

Keyhan Yusefi

A Critical Analysis of Kurdistan Movement Leadership in Iran

Investigating the Role of Ideology in Decision Makings from 1979 to 1989

TISHK Research Paper
TISHK Center for Kurdistan Studies

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Keyhan Yusefi



The land and dispersion of the Kurds

Chapter one

Introduction

1-1 Background

Kurds are among the largest and the oldest nations in the Middle East, not having any country yet. There seems to be no exact statistic information on the population of the Kurds, however, the Kurdish Institute in Paris¹ has estimated a total population of about 36 to 45 million of Kurds to the year 2016 – 10 to 12 million of whom are living in Iran.

Kurds are accounting for about 13 to 17.5 percent of the total population of the country, of about 80 million². The land of the Kurds is to occupy an area of 409650 km² and has been broken apart in four main countries, Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria. The Kurdish lands in Turkey account for 194400 km², while it is 124950 km² in Iran, 72000 km² in Iraq and 18300 km² in Syria³.

1. Statistics of Kurdistan Population, available at:

<https://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/the-kurdish-population-1232551004>

2 .Statistics Center of Iran, excerpts from the results of the general population and housing census in 2016

3 .Abdurrahman Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and The Kurds*, Translated by Abdullah Hassanzadeh, Arzan Publications, Sweden, 2004

Such a division has led to a crisis having been concerned throughout such a long period. The Kurdish Question is of the highest levels of significance in the Middle East and has remained insoluble so far. This issue can be traced back to the period after the Crusades, during which Kurdistan was divided into two major parts between the Ottoman and the Safavid⁴ empires. David McDowall, the author of ‘A Modern History of the Kurds’, is of the opinion that up to the 19th century, the Kurds had been struggling with the central governments of the Ottomans, the Safavids and the Qajars⁵. These governments seemed reluctant of accepting the Kurdish nation within a homogeneous essence and were likely to subjugate them, following the order of the King and the Caliph⁶.

During the early 19th, the Ottoman and the Qajar empires used to eliminate all the regional states attributed to the Kurds. Anoushirvan Mustafa Amin, a historian and a politician from the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) of Iraq, reports of this issue as following: “during the second quarter of the 19th century, the Sublime Porte⁷ eliminated almost all the independent states of Bitlis, Hakkari, Botan, Soran, Bad-

4 . Safavid Empire, 1501-1736 ruled Iran and parts of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Armenia and Azerbaijan

5. Qajar Empire, 1789 - 1925 The Last Empire of Iran

6. David MacDowell, The Contemporary History of Kurds, Translated by Ibrahim Younesi, Paniz Publication, 2005

7. The Supreme Court was the palace or court of the Ottoman Prime Minister, which was the seat of government affairs.

inan and Baban in the Kurdish regions within the Ottoman territory; in the other side also, the Qajar court attempted to annihilate the independent emirates of the Iranian Kurdistan in Ardalan, Lorestan and Mukriyan, and establish states dependent to the central governments of Iran and Ottoman⁸.” The removal of Kurdish emirates and appointing the representatives of the Sultan and the King in the regions, were followed by distinct protests and uprisings throughout the Kurdistan, what were featured by a nationalist nature, formed by a traditional – tribal outlook.

One of the most prominent and influential of these uprisings was of one of the religious leaders of the Naqshbandi Tariqa⁹, Sheikh Obaidullah Nahri (1827-1883). Following the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877, Sheikh Obaidullah sought to unite the Kurds, regardless of their different religions, tribes or ethnicities, circa a common national motive and to force back the Ottoman and Qajar forces from Kurdistan and establish an independent Kurdish state. However, among the Kurds, he is considered as the father of national movements in Kurdistan. The Sheikh planned an uprising against the two empires in 1880 with the goal of scaffolding an independent Kurdistan, preparing about 30,000 Kurdish forces, as a result of which, he could take the control of parts

8. Anoushirvan Mustafa Amin, *Political History of Kurds*, Benkey Jin Publications, 2006

9. The Naqshbandi sect is one of the Sunni sects that has many followers around the world and they considered Islam as a kind of mysticism and Sufism. The family of Sheikh Nahri had spiritual and material influence and considered themselves the grandson of Sheikh Abdul Qadir Gilani, one of the great Islamic men. Sheikh Ubaidullah belonged to this family and owned nearly 200 villages.

of Ottoman and Qajar Kurdistan. In addition to the internal tensions of the Kurds themselves, his uprising was not in line with the interests of European countries, including Russia and Britain, and with their help the Qajar and Ottoman Empires suppressed the Sheikh's uprising.

Kurdistan, being ruled under the Ottoman Empire so far, was divided after the collapse of the Empire in World War I. Of course, the Kurdistan region of Iran had been separated before the other parts, at more than 500 years ago, during the Chaldoran war at 1514, taking place between the Safavid and Ottoman empires. Not surprisingly, the Ottoman Empire could defeat its counterpart and annex a large part of Kurdistan, what was later formalized in the Treaty of Zahab at 1639¹⁰.

During the World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Sykes-Picot Treaty¹¹ was signed on May 16, 1916 between the British and French governments, according to which the Ottoman-occupied Kurdistan had to be divided between Turkey, Iraq and Syria, irrespective of Kurds' ethnic rights.

With the formation of modern governments in the three countries of Turkey, Iraq and Syria, as well as Iran, the Kurdish struggle against the assimilation policy and the removal of central government

10. The Treaty of Zahab or the Sweet Palace between Sultan Murad IV (Ottoman) and Shah Safi (Safavid) marked the end of 120 years of continuous war between the two empires. This treaty was concluded on May 17, 1639, and somehow stabilized the 2185 km border between the two governments and separated the Kurdistan region of Iran from other parts.

11. Sykes-Picot Treaty, available at: <https://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/232358BACBEB-7B55852571100078477C>.

for realizing its national rights, has entered a new paradigm. In all four countries, the Kurdish struggle against the central governments has likely been a representation of resistance, to preserve their existence against the assimilation policy pursued by the central governments of Turk, Persian and Arab states, aiming to homogenize their communities.

The modern government in Iran, established by Reza Shah¹² in 1925, was influenced by some Persian intellectuals, planning to form 'a homogeneous Iran'. Under Reza Shah's version of Iran, the Kurdish identity and existence of the Kurds were to be endangered. Mahmoud Afshar Yazdi (1893-1983) was one of Shah's ideologues who believed that national unity could be achieved only when everyone in the country speaks Persian, and any form of regional differences such as language, clothing, as well as the power and sovereignty of the local tribes and groups must be dissolved and neutralized. Following which, not only the Kurds, but also the Lors, Qashqais, Turks and Turkmens were allowed to look different from each other, neither should they wear their own costumes nor communicate in their own languages. It was believed that political independence and territorial integrity of the country would

12. Reza Pahlavi (15 March 1878-26 June 1944) known as Reza Shah, declared himself Shah of Iran on 15 December 1925 and was forced to resign after the occupation of Iran by Britain and the Soviet Union in September 1941, leaving his son, Mohammad Reza Shah. He was installed in power and was ousted from power by the 1979 Iranian revolution.

be at risk unless the national unity was achieved linguistically first¹³.

The Persian theorists and ideologues whose approaches were put into practice by Reza Khan were anonymously wishing to create a modern, homogeneous Iran and wanted to revive the Persian Empires. The identity that Reza Khan wanted to establish was a historical-national identity, what was later labeled as 'the Iranian identity' by him. From this perspective, Persian was the only linguistic, cultural and discourse center in Iran and the other identities were considered as parts of that whole. The roots of such an identity could go back to the ancient Iran and any resistance against its radical essence, having a state power behind it also, was interpreted as opposition and enmity to the sanctified whole and had to be weeded out.

The northwestern, western and southwestern parts of Iran, as in Urmia(West Azerbaijan¹⁴), Senna (Kurdistan), Kermashan (Kermanshah), Ilam, Hamedan and Lorestan provinces are the major regions Kurds live in; while another part of them live in northeastern Iran, namely in North Khorasan and Razavi Khorasan. Many Kurds are also scattered in northern Iran, Guilan and Qazvin provinces, during the forced migrations in the Safavid and Reza Shah (Pahlavi) periods. In addition to the Persians, the Azeris, Kurds, Lors, Arabs, Baluchs, and the Turkmens are among the major communities forming the geopoliti-

13. Mahmoud Afshar, "Unity is our Que!", Ayandeh Publications, 1926

14. The names in parentheses are the names designated by the central government and renamed.

cal spectrum of Iran. In terms of population, Azeris and Kurds, following the Persians, are considered to have the largest populations in Iran. The homogenization policies Reza Khan applied, led to considerable tensions throughout the regional lands of the non-Persians; accordingly, as a national community, the Kurds have posed even greater challenges against the central government since then.

Masoud Rostami, a professor of Political Sciences and a Germany resident, describes the contradiction between the Kurdish identity and the new Iranian identity as following; “A Kurdish person is less likely to hold two historical identities simultaneously, what was proposed following Reza Khan’s policies. That is, if the person is to be an Iranian, s/he would no longer be a Kurd, and if aims to keep the Kurdish identity, s/he would not be considered as an Iranian anymore. And if s/he would consider themselves as Kurds, they are less likely to recognize the historical identity and the national identity of Iran; according to which, history, language and culture of the Kurds are considered as the parts of the Iranian identity and there is no such a thing as a Kurdish identity¹⁵.”

In response to the policy of assimilating identities and merging other

15. Masoud Rostami, telephone interview with the author, December 5, 2021 - Masoud Rostami had a doctorate in political science and was a professor at the Islamic Azad University of Sanandaj. He was expelled from the university along with another group of humanities professors with nationalist views in 2010. Masoud Rostami has a book entitled “Problematic Struggle” which was published in 2018 and examines the problems of the Kurdish struggle in Iran.

nations into the central discourse, Iran had to encounter some scattered uprisings all over the country, especially in Kurdistan. Ismail-Agha Shekak (better known as Simko), the nationalist leader of the Kurds, led one of these uprisings following which, between 1920 and 1929, he was able to control a major part of the Kurdish regions from Urmia region to Senna. Kurdish historians have argued that Simko's ultimate objective was to form an independent Kurdish entity¹⁶. The predominance of traditional and tribal thought seemed to stop Simko leading a revolution to unite the Kurds as a united nation.

Other sporadic uprisings took place in central and southern parts of Kurdistan against Reza Khan's nationalist policies, including the uprising of Dawood Khan Kalhor in the Kermashan and Ilam regions. With the help of foreign support, however, Reza Khan could suppress all the uprisings. In August 1941, Britain and the Soviet Union occupied the western parts of Iran, forcing the German-inspired Reza Shah to abdicate and leave the country, instating his son Mohammad Reza. The Russians, however, occupied the northern regions and the British occupied the southern regions of Kurdistan¹⁷.

In those years, Kurdish intellectuals and nationalists sought to establish a nationalist movement. An educated group of the urban mid-

16. David McDowell, *The Contemporary History of Kurds*, translated by Ibrahim Younesi, 2004

17. David McDowell, *The Contemporary History of Kurds*, translated by Ibrahim Younesi, 2004

dle class was supposed to lead the movement, unlike the previous times when a sheikh or a chieftain was the main decision maker. On August 25, 1942, the Komala of Jianahway Kurdistan (The Society for the Revival of Kurdistan (SRK)) was formed with the aim of liberating all of the occupied parts of Kurdistan and forming an independent and greater Kurdistan¹⁸.

William Eagleton Jones, in *The Republic of Kurdistan* (1946), describes the SRK's programs and goals as fundamentally national; reflecting the fact that the minimum condition for membership in this population was "being Kurdish". This society used to begin its work covertly, consisting of nuclei of 5 to 6 people, which aimed to make the Kurdish nation aware of its history, culture and situation and to prepare them for liberation. By 1945, most Kurdish tribes and nomads, throughout the Russian-occupied areas, had joined the SRK. In 1944, on Dalan Per Mount, on the border line shared by Iraq, Turkey and Iran, a representative of the SRK meets the representatives of the Kurds of Turkey and Iraq, concluding to a treaty called the Se-Sinoor (Three Borders) to fight for the liberation of Kurdistan¹⁹.

The SRK began to grow and declare its activities; following which, the activities of the SRK reached out Kurdistan, Kermashan and

18. Hamed Gowhari, *Kurdistan Revival Society*, Aras Publications, 2004

19. William Eagleton Jones, 1946 *Book of the Republic of Kurdistan*, translated by Seyyed Mohammad Samadi

Sulaimaniyah regions. Consequently, due to a statement signed by 72 people, the Kurdistan Democratic party “ KDP” announced its existence in the city of Mahabad²⁰. With the formation of the KDP, the SRK after three years of activity was dissolved on August 25, 1945, and its members were organized within the KDP . Wide extent of plans and lack of efficient personnel to implement the SRK plans, were considered as the major causes for the liquidation of the SRK. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou later reflected on this issue and declared; “The importance and scope of the Kurdistan Liberation Movement did not correspond to the ability of the cadres of the organization; instead, they had to work based on a particular political program, in accordance with the conditions and potentials of that time²¹.”

Anoushirvan Mustafa Amin believes that the character of Qazi Muhammad, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, who had previously joined the SRK, and the Soviet Union’s role in the dissolution of the SRK used to leave undeniable impacts on the doctrine of the party. Qazi Muhammad²², however, was among the 30Kurds from Ma-

20. Karim Hessami, A Brief Look at the Kurdistan Liberation Movement, Mardin Printing House, Sweden 1996

21. Gérard Chaliand, a group of Kurdish writers, a withered nation and a torn land, translated by the Union of Democratic Students of Iranian Kurdistan, 2014

22. Qazi Muhammad, the founder of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, was the judge of Mahabad. He has a special respect as one of the most popular Kurdish leaders among all Kurds. Judge Mohammad surrenders to the army when the Iranian central government army attacks Mahabad to prevent bloodshed and to be aware that some of its forces are betraying him. On April 30, 1326, Ghazi Mohammad was hanged along with his brother Sadr Ghazi, a member of the Iranian parliament, and his cousin Seif Ghazi, who was the Minister of War in the Republic

habad the Soviet Union invited to Russia in 1942. The Party declared its existence with a modern eight-article program seeking to realize the rights of the Kurds. In Article One of this program, the Democratic Party demands the right of autonomy for the Kurds within the borders of Iran. In other words, it can be concluded that the previous SRK program, aiming at the independence of Kurdistan, had now become a base for the Party to establish an autonomous country for the Kurds within the Iranian borders²³.

On February 2, 1946 in Mahabad, The Democratic Party officially announced the government of the Republic of Kurdistan. Simultaneously with the announcement of the existence of the government of Kurdistan, the Azeris of Iran, in Tabriz, announced the formation of the national government of Azerbaijan. Qazi Mohammad became the president in the capital city of Mahabad, appointing a prime minister and cabinet members accordingly. They also, created a flag and a national anthem; this anthem became the national anthem of the Kurds in the four parts of Kurdistan and has been accepted by all Kurds so far. Kurdish newspapers and schools were established in Kurdish. This government was formed only in the northern parts of Kurdistan, covering 30% of the territory of Kurdistan, which was previously occupied

of Kurdistan.

23. Anoushirvan Mustafa Amin, *Kurds in the Soviet Game*, Kurdistan Strategic Research Center, KRG-Iraq 2007

by the Soviet government and the Iranian forces had no presence there so far. It was the first modern Kurdish government by that time and it had respectively given it a special significance²⁴.

Eleven months after the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Iran, the government of the Republic of Kurdistan encountered the same fate as of the National Government of Azerbaijan and was overthrown by the Iranian army. Qazi Mohammad and some of the party leaders were executed, some imprisoned and others displaced. The party continued to its subterranean activities until 1979, except for an 18-month period in 1968 and 1969, when it was armed. The Democratic Party was the only Kurdish political party in Iran until 1979, a nationalist party that sought autonomy for the Kurds within Iran. During its 33 years of subterranean activity, under the prevailing atmosphere at the time, as well as its organic and organizational affiliation with the Tudeh Party of Iran, that was a Stalinist and pro-Soviet Marxist party, the party used to be influenced by communist ideas.

