iraq, are willing to acknowledge the terrible mistake that was made and put it right?"

In April 2004, the Americans created the Iraqi Property Claims Commission to rule on restitution. By the end of 2004, the commission had received 10,044 claims from Kirkuk's province, Tamin. The commission's statistics show that judges have decided only 25 cases.

The head of the commission said in an interview that only two judges, both Kurds, were working on cases in Kirkuk. The commission has been

unable to assign more judges because Kurdish political parties insist that only Kurds review the claims, limiting the number of qualified people, said the commission head, who declined to be identified by name because one colleague had been assassinated and another kidnapped.

Turkmen and Arab officials here accuse the major Kurdish parties of having moved people pretending to be returnees into Kirkuk before the Jan. 30 elections in order to bolster the Kurdish vote. The main Kurdish coalition won 26 of 41 provincial council seats, and a Kurd will almost certainly be installed as governor.

Each ethnic group claims demographic dominance, but no reliable census has been taken since 1957. Mutual suspicions are intense.

"The families who were kicked out of Kirkuk had homes in Kirkuk," said Suphi Sabir, a senior official in the Iraqi Turkmen Front. "If these people were from Kirkuk, why did they not return to their homes? Why are they staying in the stadium?"

In the Kirkuk neighborhood of Qadisiya, from which Kurds were evicted in large numbers, a group of Arab men said on a recent afternoon that the city would remain peaceful — as long as no one tried to seize their homes.

"Those people are not from Kirkuk," a tall man in a dark blue robe, Muhammad Awad, said of the Kurds. "They came from Turkey and Iran. They're not Iraqis. Maybe the old regime kicked out 1 or 2 percent of the Kurds, but those people came from outside the country."

At the stadium, one glance at Mr. Ahmed's home shows why he has grown so impatient. Water runs along the floor when it rains. Children rummage in garbage barrels outside. A small kerosene heater is the sole source of warmth, and a television set the only entertainment.



Kurds prepare for dinner in a home in a Kirkuk stadium. The family of Shirin Ahmen, passing glass, was exiled from the city by the Hussein rule.

Insurgents attack the stadium every week or two. On election day, a rocket landed near Mr. Ahmed as he stood outside his home, decapitating a 16-year-old named Yusef.

"We are willing to pay with our blood, like water on the floor, because Kirkuk is a Kurdish city and should stay part of Kurdistan," said Yusef's mother, Sabir Kareem Muhammad, as her husband kissed a photo of their son.

About 440 families live in the stadium, at least 100 more than a year ago, said Ismail Ibrahim, an unofficial mayor of the camp. Thousands of other Kurdish returnees are living in dozens of sites in and near Kirkuk, local officials say, scattered in dirt fields, abandoned government buildings and former military barracks. Many returnees started off in tents, but this winter built spartan cinder-block or mud-and-brick homes.

"Nobody is supporting us," Shakur Ahmed, 44, said as he sat on Mr. Ibrahim's floor. "Baathists are still occupying our land."

For many Kurds, employment at the oil company is as important as winning back their property. But securing jobs there is not easy, either. Muhammad Ahmed, who worked as a supervisor of oil pumps and turbines for 10 months before he was relocated, said he was among 180 experienced Kurds who recently applied together for jobs at North Oil. Mr.

Ahmed had an interview two months ago, he said, but has heard nothing.

A senior official at the Oil Ministry said he had sent to North Oil nine lists of people, half of them Kurds, who should be given jobs.

The Kurds complain that they have seen little or no results. "It's chauvinism," Mr. Ahmed said. "They don't want Kurds to work in oil. It's the same as under Saddam's plan."

On the edge of the city, out of sight of the stadium, the flames from oil processing plants leaped into the sky in the gathering dusk, the brightest light for miles around.

# Shiites and Kurds at Impasse Over Oil-Rich Zone's Fate

By EDWARD WONG

**BAGHDAD, Iraq, March 15** — On the eve of the first meeting here of the new constitutional assembly, the major Shiite and Kurdish political parties have yet to agree to form a coalition government and will have to continue talks later in the week, senior officials on both sides said Tuesday.

Nevertheless, the assembly is still expected to vote for a president and several other high-ranking officials at its first meeting, on Wednesday, Iraqi officials said.

The Kurds and the Shiites, the two blocs that won the most votes in the Jan. 30 elections, have to resolve disputes on several major issues that are hindering moves toward an alliance, the officials from the two groups said. The two sides are deadlocked over conflicting visions of the future of the oil-rich northern city of Kirkuk and the status of the Kurdish militia, among other things, the officials said.

The wrangling is continuing into its seventh week after the elections, and there is evidence that it is deeply shaking the public's trust. Many Iraqis defied insurgent threats to take part in the country's first free elections in decades and now are expressing growing disillusionment with the top parties, accusing them of selfishly grabbing for power at the expense of the country.

"A state without a government is like sheep without a shepherd, and in such a situation the wolves can play very easily," said Majida Aziz, 40, a teacher at a girls' high school in western Baghdad. "Not having a government is causing a great deal of harm to the Iraqi people and to the interests of Iraq."

On Wednesday, the 275-member assembly will try to take the first formal steps toward putting together a government, though it is unclear whether that will be enough to assuage the mounting concerns of Iraqis. The assembly will most likely select Jalal Talabani, a top Kurdish leader, as the country's president

presidency is expected to go to a Shiite, possibly Ayad Allawi, the interim prime minister, said a Shiite official familiar with the negotiations.

The speaker of the assembly post is expected to go to Fawaz al-Jarba, one of the few Sunni Arabs who joined the main Shiite bloc, the official said.

A two-thirds vote by the assembly is needed to install the president and the two vice presidents, according to the transitional law approved last March.

Those three officials, who will constitute the presidency council, will have two weeks to decide on a prime minister, who will be approved, along with the new cabinet, by majority vote of the assembly. If the presidency council cannot settle on a prime minister, then the assembly will appoint a prime minister by a two-thirds vote.

Many Iraqi and American officials had hoped the Shiites and Kurds would be able to reach an accord and announce the formation of the entire top tier of a government — complete with the presidency council, prime minister and cabinet — by the first meeting of the assembly, which is charged with drafting a permanent constitution by August.

But the disagreements between the sides mean the government will have to be put together in steps, and any triumphal atmosphere at the assembly meeting will be dampened. There is also no guarantee that the assembly will elect a presidency council on Wednesday, though Iraqi and American officials put out a news release on Tuesday saying that the assembly will vote people into those positions.

The main Shiite and Kurdish blocs

## *Weeks after a vote, wrangling rattles the public's trust.*

together control more than two-thirds of the seats in the assembly, and so could vote in a presidency council on Wednesday. But the council and the assembly could stall on appointing a prime minister and cabinet until the two sides work out their differences. Shiite and Kurdish leaders say they have drafted a document that lays out the broad princi-

ples under which the new government would operate, though they are clashing over details.

"There is more common ground than differences," said Safeen Dizayee, a senior official with the Kurdistan Democratic Party, one of the two main Kurdish parties. But sometimes during the negotiations, he added, "you take one step forward and then it's two steps back."

The senior Shiite official said the two sides, despite their differences, had reached a tentative agreement on some cabinet positions. The Shiite bloc will most likely get the Interior Ministry, the Kurds will probably keep the Foreign Ministry, and a Sunni Arab will be put in charge of either the Ministry of Defense or the Finance Ministry, the official said.

If the Kurds and the Shiites cannot reach a final agreement within a week, he said, then there is a chance that the Shiites could change their prime minister nominee in order to win the confidence of the secular Kurds. The current nominee, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, is a religious conservative. A possible alternative is Adel Abdul Mahdi, a more secular Shiite who is close to Mr. Talabani, the Kurdish nominee for president, the Shiite official said.

As the talks continued, the Sunni-led insurgency kept up its campaign of attacks in the capital. Two suicide car bombs detonated in western Baghdad on Tuesday morning, killing four Iraqi civilians and wounding three others, Interior Ministry officials said. The bombs were aimed at an American convoy but missed their target, the officials said.

Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the Jordanian militant, claimed responsibility in an Internet posting.

The American military said a soldier on patrol was also killed Tuesday morning by a car bomb in Baghdad. Several other soldiers, Iraqi civilians and an Iraqi policeman were wounded, the military said. It was unclear whether this was the same attack that killed the four Iraqi civilians.

An American marine was killed in combat in Anbar Province on Monday, the military said Tuesday.

In Najaf, the police chief, Maj. Gen. Ghalib al-Jezaieri, said the police had arrested a man suspected of a car bomb attack in August 2003 that killed a revered Shiite cleric and at least 95 others. The suspect, Ramzy Hashem, is from Mosul, General Jezaieri said. The cleric, Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, was the head of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, a powerful Shiite party.

## *At a big moment, Iraqis take only small political steps.*

and a prominent Sunni Arab as one of the two vice presidents, Shiite and Kurdish officials said. The other vice

**The New York Times**

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la Croix  
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# Le nouveau Parlement irakien se réunit

Les Kurdes et les islamistes chiites sont en position de force dans l'Assemblée élue le 30 janvier dernier

**L**es 275 députés du premier Parlement irakien choisi librement en plus d'un demi-siècle devaient se réunir aujourd'hui à Bagdad pour choisir en principe leur président et un Conseil présidentiel de trois membres. Cette instance, qui doit obtenir l'assentiment des deux tiers des 275 députés, désignera le premier ministre.

La réunion inaugurale a lieu quarante-cinq jours après le scrutin qui a vu des millions d'Irakiens braver les menaces des groupes armés pour aller voter et a été suivi par de longues tractations entre les listes gagnantes, la chiite soutenue par le clergé de Nadjaf, et la kurde, pour former un exécutif. La date du 16 mars n'a pas été choisie au hasard. Elle est symbolique. Les députés se retrouveront, dans le Palais des congrès érigé par l'ancien régime, le jour anniversaire du gavage, en 1988, des Kurdes dans le village de Halabja par l'armée de Sad-

**Les Kurdes ont prévenu qu'il n'y aurait pas d'accord tant qu'ils n'auraient pas obtenu des garanties, notamment sur Kirkouk, la grande ville pétrolière du nord de l'Irak qu'ils considèrent comme leur capitale.**

dam Hussein. C'est également en mars 1991 que les chiites, dans le sud, et les Kurdes dans le nord, s'étaient soulevés contre le régime de Saddam Hussein qui a fini par être renversé en 2003 à la suite de l'invasion américano-bri-

tannique.

Avec leur victoire aux élections, les chiites, marginalisés sous l'ancien régime, s'apprentent à être aux commandes de l'Irak pour la première fois dans son histoire moderne. Leur liste de l'Alliance irakienne unifiée (UIA) peut compter sur 146 élus dans l'Assemblée qui aura à rédiger une Constitution qui sera soumise à référendum en octobre avant les prochaines élections programmées pour décembre. «*Nous espérons être à la hauteur de cette*

*occasion historique*», a déclaré hier Jawad Al Maliki, un haut responsable du parti islamiste Dawa, l'un des piliers de l'alliance chiite, dont le chef Ibrahim Jaafari est le candidat pour le poste de premier ministre.

Hier toute la journée, les représentants des partis chiites et kurdes se sont réunis afin de tenter de conclure un accord sur la composition finale du Conseil de gouvernement. Les Kurdes ont prévenu qu'il n'y aurait pas d'accord tant qu'ils n'auraient pas obtenu des garanties, notamment sur Kirkouk, la grande ville pétrolière du nord de l'Irak qu'ils considèrent comme leur capitale. Les Kurdes veulent le retour des 300 000 déportés kurdes de la ville et le départ des «*colons irakiens*», envoyés sous le régime de Saddam Hussein dans le but d'«*arabiser*» cette région.

Les Kurdes veulent aussi que soit inscrite sur le papier l'organisation d'un recensement général de la population de Kirkouk suivi d'un référendum. Ils demandent que, si



Les nouveaux députés irakiens doivent élire un Conseil présidentiel de trois membres. Les partis kurdes et chiites ont déjà commencé les tractations pour parvenir à une majorité de deux tiers des députés.

les deux tiers du gouvernorat de Kirkouk votent pour un rattachement au Kurdistan, Kirkouk soit partie intégrante de cette région autonome. Enfin, les Kurdes demandent que les peshmergas (combattants kurdes) soient reconnus comme la garde nationale du Kurdistan, la seule à être autorisée à entrer au Kurdistan, l'armée irakienne devant rester en dehors du territoire kurde. « *Ce que nous exigeons est inscrit dans la loi provisoire du 8 mars 2004, explique Sewan Barzani, représentant en France des Kurdes irakiens. Nous voulons aussi que soit inscrit clairement sur le papier le partage des compétences entre Bagdad et le Kurdistan sur le sujet des ressources naturelles: qui de Bagdad ou du gouvernement du Kurdistan signera les contrats avec les compagnies étrangères pour l'exploitation du pétrole? Quelle sera la part du Kurdistan dans le budget de l'Irak, etc.? Il faut mettre les points*

*sur les i, poursuit-il. Si nous n'arrivons pas à un accord, on ne se mettra pas d'accord sur la composition du gouvernement et celui en place continuera à exercer ses fonctions avec un Parlement hostile.* »

Dans le cas d'un accord, la présidence irait au chef de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), Jalal Talabani, et les deux vice-présidences à un chiite et un sunnite, selon Jawad Al Maliki, « numéro deux » du parti islamiste Dawa. Le candidat chiite ayant le plus de chances est le ministre sortant des finances Adel Abdel Mehdi.

Pour l'autre poste, quatre sunnites sont en compétition: l'actuel chef de l'État Ghazi Al Yaouar, le ministre de l'Industrie Hajem Al Hassani, le chef tribal cheikh Fawaz Al Djerba, et l'ancien gouverneur de la province de Salaheddine (nord) Hussein Al Joubouri.

La présidence du Parlement doit, elle, revenir à un sunnite. Le nom cité le plus souvent est celui

de Ghazi Al Yaouar, s'il n'est pas nommé vice-président.

Les sunnites qui ont boycotté les élections du 30 janvier à l'appel du Comité des oulémas, leur principale organisation religieuse, n'ont envoyé qu'une vingtaine d'élus dans le Parlement, mais les listes kurdes et chiites n'ont cessé de souligner la nécessité de leur participation au processus politique. Au sein de l'Assemblée, l'Alliance unifiée irakienne (AUI), soutenue par le clergé chiite, peut compter sur une majorité simple d'au moins 146 députés sur 275, mais l'élection du Conseil présidentiel, qui désigne à l'unanimité le premier ministre, requiert une majorité des deux tiers de l'Assemblée. Les Kurdes disposent du deuxième groupe parlementaire, avec 77 députés.

AGNÈS ROTIVEL

## IRAK Ouverture de session du Parlement librement élu

# Les chiites et les Kurdes prennent leur revanche

Adrien Jaulmes

La session inaugurale du premier Parlement irakien librement élu depuis près de 50 ans, prévue aujourd'hui à Bagdad, tombe à une date symbolique. Les 275 députés irakiens doivent ouvrir leur Assemblée le jour anniversaire du gazage le 16 mars 1988 des Kurdes du village d'Halabja par l'armée du dictateur. C'est également durant un mois de mars que les troupes de Saddam écrasèrent en 1991 l'insurrection des chiites dans les provinces méridionales du pays et des Kurdes dans le nord, au lendemain de la défaite irakienne dans la première guerre du Golfe.

La première réunion du nouveau Parlement, qui s'ouvre sous haute surveillance dans l'ancien Palais des congrès bâti sous le régime de Saddam Hussein, 45 jours après son élection par des millions d'Irakiens bravant les menaces des groupes de la guérilla sunnite, marque donc une revanche historique pour ces deux communautés.

Les chiites, majoritaires en Irak, mais marginalisés politi-

quement depuis la création de l'État au lendemain de la Première Guerre mondiale s'apprêtent pour la première fois à occuper un rôle de premier plan sur la scène politique irakienne. Les Kurdes, privés d'un État par

le traité de Lausanne en 1924, entendent de leur côté user de leur deuxième place aux élections législatives pour obtenir un maximum d'autonomie pour leur région, et le plus de garanties possibles au sein des futures institutions irakiennes. « *Nous espérons être à la hauteur de cette occasion historique* », a déclaré avant-hier un haut responsable du parti chiite Dawa, l'un des piliers de l'alliance chiite, dont le chef, Ibrahim Jaafari, est le candidat pour le poste de premier ministre. Selon M. Maliki, la présidence de l'Assemblée, qui doit être décidée aujourd'hui pourrait échoir au Kurde Jalal Talabani, alors que les deux vice-présidences reviendraient à un chiite et à un sunnite, malgré le peu d'élus obtenus par cette communauté à des élections qu'elle a largement boycottées.

Des responsables chiites et kurdes ont rencontré hier plu-

sieurs responsables sunnites, dont le président sortant Ghazi al-Yaouar, le libéral Adnane Pachachi et des représentants du Comité des oulémas, principale organisation religieuse sunnite en Irak. « *Il n'y a pas plus de 20 députés sunnites arabes au Parlement à cause de la myopie politique des partis islamistes sunnites. Les sunnites sont divisés, il leur manque une direction unifiée* », souligne Nasser Chaderchi, ancien membre sunnite du Conseil

de gouvernement transitoire, qui a aussi estimé que le discours politique sunnite consistant à refuser de participer à tout gouvernement aussi longtemps que durerait l'occupation étrangère était « *illogique et inacceptable* ». Mais malgré des négociations intenses, qui se poursuivaient encore hier, les chiites et les Kurdes n'étaient pas non plus parvenus à un accord. Les Kurdes, qui ont leur propre zone autonome dans le Nord, exigent notamment un accord écrit pour une alliance avec les chiites sur les questions essentielles du fédéralisme, de la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk, arabisée sous Saddam Hussein

et qu'ils revendiquent, et du statut de leurs milices, les peshmergas, qu'ils refusent d'intégrer dans l'armée irakienne. Dans cette perspective, un dirigeant kurde, le ministre sortant des Affaires étrangères, Hoshiyar Zebari, s'est montré peu optimiste sur les chances d'un accord rapide pour la formation d'un gouvernement. « *La réunion de demain aura un caractère cérémoniel et les discussions vont se poursuivre après* », a-t-il déclaré.

Par ailleurs, le Parlement italien a annoncé hier qu'il prolongeait de six mois la mission de ses 3 000 soldats en Irak, mais que leur nombre sera réduit à partir du mois de septembre à la demande de l'opinion publique.

**MOYEN-ORIENT** Six semaines après les élections du 30 janvier,  
un gouvernement est en voie de formation à Bagdad

# Gérard Chaliand : « 2005, année décisive pour l'Irak »

Spécialiste des problèmes politiques, stratégiques et des conflits, Gérard Chaliand vient de passer un mois en Irak (\*), essentiellement dans la région kurde et à Kirkouk. Il livre ici un éclairage sur les perspectives de ce pays et celles de la région.

Propos recueillis  
par Frédéric Fritscher

**LE FIGARO.** – Comment voyez-vous évoluer la situation en Irak, six semaines après les élections du 30 janvier ?

**Gérard CHALIAND.** – Après de laborieuses négociations, un gouvernement est en voie de formation en Irak où chiïtes et Kurdes sont parvenus à s'entendre pour former une coalition. Les chiïtes de l'Alliance irakienne unie auraient préféré – dans leur majorité – que l'Islam soit la seule source de législation mais ils ont dû s'incliner devant le refus des Kurdes d'accepter un Etat de cette nature. Les deux partis se sont également entendus sur la nécessité d'intégrer les Arabes sunnites au sein de la coalition afin d'éviter que leur marginalisation ne conduise à une guerre civile.

**Une page est-elle définitivement tournée ?**

Jamais plus les Arabes sunnites ne gouverneront le pays de façon hégémonique. Ce fait est à porter au crédit de Washington, quelles que soient les réserves qu'on puisse exprimer par ailleurs sur la guerre et sa conduite. L'Irak est aujourd'hui tripolaire. Les chiïtes et les Kurdes se retrouvent au pouvoir avec des objectifs qui ne sont pas nécessairement concordants et les Arabes n'ont pas pu ou voulu voter. S'il est très difficile de gouverner l'Irak aujourd'hui avec une représentation substantielle de sunnites on ne peut, durablement, le faire sans eux. Rien n'est encore réglé à cet égard. Aucun triomphalisme n'est de mise, car l'équilibre de l'Irak post-baasiste est, pour l'instant, pré-

caire et chargé d'incertitudes.

**L'insurrection sunnite ne risque-t-elle pas de faire capoter le processus ?**

Militairement, le fait est que la guerre ne peut être gagnée par les Américains. C'est pourquoi l'effort principal est porté sur la formation des forces armées irakiennes auxquelles on espère confier la tâche de rétablir l'ordre. Le nombre de 125 000 hommes aujourd'hui, plus ou moins convenablement entraînés et modérément motivés, doit être doublé pour l'année prochaine. Cette armée qui présentera l'avantage de n'être pas étrangère pourra-t-elle assumer la tâche qui lui est assignée ? Comme on peut le constater depuis plusieurs mois déjà, l'insurrection porte la plupart de ses coups contre les soldats de la nouvelle armée qui essuie des pertes sensibles dont les Américains ne fournissent pas les chiffres. L'insurrection est avant tout sunnite, les éléments étrangers sont fortement minoritaires. Mais pourra-t-elle – si elle est demain privée du sanctuaire syrien – perdurer avec la même intensité ?

**Quelle stratégie suivent les chiïtes et les Kurdes ?**

Cette année 2005 est décisive. Elle va définir pour une durée indéterminée l'équilibre ou le déséquilibre qui va prévaloir en Irak. A son terme, on pourra dresser le bilan de la stratégie américaine qui a mené à l'investissement de ce pays. La tentation existe chez une partie des chiïtes, plus ou moins encouragés par l'Iran, d'accentuer leur pression en estimant qu'ils sont sous-représentés et qu'ils peuvent obtenir davantage. Les Kurdes ne cherchent pas à proclamer une indépendance dont ils savent qu'elle serait un suicide politique. Ils veulent une fédération où leur autonomie serait aussi large que possible et ils veulent avant tout Kirkouk : Saddam Hussein avait fait expulser au moins 200 000 d'entre eux de la ville pour y installer des Arabes chiïtes venus du Sud. Ceux-ci travaillaient en outre dans les champs pétrolifères. Lors des

élections du 30 janvier, les Kurdes ont obtenu que ceux des leurs qui furent expulsés de Kirkouk puissent y voter en tant que résidents. Cette concession a été arrachée lorsque les partis kurdes ont menacé de boycotter les élections s'ils n'obtenaient pas satisfaction.

**Les Kurdes disposent pourtant aujourd'hui d'une majorité à Kirkouk...**

Il a certes été admis par le futur gouvernement que Bagdad devra dédommager les Arabes qui seraient réinstallés dans le Sud et subventionner les Kurdes expulsés qui retourneront à Kirkouk. Les réticences les plus vives, concernant le statut de Kirkouk, viennent de la Turquie qui voit d'un très mauvais œil se renforcer l'autonomie du Kurdistan irakien. La Turquie appuie activement le Front turkmène qui n'a obtenu que 93 500 voix et 3 sièges sur 275, au grand dam d'Ankara

fraction substantielle des représentants des Arabes sunnites.

**Quel rôle peuvent être tentés de jouer les voisins de l'Irak ?**

La partie délicate qui se joue en Irak dépend aussi des trois pays voisins les plus concernés : la Syrie, l'Iran et la Turquie, tous trois présents de façon indirecte sur l'échiquier irakien. Dès le début de la guerre d'Irak,

la Syrie était, avec l'Iran, l'un des objectifs majeurs de l'Administration Bush. Maillon faible, la Sy-

rie, prisonnière des conséquences de l'assassinat mal éclairci de Rafic Hariri est sommée de retirer ses troupes du Liban. Les manifestations de Beyrouth confortent les buts poursuivis par l'Administration Bush. Mais comme rien n'est simple dans l'univers politico-

**Jamais plus les Arabes sunnites ne gouverneront le pays de façon hégémonique**

qui n'a cessé de gonfler l'importance numérique de la minorité turkmène en Irak. La question de Kirkouk, cette année, sera l'un des points d'achoppement, sinon un des lieux d'affrontements dans le pays.

Par ailleurs les Kurdes tiennent à préserver leur autonomie de facto, confortée par leurs 80 000 pechmergas et voudront sans doute être les maîtres de leurs ressources naturelles, même s'ils entendent en partager les recettes. Cette année est aussi celle de l'élaboration définitive de la Constitution et de la mise en place des Institutions du nouvel Etat. Celui-ci sera-t-il légitimé par deux des trois composantes d'un pays grevé par une insurrection d'envergure qui risque de se transformer en guerre civile ? Pour éviter ce risque, il faut réussir, d'ici l'été, à coopérer une

confessionnel au Moyen-Orient, la contre-offensive menée par le Hezbollah illustre la complexité de l'échiquier politique libanais. Cependant, la Syrie, dans cette épreuve de force, ne fait pas le poids et devra probablement céder.

**Quid de l'Iran ?**

L'Iran reste, aujourd'hui comme hier, l'adversaire principal et l'obliger à renoncer à se sanctuariser grâce au feu nucléaire n'est pas un exercice aisé. Mais quel est le moyen de pression le plus efficace ? La stratégie de l'Administration Bush est plus que jamais encline à étendre le champ conflictuel en estimant qu'une politique dynamique produit des effets. On peut porter au crédit de Washington de façon indiscutable les effets indirects de la politique américaine en Géorgie avec la révolution des

Roses et en Ukraine avec la révolution Orange.

**L'offensive politico-diplomatique à la périphérie de la Russie s'est donc révélée payante...**

Oui. Mais est-elle aussi probante en Egypte ou en Arabie saoudite où l'on paraît saluer bien vite les velléités démocratiques qui paraissent tenir davantage du mime que d'une volonté de transformation ? L'instrumentalisation de la démocratie comme arme destinée à sélectivement déstabiliser les adversaires politiques ne peut réussir que si elle s'inscrit dans un contexte non hostile à

l'échelle des populations. Or, au Grand Moyen-Orient, l'image des Etats-Unis n'a pas l'aura dont ils jouissent dans l'ex-monde communiste. Par ailleurs, le nouveau climat de coopération établi depuis la disparition de Yasser Arafat entre l'Etat israélien et l'Autorité palestinienne ne paraît pas devoir déboucher sur un retrait substantiel des Israéliens de Cisjordanie. Dans ce contexte, l'Administration Bush apparaît comme partisane du laisser-faire qui avantage le fort contre le faible.

**Que pensez-vous du rôle joué par l'Arabie saoudite**

**sur l'échiquier politique moyen-oriental ?**

La liste des tyrannies dans le monde que Washington a publiée récemment est indicative : outre la Corée du Nord, l'Iran et Cuba qui sont attendus, on relève la Biélorussie, un allié fidèle de la Russie, le Myanmar, avec lequel la Chine entretient des relations étroites, et le Zimbabwe, fréquemment et justement dénoncé par Tony Blair, fidèle allié de Washington. Aucune mention n'est faite de l'Arabie saoudite, modèle de la tyrannie la plus archaïque, de surcroît à l'origine de la propagande qui a favorisé l'isla-

misme radical à l'échelle du monde musulman.

Toute politique doit être jugée à ses résultats. Celle de l'Administration Bush a le mérite de provoquer une dynamique mais le chantier est en cours et jusqu'à présent, les effets à la périphérie de la Russie sont plus probants qu'au Grand Moyen-Orient où rien encore de décisif n'est intervenu sinon la fin du baasisme irakien et de l'hégémonie des sunnites dans ce pays, ce qui n'est pas rien.

(\*) Gérard Challand est l'auteur d'une guerre d'Irak à l'autre, aux Editions Métailié.

## TURQUIE *Le renouveau du nationalisme à travers le succès de librairie du manifeste d'Adolf Hitler*

# « Mein Kampf » parmi les meilleures ventes

Placée ce mois-ci au quatrième rang des best-sellers, une réédition de *Mein Kampf*, le manifeste antisémite rédigé par Adolf Hitler en 1925, s'est vendue, en Turquie, depuis sa sortie en janvier, à 50 000 exemplaires.

**Istanbul :**  
Marie-Michèle Martinet

Si les livres sont le miroir de ceux qui les écrivent et, par ricochet, de ceux qui les lisent, les ouvrages qui, ces derniers temps, caracolent en tête des meilleures ventes de l'édition turque font un peu frémir. *Mein Kampf*, publié pour la première fois en turc en 1939, puis réédité par une douzaine d'éditeurs, n'avait jamais, jusqu'à présent, dépassé les 20 000 exemplaires par an. Il se négociait alors autour de 20 YTL (environ 11 euros). Cette fois, les éditions Manifesto ont décidé de casser les prix en proposant l'ouvrage à moins de 6 YTL. Pour l'éditeur Oguz Tektas qui signe cette opération, il s'agit simplement d'une belle réussite commerciale, qui n'avait d'autre objectif que de « gagner de l'argent ».

Sans négliger l'argument lié à la modicité du prix du livre, on peut cependant s'interroger sur les motivations des lecteurs turcs qui, dans une période où leur pays prétend se rapprocher

de l'Europe et des valeurs démocratiques qu'elle défend, se sont précipités sur ce brûlot de l'antisémitisme nazi : « J'observe qu'il existe actuellement, en Turquie, un courant antieuropéen et anti-américain qui peut être favorable à la vente d'un tel livre, analyse le professeur Ahmet İcduygu, spécialiste des relations et des migrations internationales à l'université Koç d'Istanbul. Ce courant s'exprime par un renouveau du nationalisme, nourri par la pression ressentie par de nombreux Turcs. Ils ont le sentiment que l'on veut leur dicter leurs actes. D'où une certaine crispation... »

Récemment, d'autres succès de librairie semblent s'être construits autour de cette crispation nationaliste effectivement perceptible. Le roman *Orage de métal*, qui se projette en 2007 pour décrire une guerre provoquée par les Etats-Unis attaquant la Turquie, s'est déjà vendu à plus de 100 000 exemplaires. L'un de ses auteurs, Burak Turna, un ancien journaliste spécialisé dans les questions de défense, ne cache pas son opposition à la politique internationale américaine.

Visiblement, ses idées sont partagées par un grand nombre de lecteurs turcs qui, solidarité musulmane aidant, ont jugé tout aussi sévèrement la guerre conduite par les Américains en Irak et la politique

ménée par Israël dans les territoires occupés par les Palestiniens. Les choix des lecteurs turcs seraient donc l'expression de certains non-dits : « Le sentiment de frustration actuellement ressenti par un grand nombre de personnes en Turquie peut inconsciemment

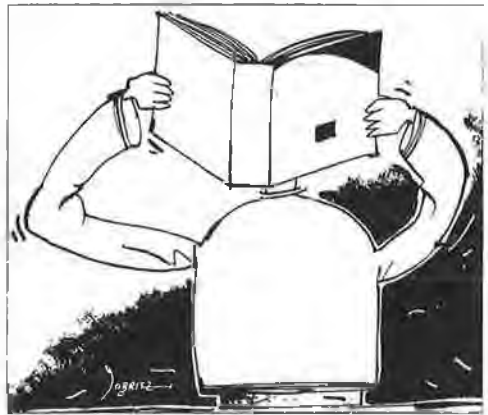
les amener à acheter tel ou tel livre, précise le professeur Ahmet İcduygu.

A l'inverse, certains auteurs turcs peuvent faire les frais de leurs prises de position jugées antinationalistes. Ainsi, le prestigieux romancier Orhan Pamuk, dont les ouvrages sont traduits en France par Gallimard, a été violemment mis en cause, le mois dernier, à la suite d'une interview accordée à un magazine allemand. Dans cet entretien, il avait évoqué le génocide arménien de 1915 en des termes jugés, par certains, contraires à l'intégrité nationale turque.

Le succès retentissant de la réédition de *Mein Kampf* pose évidemment la question d'un éventuel antisémitisme turc, qui irait pourtant à l'encontre d'une très ancienne tradition

d'accueil. La Turquie n'a jamais été un pays antisémite. Depuis le XV<sup>e</sup> siècle et les persécutions de l'Inquisition jusqu'au génocide nazi, de nombreux juifs échappant aux pogroms ont trouvé refuge sur les rives du Bosphore.

Silvyo Ovadya, qui dirige cette communauté comptant 22 000 personnes en Turquie s'est déclaré « irrité » par le regain d'intérêt manifesté par les lecteurs turcs pour *Mein Kampf*. Il s'est également étonné que cet ouvrage de 500 pages puisse être publié à si bas prix... Les juifs de Turquie n'ont pas oublié qu'en novembre 2003, à Istanbul, deux synagogues ont été la cible d'attentats terroristes islamistes qui ont fait 25 morts et des centaines de blessés.



## Inauguration de l'Assemblée nationale irakienne

**LES 275 ÉLUS** de l'Assemblée nationale transitoire irakienne issus des élections du 30 janvier ont commencé, mercredi 16 mars dans la matinée, à Bagdad, une séance inaugurale historique, et devaient élire à la majorité des deux tiers un nouveau chef de l'Etat et deux vice-présidents. La date a été choisie car c'est le 16 mars que les Kurdes commémorent le gazage par Saddam Hussein, en 1988, d'environ 5 000 habitants de la ville d'Halabja.

Vainqueur incontesté de la consultation avec 146 élus, l'Alliance unifiée irakienne (AUI), dominée par les partis chiites religieux, a accepté de voter pour le Kurde Jalal Talabani, chef de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), en remplacement à la tête de l'Etat du cheikh Ghazi Al-Yaouar, un Arabe sunnite. Les deux vice-présidences seraient attribuées, l'une à un chiite, l'autre à un sunnite, ces trois personnes formant le Conseil présidentiel, seule instance habilitée à nommer le gouvernement et son chef, à charge pour eux d'obtenir ensuite l'assentiment d'une majorité simple à l'Assemblée.

Mise à part « l'erreur » qui a consisté à ne faire de l'Irak qu'une seule circonscription, ce qui, en raison des appels au boycottage et de l'insécurité générale dans leurs régions, a privé les Arabes sunnites de représentation adéquate dans la nouvelle Assemblée – 8 % seulement d'élus alors que la minorité,

qui dirigeait le pays depuis des siècles, représente quelque 20 % de la population –, le processus électoral concocté par l'occupant américain et les Nations unies a, jusqu'ici, plutôt bien fonctionné. Même si 58 %

seulement des Irakiens inscrits ont participé à ces premières élections multipartites organisées depuis un demi-siècle, il y a eu peu de contestations des résultats et toutes les formations politiques sont officiellement d'accord pour « associer » les sunnites, qui se sont abstenus à plus des deux tiers, non seulement au pouvoir – où ils devraient avoir quelques strapontins – mais surtout aux travaux de la Commission nationale qui doit rédiger une Constitution devant être présentée au pays dans un référendum prévu pour octobre 2005.