With the Iranian Revolution in February 1979, in addition to the Democratic Party, other active currents had emerged, such as the Maktab Quran, Revolutionary Organization of Kurdistan Toilers (Komala), the Rizgari Corps, the Khabat Organization, and several other currents announced their existence in Kurdistan. Until 1981, more than two-

24. Abdurrahman Ghassemlou, *Kurdistan and The Kurds*, translated by Abdullah Hassanzadeh, 2004 Sweden Cheap Printing House

third of Kurdistan was controlled by these parties, the aim of all of which was to resolve the Kurdish Question and realize the rights of the Kurds. However, except for a short period, these parties seemed incapable of forming a united front to address what they expected from the central government, what led to a war declaration on behalf of the central government against them. In addition to the central government, these parties were found in a civil war and carried out internal purges. Finally, after ten years of war in Kurdistan, the Islamic Republic of Iran was able to impose its sovereignty over Kurdistan.

1-2 Purpose of the study

The 1979 revolution was a unique opportunity for the Kurds to achieve their national rights. However, the Kurdistan movement failed to make this dream bright, what can be traced back to two major causes; the domestic motives and the foreign motives.

However, the current study is not to investigate the foreign reason that might have caused the Kurdish movement fail, but it aims at recognizing the domestic motives that have been distracting it. Unity and consonance are considered to be the major factors for the vitality of a nationalist movement, what was found absent in the Kurdistan movement during the 1979 revolution. Therefore, this research aims at revealing the main motivations behind this issue and tries to uncover the

reasons caused by which the Kurdistan movement could never unite.

1-3 Research Questions and Hypotheses

Various local movements used to seek the national right of the Kurds in Iran after the 1979 revolution, through political and martial approaches. These forces all introduced themselves as the one and only alternative for the Kurds so as to achieve their national rights, and it stopped them agreeing over some potentially common values. The intro-organizational objectives were prioritized over the national ones that was a result of the ideological hegemony of the parties which made them make inappropriate decisions against the central government and fail achieving their rights. The current study is an effort to answer the following questions respectively:

RQ1. Why the Kurds failed to unite and to form a united front against the central government after the 1979 revolution?

RQ2. How has ideology affected the disunity among the Kurdish currents, fueled the struggles and possibly caused civil war among them?

This study aims at investigating the effect of ideology on the decision making of Kurdish currents leaders during the 1979 struggles and event. Also it tries to find out the role of ideology in the divisions, struggles and failure of the Kurdish currents and parties trying to achieve the Kurdish rights. The main hypothesis of the study is thus

structured based on this idea and it can be tackled as follows:

Hypothesis: Islamism, Marxism and Pan-Iranism ideologies have all affected the disunity, civil war, desperation and weakening of the Kurdish national movements during the years 1979 to 1989.

Null hypothesis: Ideology has had no significant role in the Kurdish movement disunity and failure.

Marxism, Political Islam and Pan-Iranism ideologies are to be examined as **independent variables** in the study. As the extent to which ideology had played role in the issue raises, the Kurdistan movement is more affected by its severe consequences. Therefore, the Kurdistan movement has been considered as the dependent (control) variable in this study; also, **civil war** and **intro-organizational divisions** have been considered as mediating variables.

1-4 Literature Review

The Iranian Revolution on 1979 provided the Kurds with a special chance in order to realize their rights through. On the other hand, the disunity existing among the Kurds made the Kurdish Nationalist movement fall opposing the central government, what has been the central concern of hundreds of books, articles and researches so far.

This research, however, aims at establishing a critical analysis of the leadership in the so called Kurdistan movement and the role of

ideology in their decision making as party leaders. Also, it is planning to shed light upon the fact whether ideology has played any role weakening the Kurdistan movement respectively.

Although many books and journals have approached the issue from different perspectives, the fundamental motivations and causes for the political behavior and stands of these parties leading to disunity among the Kurdistan movements have remained unexamined yet. Biographies are among the most accessible sources in this regard that have shed some light upon the different aspects of the issue sporadically. The leaders of these parties have also been recorded in interviews whose manuscripts have been published, but are most likely to reject accepting the responsibilities for their previous decisions and actions.

Hence, some sources are available as diaries throughout which the author has reported his/her own memories of the time and seem to be more trusted in case of bias and can contribute to understanding the fundamental impacts of the decision makings on the Kurdish society and also on the existence of the Kurdistan movement.

Also, some other sources have been used as the introductions to the leaders' characteristic, biography, creed and ideals that are less likely to explain the reasons and mechanisms of the movement's failure and are mostly focusing on providing a report of their lifestyle, thoughts and management strategies though.

The present study is trying to clarify the roles of ideology as

a vital factor affecting leaders' decision making, assumed to have led the movements towards failure. Also, it is planned to investigate the effects of Marxism, Political Islam, Iranian Colonialism (Pan-Iranism) hegemonies that used to emerge as Kurdish speaking currents within the Kurdish society, and how they might have deviated the Kurdistan movements though.

It has been understood that the Kurdish leaders at that time had prioritized their ideology over the national aims so as to consider their party or organizational benefits, not the national ones. This led to a great struggle among the Kurdish currents and motivated them stand against each other rather to concentrate their forces and power to stand against the central government, what used to eliminate them one by one from the politics' forum and led to fragility of the Kurdistan movements consequently.

A qualitative approach was taken so as to meticulously investigate the biographies, statues and plans, party and organizational declarations, speeches, intra-organizational documents, books and other categories of sources. Also, some interviews were arranged with the personalities who had been a part of the movement or have conducted prominent studies in this field so as to achieve a deeper understanding of the effect of ideology on the fragility of Kurdistan movements.

The Kurdistan movement had split into three sections each of which had stepped towards weakening the Kurdistan movement and

contributed to the central government's national interests instead. However, Frantz Fanon's(1925-1961) ideas were applied in order to achieve a clear understanding of how and why the anti-colonial nationalism tend to mimic the dominant regime's discourse, fail to overcome the dominant discourse, not being able to oppose the regime and contribute to its interests instead.

The Kurdish nationalism had interpreted the central government discourse as being a Persian colonialism therefore it tried to form its activities against the regime on this basis; meanwhile, they seemed willing to participate in the formation the Iranian government so as to establish an Islamic, socialist, and democracy at the end of the day. Ideology had mad the notion of nationalism somehow unclear what med the parties lose the right path to nationals interests.

The Kurdish forces were fed by whether Marxist or Islamic ideologies and tried to base their movements and activities based on them, but these ideologies were seen to be derived concepts having the least compatibility with the local and national concerns of the Iranian Kurdistan, especially as the central government had tried to manipulate their sources in line with its own benefits so that all the Kurdistan movements had somewhat contributed to the Pan-Iranian interests, not their national objectives. It seems that ideology had made the movements commit strategic mistakes several times, what prohibited them making a contributive decision in line with the Kurdish interests.

‘Independent Thinking’, proposed by Leonardo Da Vinci(1452-1519), was also tackled so as to recognize the structure of the fact that the Kurdish leaders had less likely had the chance and ability to make independent decisions; rather, their decisions had been quite guided by ideology, what was recognized too late since there was mere to be done so as to compensate the devastating outcomes of their decisions.

Regarding the plural context of Kurdistan at that time and the national demands of the Kurds, ideology seemed to have a quite negative effect on the active currents; also, the radical ideologies were most likely to reflect intolerance against each other and it had taken the possibility of success to zero, both at the time and for any future opportunity. The need for a comprehensive idea that was able to accumulate all these diversities under the same plane was quite identified so as to lead the discombobulated forces and ambitions these currents used to have, towards national interests of the Kurds only.

This study is aimed at presenting an explanatory portrait of the role of ideology in deviation of the Kurdish forces after the 1979 revolution. Apart of the Kurdistan movement sounded to be misled by the central government and tended to whether join the regime front or ignore the national interests of the Kurds under the shadow of ideology; while, the others seemed incapable of tolerating the currents defined outside the framework of their own ideology and the other part had to leave their stands and end their political activities against the regime.

Eventually, it can be concluded that the Kurdistan movements, once willing to realize the national interests of the Kurds, after ten years of political and armed opposition against the regime withdrew to the mountains of Kurdistan and literally failed.

1-5 Methodology

The data compiled for this study in response to its main concern, as how ideology has affected the decision making of the leaders of the Kurdistan movement, shows that it had played a significant role in leading the leaders' decision-makings and resulted in disunity and split among the Kurdistan notional movement.

Three qualitative methods were applied so as to approach the objectives of the study:

1- Analyzing the compiled sources, 2- Analyzing the recorded speeches both as audio and video files, and 3- Interviewing individuals who whether had a comprehensive knowledge of the issue or used to be a member of the named currents and parties.

Interviews Information

Deep Interview (person to person) is considered as one of the data collection procedures that is quite useful extracting a clear theme out of the interviewee's speeches regarding the research subject. Neutral ques-

tions are to be asked during the interview so as not to lead the interviewees towards the objectives of the interviewer, showing no proving or rejecting reflection to their ideas during the interview²⁵. In this study, twelve individuals were interviewed following the deep interview procedure so as to gain reliable data in this regard.

The individuals were interviewed in September, November and December, 2021 through phone calls or video chats. The interview questions were to be some open-ended ones, while the interviewees were allowed to add any further information regarding the issue. A notable advantage of proposing open questions in interviews is that the interviewees are not to answer a limited pre-organized questions, instead they would be able to share a wide scope of answers that might not fit the very expectations of the interviewer and it can potentially shed light on different aspects of the issue that might have been ignored intentionally.

However, the interviews were arranged to follow a special framework so as to organize the route of the discussion. The interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes on average. The interviewees were grouped into two categories, one for those who had previously been a part of the Kurdish currents and were as eyewitnesses of the events, and the other for those intellectuals who had published books or journals about the

25.Natasha Mack, Cynthia Woosung, Kathleen M. Macqueen, Greg Guest, Emily Namey. Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide

subject and had tried to investigate the issue from a scientific point of view. It was attempted to select interviewees with different points of view in order to shed light on different aspects of the issue.

The majority of the interviewees of the first group used to have high ranks in the organizations or parties, and the second group had all published scientific works as articles and books on the issue. The real names of the interviewees are to be used in this study following their consent. The data collected have been categorized into different chapters and have been compared with the data derived from the documents and audiovisual sources.

Data Analysis

Published books written by independent scholars, diaries of the leaders and figures, intra party documents, congress declarations, party plans and statuses, and also the statements issued at that time regarding the concurrent events were all among the resources studies in this research. Also, some audiovisual tapes of the figures and leaders at that time, as well as the interviews published in the newspapers and journals then were analyzed in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue. I tried to hold no presupposition or biased interpretation of the data, instead the data derived from the interviews and other sources were analyzed unbiasedly.

The sources were mostly in Kurdish and Persian, although some of them were in English, however, they were all translated into English and have been listed in the reference section. In order to validate the research data, they have been directly mentioned in the body of the research so as not to lose their validity when interpreted by the researcher. In order to have access to reliable resources for the research, the documents compiled were checked for validity by the representatives of the parties and organizations; also, they accepted to provide the researcher with any further information or sources circa the subject of the study.

Chapter Two

Kurdish Nationalism and Ideology

This article is mainly attempting to find out whether the negative role of ideology in the decisions made by the leaders and the weakness of Kurdish nationalism was the main reason for the disunion of the Kurdistan movement in Iran after the 1979 revolution. The Kurdish struggles over the last two centuries have been whether nationalist or patriotic.

Nation, is a term of different definitions; however, most theorists recognize territory, race, language, religion and so on as the minimum features of a community to be considered as a nation. Ernest Renan (1823-1892), Historian and famous French Philosopher, believes that other than the mentioned features, “A nation is a soul and a spiritual principle, two things that are in fact the same, and it is the soul that constitutes the spiritual principle. One is past and one is present, one is a common heritage of past and another is a desire to live together, a desire to continue investing in a heritage they have received jointly”, also “.....

to have shared glories in the past and the will to continue it all together has made great things together and they wish to build it again. Spartans are recited for a famous motto, as “We are whom you used to be once; we are going to be the ones you already are²⁶.”

The Kurds have all the characteristics of a nation, as language, history, culture, land, and a common soul they need to regenerate and recreate the glory of the past. Kurdish struggles have been quite nationalist, what the Kurds themselves call “Kurdayati”, a struggle for the realization of the national rights of the Kurds. Various ideologies influenced the ‘Kurdish nationalism’ pushing it into a detour for a significant period.

Abdul Rahman Qaseemlou was of the opinion that “National oppression was the main reason triggering the Kurdish uprisings. Gradually, with the increase of the national oppression being imposed on Kurds by the authorities, the national motive began to grow among the Kurds in Kurdistan, what united all different parts of the Kurdish society in response. This became a reason for the farmers and peasants, under the leadership of tribal and religious leaders, to rise up against the ruling government in Kurdistan²⁷.

26. Ernest Renan, “What is a Nation?” Based on the text of a conference delivered at the Sorbonne on March 11th, 1882, in Ernest Renan, “Qu’est ce qu’une nation?” Paris, Presses-Pocket, 1992. (translated by Ethan Randell)

27. Abdurrahman Ghassemloo, Kurdistan and The Kurds, translated by Abdullah Hassanzadeh, 2004 Sweden Cheap Printing House

Although some believe that nationalism can also be considered as an ideology, ideologies seek to define the human world and also to make a person's identity known. Ideologies have sought to provoke the masses and monopolize the social values accordingly. Political ideology is an idealistic approach which leads to the emergence of commitment and obedience in its followers; it also has a propaganda rooting in the fundamental intellectual principles and should be accepted as a sum of absolute and impermeable truths respectively.

Different perspectives are likely to take different viewpoints considering nationalism as ideology; however, nationalism has never been the result of incitement and monopoly of the values of a society and most importantly, it has appeared a part of the social values system. For example, nationalism, along with cult of personality and racism, is a part of Hitler's Nazism value system, and Nazism could never be defined as nationalism. The American value system is a set of democracy, liberalism, and nationalism as well; in which, the individualistic soul of liberalism has softened the potential of pluralistic nationalism, prevented the emergence of movements as Nazism²⁸."

With the formation of a modern state in Iran, a kind of ideology, called Pan-Iranism emerged that was trying to absorb the Kurdish iden-

28. Hamid Ahmadi, Habibullah Fazeli. Nationalism, The Issue of Identity and the National Government in Social Theory. Quarterly Journal of Politics, Journal of the Faculty of Law and Political Science, Volume 37, Number 4, Winter 2007, Pages 21-40

tity through making people put on ‘Persian and Iranian’ clothing. “Persian nationalism with emphasis on the nationalism of a French nation state sought to promote Persian as an official and state language, justifying the destruction of any other language spoken. At the same time, in order to deprive any of the historical spirit of the current geographic nations, through applying the traditional German nationalism, it began to process an eternal and historical identity of Iran with an emphasis on the Persian identity elements²⁹.”

This nationalism used to speak of a superior race, the dominant culture, what thought to be a kind of divine and supernatural blessing. Such a discourse, used to disdain and attack the other nations; however, relying on an Aryan legend, tied itself to a far distant root. It began to ignore a thousand-year old Islamic living history, considering itself an heir to the history of the Achaemenes and to the legendary empire of Cyrus, whose evidence of existence were all compiled during the modern Iran.

Ahmad Mohammadpour, a researcher and lecturer in anthropology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst U.S., is of the opinion that, “Perso-Iranian nationalism is a unique entity, a singular and monolithic discourse having its base in reactionary ideas, and military, government and cultural and intellectual institutions politically seem to

29. Masoud Rostami, Problems of Struggle, E-book, 2018

have been imposing an agenda during the last century, and as for more than a century, it has remained almost closed to cultural and ethnic diversities though³⁰.”

Kurds and other non-Persian resident nations have resisted the unjustified wills of the Iranian nationalism. Kurdish nationalism has been taking more strict stances against the invasion of the Persian nationalism in comparison to other ethnic groups throughout the country; however, it did not seem likely to react the same as other parts of the Iranian diaspora. Insisting on Iranian identity, the political power and state apparatus, from 1925 to 1979, were attempting to create a history and inhere the totalitarian perspectives of the Pan-Iranian ideology in society and to further assimilate other nations through the educational system, media and military power, etc. The Kurdish nationalism, however, did not have the same power or facilities to deal with it, and used to be under the highest level of oppression by Persian identity, especially Mohammad Reza Shah's rule (1941-1979).

Respectively, the Kurds took an alien stance and remained unknown to the government more than any time before. Two other ideologies, Russian Marxism and political Islam, after the Republic of Kurdistan appeared in the political forum of the Kurds and influenced Kurdish nationalism accordingly. Kurdish nationalism or Kurdish dis-

30.Ahmad Mohammadpour, Tishk Journal, No. 59-60, 2021

course was then influenced by these three ideologies, Persian Pan-Iranism, Russo-Marxism and political Islam, what led to a sort of ambiguity and non- transparency within the existing discourse.

Erfan Rahnemoun, a Kurdistan political analyst, believes that, “After the Kurdistan Republic, there used to raise a kind of separation or division among the Kurds. Qazi Muhammad, Sheikh Obaidullah Nehri, Semko, Sheik Saeed Piran, Sheik Mahmoud, leaders of the Kurdistan movements in Turkey, Iran and Iraq, all used to carry a historical Kurdish background whose dialogue was in harmony with the Kurdish cultural reality. Also, regardless of being religious characters, their movements surprisingly were not religious but national. Culture, had been the core pillar of their beliefs within the religious discourse and their movement had called for national rights; thus, at least until the Kurdistan Republic, a foreign discourse had not penetrated into the Kurdistan movements³¹.”

After World War II, Mohammad Reza Shah, succeeding his father, tended to develop close ties with the liberal world and became a strategic ally of the United States in the Middle East. On this basis, the protest movements in Iran against the dictatorship of the monarchy were in some way an attempt to oppose international imperialism, the

31. Erfan Rahnemoun, telephone interview with the author, September 25, 2021 - Rahnemoun, a graduate of philosophy, was a member of central committee of Kurdistan Democratic party of Iran and in charge of the party's publications and was in charge of the party's representative office in Sulaimaniyeh, Iraq. He currently resides in Norway.

liberal world of Western capitalism and the United States, and were influenced by Soviet communist ideas. Revolutionary Marxism had also influenced the religious currents throughout Iran, who considered the West as their number one enemy and held anti-imperialist and American positions. The only Kurdish Party in the Iranian Kurdistan then, was the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), was being secretly led and some of its leading members and cadres lived in Kurdistan; they were influenced by Marxist-Leninist ideas through the Tudeh³² Party of Iran. After the fall of the Kurdistan Republic and at one point, the Democratic Party had become a part of the Tudeh Party. This relationship affected the nationalist view of the members of the party and later the Kurdistan Society, what added to the transparency existing within the Kurdish movements. According to the Kurds, Kurdistan had been occupied by the central government and that their struggle was anti-colonialist and they also demanded the realization of the national rights of the Kurds within the current frameworks of Iran.

Kamal Suleimani, professor of Islamic and Kurdish Studies at the University of Mexico City, believes that, "It was a serious ideological issue that the Kurds could never recognize if they were Iranian or

32. The Tudeh Party of Iran will be established on October 10, 1942. It had extensive ties to the Soviet Communist Party and wanted to establish a socialist system in Iran. From 1332 to 1357, its activities in Iran became illegal. In the 1979 revolution, he supported Iran's religious leader, Ruhollah Khomeini, who had anti-imperialist and American stances. In 1982 and 1983, Khomeini imprisoned and executed many of the party's leaders and outlawed its activities.

not. And they never realized what Persian nationalism is or what it has done to other nations. We can't understand their game and we play for their side and for them. There was no clear definition or portrayal for the Kurdish nationalism, the so called Kurdayati notion; and you would never be able to overcome the issues should you look at language, values and views of the diversities from the lens of the ruling government³³."

Soleimani's opinion, however, referred to the numerous measures taken by the Security and Intelligence Service, better known as 'SAVAK' by the locals, which had announced that the Iranian government must have planned to make an effort absorbing the mentality of all the Kurds towards the central government hence. The Kurds, as a neighboring nation, used to have cultural and historical ties with the Persians, but they seemed to lack such a firm relationship with the Turks in Turkey, the Arabs in Iraq and Syria. The Imperial government, however, tended to launch a comprehensive project with the aim of employing Kurds outside its borders to change the mind-set of the Kurds into a sense of belonging to the Iranian identity. Accordingly, they used to support and fund the Kurds in Iraq and other neighboring regions to conduct a great deal of publicity and activity.

33. Kamal Suleimani, telephone interview with the author, November 10, 2021. Kamal Soleimani holds a Ph.D. in the Middle East Political History from Columbia University and currently teaches political Islam, Kurdish studies, and Middle Eastern history at the University of Mexico City in Mexico.

Isa Pezhman, Head of Department-7 at SAVAK (Shah's Security and Intelligence Organization) and Shah's representative in Kurdistan Affairs, said; "The policy of the Iranian government changed after the establishment of SAVAK (14 March 1957) and especially I, who was assigned to this mission with regard to the Kurds, came to the conclusion that the Kurds, although not considering themselves to be an Iranian nation, believed that they were racially relatives of the Iranians. Respectively, we prepared a set of projects in different regions, called 'Unity and Dependency of Kurds with the Iranians'. We established Kurdish Radio stations in Kurdish regions as in Mahabad, Senna, Kermashan, Urmia and even in Mashhad so as to leave a positive impact on them; also, earlier we had released Kurdish-language publications in Iran and event in Turkey and Syria, yet secretly published. These were all to change the perception of the Kurds towards the idea of being an 'Iranian'³⁴."

This project used to be applied in almost every field, and could somehow affect the Russian Marxist dialogue that was being promoted in Iran. Iranian Marxism considered itself to be serving Iranian nationalism, in a way that the red lines of Iranian nationalism, as in geographic border, race, language and history appeared to be theirs also.

34. Diaries of Issa Pejman, Interviewer: Habibullah Lajevardi, March 4, 1983, available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKLtXcl_eIA

On the other hand, Russian Marxism that had influenced most of the Kurdistan movements had entered Iran by the Tudeh Party, as through the translated texts produced by the Tudeh Party. The Tudeh Party wanted Marxism itself to serve Iran, or the Pan-Iranian dialogue which had become a kind of national Iranian dialog under Reza Shah. Respectively, the left-wing Kurdish activists were introduced to Marxism in service of the Persian nationalism. In this regard, Erfan Rahnemoun believes that, “The Russian interpretation of Marxism had been combined with the interests of Persians. Most of the leftist parties in Iran had taken an opposing stand against the non-Persians in Iran, especially the Kurds. The existing version of Marxism was solved in the Persian discourse and the left-handers in Kurdistan had been fed with³⁵.”

The ideologies entering Kurdistan seemed less likely to match the social fabric of Kurdistan and were considered as an alien. The ones who had identified themselves as the representatives of Marxist ideologies and political Islam, in the preceding decade of the 1979 revolution, were young people had neither sufficient knowledge nor political or scientific status.

In the early 1970s, in addition to the active presence of Marxist ideology in Kurdistan struggles and the Kurdish society, political Islam also had entered the struggle, what tended to deny the traditional na-

35. Erfan Rahnemoun, telephone interview with the author, September 25, 2021

tionalist Islamic currents in Kurdistan led by Sheikhs. Such a reading of Islam was influenced by the Muslim Brotherhood ideology in Egypt, which sought to create a major Islamic nation in the world and oppose the Western and other traditional values in Islamic societies.

Sabah Mofidi, Researcher and Professor of Political Science of Kurd, believes that, “These young political leaders, whether Marxists or religious, did not have a trusted political understanding and used to know a little about politics. Each was influenced by an ideology which was not local, therefore, there used to be no ideology suitable for the Kurds, and the leaders seemed unable to recognize which ideology was capable of tolerance in Kurdish societies.

That is why it can be observe that the ideologies these leaders used to follow had passed several filters before, of course after the influence of the Persians; on the other hand, the Islamic stand was isolated because of the religious relationships and being influenced by the imported religious ideology. However, they were affected by non-Kurdish ideology and, apparently claiming to be solving the national issues of the Kurds³⁶.”

The Kurdish national movement was somehow influenced by the ideology that made the leaders unable to achieve a clear understand-

36. Sabah Mofidi, telephone interview with the author, November 27, 2021- Sabah Mofidi was born in Marivan, Iranian Kurdistan, and holds a doctorate in political science from India. His work is research on Kurdish politics in Iranian Kurdistan and he is currently working on research in this field in the Netherlands.

ing of the current situation Kurds were dealing with. Ideology influenced the decisions of leadership in a way that the national issue and the national rights of the Kurds were somehow put into a second priority or for some of them it did not seem to be prioritized at all.

The Kurdish community was blown up after the 1979 revolution. People had begun to form councils in their own cities and organize their communities. The exiled leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party had returned to Kurdistan. The underground Marxist and Islamic currents had announced their presence and were seen in struggle with the new regime; whose leader was a Shi'ite religious character, Ruhollah Khomeini, who called for an Islamic state and introduced the Iranian revolution an ideological Islamic revolution, what could succeed by liberal Persian nationalists, the Communists and other non-Persian nations.

Chapter Three

3-1 Kurdistan and the 1979 Revolution

Since the winter of 1978, with daily demonstrations in one part of the country, the revolution against the imperial regime of Mohammad Reza Shah had intensified throughout Iran. In February 1979, after the Shah left Iran, Ruhollah Khomeini, an exiled cleric opposed to the Shah's regime, then known a symbol of the Iranian revolution, returned to Iran from Paris. The monarchy had collapsed, and in less than two months the revolutionaries in Tehran held a referendum to determine the new government on March 30 and 31, 1979, so that the people could vote for either the Islamic Republic or the imperial regime. However, the Kurds boycotted the referendum because the content and structure of the new regime were not clear to anyone. In the first months after the revolution, Khomeini repeatedly stressed in his speeches that political parties would be allowed to freely operate within the Islamic Republic³⁷, something that never occurred.

37. Official Website of Ruhollah Khomeini; <http://www.imam-khomeini.ir/fa/>

Mohammad Reza Shah was a close ally of the United States and the West, whose opponents all imagined themselves in the anti-imperialist ranks. Also, the communist parties of Iran that played a major role in the revolution and the fall of the Shah's regime, all supported Ruhollah Khomeini for his anti-imperialist positions; major parties such as the Tudeh Party of Iran, the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran³⁸, and the People's Fedayeen Guerrilla Organization of Iran³⁹ were among the advocates of the anti-imperialistic revolution. None of the leaders of these parties predicted that Ruhollah Khomeini would ban their activities and by any chance would imprison, execute, or force their members to flee.

In the months before the revolution, the Shah of Iran decided to release some political prisoners to prevent the potential revolution,

38. The People's Mujahedin of Iran Organization (PMIO) was a Marxist-Shiite organization founded on September 6, 1965, and after its establishment, organized an armed struggle against the imperial regime. After the revolution, they sided with the regime of the Islamic Republic until June 1981, then opposed the new regime, and from 1982 onwards, in the Iran-Iraq war, fought from Iraq against the forces of the Iranian regime. Before the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, their camps were in Iraq, and after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, their camps were moved from Iraq to Albania. The leaders of this organization are Masoud Rajavi and Maryam Rajavi. Masoud Rajavi has not appeared in public for many years and no one knows much about his condition. This organization is one of the largest opposition parties to the Iranian regime.

39. The People's Fedayian Guerrilla Organization of Iran was a Marxist organization founded in 1971. The organization waged armed struggles against the Shah's regime. After the revolution, differences arose between the leaders of this organization in support or opposition to the new regime, and the organization became divided into two factions, the majority, and the minority. The organization had nearly half a million members at the time. The majority faction supported the Khomeini regime, and the minority faction turned to armed struggle against the new regime. In 1983, the majority faction was also angered by the regime, and its leaders and supporters were imprisoned and arrested

including the release of some leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran who had been imprisoned for years, including Aziz Yousefi⁴⁰ and Ghani Bolourian⁴¹, who were known as two well-known figures of the party that time. The party's general secretary and members of the central committee, based in Europe and Iraqi Kurdistan, met in the summer of 1978 at the urging of Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou⁴², who had become the general secretary following the party's third congress in 1973, to return to Iran and to prepare for the revolution. The majority of the members of the Central Committee opposed the idea of returning home for several meetings, and finally, due to Ghassemlou's insistence, the committee decided to return a small group of the party home to or-

40. Aziz Yousefi (1928-June 1978) was one of the leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran and its liaison with the Tudeh Party of Iran. Yousefi was arrested several times by the Shah's regime, and in his second arrest he was imprisoned in the imperial regime for 18 years, and died a few months after his release from prison due to an illness he had contracted in prison.

41. Ghani Bolourian (1925-2011). He was one of the leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran and its liaison with the Tudeh Party of Iran. Bolourian was arrested by the Shah's regime in 1337 and spent 25 years of his life in prison. After the 1979 revolution at the Fourth Congress of the Democratic Party, he became a member of the party's political bureaucracy. He, along with six other members of the Central Committee, split in 1980 with 800 cadres and members of the Democratic Party, and formed the Democratic Party of the Fourth Congress. Its members were arrested by the Iranian regime and fled. He went to Czechoslovakia, where he joined the Tudeh Party and became a member of the Tudeh Party's political bureau. In 1989, he left the Tudeh Party and went to Germany to retire from politics.

42. Abdurrahman Ghassemlou (1930-1989) was the leader of the Democratic Party from 1973 to 1989, and a PhD in Capitalist and Socialist Economics, Professor at the University of Prague and Modern Oriental Languages in Paris. Since the founding of the Democratic Party in 1945 he has been a member of the party's youth organization, a member of the party reconstruction group, a member of the Tudeh Party when the Democratic Party became a branch of the Tudeh Party. After Prague Spring, 1968 and expulsion from Prague. He changed his mind and became a critic of Soviet socialism. In 1970, he re-established the Democratic Central Committee, became its secretary-general, opposed the Tudeh Party and its influence over the Democratic Party in the struggle against the central regime of Iran.

ganize the situation. Ghassemlou with six⁴³ others were the ones who were supposed to return and organize the Kurdish people movements as well as the activities of the members of the Democratic Party⁴⁴.

In 1969, another group of Kurdish Marxist was formed by some students in Tehran, the aim of which was to organize the Kurdish people against the Iranian regime in the form of a Marxist-Maoist organization. They tended to appear as the critics of China-Soviet versions of Marxism and used to introduce themselves as the third line of Marxism. They described the Soviet Union and China as Marxist imperialists and as the line ones. At that time, organizations such as the The People's Fedayian Guerrilla Organization of Iran , who were armed at the policy level, were considered as the line two and considered themselves as the Marxists of the line three who believed in the political organization of the masses. The group formed secret cells in different cities throughout Kurdistan, including Senna, Boukan, Mahabad, and Marivan, and also used to have members in some Iranian universities, including the University of Tabriz. Some of the group's leaders were arrested and imprisoned by SAVAK; finally, after the fall of the Shah's regime, the group openly declared its activities under the name of the Revolutionary Organization of the Toilers of Kurdistan of Iran (Komala).

43. Mullah Abdullah Hassanzadeh, Mullah Hassan Shiwasali, Amir Qazi, Hashem Karimi, Muhammad Amin Seraji, Seyyed Rasoul Dehqan

44. Teimour Mustafaei, *Seventy Historic Stations*, KRG-Iraq, 2015

In the years before the revolution, a religious leader had begun a wide-scale activity in the Senna city. Ahmad Muftizadeh, the grand Muf-ti of Kurdistan province during the Shah's regime, whose father and grandfather had held the same position also, was a Kurdish religious character who also stressed the vitality of the national existence and the national rights of the Kurds, and for whom Qazi Muhammad, the first leader of the Democratic Party, meant a hero. Muftizadeh establishes an Islamic organization called the "The School of Quran⁴⁵" and started teaching religious courses and organized people to fight respectively. Muftizadeh's organization used to follow a political Islam, very close to the political ideas of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, who believed in creating an Islamic nation for all Muslims. From this perspective, Muftizadeh used to admire Khomeini as an Islamic religious leader, and in a way, he sympathized with him and believed that within the framework of Khomeini's thoughts and slogans, the rights of the Kurds and the Sunnis of Kurdistan could be manifested.

In response to the Iranian revolution and Khomeini's return, two other traditional religious currents declared their position among the Kurds; although their presence were short-lived, their followers and their fate later played a key role in undermining Kurdish nationalism. In

45. There were religious schools that were established in 1978 by Ahmad Muftizadeh in Marivan and Sanadaj as the Quran School and in 1980 renamed the Maktab-e Quran. The current in 1996, after Muftizadeh's death, was divided into majority and minority groups.

Qorveh and the eastern parts of the city of Senna, Sheikh Hadi Hashemi, the leader of the Qaderieh dervishes, clashed with Shiite Kurds and Khomeini Turkish followers in these cities. The revolutionary forces, in response, destroyed his house, mosque, and monastery, killing about a hundred of his followers; what made him flee to the mountainous areas of Kurdistan and later leave the country. This was the revolutionaries' first action against the Kurds.