Les Irakiens « sont en train d'appréhender la démocratie du consensus », s'était félicité le président Bush. De fait, il aura fallu 45 jours de laborieuses tractations entre les partis chiites et kurdes pour s'entendre sur les grands principes et, à la veille de la séance inaugurale de l'Assemblée, le consensus n'avait toujours pas été trouvé quant à la composition du gouvernement. Habités, depuis la guerre du Golfe de 1991, à vivre en autonomie

complète par rapport à Bagdad, les deux grands partis qui se partagent le pouvoir dans les trois provinces du Kurdistan ont – pour prix de

leur soutien, indispensable aux formations chiites pour atteindre la majorité des deux tiers – multiplié les exigences.

## UN NOUVEL ÉTAT FÉDÉRAL

La dernière en date concernait le statut des *peshmergas*, les 100 000 miliciens kurdes que leurs chefs refusaient d'intégrer physiquement à la nouvelle armée nationale. De plus, l'armée nationale irakienne devrait obtenir la « permission préalable du Parlement kurde » avant de pénétrer dans la zone autonome.

A leurs yeux capital, le caractère fédéral du nouvel Etat en gestation n'a en revanche pas posé trop de problèmes. Le « danger de balkanisation du pays », notamment mis en exergue par des personnalités sunnites, semble pour l'instant en sourdine. Des élus chiites cependant, à commencer par Abdel Ka-

rim Mohammedaoui, l'ex-« prince des marais » qui lutta vingt ans durant contre l'ancien régime, réclamaient la semaine dernière la formation rapide d'une nouvelle « région autonome », chiite celle-là. Le 6 décembre, quelque 600 personnalités des cinq provinces – sur dix-huit – dominées par les chiites avaient déjà annoncé leur intention de former des institutions communes qui jetteraient les bases d'une telle « région autonome ». Problème : si 60 % des richesses

pétrolières de l'Irak se situent dans les régions chiites du Sud et environ 40 % dans le nord kurde du pays, il n'y a pratiquement rien dans les régions désertiques du Centre et de l'Ouest où vivent la majorité des Arabes sunnites.

Seule ressource immédiatement exportable du pays, le pétrole – et le partage de ses subsides – fut d'ailleurs l'un des points d'achoppement les plus sérieux des marchandages chiito-kurdes. Expulsés manu militari de la ville de Kirkouk – principale région pétrolière du Nord – par les sbires de Saddam Hussein, des milliers de familles kurdes sont revenues dans la cité depuis deux ans, et les partis qui les représentent, l'UPK de M. Talabani et son rival, le PDK de Masoud Barzani, réclament avec la même vigueur l'intégration de la région à leur zone autonome.

En définitive, il semble que les parties se soient mises d'accord pour renvoyer la question à décembre 2005, date à laquelle les Irakiens devront se rendre aux urnes pour la troisième fois de l'année afin d'élire une nouvelle Assemblée.

Patrice Claude

## A 75 ans, le maître spirituel chiite Ali Al-Sistani veut un passeport irakien

**LES ÉLECTIONS** dont les Américains ne voulaient pas, c'est lui. La victoire chiite à ce scrutin, c'est encore lui. La relative et fragile paix civile qui, malgré les tueries quotidiennes, règne encore entre Irakiens de confessions diverses, toujours lui.

Le 30 janvier pourtant, le grand ayatollah Muhammad Ali Hussein Al-Sistani, maître spirituel incontesté de l'Irak chiite et tacticien hors pair qui avait décrété par fatwa – décret islamique – que voter était, en la circonstance, « une obligation religieuse », ne s'est pas rendu aux urnes. Motif : il est né en 1930 à Machhad, en Iran, et n'a jamais demandé la citoyenneté irakienne. L'eût-il fait que Saddam Hussein, qui tenta de le faire assassiner, eût refusé.

Le paradoxe, pour un homme émigré en Irak à l'âge de 22 ans et qui n'en est pratiquement jamais sorti, est sur le point d'être corrigé. Dimanche 14 mars, le conseil élu de la ville sainte de Nadjaf, largement dominé par ses fidèles, a envoyé à l'Assemblée transitoire sortie des urnes une pétition demandant pour le grand *marja* – « source d'imitation » chez les chiites – la nationalité irakienne. L'« irakisation » de « son éminence », respecté et admiré jusque

parmi les sunnites et les chrétiens qui louent son habileté et sa modération, ne devrait rencontrer aucune opposition parlementaire.

Le conseil de Nadjaf a demandé la même mesure pour deux des trois autres *marjas* qui administrent le clergé chiite local sous la houlette de Sistani : l'Afghan Mohammed Ishaq Al-Fayad et le Pakistanais Bachir Al-Najafi, l'un et l'autre établis à Nadjaf depuis quarante ans.

## VIE RECLUSE ET SITE INTERNET

De tradition quiétiste, contrairement à son ex-condisciple feu l'ayatollah Khomeiny, qui forma à Téhéran un « gouvernement des clercs », Al-Sistani, devenu Irakien, n'en briguera pas pour autant une fonction politique. Son credo à lui est que « les religieux doivent rester à l'écart de l'administration et des fonctions politiques ».

Selon l'un de ses trois fils, Mohammad Reza, par l'intermédiaire duquel le *marja* – qui ne fait jamais de discours ni ne rencontre les Américains, les dirigeants étrangers ou la presse – fait entendre sa voix, entre un pouvoir religieux ou laïc, il y a une troisième voie : celle des « laïcs religieux ». Futur premier ministre, le docteur Ibrahim Al-Jaffari, chef du parti reli-

gieux chiite Al-Daawa (L'Appel), appartient précisément à cette catégorie.

Longue barbe blanche, épais sourcils noirs et turban sombre réservé aux *sayyeds*, les descendants présumés du prophète, l'image du « vieux sage » – cliché volé, l'humble ascète ne posant jamais – décore depuis deux ans des millions de foyers chiites en Irak. L'austère et pieux patriarche, qui vit reclus dans une petite maison louée à Nadjaf, à deux pas du sanctuaire sacré de l'imam Ali, saint patron martyrisé du chiisme mondial, n'en exerce pas moins son magistère planétaire – il a des fidèles jusqu'au Pakistan et dispose de son propre séminaire religieux, l'un des plus riches et des plus puissants au monde, dans la ville sainte iranienne de Qom – par des moyens modernes. Son site Internet, *sistani.org*, est l'une des adresses religieuses les plus visitées en Islam.

La semaine passée, pourtant, ce sont des chrétiens de la petite communauté chaldéenne d'Irak, immigrés aux Etats-Unis, qui ont lancé une pétition mondiale pour faire d'Ali Al-Sistani le Prix Nobel de la paix 2005.

P. C.

*Hors du processus politique, les groupes armés sunnites sont en quête d'une stratégie*

# L'impossible front uni de la guérilla

Georges Malbrunot

S'unir pour peser sur l'avenir de l'Irak, ou continuer de combattre en ordre dispersé les forces étrangères et gouvernementales ? A la veille de la formation d'un nouveau gouvernement à Bagdad, le débat agite les groupes armés. La question de la réintégration de la communauté sunnite dans le processus politique est reposée, un mois et demi après les premières élections législatives.

« La résistance est dans une impasse, souligne Naed Hattar, un analyste jordanien. Elle n'a pas de programme politique, ni de leadership pour la fédérer, et sa base essentiellement sunnite est étroite. » Eclatée géographiquement, elle est composée d'une nuée de groupes plus ou moins structurés, dont les

plus connus sont al-Qaida en Mésopotamie, l'Armée islamique en Irak, al-Ansar al-Sunna, l'Armée de Mohamed et l'Armée islamique secrète.

Chacun vit dans la hantise du complot, et les haines passées subsistent. Sur le terrain, les groupes armés s'en tiennent à une coopération opérationnelle dans les principaux foyers de la rébellion antiaméricaine (Falludja, Ramadi, Baqubah, Dyala, Samarra). « Lorsqu'un groupe est confronté localement à une situation difficile, nous allons lui donner un coup de main, raconte un membre de l'Armée islamique en Irak qui évoque un partage des régions du triangle sunnite. Mais nous devons être très vigilants face aux infiltrations, en particulier des milices liées aux factions irakiennes proaméricaines », ajoute-t-il.

Malgré ces faiblesses, le mo-

ment n'est pas encore venu d'un rapprochement stratégique pour former un front uni. « Ils voient dans leurs divisions plus d'inconvénients que d'avantages, explique le chercheur jordanien Assem al-Omari. Leur priorité reste de frapper les Américains pour les faire sortir d'Irak, mais ils ne sont pas pressés, ils savent que cela va prendre des années. » Les responsables de la guérilla n'ignorent pas qu'en apparaissant au grand jour, les groupes armés et leurs dirigeants deviendraient vulnérables.

Les anciens du régime de Saddam Hussein et les ex-baasistes reconvertis en islamistes plus ou moins crédibles sont au cœur de la guérilla, mais ils doivent affronter les vrais intégristes. Entre ces deux mouvances court une double ligne de fracture. La première porte sur la logique du combat à mener. Les djihadistes

peuvent se poser comme relais d'Oussama Ben Laden ou trouver leur inspiration uniquement en Irak. La seconde porte sur l'intégration, ou non, de la minorité sunnite au processus politique en cours.

Vitrine légale de la guérilla, le comité des oulémas sunnites ne peut pas ignorer le problème, mais il reste pour l'heure attentiste. Il n'envisage pas de participation à l'avenir politique de l'Irak, tant qu'un calendrier de retrait des troupes de la force multinationale n'aura pas été établi. C'est en substance ce que son secrétaire général, cheikh Harøth al-Dari, a dit à l'ambassadeur de France en Irak, Bernard Bajolet, lorsque ce dernier a tenté une médiation à la demande de John Negroponte, son homologue américain, désireux de ramener les sunnites modérés dans le giron du pouvoir à Bagdad.

Signe du bouillonnement sur la scène politique irakienne et de l'embarras des sunnites, un imam du comité vient de rencontrer un représentant de l'Assemblée suprême de la Révolution islamique en Irak (As-rii), qui collabore avec la Force multinationale dirigée par les Etats-Unis. De la même façon, les oulémas entretiennent des contacts avec Moqtada al-Sadr, le turbulent leader chiite, qui observe l'évolution de la situation, après son refus de participer aux élections de janvier. « Les sunnites restent incontrournables, même s'ils ont été marginalisés, constate un diplomate à Bagdad, qui ajoute : une fenêtre d'opportunité s'est ouverte à la lueur de la nouvelle situation politique, mais certains groupes armés jouent leur place autour d'une future table des négociations. »

Après une décrue relative au

moment des élections, la violence a repris ces dernières semaines. « Certains jusqu'aboutistes tentent de faire déborder la résistance chez les chiites en attisant les risques de guerre civile », poursuit un irakien proche de la guérilla. Ce n'est pas un hasard si la ville mixte sunnite-chiite d'Hilla au sud de Bagdad a été le théâtre d'un attentat parmi les plus meurtriers de ces deux dernières années. Mais à la suite de cet acte terroriste, de nombreux habitants d'Hilla sont descendus dans la rue pour manifester leur dégoût de la violence aveugle qui frappe d'abord des civils.

Même le groupe du Jordanien Abou Moussab al-Zarqaoui aurait pris conscience de ces dérives et un débat serait né parmi ses dirigeants. Après une récente attaque contre un hôtel de Bagdad, la plus importante

des factions armées s'est empressée de diffuser un communiqué sur son site Internet appelant à frapper des cibles « avant la journée de travail ». La succursale d'al-Qaida en Irak serait-elle soucieuse de montrer qu'elle ne met pas en danger des vies humaines musulmanes ? « Au sein du groupe Zarqaoui, les nationalo-islamistes tentent d'écarter les radicaux djihadistes, explique un spécialiste des questions de sécurité. Ils se rendent compte que les attentats visent des civils, des postes de police qui sont infiltrés par la guérilla, et donc qu'ils se décrédibilisent auprès de la population. » Nerveux, les djihadistes « sentent qu'ils sont en train de perdre la bataille », a prédit dans le *New York Times*, avec une certaine assurance, Rita Katz, qui dirige un institut américain sur les sites intégristes.

LE FIGARO

17 MARS 2005

# With work to come, Iraq assembly gathers

## Installing coalition proves no swift feat

By Edward Wong

**BAGHDAD:** As mortar rounds pounded the heart of the capital, the country's first freely elected Parliament in a half-century met for the first time on Wednesday, but fell short of expectations by not starting the process of installing a government.

The largely ceremonial meeting of the National Assembly came nearly seven weeks after many Iraqis defied insurgent threats to take part in national and provincial elections. As negotiations to form a coalition government have dragged on, though, the confidence of ordinary Iraqis in their elected leaders has faded as steadily as the campaign posters still lining the streets here.

The divisiveness of the negotiations was evident on Wednesday, when the assembly failed to take even the first formal step toward building a government: appointing a president, two vice presidents and a speaker of the assembly. Nevertheless, members of the 275-member assembly marched into the convention center in the heavily fortified Green Zone with a solemnity that indicated they understood both the historic nature of the occasion and the gravity of the task still at hand.

They quietly submitted to body

searches before picking up name tags at a reception desk, then sat down in a vast auditorium for more than an hour to listen to speeches from the most prominent among them.

They represented the full range of Iraqi society, with elderly clerics in black turbans sitting alongside Western-educated men in pinstripe suits and women in full-length robes.

One by one, the speakers strode up to a wooden lectern, Iraqi flags flanking both sides of a wide stage whose rear was draped with thick white curtains.

From the impassioned speeches, it was evident that the Iraqis saw themselves to be at a turning point, nearly two years after the U.S.-led invasion toppled Saddam Hussein.

The Iraqis will now assume more responsibility for their affairs, beyond the duties of the caretaker government of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, and their most powerful leaders will be Shiite Arabs and Kurds, long oppressed by Saddam, a Sunni Arab.

In writing a constitution, the assembly will have to wrestle with the thorniest political issues confronting the country — the legal role of Islam, the definition of federal powers and the balance of power among different ethnicities and sects.

Iraqi and U.S. officials put out a news release on Tuesday saying the assembly would appoint a president and other leaders at its first meeting, though it quickly became clear on Wednesday that the officials had been overly optimistic. In interviews before and after the assembly meeting, the top leaders of the two political blocs involved in the power-sharing talks, the Shiites and Kurds, gave wildly varying estimates of when they might agree on a government.

Ibrahim al-Jaafari, the Shiite nominee for prime minister, said it would take one or two weeks to reach an agreement, while another senior Shiite politician, Hussein al-Shahristani, said a deal would be hammered out "in a few days' time."

"There is broad agreement on the principles of the democratic process," said Shahristani, a nuclear physicist who cobbled together the Shiite bloc before the elections. "We agreed with the Kurdish coalition from the very beginning that we would form a government together."

The Kurds are pushing the Shiites, who won the most votes in the Jan. 30 elections, to give specific guarantees on the rapid restoration of Kurdish property in the oil-rich city of Kirkuk, and on the retention of strong autonomous powers, including the right to keep a militia. The Shiites would rather put off tackling such issues until the national assembly writes the permanent constitution, due by August, or even later.

The jockeying has left ordinary Iraqis feeling increasingly disillusioned. "I thought all our problems would be solved after the elections since those parties now in disagreement pushed very hard to hold the elections," said Sami Alwan, 27, a technology graduate student in Baghdad. "But I didn't know the differences among them were so deep."

The Shiite bloc, called the United Iraqi Alliance, has 140 seats on the assembly, and the Kurdistan Alliance has 75 seats. If they joined together, they would have enough seats to get the two-thirds assembly vote necessary to install a president and vice president, who would then appoint a prime minister. A majority vote in the assembly would then be needed to approve the new government.

A suicide car bomber attacked an Iraqi Army checkpoint at 9 a.m. in Baquba, northeast of Baghdad. The explosion killed at least three soldiers and wounded another 11, an Iraqi Army spokesman said.

The New York Times

### ■ ISTANBUL

## Kurdish speakers face 6-month prison terms

Turkish prosecutors are demanding six-month prison sentences for 13 leaders of a small pro-Kurdish party after they conducted a congress last year in Kurdish instead of the official language, Turkish, a party official said Wednesday.

Prosecutors in Ankara allege that the party, which did not run in 2002 general elections and does not hold seats in Parliament, broke laws that stipulate that no other language than Turkish can be used at official party congresses. Resit Deli, deputy head of the Rights and Freedoms Party, or Hak-Par, said by telephone.

He acknowledged that the party leaders used Kurdish, but said the use of Turkish should not be required as the country advances its bid to join the European Union. (AP)

INTERNATIONAL  
**Herald Tribune**

March 17, 2005

# Two years later, taking stock in Iraq

**T**he invasion of Iraq, which began two years ago this weekend, was a world-changing event. We can see many of the consequences already. The good ones, so far, exist mainly as hopes and are fewer than the bad ones, some of which are all too concrete. One of the few positive domestic consequences of the war has been the nation's determination — despite obstruction from the White House and its supporters — to honor the memory of each American man and woman who has died in Iraq. The administration has been shockingly callous about the tens of thousands of Iraqi victims, whom ordinary Americans cannot count let alone name.

The Bush administration was famously flexible in explaining why it invaded Iraq, and the most important reason, in the minds of Americans and in the arguments made by American diplomats, turned out to be wrong. There were no weapons of mass destruction to destroy. Worse, the specialized machinery and conventional weaponry that did exist was looted during the invasion and is now very likely in the hands of terrorists.

However, there was another theory behind the invasion. George W. Bush might have been slow to articulate it, but other officials were saying early on that overthrowing Saddam Hussein would shake up the hide-bound, undemocratic regimes in the Middle East and free the democratic impulses of Arab and Islamic people. This rationale may still hold up. The image of Iraqi and Afghani voters marching to the polls was by far the most hopeful of the past two years.

There is an endless list of qualifications. Many of the most promising signs of change, however, have little to do with Iraq. The peace initiatives in Israel were made possible when Yasser Arafat died and was replaced by a braver, more flexible leader. The new determination of the Lebanese people to throw out their Syrian oppressors was sparked by the assassination of the Lebanese nationalist Rafik Hariri, not the downfall of Saddam. And in Iraq itself, the voting largely excluded the Sunni minority, without whose cooperation Iraq will never be anything more than a civil war battleground or a staging platform for a new dictatorship.

With all that said, even the fiercest critic of Bush's foreign policy would be insane not to want these signs of hope to take root. That would not excuse an unnecessary war on false pretenses, but it could change the course

of history. Grieving families would find the peace that comes with knowing that spouses, parents or children died to help make a better world.

Even with the best possible outcome, the invasion is already costly. America's alliances, particularly with Europe, have been severely frayed since Bush turned his back on the United Nations in 2002. Even some early supporters, like Spain, have edged away. Tony Blair remains the exception, mainly because of his willingness to ignore public opinion. If there is such a thing as the European street, anti-American feeling is strong and universal there.

Things are even worse on the Arab street. While hope for change may be rising, opinion about the United States has never been as profoundly negative. Even under the best circumstances, it would have been hard for the proud people of the Middle East to acknowledge any benefit from an armed Western intervention. And the occupying forces have made themselves easy to hate with maddening human rights disasters. When the average Egyptian or Palestinian or Saudi thinks about the Americans in Iraq, the image is not voters' purple-stained fingers but the naked Iraqi prisoner at the other end of Private Lynndie England's leash.

The atrocities that occurred in prisons like Abu Ghraib were the product of decisions that began at the very top, when the Bush administration decided that Sept. 11 had wiped out its responsibility to abide by the rules, including the Geneva Conventions and the U.S. Constitution. For the United States, one of the greatest harms from the Iraq conflict has been the administration's willingness to define democracy down on the pretext of wartime emergency.

Bush was not honest with the American people in the run-up to the war. He hyped the WMD evidence abroad and played down the cost at home. His re-election ensured that he would pay no political penalty. But other people sit in judgment as well. Bush's determination to have his war and his tax cuts at the same time meant masking the real price of invading Iraq, and even now the costs are being borne mainly by overseas holders of American debt. The international markets know this, and over the long run are most likely to be less forgiving than American voters.

The stained index fingers of Iraqi voters have long faded, and disillusionment has set in. People reasonably want to know what comes next. More chilling, they seem to be prepared to blame competing ethnic groups for anything that goes wrong.

Iraq's new leaders must organize a government that all its people feel has their best interests at heart. They must also accomplish some practical matters — more electrical power, cleaner water, better security — to give their constituents the confidence that things really can get better.

The first challenge is up to the Iraqis, and so far, there are not many signs that any group is prepared to compromise for the common good. Americans must help with the second problem, and almost no one inside Iraq seems to feel the infant government can survive right now without the Western military.

It is hard to imagine a quick exit that would not make things much worse. But at the same time, it's clear that the presence of American troops is poisoning the situation. Under constant fire from insurgents, soldiers are seldom free to provide the goodwill services that many would undoubtedly like to offer. Instead they stand behind barricades, in fear of the next suicide bomber. The inevitable consequence is what happened to the Italian journalist and her protectors whose car was riddled with bullets en route to the airport. Far more often, the people inside the cars are Iraqis.

The invasion has stirred up other dreadful side effects that must be addressed. One is that other rogue nations watched what happened to Saddam Hussein and not unreasonably took the lesson that the only way to keep American forces away permanently was to acquire nuclear weapons quickly. Curbing the international market of the most lethal weapons must be the top priority for the White House, but it is not possible without the multilateral cooperation they scorned before the invasion. North Korea, which any sensible person regards as a far more deadly threat than Saddam Hussein ever was, can be kept in check only by allies working together.

**L**ike a great many Americans and most Europeans, this page opposed the invasion of Iraq. Our reasons seem as good now as they did then. Most important is our belief that the United States cannot work in isolation from the rest of the world. There are too many problems, from global warming to nuclear proliferation, that can be solved only if the major powers collaborate. Americans need both the counsel and restraint of other world leaders. The White House has almost unthinkable power, and the rest of the globe has the right to take a profound interest in making sure it is exercised wisely.

## **Pas d'armée irakienne au Kurdistan sans l'aval du parlement kurde (Barzani)**



DUBAI, 11 mars (AFP) - 19h26 - Le chef du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), Massoud Barzani, a affirmé que l'entrée de l'armée irakienne dans le Kurdistan irakien devrait à l'avenir obtenir l'aval du parlement kurde, dans une interview à la télévision al-Arabiya.

"Certainement, l'entrée des forces de l'armée irakienne dans le Kurdistan doit obtenir l'accord du parlement kurde", a déclaré M. Barzani à cette chaîne basée à Dubaï.

"Les Peshmergas (combattants kurdes) feront partie de l'armée irakienne. Aujourd'hui, l'armée irakienne diffère de celle d'hier", a ajouté M. Barzani.

"Si le Kurdistan est exposé à une menace extérieure ou à une menace qui dépasse les capacités de ses forces de sécurité intérieure, l'armée irakienne aura certainement la possibilité d'aider et d'entrer" dans le Kurdistan, a poursuivi M. Barzani.

"Mais, dans tous les cas, il faudrait que cette entrée se fasse avec l'accord du parlement kurde", a insisté M. Barzani.

M. Barzani a par ailleurs réaffirmé l'attachement des Kurdes irakiens au rattachement de la ville multiethnique de Kirkouk au Kurdistan irakien, conformément aux dispositions de la Loi fondamentale pendant la période transitoire, affirmant que cette question ne tolérerait aucun report.

"Si on applique l'article 58 de la Loi fondamentale pendant la période transitoire, Kirkouk reviendra au Kurdistan, d'une manière légale et pacifique", a déclaré M. Barzani.

Dans son article 58, la Loi fondamentale, la Constitution provisoire qui régit l'Irak pendant la période transitoire, prévoit de corriger les effets de l'arabisation forcée de la ville pétrolière, dont les Kurdes réclament le rattachement à leur région autonome, menée sous le régime de Saddam Hussein.

"Kirkouk fait partie du Kurdistan, historiquement et géographiquement. Nous ne demandons pas quelque chose d'illégal ou de non réaliste. Kirkouk est une ville irakienne, mais avec une identité kurde. Nous n'accepterons pas de report de ces questions jusqu'après (l'élaboration de) la Constitution. Il faudrait qu'on se mette d'accord sur ces questions dès à présent, en particulier la question de Kirkouk", a déclaré M. Barzani.

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## **Découverte d'un charnier de 81 Kurdes près de Kirkouk (source médicale)**



KIRKOUK (Irak), 16 mars (AFP) - 13h59 - Une fosse commune contenant les restes de 81 Kurdes tués sous le régime de Saddam Hussein a été découverte près de Kirkouk, à 255 km au nord de Bagdad, a annoncé mercredi le responsable de la Santé de la province, le Dr Sabah Zangana.

"Les informations que nous avons reçues de la police et de familles kurdes expulsées (sous Saddam Hussein) à la périphérie de Kirkouk ont établi qu'il y avait une fosse commune de 81 personnes, dont cinq enfants" à Rahimawa, à 7 km au nord de Kirkouk, a précisé le Dr Zangana.

Selon lui, "36 familles ont pu reconnaître leurs disparus, tandis que 45 autres n'ont pas été identifiées".

L'examen médico-légal a montré que la plupart des morts, dont huit femmes et les cinq enfants, avaient été tués par balle dans les années 1990, a-t-il dit, expliquant que la fosse commune avait été mise au jour mercredi, après la découverte d'ossements par des bergers.

Des milliers de personnes se sont massées le long de la route menant à la fosse commune, criant vengeance.

Des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes ont été chassés de la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk par le régime de Saddam Hussein pour y installer des Arabes. Les Kurdes exigent l'inversion de cette arabisation forcée et revendiquent le rattachement de Kirkouk à leur région autonome.

L'Assemblée nationale transitoire a tenu sa première réunion mercredi en mémoire du gazage de 5.000 Kurdes dans la localité de Halabja (nord-est), dont c'était le 17ème anniversaire.

16 mars 2005, 11h36

## "Mein Kampf" devient un best-seller en Turquie



agrandir la photo

ANKARA (AFP) - Publié pour la première fois en turc en 1939, "Mein Kampf" d'Adolf Hitler figure depuis plusieurs semaines au palmarès des meilleurs ventes des libraires turcs, un engouement qui s'explique, selon les spécialistes, par son prix bas aussi bien que par une poussée nationaliste.

Depuis janvier, "Mein Kampf" s'est vendu à près de 50.000 exemplaires et cette semaine il se classe au quatrième rang des meilleures ventes, selon le libraire D&R.

Ecrit en prison en 1925, "Mon combat" a pour la première fois été traduit en turc et publié en 1939, dans un pays déchiré par une lutte d'influence entre l'Allemagne nazie et les alliés.

"Mein Kampf était un best-seller caché, nous l'avons sorti du placard pour des raisons commerciales", explique à l'AFP Oguz Tektas des éditions Manifesto, qui tient à préciser que son entreprise n'avait d'autre motif que de "gagner de l'argent".

Publié et vendu librement au cours des années par une douzaine d'éditeurs, il se vendait à moins de 20.000 exemplaires par an pour environ 20 nouvelles livres turques (YTL - 11,6 euros) alors que la nouvelle édition est mise en vente à 5,90 YTL (3,4 euros).

"Ceux qui veulent connaître une personne qui a mis le monde à feu et à sang le lisent", a déclaré M. Tektas, dont les éditions sont les premières à offrir à bas prix l'ouvrage, écoulant en deux mois 23.000 exemplaires.

Sami Kilic, propriétaire des éditions Emre à Istanbul, qui a également publié "Mein Kampf" --31.000 depuis fin janvier, dont 26.000 déjà vendus-- admet que c'est surtout les jeunes qui l'achètent.

"Les événements ont un impact sur les ventes", dit-il, faisant allusion aux aspirations turques à rejoindre l'Union européenne, perçue dans les milieux nationalistes comme un abandon des valeurs nationales, la guerre en Irak qui a déclenché un sentiment anti-américain en Turquie, et la politique israélienne envers les

Palestiniens.

"C'est surprenant et étonnant", reconnaît M. Kilic.

"Ce livre, qui n'a pas le moindre lot d'humanité, semble malheureusement être pris au sérieux ici", déplore pour sa part le politologue Dogu Ergil, interrogé par un journal turc.

Selon lui, l'engouement pour "Mein Kampf" dans ce pays à forte majorité musulmane s'explique notamment par une recrudescence de l'antisémitisme et de l'anti-américanisme nourris par l'occupation de l'Irak et les violences contre les Palestiniens.

"Le nazisme enterré dans les oubliettes de l'histoire en Europe a commencé à apparaître chez nous", regrette le professeur Ergil.

Contrairement à ce que laissent penser les ventes, la Turquie n'a jamais été un pays antisémite. Bien au contraire, c'est le sultan Beyazit II qui a accueilli les juifs d'Espagne fuyant l'Inquisition au XVe siècle, donnant ainsi l'exemple de ce qui allait devenir une tradition. De tout temps, l'Empire ottoman, puis la République Turque furent les protecteurs des juifs chassés d'Europe par les différents pogroms et le génocide nazi.

Silvyo Ovadya, le chef de la communauté juive de Turquie, qui compte 22.000 membres sur une population de 71 millions, se déclare "irrité" par cet intérêt soudain pour un livre qui jette les bases d'une politique raciste et antisémite et s'étonne du "fait qu'un livre de 500 pages puisse être publié à aussi bas prix". M. Ovadya dit avoir fait part de ses préoccupations aux maisons d'éditions qui ne l'ont pas écouté.

La majorité des juifs turcs sont établis à Istanbul, qui compte 18 synagogues. En novembre 2003, deux synagogues stambouliotes avaient été la cibles d'attentats islamistes qui avaient fait 25 morts et des centaines de blessés.

## Jalal Talabani, le dirigeant kurde aux ambitions irakiennes, lorgne sur la fonction suprême

IRAQ. D'entente avec les chiites, le fondateur de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan devrait devenir le prochain chef de l'Etat irakien. Contrairement à son ex-frère ennemi Massoud Barzani plus ancré vers ses racines kurdes, Talabani voit son horizon orienté vers Bagdad. Portrait.



Jalal Talabani. Pour le chef de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan, se retrouver aujourd'hui à la tête de l'Etat irakien serait une continuité logique de sa carrière. Photo: Keystone

### Le Temps - international

Delphine Minoui, De retour du Kurdistan irakien  
Lundi 14 mars 2005

Ceux qui ont fréquenté Jalal Talabani au petit-déjeuner racontent toujours les prouesses du prétendant à la présidence d'Irak lorsqu'il avale trois œufs d'un coup sans s'étouffer. A 72 ans, le leader de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK, un des deux grands partis kurdes qu'il dirige depuis sa création il y a trente ans) adore être au centre de l'attention. Et il ne l'a jamais caché. Moustache grise et ventre rond comme une lune, il parle fort, raconte des blagues à tout va, jongle aisément du kurde, sa langue maternelle, à l'anglais, en passant par l'arabe, et n'hésite pas à claquer la porte au nez de ses interlocuteurs quand il veut affirmer ses idées.

Né au Kurdistan, éduqué à Bagdad, ses racines sont au nord, mais pour cet homme qui aime l'ampleur, l'horizon est aujourd'hui irakien. Son combat – qui mena à l'autonomie du nord de l'Irak en 1991 – il l'a d'abord dédié à la cause des Kurdes, persécutés sous Saddam Hussein. Dès l'âge de 13 ans, il adhère au Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK), fondé en 1946, par le légendaire Moustafa Barzani, leader de la bataille pour l'indépendance kurde.

Mais au bout de quelques années, ses ambitions grandissent. En 1975, il fonde son propre parti, l'UPK, et installe son quartier général à Suleymanieh, au sud-est du Kurdistan, non loin de la frontière iranienne. La même année, Moustafa

Barzani, basé à Erbil, cède la direction de son parti à ses deux fils, Idriss et Massoud. En 1979, Massoud prend définitivement la tête du PDK. Commence alors une longue guerre, parfois verbale, parfois armée, entre Jalal et Massoud, qui durera jusqu'à la réconciliation devant le parlement kurde, quelques mois avant l'invasion américaine en Irak, en mars 2003. Le 30 juin dernier, les deux hommes ont mis définitivement leurs rancunes au placard, en s'alliant sur une liste commune pour les élections parlementaires.

Quand l'été qui suit la chute du régime de Saddam Hussein Jalal Talabani est désigné parmi les neuf chefs tournants du Conseil de gouvernement provisoire irakien, il n'hésite pas une seconde. Aujourd'hui, se retrouver à la tête de l'Irak est, pour lui, une continuité logique de sa carrière. Son rôle sera bien sûr plus symbolique que pratique. Mais qu'importe, il adore être en public. Sa candidature, en tant que Kurde, à la présidence de l'Irak a été savamment négociée avec les chiites, qui visent, eux, le poste de premier ministre, pour lequel Ibahim Jaafari, le chef du parti Dawa, a été désigné.

La candidature de Talabani est également le fruit de discussions préalables entre lui-même et Massoud Barzani, qui remontent à plus de deux mois avant les élections, durant lesquelles les chiites et les Kurdes ont respectivement remporté 140 et 75 sièges de la nouvelle assemblée. «Le scénario était ficelé d'avance, confie Nasih Ghafoor Ramadan, un membre actif du PDK. Convaincus que leur liste commune allait arriver en deuxième position au parlement, les deux leaders kurdes s'étaient déjà partagé le gâteau en décidant que l'un soit désigné comme le candidat des Kurdes à la présidence irakienne, et que l'autre récupère la présidence du gouvernement régional du Kurdistan.»

Pour Saadoun al-Douleyymi, directeur général du Centre irakien pour la recherche, qui connaît bien la personnalité des deux hommes, «c'est un choix qui va de soi». Barzani, toujours très discret, ne quitte que très rarement son charwar kurde, pantalon bouffant traditionnel, et préfère recevoir ses hôtes dans sa résidence de Salaheddin, au nord d'Erbil, plutôt que de se déplacer. On ne voit jamais sa femme. Talabani, costume-cravate, aime les rencontres et les voyages, qu'il entreprend souvent en compagnie de son épouse, Hewro, une féministe acharnée en blue-jeans et aux brushings parfaits. «Barzani, poursuit Saadoun al-Douleyymi, est plus tourné vers ses racines kurdes. Il porte sur ses épaules l'héritage culturel de son père, Moustafa Barzani. Pour lui, les valeurs de la tribu sont importantes. Talabani est plus irakien. Son horizon est plus large. Il joue plus le jeu des politiciens.»

## Les Kurdes s'accrochent à leurs revendications en mémoire de leurs victimes



BAGDAD, 16 mars (AFP) - 14h42 - Les Kurdes, deuxième groupe dans la nouvelle Assemblée nationale transitoire, insistent sur leurs revendications dans un Irak fédéral, invoquant les nombreuses injustices subies sous Saddam Hussein.