The other current was of the sons and the family of Sheikh Othman Naqshbandi the famous Sheikh of the Howraman region, a mountainous region in shared in Iran and Iraq. The group was called 'Rizgari Corps', having more than 2,000 armed forces and held its first gathering in Senna. Another organization was formed in the city of Baneh, called the 'Khabat-e Kurdistan Organization', led by Sheikh Jalal Hosseini, the brother of another Kurdish religious leader, Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Husseini⁴⁶, and used to operate within that city only, meaning that it was geographically limited to a small city.

Senna, however, used to be one of the most controversial cities in Kurdistan, and seemed to be a great challenge for the Iranian regime and became the center of the conflicts between the Kurdish currents against the regime. Senna was the third largest city in Kurdistan af-

46. Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Husseini (1922-2010), the Imam of Mahabad, the head of the Kurdish delegation at the beginning of the revolution and a Kurdish secular cleric who initially tended to approach the Democratic Party, but after the revolution, although he used to support the Komala party, yet he considered himself an independent figure.

ter Kermashan and Urmia that time. Yousef Ardalan, a member of the Komala leadership and a member of the first city council of Senna, who was released from prison in the fall of 1978, describes the atmosphere at that time as; “From the beginnings of October and November, 1978 city councils used to emerge, and people began to feel that the government was soon to collapse; therefore, they thought of forming councils to secure their safety, what was quite more prominent in Senna⁴⁷.”

Revolutionary committees were being formed in cities all over Iran, where the representatives of most currents and parties used to join. With the fall of the Shah’s regime, these committees took control of the cities, government and the military; the Kurdish parties also, had formed their own headquarters in the Kurdish cities.

The Kurdish currents sent some representatives to Tehran and Qom, to meet Khomeini and the interim government so that the new government would realize and secure their rights of them. Interestingly, any of these currents appeared to introduce itself as the representative of the Kurdish people and none seemed to have a specific strategy to form a united Kurdish national front.

It could be observed that the Kurds had been somewhat surprised by the revolution, since their behavior and organization were

47. Yousef Ardalan, telephone interview with the author, October 30, 2021 - Yousef Ardalan is currently living in France, and was born in Senna. In the first election after the revolution for Senna City Council, he was one of the eleven members of this council. He became a member of Komala and was one of the first cadres of this organization during its public activity.

inconsistent, and each sought to realize the rights of the Kurds within the framework accepted and designed by their own organization and current. Also, they expected the new system to be democratic and guarantee the rights of the Kurds as well as their organization's.

There were two revolutionary committees in Senna, each with its own office, one committee was of the followers of the Sunni character Ahmad Muftizadeh and the other one was a revolutionary committee belonging to Mullah Safdari, a Shi'ite cleric and Khomeini's representative in the city who was exiled to Senna during the previous regime. Ahmad Muftizadeh appeared to oppose the presence of Mullah Safdari in the city, also there was also a struggle between the Marxists and Ahmad Muftizadeh's followers in the city, which weakened the Kurdish unity and led to a quarrelsome atmosphere within the city respectively. Mullah Mohammad Emami, a companion and a like-minded of Ahmad Muftizadeh, reports of that time as; "before the revolution the political currents, both the leftist and the rightist, used to work closely together, but after the revolution, when the ideological issues arose, the people got disunited; the ideology had pitted friends of yesterday against each other today."⁴⁸

All the actors in the Kurdish political arena supposed their activities in the service of the Kurdish people, while each used to look

48. Mullah Mohammad Emami, audio tape, - Telegram Channel, @Amizan. Mullah Mohammad Emami (1305-1398) was one of the famous Kurdish religious figures in Saqqez.

at the issue through the lens of their own, and in a way what is called national interests and must have gathered them under the same umbrella, they were influenced by ideology that made them define the issue differently; however, instead of cooperating with each other, they competed and propagandized deadly against each other.

“In August and September of 1978, Siddiq Kamangar, Abdullah Baban and Yadollah Biglari⁴⁹, the leaders of Komala, and Ahmad Muftizadeh tended to establish a charity in Senna,” said Yousef Ardalan reporting of the cooperation between Marxist and Kurdish Islamist before the revolution, “and to carry out political activities against the regime through the status of the institution.” At the same time, a statement was issued in Senna urging the Kurdish people, referring to Ahmad Muftizadeh, to “support the positions of the wise man of God⁵⁰.”

But after the revolution, there used to begin an intense competition between Marxists and Islamist in Senna upon controlling the city. Ahmad Muftizadeh was convinced that Khomeini and the Islamic Revolution could secure the national and religious rights of the Kurds, while the Marxists had no belief in the revolutionary government though. Hatem Manbari, a former Democratic Party cadre in Senna and Kambaran region, described the situation at the time as; “It was a major turning point for the Kurdish people. More than a hundred high-ranking

49. The founders of the Revolutionary Organization of the Workers of Kurdistan of Iran.

50. Ali Ezzatyar, *The Last Mufti of Iranian Kurdistan*. 2016

Iranian Kurdish army officers joined the Kurdistan movements, and at the same time tens of thousands of people tended to serve the movement as soldiers⁵¹.” The Kurdish currents were able to grow greatly in a short period of time and their number of members was increasing day by day: “The Democratic Party in the city of Mahabad on February 20, 1979, with no conflict, could take the control of the Mahabad army barracks.⁵²” This action angered the interim government and the revolutionary forces in Tehran and Qom. On March 5, 1979, Ahmad Muftizadeh traveled to Tehran to meet Khomeini’s representatives. One week later, Ayatollah Khomeini announced that he would hold talks only with Ahmad Muftizadeh as the representative of Kurdistan. Muftizadeh, as a trusted character of the revolutionary government, intends to prepare a consensus among Kurdish religious figures to negotiate with the central regime.

On March 18, 1979, prominent religious (Sunni) personalities of Kurdistan met in the city of Saez at Mullah Abdullah Mohammadi’s home, Imam of Saez. During the meeting, they prepared a statement entitled “The Demands of the Kurdish Nation”, which stressed the three pillars of religious, national and socioeconomic oppression and sent it

51. Hatem Munbari, interview with the author, December 17, 2021, Hatem Munbari was one of the cadres and field commanders of the Democratic Party in the areas of Sanandaj, Kamyaran and Howraman from 1979 to 1989. He published his memoir “Azar and Ezmoun” in Sweden in 2016, in which he describes the events of that time, especially the war between the Democratic Party and Komala

52. Abdullah Hassanzadeh, *Half a Century of Struggle*, Volume I 1995

to the central government⁵³. It is noteworthy that no representatives of the two the mainstream parties of Kurdistan, namely the Democratic Party and the Komala Youth Party were invited to this meeting.

On the same day, a dispute broke out between Muftizadeh's followers and the Shiite Khomeini's representative in the Senna, Mullah Safdari. On the other hand, the Kurdish Marxists of Komala and other currents in the Senna had attacked the army barracks in this city in order to take control of it. There began a bloody war between the army, the revolutionary forces and the Kurdish forces. From that day on, the central government declared a war against the Kurds and the differences between the Kurdish forces and the role of ideology were highlighted. Yousef Ardalan reports about the conditions of the early days after the revolution as; "At that time, there were three main currents in Kurdistan, the Democratic Party that wanted to get along with the government by any means, Komala that seemed completely incompatible, and the Islamic current, that wanted to be a part of the government body."⁵⁴

From that date on, except for one stage known as the Quarterly War, there used to be no strategic cooperation between the Kurdish forces. A three-month war was waged to purge the Kurdish forces, in which Khomeini ordered jihad against the Kurds on August 19, 1979, and the army and the Revolutionary Guards were defeated by the Kurd-

53. Mullah Mohammad Emami audio tape, - Telegram Channel, @Amizan.

54. Yousef Ardalan, telephone interview with the author, October 30, 2021

ish forces on , Later, a statement called on the Kurds to reconcile and it promised to secure their rights. A committee of the Kurdish representatives was formed, including Sheikh Izz al-Din, as the chairman, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, as the spokesman and the representatives of Komala and the Fada'i's people as representatives dedicated to the minority. They compiled a 26-article statement respectively containing the Kurds' demand for an autonomous government in Kurdistan. The central government stopped the formal talks with the Kurds and seemed only to organize and strengthen its forces to invade Kurdistan again. The Kurds seemed incapable of benefiting the opportunity then, since they first found fighting against each other and then some divisions appeared in their organizational structure, what led them to weaken more than before. One of the main reasons was the role of ideology on their approaches and decisions. The following are the selected areas expected to have set the ground for the events that weakened and defeated the Kurdish national front:

- Ahmad Muftizadeh's positions and the formation of the Muslim Peshmerga Organization

- Disarmament of the Rezgari crops by Komala
- Komala invasion to the headquarters of Sheikh Hadi Hashemi
- Splits occurred within the Kurdistan Democratic Party
- The struggles between Komala and the Kurdistan Democratic Party

However, providing a comprehensive introduction of the Kurdish forces and currents seems vital before attempting to deal with the analysis of the issue.

3-2 Organizations and political parties

3-2-1 Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran

Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) as the oldest Kurdish political Party in Iran, was formed on the ideological basis of the Society for the Revival of Kurdistan, founded on 16 August 1942, and it ended its activity on 16 August 1945, when the Kurdistan Democratic Party was formed. The plan of the organization was to achieve the independence of Kurdistan; however, the Democratic Party's plan for the Kurds was to be defined within the Iranian government's framework. The presence of the Soviet army in the northern and western parts of Iran and the absence of the power of the central government in the region had made the Kurdish Republic of Kurdistan able to rule the areas it had under its control on 22 January 1946.

Qazi Muhammad, a nationalist cleric and a judge in Mahabad, founded the PDKI in Mahabad, Iran. Eleven months later, the Republic of Kurdistan was invaded by the Central Regime Army. On one hand,

the local nomads and tribes betrayed him, and the withdrawal of Soviet forces in Iran on 17 December 1946, had made the Republic fall. The army arrested Qazi Mohammad, and the 28 republican leaders who had yielded without any resistance. During these eleven months, the Kurds had formed a democratic Kurdish government, published Kurdish-language newspapers, established Kurdish schools, and set national flag and anthems. The Iranian government executed Qazi Mohammad and some other Republican leaders, the Democratic Party collapsed respectively and other members escaped from the regime.

Democratic Party used to be a part of the Tudeh Party organization so that after the fall of The Kurdistan Democratic Government, to the first conference of the party was held in 1955, while the remaining organizations and members used to continue their activities within the Tudeh Party. The Tudeh Party wanted the Democratic Party and the National Party of Azerbaijan to become a branch of this party. In 1955, the first conference of the Democratic Party for the reconstruction of the party was held in Mahabad in which six people including Aziz Yousefi, Abdullah Eshaqi, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, Assad Khodayari, Abdullah Ezzatpour, Hashem Aql al-Talab were elected as the leadership committee of the party. In 1958, SAVAK arrested about 250 members of the Democratic Party, among whom Aziz Yousefi and Ghani Blourian were prominent, and the other members were arrested, in 1964.

In 1964, the 2nd congress of the party was held in Iraq; follow-

ing which, Abdullah Eshaqi became the first leader of the party, and Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou was expelled. The party was in a state of chaos from 1964 to 1970; on one hand, Abdullah Eshaqi had to change the Party into the Iraqi Democratic Party under Mustafa Barzani's leadership, on the other hand, Mustafa Barzani's close relationship with the Iranian SAVAK, who had supported them against the Iraqi regime, was considered as a risk for the vitality of the party. Accordingly, Barzani prevented the Democratic Party's activity against Iran. In 1967 and 1968 a group of party leaders decided to change the current situation and aimed to show their anger at the policies of Abdullah Eshaqi; consequently, they started an armed movement against the Iranian regime. All members of the leadership of this movement were killed by the Iranian regime in cooperation with the forces of the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party; Abdullah Eshaqi was killed on suspicion later on.

In 1970, Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, a university professor in Prague, had returned to Iraqi Kurdistan. With the other remaining forces of the party, he aimed to reconstruct the party; however, their situations until the revolution in 1979 did not allow them to work. The third congress was held and Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou was elected as the secretary-general; alternatively, until 1989, he was re-elected as the party's leader in the 4th to 8th congresses. The Democratic Party's goal was to achieve "democracy for Iran and autonomy for Kurdistan." The structure of the party was similar to Leninist Marxist parties, including the

secretary-general, the political bureau, the central committee, and the congress. The highest decision-making institution was the Congress, 25 members in the central committee had approved the objectives and purposes of the party. Seven members of the Political Bureau had been selected for Executive Affairs by the Central Committee, one of whom as Secretary-General and one as his/she successor.

At the 3rd party of the congress, the party defined itself as a Marxist party to secure the Iranian Kurds' rights within the central government framework and to establish a socialist society. Later, at the party's sixth congress, Ghassemlou influenced by Prague's Spring and the condition in Paris, changed his mind, and changed the party's program from socialism to democratic socialism. Following the Fourth Congress in 1980, under the influence of Marxist ideology, an affiliation of some members of the Tudeh Party, seven leaders, followed by 800 members left the party and joined the Tudeh Party, who left the Tudeh Party also. The Democratic Party and Komala Marxists were found in an armed struggle, what the Komala leaders called an ideological war.

In early 1988, 500 members, including 15 leaders, left the party and formed another party, the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan under a revolutionary leadership. Ghassemlou's non-Marxist policies and tendency towards social democracy were supposed to be the main cause for this separation. In 1996, they had rejoined the party and the party had become united; however, in 2006 the

party separated again, The party presently was diverged into two branches under the names “Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran” and “Kurdistan Democratic Party”. Their Headquarters were in Iraq and hold political, media and propaganda campaigns; occasionally, they seem to hold military operations against the Iranian regime⁵⁵.

3-2-2 Revolutionary Organization of Kurdistan Toilers (Komala)

In 1969 several Kurdish students in Tehran had established a political organization, among whom Fouad Mostafa Soltani, Yadollah Bigleri, Mohammad Hossein Karimi and Abdullah Mohtadi, were the pioneers; while later, Seyyed Ibrahim Alizadeh, Saed Vatandoost, Sediq Kaman-gar and Omar Ilkhanizadeh joined them and started their activity secretly. The social and political situation at that time had changed following the Post-agrarian reform in Iran by Shah and Mihaan Revolution in 1963; among which the emergence of Marxist parties like the People’s Mujahidin Organization and the People’s Fedayeen Guerrilla Organization were the most notables. Also after the fall of the republic activities and the armed leaders had been defeated in 1967 and 1968, the Democratic Party was recognized illegal, while people had formed small

55. Abdolrahman Ghassemlou, *Forty Years of Struggle for Freedom, Union of Democratic Students of Iranian Kurdistan*, 2013- Abdullah Hassanzadeh, *Half a Century of Struggle*, Volume 1 1995 - Teymour Mustafaei, *Seventy Historic Stations, Iraqi Kurdistan* 2015 - Mahmoud Naderi, *Kurdistan Democratic Party*, Tehran Institute of Political Studies and Research 2015

secret nuclei influenced by Marxist thought.

In 1973, some of their leaders have been imprisoned and their activities were carried out secretly until the Iranian Revolution. In the fall of 1978, before the revolution, a meeting was held between their leaders, However, its plan or constitution to define the structure of a political party did not approve such an event to be considered a congress. After the revolution, in some cities of Kurdistan, including Senna, Boukan, Saqqez, Marivan, and Kamyaran, Komala had begun some activities in the form of small organizations and due to the Democratic Party's preoccupation with intra-party divisions for 2 years, could grow in scale so rapidly. In 1981, from the 1st Congress to the 2nd Congress, Komala believed that the society of Kurdistan and Iran was a semi-feudal and capitalist society; on the other hand, other central Kurdish organizations, including the KDP, had approved to have the ability to fight against the central government. At beginning of the revolution, Komala clashed with Ahmad Muftizadeh's followers in Senna and he left Senna; in the winter of 1979, attacked and disarmed the headquarters of the Rizgari forces, which had, having about 2,000 armed forces and at that year, attacked the headquarters of Sheikh Hadi Hashem several times and forced him to leave Iran, one who had fought against the Shah regime before and was considered as a national current also.

In September 1979, Fouad Mostafa Soltani⁵⁶, the leader and founder of Komala, was killed by the Iranian regime. What gradually made the party stay distant from Kurdish nationalism movement and moved towards forming an ideological Marxist organization.

In March 1981, in the second congress held in a mosque in the village of Zanbil between Boukan and Saqqez, the party concluded that the Iranian society was a capitalist society and as bourgeois class they had to be fought against. In this congress, however, KDP was introduced as a bourgeois force, what was decided to remain as a secret document within the party that shall not be published. Komala formed the Communist Party of Iran in August 1983, with the small communist organizations of Iran, e.g. the Alliance of Communist Fighters (Sahand), as the most prominent one, Peykar and Rah-e Kargar respectively. Komala, following the formation of the Communist Party, intensified the war against the Democratic Party, named ‘an ideological war’; a nationwide war that lasted until 1987.

Later, in 1991, a group called Worker Communism had separated from the party; also, in 2000, Abdullah Mohtadi, disputing Ebrahim Alizadeh, party secretary-general, separated from the Communist Party

56. Fouad Mustafa Soltani (1358-1327) was one of the leaders and founders of Komala. In 1350, he graduated from Technical University of Tehran in the field of electrical engineering. He spent 1353 to 1357 in prison. In September 1979, he was killed in a clash by the Iranian regime. Meanwhile, the Iranian regime, his two other brothers, Hussein and Amin, were shot dead in Mariwan by Khomeini Khalkhali's famous assassin, Shahrivar 1979. Fouad's other two brothers, Majed and Amjad, were shot dead in 1981 in the city of Tabriz.

and declared its existence; which criticizing the previous actions and decisions of the Kurdish currents, tended to introduced itself as a Komala of Iranian Kurdistan . In 2007, Komala of Iranian Kurdistan split, and Komala of Kurdistan Toilers with a more radical nationalist orientation announced its existence, and the Communist Party of Iran split in 2022. To the current moment, Komala is bearing four operating divisions under the same name. Komala, with a secretary general, a political bureau, a central committee and a congress, used to have almost the same organizational structure and decision-making administration as Democratic Party⁵⁷.

3-2-3 Quran School and Kak Ahmad Muftizadeh

The Quran School (Maktab-e Quran), founded by Ahmad Muftizadeh in 1978 in Senna and Marivan, was an Islamic institution. Muftizadeh, considered as the absolute leader of the School and known as a charismatic mentor by his followers, was a religious cleric who unlike other religious clerics in Kurdistan, aimed to transform the traditional reading of Islam into a political one adapting the Kurdish backgrounds. Muftizadeh was from a religious family, whose father and grandfather during the Pahlavi and Qajar regimes were muftis and religious rul-

57. Telephone interview with Reza Kaabi, Deputy Secretary General of Komala - Telephone interview with Rashad Mustafa Soltani, brother of Komala founder Fouad Mustafa Soltani from the staff of Komala Publishing after 1986 - Bahman Saeedi, Five Years with Abdullah Mohtadi, first edition 2010 - Bahman Saeedi, Three Years with Ibrahim Alizadeh, Second Edition 2009 - Saed Vatandoost, Malak Mustafa Soltani, Topics of the First Komala Congress, 2015

ers in Senna and Kurdistan province. They used to run the Dar al-Ehsan, a Sunni religious school, and were in close ties with the Al-Azhar University in Egypt. Muftizadeh was influenced by the thoughts of the great Egyptian Islamic thinker, Sayyid Qutb⁵⁸, although he had begun religious courses with his father and some other prominent clerics in Iraqi Kurdistan. Before 1979. In Kurdistan, Ahmad Muftizadeh, being influenced by the character of Qazi Mohammad, the leader and founder of the Kurdistan Democratic Party, used to have nationalist tendencies in addition to his religious activities before 1979. However, in response to his national concerns, he had joined the Democratic Party and later in 1959, with his father who was a Sunni lecturer in Islamic Sciences at the University of Tehran at that time, went to Tehran to for the Kurdish Radio in Tehran and the Kurdistan newspaper, which was broadcasted in Tehran supported by the Iranian government.

After several years of membership and activity in the Democratic Party, eventually in 1964, he was arrested by SAVAK and imprisoned for one year. He continued his religious activities at Dar al-Ehsan School in Senna. Influenced by his Islamic political thought, he gave speeches against the Pahlavi regime during the years before the revo-

58. Seyyed Ibrahim Hussein Shazli Qutb, known as Seyyed Qutb (1906-1966), was one of the Islamist theorists whose thoughts had a great impact on the growth and formation of Islamic extremist groups. He believed in the unity of all Muslims in the world in the form of a single Islamic nation. Some consider his thoughts to be the basic trigger of the formation of extremist groups such as al-Qaeda.

lution; also he believed in Khomeini's Islamic promises and slogans and that he could establish an Islamic democratic system, that would guarantee the rights of Kurds and Sunnis in Iran accordingly.

Opposing the Western imperialistic ideas dominant in Iran before the revolution, and believing that he could solve the Kurdish question with Khomeini, who had recognized him as the religious leader of Kurdistan and promised him support and equal rights, and under the shadow of his own political outlook, he eventually sided with two secular and Marxist parties in Kurdistan, the so called Democratic Party and Komala. The rights of Kurds and Sunnis were seen violated after the Assembly of Constitutional Experts formation and writing the Constitution draft; what Ahmad Muftizadeh blamed Khomeini and himself for, and accused Iranian leaders of deviation of the revolution consequently. In November 1979, the School became known as Maktab-e Quran and Muftizadeh, under the Marxist's pressure, had to leave Senna In 1980. At that time, the central government had established a Kurdish armed force of its followers and according to the regime ideas and position, in the name of "Muslim Peshmergas Organization⁵⁹", whose task was to stand against the Kurdish forces through armed activities; they, as advocate of the central regime interests in Kurdistan played a significant

59. The Muslim Peshmerga Organization is a military organization formed by Kurds affiliated with the central government at the beginning of the revolution to confront the forces of the Kurdish parties.

role in the success of the Islamic Republic.

Muftizadeh, however, calling the Organization the central government's weapon triggering a civil war within Kurdistan, and denied his role in the formation of the force, and forbidding his followers from joining the force. The Shams Council, as a Sunni religious group, was founded in 1981 following Muftizadeh's convergence with the major Sunni religious groups from other parts of Iran. Eventually, in 1982, the central government arrested him, and imprisoned him for ten years in prison, of which he spent seven years in solitary confinement and used to be tortured during his condemnation period, what made him suffer from a kind of disease that he had been infected by in the prison and died of consequently. Even after the death of Ahmad Muftizadeh, Maktab-e Quran continued its activities and in 1995 it split into two parts, the majority and the minority groups. The majority section had operated as 'Management Council of Maktab-e Quran', which still tends to avoid any intervention in political affairs. Nevertheless, the minority group had operated political issues and social events as 'Kurdistan Maktab-e Quran'⁶⁰.

60. Ali Ezzatyar, the Last Mufti of Iranian Kurdistan. 2016 - Official Website of Maktab-e Quran - Nowgara website, Maktab Quran; how it was established, its goals and plans and the biography of Kak Ahmad Muftizadeh - Mohsen Kadivar, Islamic Republic of Iran's Persecution to Ahmad Muftizadeh, personal website - Documentary biography of Kak Ahmad Muftizadeh, You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OPaQQf6tvOQ>

3-2-4 Rizgari corps

‘Rizgari corps’ was the name given to the armed force established by the followers of Sheikh Uthman Naqshbandi⁶¹ that was formed at the beginning of the revolution and used to be led by the Naqshbandi sect Sheikhs then. Sheikh Uthman, whose religious ideas were rooted in a traditional reading of Islam had played a role in nationalist Kurdish uprisings before also and was a well-known religious characteristic who had many followers in Iranian Kurdistan and Iraq. The idea of forming an armed forces emerged after the establishment of the Shiite regime in Iran, following which the Sheikhs of Naqshbandi sect decided to defend Kurdistan against any armed and/or ideological invasion by the central government. Dr. Madeh Naqshbandi, son of Sheikh and the brother of Sheikh Uthman, namely Sheikh Mokhtar Naqshbandi were the leaders of this group. Sheikh Mokhtar, attending KDP’s 3rd conference in 1970, was a former member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran who announced the establishment of the Rizgari corps in a meeting attended by 150 people, in the first days of the revolution in Senna; what

61. Sheikh Mohammad Usman Sirajuddin Naqshbandi Thani (1895-1996), who is known as “Sheikh Othman Biarah” in Iraqi Kurdistan and “Sheikh Othman Dorouveh” in Iranian Kurdistan, he was a decedent of Sadat Naimi and the eldest son of “Sheikh Aladdin Usmani” The functions of Halabja province are in Iraqi Kurdistan. Sheikh Othman immigrated to the village of Dorouveh in Iranian Kurdistan after the coup d’état of “Abdul Karim Qasim” in 1958 and the fall of the Iraqi monarchy, and left Iran sometime after the revolution and lived in Iraq for about a decade. Eventually, however, he went to Turkey after ten years, and due to his popularity among many Turkish Muslims, he remained in the country until the year 1996, when he passed away, making Turkey one of the greatest strongholds of the Naqshbandi and Sufi sects.

did not seem to have a specific plan nor any constitution.

The members who used to consider sheikh Uthman as their spiritual leader and followed him as a religious guru, aimed to find a proof securing the Kurd's right in the new government. Although it had attracted around 2000 forces at first, it could take control of the majority of army bases in Kurdistan; some of the group's commanders were those who had fought alongside Mustafa Barzani in the Kurdish movement in Iraqi Kurdistan. Rizgari crops used to defend Kurdistan alongside the Democratic Party and Komala when the central government had invaded Kurdistan by order of Ruhollah Khomeini on August 19, 1979. Later on, in February 1979, the Komala forces invited most of the group's leaders to their headquarters, arrested them and then disarmed them in a pre-arranged program.

After the leader of the group was arrested by the Komala forces, the only few armed sectors remained in the mountainous region of Howraman were gradually destroyed by the central government in 1988 and 1989. Their leaders went abroad, and a large number of members and followers supported the central government against Kurdish forces in opposition to Kurdish Marxist forces⁶².

62. Hessam Heydari, telephone interview with the author, Hessam Heydari is the nephew of Sheikh Usman Naqshbandi who witnessed the issues closely at that time - Yousef Ardalan, telephone interview with the author - Hawre Yousefi, biography of Sheikh Usman Naqshbandi, IranWire website - Rashad Mustafa Soltani, Komala and the Rizgari Forces, Awena 2009

3-2-5 Sheikh Mohammad Hadi Hashemi Kurdistan

Sheikh Mohammad Hashemi, born in 1310 in the south of Iranian Kurdistan- Kermashan, was one of the influential followers of the Qaderiyeh sect in Iranian Kurdistan. His family, who had settled in the Dolatabad area near the city of Ravansar about 200 years ago, was one of the prominent sheikhs of Kurdistan. During the imperial regime, for his connections and support for Kurdish nationalists, Sheikh Mohammad Hadi Hashemi was first sentenced to death; later, due to his influence and popularity among the people of the three provinces of Urmia, Senna and Kermashan, his sentence was reduced to deportation, following which he was exiled to the eastern region of Iran, namely Khorasan and then to the city of Qorveh that is located between the cities of Hamedan and Senna whose population at that time used to contain Sunnis, Bahai and Shias. Eventually, Khomeini's supporters and revolutionary forces, a few days after the revolution attacked Sheikh Hadi's mosque and house on February 15, 1979; following which nearly 80 of his armed Dervishes were killed and his house, the mosque and the buildings of him and his followers was quite ruined and his library of 13,000 books was burnt. Sheikh Hadi ran away to Dolab village, in Howraman region somewhere located between Senna and Kamyaran. Sheikh Hadi had not accepted the offer Khomeini and the central government had proposed him to cooperate with them. Somehow, he considered himself close to

the Democratic Party's thoughts although the Democratic Party did not even show any support when Komala Marxists attacked his headquarters in Dolab village several times aiming to kill him. Inevitably, Sheikh Hadi left Iran in 1981 and went to Iraq, later went to England in 1986 to the last moments of his life in 1998. Most of his followers were also threatened by Marxists after Sheikh Hadi's departure; those who joined the regime forces and fought against the Kurdistan Movement under Muslim Peshmergas organization.

Chapter Four

The Role of Ideology in Weakening the Kurdistan Movement

On February 13, 1979 The Iranian revolution won following which a referendum on the Islamic Republic was held by the revolutionaries and the interim government on March 30 and 31, 1979. The Assembly of Experts elected to start drafting the constitution on 12 August 1979 and officially began its work on 28 August 1979 and could complete the task on 24 November 1979. The Islamic Republic of Iran declared the constitution of the political system in Iran with the official Shiite religion and Persian language as the official. Shiism had become the essence of the Iranian nationalism, and despite the Islamic nature of the system and the universality of their thought, the national integrity and Persian language and values were considered as the slogan in practice as the red lines of the regime.

Among the diversities whose ethnic rights and religious rights were generally ignored in the constitution, were Kurds, Sunnis, and other diversities. To that time, the eleven months of government of the

Republic of Kurdistan in 1946 was considered as the Kurds' only experience of modern governance. Although the Kurdish currents did not seem to have a comprehensive plan and strategy to realize the rights of the Kurds as an ethnic group and could not achieve their demands through ideological and organizational influences in the form of a national project, nor to present it to the central government through the right discourse.

Pan-Iranism and Shia religion were the main ideologies the central government was influenced by, what did not let the regime give the Kurds their rights, however made it concentrate on rebuilding the army, stabilizing the political status, and suppressing the Kurds through the time they had sought for the regime. Weaken the current status of the Kurds was of the main concerns of the think tank of the central government; what made it follow the separatism policy to penetrate into the body of Kurdistan movements. Ahmad Muftizadeh used to be the only recognized by Khomeini, at the beginning of the revolution, and was promised to witness the realization of Kurdish rights by the regime; what made Muftizadeh stand against by the Kurdish Marxists. However, Khomeini addressed the Democratic Party as the representative of the Kurdish currents for negotiations, aiming to trigger Komala against the Democratic Party; what was after Metafizadeh had left the political scene in Kurdistan and his role became transparent. All forces in Kurdistan, whether followers of Ahmad Muftizadeh, the Democratic

Party, or Komala were considered as separatists by the leaders of the revolutionary government in Tehran, and it turned into a justification for the government to suppress them. Surprisingly, Kurds themselves had reached no comprehensive understanding of their own conditions and were not aware of the situation though.

“Generally speaking, I am of the opinion that the Kurds were in a special situation then. The Kurds were inexperienced and a strategic issue was that due to the probability of not compromising with the central government, a foreign threat had made the Kurds unite; following which the Kurds had to follow three basic strategies: 1) the strategy of the Kurds, 2) the strategy of the Persians, and 3) the strategy of the non-Persians”, Kamal Soleimani, maintained concerning the situation⁶³. In order to realize their national rights and their relationship with the central government the Kurds had to realize that they needed to form a united front with a common purpose to address the central government. Also, to guarantee the rights of all ethnicity and minorities they had to seek alliances with other non-Persians in Iran, and attempt to establish a democratic system respectively, yet no party stepped forward in this regard, since each was seen immersed in a utopia promised by their own ideology.

Bayan Karimi, a researcher and Ph.D. in political sciences in

63. Kamal Soleimani, telephone interview with the author

London believes that “The very basis of the Kurdish nationalism seemed to be problematic, as being an anti-colonial version of nationalism that seemed quite weak having no root in the reality of the Kurdish people.” Such a version of nationalism seemed to be a collective product of and developed by a group of educated middle-class men whose main concerns were about the current situation, what appeared to be an imitation of a foreign version of nationalism. They decided to seize the ruling power and appear as nationalist fronts since they had considered themselves as the victims of a political humiliation by the regime. Generally, the imitated version of ideology had nothing to do with the realities of the society and a non-local ideology had been administered to achieve the national goals⁶⁴.”

An imitative reaction was supposed to be the initial strategy of the Kurds against the revolution and Persian nationalism; following which, the Persian nationalism that had elected a Shiite cleric as its leader, used to be considered as a front they had to stand against. The fact that the Kurdish society was a Sunni-dominated society made a Sunni cleric take the lead in Kurdish nationalism. However, the Kurds of the provinces of Ilam, the majority of Kermashan, and Hamedan and Lorestan were followers of the Shiite religion, among who were follow-

64. Bayan Karimi, Hashem Karimi's daughter, is one of the leaders of the Democratic Party after the 1979 revolution. She currently lives in the United Kingdom and is completing her PhD in Political Science at the University of London, and researching the issue of women in the Kurdish National Movement in Iranian Kurdistan.

ers of the Yarsan religion, which was a Kurdish religion. Saremuddin Sadegh Vaziri, a veteran Kurdish political activist and a member of the Tudeh Party accepted Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou's request for meeting; Ghassemlou had secretly returned to the country, and met Vaziri in Tehran, maintaining that a Kurdish cleric would be the best choice to confront Khomeini. Sheikh Izz al-Din Hussein was chosen, one who was later supported by the Democratic Party and Komala as the leader or representative of the Kurds, while, Ahmad Muftizadeh used to be another prominent religious cleric in Kurdistan at the time that could not proceed Sheikh Izz al-Din in this case⁶⁵.