En raflant 77 des 275 sièges de l'Assemblée nationale, les Kurdes sont devenus une force incontournable dans le paysage politique irakien.

Leur histoire a été marquée par de nombreuses exactions comme la campagne d'Anfal lancée en 1988 par l'ancien régime déchu de Saddam Hussein, consistant à raser des villages entiers ou le gazage, la même année, de milliers de Kurdes à Halabja.

C'est d'ailleurs en souvenir de Halabja que la première réunion de l'Assemblée nationale élue s'est tenue le 16 mars, date du 17ème anniversaire du gazage.

Sous l'ancien régime, des dizaines de milliers de Kurdes ont été spoliés de leurs terres et expulsés de la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk et de villages des provinces de Ninive, Diyala et Salaheddine, dans le nord.

Avant le renversement de Saddam Hussein en avril 2003, les Kurdes ont cependant joui de douze années d'autonomie grâce à la zone d'exclusion aérienne imposée par les Alliés de la guerre du Golfe en 1991 dans le nord.

L'Alliance kurde, composée de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan de Jalal Talabani (UPK) et du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan de Massoud Barzani (PDK), sait qu'elle est en position de force pour négocier avec la liste chiite, l'Alliance unifiée irakienne (AUI), qui dispose d'une courte majorité de 146 sièges.

La Loi fondamentale, la Constitution provisoire, prévoit en effet l'élection par les deux tiers des députés d'un Conseil présidentiel de trois membres, qui choisit à l'unanimité le Premier ministre.

Début mars, M. Barzani résumait les revendications kurdes: "Il faut que la loi fondamentale soit la base de la Constitution permanente, qu'une solution soit trouvée à Kirkouk sur la base de l'article 58 de la première loi, que les forces des peshmergas (milices kurdes) soient maintenues, que les richesses (pétrolières) soient réparties de manière équitable et que soit retenu le principe du fédéralisme".

Les responsables de l'AUI ont estimé que le règlement de la question de Kirkouk relevait de la compétence de l'Assemblée, sans se prononcer explicitement sur les peshmergas et le partage des ressources.

Dimanche, les dirigeants kurdes ont exigé la révision du projet d'accord mis au point avec les chiites pour la formation d'un gouvernement et l'implication de l'ensemble des forces politiques dans les négociations.

Lundi, Jalal Talabani, choisi par l'Alliance kurde comme candidat à la présidence, reconnaissait "des désaccords sur l'avenir des peshmergas et sur des articles de la Loi fondamentale, notamment ceux traitant de Kirkouk".

Selon une responsable de l'AUI, Samira al-Moussaoui, "certaines parties tentent de réaliser certains objectifs parce qu'elles craignent de ne pouvoir les atteindre à l'avenir. Parmi les questions sur lesquelles elles insistent figurent les déplacés kurdes et le statut des peshmergas dans l'armée irakienne".

"Les Kurdes font chanter les chiites parce qu'ils savent que s'ils ne s'entendent pas sur tout, les chiites seuls ne peuvent pas atteindre leurs objectifs", a commenté le sunnite Sobhi Abdelhamid, le chef du Mouvement des nationalistes arabes.

Selon un responsable du PDK à Bagdad, Dilshad Miran, "il est important que l'accord entre les deux parties soit clair et transparent". "Il y a eu beaucoup de problèmes pour les Kurdes par le passé", a-t-il expliqué.

"L'Irak ne jouira de la stabilité que s'il est bâti sur un consensus entre toutes les composantes de son peuple", a déclaré M. Talabani lors de la première réunion de l'Assemblée nationale mercredi, alors que les deux parties n'étaient toujours pas parvenues à surmonter leurs divergences.

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## **Syrie: arrestation de plus de 40 Kurdes à Alep**



DAMAS, 24 mars (AFP) - 15h19 - Les autorités syriennes ont arrêté mardi plus de quarante Kurdes, au lendemain de la fête de Norouz, qui marque l'arrivée du printemps et le Nouvel An kurde, a indiqué jeudi l'avocat des droits de l'Homme Anouar Bounni.

"Plus de quarante Kurdes, dont sept femmes, ont été arrêtés il y a deux jours après des incidents intervenus à Alep (nord) pendant les célébrations de Norouz", a affirmé Me Bounni.

L'avocat a en outre appelé les autorités à "ouvrir une enquête neutre sur les événements d'Alep et de Qamichli" intervenus en mars 2004.

Du 12 au 17 mars 2004, des affrontements avaient opposé des Kurdes aux forces de l'ordre ou à des tribus arabes dans ces villes du nord du pays et d'autres régions septentrionales, faisant 40 morts, selon des sources kurdes, et 25 morts selon un bilan officiel syrien.

Me Bounni a appelé à "dénoncer tous ceux qui ont fait usage de la force, tué des innocents et battu des manifestants", en jugeant qu'une "solution politique fondée sur les droits de l'Homme", était seule susceptible de régler les problèmes kurdes.

Les Kurdes de Syrie représentent environ 9% de la population du pays et sont installés essentiellement dans le nord. Outre la reconnaissance de leur langue et de leur culture, ils revendiquent une égalité de droits et de traitement avec la majorité arabe "dans le cadre de l'intégrité territoriale du pays".

## Des débats constitutionnels à venir - Quel avenir pour les Kurdes d'Irak?

André Poupart

Professeur honoraire, Faculté de droit, Université de Montréal, de retour d'une mission au Kurdistan

Edition du lundi 14 mars 2005 **LE DEVOIR** **bm**

Le 30 janvier, les Kurdes ont voté massivement pour élire leurs représentants au sein du gouvernement transitoire irakien. L'Irak constituant une seule grande circonscription, l'Alliance des partis kurdes a obtenu 25,7 % des votes et 75 sièges sur les 275 que compte le Parlement provisoire. Le même jour, dans le cadre d'une consultation non officielle, les mêmes Kurdes se prononçaient à plus de 95 % en faveur de l'indépendance (selon les critères canadiens, la question était aussi claire que la réponse).

On ne saurait mieux illustrer l'ambiguïté de la situation des Kurdes d'Irak au début de cette nouvelle phase de l'histoire de l'Irak contemporain. Massivement les Kurdes sont favorables à l'indépendance alors que leurs dirigeants sont engagés dans un projet fédéral qui permettrait de sanctionner les acquis de 15 dernières années d'un régime d'indépendance de fait, grâce à la protection aérienne garantie par l'ONU.

Parallèlement, on constate une évolution du discours qui manifeste une volonté de donner à l'Irak un gouvernement central fort. Immédiatement avant et après l'invasion par les armées de la Coalition, les thèmes porteurs étaient la «démocratie», le «fédéralisme», le «respect des droits des minorités». Depuis, si la «démocratie» reste un thème majeur, le «fédéralisme» et le «respect des droits des minorités» ont été remplacés par la nécessité d'un État central fort qui préservera l'unité nationale de l'Irak.

Les autorités kurdes et notamment la Liste unifiée du Kurdistan -- qui regroupe l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan de Jalal Talabani et le Parti démocratique du Kurdistan de Massoud Barzani ainsi que les partis islamiste, communiste, assyro-chaldéen et turkmène -- ne remettent pas en cause l'unité de l'Irak. Les dirigeants kurdes insistent cependant sur la nécessité d'un régime fédéral qui reconnaisse l'essentiel des acquis des 15 dernières années obtenues grâce à une indépendance de fait.

Pour obtenir ce résultat, les Kurdes se fondent sur leur récent succès électoral et sur le fait que leur situation n'a jamais été aussi favorable sur l'échiquier politique.

Il est vrai que toutes les composantes de la population qui vit au Kurdistan sont maintenant unies. Cependant, une large part de cette puissance relative résulte de la présence américaine et de la division entre sunnites et chiites. Cette division interarabe perdra sûrement à terme son caractère violent et les Kurdes, mieux que quiconque, savent qu'ils peuvent être lâchés, à tout moment, par les Américains dès que leurs intérêts réciproques ne convergeront plus.

Dans ce contexte, les Kurdes s'opposeront à la création d'un gouvernement central fort qui ne respecterait pas leurs droits et leur identité tout en leur assurant les ressources financières nécessaires à leur épanouissement.

Avoir une reconnaissance

Depuis plusieurs années, les autorités kurdes favorisent l'adoption d'une constitution fédérale. Cette volonté a déjà été reconnue le 8 mars 2004 par la Loi sur l'administration de l'Irak pendant une période transitoire.

L'article 4 de cette loi précise que le système de gouvernement irakien doit être «républicain, fédéral, démocratique et pluraliste». Cependant, les articles 25, 26 et 54 établissent un partage des pouvoirs nettement favorable au gouvernement central et le contrôle absolu de celui-ci sur les ressources financières qui laissent peu de marge au gouvernement régional kurde. Nulle part dans cette constitution provisoire, il n'est fait mention d'un pouvoir législatif autonome pour le gouvernement kurde. Tout au plus, l'Assemblée nationale kurde pourrait amender la législation fédérale dans les domaines qui ne sont pas de la compétence exclusive du gouvernement central (art. 54B).

En outre des compétences législatives, fiscales ou financières, la question territoriale, c'est-à-dire, la redéfinition des frontières intérieures demeure de première importance. Les frontières actuelles des gouvernorats ont été fixées de façon à réduire au minimum l'influence démographique et politique des Kurdes (art. 58B), elles ne seront toutefois pas modifiées par le gouvernement provisoire (art. 53B), y compris celles de la région de Kirkuk où l'Alliance des partis kurdes a obtenu 58 % des votes (art. 58C).

Les Kurdes comptent parmi les vainqueurs de l'élection du 30 janvier et la conjoncture leur est certainement favorable. Ils demeurent toutefois une minorité qui souhaite obtenir une sanction constitutionnelle pour ses droits et ses acquis des 15 dernières années. Cette reconnaissance dans le cadre d'un Irak fédéral laisse entrevoir des négociations difficiles car toutes les composantes de la société ont des intérêts à faire valoir.

Une constitution «Québec-Plus» ?

Et si ses négociations échouaient ? Les Kurdes disposeraient alors d'un droit de veto si deux tiers des électeurs de trois gouvernorats ou plus rejetaient le projet de constitution. La crise serait alors profonde et remettrait en cause le vouloir vivre ensemble des Irakiens.

La solution ne serait pas nécessairement l'Indépendance du Kurdistan. La situation actuelle de souveraineté de facto pourrait être maintenue jusqu'à ce qu'une nouvelle Assemblée nationale rédige une constitution qui réalise les compromis nécessaires.

«Déficit fiscal», «envahissement des compétences provinciales» ne sont pas des expressions connues en droit constitutionnel irakien mais les Kurdes devront affronter ces dures réalités si le projet constitutionnel n'est pas rééquilibré. Comme certains le soulignaient l'an dernier, les Kurdes souhaitent obtenir une constitution «Québec-Plus». Pour obtenir ce succès, ils devront se méfier des non-dits et des détails qui peuvent transformer les plus généreuses déclarations fédérales de principe en envahissement, aussi sournois que progressif, des compétences régionales grâce au pouvoir fiscal et au pouvoir judiciaire.

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## Riots Rock Three Kurdish Towns in Iran

TEHRAN / 21 February 2005

Heavy clashes between Iranian Kurds and security agents erupted on Friday in three towns in western Iran, leaving dozens injured and hundreds arrested.

Clashes broke out after State Security Forces agents used force to disperse demonstrations taking place simultaneously in the towns of Sardasht, Saqqez, and Baneh in protest against severe fuel shortages in the area, eye-witnesses reported. The demonstrations quickly turned violent as protestors fought back and shouted slogans against Iran's ruling clerics.

In Sardasht, residents came to the aid of protestors during clashes as the SSF attempted to arrest anyone in the vicinity of the demonstration. At least 200 people, mostly youths, were arrested.

In Saqqez, residents reportedly forced SSF agents to flee the scene after serious scuffles.

In Baneh, hundreds of protesting youths were reportedly detained by security forces and taken for questioning.

Iranian Kurds have been at loggerheads with the Islamic fundamentalist regime that has been in power for 26 years.

## 'Mein Kampf' a Best Seller in Turkey

Mar 24, 2005 - By JAMES C. HELICKE, Associated Press Writer

ISTANBUL, Turkey - Turkish bookshops have a best seller, but some of them are hesitant about giving it too much display.

### It's "Mein Kampf."

The popularity of Adolf Hitler's book, filled with anti-Jewish diatribes and dreams of world domination, is puzzling some Turks. Does it reflect rising anti-Semitic or anti-Western sentiment in Muslim Turkey? Or anger over Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and the war in Iraq? Is it a backlash against the country's moves to join the European Union? Or does it simply offer a cheap thrill?

At least two new Turkish-language versions are out in paperback and selling for as little as \$4.50, but they could run into legal trouble. They were printed without the permission of the Finance Ministry of the German state of Bavaria, which was given control of Hitler's estate after World War II and is keen to suppress the book. German diplomats in Turkey have been told to explore court action. "The book 'Mein Kampf' should not be reprinted," says Bavarian Finance Minister Kurt Faltlhauser. "The state of Bavaria administers the copyright very restrictively to prevent an increase of Nazi ideas."

Last month the ministry said it was seeking legal action to stop the book's publication in Poland.

"Mein Kampf" — meaning "My Struggle," was written in the 1920s and has long been widely available in Arab countries, but no increase in sales has been noted there lately. So Turkish analysts are hard put to explain why tens of thousands of copies have been sold here in recent months.

Lina Filiba, executive vice president of Turkey's 25,000-member Jewish community, called it "disturbing." She said price and media attention were major factors, but also pointed to a "worrying trend" of anti-Semitic publications such as "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" being sold even in bustling department stores.

"Metal Storm" by Orkun Ucar and Burak Turna, a novel imagining a war between Turkey and the United States, is Turkey's top seller. Conspiracy theory books sell well and the press is extremely critical of the United States and Israel.

Filiba tied the phenomenon to the European Union's Dec. 17 decision to open membership talks with Turkey, a move long sought by Turkish governments but unpopular among those who fear it will expose their country to permissive European influences. "I think there's an increase in anti-Semitic, anti-American, and anti-foreigner feeling that has paralleled Dec. 17," Filiba said.

Umit Ozdag, writing in the daily Aksam, worried that Turks feel ill-treated by the West and are anxious as ethnic Kurds in Turkey and neighboring Iraq are increasingly assertive. Some Turks, he wrote, are finding comfort in Hitler's claims that Germany lost the first world war because of the Jews.

"Turks think they are being exploited. They are angry with the demands of the European Union and United States. But those who anger them the most are Kurdish nationalists," he wrote. "Turks who think they're being stabbed in the back read Hitler. That is a ... very dangerous development."

At least two publishing houses, Emre and Manifesto, have released cheap versions of "Mein Kampf." Oguz Tektas of Manifesto said it had sold at least 25,000 of its print run of 30,000.

"It has nothing to do with anti-Semitism. Our only aim was commercial," Tektas said. Esin Aka of the D and R bookshop chain said Thursday that the Emre book, released five weeks ago, was No. 2 this week, after "Metal Storm." Senol Bilginan of the Bilgi store in Ankara said it was No. 3.

"The price is of course low. And the fact that it has been ordered confiscated in some countries also helped," he said. "Everyone is buying it ... Young people have an intense interest." Still, it's not always easy to find. One D and R shop in Istanbul buried it on a low shelf. The Dost bookshop in Ankara put it on a high shelf, where the cover featuring a saluting Hitler couldn't be seen. The manager said he was selling about five books a day and added he deliberately didn't put it on the best-seller shelves.

"I saw the book on TV and got curious about Hitler's life and decided to buy it," said Asli Ugur, 20, a university student.

She also bought a book about Che Guevara.

# La Turquie, un pays "ingrat, antisémite et paranoïaque"

Ce coup de gueule d'un éditorialiste du *Wall Street Journal* sur les dérives antiaméricaines et antisémites de la Turquie a fait grand bruit. Marque-t-il la fin de la relation privilégiée entre Washington et Ankara ?

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (extraits)  
New York

**I** l y a quelques années, j'ai visité à Istanbul une exposition d'art turc à l'époque du dernier coup d'Etat militaire survenu dans le pays (1980). A vrai dire, les artistes m'avaient paru beaucoup plus préoccupés par les injustices du capitalisme global que par l'avenir de la démocratie turque. Définir les œuvres exposées comme étant des caricatures gauchistes – beaucoup représentaient de gros capitalistes coiffés du chapeau de l'Oncle Sam et des travailleurs émaciés – serait un euphémisme. Comme l'écrivait un critique local plutôt perspicace, cette exposition montrait que *"les artistes turcs sont prêts à s'avilir volontairement à un point que les artistes soviétiques ont toujours refusé, même à l'apogée de l'oppression stalinienne"*.

Le souvenir de cette exposition m'est revenu récemment quand j'ai entendu des Américains s'interroger avec amertume : *"Si nous avons perdu la Turquie, à qui la faute ?"* Le fait est qu'une relation d'un demi-siècle entre des pays alliés de longue date au sein de l'OTAN, qui ont combattu ensemble l'expansionnisme soviétique, souffre depuis longtemps de l'hostilité idéologique et de la décadence intellectuelle d'une bonne partie de l'élite turque. Aux élections de 2002, les principaux partis turcs qui défendaient les liens entre la Turquie et les Etats-Unis ont mordu la poussière, laissant un vide qu'occupa aussitôt l'islamisme subtil mais insidieux du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP). C'est cette combinaison de vieille idéologie de gauche et de nouvel islamisme qui, beaucoup plus que le refus d'Ankara de se ranger à nos côtés dans la guerre en Irak, explique l'effondrement des relations turco-américaines.

Et quel effondrement ! Lors d'une brève visite à Ankara que j'ai effectuée début février en compagnie du sous-secrétaire à la Défense Doug Feith, j'ai découvert une atmosphère empoison-



▲ Dessin de Ray Bartkus paru dans The New York Times Book Review, New York.

née. La quasi-totalité des politiciens et des médias (laïcs comme religieux) professent contre l'Amérique (et contre les Juifs une haine extrême qui (comme pour les artistes de l'exposition) va bien plus loin que ce que l'on peut trouver dans la presse du monde arabe, souvent contrôlée par l'Etat. Si j'hésite à traiter cette attitude de "nazie", c'est que Goebbels lui-même l'aurait probablement rejeté en partie, à cause de sa grossièreté sans bornes.

Voyons un peu ce qu'écrit le journal islamiste *Yeni Safak*, lecture préférée du Premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Un article paru le 9 janvier affirmait que les forces américaines balançaient un tel nombre de cadavres d'Irakiens dans l'Euphrate que les mollahs du pays avaient édicté une fatwa interdisant aux riverains de manger le poisson du fleuve. *Yeni Safak* a par

ailleurs affirmé à plusieurs reprises que les forces américaines avaient utilisé des armes chimiques à Falloudjah. Un des chroniqueurs du journal a écrit que les soldats américains avaient violé puis tué des femmes et des enfants dans cette ville, avant d'abandonner leurs cadavres dans la rue pour qu'ils soient dévorés par les chiens. Parmi les autres "scoops" du journal, signalons le déploiement en Irak d'un millier de soldats israéliens aux côtés des forces américaines, et la récupération par les soldats américains d'organes d'Irakiens tués afin de les revendre sur le "marché aux organes" américain.

## LES ETATS-UNIS, LE BRAS ARMÉ DES JUIFS

La presse laïque ne fait guère mieux. Le grand quotidien *Hürriyet* a accusé des équipes de tueurs israéliens d'avoir assassiné des membres des services de sécurité turcs à Mossoul, et les Etats-Unis d'avoir entamé une occupation de l'Indonésie sous prétexte d'assistance humanitaire. Cet automne, dans le journal *Sabah*, un chroniqueur accusait l'ambassadeur des Etats-Unis en Turquie, Eric Edelman, de laisser

ses "origines ethniques" – car, devinez quoi, il est juif – guider son comportement. Le climat intellectuel turc a atteint un tel degré de folie qu'Edelman s'est senti obligé d'organiser une téléconférence avec des experts de l'US Geographical Survey afin d'expliquer que le récent tsunami n'avait pas été provoqué par des expérimentations nucléaires menées en secret par les Etats-Unis. Mais la rumeur antiaméricaine sans doute la plus étrange qui circule en ce moment dans la capitale turque est la théorie dite "de la huitième planète", qui affirme que les Etats-Unis savent qu'un astéroïde va prochainement heurter la Terre et détruire l'Amérique du Nord. D'où le désir américain de coloniser le Proche-Orient.

Je sais, tout ça paraît complètement dingue. Mais des histoires de cet acabit sont rapportées avec grand sérieux autour des tables les plus autorisées d'Ankara. Leur fil conducteur est que pratiquement tout ce que font les Etats-Unis dans le monde – jusqu'à leur aide aux victimes du tsunami – procède d'intentions malveillantes, le tout enrobé de sous-entendus visant à nous faire passer pour le bras armé des Juifs.

Face à de telles calomnies, les politiciens turcs ont gardé un silence assourdissant. En réalité, des parlementaires turcs ont eux-mêmes accusé les Américains de "génocide" en Irak, tandis que M. Erdogan (dont nous avions un instant pensé qu'il allait instaurer un exemple de démocratie pour le monde musulman) a été parmi les rares responsables politiques mondiaux à mettre en doute la légitimité des élections irakiennes. Quand on les interroge sur ce silence coupable, les politiciens turcs rétorquent qu'ils ne peuvent pas prendre le risque d'aller contre "l'opinion publique".

Tout cela montre l'étendue de l'hypocrisie de M. Erdogan lorsqu'il se plaint auprès de Condoleezza Rice du portrait peu flatteur brossé de la Turquie dans un épisode du feuilleton télé *The West Wing* [L'aile occidentale (de la Maison-Blanche)]. L'épisode aurait décrit la Turquie comme un pays tombé aux mains d'un gouvernement populiste rétrograde qui menacerait les droits des femmes. (Ce qui me paraît assez bien résumer la situation.) Autrefois, la Turquie aurait disposé d'un parti d'opposition suffisamment puissant pour ramener un tel gouvernement à la raison. Mais il se trouve que la seule opposition actuelle est celle du Parti républicain du peuple (CHP), ancien parti d'Atatürk, aujourd'hui moribond. Lors d'un récent congrès, son dirigeant a accusé son principal challenger d'avoir trempé dans un complot de la CIA contre lui. Cela ne veut pas dire qu'il n'existe plus aucun responsable proaméricain dans les rangs de l'actuel gouvernement ou dans les différentes

bureaucraties d'Etat. Mais ils ont peur de s'exprimer publiquement. En privé, ils ne cessent de geindre sur telle ou telle chose que les Etats-Unis "auraient pu faire différemment".

On a complètement oublié ici que le président Bush a été parmi les premiers leaders mondiaux à reconnaître le Premier ministre Erdogan alors que le système judiciaire turc en était encore à évaluer s'il était suffisamment laïc pour occuper ce poste. Oubliées les décennies d'assistance américaine. Oubliées les années d'efforts déployés par les Américains pour assurer la sécurité du pipeline transportant le pétrole de la mer Caspienne jusqu'au port turc de Ceyhan. Oublié le fait que les administrations américaines successives se sont toujours opposées aux tentatives du Congrès de faire voter une résolution condamnant la Turquie moderne pour le génocide des Arméniens commis au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Oubliée l'action incessante de lobbying effectuée par Washington pour l'intégration de la Turquie à l'Union européenne.

#### DEVENIR UN BANAL PAYS DE SECONDE ZONE

Oubliée, surtout, l'aide américaine dans la lutte contre le [mouvement séparatiste] PKK, alors que les Etats européens refusaient tout à tour d'extraire le leader du PKK Abdullah Öcalan vers la Turquie parce que – grands dieux ! – il y risquait la peine de mort. Il fut finalement arrêté – avec l'aide des services de renseignements américains – alors qu'il avait trouvé refuge à l'ambassade de Grèce de Nairobi. "Ils nous ont donné Öcalan. Quel plus grand cadeau auraient-ils pu nous faire ?" s'interroge l'un des rares Turcs que je connaisse encore qui expriment sans ambages leurs sentiments proaméricains.

Je sais que M. Feith (un autre Juif, comme n'a pas manqué de le faire remarquer la presse turque), puis M<sup>me</sup> Rice, ont insisté auprès des dirigeants turcs sur la nécessité, s'ils accordent quelque valeur à la relation turco-américaine, de s'opposer aux accents les plus dangereux de cette rhétorique. Rien ne montre à ce jour qu'ils aient reçu une réponse satisfaisante. Les dirigeants turcs devraient comprendre que l'"opinion publique" qu'ils invoquent est encore réversible. Mais, s'ils continuent quelques années encore à vouloir chevaucher le tigre, qui sait ce qu'il adviendra ? Une bonne partie de l'héritage d'Atatürk risque de sombrer, et la Turquie ne pourra plus compter non plus sur le moindre résidu de grandeur ottomane. Elle pourrait bien devenir alors un banal pays de seconde zone : un pays à l'esprit étroit, paranoïaque et marginalisé. Un pays – comment pourrait-il en être autrement ? – ignoré par les Etats-Unis et indésirable en Europe.

Robert L. Pollock

#### ANALYSE

## Racisme antikurde

■ L'antiaméricanisme en Turquie se nourrit des réalités et des fantasmes concernant la politique américaine en Irak. Cet antiaméricanisme sert d'ailleurs de dérivatif pour reporter à bon compte sur les Etats-Unis les erreurs de notre politique étrangère. En réalité, l'antiaméricanisme en soi n'est pas vraiment un phénomène digne d'intérêt. Ce n'est d'ailleurs pas une spécificité turque. En effet, il se manifeste partout dans le monde et notamment en Europe. Le problème n'est donc pas là ; le problème, c'est que, dans le cas de la Turquie, l'antiaméricanisme se manifeste désormais en parallèle et en relation directe avec l'antikurdisme et avec l'opposition à l'Union européenne. En effet, aujourd'hui, en Turquie, il faut être sourd et aveugle pour ne pas s'apercevoir que l'antiaméricanisme est en train de nourrir un racisme antikurde qui va croissant. Même pendant les quatorze années qu'a duré la campagne terroriste du PKK [mouvement kurde responsable d'actes terroristes], on n'avait jamais vécu ce genre d'ambiance faite de haine à l'égard des Kurdes. Chacun faisait preuve alors en Turquie d'assez de sagesse pour faire la part des choses entre le PKK et les Kurdes. Aujourd'hui, ce n'est plus le cas. La paranoïa a pris le dessus sur la prudence. L'hostilité à l'égard des Kurdes d'Irak – qui sont proches ethniquement de nos concitoyens d'origine kurde – prend donc une tournure qui, à terme, met en péril notre intégrité intérieure. Au fur et à mesure que les Kurdes se renforcent en Irak, l'hostilité en Turquie se manifeste à l'égard de nos propres citoyens kurdes, au point de les offenser de plus en plus. Il n'y a pas meilleur moyen pour ralentir la marche de la Turquie vers l'Europe. L'antiaméricanisme, tant qu'il reste de l'antiaméricanisme, ne me tracasse donc pas vraiment. En revanche, dès lors qu'il devient synonyme de racisme à l'égard des Kurdes, alors là, il devient notre problème à tous.

Cengiz Çandar, Tercüman, Istanbul



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# Looking to Europe

A survey of Turkey | March 19th 2005



After decades of trying, Turkey has at last got a starting date for EU entry negotiations. Tim Hindle explains what membership will mean for Turkey, and for Europe

**W**HEN Europe's leaders agreed last December that negotiations for Turkey's entry into the European Union could begin in October this year, they brought cheer to some parts of Europe and fear to others. Marek Belka, Poland's prime minister, said it was "a fantastic economic opportunity" for his country, which joined the EU only in May 2004. Others were much less enthusiastic. Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, a former French president, said he objected to Turkish membership because Turkey has "a different culture, a different approach, a different way of life".

Indeed it has. But so has France, and so has every other member of the European Union. The EU was never designed to impose rigid uniformity. The memoirs of Jean Monnet, one of the EU's founding fathers, quotes him on the dust-jacket: "Nous

ne coalisons pas des états; nous unissons des hommes." (We are not combining nations; we are bringing together people.) The draft EU constitution, drawn up by a convention chaired by none other than Mr Giscard d'Estaing, recalls the EU's motto: "Unity in diversity".

Turkey's entry into the EU will increase that diversity, but not by as much as some people fear. For the EU itself is changing as it takes on board the ten new members who joined in May 2004 (ranging from Estonia to Cyprus), even as Turkey is becoming more like an EU member state in order to prepare for membership. Moreover,

change on both sides is bound to continue. The Turkey of today is not the one that may eventually become the first Muslim nation to join the largely Christian EU, any more than the EU of today is the club that Turkey



may eventually join.

Istanbul taxi drivers, a sure barometer of the state of their nation, know that the mere prospect of EU membership has already transformed their country. "It doesn't matter now if we never get into Europe," says one. "Look at the tremendous changes that we have already seen just by trying to get in."

Turkey has been trying to get in ever since 1963, when it was admitted as an associate member of the then European Economic Community. It formally applied for full membership in 1987. But its hopes rose only in 1999, when it was officially recognised as a candidate country, and were further boosted in 2002, when it was told that if it met certain conditions by December 2004 it would be given a firm date for talks to begin. By then the Turkish people were overwhelmingly in favour of membership, although different groups had different reasons. Last December, on the day after the EU set a date for the start of membership negotiations, *Milliyet*, a mass-circulation Turkish daily, quoted Nazim Hikmet, an iconoclastic 20th-century poet: "Beautiful days beckon us, lads, sunny days beckon."

In a deeper sense, Turkey (or rather its ►►

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► ruling elite) has wanted to be seen as European for very much longer. In the mid-19th century the Ottoman empire introduced a series of reforms known as *tanzimat*, or re-organisations. These were modelled on European ideas about things such as property rights, education and taxes, and were meant to help the ailing empire's economy catch up with its peers to the west. At the Paris Conference of 1856 to negotiate peace after the Crimean war, the Ottoman empire was described as "part of the European concert".

But the *tanzimat* did not get very far, and by the 1870s the empire was famously labelled "the sick man of Europe". The origin of the phrase is disputed, but Tsar Nicholas I of Russia seems to have the strongest claim. Over the years many Turks have quoted this with perverse pride. They may have been sick, but at least they were part of Europe.

#### Parental guidance

When the empire crumbled after its disastrous alliance with Germany in the first world war, Turkey resumed its European aspirations under General Mustafa Kemal, the charismatic founder of the republic. Subsequently known as Ataturk, "father of the Turks", Mustafa Kemal was determined to turn his metaphorical children into a nation of thoroughly modern European-oriented citizens. He was not, for instance, going to let Turks wear silly clothes such as the *fez*, the brimless hat that allowed them to bow their covered heads in prayer. So he outlawed the rather charming headgear and imposed a uniformity



that denied his country's rich multicultural past. One nation, one language, one culture: that was his vision.

Turkish students are taken to Ataturk's mausoleum, Anit Kabir, to be taught the official, politically correct version of the republic's history. On a hill in the capital, Ankara, the great man's remains are laid to rest pointing unequivocally towards Europe, not to any religious monument in Arabia or in Turkey's Anatolian heartland.

Ataturk died in 1938 of a modern European complaint, cirrhosis of the liver. Just before the beginning of the second world war, it was not a time for pushing on with revolutionary nation-building, but for batten down the hatches. In his book, "The Turks Today", Andrew Mango (who has also written an authoritative biography of Ataturk) says that the first concern of Ismet Inonu, Ataturk's successor and loyal follower in the early years of the new Turkey, "was to safeguard the achievements of the republic". To do that, he had to exercise stronger controls because he did not have "the unrivalled prestige Ataturk had won...The approach of the [second] world

war brought on a siege mentality and a siege economy."

Thus Turkey turned inwards for decades, its leaders fiercely determined to preserve the work-in-progress that Ataturk had left them in 1938. Inonu stayed on as head of his party until 1972, the year before he died at the age of 89. His successor was a youngish man called Bulent Ecevit, who served as prime minister on and off for the next 30 years until he was finally ousted in the general election of 2002. A series of coups and military interventions in 1960, 1971, 1980 and 1997 helped to preserve the Kemalist heritage.

The great man's aura is undiminished. The new Turkish notes and coins, introduced on January 1st this year, are dominated by his image. He is on the front of every single note and also appears on the watermark. The back of the one-lira note shows the Ataturk Dam and the five-lira note the Ataturk Mausoleum. The ruggedly handsome leader, looking a bit like the actor Ralph Fiennes with wrinkles, is set to continue to shape the destiny of Turkey's 70m people in the 21st century. ■

## Which Turkey?

Not everyone sees the country with the same eyes

EUROPEANS' perceptions of Turkey are often shaped by the Turks they know. In Germany, these tend to be the *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) who moved there in the 1960s to take up low-grade jobs that the booming post-war economy could no longer fill from the domestic labour market. Over 2m Turks came, and they were mostly honest, hard-working and religious people. But they were economic refugees, poor villagers from the east, not model citizens of Ataturk's republic.

Many of their children, though, have moved on, to become anything from

prominent European parliamentarians to star European footballers. One of them even married one of the sons of Helmut Kohl, a former German chancellor. It is just the sort of transformation that Ataturk would have wished for his countrymen.

Yet experience of the *Gastarbeiter* has left Germans in two minds about Turkish entry into the EU. Their main worry is about a massive further inflow of economic migrants. The Social Democrat-led government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder is generally supportive, but the opposition Christian Democrats, led by

Angela Merkel, have vowed to do everything possible to wreck Turkey's application. A federal election is due next year, with the outcome still wide open. Even Mr Kohl, the Christian Democrat chancellor who was voted out in 1998, has spoken against Turkish membership, saying that he is "convinced that Turkey will not fulfil the Copenhagen criteria". These are the basic conditions for joining the EU, which lay down that "membership requires that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and re- ►►

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► spect for and protection of minorities."

France's perspective is very different. Many of Turkey's 19th-century reforms, the *tanzimat*, were based on French laws, and Turkey's early republican elite was educated in the French language in French schools. As with Iran, disaffected members of that elite, including members of the Armenian and Jewish minorities, headed first for Paris. It is no coincidence that France is the only European country other than Greece (which is particularly hostile to its eastern neighbour) to have officially recognised the slaughter of Armenians in the first world war as genocide. In 1998, the French National Assembly decreed as much—a judgment the Turks maintain can be made only by the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

Britain's relationship with Turkey is less burdened by history and complexity. The British mostly meet bright young Turks who come to their country to study, or chirpy hotel staff on their holidays in resorts such as Bodrum and Marmaris. For them, Turkey is a young place, full of promise. They rarely see headscarves, or the darker side of Anatolia.