The same ideology that the ruling nation, the Persians, had enjoyed, used to be the ideology that the Kurds organized their society based on. Khomeini and Ahmad Muftizadeh used to follow a common reading of political Islam and both aimed at establishing an Islamic state. On the other hand, the ideology of centralist Marxist organizations had affected Komala's Marxists and the Democratic Party. Kurdish nationalism, in practice, seemed to have no subject or priority for Islamists and Marxists; instead, ideological interests were prioritized over them. On this basis, Muftizadeh maintained that the other parties did not have a trusted understanding of the Kurdish issue and the national interests of the Kurds. Also, they seemed to lack a sufficient knowledge

65. Chris Kutschera, Translated by Aziz Mamli, *The Kurdish National Movement and the Struggle for Independence*, Suleimaniyeh, 2008

of the ideology of Persian pan-Iranism, what appeared to ideologically alienate their ideological and organizational interests against Muftizadeh. The positions and differences between Ahmad Muftizadeh and other Kurdish currents was supposed to be main factor that weakened the Kurdish national movement from the very beginning. Muftizadeh, influenced by the ideology of political Islam, sought to form a utopia that he was fantasizing.

4-1 Quran School, Weakening the Kurdistan Movement

The year before the 1979 revolution, Khomeini, whose ideas at the time were influenced by Egyptian Islamic thinkers, including Sayyid Qutb and believed in the formation of a trans-ethnic Islamic state, was now a leader among all currents of opposition to the Shah's regime. It's to be stressed that Sayyid Qutb had held an anti-Western, revolutionary reading of Islam; one who had influenced Muftizadeh also.

Before the revolution, Ahmad Muftizadeh was seen as the only influential person in Kurdistan, by Khomeini's supporters and relatives, whose thoughts could be close to Khomeini's. Cooperation with Mr. Muftizadeh began in 1975 and 1976., what is stressed by Khomeini's representative Seyyed Mousa Mousavi Panahi's statement⁶⁶. Ahmad

66. Seyyed Musa Mousavi, interviewed by Taffrib website, July 12, 2012

Muftizadeh visited Khomeini six days after his arrival on February 3, 1979, in which he emphasized the elimination of national, class and religious oppression in Kurdistan, and Khomeini emphasized that the problems need to be solved through a collective will, in response to the unity among Muslims and the threats against Islam and the defense of Islam⁶⁷. In order to establish an Islamic government as soon as possible, Khomeini, in another letter dated February 20, 1979, asked Muftizadeh to cooperate with his envoy, Hajj Sheikh Hassan Nouri, in Kurdistan⁶⁸.

Apart from the religious differences between them as being Shia and Sunni, Muftizadeh hoped that due to the Islamic soul of Khomeini's thoughts and the intellectual commonality between them, the talks would center on the Islamic ideas, through which they would realize the rights of Kurds and religious minorities in the new government. In a statement issued in Tehran in 26 February 1979, he declared his demands, which included: "Equal national, cultural, political and social rights for all nations living in Iran, political and legal equality for Sunnis and Shias, and equal social and economic rights for all individuals⁶⁹." Some politicians and witnesses at the time remember Muftizadeh saying, "Autonomy is in my pocket."; what was interpreted by Muftizadeh as a guarantee of autonomy for the Kurds by Khomeini and the

67. Etelaat newspaper, June 20, 1979.

68. Khomeini's Sahifeh collection, Vol. 6, p. 196, February 1979, Alavi School

69. Ahmad Muftizadeh, "On Kurdistan". Noor Printing House, 1980

revolutionaries, what never came true.

The other Kurdish parties did not asked for much rights compared to whatever Ahmad Muftizadeh had wanted from the central government; yet, his concept towards the issue of Kurdistan was to be defined within an Islamic framework, while the others were Marxist or Liberal. There used to be two independent Shia and Sunni committees at the time one led by Muftizadeh and the other one by Mullah Safdari, who represented Khomeini and the Shias. The revolutionary committees at the time were responsible for ensuring the security of the cities, which later split, and the central government trusted Mullah Safdari, and was administered with key responsibilities.

Other Kurdish cities, including Senna, used to be the forum for the Democratic Party and Komala activities. Another Sunni cleric in Kurdistan, Sheikh Izz al-Din al-Husseini was seen as a rival to Muftizadeh; he was a secular cleric whose thoughts tended to be more nationalistic rather being religious. Not opposing the Western values and Marxist views, approached Sheikh Izz al-Din to the body of the Democratic Party and Komala. a delegation headed by Dariush Forouhar, Minister of Labor, was sent to Mahabad On February 20, 1980; by which, the Provisional Government aimed to hold talks with representatives of Kurdistan cities. A delegation of Kurds, including Sheikh Izz al-Din, Dr. Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, leader of the Democratic Party, and Fouad Mostafa Soltani, leader of Komala, attended the delegation. The

Kurdish front formulated its demands in eight articles and submitted it to the central government. Elimination of national and class oppression and the rights of the Kurds were stressed in Articles 1 to 7, however, Sheikh Izz al-Din was introduced as the leader of the Kurdish delegation according to Article 7, also it warned the interim government not to talk to the Kurdish reactionary leaders, referring to Ahmad Muftizadeh, as the Kurdish representative. The expulsion of Kurdish forces from the Iraqi Kurdistan Democratic Party was the central concern of Article 8. The Iraqi forces were in Iran at the time, and had led further hostility against the Kurdish parties, supporting the Islamic Republic to oppose the Iranian Kurdish parties⁷⁰.

70. Ahmad Eskandari, Mahabad Eight-Article Resolution, Provisional Government and Kurdistan of Iran - Paulinia Journal, August 2019. The text of the 8-Article resolution of Mahabad: 1- The Kurdish people together with the other peoples of Iran to celebrate the Iranian revolution They agree and intend to play a key role in creating a free and prosperous society by strengthening the bond of struggle with other peoples of Iran. 2- The Kurdish people, like other peoples of Iran, want to end national oppression and secure their right to self-determination federally within the framework of Iran. This request is officially announced. 3- We believe that the working people of Iran have played a fundamental role in the Iranian revolution, and therefore it is the inalienable right of the working people, workers and peasants to participate in the revolutionary government. 4- Iranian Kurdistan, while having abundant untapped resources, is one of the most backward regions of Iran, so the elimination of economic oppression is one of the basic demands. 5. All barracks in Kurdistan should be run under the supervision of the Revolutionary Council, and for this purpose a joint military committee should be formed of patriotic officers and representatives of the Revolutionary Council. 6. The criminal officers who ordered the shooting and caused the martyrdom of the children of the people must be handed over to the Revolutionary Court, and in order to turn the reactionary army into the People's Army, the army must be purged of counter-revolutionary elements. 7- All the present representatives who represent the Kurdish cities declare that Ayatollah Seyyed Izza al-Din Hussein has the authority to be the head of each delegation and to negotiate with the central government on behalf of the Kurdish people and to negotiate with the revolutionary leadership and the interim government. Beware of contact with Kurdish reactionary elements. 8- Because Mullah Mustafa Barzani and the group known as the "temporary leadership" have been and are the agents of the US CIA and Iran's SAVAK and the "dead" of Turkey and are hated by all the Kurdish people. "Therefore, we call on the revolutionary government to cut off all contact with this drug and expel its traitorous

Muftizadeh had presupposed that Khomeini is going to establish an Islamic state through which Shies and Sunnis could unite. Of course, Khomeini wanted an Islamic government also, but he believed in the dictatorship of Velayat-e Faqih as the omnipotent leader of this Islamic government, as well as an Islamic government that served the Shies religion and the Persian language and Pan-Iranianism. While Muftizadeh did not believe in the rule of one person, and the Islamic government he dreamed, based on his views in his speeches as well as in a published pamphlet entitled “Islamic State”, called for an Islamic Council Government, meaning to to be governed by a council of elected Islamic officials, not a single person, what could be considered as the equivalent of a parliamentary government in a democratic government.

Muftizadeh somewhat had to support the Islamic State and oppose Kurdish secular parties and other traditional religious movements in Kurdistan due to not understanding Khomeini and the dream of realizing an Islamic rule in Iran. At that time, Muftizadeh, in addition to opposing the Western values of the Kurdish Marxist and secular parties, also took a stand against the traditional religious leaders of Kurdistan, the sheikhs, and supported the revolution and Khomeini. Consequently, he he took a stand against Sheikh Hadi Hashemi who was considered as an agent and affiliate of the previous regime, while the sheikh himself

leaders from Iran, without this policy harming the situation of poor refugee families.”

was exiled and harassed by the previous regime; also his mosque and monastery in Qorveh had been set on fire by the revolutionary forces and his followers had been killed⁷¹.

As an expert, Muftizadeh participated in the Assembly of Constitutional Experts, whose was supposed to draft the constitution of the Islamic Republic, but he failed since the draft constitution was very different from his ideals and the revolutionary leaders did not seem to comply with what he had tackled.

According to the British Foreign Office at the time accordingly state that, "Ahmad Muftizadeh had criticized the draft constitution complied by the other parties and in a letter to Khomeini dated on 19/06/1979, stated that the previous deal between him and Khomeini used to secure the rights of Sunnis and Shies, and declared to have a tape from Khomeini emphasizing this fact as an evidence. Khomeini had never been criticized so strictly so far; Muftizadeh's criticism was interesting because to that moment he was thought that in comparison to any other Kurdish figure, he used to be closer to Khomeini and the new regime⁷². At that time, Ahmad Muftizadeh had a complete control over all administrative affairs in the city of Senna, and Mullah Safdari's committee used to control the affairs related to the barracks and military

71. Kayhan newspaper, March 22, 1979

72. Sharif Hajhari, translated by Reza Fathollah Nejad - East Kurdistan (1979-1980) in British documents

centers. In order to realize the rights of the Kurds, Muftizadeh seemed to have decided to approach the central government, rather than getting closer to the Kurdish parties.

Khomeini issued a decree of jihad against Kurdistan and its cleansing of Kurdish forces on August 19, 1979, following which Kurdistan came under attack by the army and Revolutionary Guards. Accordingly, that was the very beginning day of the parliament approving the constitution, where Muftizadeh was present as a Sunni expert.

Due to Muftizadeh's religious views and the Kurdish Marxists' extremism, the followers of Muftizadeh seemed to oppose the Kurdish currents, following which several conflicts arose between them. Hassan Amini, a friend and associate of Ahmad Muftizadeh who was then introduced by him as the religious ruler of Kurdistan, maintained that several of Muftizadeh's followers and friends were killed by Marxist forces in Senna. In November 1979, he left the city of Senna with a group of his followers and went to the city of Kermashan⁷³. The city of Kermashan was under the control of central government forces at the time, and the Kurds' forces had no control over it. The central government was defeated three months after the invasion of Kurdistan by resistance from Democratic Party forces, Komala, the Rezgari corps, and the Khabat Organization, and the People's Fedayan Guerrillas on

73. Hassan Amini, Interviewed by Perspective of Iran Quarterly, Fall 2005

November 17th, and Khomeini issued a statement calling on the Kurdish people to reconcile. Gives their wishes. Muftizadeh had lost his prestige among the Kurdish currents at the time, and they viewed him as part of the government, and the central government had not complied with any of his demands.

In the winter of 1979, the central government, using the Kurdish habitants living in Kermashan who opposed Kurdish parties and had religious leanings, formed an armed organization called the Kurdish Muslim Peshmerga Organization, promising money and position to the Kurds who opposed Kurdish parties. They wanted to join the organization in order to fight against the Kurdish forces, most of the members of which were forces affiliated with Ahmad Muftizadeh in the beginning, this organization. The government, using the influence of Ahmad Muftizadeh, attributed the organization to him and encouraged his supporters to join the organization. On the other hand, Kurdish groups attributed Muftizadeh to him in order to further weaken Muftizadeh and to see his supporters and followers in the organization. In an audiotape and several letters and statements released at the time, Ahmad Muftizadeh denied having any role in the formation of the organization, calling it basically the central government's plot to spread civil war among the Kurds⁷⁴. Hassan Amini called believes that the policy of the Quran

74. Keyhan newspaper; Ahmad Muftizadeh rejected the formation of Kurdish Muslim Peshmergas Organization, February 2006,

School and Ahmad Muftizadeh used to be a peaceful one and they did not believe in armed struggle with either the central government or the Kurdish forces and did not seek fratricide⁷⁵.

Due to several factors among which inexperience, lack of political understanding concerning the current issues, the impact of the ideology of political Islam, as discussed above, the universal outlook and non-localization of ideology made Muftizadeh a religious nationalist figure that never wore the clothes of traditional Muslim clerics and preferred to wear Kurdish clothes instead. He used to write Kurdish nationalist poems and tended to be called by the title Kaka (meaning brother) not by the usual titles other religious figures used to be called with, in order not to set him apart from the Kurdish movement in Kurdistan. Also, he was less likely to let the central government removing him from the political scene of Kurdistan and to use his political status and social base against other Kurdish forces.

4-2 Disarmament of the Rizgari corps by Komala, Withdrawal of the Kurdistan Movement

The reason for the disarmament of the Rizgari forces by the forces of the Revolutionary Organization of Kurdistan Toilers (Komala) remains to be one of the unclear points in the events after the revolution in Kurd-

75. Hassan Amini, Interview with Hassan Amini, Perspective of Iran Quarterly, Fall 2005

istan was. Forces affiliated with the Rizgari corps had fought alongside other Kurdish forces, and a number of them had been killed even during the three-month war between the central government forces and the Kurds. The sons and brother of one of the greatest sheikhs in Iranian and Iraqi Kurdistan, most importantly Sheikh Othman Naqshbandi, was thought to have formed the Rizgari forces. Sheikh Othman was an influential figure not only in Kurdistan but also in the Middle East and had many followers in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Arab countries, whose character and position could have made a significant contribution to the Kurdish national movement at that time. The Sheikh's monasteries, had for the past two centuries been the breeding ground for Kurdish poets and thinkers, among whom the most famous Kurdish nationalist poets had been raised in the monasteries of the Naqshbandiyya sect; where the father of Kurdish nationalism, Sheikh Obaidullah Nahri, was also one of the sheikhs of.

A paramilitary force affiliated with Khomeini was formed after the revolution, to leave Kurdistan in response to Khomeini's request for a ceasefire, as the first demand of the Kurds after the end of the three-month war on November 17, 1979. Ahmad Muftizadeh had left the city of Senna and the Democratic Party's influence in the city and other southern regions of Kurdistan, including Kamyaran and Marivan, the area between the three cities known as Horaman, which was a mountainous and impassable region, was not as great as that of Komala and

the Rizgari forces..

Sheikh Uthman considered their sole duty to fight against the central government and banned the leaders of the Rizgari forces fighting other Kurdish forces⁷⁶. The Rizgari forces did not have a political line of ideology and had taken up arms to fight against the central regime only⁷⁷. Accordingly, the Rizgari forces successfully carried out several operations against government bases, especially in the city of Senna, whose members were ready to fight the central government forces and even assist the Komala and Democratic Party forces by any means⁷⁸.

On the first day after the withdrawal of government forces from Senna and areas under the control of Kurdish forces, the leaders of the Rizgari forces were invited to the Komala leadership camp for a lunch fest, in a nationwide operation in Senna, Marivan and Kamyaran. Consequently, their bases were attacked and their forces were disarmed; also, the majority of these forces were disarmed and some leaders were arrested for some time in Komala prisons. Since the Democratic Party had appeared weak in the areas under Rizgari and the party leadership was involved in intra-party issues and problems in Mahabad at that time, and despite the fact that it had previously taken steps to attract some of the Rizgari forces into its party, no special attention was paid

76. Hessam Heydari, telephone interview with the author

77. Hatem Menbari, telephone interview with the author

78. Rashad Mustafa Soltani, Komala and the Rizgari Forces, 2009 Awena Website

to this objective, hence, the condition was provided for Komala to do so. The effect of the Marxist ideology of the Komala forces on events was considered as the main reason for the decision to disarm a national religious force like Rizgari. Komala forces did not seem to have enough knowledge of Kurdish society and tried to tackle an approach based on their Marxist ideology and defined Kurdish society not on the basis of the fact that it was a traditional and religious society.