Britain's government looks on Turkey's entry into the EU as an opportunity. It sees the country as a potential role model for Muslim democracy, much as America's does. Not surprisingly, Britain and America have been among the staunchest supporters of Turkey's application to join the EU. Bringing economic and political stability to a country described by one analyst as "the most geo-strategically important piece of real estate in the world" is a grand goal, almost on a par with bringing democracy to Iraq. But in some parts of the EU America's support has not gone down well. When President George Bush last year said yet again that the EU should start talks with Turkey at once, France's president, Jacques Chirac, told him off for interfering in things that were not his business.

### The common view of Islam

All across Europe, though, people are worried about Turkish membership. Many feel, like Mr Giscard d'Estaing, that Turkey is an alien place whose people's values are incompatible with Europe's. This concern is fed by all sorts of things: from schoolboy propaganda about the Crusades and the Ottoman siege of Vienna to the views of the Catholic Church and of historic Protestant leaders such as Martin Luther, who described the Turks as "the people of the wrath of God".

That unease explains why relatively



Like fathers, like sons?

few people from northern Europe choose to spend their winters in Turkey rather than, say, in Greece or Spain. It also accounts for the defensive behaviour that Europeans often unpack the moment they arrive on Turkish soil. In a recent short story by Louis de Bernières, "A Day Out for Mehmet Erbil", the (British) author tells of a long-drawn-out haggle he witnessed in Gallipoli between a German tourist and a Turkish café-owner over the price of a cup of tea: "A sum", says Mr de Bernières, "that in Germany would not have bought a second-hand piece of chewing gum."

In essence, Europeans are bothered because 99% of Turkey's population is Muslim. Benign ignorance of the youngest of the major religions turned to fearful ignorance after September 11th 2001. Some Europeans assume that all Turks pray five times a day, want to introduce *sharia* law (so they can chop off people's hands) and frequently violate their women.

The reality, of course, is that the vast majority of Turks practise their religion in much the same matter-of-fact way as do

Christians in western Europe. Many can quote from the Koran and use it as a source of moral guidance in their everyday lives, just as many Europeans are familiar with Biblical texts and stories. For neither group does knowledge of the good books necessarily imply fundamentalist convictions, though in both groups there are people for whom it does.

Turkey is that rare thing, a democratic Muslim country, because Atatürk decreed that it should be so. Although he separated the church from the state, he was so suspicious of clerics of all kinds that he brought the church firmly under the state's control. He made the Christians' Sunday into the day of rest, and nobody has suggested that it revert to the Muslim holy day of Friday. The democratic republic's Directorate of Religious Affairs decides where mosques shall be built, employs their *imams* and on occasion tells them what to preach. It also lays down rules on the sort of religious education to be given in schools.

In recent years, Turkey has seen renewed interest in religion. Since the 1980s and early 1990s, when Turgut Özal was prime minister and president, Atatürk's tight controls have been relaxed. Large numbers of new mosques have been built, and the Islamic headscarf has reappeared on the streets. In "The Turks Today", Mr Mango argues that this resurgence of Islam parallels the resurgence of Christianity in Europe after industrialisation. "As in Britain after the industrial revolution," he says, "the revival of piety is easing the pain and discomforts of Turkey's modernisation." It is also proving to be a test of the monocultural republic's ability to accommodate diversity. ■

### Room for improvement

Per '000 population, 2001

	Turkey	Russia	United States	Germany
Doctors	1.23	4.20	2.79	3.63
Mobile-telephone users	403	31	524	765
Retail sales of personal computers	5.4	15.1	60.4	58.8
Passenger cars in use	72.7	117.2	486.8	543.3

Sources: Euromonitor; UNDP

## Surprisingly European

Mr Erdogan and his Islamist AK Party are not the obvious people to take Turkey into the EU

THE government now enthusiastically leading Turkey towards EU membership is an unlikely candidate for the job. Its two most powerful figures, the prime minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the foreign minister, Abdullah Gul, have strong Islamist roots.

Mr Erdogan, the son of a sea captain, was born and raised in a poor district of Istanbul. He earned his political spurs as mayor of the city in the 1990s, when he was notably successful in cleaning up its dreadful pollution and getting its gridlocked traffic moving.

As chairman of the one-year-old AK Party when it surprisingly but convincingly won the general election in 2002, Mr Erdogan was unable to take a seat in parliament immediately because of a 1998 conviction for inciting religious hatred by reading a poem in public. In the months it took for him to change the rules and obtain a parliamentary seat, Mr Gul stood in as prime minister.

Mr Gul himself was a member of parliament and minister for a strongly Islamic party, Welfare, which briefly headed a coalition government in the mid-1990s. In 1997, however, the party was expelled from the coalition in a forceful nudge by the armed forces that did not fall far short of a coup. The soldiers felt Welfare was pushing its Islamic agenda too strongly, forging links with the Arab world and looking to adopt elements of *sharia* law. Ziya Onis, a professor of international relations at Koc University in Istanbul, says that the armed forces in Turkey have always intervened to "re-equilibrate democracy, as opposed to a desire to assume power for its own sake". And so it proved on this occasion.

Both Mr Erdogan and Mr Gul are distinctly more religious than any of their predecessors. Their wives wear headscarves and rarely appear in public. When her husband first took office, Mr Erdogan's wife, Emine, who comes from the town of Siirt in the Kurdish south-east of the country, would not even shake hands with other men, but now she does.

Mr Erdogan is regarded as a pragmatist who has changed since his days as an Islamic firebrand. In September 2004 he was

persuaded by the EU and his country's armed forces to withdraw a proposal to criminalise adultery that had plenty of support within his own party. At a conference of European Green parties held in Istanbul in October 2004, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, a fiery leader of student riots in Paris in 1968 and now the respectable co-head of the Greens in the European Parliament, said that Mr Erdogan, whom he had first



Mrs Gul and Mrs Erdogan face the public

met ten years earlier, "has changed as much as me".

In his speeches, the prime minister likes to get away from the past and look to the future. "The past" might mean Kemalism, but it might also refer to previous Islamic-leaning politicians. When Mr Gul went off on a peace-broking trip to Israel and Palestine at the beginning of this year, Mr Erdogan said that Turkey was now ready to fill a gap in the region left by its retreat into itself years ago.

In his government, Mr Erdogan wants idealists who always see the glass as half full, not half empty. His party's goal is to "develop every corner of the country and redistribute national income". That befits a politician brought up in the slums of Istanbul, a city with great and highly visible extremes of wealth.

Apart from Mr Gul and the American-educated economy minister, Ali Babacan, few of the AK Party's ministerial team speak foreign languages, but outsiders who know them are impressed by their efficiency. Kemal Dervis, a senior World Bank official who was called back from Washington, DC, to become finance minister under Mr Ecevit (after one of Turkey's periodic financial crises in 2001), has said that if the government he served in had been anything like as efficient as this one, it would still be in power today.

The AK Party has learnt lessons from Welfare's experience, dropping many of its predecessor's more radical Islamic policies but holding on to the reputation for honesty in public affairs that, after many years of sleaze in both the public and the private sectors, had propelled it to the top in the first place. The letters AK stand for *Adalet ve Kalkinma*, Justice and Development. But the word *ak* in Turkish means white, and by implication clean and pure.

### Look west

The party soon made it clear that its priorities lay not to the east or the south, but to the west. On hearing of his election victory, Mr Erdogan said: "Our most urgent issue is the EU, and I will send my colleagues to Europe... We have no time to lose."

Showing enthusiasm for EU membership was hardly controversial. Opinion polls at the time of the 2002 election suggested that some 70% were in favour across the country as a whole, and as many as 95% among the Kurds. If the experience of the ten countries that joined the EU in May 2004 is anything to go by, those figures will fall as Turks begin to realise that most of the 80,000 pages of EU rules that they must take on board are not negotiable. If they join, all sorts of things—from the size of their apples to the state of their factory toilets—will be decided in Brussels.

But none of this is likely to affect the results of the next Turkish general election, which is due in 2007. The AK Party's popularity has increased steadily, to the point where opinion polls now give it more than 50% of the vote. It won the 2002 election with a mere 34%, but under Turkey's electoral rules that gave it 363 seats in parlia- ►

ment, two-thirds of the total.

The only other party to win any seats was the Republican People's Party (CHP), led by Deniz Baykal, whose 19% share gave it 178 MPs. This has been one of the few occasions in Turkey's short democratic history when the country has been free from the constraints of coalition government. But AK's parliamentary majority is so overwhelming that some think democracy would be better served by a little more opposition.

This arithmetic hinges on the 10% threshold for parliamentary representation. (Germany, which some people see as a model, has a threshold of 5%. But it also has a long tradition of effective coalition government, which Turkey does not.)

Kurds complain that the system leaves them entirely unrepresented. DEHAP, a pro-Kurdish party, got more than 6% of the total vote in 2002 (and more than 45% in the five main Kurdish provinces), yet it ended up without a single seat in parliament. However, this parliament contains more Kurdish MPs than any previous one, probably over 100. And the 10% threshold had the advantage of keeping out of power a man several members of whose family have been found guilty of massive fraud. The Youth Party, led by Cem Uzan, won 7% of the votes in the election.

Despite Mr Erdogan's nigh-impeccable record so far in both economic and foreign affairs, most of the Kemalists in Istanbul and Ankara suspect that he has a hidden

agenda which, once revealed, will show the AK Party in its true colour: an intense Islamic green. They sincerely believe that it is merely using the prospect of EU membership to reduce the power of the armed forces before turning the country into an Islamic state, something akin to Iran.

They are not reassured by the argument that, just as approaching EU membership protects civilian rule against military interference, so it defends it against religious takeover. Ah yes, they say, but EU membership will never actually come about. Somewhere along the way it will be vetoed. And then Turkey will be left in the hands of the AK Party, and all the good works of Ataturk and his republican successors will be undone. ■

## City lights

For Turks who want to get ahead, the places to be are Istanbul or Ankara

**T**URKEY is divided into two parts. There is Istanbul and its political appendage, Ankara, and there is the rest. This "other" Turkey, most of it in the east, is a vaguely defined area from which the cosmopolitan inhabitants of Istanbul and Ankara carefully insulate themselves. Until very recently they would have travelled there only under firm instructions from the armed forces or the government.

Conversely, people from the eastern regions hardly ever made it to positions of power. Now, however, there are some easterners in the ministerial team. Burhan Yenigun, the mayor of the remote eastern city of Van, says some ministers in office today were at school with him. In a country where whom you know still matters at least as much as what you know, that is helping Turkey's disadvantaged east feel more involved in the democratic process.

The east also happens to be home to many millions of Kurds, whose alienation from the mainstream of Ataturk's republic has been a cause of dissension and violence almost since the republic was born. When one Istanbul company's salesman goes to Diyarbakir, a large Kurdish city in the east, the locals say (and not in jest): "The men from the republic have arrived."

Istanbul, home to up to a fifth of Turkey's population, is a microcosm of Turkey itself, with migrants from particular regions clustering in specific areas. Migration has also made it the largest Kurdish

city in the world. At the same time it is home to some of the trendiest boutiques in Europe. Meandering beside the Sea of Marmara and across the Bosphorus for some 40 miles, it houses the headquarters of every Turkish company of substance. Even Is Bank, a commercial bank set up by Ataturk and his Republican Party in Ankara, his own creation, recently moved its headquarters there.

Istanbul is a handsome, ancient place and a magnet for the rest of the nation. It has an air of noisy, amiable chaos. In far-off Rize, a city on the Black Sea coast near the border with Georgia, in the heart of Turkey's wealthy tea-growing region, an improbably large number of cars have Istanbul registration plates, recognisable by the prefix "34". The locals explain that anybody in the area who makes money immediately goes to Istanbul to spend it.

Ankara, on the other hand, is a modern place sadly lacking in man-made beauty. Many a Turkish civil servant has silently rued the day that Ataturk decided to plonk his republic's capital in a treeless expanse of Anatolian wasteland, in the interest of shifting the nation's centre of gravity away from Istanbul. So devoid was Ankara of any structure of note in the early years of the republic that civil servants had to live in dormitories.

Beyond these now lively metropolises lies the "other" Turkey, vast tracts of mountainous land stretching from the city of

Edirne in the west, where Ottoman architecture had its finest flowering, to Kars, once capital of the long-defunct South-West Caucasian Republic, now wasting near the end of the cul-de-sac leading to Turkey's closed border with Armenia.

The typical inhabitant of this other Turkey today lives in a town, not a village, in a standard apartment that is one-quarter of a floor in a six- or seven-storey concrete block. These uniform buildings, sometimes painted in pastel shades to break the monotony, creep across the hillside scrub on the fringes of fast-growing towns from Edirne to Sanliurfa. Everywhere the countryside has a half-finished look, littered with abandoned buildings.

### Europe's new neighbours

Around its eastern and southern edges this landmass touches Georgia, Iran, Iraq and Syria. With Turkey inside the EU, these will be Europe's new neighbours, a Europe whose highest mountain will be Mount Ararat, not Mont Blanc; a Europe that will include the northern areas of Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, often considered the cradle of civilisation.

Turkey's mountainous hinterland is tightly controlled from Ankara, which allows the regions little financial autonomy. Ataturk inherited the Ottoman system for imposing law and order and for gathering taxes and redistributing revenues. At its ►►

The Economist March 18th 2005

A survey of Turkey

heart is the *vali*, the governor appointed by the Ministry of Home Affairs in Ankara who is sent out to the regions much like ambassadors are to foreign postings.

Every *vali* has a huge office, which reflects its occupant's status both by its size and by the number of black leather armchairs it contains. The great men are surrounded by acolytes in dark suits who interrupt continually with requests to sign pieces of paper. In Turkey today, as in Ottoman times, little can be done without a governor's signature. If a *vali* is absent or ill, official life—from granting a pay rise to a junior employee to authorising a new office block—simply goes on hold until the governor can resume signing.

#### The middle of nowhere

The *vali* system suits a geography in which towns and cities sit in bowls surrounded by mountains, isolated and self-contained. The towns are joined by long asphalt strips with only the occasional petrol station as a diversion. From time to time a village appears in the distance. But there is no rural aristocracy or country life of the sort you find in western Europe. Turks live in villages not because they have chosen to escape to them, but because they have been unable to escape from them.

The other power in town is the local mayor, an official elected for a five-year term. Unlike the *vali*, who comes from many miles away, the mayors are usually local folk from the town they represent—often local tradesmen, in Trabzon even a former professional footballer. Both the



Urban aspirers

mayor and the deputy mayor of Diyarbakir are Kurds. Their responsibilities are for the most part limited to transport, drains and water, and their revenues come from building permits, local property taxes and central-government grants.

It is now government policy to decentralise control and budgets away from the huge and inefficient ministries in the capital. This year the "Village Services Department", a 42,000-strong cohort of civil servants in Ankara who oversee administration of the villages, is due to be disbanded. But this is only a drop in the ocean. Turkey's public administration still employs more than 2m bureaucrats.

Trying to decentralise further, the government says it would like to shift power from the *vali* to the local mayor. Part of the plan is to send a different sort of individual to these outposts. Efkân Ala, for example, the governor of Diyarbakir, was appointed

to the job last year at the age of 39. His approach is more informal than that of his predecessors. He clearly disapproves of the minder from the security services who attends the meeting with your correspondent and takes copious notes.

Last autumn the government was due to transfer large chunks of treasury property to the local authorities. Much of it—such as sports centres and museums—earns rent and could make a big difference to the mayors' budgets, says Volkan Canalioglu, the mayor of Trabzon. But the plan was shelved. Perhaps the central government's success in getting its own budget under control has made it reluctant to let go. "We don't want to end up like a Latin American country," says Mr Babacan, the economy minister, "where they don't know what their budget is." But the government, he says, is still "working on how to share revenues with the regions". ■

## The wrongs and rights of minorities

Turkey has yet to face up to its diversity

THE country has moved some way towards meeting the Copenhagen criteria for EU membership. It has abolished the death penalty, saving the life of Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of the PKK, an outlawed Kurdish organisation responsible for a guerrilla war through much of the 1990s. It has revised the penal code (previously unchanged since 1926) and reinforced the rights of women. It has introduced a new law allowing broadcasting in any language, including Kurdish. And it has brought to an end the random searches that used to be common, particularly in the east. Now nobody can be

searched without a court order.

The government has also introduced an official policy of zero tolerance towards torture, for which its police and security forces became infamous in the West in 1978 with the release of "Midnight Express", Alan Parker's film about a young American imprisoned on drugs charges. The punishment for torture has been increased, and sentences may no longer be deferred or converted into fines, as often happened in the past.

But changing the law is one thing, changing habits is another. A villager in the east who gets searched by the state po-

lice may still not dare demand to see a court order. The police forces, it is said, are being retrained, but the Turkish Human Rights Foundation (TIHV) says that of 918 people treated at its centres in 2004, 337 claimed they had been tortured. The comparable figures for 2003 were 925 and 340. The TIHV says that even in 2004, "torture was applied systematically by police, gendarmerie and special units in interrogation centres." It claims that 21 people died in "extra-judicial killings" during the year.

In its October 2004 report on Turkish accession, the European Commission emphasised the need for further "strengthen-

ing and full implementation of provisions related to the respect of fundamental freedoms and protection of human rights, including women's rights, trade-union rights, minority rights and problems faced by non-Muslim religious communities."

#### Institutionalised intolerance

From its very beginnings the republic has been confused about minorities. In his book, "Crescent and Star: Turkey Between Two Worlds", Stephen Kinzer, a New York Times journalist, wrote: "Something about the concept of diversity frightens Turkey's ruling elite." Officially the state recognises only three minorities: those mentioned in the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, signed after Ataturk's army had thrown out the occupying forces left over from the first world war. The treaty specifically protects the rights of the Armenian, Greek and Jewish communities in the country.

In the early years of the republic there were Kurds in parliament, and the deputy speaker was an Alevi (a religious minority of which more later). But after Kurdish uprisings in 1925 and 1937 were brutally suppressed, the republic went into denial about its cultural diversity. The word "minority" came to refer only to the Lausanne trio, who were non-Muslims and indeed were increasingly perceived as non-Turks. If you are a member of a minority in Turkey today you are, almost by definition, seen as not fully Turkish.

The Kemalists' narrow brand of nationalism has helped to suppress the country's sensitivity to minorities. At Anit Kabir, one of the huge murals in the museum below Ataturk's tomb depicts the Greek army marching through occupied Anatolia in 1919, with a soldier on horseback about to bayonet a beautiful Turkish girl. In the background is a Greek cleric brandishing a cross and inciting the soldiers. The picture caption explains (in English): "During these massacres the fact that clerics played a provoking role has been proven by historical evidence." As anti-clerical as Ataturk was (whatever the faith), it is hard to believe that he would have approved of such a message.

Turkey has also found it difficult to face up to the Armenians' persistent allegation that the massacres of 1915, in the maelstrom of the first world war, were genocide. Gunduz Aktan, the head of an Ankara think-tank and a former Turkish ambassador in Athens, dismisses the claims as "Holocaust envy".

The most troublesome minority in recent years has been the biggest of them all,

the Kurds. Where minorities are concerned, size does matter. The Armenians, Greeks and Jews in Turkey today number in the tens of thousands; the Kurds up to 15m. In the 15-year guerrilla war in the east between the Turkish army and security forces and Mr Ocalan's PKK, some 35,000 civilians and troops were killed. Many more villagers were displaced (some say perhaps a million), terrorised out of their homes, often by fellow Kurds, and forced to move to cities far away. But nobody really knows what proportion of the Kurds the PKK stands for.

The more extreme Kurds say they want their own homeland—"Kurdistan", a word that provokes shivers in Ankara—to embrace their people living in Iran and Iraq as well as in Turkey. The more moderate Turkish Kurds want to be allowed to speak their own language, to be taught it in school, and to hear it broadcast—all of which they are slowly and grudgingly being granted. DEHAP's party congress this year was attended by Mr Ocalan's sister and Feleknaş Uca, a German member of the European Parliament. Both addressed the meeting in Kurdish. The Kurds' cause has received extensive publicity abroad. Leyla Zana, a member of the Turkish parliament imprisoned for ten years for speaking in Kurdish in the parliament building, was released last year after intense pressure from abroad. The Kurdish Human Rights Project, a London-based charity, has been effective in bringing Kurdish cases to the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

Among them are thousands of claims for compensation for loss of property as a result of the military incursion against the PKK in the 1990s. Such cases, however, can be heard in Strasbourg only if domestic laws offer no prospect of compensation, and Turkey recently passed a law "on damages incurred from terrorism and combating terrorism". The governor of Tunceli, a town close to mountains where the PKK was particularly active, said recently that 6,200 people in his province had applied for compensation under the new law.

The government is also making modest attempts to help Kurds who were forcibly removed from their villages to return home. Incidents in the east are now few and far between, even though last summer the PKK, renamed Kongra-Gel, ended a ceasefire called after Mr Ocalan was arrested in Kenya in 1999. The organisation said the government had reneged on a promised amnesty to its members.

#### Dark forces

So has the Kurdish problem been more or less resolved? Not if you listen to the many Turks who believe in conspiracy theories. Such theories thrive in a society that still thinks transparency in public affairs is an oxymoron. After the tsunami disaster in Asia on December 26th last year, the American embassy in Ankara felt obliged to issue an official denial of colourful Turkish newspaper reports that the wave had been caused by American underwater nuclear explosions designed to kill large ►



The Kurds are still waiting for better times

## A woman's place

**I**N 1993 Turkey elected its first female prime minister, Tansu Ciller. Many wealthier nations have yet to equal that feat. In business, too, some Turkish women stand out. For example, one of them heads the Sabanci Group, a large conglomerate. Guler Sabanci succeeded her uncle when he died in 2004. There are plenty of Turkish women who appear scantily clad in the local gossip magazines, and there are those who parade up and down Istanbul's ultra-smart Abdi İpekçi Street, buying fashion labels. There are also brilliant female professors, glamorous TV journalists and dogged lawyers. And there is Leyla Zana, the Kurdish parliamentarian who shortly after she was released from prison last year went to Brussels to receive the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought.

The official republican line on women is written on a wall inside the Atatürk memorial at Anıtkabir. "The ancient Turk considered men and women to have equal rights. With the adoption of Islam women lost these rights... Atatürk was determined that men and women should have equal rights." And indeed the civil code he introduced in 1926 ended the Muslim law allowing husbands to divorce their wives unilaterally—a law he himself had taken advantage of only six months previously.

More important than the law itself was his public attitude to women. He encouraged them to be independent and to go out to work. Childless himself, he adopted a number of young girls, one of whom, Sabiha Gökçen, he sent to Russia to be trained as a military pilot.

And yet behind the door of the average Turkish home, much has remained unchanged since 1923. A survey in 1994 found that virtually all the women in a poor neighbourhood in Istanbul needed the permission of a man to leave their house at night. And in eastern Anatolia there are towns where the teeming crowds on the mid-day streets seem to be made up exclusively of men.

### The hamam and the coffee-house

With the migration of families from villages to large towns, "family conflicts have increased," says Aytekin Sir, a professor at the Dicle University faculty of medicine in Diyarbakir. Anthropologists explain that traditional Turkish villages were organised into "male spaces"—such as the coffee-house and the mosque—and "female spaces"—such as the *hamam* (Turkish bath) and the public laundry, where women could get together.

As Turkish villagers migrated to the cities and living standards rose, the tasks of washing and cooking were transferred to the home. Most *hamams* today are in luxury hotels, for the benefit of tourists. The mosques and the coffee-houses, on the other hand, are still there. And in the towns there is yet another place for men to gather: at the football ground.

Ms Sir says that when families move into cities, young girls can be virtually incarcerated in small urban apartments. This, she says, explains a sharp increase in recorded suicides among 15-25-year-old women in eastern cities. One such rash of suicides inspired the latest book by Orhan Pamuk, Turkey's most famous

## The theory and the practice

contemporary writer. The girls in "Snow" kill themselves because of the official ban on headscarves.

Wearing the headscarf is prohibited in government offices, schools and universities. Its original purpose—to screen women's hair, once considered a particularly sensual human feature, from the lascivious gaze of men—has long been overlaid with political and feminist significance. Kemalist women would not be seen dead in one, but women in the villages have always covered their heads.

Outside a multiplex cinema in a spotless new shopping mall on the outskirts of Adana there are no headscarves to be seen. Near the gates of Ankara University, though, your correspondent spotted a male student giving his female companion an undisguised kiss on the lips. She was wearing an Islamic headscarf and the particularly unattractive ankle-length khaki macintosh that often goes with it.

The girls' suicides in the east may be provoked by more than a general absence of freedom, or of the particular freedom to wear a scarf. Ms Sir says family members often claim that a girl committed suicide to cover up an "honour killing" by a family member. This is just one of many forms of abusive behaviour within families, says Nuket Sirman, an anthropologist at Istanbul's Bogazici University. Turkey has only very recently moved from a kin-based community, where family relationships and honour were the cement of society, to a citizenship-based rule of law. The law may now give Turkish men and women equal rights; the family still does not.

### ► numbers of Muslims.

The conspiracy theory about the Kurds goes something like this: Mr Ocalan, although held in solitary confinement on a remote island in the Sea of Marmara, still controls the larger part of the organisation through visits from his brother, his sister and a lawyer. Since his captors are said to be able to control what messages he conveys in return for supplying him with cigarettes and other favours, why would he end the ceasefire unless dark forces wished to resurrect the Kurdish uprising? And why ever would they want to do that? In order to undermine the EU negotiations by reigniting civil war in the east, concludes the theory.

This may not be as absurd as it sounds. There are powerful groups inside Turkey

who see no advantage in joining the EU, and many Turks believe in the presence of dark forces inside the state. Anyone who doubts the idea of an *état profond*, a deep state—a combination of military officers, secret-service agents, politicians and businessmen that pull invisible strings—is silenced with one word: "Susurluk". This is the name of a town in western Turkey where in 1996 a Mercedes car crashed into a lorry, killing three of its four occupants. These proved to be an eerily ill-assorted bunch: a notorious gangster, sought by Interpol, and his mistress; a Kurdish MP and clan chief suspected of renting out his private army to the Turkish authorities in their fight against the PKK; and a top-ranking police officer who had been director of the country's main police academy. What

they were doing together that night may never be known—the sole survivor, the clan chief, claims to remember nothing—but it is sure to fuel Turkish conspiracy theories for years to come.

### An unsung minority

There is another large minority in Turkey that has received nothing like as much attention as the Kurds. Most Turks are Sunni Muslims, whereas most Arabs are Shiites. But there is a group called the Alevi who have lived in Anatolia for many centuries and who are not Sunni.

Their main prophet, like the Shiites', is not Mohammed but his son-in-law, Ali. Most of them maintain that their religion is separate from Islam, and that it is a purely Anatolian faith based on Shaman ►

► and Zoroastrian beliefs going back 6,000 years. Christian, Jewish and Islamic influences were added later, though the Alevi accept that the Islamic influence is the strongest.

Their number is uncertain, because no census in Turkey has asked about religious affiliation since the early 1920s. At that time the Alevi accounted for about 35% of the then population of 13m. Today the best estimate is that they make up about a fifth of a population that has grown to 70m, their share whittled down by the success of the republic's policy of "ignore them and hope they will assimilate".

Many of the Alevi are also Kurds. The most predominantly Alevi town is Tunceli, once a PKK stronghold and a place notably

short of mosques. The Alevi are not keen on them because Ali, their prophet, was murdered in one. Their houses of prayer are called *cemevi*.

In the cities they tend to practise their religion in private. Kazim Genc, an Alevi human-rights lawyer, says he discourages his daughter from mentioning her faith because Sunni Muslims think Alevi rites include sexual orgies and incest. Of the AK Party's 367 members of parliament, not one has admitted to being an Alevi.

The current government treats the Alevi as merely a cultural group, not a religious minority. That way it can sidestep its legal obligation to set aside space in towns and cities for religious communities' "places of worship". When in May 2004 a

group of Alevi in the Istanbul district of Kartal asked for land to be allocated for a *cemevi*, the local governor said they were Muslims and Kartal had enough mosques already. Indeed it has: almost 700 of them. But there is only one *cemevi*. The Alevi have taken the case to an Istanbul court and are awaiting a hearing.

Another case has gone all the way to the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, a journey that the Kurds have taken with some success. It involves a student who is trying to establish his right to stay away from compulsory religious classes in school on the ground that they teach only Sunni Islam. The authorities may have to learn to come to terms with yet more scary diversity. ■

## Troublesome neighbours

Some fences take a lot of mending

THE first hurdle to be surmounted on Turkey's journey to Europe may well be Cyprus. Greece and Turkey have growled at each other over Cyprus ever since the Turkish army invaded the tiny island in 1974 to pre-empt a coup aimed at enosis (union) with Greece. That led to a division of the island, which replaced inter-communal strife with physical separation. For the Turkish speakers in the northern part of the island, acknowledged only by Turkey, it also meant economic stagnation.

Only some nifty semantics in Brussels last December managed to stop the Greek-speaking part of the Mediterranean island (which at that point had been a member of the EU for all of six months) from using its veto to spoil Turkey's European ambitions. In the end, Mr Erdogan agreed to recognise Greek-speaking Cyprus as a member of the EU without recognising the state itself. All the same, Turkey will shortly have to revise its 1963 association agreement with the community, in which it recognised the existing members at the time, to extend that recognition to all the new members that have joined since, including Cyprus.

When Mr Erdogan returned from Brussels with his carefully worded agreement, the opposition in parliament homed in on the fate of the northern part of the island. Mr Baykal, leader of the Republican People's Party (the only parliamentary opposition), told Mr Erdogan: "If you sacrifice Cyprus, the nation will sacrifice you."

But Mr Baykal's reading of the nation's mood may be less astute than Mr Erdogan's. The prime minister has no doubt noticed the parallel with Britain, where voters in the 1990s were getting tired of the running sore in Northern Ireland. Once Ireland and Britain were both members of the EU and the large economic gap between them began to close, the issues that divided the communities in Northern Ireland started to fade.

In the 19th century, when the British used Cyprus to stand guard at the entrance to the Suez Canal, the island had considerable strategic importance, but now it is lit-

tle more than a few orange groves and a string of sunbeds. Turkey will be hoping that over the next few months the UN's so-called Annan peace plan for reuniting the island can somehow be revived. When both halves of the island voted on it in 2004, it received overwhelming support in the north, traditionally seen as the main obstacle to settlement, but surprisingly was vetoed in the south. Next month the northern region may swing further in favour of such a plan when it votes for a new president to replace the long-time holder of the post, Rauf Denktaş. At times Mr Denktaş has seemed almost pathologically opposed to reconnecting the two halves of the island.

Nothing could establish Turkey's political maturity more surely in the months to come than an ability to extricate itself from Cyprus without feeling diminished. It is uncomfortable about handing over the Turkish-speaking community in the north to a country led by Tassos Papadopoulos, a man described in the Turkish press as a "terrorist turned Greek-Cypriot leader". But now that the island is a member of the EU, it has to accord its minorities the same sort of protection that the EU is asking Turkey to provide.

The only party with real clout is the EU itself. Mr Erdogan is thought to have decided not to stand in the way of any internationally led peace initiative on the island, an example perhaps of his pledge to ►►



Can Cyprus become whole again?

► "jettison the past". Some Turks would like Britain or Germany to threaten to recognise northern Cyprus if the Greek-speaking Cypriots do not come into line. But that is unrealistic. The best hope for a settlement lies in the EU finding a way to make Mr Papadopoulos see the sense of a new sort of enosis, one with the ostracised northern part of the island.

### Iraq's dominoes

The other place high on Turkey's foreign agenda is Iraq. Although the Turks opposed the Americans going in, and stopped the troops from passing through en route to the north of Iraq, the war has been of great economic benefit to them. Plastic containers for Turkish drinking water are strewn all over Baghdad, and Turkey has served as a market garden for the foreign troops there.

Turkey, however, is watching developments in the northern, Kurdish part of the

country with trepidation. It claims to be keeping a brotherly eye on the Turkomen minority there, central Asians with some DNA in common with some Turks. But why should it feel more concerned about Turkomen interests in Iraq than about the interests of its own Kurdish minority inside Turkey?

The deeper fear is that the Americans will not be able to hold the three very different parts of Iraq together—the Kurds in the north, the Sunni Muslims in the middle and the Shiites in the south. Turks are worried that the Kurds will break away from a fragile federation and form their own country (the dreaded Kurdistan), centred on the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

They believe that the Kurds in Turkey would then want to annex a big chunk of their land to this new state. The movement of thousands of ethnic Kurds into Kirkuk just before the Iraqi elections at the end of January this year prompted a senior Turk-

ish general to give warning that they could "cause a serious security problem for Turkey". Mr Gul, the foreign minister, expressed similar concerns to the UN.

The Kurds claimed that they were simply responding to earlier population shifts engineered by Saddam Hussein, who forced large numbers of Iraqis to move from the south of the country to wealthy Kirkuk to dilute the Kurdish majority there. The two long-serving leaders of the Iraqi Kurds, Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani, say that the Kurds' national aspirations can be met within a federal system.

Other Kurds continue to argue that the unity of Iraq is not sacred, especially if the rest of the country to their south falls further into chaos. Should they gain the upper hand, it is not inconceivable that the Turkish army might want to move into northern Iraq. For many Turks, there is a Jerusalem quality to Kirkuk. It is a place they believe should always have been theirs. ■

## A promising start

But Turkey's economy still has a lot to catch up on

IF IT were a member today, Turkey would be the poorest country in the EU—but not by a mile. Although its GDP per person is less than a third of the average for the 15 members before last year's round of enlargement, it is not far off that of Latvia, one of the ten new countries that joined in May 2004. And it is much the same as those of Bulgaria and Romania, which hope to become members in 2007. When they do, there will be an overland route from the Channel Tunnel to the Turkish border that never leaves EU soil.

Later this year Turkey's state statistical department will come up with revised figures for the country's GDP, based on the EU's statistical methodology. The economy minister, Mr Babacan, says that GDP figures could go up as a result. But even if they do, the size of the Turkish economy will remain considerably understated because of the huge black economy. Mr Babacan puts the size of this "informal" economic activity at over 30% of official GDP. One survey found that more than half of the people who claimed to be employed were not registered, meaning that they did not pay taxes or receive state benefits.

Whatever the absolute level of Turkey's GDP, there is no doubting the country's re-

cent economic progress. Donald Johnston, the secretary-general of the OECD, has described it as "stunning". This success has come in three parts. First, growth. Turkey's GDP in 2004 was probably more than 8% up on the year before, a rate that no country in the EU came close to matching.

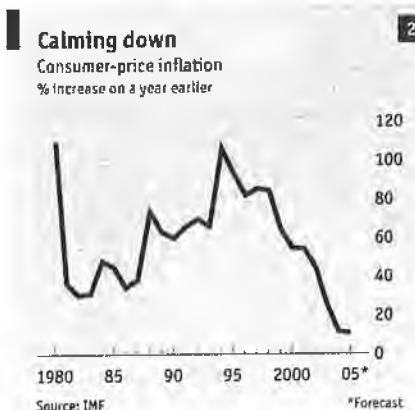
Second, inflation. Late last year the monthly year-on-year rate came down to single figures for the first time since 1972. The rate for the whole of 2004 was 11.4% (see chart 2). Last December, when Turkey signed a \$10 billion three-year economic

agreement with the IMF, the Fund's managing director, Rodrigo Rato, said that it would "help Turkey...reduce inflation toward European levels, and enhance the economy's resilience."