Several main reasons were outlined in a statement by Komala so as to justify their actions for the public opinion, including: “the leaders were considering this force to be a hostile dogmatic feudal front against the workers’ movements. The workers know that this force would fight alongside them against the regime in the future, and would turn into a hero for the Kurdish people and a serious opponent of the regime⁷⁹.”

Rizgari followers, after the disarmament, staged demonstrations in the cities of Marivan, Saolabad, Senna, and Kamyaran against Komala; while the demonstrations did not result in the release of the leaders and the reorganization of the Rizgari since the Komala forces had dominated these areas. This was considered a kind of distancing of Komala from national positions and falling into the trap of Marxist ideology; what had happened after the death of the leader and founder of Komala, Fouad Mostafa Soltani, whose views were more nationalistic,

79. In Response to the Fada'i comrades about “Disarmament of the Rizgari Forces”. Revolutionary Organization of the Workers of Kurdistan of Iran (Komala), 16.02.1980

and. Fouad Mostafa Soltani, in the first Komala Congress, considered the bourgeois and traditional nationalist forces, like the Rizgari forces, as their ally, not the enemy to be eliminated: "Opportunism was defined as a detour of the workers class that must not be interpreted as serving the enemy all the time. Hence, the minor bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie were among the people and were against the enemy⁸⁰."

The first negative effect of the disarmament of the Rizgari forces was considered to be the fall of the city of Kamyaran, which was an important city between Kermashan and Senna and was under the control of the Kurds, what was considered as a heavy blow to the body of the Kurdish National Movement. The Revolutionary Guards and the central forces could easily enter the city of Kamyaran after the disarmament Rizgari forces since its defensive guards had weakened⁸¹. Also, with the disarmament of Rizgari, the Hawraman region, a mountainous and strategic region, remained somewhat empty, and Komala and the Democrats could not attract the forces of the Rizgari forces. After being released from Komala prison, Rizgari forces leaders leave Kurdistan for Iraq, Turkey, and later Europe. From the remaining forces of this corps, some of the Kurdistan movement were disappointed and return to normal life, while others, who were not few in number, were recruit-

80. Saed Vatandoost, Malaka Mustafa Soltani, Discussions of the First Congress of Komala, Fall 1978

81. Yousef Ardalan, interview with the author

ed by the Kurdish Muslim Peshmerga Organization and join the central government forces in fighting the Kurdish forces and controlling the region.

Komala's Marxist ideology forced him to stand up against all the values and traditions of Kurdish society and to target the sheikhs and religious people who were part of Kurdish society, and thus disarmed Rizgari without any negative effects. It should think about weakening the Kurdistan movement and strengthening the central government, and one of the reasons for the defeat of Komala and other Kurdish forces from the central government in the following years was the cooperation of government-affiliated Kurdish forces within the Kurdish Muslim Peshmerga Organization. They ignored the element of religion, and this lack of knowledge about Kurdistan society and the attempt to modernize society by resorting to violence and the elimination of age led to the attraction of most followers of religion to the Islamic Republic⁸². In another attempt, Komala attacked another influential sheikh in that region of Kurdistan, which further weakened the Kurdistan movement in those years.

82. Bayan Karimi, interview with the author

4-3 Komala invasion to the headquarters of Sheikh Hadi Hashemi

Sheikh Hadi Hashemi Kurdistanian was an influential sheikh among Sunni Kurds in Iranian Kurdistan who was exiled by the central government during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah for supporting Kurdish nationalists, first to Khorasan and finally to Qorveh. The first encounter of the revolutionary forces was with the Kurds in Qorveh and against Sheikh Hadi on February 15, 1979; what led to the burning of his mosque and monastery and the killing of more than eighty of his followers. Sheikh Hadi had gone to the village of Dolab in the Howrman region between Sanna and Kamyaran, the place his father and grand father had been enshrined⁸³. Sheikh Hadi, having a comprehensive understanding of the new regime, did not accept Khomeini's request sent through his representative, Sheikh Hassan Kermani⁸⁴, asking him to cooperate with the new government and the revolutionaries. Although Sheikh Hadi was a religious leader, as stated, despite the traditional religious leaders in Kurdistan he had a more nationalistic orientation and had a tendency towards the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

The great sheikhs and landowners in Kurdistan were among the targets of the Marxists of Kurdistan, namely Komala, and were con-

83. Sharif Hajhari, translated by Reza Fathollahnejad - East Kurdistan (1979-1980) in British documents

84. Perspective of Iran - The Second Vital Issue for Kurdistan - Fall 2005

sidered as the agents of the feudal system that had to be destroyed. Between 1979 and 1981, Komala forces attacked Sheikh Hadi's headquarters in the village of Dolab several times and set fire to his stronghold, this action provoked a great level of violence in the region. Democratic Party was unaware of supporting sheikh Hadi due to its preoccupation with intro-party issues and problems. Eventually, not willing to fight the Kurdish forces and not trust the central government, on the other hand, made Sheikh Hadi leave Iranian Kurdistan to Iraq.

After Sheikh Hadi left Kurdistan and severed ties with his followers, many of them collaborated with the government to avenge Komala, whose attacks on Sheikh Hadi's residence and hiding place were supposed to have left devastating effects on Kurdish society; also they aimed this action towards protecting themselves and recruiting the Muslim Peshmerga Organizationn again. Consequently, they became Muslim Peshmergas and were likely to have formed the mainstay of the organization in that area. Sheikh Hadi, due to his influence and personality and his encounter with the central government, could have a very heavy leverage in attracting the Kurdish people to the Kurdistan movement supporting this movement. On one hand, the Kurds did not have a national strategy to recruit forces to help them against the central government, while on the other hand, the influence of ideology on Komala leaders' decision making, their plan to assassinate Sheikh Hadi and attack his headquarter and burning Qur'an and disrespecting Mus-

lims' sacreds, had motivated the people not to join the movement and cooperate with the government, what ultimately weakened the movement.

The phenomenon of non-unity used to be one of the issues that the Kurds were always ready to sacrifice and give their lives for, whose essence was considered as one of the side effects of the Kurdish movement. Both the Rizgari forces leaders and Sheikh Hadi Hashemi were ready to fight and die alongside the Democrats and Komala, but they were never understood and were attacked in response⁸⁵.

4-4 Marxist tendencies and the split of the Democratic Party

4-4-1 The first split, the followers of the 4th Congress

The Democratic Party, being established in 1945 and forming the first Kurdish government in 1946 that lasted for eleven months, was the oldest Kurdish party in Iran, while after the revolution was seen as being influenced by the ideology and outlook of Tudeh Party. Although the Tudeh Party was a Soviet-affiliated Stalinist Marxist party, called the Pan-Iranian ideology opposed to the idea of independence and equal national rights for non-Persians; it used to have patriotic tendencies and

85. Rashad Mustafa Soltani, telephone interview with the author

its members believed in the integrity of Iranian territory dispute the universal outlook stressed in Marxism. The Tudeh Party called on Kurdish youth to leave the Democratic Party and join the Tudeh Party and in a 1975 declaration of its Central Committee the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Kurdistan National Government, and did not believe in an independent national party for the Kurds⁸⁶.

Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou succeeded in freeing the Democratic Party from affiliation with the Tudeh Party in 1970, and could form an independent organization for the party in Iraqi Kurdistan. He, the party's leader and a former member of the Tudeh Party of Iran, seeing the majority of nationalist Persian leaders of Tudeh party attempting to secede the Democratic Party, was forced to leave Kurdistan and settle in Czechoslovakia in 1960, and it influenced Ghassemlou to change his mind against Tudeh party. In a letter for Karim Hessami, one of the leaders of the Democratic Party, Ghassemlou wrote: "I had met with Radmanesh, the secretary general of the Tudeh Party. They are trying to show a misguided portrait of our party especially of me as the leader." He wrote in another letter; "I met Radmanseh and he said that we are all nationalists and have to leave the party⁸⁷."

There used to be a sort of disagreement between KDP leadership over confronting the new system after the revolution, believing

86. People, the central organ of the Tudeh Party of Iran, No. 150, January 6, 1975

87. Karim Hessami, My Memoirs, Volume 3, eBook

that they should support the revolution and Khomeini because of his anti-imperialist positions, and at the start of the Democratic Party's public activities; what was characterised as an attitude influenced by the Tudeh party. Ghani Blourian was the leader of this approach who had been imprisoned until the 1979 revolution and was influenced by the Tudeh Party. The other side, having the majority of the party leadership supporting it, stressed on the national issue, what the leaders of the revolution and the new government ignored. He used to call for a confrontation with the central government until the Kurdish rights were realized in the constitution. Although the second line of the national issue had given priority to nationalism, whose majority of leaders, including Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou, considered themselves Marxists, the first line's position was prioritizing compromising with the central government, influenced by Stalinist Marxist ideology of the Tudeh Party.

Legitimizing and justifying the status of being the older brother of Iran, as a country, and the non-Persian nations living in Iran, Tudeh Party, instead of aiming at a Marxist and justice-oriented ideal to accept the guardianship of this older brother, considered the national issue as the third and fourth priority⁸⁸. "Unity is our main issue today. A systemic unity following the cooperation of all political currents led by

88. Behzad Khoshhali, telephone interview with the author

Imam Khomeini would unite the whole nation against the great devil of America.” Ali Galavij⁸⁹, a member of the Tudeh Party leadership, said in a meeting in Mahabad⁹⁰. Tudeh, persuading Ghani Blourian and six other members of the leadership to secede from the Democratic Party in order to weaken the party and its nationalist ideology, tended to align the Democratic Party’s position with that of its own and remove Ghassemlou from office, decided to oppose Ghassemlou’s nationalist positions in the Democratic Party.

Ghani Blourian and 800 cadres and members of the Democratic Party in a statement of 28 pages on June 15, 1980, declaring themselves supporters of the revolution and Khomeini and his anti-American positions, announced their separation from the Democratic Party⁹¹. Hussein Bakhshi, a member of the Central Committee of the 4th Congress, maintained that the fate of the congress and any independence in decision-making was taken were entirely in the hands of the mother party, Tudeh. Regardless of the characteristics of the Kurdish liberation struggle in the Kurdish issue, Tudeh Party was implementing its leadership, and was attempting to strengthen its foothold with the leaders of the

89. Ali Galavij (1301-1364) was born in Buchan, Kurdistan. He joined the Kurdistan Movement in 1320, then went to Azerbaijan and received a doctorate in economics. He was a member of the leadership of the Tudeh Party, and after the revolution had a direct influence on Ghani Bolourian and other leaders of the Democratic Party who left the party in the Fourth Congress in 1980. He died in 1983 in the prison of the Islamic Republic as a result of torture.

90. Yassin Sardashti, Position of the Tudeh Party, Iraqi Kurdistan

91. Mustafa Hijri, Nesco and Dabran, Kurdistan 2014

Islamic Republic⁹².

The followers of the 4th Congress of the Democratic Party were all concerned about the Kurdish national question, those who seceded from this party before, and they tended to consider their activities in line with the realization of the Kurdish national rights and eliminating oppression and discrimination held against Kurdistan. Unfortunately, under the influence of ideological ideas, they followed the Tudeh Party. Moscow, that had instructed Tudeh and made the ideological and organizational outlook of the party, had asked them to support Khomeini and his new government, the Islamic Republic since it supposed to have anti-American and imperialist positions. Democratic Party, the largest Kurdish party and one of the most serious opponents of the Islamic Republic at the time, fighting the central government with 12,000 guerillas, was challenged following the split within the party; what eventually resulted in the weakening of the Kurdistan movement. Having looked at the issue of Kurdistan outside the Marxist framework and pan-Iranian ideology of the Tudeh Party and focusing upon the national interests of the Kurds and what they had fought for, the leaders of Kurdistan movements would not made such strategic mistakes; what showed them deceived by the Tudeh Party, eventually taken as hostile

92Hussein Bakhshi, Branching, A Passage on How to Form the Followers of the Fourth KDPI Congress, Germany 2007

by the Islamic Republic. Surprisingly, KDP appeared to be disbanding and merging with the Tudeh Party, and sporadically leaving it at the end of the day.

The leadership of the Democratic Party, from the beginning of the revolution to the separation happened within the group, had focused more on the intro-party issues; while, it stayed unaware of issues like Senna struggles, Rizgari forces, Sheikh Hadi, and the problems that the group had created for the leadership of the party.

4-4-2 The 6th Congress and the Question of Socialism

“The Democratic Party, yet not being a party with a cohesive nationalist agenda, was the traditional representative of Kurdish nationalism in Iran.” said Abdullah Hijab, a prominent Democratic Party cadre in the 1980s. “The Democratic Party was a Kurdish party and used to fight for the Kurds; that was a convincing motivation for us to join the party at that time⁹³.”

A serious change in the Democratic Party happened after the revolution, and to some extent Ghassemlou wiped out the Democrats than the Lefties. Ghassemlou was a previous member of the Tudeh party; he had clearly declared the party that he and his party would remain

93. Abdullah Hijab, telephone interview with the author, December 17, 2021

stressing the issue of Kurds and Kurdistan⁹⁴. Although he used to believe in solving the national issue of the Kurds in Iran, he remained a Marxist; a Marxist who was not following the approach of the Soviet Union and China, but appeared as a critic of their political system and behavior. The party was defined as a Marxist-Leninist party that sought to establish a socialist system for Kurdish society after resolving the national question in the idea of the bystanders, what was influenced by the Democratic Party's program and constitution until the party's 6th congress. Accordingly, the party introduced itself an anti-imperialist party, considering the Soviet Union and the socialist countries as its friends and allies.

The Kurds, due to Soviet's previous support to the emergence for Republic of Kurdistan, and in reaction to US supporting the Shah's regime, had considered themselves on the Soviet front while the Soviets, after World War II, used to pay no attention to the Kurds, and the Kurds were fantasizing about Soviet and were seeing it as oppressed nations' liberation advocate. Ghassemlou had written several letters to the Soviet Union after the revolution, not even once did they respond to them⁹⁵. He stepped closer to the Western countries, including the European Social Democratic parties, so as to get rid of this issue. To gain these countries' support, Ghassemlou changed the program at the party's

94. Masoud Rostami, telephone interview with the author

95. Mustafa Hijri, Nesco and Dabran, 2014

the 6th congress, and entitled it 'Socialism', aiming to change the party's program from existing socialism to democratic socialism. The move provoked a reaction from the remaining Marxist-Leninist in the party, and a number of cadres of the party who believed in radical Marxism left the party with the passage of the program. However, ideological differences, or more specifically, a different reading of Marxist ideology, further weakened the ranks of the Kurdish nationalist movement.

4-4-3 The 8th Congress and Revolutionary Leadership

The only serious and significant parties and currents that took up armed resistance against the central government, used to be the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP) and the Revolutionary Organization of Kurdistan Toilers (Komala) from 1980 and 1981 onward; during which the Iran-Iraq war was going on and the central government was involved in another war with the Kurds inside its borders, what had made almost one third of the armed forces of the central government of Iran fight against the Kurds. Although after the 7th Congress of the Democratic Party in 1985, following which the administration of the party as well as the party's positions had weakened, the internal divisions had resumed; yet it was larger in number and sphere of influence than Komala. Later in January 1987, the 8th Congress of the party was held in the city of Sulaimaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan in order to com-

pensate the lost integrity. Tow months later 15 members of leadership with 500 cadres and Peshmergas signing a declaration announcing their separation from the Democratic Party on the first day of Nowruz 1988, they formed a revolutionary leadership as a new party called the Democratic Party.

The reason mentioned for the split was not the internal divisions, as declared in their published statements and documents, but the deviation from socialism and Marxist ideology by Abdolrahman Ghassemlou and the tendency towards Western social democracy. At their first conference in June 1988, the Ghassemlou-led Democratic Party was described; the Democratic Party has moved towards Western Social Democracy and compromise with the imperialist assemblies and is located in the compromising and reactionary house of Kurdistan, as the report reiterates, that the socialist countries and labor movements in the world were considered as the strategic allies of the oppressed nation, and that the party leadership had to step towards applying these objectives. At least the program of revolutionary leadership changed from democratic socialism to existing socialism⁹⁶, and a year later, in 1989, the communist front disintegrated.