The economy could do with extra resilience. It has enjoyed rapid growth before, but this has usually been followed by severe recession and financial crisis. In the 1990s the growth rate went up and down like a yo-yo (see chart 3, next page), with the economy shrinking by around 5% in both 1994 and 1999 and growing by slightly more in 1995 and 2000. Foreign investors mostly kept clear.

In the most recent crisis, in 2001, GDP plummeted by over 7%. In February that year the lira was devalued by about 40% in a week and short-term interest rates briefly touched an annual rate of 7,500%. On the IMF's recommendation Mr Ecevit, the then prime minister, called in Mr Dervis from the World Bank in Washington, DC, to become his finance minister. The government introduced an economic programme which Turkey has (unusually) held to, and which seems to be working. Mr Erdogan more or less adopted it as his own, if only to retain the IMF's support.

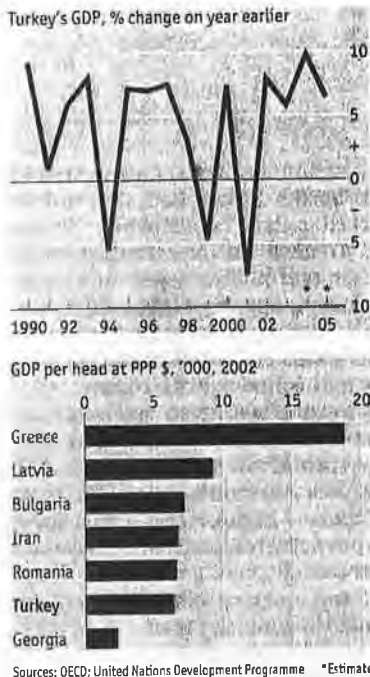
The government's third big success in ►



The Economist March 19th 2005

A survey of Turkey

### Fat years and lean years



Sources: OECD; United Nations Development Programme \*Estimate

► recent years has been in fiscal policy. In 2004 its budget achieved a primary surplus (before interest payments) of 6.5% of GDP, which went a long way to keeping Turkey's international creditors happy. The budget has been helped by a sharp cutback in agricultural subsidies, from \$6 billion a year three years ago to around \$1.5 billion now, which has caused surprisingly little complaint from farmers. At the same time there has been a big shift from price support to direct income support.

The government is trying to reduce its role in the economy in several ways. For one, it is dismantling price controls. Since the beginning of January it has no longer had to decide on the right level of fuel prices every Monday morning. It hopes soon to stop setting electricity and gas prices too.

However, it has been less successful in getting rid of its extensive industrial and financial holdings. Privatisation has been promised for almost as long as low inflation. The government now says that this year it will revive the previously cancelled sale of Tupras, an oil refiner; Turk Telekom; Petkim, a petrochemicals firm; and the tobacco side of Tekel, the state-owned drinks and tobacco company. But would-be investors should not hold their breath. Previous plans have fallen through because of the state's inability to make the businesses

sufficiently attractive to buyers.

When competition has been allowed to enter state-controlled areas, the results have been good. The opening up of the skies saw a number of private airlines (such as Onur Air and Atlasjet) take on the state-owned Turkish Airlines. This, says the OECD, has brought fares on some internal routes down by 60%. It has also increased passenger numbers, but it has not yet opened up new routes. Traffic is still concentrated on journeys to and from Istanbul. More flights between provincial towns would help reduce Istanbul's stranglehold on resources, as well as the stacking over its international airport.

After stability, the next priority for the Turkish economy is redistribution. The gap between the country's rich and poor is vast. Istanbul and Ankara alone account for about 30% of GDP. In the richest regions of the country, GDP per person is nearly six times what it is in the poorest—the region round the cities of Kars and Agri, towards Mount Ararat and the Iranian border. Many of the houses there are mud-roofed single-storey structures with improvised windows. Water is drawn from the nearest well and separate piles of dried dung for fuel and straw for animal feed are heaped outside the front doors to see the occupants through the winter. The lucky houses have a satellite dish on the roof to pick up the multiplying number of Turkish television channels with their soaps and chat shows. Most of the local community's economic opportunities lie in smuggling.

Redistribution could be helped by a change in the tax system. At present the country relies heavily on indirect taxes—which are non-redistributive, but easily collected—and more lightly on direct taxes, which are harder to collect. The government has started to shift the burden. In the 2005 budget, for example, VAT on various food, health and education items was cut from the standard rate of 18% to 8%.

The government is also drawing up legislation to restructure its inland-revenue service, making it a semi-independent authority with tax collection as its main task. "Our purpose is to establish a tax system to reduce the unregistered economy and collect taxes more efficiently," said Mr Erdogan at the end of last year. He hopes that cuts in the corporation-tax rate and in the top rates of income tax this year will encourage more people to fill in their tax returns honestly. Currently only 2% of returns are audited, so tax evaders are likely to get away with it. Even those who are

caught are merely given a fine, although imprisonment to punish tax evasion is being considered.

Perhaps the most politically charged economic challenge for the government is unemployment. The official rate of 10% is widely acknowledged to be unrealistically low. There is considerable underemployment in farming, for example. Unemployment among Kurdish migrants in Diyarbakir is as high as 60%, says the city's mayor. As the OECD puts it, "continuously high unemployment could undermine the social and political support for reforms."

### Where it hurts

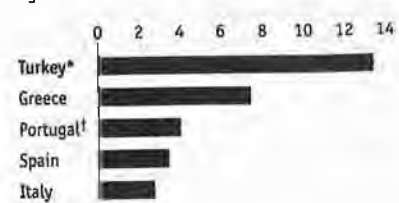
Yet unemployment seems destined to get worse before it gets better. Mr Babacan explains that 500,000 new jobs need to be found every year to keep the unemployment level constant. That number is set to rise as the working population continues to grow. If the government meets its target of 5% growth for each of the next three years, says Mr Babacan, it will create 1.65m jobs over that period, just enough to mop up the increase in the working population.

But the labour force could be swelled further by large numbers of workers coming off the land as Turkey invests in its agricultural sector and increases productivity. Agriculture currently accounts for 32% of all jobs but only 13.4% of GDP. If the workforce was cut to match the sector's contribution to the economy, 4.4m jobs would have to be found elsewhere.

Some Europeans have nightmares about hordes of unemployed Turks roaming freely across the European Union and undercutting native workers' pay. But in reality there is little evidence that immigration harms the natives' job opportunities. Rather, EU countries should be welcoming young Turkish workers with open arms, especially where populations are declining. Those workers will help to make sclerotic economies more flexible and keep up contributions to state pay-as-you-go pension schemes. ■

### Too much field work

Agriculture, % of GDP, 2002



Source: World Bank

\*2003 †Estimate

## Den of thieves

The importance of fighting corruption

**W**HATEVER else Turkey does, if it wants its economy to flourish, it must control corruption. For decades, sleaze and authorised theft have undermined the economic life of the country. And this is a fish that has rotted from the head. When asked how she was able to afford an apartment block in Florida, Tansu Ciller, who served as prime minister in 1993-95, said that she had found some of the money wrapped in a bundle in her mother's bedroom. Other former prime ministers stand accused of manipulating the sale of state assets for their benefit.

On New Year's Eve last year, Murat Demirel, the one-time owner of Egebank and a nephew of a former president, Süleyman Demirel, was picked up by the Bulgarian authorities from a small fishing boat that was trying to land on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. He had been barred from leaving Turkey while investigations into the collapse of Egebank were going on. He is said to have offered the Bulgarian coastguard €100,000 (\$136,000) to let him go, but the man would not take a bribe. In asking for his extradition, Turkey told the Bulgarian authorities that Egebank's collapse had caused financial losses of \$1.2 billion. Mr Demirel was duly sent back to await trial.

Corruption may be getting more publicity, but is not yet attracting heavier punishment. Turkey was one of 34 signatories of the OECD's anti-bribery convention in 1997, but an anti-corruption law that the present government drafted in its early days in power has yet to be passed, and a pre-election promise to end immunity from prosecution for parliamentarians and ministers remains unfulfilled.

The family suspected of being the biggest thieves of all, the Uzans, continue to elude the authorities. The father, Kemal, and one son, Hakan, have fled abroad. The other son, Cem Uzan, once an aspiring politician who made his own fortune as a media mogul in partnership with the son of a former president and prime minister, Turgut Özal, still lives openly in Turkey, having avoided signing incriminating documents. Meanwhile Motorola and Nokia, two mobile-phone companies, are trying to recover the \$5 billion awarded to them by an American court in 2003 in damages,

compensation and interest for money of which the Uzan family defrauded them; and the Turkish government is trying to find the Uzans to reclaim the \$6 billion that it says they owe the state.

The armed forces, surprisingly, are being bolder than the government in cracking down on corruption. General Hilmi Özkök, the chief of general staff, has given his blessing to the prosecution for corruption of a retired admiral. In December, various charges were brought against İlhami Erdil and his wife and daughter. The daughter is alleged to have been a partner in a company that won naval supply contracts; the wife is said to have used the navy's credit cards for frequent shopping trips; and Mr Erdil himself is said to have dispensed soft postings to conscripts at a price of \$5,000-10,000 each. He claims his purchase of two apartments in Istanbul for \$1.25m was financed by a relative.

The admiral's case came to court not because the system's built-in safeguards exposed him but because two officers he had fired posted some of the evidence on the internet. Immune from prosecution while in office, he was brought to court on his retirement. His case is widely expected to be followed by others involving former generals and an air-force commander.

Most Turks know (if only because every male has to do military service) that military officers' quarters are far from spar-

tan, and on the whole they are not bothered by the luxury bath taps and well-stocked cellars. Some worry, however, that General Özkök's decision to bring higher, and hidden, levels of corruption out into the open may undermine the average Turk's faith in the armed forces, which polls consistently show to be the most respected institution in the country.

This, the worriers argue, will matter more in the years to come as Turkey's progress towards EU membership steadily diminishes the soldiers' power. This process has already begun. Since August last year, the powerful National Security Council, a joint committee of government ministers and top military officers, is no longer headed by a military man.

### Foreign Dearth of Investment

The pervasive corruption in Turkey has imposed not only a moral cost but a heavy economic one too. It is one of the main reasons why Turkey attracts such low levels of foreign direct investment. A recent study by two professors at the University of Massachusetts in Boston on the relationship between corruption and foreign direct investment (FDI) found that corruption is a serious obstacle to investment. It also found that the willingness to invest was related to the difference in corruption levels between the country of the foreign investor and that of the host country. Thus Turkey may be able to attract investment from equally or more corrupt nations, such as Russia or Ukraine, but not from western Europe or north America.

Indeed, Russians and Ukrainians are far more in evidence in Turkey these days than visitors from any EU country. From the queue for visas at the airport to the hairdressing salons in the south-west, the brothels in Istanbul and the ski resorts near Erzurum, it is clear that these two countries are happily investing in Turkey whereas others stay away.

"Power can corrupt even good people," says Mr Ala, the governor of Diyarbakir. A big chunk of the AK Party's vote at the 2002 election came from people fed up with sleaze. But however well-intentioned Mr Erdoğan and his ministers may currently be, to expect them to be totally in- ➤



Cem Uzan tries his hand at politics

corruptible is unrealistic. The system presents temptations at every turn. In mid-January there were headlines about Mrs Erdogan having accepted gifts worth \$33,500 on an official trip to Moscow with her husband earlier that month. When she had admired a carpet in a shop, the Turkish owner had presented it to her, explaining that he could not accept money from his prime minister. Some of the gifts were subsequently returned.

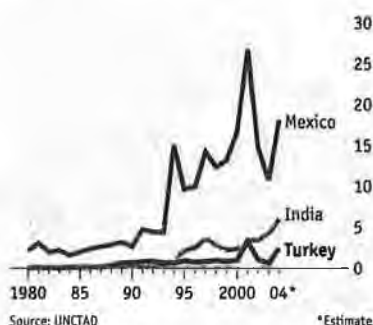
Corruption has helped to prevent Turkey from taking advantage of a huge economic opportunity that presented itself on a plate. International companies today want to be "lean and mean", which implies holding very little stock. Yet they also want to be able to meet modern consumers' desire for instant gratification, which requires them to hold at least some stock. Most companies resolve this conflict by compromise. They go to China to get goods made cheaply, but they also look for another offshore manufacturing centre that is closer to home.

Mexico has become such a place for the United States. But Turkey has not been able to play a similar role for Europe because it has never managed to attract the heavy foreign direct investment that would be needed. Annual inflows have generally remained below \$1 billion; Mexico, by contrast, has attracted over \$10 billion a year for the past eight years (see chart 5). As a proportion of GDP, Turkey's stock of FDI is lower now than it was in the 1980s.

Undoubtedly corruption is one reason for these low levels of investment, but there are others. One of them is red tape.

### Not off the ground yet

FDI inflows, \$bn



Compliance with Turkish customs regulations is particularly onerous. Sadan Eren, the chairman of the thriving chamber of commerce in lively Trabzon, says he complains about bureaucracy every time he goes to Ankara. The governor of Van sees the reduction of red tape as one of his prime responsibilities.

Another deterrent for foreign investors is Turkey's poor record in protecting intellectual-property rights. One American company recently withdrew from the country because it found itself unable to enforce international arbitration awards. Others complain of the "at times ambiguous legal environment".

Investment is sorely needed, particularly in the east. Beyond Erzurum there is little industrial activity other than the occasional cement factory and a flour mill or two. When Mr Erdogan visited the eastern town of Siirt, his wife's birthplace, the

crowd chanted, "Bring us a factory."

The GAP project, a series of dams blocking the Tigris and Euphrates rivers as they meander towards Syria, has been a showpiece for successive governments of what is being done for the impoverished regions of the east. But the dams have been a mixed blessing. They have turned large parts of the Harran plain, south of Sanli-urfa, from brown to green. But they have also created a build-up of silt close to the Syrian border that threatens to raise tensions between the two neighbours. They have encouraged the cultivation of thirsty, soil-depleting cotton in the area: the GAP region is now a bigger producer of the white fluff than Turkey's traditional cotton-growing area around Adana. And they are blamed for a change in the local climate. Diyarbakir, which used to see regular falls of winter snow, has not had one for five or six years.

Almost the only sizeable foreign investment in the region is a huge pipeline being built by a consortium of oil companies led by BP. Scheduled to come on stream this year, it will be able to carry a million barrels of oil a day from Baku, in Azerbaijan, via Tbilisi in Georgia and Kars in the north of Turkey, to the Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. But there will be little to show for it. Along its whole length there will be only eight pumping stations; the rest of the pipeline will run underground. It will be watched over by a specially trained but small security force. It will, however, prevent a further increase in the large number of oil tankers that now pass through the narrow Bosphorus Straits. ■

## Turkey's curriculum

Continue westernising and press on with economic reform—but take the people with you

TURKEY has been brave enough to take part in the International Student Assessment Programme (PISA), allowing its education system to be compared with those of other OECD countries. The main finding of a recent PISA study was that provision within the country differs wildly. Some schools and some students perform very well by any standard—and they are not all in Istanbul or Ankara. But too much Turkish education is of poor quality.

One teacher who recently moved schools, from a town in Anatolia to a village 15km away, was shocked by the differ-

ence in standards. The poorer schools still put too much emphasis on memorising facts and learning by rote, and not enough on understanding ideas. Minority Rights Group International, a non-governmental organisation, also points out that "derogatory statements remain in school textbooks about different minorities." Kazim Genc, the Alevi human-rights lawyer, says there are "hurtful words about Alevis in many schoolbooks, encyclopedias and magazines".

Some of the reasons for the low educational standards are socio-economic. Chil-

dren in poor families can be important breadwinners. If there are lots of children, the older daughters often have to take care of their younger siblings, which leads to high rates of absenteeism. This is a particular problem in the east of the country, where it is still not unusual for village families to have ten or 15 children. The daughters of such families have a poor chance of getting a decent education.

But their prospects are improving. In 1997 the government increased the period of compulsory education from five years to eight, and today just over half of all ►►

► schoolchildren go on to a further three or four years of secondary education. In 2005, for the first time in the history of the Turkish republic, education received a bigger share of the national budget than the armed forces.

Backed by a \$250m World Bank programme, the government is trying to improve attendance. Mothers of poor families receive a monthly grant of \$15-20 for each child, depending on its attendance record. At the end of 2004, in a remarkable example of affirmative action, the government agreed to give larger grants for girls than for boys.

But the biggest improvements have been in higher education. The number of universities has grown rapidly and now totals 78. Several high-quality private institutions have been set up, including a university sponsored by the Sabanci Group which its boss, the unmarried Ms Sabanci, calls her big baby. Most of the teaching in these institutions is in English. They now give the country's brightest undergraduates a real alternative to going abroad.

One of the best is Bilkent University, founded in 1984 on a vast site just outside Ankara and backed by a large family-owned conglomerate that built, among other things, Istanbul's huge new international airport. Students in Turkey sit a nationwide university entrance exam and are ranked on their performance. Of the top 100 students in the rankings last year, 34 chose to go to Bilkent. Increasingly, the main reason why students go abroad for their first degrees is that they have failed to get into a decent Turkish university.

A good supply of high-quality university education is something new for Turkey. The country's recent leaders were almost all educated abroad—an expensive luxury available only to a small elite. When she became prime minister, Ms Ciller spoke better (American) English than she did Turkish. So, arguably, did Mr Derwis when he was parachuted in to rescue the nation from financial disaster in 2001. Mr Ozal did his best to lure back bright Turks who had stayed away after studying abroad. Many of the country's top businessmen and government officials in the 1990s were American-educated. They brought with them western attitudes and expectations, but had little in common with Turks outside the sophisticated enclaves of Istanbul and Ankara.

The present government has a chance to bridge that divide. It is trusted by Kurds and others in the east who have felt left out of "the republic" and its political life al-



Still father of all he surveys

most since Atatürk's time. It is trying hard to improve its human-rights record—still too slowly for some, but more genuinely than its predecessor. At the same time it is continuing with the pro-EU policy of its western-oriented predecessors and sticking to their economic policy as laid down by the IMF. Moreover, it is determined to end Turkey's isolation and play a full part in the complicated politics of the region.

#### A once-in-a-lifetime chance

The results so far are almost too good to be true. Mr Gul has described it as a "silent revolution", a phrase that is being echoed everywhere. It may be too soon to rejoice: the government has been in power for nearly two-and-a-half years, and has not yet reassured the Kemalist doubters, many of whom still suspect that it has a long-term fundamentalist agenda. But every day brings more converts to its cause.

Much depends on Mr Erdogan himself. The Turkish political system is designed to

channel power to the top. Diplomats and journalists in Ankara work away at trying to understand him, but find him hard to read. He is a different breed of Turkish leader, lacking the Byzantine political skills that served many of his predecessors so well. But then with his parliamentary majority he has little need for them.

He could well be in this fortunate position for at least another seven years—the rest of this electoral term and, assuming he is re-elected, the next one. Turks, it has been said, are good on a forced march. Mr Erdogan may be about to take them on a journey to Europe the like of which they have not seen since the days of Atatürk.

Outside all Turkish schools today are emblazoned the words: *Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyene* (happy is the man who can say "I am a Turk"). One day, perhaps, all over Turkey there will be signs saying, *Ne Mutlu Avrupalıyım Diyene* (happy is the man who can say "I am a European"). Atatürk would certainly approve. ■



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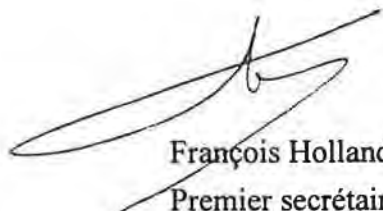
**Message de François Hollande au peuple kurde  
et à la communauté kurde en France**

Le 21 mars 2005, le peuple kurde dans différents pays, comme d'autres peuples de la région, célèbre la fête de Newroz qui marque l'arrivée du printemps. Je sais combien le Newroz, symbole de l'espoir, vous est cher. Enraciné dans votre culture et votre histoire, il signifie aussi pour vous le combat pour la liberté et constitue l'un des éléments fondamentaux de votre identité.

Je suis heureux de présenter, au nom du Parti socialiste et en mon nom personnel, à nos concitoyens d'origine kurde, à la communauté kurde de France et à l'ensemble du peuple kurde, mes vœux les plus chaleureux.

Cette année, les Kurdes irakiens célèbrent le Newroz avec l'espoir de voir enfin reconnus ses droits légitimes et de contribuer, aux côtés des autres composantes de la société irakienne, à l'édification d'un Irak démocratique, pluraliste et fédéral. Malgré quelques ouvertures en Turquie, les Kurdes sont toujours victimes de la discrimination politique, culturelle et du sous-développement. En Iran, au contraire, les forces conservatrices ont tout fait pour bloquer le mouvement de réformes et de démocratisation dont est victime toute la société iranienne, notamment les Kurdes.

Je formule néanmoins des souhaits ardents pour que la nouvelle année vous apporte enfin, au-delà des inquiétudes du moment, la paix, le bonheur et la prospérité.



François Hollande  
Premier secrétaire

16 MARS 2005

Le Monde

## Irak : Kurdes et chiites tentent de réduire leurs divergences

**LES NÉGOCIATEURS** chiites et kurdes devaient poursuivre, mardi 15 mars, leurs discussions, afin de trouver un accord sur la formation du nouveau gouvernement irakien avant l'échéance fixée au 16 mars. Ils se sont rencontrés, lundi, pour tenter de « surmonter leurs divergences », a affirmé Adnane Ali, conseiller du candidat de l'Alliance irakienne unifiée (AIU) au poste de premier ministre, Ibrahim

Al-Jaafari. « Il y a des désaccords sur l'avenir des peshmergas et sur des articles de la Loi fondamentale (Constitution provisoire), notamment ceux relatifs au statut de Kirkouk », revendiqué par les Kurdes, a déclaré Jalal Talabani, favori pour le poste de président.

Les Kurdes refusent une intégration totale dans l'armée des peshmergas, les milices du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK) de Massoud Barzani et de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) de M. Talabani, qui contrôlent la région autonome. Ils exigent également le rattachement de Kirkouk, ville pétrolière, au Kurdistan, alors que la Loi fondamentale prévoit seulement de remédier à l'arabisation forcée de la ville mise en

œuvre par Saddam Hussein.

Dimanche, les responsables du PDK et de l'UPK, réunis en l'absence de M. Talabani, avaient exigé une révision des termes de l'accord et l'implication de l'ensemble des forces politiques dans les négociations.

Côté sunnite, le président irakien sortant, Ghazi Al-Yaouar, a annoncé la création d'un comité regroupant des partis et personnalités, en vue de négocier des postes dans le nouveau gouvernement. Cette communauté détient 8 portefeuilles... sur les 31 que compte le gouvernement sortant, et n'a remporté qu'une vingtaine de sièges en raison du boycottage observé par les sunnites lors des élections du 30 janvier. - (AFP.)

# «Journée historique» pour l'Assemblée irakienne

Les 275 nouveaux élus ne sont pas parvenus à désigner un exécutif.

**L**a démocratie irakienne avance à pas comptés. Quarante-cinq jours après avoir été élus, les 275 députés de l'Assemblée nationale constituante se sont réunis pour la première fois hier matin. Mais ils se sont séparés sans avoir pu se doter d'un exécutif et sans fixer la date de la prochaine séance destinée à cet effet. Le Premier ministre pressenti, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, du parti islamique chiite Dawa al-Islamiya, estime qu'il faudra encore deux semaines d'intenses tractations avant de pouvoir former un gouvernement.

**Tirs de mortier.** Le premier orateur a salué un jour « historique qui suit des décennies d'oppression ». A Washington, George W. Bush a salué de son côté « un grand moment » et une « étape dans le processus » vers la démocratie. La session se tenait dans le palais des congrès, transformé en bunker, au cœur de la zone verte, qui abrite le siège du gouvernement et les ambassades des Etats-Unis et du Royaume-Uni. Malgré des mesures de sécurité très

strictes, les rebelles ont marqué l'événement à leur façon. Des tirs de mortier ont fait vibrer les fenêtres de l'édifice. Une bombe a en partie détruit les bureaux du *Baghdad Mirror*, le seul hebdomadaire irakien en langue anglaise, sans faire de victime, et cinq soldats irakiens ont été tués dans un attentat-suicide à la voiture piégée à Baaqouba, au nord-est de la capitale. Avant de le-

**L'alliance islamiste chiite, qui dispose de la majorité à l'Assemblée, a accepté de soutenir la candidature du leader kurde, Jalal Talabani, à la présidence.**

ver la séance, les députés ont prêté serment, puis se sont recueillis à la mémoire de toutes les victimes de la répression sous Saddam Hussein et en particulier des 5 000 Kurdes morts gazés dans le village de Halabja, il y a dix-sept ans, jour pour jour.

La première tâche du nouveau Parlement consistera à élire à la majorité des deux tiers le chef de l'Etat et ses deux vice-présidents. C'est ce conseil présidentiel qui devra ensuite

désigner à l'unanimité le Premier ministre. Iyad Allaoui, l'actuel détenteur du poste, a peu de chance d'être reconduit. L'alliance islamiste chiite qui dispose de la majorité absolue à l'Assemblée avec 146 sièges sur 275, a accepté de soutenir la candidature du leader kurde Jalal Talabani, chef de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK), à la présidence. En échange, les 77 députés kurdes, rassemblés dans une coalition, sont prêts à confier à Ibrahim al-Jaafari, un islamiste modéré, la

tête du gouvernement.

Mais un accord entre les deux blocs bute toujours sur le sort de Kirkouk et de ses précieux champs pétroliers. Les Kurdes revendiquent cette ville stratégique dont ils ont été chassés du temps de Saddam Hussein et qu'ils considèrent comme la future capitale de leur région autonome. Ils refusent également d'intégrer dans l'armée régulière leur milice, ces quelques dizaines de milliers de peshmergas qui jusqu'à

présent assurent seuls la garde de leur enclave. Ils souhaitent également disposer d'un droit de veto sur tout déploiement militaire dans leur région.

**Intérêts sunnites.** Dans cette Assemblée qui sera essentiellement chargée de rédiger la future Constitution, les grands absents sont les sunnites. Après leur boycottage du scrutin, ils ne détiennent qu'une vingtaine de sièges. Hier, les députés ont tous souligné la nécessité d'associer cette communauté au processus politique en cours et de lui faire une place au sein du gouvernement. A cet effet, des leaders chiites et kurdes ont rencontré mardi plusieurs de ses représentants, dont le président sortant, Ghazi al-Yaouar, le libéral Adnane Pachachi et des responsables du Comité des oulémas. Pour défendre les intérêts des sunnites, Ghazi al-Yaouar a annoncé la création d'un comité de coordination entre ses cinq députés, le Parti islamique irakien, qui a boudé l'élection, et le mouvement d'Adnane Pachachi. ◆

AFP, Reuters

17 MARS 2005

Libération

# La question de l'adhésion de la Turquie continue à peser sur la campagne du référendum

Malgré les efforts de l'UMP pour déconnecter ce sujet de la ratification de la Constitution, l'électorat de droite demeure inquiet. Certains élus estiment que cela renforcera le « non »

## RÉFÉRENDUM

La ratification du traité constitutionnel européen

**SUR LES MARCHÉS**, dans les réunions publiques, dans les permanences, c'est la première question qui reste posée aux élus de droite à propos de l'Europe : l'adoption du projet de Constitution, le 29 mai, ouvrirait-elle la porte de l'Union à la Turquie ?

Pourtant, depuis l'entame des négociations d'adhésion avec ce pays, en décembre 2004, et l'engagement favorable de Jacques Chirac, la majorité a bien tenté d'endiguer la montée de l'inquiétude dans son électorat.

L'UMP, sous la direction de Nicolas Sarkozy, s'est prononcée massivement contre l'adhésion de la Turquie, et la Constitution française a été modifiée, afin de consulter la population par référendum pour toute nouvelle adhésion.

Peine perdue, pour l'heure. « La question de la Turquie sera un élément majeur du "non" au référendum », prévient Alain Marleix, député (UMP) du Cantal. « Je sais que c'est dans la tête des gens, et j'aborde toujours le sujet dans les réunions publiques, raconte Pierre Lequiller, président (UMP) de la délégation de l'Assemblée nationale pour l'Union européenne. Sinon ils croiraient que je veux l'esquiver. »

A ce rejet, il y a d'abord les « bonnes raisons », selon M. Lequiller. « Pourquoi, après l'élargissement, ouvrir de nouveau l'Union à un grand pays, situé à la fois dans l'Europe et en dehors, alors qu'on a déjà du mal à la faire fonctionner à vingt-cinq ? Les Français s'inquiètent aussi des éventuels nouveaux voisins : l'Arménie, la Syrie, l'Irak », résume l'élus.

« C'est la crainte d'un élargissement sans fin qui domine, avance Axel Poniatowski (UMP, Val-d'Oise). On a le sentiment, aujourd'hui, que l'Europe va trop vite. » L'Europe peut être perçue comme un « chantier permanent » et donner le sentiment qu'on est « embarqués dans un mouvement qu'on ne



maîtrise pas », affirme François Sauvadet, porte-parole de l'UDF.

## « L'ISLAM, EN APARTÉ »

Mais il y a aussi les « mauvaises raisons, un peu cachées », reconnaît M. Lequiller. « Jamais personne ne se lève pour dire qu'il ne veut pas de ce pays parce qu'il est musulman, mais on le devine », affirme-t-il. « Les gens parlent de l'islam, en aparté », relate Isabelle Debré, sénatrice (UMP) des Hauts-de-Seine.

« Pour les Français, les Turcs sont des Arabes, on leur explique qu'ils sont musulmans mais pas arabes, mais ils ne comprennent pas. Ils ne veulent pas qu'on donne le sentiment de financer des mosquées », rapporte M. Marleix. « Dans ma circonscription, le voile est beaucoup porté par les femmes turques, note Irène Tharin, députée (UMP) du Doubs. On ne nous croit pas quand on explique que la Turquie est un pays laïque. » L'ab-

sence de référence aux racines chrétiennes dans la Constitution renforce ces craintes.

Les images de femmes matraquées par des policiers, lors de manifestations en Turquie pour la

Journée des femmes dimanche 6 mars, se superposent à ces préventions. Elles ont marqué à droite, mais aussi à gauche, au sein de laquelle le sujet turc taraude certes moins les électeurs : ceux-ci mettent d'abord l'accent sur le refus du libéralisme et la crainte des délocalisations.

Mais quand la Turquie est évoquée, la question des droits de l'homme et de la femme est toujours avancée pour rappeler le long chemin que le pays doit encore parcourir. « Les choses ne sont pas mûres », résume Michel Liebgott (PS, Moselle).

## « RISQUES D'AMALGAME »

Moins interpellé par ses électeurs que la droite, le PS ne tient

pas à mettre le sujet à l'ordre du jour. D'autant que la question de l'adhésion ne se posera pas avant une dizaine d'années. Selon Guy Lengagne, maire de Boulogne et député socialiste du Pas-de-Calais, ce sujet serait encore « tabou » au sein du parti. Ce n'est « pas un enjeu », affirme Pascal Terrasse. Pour ou contre l'adhésion, les avis sont très partagés.

C'est donc la droite favorable au « oui », qui va devoir travailler à déconnecter la question turque et le référendum. Son argumentaire est rodé. « C'est en votant "oui" à la Constitution que les Français pourront s'exprimer, le moment venu, sur la Turquie », affirme Luc Chatel, porte-parole de l'UMP.

Richard Mallié, député des Bouches-du-Rhône, lance le mot d'ordre du « "oui" [à la Constitution] pour le "non" [à l'entrée de la Turquie] ». « Il est aujourd'hui de [notre] devoir de mettre l'accent sur les risques d'amalgame, dans le mauvais sens, entre l'adoption de ce texte historique et l'adhésion de la Turquie », affirme M. Mallié dans un communiqué. Suite à la révision de la Constitution française, adoptée le 28 février, toute nouvelle adhésion sera subordonnée à un référendum en France. Les élus veulent aussi faire connaître cette « garantie ».

Paradoxalement, de nombreux Français voient déjà la Turquie dans l'Europe. La preuve ? Ils citent volontiers le fait qu'elle soit représentée au concours de Miss Europe et à l'Eurovision. Et la finale de la Ligue des champions de football aura lieu, le 25 mai, à Istanbul.

Gaëlle Dupont

Thomas L. Friedman

# Why Sistani deserves a Nobel prize

**WASHINGTON**  
As we approach the season of the Nobel Peace Prize, I would like to nominate the spiritual leader of Iraq's Shiites, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, for this year's medal. I'm serious.

If there is a decent outcome in Iraq, President George W. Bush will deserve, and receive, real credit for creating the conditions for democratization there, by daring to topple Saddam Hussein. But if some kind of democracy takes root there, it will also be due in large measure to the instincts and directives of the dominant Iraqi Shiite communal leader, Sistani.

It was Sistani who insisted that there had to be a direct national election in Iraq, rejecting the original goofy U.S. proposal for regional caucuses. It was Sistani who insisted that the elections not be postponed in the face of the Baathist-fascist insurgency. And it was Sistani who ordered Shiites not to retaliate for the Sunni Baathist and jihadist attempts to drag them into a civil war by attacking Shiite mosques and massacring Shiite civilians.

In many ways, Sistani has played the role for Bush that Nelson Mandela and Mikhail Gorbachev played for the elder George Bush. It was Mandela's instincts and leadership — in keeping the transition to black rule in South Africa nonviolent — that helped the Bush I administration and its allies bring that process in for a soft landing. And it was Gorbachev's insistence that the dismantling of the Soviet Empire, and particularly East Germany, be nonviolent that brought the Soviet Union in for a soft landing.

In international relations, as in sports, it is often better to be lucky than good. And having the luck to have history deal you a Mandela, a Gorbachev or a Sistani as your partner at a key historical juncture — as opposed to a Yasser Arafat or a Robert Mugabe — can make all the difference between U.S. policy looking brilliant and U.S. policy looking futile.

Sistani has also contributed three critical elements to the democracy movement in the wider

**If democracy takes root in Iraq, it will be due in large measure to Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani.**

Arab world. First, he built his legitimacy around not just his credentials as a religious scholar but

around a politics focused on developing Iraq for Iraqis. To put it another way, says the Middle East expert Stephen Cohen, "Sistani did not build his politics on negating someone else."

Saddam built his politics around negating America, Iran and Israel. Arafat built his whole life around negating Zionism — rarely, if ever, speaking about Palestinian economic development or education. The politics of negation has a deep and rich history in the Middle East, because so many leaders there are illegitimate and need to negate someone to justify their rule. What Sistani, the late Lebanese Sunni leader Rafik Hariri and the new Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, have in common is that they rose to power by focusing on a positive agenda for their own people, not negating another.

The second thing that Sistani did was put the people and their aspirations at the center of Iraqi politics, not some narrow elite or self-appointed clergy (see: Iran), which is what the Iraqi election was all about. In doing so he has helped to legitimize "people power" in a region where it was unheard of. In Lebanon, Egypt and Palestine — where Hamas recently said it would take part in parliamentary elections — the ballot box and popular support, not just the gun, are showing signs of becoming real sources of legitimacy. Both Hezbollah and Hamas will have to prove — with turnout, not terrorism — that they are entitled to a larger slice of power.

Third, and maybe most important, Sistani brings to Arab politics a legitimate, pragmatic interpretation of Islam, one that says Islam should inform politics and the constitution, but clerics should not rule.

The process of democratizing the Arab world is going to be long and bumpy. But the chances for success are immeasurably improved when America has partners from within the region who are legitimate, but have progressive instincts. That is Sistani. Lady Luck has shined on us by keeping alive this 75-year-old ayatollah, who resides in a small house in a narrow alley in Najaf and almost never goes out the door. How someone with his instincts and wisdom could have emerged from the train wreck that was Saddam's Iraq, I will never know. All I have to say is: May he live to be 120 — and give that man a Nobel Prize.

## Rumsfeld warns Iraqis on new government

By Brian Knowlton

**WASHINGTON:** Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld warned Iraqi politicians Sunday to be "darned careful" in forming a new government so that they not weaken Iraqi security forces. He also indirectly blamed Turkey for the persistent strength of the Iraqi insurgency, saying U.S. troops could have sharply curtailed it had they been able to invade Iraq from the north.

His caution to the Iraqi politicians

struggling to assemble a government seemed a rather unusual intervention by a Pentagon chief in the internal deliberations of a nascent democracy, albeit one that would not have existed without the U.S.-led occupation.

Rumsfeld, speaking two years after the war began, sought above all to underline accomplishments in Iraq.

"We have 25 million Iraqis that are free," he said. "The economy is coming back. The dinar is strong. The schools are open. The hospitals are open."



Rumsfeld speaking during a Sunday television interview with Fox News.

But he made clear that he had concerns as well. Rumsfeld noted the ferment, turnover and slippage inherent in the process as Iraq has moved from post-invasion governing council to interim government to transitional government.

He then warned that Iraqis had to "be darned careful about making a lot of changes just to be putting in their friend or to be putting in someone else from their tribe or from their ethnic group."

"This is too serious a business over there," the plain-spoken Rumsfeld said on Fox News, "and the United States has got too much invested and too much committed and too many lives at stake for people to be careless about that."

The defense secretary, tempering his comment, said that Iraqis should "put in who you want — it's your country and your sovereignty." But he then repeated that they should "be darned careful that you don't cause undue turbulence and weakness in the security forces, because it's the security forces of Iraq that are going to defeat that insurgency."

Rumsfeld did not say precisely what possibilities concerned him in Iraq.

But as Iraqi political negotiations have dragged on into the year with no new government formed, frustrations have risen in the country and the timetable for a democratic evolution meant to permit a faster coalition withdrawal may have been pushed back.

Rumsfeld was also asked to name "the single biggest mistake in prosecuting the war."

"The most important thing," he said on ABC television, "was that had we been successful in getting the 4th Infantry Division to come in through Turkey in the north when our forces were coming up from the south out of Kuwait, I believe that a considerably smaller number of the Baathists and the regime elements would have escaped."

"More would have been captured or killed. And as a result, the insurgency would have been at a lesser intensity than it is today."

U.S. displeasure with Turkey over the refusal to grant access for the invasion, which required a hasty remaking of war plans, has never been a secret.

In early May 2003, Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz called on Ankara in an interview with CNN to admit that it had erred: "Let's have a Turkey that steps up and says, 'We made a mistake. We should have known how bad things were in Iraq, but we know now.'"

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan later rejected the comment, saying, "Turkey, from the very beginning, never made any mistakes."

The next year, during a North Atlantic Treaty Organization conference in Istanbul, President George W. Bush reassured Turkey that he was ready to move past the dispute. That made Rumsfeld's comment Sunday more striking.

His caution to Iraqi politicians about not endangering the country's security

drew attention anew to questions about how much remains to be done to train Iraqi forces to assume full responsibility for order, how stretched U.S. forces are and how soon they will be able to depart in numbers.

Both Rumsfeld and General Richard Myers, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, insisted that U.S. forces were adequate for the job and for any other challenge that might arise, whether in Iran or North Korea.

And Myers, speaking on NBC television, said that the goal of training 200,000 Iraqi security forces should be reached this summer.

Myers was asked by an interviewer about widespread doubts on the reliability of U.S. figures for those trained so far. The latest figure offered is 142,000, and the U.S. Government Accountability Office said that this included tens of thousands of Iraqi police who had slipped away from their jobs. "I'll stick with the 142,000," Myers said.

But he conceded that certainty about the numbers of trained police was lower than for trained army members. "Our visibility into the police is not perfect," he said.

Pressed about whether the U.S. military could handle new missions to remove the nuclear capability of North Korea or Iran, Myers said, "Well, I think the point is that the president said we're going to do this diplomatically." He said the availability of force provided a useful negotiating chip.

International Herald Tribune

## Les intentions du futur Premier ministre irakien

21 mars 2005 / metro

**BERLIN** Le candidat chiite au poste de Premier ministre irakien Ibrahim Jaafari a plaidé pour l'introduction de la charia et du fédéralisme, tout en affirmant que l'ancien dictateur Saddam Hussein serait jugé d'ici fin 2005, dans une interview au magazine allemand 'Der Spiegel'.

À la question «Allez-vous introduire la charia», la loi islamique, dans la future constitution, le probable chef du futur gouvernement a répondu: «Oui, mais comme une des multiples sources de jurisprudence». «Cela se comprend pour un pays qui est majoritairement peuplé par des musulmans», a-t-il ajouté dans une interview faite à Bagdad. Il a soutenu que «tous auront les mêmes droits, même les membres des nombreuses petites communautés religieuses». Par ailleurs, a-t-il affirmé,

les femmes ne seront pas obligées de porter le voile. «C'est à elles de faire leur choix», a dit le responsable chiite. «L'Irak doit devenir un Etat islamique, mais sans que l'Iran ou l'Arabie saoudite en soient les parrains», a encore dit Ibrahim Jaafari.

Interrogé sur les revendications kurdes pour plus d'autonomie, il a répondu: «Je plaide pour un Etat irakien fédéral». Il a également dit «tout faire pour convaincre nos frères sunnites à travailler avec nous sur la nouvelle constitution». Enfin, le candidat chiite s'est dit convaincu que «le cas Saddam Hussein serait clos avant la fin de l'année». Ibrahim Jaafari, en pourparlers avec les élus kurdes sur la formation d'un exécutif, a estimé mercredi après la séance inaugurale du nouveau Parlement que l'Irak aurait un nouveau gouvernement d'ici deux semaines. M. Jaafari est le chef du parti islamiste Dawa, l'un

des piliers de l'alliance chiite qui peut compter sur une majorité de 146 élus sur les 275 que compte l'Assemblée nationale.



### Accord sur Kirkouk

**SALAHEDDINE** Le chef kurde Jalal Talabani a confirmé qu'un accord avait été trouvé avec la liste chiite sur le statut de la ville pétrolière de Kirkouk, revendiquée par les Kurdes. «Nous nous sommes mis d'accord sur l'article 58 de la loi fondamentale et il sera mis en application un mois après la mise sur pied du nouveau gouvernement», a affirmé le dirigeant de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan (UPK) à l'issue d'une rencontre avec son rival Massoud Barzani, leader du Parti démocratique du Kurdistan (PDK). Selon l'article 58, le gouvernement doit, entre autres, favoriser le retour des Kurdes expulsés par la politique d'arabisation de Saddam Hussein. «Un Etat a été détruit et nous allons en reconstruire un autre dès que le gouvernement sera formé», a-t-il ajouté à Salaheddine, chef du PDK.

# Ankara ne fait plus d'efforts pour réformer depuis l'ouverture des négociations avec l'UE

Le représentant de l'Union européenne en Turquie dénonce la torture, les atteintes à la liberté d'expression et aux droits des Kurdes comme autant de problèmes prioritaires

## ANKARA

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Le gouvernement turc est-il vraiment résolu à faire appliquer les réformes votées au pas de charge ces deux dernières années en vue de l'intégration du pays à l'Union européenne (UE) ? Alors que les discussions sur la réunification de Chypre sont bloquées, que la situation des droits de l'homme en Turquie laisse à désirer, l'équipe du premier ministre Recep Tayyip Erdogan est de plus en plus questionnée sur sa détermination à poursuivre sur la voie du changement.

En décembre, le Conseil européen a décidé d'ouvrir les négociations d'adhésion avec Ankara le 3 octobre 2005. Mais « aucun représentant n'a été nommé », constate la presse turque. Le pays a « pris du retard », a récemment indiqué Hans Kretschmer, le représentant de l'UE sur place, citant l'éradication de la torture, une plus large liberté d'expression et l'amélioration des droits des Kurdes (12 à 15 millions de personnes sur une population totale de 70 millions) parmi les priorités immédiates. Olli Rehn, le commissaire européen à l'élargissement, n'a pas dit autre chose lors de son séjour en Turquie, les 7 et 8 mars, constatant qu'il reste encore « du travail à accomplir pour atteindre le degré zéro de tolérance envers la torture », une allusion à l'expression favorite du premier ministre turc, partisan affiché de la « tolérance zéro » dans ce domaine.

Comble de malchance, le 6 mars, à la veille de l'arrivée de la tröika (le chef de la diplomatie luxembourgeoise Jean Asselborn, le ministre britannique délégué aux affaires européennes Denis MacShane et le commissaire européen Olli Rehn), la police turque réprimait brutalement une manifestation de militants d'extrême gauche – dont de nombreuses femmes – rassem-



sur la place Beyazit à Istanbul pour célébrer la Journée internationale des femmes. Les télévisions diffusèrent les images de policiers en train de frapper à coups de pieds dans la tête des manifestantes à terre. La plus importante visite de dirigeants européens depuis le feu vert de l'UE ne pouvait tomber plus mal.

## « COMPRENDRE LA POLICE »

Mais tandis que la tröika exprimait son indignation, que le Parlement européen demandait une enquête, M. Erdogan argua de la présence de provocateurs parmi les manifestants, fustigeant les médias pour leur couverture de l'événement. « Ce genre de choses se produit aussi en Europe. Pourquoi est-ce que le Parlement européen n'y attache pas la même importance ? », confia-t-il à la chaîne publique

TGRT. « Il faut comprendre la police », concéda Abdullah Gül, le ministre des affaires étrangères, en annonçant l'ouverture d'une enquête. « Avec ce genre de mentalité, rejoindre l'UE ne sera pas facile ! », résuma le quotidien Radikal.

« Quand on parle de tolérance zéro, encore faut-il le prouver. Or éduquer la police pour empêcher ce genre d'excès relève de la responsabilité du gouvernement », affirme pour sa part Onur Öymen, vice-président du Parti républicain du peuple, l'ancienne formation créée par Atatürk, active dans l'opposition au gouvernement islamiste modéré du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP). Il estime toutefois que l'ardeur du gouvernement à mettre en œuvre les réformes a surtout été refroidie par la perspective d'un « partenariat privilégié » pour la

Turquie, au lieu de l'adhésion pleine et entière.

Rencontrée dans un café d'Ankara, Leyla, 21 ans, étudiante en médecine, est encore sous le choc des images de la manifestation. Mais le plus étrange à ses yeux, « c'est que la police se comporte différemment selon les manifestants ». « Dernièrement, la femme du premier ministre, Emine Erdogan, a fait un discours en public. Des femmes non voilées ont émis des protestations, et ont été sorties manu militari, parfois tirées par les cheveux ! Un peu plus tard, un groupe de femmes voilées l'ont prise à partie, et la police n'a rien fait », déplore-t-elle.

Le processus de réformes sera entier le jour où « la volonté politique se traduira dans la mentalité de l'administration judiciaire et dans celle de l'ensemble de l'Etat », a rappelé le commissaire européen Olli Rehn à la fin de sa visite. Or, à en juger par les rapports des organisations de défense des droits de l'homme, beaucoup reste à faire. Pour les deux premiers mois de l'année 2005, l'ONG locale Mazlum Der déplore la mort de 75 personnes, assassinées, victimes d'exécutions extrajudiciaires ou d'actes de torture.

De son côté, l'organisation Human Rights Watch vient de réclamer des pressions européennes accrues dans le dossier kurde. Selon l'ONG, la plupart des Kurdes déplacés par les violences du conflit entre l'armée d'Ankara et les militants du PKK (1984-1999) n'ont pu regagner leurs foyers. Dans son dernier rapport, l'ONG regrette que le gouvernement n'ait pas entrepris « la moindre démarche concrète pour les réfugiés ». Le gouvernement, qui estime ceux-ci à 350 000, assure qu'un tiers d'entre eux sont rentrés. C'est faux, rétorque Human Rights Watch, qui évalue cette population à 2 millions.

Marie Jégo

## La condition des femmes turques débattue au Parlement européen

### BRUXELLES

de notre bureau européen

L'eurodéputée Emine Bozkurt n'a pas une position facile : cette socialiste née aux Pays-Bas d'une mère néerlandaise et d'un père turc souhaite que la Turquie entre un jour dans l'Union européenne. Mais, en tant que rapporteur du Parlement européen sur « le rôle des femmes en Turquie », force lui est de constater que ce pays ne garantit pas l'égalité des sexes, qui fait partie de l'acquis communautaire. Lors

d'une audition organisée le 16 mars, elle a demandé que l'« Union européenne mette la question des droits de la femme en bonne place à l'ordre du jour des négociations d'adhésion avec la Turquie ».

M<sup>me</sup> Bozkurt a condamné à cette occasion la manière dont la police s'est acharnée sur des femmes lors de la manifestation du 6 mars à Istanbul, provoquant l'agacement de son collègue social-démocrate allemand Vural Öger, un homme d'affaires d'origine turque, qui a regret-

té que « les actes des forces de l'ordre soient exploités par ceux qui ne veulent pas de l'adhésion de la Turquie ». « Dans tous les pays, il y a des dérapages », a-t-il fait valoir.

Ministre turque en charge des femmes – et seule femme du gouvernement d'Ankara –, Gül-dal Aksit a expliqué que les hommes et les femmes turcs sont désormais égaux en droit selon la nouvelle Constitution. Elle a rappelé que le nouveau code pénal envisage la prison à perpétuité pour les crimes d'honneur et que les villes

de plus de 50 000 habitants ont l'obligation d'ouvrir des foyers pour les femmes victimes de violences.

Plusieurs expertes ont cependant rappelé que l'égalité n'est pas garantie en fait : 19 % des femmes sont analphabètes et, dans le sud-est, seules 52 % des filles sont inscrites dans l'enseignement primaire - 50 % dans le secondaire. Citant

des chiffres pour 2002, une représentante de la Fondation européenne pour l'amélioration des conditions de vie et de travail a indiqué que « 27 % des femmes ont un emploi, contre 73 % des hommes ». Une représentante du Fonds pour les populations des Nations unies a témoigné que « sur 1 259 femmes interviewées entre 1990 et 1996, 68 % avaient déclaré avoir déjà été bat-

tues », et que « 39,2 % acceptent qu'un époux batte sa femme, ce pourcentage s'élevant à 63 % chez celles qui ont entre 15 et 19 ans ».

Rafaële Rivals

## Chypre, écueil pour la Turquie sur la voie de l'Europe

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Résistant à tout règlement, le problème de Chypre s'annonce comme un écueil de taille sur la route de la Turquie vers l'Union européenne et comme un vrai casse-tête pour les 25. Trente ans après la guerre entre les deux communautés, l'île reste divisée entre la République turque de Chypre du Nord (RTCN, 185 000 personnes, reconnue par Ankara seulement) et la République de Chypre (620 000 habitants, la seule reconnue internationalement).

Les négociations entre les deux parties sont au point mort depuis le rejet, par les Chypriotes grecs, en avril 2004, du plan de réunification de l'île mis au point par l'ONU. D'autre part, le gouvernement turc n'a guère progressé depuis le sommet européen du 17 décembre 2004 sur la demande que lui a faite Bruxelles de reconnaître de facto la République de Chypre.

Or, pour pouvoir commencer, comme prévu, ses négociations avec l'UE, le 3 octobre 2005, la Turquie, puissance tutélaire du nord de l'île où elle maintient 35 000 soldats, devra normaliser ses relations avec la République de Chypre, qu'elle refuse de reconnaître depuis 1974. Comme premier ges-

te, le gouvernement turc a été sommé d'accepter l'extension de l'accord d'Union douanière, qui lie Ankara à l'Europe depuis 1963, aux dix nouveaux pays membres de l'UE, dont Chypre. Rien n'a été fait à ce jour.

Le premier ministre turc, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, ne cesse d'assurer qu'il va signer le protocole d'extension. Il l'a encore affirmé à Madrid, le 11 mars, lors de sa rencontre avec le secrétaire général de l'ONU, Kofi Annan, et le président de la Commission européenne, José Manuel Durao Barroso. Mais il ne perd pas une occasion de rappeler qu'il « ne s'agit pas d'une reconnaissance de la République de Chypre ».

« Il peut difficilement dire autre chose. N'oubliez pas que Chypre est une des grandes causes nationales », rappelle Zeynep Ürektürk, journaliste au quotidien anglophone *The New Anatolian*, à Ankara. Les causes nationales - les questions kurde, arménienne, chypriote, l'armée et son rôle au sein de l'Etat, le culte d'Atatürk - forment, en Turquie, le cœur de la pensée nationaliste, qui ne souffre aucune remise en cause.

Ancien ministre - démissionnaire - de la culture et du tourisme dans le gouvernement du Parti de la justice et du développement (AKP, la formation islamiste modé-

rée du premier ministre turc), Erkan Mumcu ne ménage pas ses critiques au parti qu'il vient de quitter. « L'équipe au pouvoir ne sait pas parler comme il faut du problème de Chypre. Concentré sur l'obtention d'une date, le gouvernement a oublié le reste », explique-t-il, tout en le déplorant car « dans le cas de Chypre, la perspective d'une solution s'éloigne ».

La seule issue, selon lui, est de « ramener les deux parties autour du plan Annan, qui doit être révisé ». Le plan du secrétaire général de l'ONU, prévoyant la création d'une fédération souple composée de « deux Etats constitutifs », a été rejeté par les trois quarts des électeurs chypriotes grecs lors du référendum du 24 avril 2004, la plupart des partis l'ayant jugé trop favorable aux Chypriotes turcs.

### « LA TURQUIE DÉCIDE DE TOUT »

Au nord de l'île, les initiatives en faveur de la recherche d'une solution se sont taries, occultées par la perspective d'une élection présidentielle en avril. Pour la première fois, Rauf Denktaş, le chef historique de la communauté chypriote turque, soutenu par les militaires turcs et peu enclin à un règlement, ne se présentera pas. Le premier ministre progressiste, Mehmet Ali Talat, qui

avait appelé en 2004 les Chypriotes turcs à voter en faveur du plan Annan, a beau être le favori pour l'élection, il est critiqué et rien n'assure que les négociations reprendront rapidement.

Nombre d'habitants du nord de l'île s'interrogent sur les raisons pour lesquelles leur gouvernement ferme les yeux sur le bradage en cours - à des Britanniques ou à des Turcs - des propriétés des Chypriotes grecs (environ 160 000 qui ont fui le nord en 1974, laissant tout derrière eux). Par le passé, Mehmet Ali Talat s'était pourtant dit attaché à la solution du problème des propriétés.

« Mehmet Ali Talat fait très exactement ce qu'Ankara lui demande, estime un habitant de ces régions. Pour continuer à jouir du soutien de la Turquie [principal contributeur au budget de la partie nord], il a dû faire alliance avec Serdar Denktaş [le fils de Rauf Denktaş], avec lequel il a formé le gouvernement. »

« Or la Turquie, qui décide de tout ici, n'est pas pressée de voir aboutir un règlement, poursuit-il. Les Chypriotes grecs non plus. Les deux vont tergiverser, et nous, Chypriotes turcs, nous en ressortirons perdants, comme toujours. »

M. Jé.

## As attacks flare, delay of government irks Iraq cleric

By Edward Wong

**BAGHDAD:** A wave of insurgent attacks across central and northern Iraq on Monday left at least 10 Iraqis dead, a day after a U.S. convoy fended off as many as 50 attackers in one of the fiercest firefights of recent months right outside the capital.

As the guerrilla war raged, the most powerful Shiite cleric expressed displeasure over the delay in forming a new government, said a senior Shiite politician who met with the cleric on Sunday.

The cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, feels "discontent" over the delay and has called "for haste in forming" the government "on the basis of maintaining equality for everyone," the politician, Abdulaziz al-Hakim, told reporters in the holy city of Najaf, where

Sistani lives.

The confidence of the Iraqi people in their future, given a boost after the strong turnout in the Jan. 30 elections despite insurgent threats, has steadily faded as negotiations to form the government have dragged on.

The leading Shiite and Kurdish parties, which together have more than two-thirds of the 275 seats in the new constitutional assembly, have been in protracted talks, with the Kurds trying to extract from the Shiites promises that will ultimately result in the Kurds retaining strong autonomous powers and getting territory, particularly the oil-rich city of Kirkuk.

Hakim, leader of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq, one of the big winners of the elections, was obviously relaying Sistani's mes-

sage to put more pressure on the Kurds. The reclusive ayatollah has proven to be the single most powerful authority in

the new Iraq, with the ability to call up huge street protests and get large numbers of Shiite voters to flock to the elections. Any displeasure on the part of the ayatollah could make itself felt among ordinary Shiite Arabs.

"Sayed Sistani has affirmed the principles he believes in, which are national unity, giving rights to the Iraqi people and not marginalizing the rights of others," said Hakim, who also met with the other three grand ayatollahs of Najaf on Sunday. Hakim added that the talks between the main Shiite bloc, called the United Iraqi Alliance, and the Kurds were showing "obvious progress," and that a new government would be announced "within the coming days."

For weeks, though, the leading politicians have been saying the government would be formed within "a few days." The assembly convened last week, but no government was announced.

The New York Times

**IRAK** Chiïtes et kurdes se partageraient l'essentiel des portefeuilles ministériels

# La crise entre Bagdad et Amman persiste

En Irak, où la violence s'est encore amplifiée mardi, les Chiïtes, grands vainqueurs des élections générales du 30 janvier, et les Kurdes semblent s'être partagés l'essentiel des portefeuilles ministériels du futur gouvernement, ne laissant aux sunnites que quelques maroquins. Les Chiïtes, majoritaires dans le pays, s'attribueraient 16 ou 17 portefeuilles, notamment ceux de l'Intérieur, des Finances et du Conseil de la sécurité nationale. Les Kurdes, arrivés en deuxième position lors du scrutin, récolteraient entre sept et huit ministères, dont celui des Affaires étrangères. Les sunnites hériteraient de quatre à six ministères, dont peut-être celui de la Défense. Les chrétiens et les Turcomans en recevraient chacun un.

Georges Malbrunot

L'ambassadeur d'Irak en Jordanie, Atta Abdel Wahab, devait rentrer hier soir à Bagdad pour consultations. L'Irak reste « offensé » par la crise provoquée par l'implication présumée d'un kamikaze jordanien dans un attentat sanglant à Hilla qui a fait 118 morts le 28 février.

« Nous devons le rappeler pour calmer la rue », a déclaré le chef de la diplomatie irakienne, Hoshiyar Zebari. Depuis l'acte terroriste, de nombreuses manifestations antijordanien-nes ont eu lieu en Irak.

Les autorités de Bagdad reprochent à son voisin d'être « trop souple avec les auteurs d'attentats ». Selon Zebari, « son

père a organisé une fête pour célébrer l'attentat suicide », ce qu'a démenti l'intéressé, ainsi que le premier ministre jordanien Faysal al-Fayez.

« Le pouvoir a commis l'erreur d'entrer dans le détail de cette affaire, explique un observateur à Amman. Il aurait dû dire qu'il n'était pas responsable des actes de ses ressortis-

sants, sans commenter un reportage montrant le père du kamikaze qui précisait avoir reçu un appel téléphonique lui annonçant que son fils s'était fait exploser à Hilla. »

Pour désamorcer la crise, le pouvoir hachémite, après avoir rappelé lui aussi son chargé d'affaires, a décidé lundi de le renvoyer à Bagdad. Les relations entre les deux pays ont souvent été électorales, même du temps où feu le roi Hussein

disposait d'une résidence dans le palais de Saddam Hussein à Tikrit.

Héritier d'une ancienne civilisation, l'homme de la rue en Irak affiche volontiers un certain mépris pour ses voisins bédouins, qui les font attendre de longues heures avant d'entrer dans le royaume. Les Chiïtes ont toujours reproché à la couronne hachémite d'avoir entretenu d'excellentes relations avec le régime déchu de Saddam, qui les opprima. Et aujourd'hui, alors que les Chiïtes sont aux portes du pou-

voir sur les bords du Tigre, le roi Abdallah II ne cache pas ses craintes de voir un des phares du monde arabe tomber entre les mains des partisans d'Ali. Sa récente mise en garde contre l'émergence d'« un croissant chiïte » reliant Téhéran à Bagdad a certainement laissé des traces.

Les sunnites irakiens, de leur côté, dénoncent régulièrement l'alignement d'Amman sur Washington. Le premier attentat violent commis par la guérilla après la chute de la dictature visa l'ambassade de Jordanie en août 2003.

Coincée entre une population largement anti-américaine et son alliance stratégique avec Washington, le monarque jor-

danien est contraint de mettre ses œufs dans plusieurs paniers. D'un côté, il recueille les filles de Saddam et certains enfants de hiérarques de l'ancien régime comme Tareq Aziz, de l'autre son royaume devient la base arrière des agents de la CIA en Irak ou des entreprises

américaines chargées de la reconstruction du pays. Ses services de sécurité ont beau renforcer leur surveillance, les Frères musulmans ou des réfugiés palestiniens ne sont pas inactifs dans leur soutien logistique aux groupes armés irakiens. D'autant que la frontière est poreuse et que certaines tribus sont à cheval sur les deux pays.

« Il existe une volonté de régler la crise, mais cela nécessitera du temps, a ajouté Zebari. Nous ressentons de l'amertume. » Selon lui, cette passe d'armes révèle « l'incapacité des Jordaniens à définir une politique cohérente en Irak et à y rechercher des alliés crédibles ».

Aux élections législatives de janvier, Amman avait parié sur Iyad Allaoui, l'actuel premier ministre, qui a subi une défaite au profit de l'Alliance chiïte unifiée. De quoi alimenter une fois encore l'amertume des responsables irakiens sortis vainqueurs des urnes.

## Chacun son Turc

MAIS c'est à croire qu'ils n'en loupent pas une, en Turquie ! Il y avait déjà eu, le 8 mars, la répression virile et assez peu excusable d'une manif de femmes. De son côté, « Le Figaro » (17/3) nous apprend qu'on trouve sur la liste des best-sellers actuels d'Istanbul, et en quatrième place, la fameuse blquette d'un certain Adolf intitulée « **Mein Kampf** ». Pour faciliter l'accès des masses à ce document capital, l'éditeur n'a d'ailleurs pas redouté d'en casser le prix (il se vend autour de 3,5 euros pour 500 pages). « J'observe qu'il existe actuellement, en Turquie, un courant anti-européen et anti-américain qui peut être favo-

nable à la montée d'un tel livre », commente un universitaire interrogé par la correspondante du « Figaro ». « Les Turcs ont le sentiment qu'on veut leur dicter leurs actes. D'où une certaine crispation. »

Comme s'il en fallait une illustration, « Courrier international »

(17/3) reproduit, sur une page bien tassée, un long et virulent article du « Wall Street Journal » qui recense toute une série d'articles, déclarations ou expositions (turcs) pas trop philosémites et en tout cas franchement anti-américains. Le tout décliné sur le thème : les ingrats !

Enfin, et pour compléter le tableau, Hans Kretschmer, le repré-

sentant de l'Union européenne en Turquie, vient très publiquement de déplorer le retard de la Turquie à « éradiquer la torture », favoriser « la liberté d'expression » et « améliorer les droits des Kurdes » (« Le Monde », 23/3).

Plus près de nous, en revanche, et très précisément sur les murs du métro, plus souriante aussi, une campagne de pub à l'effigie du tourisme d'Ankara salue en ce moment « l'entrée des Européens en Turquie ». C'est un pays de contrastes assez vifs et il n'est pas dit qu'en ce moment, pour ses relations internationales, ça lui facilite beaucoup les choses...

Deux ans après l'invasion de l'Irak

# MOYEN-ORIENT DEMAIN LA DÉMOCRATIE ?

L'opération américaine a transformé l'Irak en foyer du terrorisme islamiste tout en favorisant un mouvement de réformes et une aspiration démocratique en Egypte, en Arabie Saoudite, au Liban... Mais jusqu'où peut aller ce « printemps arabe » ?

**D**eux ans exactement après le déclenchement de l'invasion de l'Irak par les Etats-Unis et leurs alliés, que reste-t-il de la raison officielle – la destruction des armes de destruction massive détenues par Saddam Hussein – invoquée par Washington pour entrer en guerre ? Rien. Malgré des recherches intenses menées pendant plusieurs mois, l'armée américaine n'a trouvé en Irak aucune arme de destruction massive. Comme l'avait affirmé avant la guerre Hans Blix, chef des inspecteurs des Nations unies, elles avaient été détruites, sous la pression des missions de vérification de l'ONU, avant le déclenchement des hostilités. Quant au « tsunami démocratique » qui devait, selon certains conseillers de la Maison-Blanche, déferler sur la région, il n'a pas encore produit, il s'en faut, les résultats annoncés.

Le régime de Saddam Hussein a été détruit, ce dont personne ne se plaindra. Des élections ont eu lieu pour la première fois en Irak. Mais après deux années de guerre et d'occupation militaire, qui ont coûté la vie à 1 500 soldats américains et à près de 100 000 Irakiens, elles ont surtout consacré la division ethnico-reli-

gieuse du pays, qui n'est pas le chemin le plus sûr vers la démocratie. Les chiites ont voté pour des partis chiites, les Kurdes pour les partis kurdes. Et les sunnites se sont en majorité abstenus. Les députés issus de ces élections, qui se réunissent dans un bunker sous la protection des soldats américains, n'ont toujours pas réussi, près de deux mois après le scrutin, à désigner un gouvernement et un Premier ministre. Plongé dans le chaos, le pays, qui vit dans le fracas des attentats quotidiens, est devenu le foyer du terrorisme islamiste international. La prise d'otages, politique ou crapuleuse, est devenue l'une des principales industries nationales.

Reste que le séisme irakien et surtout le nouvel interventionnisme armé américain dont il est le résultat ont ébranlé l'ensemble de la région, dispersant ici des filières terroristes mais encourageant ailleurs des velléités démocratiques naissantes. L'organisation pour la première fois d'élections municipales en Arabie Saoudite ou l'annonce en Egypte d'une présidentielle au suffrage universel direct vont indéniablement dans le bon sens. Faut-il pour autant y percevoir les signes d'un véritable « printemps arabe » ? Rien n'est moins sûr, tant

tous ces régimes sont passés maîtres dans l'art d'assurer leur survie par tous les moyens, y compris en faisant alterner les périodes d'intense répression avec des moments d'ouverture. Ponctué de quelques gestes de libéralisation, l'intronisation de Bachar al-Assad n'avait-elle pas suscité l'espoir d'un assouplissement de la dictature syrienne, bien vite démenti par la suite ? Et en Egypte, pourquoi le président Moubarak n'a-t-il pas renforcé sa réforme électorale par la suppression de l'état d'urgence en vigueur depuis 1981 ?

Un rapide tour d'horizon permet donc de percevoir, pays par pays, les limites d'une démocratisation au mieux balbutiante, au pis cosmétique. Mais il ne faut pas non plus nier les effets positifs du « coup de pied dans la fourmilière » que marque l'intervention armée des Etats-Unis en Irak. D'abord parce que, malgré leur méfiance, leur critique et leur hostilité à l'égard de la politique américaine, nombre d'intellectuels ou de militants engagés en faveur de la démocratie dans les pays arabes – les premiers concernés – admettent qu'ils jouissent en ce moment d'un climat plus favorable à l'expression de leurs revendications.



Manifestation contre la présence syrienne au Liban le 14 mars à Beyrouth

Sageli - Reuters / MaxPPP

Il est vrai que le thème de la démocratisation est désormais devenu un sujet récurrent dans la presse arabe. Même les régimes les plus conservateurs, comme ceux des monarchies du Golfe, ne se montrent plus aussi réfractaires qu'auparavant à l'idée de consentir à des réformes. Chaque sommet arabe accouche d'une déclaration officielle de bonne intention sur ce chapitre ou sur celui du développement du monde arabe, comme à Sanaa, à Alexandrie, à Beyrouth et cette semaine à Alger, qui accueille les chefs d'Etat de la Ligue arabe. Bien sûr, entre ces annonces et leur application réelle, il y a un gouffre. Et les autocrates des pays arabes ont souvent tendance à utiliser une presse aux ordres pour tenter de faire passer leurs timides évolutions pour de véritables révolutions. Mais peut-on vraiment leur reprocher de se décerner ce satisfecit quand George Bush lui-même évoque sur tous les tons ce fort hypothétique « monde plus sûr » censé lui valoir la reconnaissance éternelle du public américain ?

L'idée de favoriser une impulsion réformatrice dans le monde arabe est surtout une conséquence du 11 septembre 2001. Aux Etats-Unis, les experts sont parvenus à la

conclusion que les régimes autoritaires, le sous-développement, le malaise d'une jeunesse sans perspective étaient les premiers responsables de la transformation de la région en inépuisable vivier du terrorisme. C'est ce constat qu'avait repris à son compte George Bush il y a un an, en lançant sa campagne pour la « démocratisation du Grand Moyen-Orient ». Démagogie ? Pour contredire les critiques qu'elle a suscitées aussi bien dans les capitales arabes qu'en Europe – où l'on a moqué une croisade destinée à masquer, comme en Irak, la mainmise des multinationales américaines sur les marchés arabes –, la Maison-Blanche s'est efforcée de prouver que ce projet ne reposait pas uniquement sur sa puissance incantatoire. Le Sénat et la Chambre des Représentants viennent ainsi de voter une loi destinée à créer de nouveaux instruments de promotion de la démocratie, et un budget de 250 millions de dollars. Mais ces efforts se heurtent encore à de nombreux obstacles qui freinent la réalisation de ce plan Bush pour le monde arabe.

L'administration américaine fait-elle ce qu'il faut pour être crédible auprès des populations arabes qui perçoivent la politique de Washing-

ton comme impériale ? Un sondage réalisé en février par le Centre d'Etudes stratégiques de l'Université de Jordanie dans cinq pays arabes montre que « les deux tiers des personnes interrogées ne croient pas que la coalition dirigée par les Etats-Unis puisse transformer l'Irak en un modèle démocratique pour la région ou améliorer la vie des Irakiens ». Washington, il est vrai, n'a pas rompu ses liens avec les pays autocratiques et ne conditionne pas le maintien de ses relations aux progrès en matière de droits de l'homme ou de démocratie. Pis, la guerre au terrorisme est menée en collaboration étroite avec les services de sécurité de ces pays qui sont le bras armé des souverains ou des tyrans.

Enfin, le dessein américain se heurte aussi aux préventions européennes – notamment françaises – selon lesquelles, dans le monde arabe, l'affaiblissement des Etats peut être générateur de chaos, comme ce fut le cas en Irak. L'édification d'un Moyen-Orient démocratique est-elle réaliste si les Etats-Unis et leurs partenaires européens continuent d'avoir des visions aussi divergentes des objectifs et des moyens ?

**RENÉ BACKMANN**  
et **HENRI GUIRCHOUN**

## IRAN

# Que les Etats-Unis viennent nous libérer !

Au moment où Téhéran se mobilise face aux pressions de Washington, un article sur un site iranien plaide au contraire pour une intervention militaire, seul chemin vers la démocratie en Iran.

GOOYA NEWS

Bruxelles

Ces derniers temps, un certain nombre d'articles consacrés à l'éventualité d'une attaque militaire et d'une occupation américaines de l'Iran ont été publiés par des personnalités iraniennes. La thèse défendue dans ces articles consiste à dire qu'une intervention et une occupation militaires rendraient nécessairement impossible l'installation de la démocratie en Iran. Elles auraient même pour conséquence de laminer complètement le mouvement démocratique iranien et de provoquer une partition du pays.

Certes, nous avons des exemples d'occupation militaire d'un pays par un autre avec des conséquences désastreuses en termes de promotion de la démocratie ; mais il existe aussi des contre-exemples où une occupation a pu jouer un rôle de catalyseur de la démocratie – l'Allemagne ou le Japon après 1945, ou plus récemment l'Afghanistan et l'Irak. Certains estiment ainsi que la démocratie ne peut être qu'une production locale et qu'aucune force étrangère n'est en mesure d'instaurer en Iran le règne de la démocratie et des droits de l'homme. Selon eux, nous devrions nous en remettre à ce lent processus qui, comme le pense Shirine Ebadi [avocate iranienne Prix Nobel de la paix], nous conduirait in fine à la démocratie.

### LE MOUVEMENT DÉMOCRATIQUE EXISTE BEL ET BIEN EN IRAN

L'action en faveur de la démocratie de la part de journalistes, de défenseurs des droits de l'homme, d'associations d'étudiants et même de personnes évoluant au sein de l'appareil d'Etat est là pour montrer qu'il existe bel et bien en Iran un mouvement démocratique. Ce mouvement d'intellectuels est une condition certes nécessaire mais à elle seule insuffisante pour que l'Iran se démocratise réellement. Croire que ce mouvement extrêmement lent va avec le temps nous rapprocher de la démocratie s'apparente donc à une belle illusion. En effet, ce n'est pas avec quelques intellectuels que l'on fonde une démocratie. Dans la mesure où la conjoncture socioéconomique et la situation

► Le jardin des mollahs.  
Dessin de Dieter Zehentmayr paru dans Der Standard, Vienne.



DER GARTEN DES MULLAH

### ■ Pétitions

Plusieurs pétitions circulent actuellement à Téhéran. La "pétition des 565" dresse un bilan négatif de la République Islamique, "Inapte à diriger le pays", et appelle indirectement à la fin de la prééminence du religieux sur le politique. Une autre

pétition, qui a récolté des milliers de signatures en Iran comme à l'étranger, notamment celles de Noam Chomsky et de Gabriel García Márquez, s'oppose à une intervention américaine en Iran, car "cela renforcerait les forces réactionnaires dans le pays".

politique et culturelle vont en se détériorant, la probabilité qu'un gouvernement démocratique soit capable de gérer seul le pays semble très faible. Année après année, notre économie se porte de plus en plus mal. On assiste ainsi en Iran à une hausse des prix vertigineuse, à un creusement du fossé entre classes sociales et à l'extension du fléau de la drogue. La

croyance à toute sorte de superstitions et l'attirance pour les sectes se répandent dans toutes les couches de la société, y compris chez les plus diplômés. Dans ces conditions, le facteur temps prend toute son importance. En effet, plus les fondamentaux éco-

nomiques et sociaux se dégradent, moins la situation sera propice à l'avènement d'un gouvernement démocratique.

Imaginons un instant qu'après plusieurs décennies de lutte en faveur de la démocratie, l'Iran accède enfin à ce régime politique. Le prix que l'Iran aura alors eu à payer aura été extrêmement lourd. Pendant ces vingt à vingt-cinq années – pour prendre un exemple de durée réaliste –, l'Iran aura accusé un retard très important par rapport au monde et à ses voisins tels que la Turquie ou Dubaï. Dans ces conditions, si nous voulons poursuivre selon ce même processus lent pendant encore vingt à vingt-cinq ans, les valeurs démocratiques que nous désirons tant pour notre pays risquent de ne déboucher que sur de la désolation. Il n'y a donc pas de temps à perdre. Chaque minute qui passe nous sépare encore davantage du monde civilisé.

### UN BILAN CATASTROPHIQUE APRÈS 25 ANS DE GESTION

Le régime actuel en Iran est bien incapable de tenir un discours justifiant sa présence. Ces gens, dont la gestion du pays après vingt-cinq années de pouvoir s'avère être une faillite complète, auraient bien du mal à faire des promesses d'avenir à la population. Dès lors, le seul discours qui justifie l'existence de ce régime

consiste précisément à dire qu'il n'existe pas d'autre alternative. Même Khatami, à lire son site officiel, considère que l'Iran cumule trop de handicaps sociaux et historiques pour pouvoir accéder dans un avenir proche à la démocratie. Il est vrai que l'état de l'opposition iranienne aujourd'hui donne en quelque sorte raison à la République islamique. En effet, en vingt-cinq ans, l'opposition iranienne de l'extérieur a été incapable de créer la moindre plate-forme démocratique commune. Les Iraniens de l'intérieur comme de l'extérieur ont bien compris que cette opposition, aussi éprise de démocratie soit-elle, n'est pas en mesure de

diriger le pays. Des groupes à l'idéologie totalitaire, comme les Moudjahidines du peuple, pourraient sans doute, eux, prendre le pouvoir par la force en l'absence de la République islamique. Dès lors, la seule alternative ne peut résider que dans l'intervention d'une puissance étrangère organisée. Celle-ci, en l'occurrence les Etats-Unis, pourrait protéger les démocrates iraniens des ennemis d'une société libre – qu'il s'agisse des Moudjahidines ou du Hezbollah (milice du régime). Les Etats-Unis aideraient de la sorte l'opposition iranienne, qui n'a toujours pas appris à s'asseoir autour d'une table, à entrer dans le jeu démocratique.

En réponse aux doutes de Khatami, il convient simplement de dire que le principal obstacle à l'avènement de la démocratie en Iran n'est autre que la République islamique elle-même. Il faudrait en effet lui demander pourquoi les Kurdes et les chiites d'Irak ont découvert la culture démocratique alors que les Iraniens en seraient incapables. Les Américains, même s'ils ne le font qu'en fonction de leurs intérêts, peuvent certainement, tout comme ils l'ont fait en Irak et en Afghanistan, créer en Iran un contexte favorable à la démocratie.

**Farid Pirouzian**

## MONDE ARABE

### La troisième défaite du nationalisme

Après les Koweïtiens et les Irakiens, c'est au tour des Libanais de se débarrasser des mythes de la nation arabe, estime *Asharq Al-Awsat*.

L'idée de la grande nation arabe unifiée, du Golfe à l'Océan, avait déjà subi de nombreux revers. Certains de ses adeptes les plus fanatiques en sont devenus les pourfendeurs les plus impitoyables. Le Koweït, par exemple, défendait avec acharnement les causes et positions de l'idéologie panarabe, jusqu'au jour où, un beau matin d'août 1991, un

pays arabe voisin [l'Irak] l'a envahi [au nom de ce même panarabisme]. Après avoir versé beaucoup de larmes, il a fini par adopter des positions plus réalistes. Quant aux habitants du pays qui l'avait envahi, les Irakiens, ils ont pour beaucoup d'entre eux souffert plus que tous les autres de l'idéologie baasiste, très panarabe, au point d'avoir développé une antipathie pour tout ce qui est arabe. Et voici venu le tour de l'élite libanaise. L'assassinat de l'ancien Premier ministre Rafic Hariri a créé un quasi-consensus contre le gouvernement actuel et son soutien syrien, qui occupe le Liban au nom de la fraternité arabe depuis vingt-neuf ans. Pourtant, dans le passé, l'élite libanaise s'était distinguée par son enthousiasme pour un panarabisme sans compromis, se montrant indifférente aux crimes des potentats arabes et aux souffrances de leurs victimes.

Pourquoi cette idéologie s'est-elle disloquée ? Sans doute parce que certains l'ont utilisée pour se maintenir

au pouvoir et pour justifier leurs erreurs. Et, depuis quarante ans, les intellectuels ont refusé d'analyser les défaites arabes. Ils ont déformé la réalité, sacralisé des symboles et asséné des slogans pour freiner toutes les tentatives de réformes politiques. Au Liban, rien ne prédestinait les Syriens à rencontrer des problèmes à brève échéance. Il existait même un accord [l'accord de Taëf] censé régir les relations bilatérales. Mais ces relations ont été empoisonnées par toutes sortes d'abus, sous prétexte de lutte nationale contre l'ennemi sioniste. On [la Syrie] a utilisé ces objectifs pour conserver Beyrouth plutôt que pour libérer les Territoires palestiniens. Et, comme toujours, les panarabes les plus fanatiques sont ceux qui se trouvent loin du feu de l'action, comme l'illustre tel intellectuel du Maghreb qui blâme les Libanais pour avoir, dans leur opposition à la Syrie, renforcé... Israël.

**Abderrahman Al-Rached, Asharq Al-Awsat (extraits), Londres**

## A 'positive' Iran-Europe meeting

### No breakthrough, but Tehran makes nuclear assurances

By Elaine Sciolino

**PARIS:** Iran and its European negotiating partners struggled without success Wednesday to break the impasse on reaching a long-term agreement on nuclear, economic and security cooperation.

But Iran presented concrete proposals to provide further assurances to the Europeans that its nuclear program is peaceful and the two sides have agreed to meet again soon, participants said.

"We had rather extensive talks and we presented a number of ideas on how we can move forward," Mohammad Javad Zarif, Iran's ambassador to the

United Nations and the head of the delegation, said in a telephone interview. "The tone of the meeting was positive and we will continue to discuss this work shortly."

A European participant in the meeting said, "By the standards of international group bureaucracies and negotiations, we've moved forward a bit."

Senior negotiators from Iran on one side and France, Germany, Britain and the European Union on the other met at the French Foreign Ministry to review progress on three months of negotiations aimed at providing objective proof that Iran's nuclear program is not designed to produce nuclear weapons.

A statement by Iran and the Europeans after the meeting said that the talks had created an "enhanced relationship" that set the stage for further progress.

Among the ideas presented by the Iranian side, participants said, was a phased approach including enhanced monitoring and technical guarantees

designed to allow Iran to once again engage in the enrichment of uranium, a process that is useful in producing both nuclear energy and nuclear bombs. The Europeans reject that approach, arguing that Iran's nuclear activities are so suspicious that the country should never again be allowed to enrich uranium.

Under a preliminary agreement reached last November that freezes Iran's programs to make enriched uranium in exchange for potential rewards from the West, Iran has pledged to give "objective guarantees" that its nuclear activities are peaceful. The Europeans have interpreted that to mean that Iran must permanently stop all activities to make enriched uranium.

The Iranians say that means nothing of the sort, that under its international obligations it has the sovereign right to conduct all nuclear activities that are not bomb-related. The two sides repeated their fixed positions Wednesday, participants said.

Sirus Naseri, a senior Iranian negotiator, told reporters following the talks that Iran would not accept the European demand that it give up sensitive nuclear activities. "This is not something we are prepared to consider," he said, reiterating the Iranian demand that concrete progress must come soon. "Time is of the essence."

A European participant said, "We are no further forward on this issue."

Wednesday was the first time the negotiating teams had met since the Bush administration softened its position to allow the Europeans to offer broader incentives to Iran that would allow the country to open talks for membership into the World Trade Organization and to buy spare parts for its civilian aircraft. In exchange, the United States has extracted a pledge from the Europeans to refer Iran's case to the United Nations for possible censure or sanctions if the negotiations fail.

But the Iranians have dismissed the American shift as a ploy to pressure them to give up uranium enrichment and its offer of potential rewards as meaningless.

The difficulties in the negotiations were laid out in a confidential, four-page status report by the Europeans on March 10 that acknowledged that "progress is not as fast as we would wish."

But the status report added that recent international support for the European negotiating process, particularly from the United States and Russia, "has strengthened the prospects for a satisfactory outcome."

The report said that the European side was proposing Iran's acquisition of a light-water research reactor to replace Iran's planned heavy water research reactor. The Europeans are considering the dispatch of expert teams to Iran to investigate the possibility of providing Iran with such a reactor, a European negotiator said.

Iran is constructing a heavy water reactor that is designed to produce plutonium, which can be used quite readily as fuel for nuclear weapons.

Weapons experts say plutonium is often preferred to enriched uranium for compact warheads on missiles because it takes a smaller amount to produce a significant blast. Iran could not gain access to a new light-water reactor without American support.

The New York Times

## Annan son reportedly got \$300,000

The Associated Press

**UNITED NATIONS, New York:** Kojo Annan, the son of the UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, received at least \$300,000 from a Swiss company that was awarded a contract from the United Nations' oil-for-food program in Iraq, almost double the amount previously disclosed, two newspapers reported Wednesday.

The newspapers, The Financial Times, based in London, and Il Sole 24 Ore, an Italian business newspaper, which conducted a joint investigation, said the payments "were arranged in ways that obscured where the money came from or whom it went to."

The newspapers also reported that the secretary general met top executives of the company, Cotecna Inspection SA, twice before the oil-for-food contract was awarded in December 1998 and once afterward.

The former chairman of the Federal Reserve, Paul Volcker, who is conducting an independent investigation of allegations of corruption in the oil-for-food program, is scheduled to release an interim report Tuesday detailing his findings about whether Kofi Annan and Kojo Annan committed any wrongdoing.

The secretary general, his son and

Cotecna all deny any wrongdoing.

A spokesman for Cotecna said the company had been cooperating fully in assisting the Volcker inquiry "to clarify any and all outstanding questions concerning payment to Kojo Annan."

Robert Massey, Cotecna's chief executive, met with Volcker and his investigators in New York on Monday to discuss the discrepancies in the reported payments to Kojo Annan and the company's ongoing audit to determine the correct amount, the spokesman said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The spokesman confirmed the three contacts between Cotecna executives and the secretary general and said they were reported to Volcker and other bodies investigating the UN humanitarian program in Iraq.

The papers reported that Annan met in January 1997 with Massey and his father, Elie-Georges Massey, Cotecna's founder and chairman, on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Switzerland. The elder Massey also met Annan at UN headquarters in September 1998 and sought him out at a public event in Geneva in January 1999, the papers said.

A UN spokesman and Cotecna were quoted in the papers as saying the meetings with Annan had nothing to do with

the contract to certify the import of goods under the oil-for-food program. The papers said the oil-for-food contract was ultimately worth about \$60 million to the Swiss company.

A UN spokesman, Fred Eckhard, had no immediate comment on the reports in the two papers. Both papers said Kojo Annan declined to comment.

Also Tuesday, Eckhard said that the United Nations agreed to reimburse Benon Sevan, the suspended head of the oil-for-food program, for legal fees he incurred during the investigation.

He said Sevan's fees are to be reimbursed with Iraqi oil funds set aside to help administer the program. That means Iraq oil money would essentially pay for Sevan to defend himself against charges that he bilked the program.

Eckhard said the United Nations had agreed to pay reasonable legal expenses up to Feb. 3, when Volcker's probe accused Sevan of a conflict of interest.

The plan to reimburse Sevan is almost certain to raise new questions about the UN's handling of the oil-for-food program and draw new criticism from congressional investigators also examining its operation.

Kojo Annan worked for Cotecna in West Africa from 1995 to December 1997 and then as a consultant until the end of 1998, according to the company.

HERALD TRIBUNE

March 24, 2005

Chiites et Kurdes se taillent la part du lion dans le futur gouvernement.

# Le grand marchandage pour les portefeuilles en Irak

**P**eut-être samedi. Sinon, promis, juré, avant la fin du mois. Le nouveau gouvernement irakien, issu des élections du 30 janvier, devrait bientôt être dévoilé et présenté à l'Assemblée nationale, qui a tenu sa session inaugurale la semaine dernière, pour approbation. La liste chiite de l'Alliance unifiée irakienne, qui a remporté la majorité absolue des sièges à l'Assemblée, pousse pour que le vote ait lieu dès samedi. Le futur Premier ministre, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, qui dirige le parti islamiste chiite Dawa, est issu de ses rangs. Avec la moitié des portefeuilles, soit seize ou dix-sept, dont ceux de l'Intérieur, des Finances et le Conseil de la sécurité nationale, la coalition chiite, rassemblée sous la bannière de l'aya-

tollah modéré Ali Sistani, se taille la part du lion. Les deux partis kurdes, qui contrôlent 77 sièges, ce qui en fait le deuxième bloc parlementaire, auraient sept ou huit ministères, dont celui des Affaires étrangères, déjà occupé par Hochiar Zebari. Ils réclament aussi celui du Pétrole, un poste clé étant donné les revendications kurdes sur Kirkouk, où est concentré l'essentiel des réserves pétrolifères irakiennes. La présidence de la République semble en revanche acquise à Jalal Talabani, le chef de l'Union patriotique du Kurdistan. Ce qui ferait de lui le premier chef d'Etat non arabe d'un pays arabe dans l'histoire contemporaine. Les perdants de ce grand marchandage sont les sunnites, qui ont largement boycotté l'élection, et le Premier ministre

sortant Iyad Allaoui, dont la liste, plutôt laïque et soutenue par les Américains, n'est arrivée qu'en troisième position. Selon des sources citées par l'AFP, son parti a «*de très faibles chances de participer au gouvernement*». Quant aux sunnites, leurs partis étant quasi absents du Parlement, ce sont

**Le parti du Premier ministre sortant, Iyad Allaoui, a «de très faibles chances de participer au gouvernement», selon des sources citées par l'AFP.**

des personnalités indépendantes qui entrèrent au gouvernement: ils pourraient contrôler quatre à six ministères, dont celui de la Défense. La présidence de l'Assemblée nationale leur serait aussi réservée. Chrétiens et Turcomans se verront accorder un ministère.

La formation du gouvernement a renforcé le processus de communautarisation de la vie politique irakienne: à quelques exceptions près, les partis ressemblent de plus en plus à des regroupements ethnico-religieux, qui réclament une participation au gouvernement proportionnelle à leur poids électoral. Les tractations, entamées fin février, ont été longues et laborieuses. A tel point que l'ayatollah Sistani, devenu le «*faiseur de roi*» dans l'Irak post-Saddam Hussein, a exprimé son «*mécontentement*» face au retard pris. Les négociations ont donc repris hier, à la fin des fêtes de Norouz, qui marquent le nouvel an kurde. Elles sont censées s'achever aujourd'hui. Les discussions ont notam-

ment achoppé sur la demande chiite d'une Constitution prenant l'islam pour unique référence – inacceptable pour les Kurdes, d'obédience plutôt laïque – et la demande des Kurdes d'inclure Kirkouk à leur région autonome – inacceptable pour les Arabes. Avant la présentation du cabinet, les deux alliances, chiite et kurde, sont censées signer un protocole d'accord. Selon Talabani, l'accord trouvé sur l'article 58 de la Loi fondamentale «*sera mis en application un mois après la mise sur pied du nouveau gouvernement*». Cet article stipule que le gouvernement doit favoriser le retour des Kurdes expulsés par Saddam et faire des propositions sur le statut définitif de Kirkouk, qui devra figurer dans la Constitution permanente. ◆

CHRISTOPHE AYAD



Dans le quartier d'Al-Amiriya, à l'ouest de Bagdad hier, des adolescents constatent les dégâts causés par un tir d'obus de mortier sur leur école, qui a tué un étudiant et fait quatre blessés.

Dealing with Iran I • By Cameron Khosrowshahi

# Iraqi Shiism could topple the mullahs

**W**ASHINGTON At the start of the last century, some time before World War I, my grandfather left his native Iran for Najaf, Iraq. It was a common journey back then for the young and religious-minded in Iran, eager for guidance.

The Shiite centers of learning were located in the shrine cities of Iraq, where the brightest theologians of their time taught in numerous seminaries. This Shiite base outside Iran became one of the critical factors in the downfall of Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, which culminated in the Islamic revolution in 1979. The religious classes had a network of followers and funding that existed beyond the reach of the Pahlavi state, which could never completely crush their opposition. Back then, Iraq contained the seeds of upheaval in neighboring Iran. Today, it does so once again.

American policy makers are understandably concerned with the rise of the Shiite community to political dominance in Iraq, particularly now with the candidacy of the seemingly pro-Iranian Ibrahim al Jaafari for prime minister. America does not want another Iran in the region, particularly as the Islamic Republic presses its nuclear ambitions.

At the same time, viable options against the mullahs are limited. While Europe and America are more united than ever on a diplomatic approach, their package of incentives is far from certain to be accepted. It will be difficult to convince Iran to completely give up a nuclear program that has broadly become a source of national pride.

Even if an agreement is forged, how will the international community monitor Iranian compliance over the long term with dispersed nuclear sites spread across the country? The lesson the Iranian regime has drawn from Iraq is this: If you have the bomb, like North Korea, you are safe; it's better to build it, secretly if you have to, so you don't get caught short like Saddam Hussein. Iran will never give up its pursuit of the nuclear card.

But there is a more organic way to effect change in Iran using the same networks that contributed to its last revolution. Rather than worrying about Iran's influence over Iraq, we should be harnessing the strength of Iraq's newly empowered Shiites against the regime in Iran. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the spiritual leader of Iraq's Shiites, is cut from a different cloth from the ruling clerics in Tehran.

He is of the quietist tradition,

which holds that mosque and state should be kept separate. There are already profound roots for this philosophy within Iran itself. It was the conventional thinking among the religious authorities of my grandfather's era and was the norm until Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini politicized Iranian Shiism.

A major artery of information flow and exchange has existed between the two countries for centuries. As Iraq's democracy and civil society stabilize, more and more Iranians will travel to Najaf and Karbala as pilgrims and seminary students. The Iranian state can restrict movement, what its people say, read and write, and what they see and hear on radio, TV and the Internet. But it will never be able to curtail their right to perform the pilgrimage to Iraq, which is a religious duty. The ideas these pilgrims take back with

them to Iran could be the beginnings of an authentic counterrevolution against the tyranny of the mosque.

Sistani's religious credentials and learning dwarf those of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, his counterpart in Iran. There are many Iranians who would rather listen to the Iranian-born Sistani if he chooses to speak to them. Moreover, his call to freedom will be couched within a language they understand, that of tradition and religious scholarship.

The mullahs of Iran will be hard-pressed to counter its effect. But the internal Shiite politics in Iraq must be watched closely. While Sistani is a moderate, some of his colleagues have been corrupted by years of exile as the ruling clerics' guests in Iran.

The Pahlavi regime in Iran was ultimately undone from within, by the same modernizing forces that

were unleashed by the Shah's White Revolution. Twenty-five years later, a startling parallel exists. The mullahs of Iran could similarly be overthrown by their own religious networks, the lifelines that had initially sustained their revolt against a secular Shah.

This strategy will not be as decisive as a cruise missile or as media-friendly as a brokered agreement. However, it will be seen by the Iranian people not as an artificial solution enforced upon them from outside but as an authentic evolution of their nation toward greater freedom.

Cameron Khosrowshahi writes about the Middle East.

**The Iranian regime could be overthrown through its own religious networks.**

## Iraqis fire on protesters, killing one

By Robert F. Worth

**BAGHDAD:** Guards opened fire on a crowd of several dozen protesting workers outside the headquarters of Iraq's Ministry of Science and Technology on Sunday morning, killing one and injuring three, officials said.

The workers, who were guards at an old uranium storage site south of Baghdad, had arrived at the ministry to collect their wages and ammunition, and after discovering that both had been reduced, they erupted in protest, Interior Ministry officials said.

Separately, negotiations between political parties trying to cobble together a coalition government continued.

The Kurdish leaders are looking for guarantees from the Shiites that they will not push forward with conservative Islamic rule, as well as promises that the Kurds will quickly get back property stripped from them in the northern city of Kirkuk. The Kurds would then be able to assert greater political control over Kirkuk and its oil fields.

The two sides have drafted a memorandum of principles and are negotiating over it.

The 275-member National Assembly is scheduled to hold its second meeting on Tuesday and may announce a speaker of the assembly.

The Shiites and Kurds have also said that they are in negotiations with Sunni Arabs and the party of Ayad Allawi, the interim prime minister, to take important posts in the government.

Ibrahim al-Janabi, a close aide to Allawi, said in an interview that Allawi had sent a letter about 10 days ago to the Shiite leaders making strong suggestions on how to run the new govern-

ment. A major suggestion was that clerics not take part in the day-to-day affairs of the government, Janabi said.

Since he sent that letter, Allawi has not heard from the Shiites, Janabi said.

In Kirkuk, gunmen opened fire at a café popular with Kurds, killing one and wounding three, The Associated Press reported.

Islamist Web sites posted a videotape Sunday showing an Interior Ministry official being shot to death by militants allied with Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, the most wanted man in Iraq.

The man, Colonel Ryad Olyway, showed a government identity card that described him as a liaison officer.

U.S. military officials said Sunday that two underground escape tunnels were found at a detainee camp in southern Iraq, not one. Besides the 180-meter, or 600-foot, tunnel reported on Saturday, a similar 90-meter tunnel was found the same day, also at Camp Bucca, said Lieutenant Colonel Guy Rudisill, a spokesman for the detainee system.

The tunnels were discovered before the prisoners who dug them had a

chance to use them, Rudisill said.

The prisoners dug the tunnels with a makeshift shovel fashioned out of a tent pole, with a piece of metal tied onto the end using tent canvas and rope, he said.

The prisoners brought water into the tunnels as they dug, he added, splashing it onto the walls in an effort to firm up the powdery soil.

The New York Times

Edward Wong contributed reporting from Baghdad for this article.

**TURQUIE** *La mise en application du nouveau Code pénal suscite des inquiétudes pour la liberté d'expression*

# Ankara peine à mettre en œuvre les réformes souhaitées par Bruxelles

Un peu plus de trois mois après le sommet de Bruxelles qui avait ouvert la voie à d'éventuelles négociations d'adhésion à l'Union, la Turquie traverse une période agitée qui ne favorise pas le dialogue avec ses partenaires européens et creuse les divisions à l'intérieur du pays. Tandis que les partis politiques apparaissent fragilisés par une vague de démissions concernant autant l'AKP, le parti au pouvoir, que le CHP, chef de file de l'opposition, le gouvernement peine à mettre en œuvre certaines réformes majeures, comme celle du Code pénal.

Avant même sa mise en application, le 1<sup>er</sup> avril, cette réforme suscite de vives inquiétudes, au regard, notamment, de la liberté de la presse.

Dans le même temps, s'exprime de nouveau avec force le patriotisme turc, réveillé par un dérapage survenu lors des célébrations du nouvel an kurde. Au cours d'une manifestation, à Mersin, dans le sud du pays, où vit une majorité de Kurdes, de jeunes garçons ont tenté de brûler le drapeau national, provoquant dans tout le pays une spectaculaire flambée nationaliste.

**Istanbul :**  
**Marie-Michèle Martinet**

La réforme du Code pénal, qui doit entrer en application le 1<sup>er</sup> avril, devait constituer l'un des piliers de la démocratisation souhaitée par Bruxelles, garantissant notamment un plus grand respect des droits de l'homme et une vigilance accrue face à la torture et aux discriminations. Soutenue dans un premier temps par les principaux

acteurs politiques et économiques du pays, elle suscite désormais des réticences de plus en plus clairement exprimées, tout particulièrement par les médias qui craignent une restriction significative de leur liberté d'expression.

Selon les experts, les dispositions du Code relatives aux médias réintroduisent des peines de prison qui avaient été abolies lors d'une précédente réforme. Pour cette raison, plusieurs grands groupes de presse, qui avaient pourtant soutenu le pro-

jet initial du gouvernement, ont envoyé une lettre au premier ministre, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, attirant son attention sur les risques de « poursuites arbitraires » qui pourraient bientôt « remplir les prisons de journalistes ».

Plusieurs symptômes ont alarmé la presse turque. Les poursuites engagées par le premier ministre contre un caricaturiste, Musa Kart, qui l'avait dessiné sous les traits d'un chat empêtré dans une pelote de laine, ont surpris par leur déme-

sure. Sont venus ensuite les reproches formulés contre les journalistes, au lendemain d'une manifestation de femmes violemment réprimée par la police. Au lieu de blâmer les policiers, le premier ministre préféra d'abord s'en prendre aux journalistes, coupables de ne pas remplir leur mission qui consiste, selon lui, à « soutenir les forces de sécurité, protéger et promouvoir les intérêts nationaux » de la Turquie.

L'Association des journalistes turcs, créée en 1946, qui re-

groupe aujourd'hui 3 000 adhérents, réclame le report de ce nouveau Code pénal : « La liberté de l'information s'est déjà dégradée ces dernières semaines, remarque son président, Orhan Erinc. Si ce code est appliqué, aucun dossier ne pourra plus être abordé sans risques. Surtout ceux qui concernent la politique, la justice, l'économie, la santé. »

Le journal *Radikal* pointe également quelques autres sujets qui, sous le coup de cette nouvelle loi, risquent désormais de devenir tabous : le suicide, l'euthanasie, l'extension du délai légal d'avortement, entre autres...

Devant tant d'inquiétudes, le ministre de la Justice, Cemil Cicek, est resté de marbre, rappelant que ce nouveau code est à l'étude depuis vingt ans et qu'il est, selon lui, bien tard pour revenir en arrière. Quant au premier ministre, il ne semble pas non plus disposé à modifier ses vues. Bien au contraire : il vient d'engager des poursuites contre le magazine *Penguen*. Prenant le relais du dessinateur

Musa Kart, *Penguen* avait continué à filer la métaphore animale, représentant Recep Tayyip Erdogan en éléphant, en girafe, en chameau... ce qui a, encore une fois, été jugé infamant par le principal intéressé qui réclame 40 000 YTL (environ 23 500 euros) de dommages et intérêts.

**LE FIGARO**

29 MARS 2005

En réponse à la provocation de jeunes Kurdes

# Des milliers de drapeaux turcs dans les rues

A la veille du printemps, lors des célébrations du Newroz, le Nouvel An kurde, la police avait dû intervenir, à Mersin, dans le sud du pays, pour empêcher que soit brûlé par des adolescents le drapeau turc, symbole de l'unité nationale.

Moins d'une semaine après, six personnes, dont cinq enfants, ont été arrêtées et mises en prison. Si les plus jeunes ne mesurent peut-être pas la portée de leur acte dans un pays où le drapeau et l'hymne national sont considérés comme des valeurs sacrées et intouchables, ils peuvent en tout cas se vanter d'avoir déclenché, dans tout le

pays, une vague nationaliste impressionnante. Avec les symboles blancs du croissant et de l'étoile, sur fond rouge, les drapeaux turcs flottent partout au vent, accrochés aux façades et aux balcons des immeubles, cosus ou miséreux.

Des manifestations sont organisées presque tous les jours dans les grandes villes... Les

Turcs, visiblement choqués, sont descendus dans la rue, comme pour faire écho à ce communiqué tranchant de l'état-major des armées : « Un groupe de personnes qui n'ont aucun respect des valeurs sont allées trop loin dans la détestation du dra-

peau turc... Une telle détestation par de prétendus citoyens est totalement inexplicable et injustifiable. Ce n'est rien d'autre qu'une trahison. »

Très mal ressenti dans le pays, cet incident, également condamné par l'ensemble de la classe politique, ne va sans doute pas favoriser la compréhension mutuelle entre la majorité des citoyens turcs et les Kurdes. Pour tenter de désamorcer la crise, les responsables du parti kurde Dehap ont exprimé leur désapprobation : « Le drapeau turc est également le drapeau des Kurdes », a déclaré le chef du parti, Tuncer Baki-

rhan, tandis que l'ex-député Leyla Zana précisait qu'il fallait « éliminer pacifiquement les

provocateurs afin de contribuer à une paix durable ». La tâche sera ardue : le mois dernier, le général Büyükanit, commandant de l'armée de terre, affirmait que le nombre de rebelles kurdes opérant actuellement en Turquie était « aussi élevé qu'en 1999, au moment de la capture du chef du PKK, Abdullah Öcalan ». A la lumière des derniers événements, une telle déclaration pourrait annoncer une tension accrue dans le sud-est du pays. M.-M. M.

## Turkey's new penal code strikes more liberal note

By Vincent Boland in Ankara

Turkey's new penal code, a cornerstone of the government's drive toward European Union membership, comes into force tomorrow, aiming to introduce a more liberal and less punitive criminal justice system.

The revised code, replacing one dating from the 1920s, gives greater recognition to the rights of individuals. Human rights groups say it contains many progressive measures, including stiffer penalties for torture and abuses of civil and human rights, and more protection for women and children.

But the new code also illustrates the difficulties this rigidly governed country faces in balancing individual rights against the protection of the state.

The code includes terms of imprisonment for "insulting" the state and its institutions, which human rights groups say are inappropriate for a country seeking to become a liberal democracy acceptable to other EU states. Among the issues

that could land journalists in jail, should a prosecutor take exception to something they write, are any calls for the withdrawal of Turkish troops from Cyprus or support for claims of the genocide of Armenians.

Already, Turkey's press council and Amnesty International have called for some articles in the new code to be revised, fearing they represent a threat to press freedom.

In addition, the code will face a stiff test of its credibility, since much depends on how it is implemented by the courts and how the police, perhaps the most incorrigible and politicised arm of the bureaucracy, modifies its behaviour in accordance with the new rules.

When the revisions were being debated last summer, the government found itself engulfed in a row following a proposal by Recep Tayyip Erdogan, the prime minister, to make adultery a criminal offence, deflecting public attention from other measures in the code.

Nevertheless, constitutional scholars say the revised code is a good first

building block for a modern system of criminal justice.

Ergun Özbudun, a professor of constitutional law at Bilkent University, says the new code, and a series of amendments to the constitution in the past few years, including the formal abolition of the death penalty, have created a more progressive legal climate that substantially meets European Union standards.

"The penal code is our basic criminal law, and having a more liberal law is a step in the right direction," he says.

Diplomats agree, but add that the important issue after the revised code comes into force will be how it is implemented.

Ensuring the implementation of a variety of reforms already approved by parliament is proving difficult, and is a particular focus of scrutiny by the EU and human rights groups.

The sight of police officers beating women demonstrators at a rally in Istanbul this month, almost under

the eyes of a visiting Brussels delegation, has also cast the spotlight on how the revised penal code will reform policing and the public perception of the police.

Mustafa Aydın, an academic at Ankara University, says many of the reforms Turkey has undertaken or plans to undertake, such as changes to the penal code, affect the police.

He fears there may be resentment among officers about how these reforms restrict their traditional ways of working, such as the frequent use of force against demonstrators.

Mr Aydın says that only a firm commitment from the top levels of government to impose changes on how police operate will ensure change.

"Turkish police are bullies, but they could easily be bullied themselves if someone slammed his fist on the table and started ordering them about," he says.



Riot police look on as a woman hit by tear gas is helped from a rally in Istanbul earlier this month. The new penal code seeks to restrict the use of force against protesters

# Gangs in Iraq thriving on threats and profits

## Abductions disrupt efforts to rebuild

By James Glanz

**BAGHDAD:** While Westerners are transfixed by the occasional kidnapping of one of their own, Iraqis are far more vulnerable. As many as 5,000 Iraqis have been kidnapped in the past year and a half, say Western and Iraqi security officials.

Some kidnappings are of Iraqis who work with Westerners, said Colonel Jabbar Anwar, head of a major crimes unit in Baghdad that works extensively with American intelligence groups on kidnapping cases. But ransom is a far greater motive than intimidation, he said: The threat of death for collaboration is usually just a way to drive up the price of freedom. "The only reason they kidnap people is for money," Jabbar said.

Ransom demands, security officials say, range from a few hundred to half a million dollars. The death rate among hostages is uncertain, but the officials say that many simply disappear even after a ransom is paid.

Seen in one way, kidnapping is just another facet of the security vacuum created by the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq and never really filled despite the hiring and training of tens of thousands of Iraqi police officers. But because of the harrowing effect the kidnapping industry has on Iraqi families, especially the prosperous and educated families whose children are special targets, investigators see kidnapping as a thing unto itself.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the epidemic of kidnapping, especially of children, is a force like no other in driving from Iraq the educated professionals who are critically needed for the rebuilding of the country. As stoic as Iraqis often are about the perils they face in their daily lives, kidnapping contributes to the national sense of instability and fuels mutual distrust — particularly be-

cause many kidnappings rely on people close to the target who pass information on net worth, daily habits and other matters of interest to hostage takers.

The head of the office of kidnapping in the major crimes unit, Colonel Faisel Ali, called kidnapping "the first and biggest problem in Iraq."

Iraqi families are so well schooled in the new commerce of kidnapping that, despite the mortal danger to their loved ones, they seldom agree to the initial ransom demand, because the price will only increase, said Abdul Razzak Hassan, an engineer. He was forced into his expertise on the topic when he was snatched on a highway west of Baghdad on Dec. 25. His captors kept him blindfolded in a filthy steel container for five days and tortured him.

Hassan, 45, a widely traveled man who speaks passable English, said that his family was aware that he was being tortured, but that they haggled with the kidnappers by telephone for five days before paying 20 million dinars, or about \$15,000, for his release. Even at that price, Hassan knew that he was fortunate not to be killed, once the payment was made. "You are lucky when people who catch you are not the killer man," Hassan said.

The kidnappers warned his family never to report the incident. Dreading what many Iraqis believe to be corrupt and infiltrated police departments, they have not.

Also unreported was the kidnapping of a wealthy 64-year-old woman named Um Sattar, who was taken by men dressed as Iraqi police officers and held for \$500,000 — a colossal sum in Iraq. During the negotiations, she was kept behind a locked door in a family home in Baghdad as children played outside and relatives stopped by for tea. Investigators, tipped off by an informant 13 days into her imprisonment, raided the

house and freed her.

But she thought that the new set of police officers was part of the kidnapping gang, recalled First Lieutenant Abbas Jassim of the Baghdad major crimes unit, who took part in the raid. She begged them not to kill her and swore her family would pay. The investigators tried again

and again to convince her that they were not criminals, but the terrified woman repeatedly refused to accept their credentials. Finally, a disgusted investigator told her to shut up. "Yes, we're a gang," the investigator said in frustration.

Despite the distrust, more than 1,000 kidnapping cases have been reported to the American-led administration in Iraq in the past 18 months, said a Western security adviser. Even among those cases, expected to be heavily tilted toward incidents involving Westerners, more than 70 percent involved hostages from Iraq or surrounding Arab countries, said the adviser, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

A tiny proportion of the cases reported to the Americans involved high-profile Western hostages like Nicholas Berg, the American engineer who was kidnapped and beheaded a year ago, or Giuliana Sgrena, the Italian journalist taken hostage on Feb. 4 and set free a month later. "It's first and foremost an Iraqi crisis," the security adviser said. "The reality of it is, it's a business."

The kidnapping office has made modest inroads on the problem, according to statistics kept by the major crimes unit. From January 2004 to February 2005, 80 kidnapping cases, involving 73 hostages, were referred to the office by police stations in the western Baghdad jurisdiction of the unit. The numbers of cases and hostages do not match because some reports turn out to be false alarms.

In 28 of those cases, investigators freed the hostages and arrested the gangs holding them, making 171 arrests in all, the statistics show. Most of the arrests were made in sting operations connected with a ransom payment, Faisel said.

The origins of the gangs vary, he said. Some are crime families, a group of relatives who at some point decided to make a few extra dinars by taking hostages. Some are bands of college students; others, groups drawn from a particular mosque. Others are gangs of hardened criminals released during the general amnesty declared by Saddam Hussein on the eve of the invasion. Investigators also suspect that at least some of the kidnappings are undertaken specifically to finance the insurgency.

The kidnappings are almost never random, Faisel said. A profusion of cell phones and the electronic cards that hold data for the phones from small and often unregistered shops makes tracing calls from sophisticated kidnappers all but impossible, Faisel said. And he said that, for all their help, U.S. military and intelligence officials have been slow to share surveillance technology.

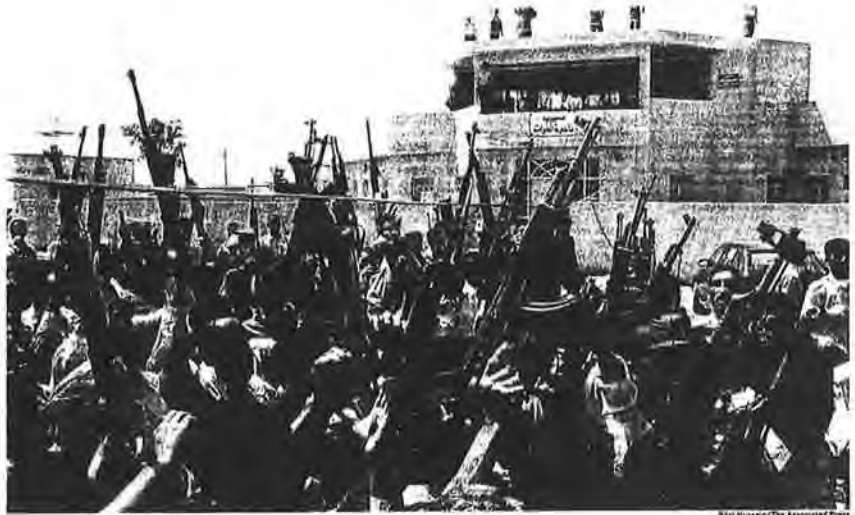
The files of the major crimes unit are bulging with strange kidnapping cases. In one, a 6-year-old, Hussein Fathi Mahmood, was grabbed in front of his



Jabbar Anwar, head of a crimes unit in Baghdad working with Americans, said money was the main reason for the kidnappings.

school in the Baghdad district of Kadimiya. Investigators recovered him after following a tortuous trail that began with an acquaintance of the boy's parents. In another, the police found a man shackled in a room. According to a report on the incident, the police took him back to the station, where he abruptly pointed to an officer and accused him of being one of the kidnappers.

The New York Times



Former Iraqi police officers demanding to return to work in Hit, Anbar Province, on Tuesday. They were protesting a plan to replace them with officers from other provinces.

INTERNATIONAL  
**Herald Tribune**  
March 30, 2005

# Divisions emerge at meeting of Iraqi assembly

## No agreement on filling important posts

By Edward Wong

**BAGHDAD:** Sharp ethnic and sectarian divisions emerged Tuesday during the second meeting of the constitutional assembly, as some members stood up and accused others of hijacking the political process and betraying the Iraqi people by failing to form a coalition government.

The heated arguments prompted the head of the assembly to ban reporters from the room and call for the assembly to reconvene next weekend, nine weeks after the Jan. 30 elections, in the hope that the top members would be ready to fill some important government positions then.

Prominent assembly members also said in interviews that the delay in cobbling together a government could very well force the assembly to take an extra half-year to write a permanent constitution, pushing the deadline for a first draft well beyond the original deadline of Aug. 15. The elections for a full-term government at the end of the year would then have to be pushed back by six months, slowing the American-led process of implanting democracy here in the heart of the Middle East.

"Realistically, I think it's very difficult," Haichem al-Hassani, a leading Sunni Arab politician and a top candidate for the post of defense minister,

said of the August deadline. "I think it's wishful thinking."

The afternoon meeting of the assembly, which descended into a shouting match, showed how the current ne-

gotiations to form a government could be poisoning the entire political process and fracturing the major political blocs, already divided along ethnic and sectarian lines.

In Washington, President George W. Bush tried to soothe the concerns that democratic process in Iraq was being jeopardized by the absence of an elected government.

"We expect a new government will be chosen soon and that the assembly will vote to confirm it," he told reporters in the White House Rose Garden. "We look forward to working with the government that emerges from this process."

In recent days, politicians here had said the assembly might be able to choose an assembly speaker and two vice speakers at the meeting Tuesday. But those hopes were dashed on Monday when the leading candidate for speaker, Sheik Ghazi al-Yawar, the interim president, turned down the job. The main parties have agreed that a Sunni Arab should take the post and are now struggling over whom to nominate.

The second member to speak, Asmaa al-Shabout, a prominent member of the main Shiite bloc, stood up in her flowing black robes and asked the temporary assembly leaders why no one could settle on a candidate, implying that the Sunni Arabs were responsible for the delay.

"I demand the revelation of all details to the public and to all the members in order for the people to be aware of who is obstructing the democratic and political process," she said. "If you don't do that, then you are covering for the enemies of the Iraqi people."

A portly Shiite cleric, Hussein al-Sadr, took up the microphone a few minutes later and called for the assembly to start installing a government on Wednesday.

"People on the street are counting on us," said Sadr, a member of the Iraqi List, the slate formed by Ayad Allawi, the interim prime minister. "What are we going to tell the people who went to vote on Jan. 30?"

As the shouting increased and more accusations flew, four prominent members of the assembly left the room: Allawi; his friend Hazim al-Shalaan, the defense minister; Yawar; and the public works minister, Nasreen Berwari, who is married to Yawar.

The 275-member assembly is charged with installing a government and writing a permanent constitution. Once the assembly puts in place a president and two vice presidents, called the presidency council, those officers will have two weeks to appoint a prime minister, who chooses a cabinet. The problem is that the transitional basic law approved in March 2004 and written under the direction of the Americans does not set a deadline for the appointment of the presidency council.

The main Shiite bloc, which has 140 assembly seats, and the main Kurdish bloc, which has 75, have been in heated negotiations to form a coalition, since a two-thirds vote of the assembly is needed to approve the government. The two sides have been at odds over a range of issues, from control of the oil-rich city of Kirkuk to the role of Islam in the new government. In recent days, officials from the two groups have said conflicts between them and with the Sunni Arabs over several important ministerial posts, including that of oil minister, are stalling the talks.

In Baghdad, at about 1:15 p.m., shortly before the National Assembly meeting began, two mortar shells landed in the heavily fortified Green Zone, where the session was being held. There were no reports of wounds.

The New York Times

# The Herald Magazine

29 January 2005

## INTERVIEW

# You're a failed assassin. You've seen members of your family murdered in Iraq. And you'll always be an exile. What do you do? Look on the bright side

Photographs Simon Murphy



**H**inner Saleem's first memory is of watching his cousin being tied to the back of a Jeep and dragged through the streets until he was a lifeless, bloody rag. Saleem was five years old but he remembers it well. Seven members of his family were murdered that day. Today he is sitting on a rickety wooden chair in his flat in Paris, clutching a set of beads: a Kurd from Iraq in exile. Children's voices drift up from a school playground to his sixth floor sanctuary. From his attic window a thousand roofs and balconies stretch out to the Eiffel Tower in the

distance, piercing the hazy winter smog. The Sacré-Coeur Catholic basilica at the top of Montmartre is visible to the right, its famous white pastry architecture overlooking the city.

Saleem smiles warmly. "I gave up smoking three months ago," he says, holding up his string of beads as if wearing handcuffs. "These give my hands something to do." The 39-year-old artist, award-winning film director and writer is the author of *My Father's Rifle*, a childhood memoir that has become a best-seller in France, his adopted home. The book is a poignant coming-of-age tale about a boy growing up in war-torn Iraqi Kurdistan, a touching portrait of the landless Kurds' struggle for freedom, and a beguiling child's-eye view of family life amid violence, murder and napalm bombs during Saddam Hussein's rise to power. Under Saddam's reign of terror, when he perpetrated his genocide of the Kurds, more than 100,000 people were killed

or taken away by Iraqi security forces and never seen again.

Saleem's novel is now being published in 20 languages and is a perfect companion to Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* and Asne Seierstad's *The Bookseller of Kabul*. "Everything in the book happened," he says. "I changed a few names, but it is all true." He has the physique of Ben Stiller, albeit slightly stockier, the spangly eyes of Kevin Spacey, and, when he talks, the animated persona of Danny DeVito. "Coffee, tea, vodka or wine?" he asks in loud, deliberate English, before jumping up to the kitchen.

A laptop sits on a small pink table against one wall: a montage of pictures of Kurdish women in headscarves looks down. Another wall is a mottled orange and yellow, yet another turquoise. The floor is pink concrete, and old wooden beams burst through the white ceiling. Several of Saleem's pastel paintings adorn the

flat, but the centrepiece of the room is a rough, pale blue wooden frame on one wall containing four small black and white pictures and a red, white and green Kurdish flag with its golden sun emblem at the centre. Saleem points at each picture. "That is an Assyrian peshmarga [a Kurdish fighter], that is General Barzani [legendary Kurdish leader] – and that is a Don Juan peshmarga," he says, exploding with laughter. "Don Juan peshmarga?" I ask, slightly puzzled. "Yes, look at him. Look at his pose and smile for the camera. Whoever he is, he thinks he's a film star." Saleem grins broadly. His sense of humour is Pythonesque and quite endearing: there can't be many people who mount pictures of complete strangers on walls in their homes simply for kicks.

The last picture is of Saleem's father. Shero Selim Malay was a resistance fighter and morse-code operator for the charismatic General Barzani, the founder of the Kurdistan

Democratic Party and the man who dominated the national movement for nearly five decades. Saleem's father died on December 18, 1996. Saleem could not attend the funeral as it was impossible for him to return to Iraqi Kurdistan. "It was difficult, horrendous, of course," he says. "But there was nothing I could do. They [the Iraqis] would have executed me. Without any doubt." His voice becomes quieter. Life now for Saleem is about telling the world about the plight of the Kurds.

His memory of growing up in Kurdistan is bleak but compelling, a continuum of pain and violence. The brutal murders of his cousin and six other male members of his extended family in Aqra by pro-government Kurdish militia when he was five is only the first of a catalogue of haunting memories: an insight into the tragedies that made up the daily life of the Kurds. "The militiamen caught Mamou alive and, instead of executing him, they brought

him down from the hills, tied his feet to the back of a Jeep and dragged him through the town centre three times as a warning to other Kurdish patriots," Saleem says, leaning forward in his chair, the string of beads clicking between his fingers. "I was a still a boy."

He recalls his father leaving on many occasions for the mountains with an old Brno rifle, repeating: "Next year Kurdistan will be free." "I believed him, when I was a young boy," Saleem says.

**T**he Kurds, who number between 20 and 25 million, are the largest ethnic group in the world without their own nation. They rose up to fight the Iraqis at the end of the 1960s; Saleem's family fled to nearby mountains to hide in caves after their town was bombed with napalm. "I was surrounded by wounded people who could not get proper medical ▶

► treatment," Saleem says. "A man next to me was moaning his children's names; then suddenly he stopped. I scratched my neck and found blood on my fingertips. I did it again and found I was covered in lice."

When the Kurds realised the uprising was going to be crushed, Saleem witnessed many of the peshmargas committing suicide rather than be taken prisoner. He and his family ended up as refugees, along with 100,000 other Kurds in Iran. "All our hopes and dreams were broken and we felt shame that the revolution had failed. All my family felt nothing but shame," he says candidly. He describes the experience of being in a UN camp as being treated like a dog, and says all he and his friends wanted to do was to become a peshmarga and resurrect the armed struggle.

In 1970, the Iraqis offered an amnesty and a degree of self-rule to the Kurds. Many thousands stayed in Iran, and still do today, but Saleem's father decided the family would return to Aqra, despite the fear they would be killed. They were not – but life was tough and sometimes horrific. The Iraqi secret police were everywhere, listening and gathering information. People would mysteriously disappear. Jumal, a Kurdish painter and hero to Saleem, was one of them. "We heard they dissolved his body in sulphuric acid," he says.

He describes one incident when he saw weeping women following an empty coffin through his town. He asked who had died and was told that nobody had. "I asked what the coffin was for, and was told cousin Mushir was going to be killed for being a collaborator," he says. "My father and uncle chased him up to a roof and asked him about his frequent trips to Mosul. My uncle then shot him."

It later transpired that Mushir was not a collaborator but had simply been seeing a mistress in Mosul. "Everyone suspected everyone else," explains Saleem. "You had to be careful who you spoke to and what you said every minute of the day. Information always got back to the authorities, and it got worse after Saddam Hussein came to power."

Did he trust his close friends and family? "Yes and no," Saleem replies. "It was intense. The Iraqis would even interrogate the children about what their parents talked about at home; what music they listened to." He recalls when a young niece – who later died after being refused treatment by an Arab doctor – was questioned for singing a Kurdish freedom song at school. The lyrics and music were banned.

"My family would secretly read Kurdish poetry and play music at home to keep our culture alive," he says. "But the secret police would sit young children down in front of the television, put on Saddam and then watch their reaction to see if they did not smile or if they would turn their heads away."

He raises his eyebrows, breaks into a smile again and opens his arms out as if he is about to embrace me. "Looking back, it was a Kalkasque comedy," he says. Whatever the Iraqis might have taken from Saleem's childhood, his propensity for seeking humour in adversity remains. "Humour is the politics of despair," he says.

After becoming involved with the peshmargas and carrying out a failed assassination attempt on an Iraqi security officer, Saleem fled from Iraq to Syria when he was only 17. "I realised that continuing the armed struggle was hopeless, and because of my activities the Iraqis were going to kill me," he says. "A friend tipped me off. It was a very hard decision to make as I could not tell my family and I did not know whether I would ever see them again."

He stayed in Syria briefly, then moved to Italy, where he worked as a painter in Florence



Top: film-maker and author Hiner Saleem has devoted his life to telling the world about the struggle of the Kurds. Above: Saleem's father, a resistance fighter; and Saleem as a teenager in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1979, the year Saddam Hussein became president

**'I need humour. People need humour. It is part of being Kurdish'**

and Venice, scratching a living sketching caricatures of tourists. "I arrived in Florence wearing a Kurdish costume," he says, "my salwar [baggy pantaloons]." He stands up, putting his hands on his hips and kicking his legs up. From Italy he travelled to Paris and was granted political asylum before returning to Italy to study in Venice for a degree in international relations.

It was when he returned to France that his ambition to make films was fulfilled. "I had always wanted to bring the Kurds to film, because as a child we only ever saw Arab-controlled TV and propaganda," he says. "I remember as a young boy saying that I wanted to make the television speak Kurdish."

Largely self-taught in the art of directing, he completed two low-budget films, *Shero* (1992) and *A Bit of Border* (1994), before being awarded the prize for the best screenplay at the French Festival of Angers in 1997 for a film called *Long Live the Bride...* and the *Liberation of Kurdistan*. The film, which is full of real stories, tells of Kurds living in exile in Europe whose hearts remain in Kurdistan. It is a journey into the tea houses and restaurants of the Kurdish village of Strasbourg-Saint-Denis, where Saleem spends hours in conversation with his friends.

French filmgoers embraced Saleem's comedy but Kurdish audiences were divided. While most women loved it, many Kurdish men disliked the image the film portrayed, especially with regard to their relations with

women: the film shows some Kurdish men drinking and using force to collect a so-called "revolutionary tax", and others eschewing work to meet with their French girlfriends.

"I am also a Kurd," says Saleem in answer to his critics. "I myself and my friends like to drink vodka, we like to sing and have a joyful party. We love women. Some blame me for doing a comedy, but it is a comedy with a cause and I can do what I want with it and with the Kurdish flag."

He springs up once again and asks if I have a girlfriend, before going to his kitchen and returning with a bottle of red wine. "Give this to her, it is very fruity, she will like it," he says, insisting I take it.

Comedy is in Saleem's blood, and in 2003 his highly acclaimed film *Vodka Lemon* won the Venice Film Festival's San Marco Prize. Set in a snow-bound Kurdish-Armenian village, where state and economy are so marginal that everyone seems to be selling themselves to stay alive, *Vodka Lemon* should be truly grim. Instead it transcends its locality to become pure art, its visual and spoken language crackling with a humour that is as humane as it is absurd.

"I need humour. People need humour. Humour is part of being Kurdish and it is absolutely necessary," Saleem says simply.

Who are his influences, then? "I must admit I don't watch a lot of cinema," he says. "I am not a cinephile, and I do not go in for intellectualism. But I do like Jack London for his resistance, and I like George Bernard Shaw for his culture."

In his book, he talks about Jean-Paul Sartre – but at the mention of the French existentialist's name, Saleem just laughs. "I did read Sartre but I did not understand any of it," he says. "I was young, though."

His next project – another comedy, this one called *Kilometre Zero* – broaches the thorny subject of Kurdish-Arab relations. Although Kurdish factions in Iraq have been running their own affairs ever since the first Gulf War in 1991, holding their own elections in 1992 and building up an army of around 70,000 peshmarga, the Kurds still face an uncertain future. Many of them fear an Arab-dominated government in Baghdad will curtail the freedoms they achieved after decades of oppression. For Saleem, Saddam might be gone but his culture still manifests itself in extreme Arab nationalism.

"The Arabs who have those views have no respect for other people," says Saleem. "With that mentality persisting, we will have another ten Saddam Husseins and we as people may suffer again. The Kurds want self-determination, democracy and freedom, not Arab hegemony." For the first time, Saleem's pain and anger surface.

In March he will return to his homeland for the premiere of his new film; he is also looking forward to the chance to see his mother, his brother and his sister. He has another brother in Germany and a sister in Sweden, whom he regularly visits. For the moment, though, his life is in France, with his actress girlfriend and the many different projects he is now involved in. He travels as much as possible, he says, visiting friends for leisure as well as for work, but for now there are no plans to return to his homeland for good.

"I am from everywhere," he says. "I feel French when I am in Kurdistan, Parisian when I am in Italy and Kurdish when I am in France. I am not a socialist, nor a capitalist, nor religious. I am a human being." ■

*My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan* by Hiner Saleem is published by Atlantic Books on February 17.

## The Sunday Times

FEBRUARY 27, 2005

### Memoir

#### MY FATHER'S RIFLE

#### A Childhood in Kurdistan

by Hiner Saleem

Atlantic £9.99 pp145

#### ANTHONY SATTIN

The cliché describing somewhere as “a place of contrasts” could have been coined for Iraqi Kurdistan. On the second page of Hiner Saleem’s childhood memoir, the beloved homeland is remembered as a place of bliss, where his caring mother sits under a mulberry tree outside their lovely old house, cracking open pomegranates. On the next page, she is being clubbed with a rifle, their house has been burnt and seven males of the family are about to be executed by a rival Kurd faction. The heart-stirring beauty of Kurdistan and the heart-stopping horror of brutal violence clash throughout this short, thrillingly vivid and, given the violence, unexpectedly beautiful tale.

For most of the 20th century, large parts of the area loosely called the Middle East were fought over by groups with national aspirations. The Hashemites achieved their goals thanks to T E Lawrence and the British government, Jews succeeded in the aftermath of the Holocaust with American backing, and the Intifada has brought the Palestinians closer to realising their dream of statehood. The Kurds, as Saleem makes clear, are one of the world’s forgotten peoples.

Saleem left Iraq at the age of 18, so his memories of the homeland are those of a child. For the purposes of the story, he calls his young self Azad. Kurdish identity seems not to lie in a name, nor even in a nationality: his grandfather was born a free Kurd, became an Ottoman subject, then a Turkish one, learnt English during the British mandate and became an Iraqi after independence. “The British invented Iraq, so my grandfather became Iraqi, but this new word, Iraq, always remained an enigma to him.” The land and the way of life it made possible are what counts.

Seeing the Kurdish world through childish and then adolescent eyes serves his purpose brilliantly, allowing him to skip the far-off political machinations that shaped events and to confine himself instead to what he sees and hears. After the murder of his relatives, his family flees to the mountain stronghold of the *peshmerga* (fighters) loyal to General Barzani — his father can operate a radio, knows code and is distinguished as “the gen-

eral’s personal operator”. Fittingly, it is over a radio that he learns that the government in Baghdad has been overthrown and first hears the name Saddam Hussein al-Takriti.

The story of Azad’s adolescence is one of dreams turning to nightmare. The optimism following Saddam’s rise to power is short-lived and is followed by terror: when the Kurds find themselves squeezed by Saddam’s forces, they fight back, believing they have a champion, Henry Kissinger, in Washington and hoping for support from the Shah in Tehran. When that support fails to materialise, Azad and his family find themselves in a UN refugee camp inside Kurdish Iran. There, they dream of moving to the United States: “Each of us imagined himself already in America — my father a journalist, my mother a supermarket manager, my brother a general, and I making a great Kurdish film.” Many people in the camp manage to make that jump, but Azad’s family are overcome by homesickness and go back to their village. Saddam promises them a safe return, but they are branded as *aidoun*, “fallen back into line”. Arabic not Kurdish is spoken at school, and the barracks are manned by hostile government troops. Unless they are signed-up members of Saddam’s Ba’ath party, they are denied access to higher education, the best jobs and, as becomes clear in one terrible scene, proper medical treatment.



## His beloved country

With a sense of inevitability, Azad returns to the mountains to join his brother among the *peshmerga*. But as soon as he has a gun in his hand, he realises the issue cannot be resolved by fighting. Instead, he slips across the border and makes his way to Italy, before settling in France. There, he fulfils the dream he had in the Iranian refugee camp and becomes an award-winning film director.

This is Saleem’s first book. It was a huge success in France and deserves to be one here, too. He constructs his story with a film-maker’s eye, but has real literary talent as well: Azad’s apparently guileless description of events is incredibly seductive, and the translator Catherine Temerson has preserved the beauty of the original French. The book ends with a postscript noting that, on April 9, 2003, American forces entered Baghdad and Saddam was toppled. This will need to be updated for the paperback to include the news that a Kurd has been appointed president of Iraq and that peace may return to the beautiful homeland. Azad’s mother may once more sit at ease beneath her mulberry trees. □

Available at the Books First price of £8.49 plus 99p p&p on 0870 165 8585

THE TIMES SATURDAY FEBRUARY 12 2005

MEMOIR

# No friend except the mountains

Hiner Saleem draws on his shattered life in Kurdistan to create a classic of loss and exile. Janine di Giovanni met him

If any good at all has come out of George W. Bush's messianic War on Terror, it is a contribution to literature. Since American bombing campaigns altered the political and social landscape of Afghanistan and Iraq, there has been a steady progression of books from a previously ignored region. Asne Seierstad's *The Bookseller of Kabul* was a surprise international bestseller; Jon Lee Anderson's *The Lion's Grave* was a wonderfully scripted account of a voyage into a strange and dark world.

But these are books written by journalists. Then came an assortment of fine books written by regional writers: Khaled Hossaini's *The Kite Runner* (another surprise hit) and Ahdaf Soueif's *Mezzaterra*. Now, Kurdistan, the unfortunate mountainous region lumped between Iraq, Syria and Turkey, and formerly associated with sad refugees and kebab houses, is making its debut.

Hiner Saleem's *My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan* begins with a vision of idyllic rural life. The names are changed, but it is Saleem's story. It opens with the author as a child, eating pomegranates under a leafy mulberry tree at the feet of his mother. He feels secure within his extended family. We meet his father, his brother — a rebel fighter — and his cousins. We are drawn into an intimate, lost world.

Then things grow dark. We slowly begin to wake up to life under Saddam Hussein. A cousin is brutally murdered by Saddam's forces, tied and dragged behind a car until he is bloody and unrecognisable. There are whispered conversations of armed struggle, resistance, punishment. The narrator's father, a Morse code operator for the Kurdish rebels, takes his family to live temporarily in a cave.

The idyllic world is shattered. Instead, there are refugees, anxiety, fear, escape. And the realisation that there is no real home for the Kurds, no friends, as the Kurdish expression goes, except the mountains.

Saleem brings us into this very intimate world of a country that had been forgotten and was persecuted relentlessly by Saddam. It is a portrait of a people who have been hunted down, gassed, beaten and still do not have their real freedom. The narrator tearfully describes being forced to attend classes in Arabic, rather than

his mother tongue, Kurdish; of leaving his home and coming back to find it occupied by another family. He describes the sound of warplanes razing his country as he's sitting in school. And he describes falling in love for the first time; at the same time his own political consciousness awakens.

"The whole class envied me," he writes. "Jian loved me and I loved her as much as I loved Kurdistan."

The loveliness of the book comes from the tone of wistfulness, of a man in exile, a writer who is far from the land of his birth. Although Saleem still goes back several times a year to Kurdistan to see his mother — his father has since died — his is a typical immigrant story. One brother is in Germany. A sister is in Kurdistan. While he feels Kurdish in his heart and soul, he has lived and worked in Europe for more than two decades. I meet him in Paris.

Does he ever feel split by the divide? "No, at night when I meet my Kurdish friends and we drink and tell stories of Kurdistan until 4am, I am really, really Kurdish," he laughs.

The author thinks he is 40,



**Immigrant song: "I'm from everywhere and nowhere," says the Kurdish writer Hiner Saleem**

but is not really sure. "I was born the year my uncle's horse died," he muses. "My mother thinks it was 1964. I know the day — November 16 at 4.30pm because my big brother wrote it in his schoolbook." He lives in a flat near the Gare du Nord where he says he does very little. *My Father's Rifle*, he

**'I ALWAYS HAVE THE FEELING THAT I LIVE IN A PLACE TEMPORARILY'**

reveals, took him 15 days to write, longhand, from his sick bed as he recovered from a back injury. He did it fast, he says, because he gets bored easily. "I have no patience." The book was accepted by the first publisher who saw it, and is now translated into 20 languages. Saleem is rather nonplussed by his success.

His Parisian life is a classic writer's existence. "If I have more than one thing to do a day," he says wearily, "it's catastrophic." Instead, he rises and consumes several litres of coffee before heading to his local café to have lunch, write or think. And he has a lot to think about. He has lived, in

his 40 short years, an extraordinary life.

The son of a Kurdish militant, Saleem fled his country at 17, escaped to Syria, knowing no one and having very little money. "I had to get out of the Black East," he says, using his nickname for the Middle East. He had nowhere to go, and no plan. So he went from embassy to embassy, starting with the former communist countries ("I believed they were my brothers; I was wrong") until the Italians finally gave him a visa. He arrived in Rome unable to speak a word of Italian and without one telephone number or place to go.

"But I am a very lucky person," he says. At the airport, an elderly Iraqi man asked him to assist with his bags. Saleem did it — grudgingly. "I did not want to help an Iraqi, but he was old and reminded me of my father." The man rewarded him by giving him the name of

a Kurdish friend in Italy, a man who lived in Florence. Saleem rushed to the station and caught the last train. Arriving at dawn, he bumped straight into one of his countrymen. "I went into a café for a coffee and this man fell drunk at my feet," he says. "I then realised he was a Kurd." The Kurd was a student who took Saleem under his wing. In time, he learnt Italian and entered university.

**In 1984 he left Italy** for France, walking over the Alps with a friend for yet another new life. "We had no money. It was the only way to go." In France his luck held out. "I wanted only to liberate Kurdistan," he says. "When I saw that wasn't possible, I became interested in cinema." His 1997 documentary *Vive la mariée ... and the Liberation of Kurdistan* was so successful that he easily found funding to make *Vodka Lemon*, which in

2002 won the Venice Film Festival's San Marco Prize. He describes his film as "a universal story of two people who only have love and dignity to survive. It's a tragic comedy."

When I ask Saleem if he has the usual complaints that nearly every film-maker I know does — the soullessness of Hollywood, for instance, or the difficulty of making ends meet — he looks surprised. "No, I had no problems raising money," he says. "An ex-girlfriend helped me." He grins. "As I told you, I am lucky."

He says he never saw a camera in his life until the first day of principal shooting of his first film. "But it did not matter. I learnt fast," he says. Then he looks thoughtful. "But it is also my nature not to complain." It is an unusual attribute in France, where the national sport is whining.

Still, it is his yearning for a free Kurdistan that gives both

the book and his films their soul. Even though he has been in France more than two decades, he says that he still feels like an outsider. "I'm from everywhere and nowhere," he says. "When I come back from a trip, I don't unpack. I leave my clothes in the bag until I need something. I always have the feeling I live in a place temporarily."

He says he dreams in Italian, French, English, Arabic and Kurdish. But he says his dream is usually the same: "I dream my country is free," he says. "But I know, realistically, we won't meet freedom in this century." He looks slightly downcast as he sips his tea. Then his natural optimism kicks in. "But I know it is coming."

*My Father's Rifle: A Childhood in Kurdistan by Hiner Saleem, translated by Catherine Temerson, is published by Atlantic (£10.99, offer £8.79)*