There were sporadic clashes between the two Democat sides, in which 22 Peshmergas were killed, what was the result of the split in

96. Documents of the Fourth Conference, Democratic Party of Kurdistan of Iran - Revolutionary Leadership, pp. 13-16

Congress led to severe armed struggles between the Kurdish nationalists⁹⁷. Hatam Menbari, one of the party cadres who had left the party with the sectarians in the 8th congress, says: “At that time, everything needed to be done, except a division within the party; since we used to fight against the Komala forces and the Iran-Iraq war had ended⁹⁸.”

Following the division, the Democratic Party, once claiming to be the representative of the Kurdish nationalist struggle, had weakened to the point where Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou had to go into the trap set by the Islamic Republic, as a so called ‘negotiate peace’. Eventually, on July 13, 1988, in the Austrian capital, he was assassinated along with two of his companions, later found to be by the representatives of the Islamic Republic being there to negotiate with him.

The influence of the mass ideas of the Marxist-Leninist who still remained in the Democratic Party was supposed to be the fundamental reason for the split of the 8th Congress, according to Behzad Khoshhali⁹⁹. In 1996, the separatists returned to the Party, whose leaders regretted their positions, but by then the KDP and the Kurdistan Front had been defeated and their forces had placed in Iraqi Kurdistan camps.

97. Jalil Gadani, *The Reality of the Events, Kurdistan* 2015

98. Hatem Menbari, interview with the author

99. Behzad Khoshhali, interview with the author

4-5 Establishment of the Communist Party of Iran and Marginalization of the Kurdistan Question

The Revolutionary Organization of Kurdistan Toilers (Komala) was formed by several Kurdish Marxist students to defend the interests of the working class of Kurdistan. After the revolution, there were two Marxist views in Komala; the first believed that the Kurdish society and the other Iranian communities were feudal societies. Fouad Mustafa Soltani was the leader of this stance that considered this view to be dependent on the ideas of Mao Zedong. However, there used to appear an intellectual and practical contradiction between the diverged lines, stressing the idea that they had derived their own thoughts from Mao; maintaining that those who had joined Komala at this stage had a national concern, the leaders of whom supposed to be quite pragmatic, and were not so theoretically knowledge. Thought, they were not able to adopt this attitude to the Kurdish society and only used it to repeat the arguments of Mao, whose majority of members were also concerned about the Kurdish issue as a national objective¹⁰⁰.

Surprisingly efficient cooperation were seen among the leaders of Komala and the other Kurdish currents at the beginning of the revolution, including the Democratic Party and the Rizgari forces in the three month war, as the Kurdish People's representative board. They

100. Masoud Rostami, telephone interview with the author

had considered their concerns circa the Kurdish community and nation; therefore they used to have a sort of compatibility with other Kurdish currents, what gradually disappeared with the early murder of Fouad Mostafa Soltani in September 1979, unexpectedly after which, the second view could gain more power. The second view believed that the Marxist ideology took precedence over being Kurdish and the national issue, reasoning that the society of Kurdistan and Iran were capitalist and that their own approved Marxist forces were considered as allies.

The existence of these two stances had caused Komala to become engaged in internal divisions; and its leaders, including Abdullah Mohtadi, sought to overcome the crisis by seeking to strengthen the second view and form alliances with small Iranian communist parties and establish the Communist Party of Iran.

Komala could establish the Communist Party at the 2nd Komala Congress in 1981, and any other contradictory was to be quitted accordingly. Abdullah Mohtadi, benefiting the circumstances and understanding the internal divisions could consider forming the Communist Party of Iran to circumvent the intro-party problems, successfully. Muhtadi, who used to be the secretary general of the party since 1979, was completely accepted in Komala with the formation of the Communist Party of Iran¹⁰¹. At that time, Marxists were used to be arrested and killed by

101. Reza Kaabi, telephone interview with the author

the Islamic Republic and Khomeini, and the Persian Marxists mostly took refuge in Kurdish-controlled Kurdistan. Komala, claiming that to have a historic responsibility to save the refugee Marxists, consequently welcomed them so as to form the Communist Party of Iran with. Rashad Mustafa Soltani, a prominent member of Komala and Fouad Mustafa Soltani's brother, saying that there were other Persian communist currents along with us, denied this claim and maintained that there were some members such as Ashraf Dehghani, who used to be communists and had fought against the central government, yet Komala never accounted them as allies¹⁰².

Komala had focused more on Kurdistan until the first stance prevailed and the Communist Party was formed in 1983. But the question of Kurdistan and the national question of the Kurds became marginal with the dominance of the second view, so they were considering the Kurdish nationalists hostile. They knew, and finally gave ideological essence to the war that took place between them and the Democratic Party, and called it the war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. After the revolution, Komala was able to form women armed forces in the traditional society of Kurdistan. Reza Kaabi believes that the formation of the Communist Party, deviating the attention of Komala leaders from the Kurdistan issue to the Communist Party and it had weakened the

102. Rashad Mustafa Soltani, telephone interview with the author

role of women fighting for the ideals within the party, was considered a fatal mistake for Komala¹⁰³.

The leaders of Komala had theoretical weakness before the formation of the Communist Party, but the Iranian Marxist currents that joined Komala in the formation of the Communist Party. They used to be theoretical Marxists Persians and were very few in number and were, for whom national oppression had no meaning and considered themselves belonging to a nation that considered Iran as their own, and on this basis they were able to influence the young and inexperienced leaders of Komala, with their pan-Iranian ideas and keep them away from the issues of Kurdistan. After the formation of the Communist Party, women were pushed to the margins and became dogmatic and turned the Kurdistan movement into a local reactionary movement, ones who were armed and marched into society and encouraged other women to fight against colonialism and poverty before. These women had lost their historical role, whose thoughts were directed towards working in the factories in Tehran and so on. However, there used to be both a victory and a defeat at this stage.¹⁰⁴.

Becoming a Communist Party, Komala no longer considered itself as a party that must fight for the Kurdish people or the Kurdish toilers; following which, the Kurdish national movement

103. Reza Kaabi, telephone interview with the author

104. Bayan Karimi, telephone interview with the author

gradually lost its power and status and triggered fatal strokes within the Kurdistan movement and break down the Kurdish front lines as a result of the ideological struggle with the KDP in 1987. It can be understood that Ideology had made the national issue marginal for Komala, what used to be the prioritized principle once.

4-6 Komala and KDP struggles and the fall of the Kurdistan movement

After the three month war and Khomeini's cease fire on November 17, 1979 the central government forces prepared for a heavy attack to Kurdistan. Neither the central government nor the Kurds themselves seemed reluctant to recognize the Kurdish People's Representative Council ¹⁰⁵

105. The Kurdish People's Representative Council was formed after the end of the three-month war between the Kurdish armed forces, and they presented their demands to the central government in the following order. Suppress. Autonomy plan of the Kurdish People's Representative Board: The general public of Kurdistan is invited to participate in the event on Tuesday, December 27, 1979 at 2:00 PM throughout Kurdistan. The nationwide demonstrations created support for the following demands, as well as for a delegation representing political organizations. Kurdistan has been formed under the leadership of Seyyed Izza al-Din Hussein. Also from national organizations, parties and personalities and we invite religious people all over Iran to support the just demands of the people of Kurdistan with all the means at their disposal. 1- The autonomy of Kurdistan should be recognized and included in the constitution. 2- Kurdish people that were divided between the four provinces of Ilam, Kermanshah, Kurdistan and West Azerbaijan, should be recognized as autonomous. 3- The National Assembly of Kurdistan is formed through free, direct, secret and homogeneous elections of the people of Kurdistan. This parliament established the "Autonomous Government of Kurdistan" to manage all economic and social affairs, cultural and disciplinary of the Autonomous Region. 4-Kurdish language» is the official language of teaching and correspondence in Kurdish offices and institutions. After in the fourth year of elementary school, Persian is taught alongside Kurdish in schools and is the official language offices throughout Iran, including Kurdistan. 5- Allocating the general share of the country's budget to Kurdistan in such a way as to compensate the economic backwardness and national oppression. 6- Kurdish People's Representatives should be allowed to

elected by the KDP and Komala parties, headed by Sheikh Izza al-Din though; what was expected to result in much more different outcomes encountering the central government if expanded and paid more credit to.

There were many political groups in Kurdistan, after the revolution, most of which were armed, and all aimed to demand the rights of the Kurds from the central government. The small groups disintegrated and the two major parties remained just, due to on the dominance of ideology and organizational interests over nationalist ideals and the revolutionary atmosphere. The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran and the Revolutionary Organization of Iranian Kurdistan Toilers (Komala) had a significant number of Peshmerga forces at that time; the military forces of which had faced the central government with a great military challenge and had deal heavy blows to it. Under the influence of ideology and organizational interests, the two parties formed an alliance with currents whose aspirations were something other than the demands of

participate in the administration of the central government. 7- All matters related to foreign policy, national defense (army), monetary and exchange rate policy, trade, foreign policy and long-term economic plans are the responsibility of the central government and the rest of the internal affairs by the organ are governed by the autonomous regions of Kurdistan. 8- Democratic freedoms such as freedom of expression, the press, the press, associations and parties, and freedom of religion and opinion to be provided throughout Iran, Seyyed Izz al-Din Hussein, Revolutionary Organization of Iranian Kurdistan Workers, Democratic Party of Kurdistan of Iran, People's Fedayeen Guerrilla Organization Iran - Kurdistan branch 1980/11/07, according to the pamphlet "Supporting the Kurdish People's Delegation as Much as possible" from the publications of the People's Fedayeen Guerrilla Organization of Iran – Kurdistan Branch / December 1979

Kurdish society, rather to a military and political alliance, what later resulted in a fight against each other.

The Democratic Party in 1981 joined the National Resistance Council¹⁰⁶, a coalition of the Islamic Republic opposition forces, including the Peoples' Mujahedin Organization and the first president-elect of Iran since the 1979 revolution, Abul Hassan Bani-Sadr. In contrast, Komala following the second congress in 1981, with other Iranian Marxist organizations, approved a draft to form a communist front called the Communist Party of Iran, what later established in 1983. The two parties, instead of forming a Kurdish coalition, each joined a coalition that used to employ the Kurdish troops and fighters only to fight against the central government since they had no belief in Kurdish rights, based on then Pan-Iranian discourse; what made the situation much more catastrophic for the Kurds and deepened the problems.

Sardasht turned into the first battlefield between the Democratic Party and Komala on May 13, 1980. Although there had been some oth-

106. The National Resistance Council was a coalition of the Iranian oppositions against the regime of the Islamic Republic. The council was secretly run by Abulhassan Bani-Sadr, the first post-revolutionary Iranian president to quarrel with religious figures, including Khomeini, and secretly with Masoud Rajavi, his son-in-law, and the head of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran in 1981 for fear of being arrested by Khomeini. They left Iran and went to Paris, where they formed this council. The Democratic Party also joined the council, although the council envisaged an autonomy program in its plan for Kurdistan, but the council was under the direct influence of the Mujahedin and their final decision-makers, and it seemed that this emphasis was on the Kurdish issue. The plan was to recruit the Democratic Party and use the strategic position of Kurdistan and its forces to fight the central government. The Democratic Party formally withdrew from the council in March 1985. Teimour Mustafaei, *Seventy Historic Stations of the Democratic Party*

er struggles in the region between the two parties, since December 19, 1983 the struggles became nationwide, following which 378 Democratic Party Peshmerga forces and 348 Komala Peshmergas were killed¹⁰⁷. Abdullah Mohtadi, the current secretary general of Komala in Iranian Kurdistan, who is still at the highest level of thinking and decision making in the party, describes the results of this war as follows: “Firstly, the war used to stop the formation of a united Kurdish front and the central government could follow its plans in the region effortlessly; also, the civil war had a great impact on the weakening of the Kurdistan movement and discouraged the Kurdish people; and finally some cadres and Peshmergas were killed on both sides unfairly¹⁰⁸.”

Hatam Menbari, one of the field operation cadres of the Democratic Party, maintains that this war left catastrophic impacts on the Kurdish National Movement and said: “there used to be seven armed squads in Kurdish cities like Kamyaran, Rawansar, Senna, Mariwan, Saqqez and Afshar region, each formed of around 120 well-trained and experienced Peshmergas who had years of experience, some of whom were like myths among people. Komala also used to have the same number of local forces in the area and was so powerful in those areas. By the December 1984, we used to have some about 800 Peshmergas under the rule of Ajwan station and in the spring of the following year,

107. Tayfour Batahi, *Journey of Imagination*, Sweden, 2014

108. Bahman Saeed, *Five Years with Abdullah Mohtadi*, 2010

in 1985, when the civil war was at its peak and most of the forces on both sides were not willing to fight each other, the number of our forces decreased to some less than 110 Peshmergas. This situation also existed among the forces of Komala, and it was the central government that made the most of this situation¹⁰⁹.”

The ideology had left such an effect on the civil war that in the same family, one of the sons in KDP would fight against the other in Komala. Rashad Mostafa Soltani describes the situation in those days in Komala as follows: “I used to work in Radio and Newspaper of the party, where I could meet many of the instructors of the party complaining that many people are joining the party but they have no tendency towards learning Ideological lectures and they run away¹¹⁰.” Most Kurdish volunteers joined the two parties so as to fight for national struggle and refused to fight against each other then, due to which many guerrillas quitted the forces and surrendered to the central government, preferring to go to prison and be tortured rather to take up arms against other Kurdish forces.

The parties only thought of maintaining their hegemony in the areas they controlled at the time, and did not have a strategic plan so as to defeated the Islamic Republic. The Democratic Party, introducing itself as the representative of Kurds’ rights in Iran, considered leading

109. Hatem Menbari, telephone interview with the author

110. Rashad Mustafa Soltani, telephone interview with the author

the Kurdish nationalist movement and defending Kurds' rights as its own historic responsibility; what had been formed based on a Marxist structure and ideas, also its leadership was influenced by Marxist ideas. That was supposed to be the main potential reason why the party leader could not fulfill what he, as the head of a nationalist party, was responsible for.

The Democratic Party could not become 'nationalist' and get rid of the influence of the Marxist hegemony that used to impose the Pan-Iranian thought, although it considered itself as the leader of nationalism in Kurdistan and was supposed to have the capacity gathering all the active currents under the same purpose and plan to unite a common front them in a way. It was seen at the time, that the organizational interests tended to be prioritized over the national issue¹¹¹. The initial clashes between the Democratic Party and Komala could barely root in ideological foundations; while it began to become more ideological after the second view dominated in Komala and the war between Komala and the Democrats gradually deepened. Under the leadership of Fouad Mustafa Soltani, Komala used to define its main objective as fighting against any force that would threat the national rights and interests of the Kurds. A statement from the organization in June 1979 stated: "The national struggle is not separate from the class struggle, and the separa-

111. Sabah Mofidi, telephone interview with the author

tion of these two would result in dangerous consequences though¹¹².” What Komala urged through the declared statement, later became public as the party step towards the Marxist ideology and moved away from national interest in the struggles with KDP. the Democratic Party was defined in a secret document as a bourgeois party, at the 2nd Komala Congress,, and the Communist Party of Iran, which was later formed on the basis of Komala, considered itself the representative of the proletariat; what made Abdullah Muhtadi stress the necessity to fight against the KDP later as: “the problem in Kurdistan is not just a simple and two-sided confrontation between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, but a class incompatibility. One main angle of it is the proletariat force, and the other two sides are the bourgeoisie. So, that would be a tragic mistake if one considers that only through armed struggles and confrontation we may stop the armed invasions the bourgeois operate against us in Kurdistan¹¹³.”

The Democratic Party blamed Komala for the between them, and explained it in the documents of it's the 7th Congress as:“ the main reason for the current situations is the inaccurate analysis the Komala leader has carried out, the essence of which is the in-stable theory that a triangular force in Kurdistan forms the structure of currents in Kurdis-

112. Komala announcement, dated 25/7/1979 - eBook

113. Abdullah Mohtadi, Armed Attack on Komala, a Sign of Fear and Helplessness of the Kurdish Bourgeoisie, Communist Journal, Central Department of the Communist Party of Iran, No. 16-30 December 1984

tan, each representing a social class; the Islamic Republic represents the Iranian bourgeoisie, the Democratic Party represents the bourgeoisie of Kurdistan and Komala represents the working class of Kurdistan. According to the leader of Komala, the internal bourgeoisie of Kurdistan and its representative are greater threats to the proletariat. Also, the war against the KDP, as the representative of local bourgeois, is far more necessary than against the Islamic Republic.¹¹⁴

Ebrahim Alizadeh, another Komala leader and current secretary general of the Communist Party of Iran, echoed this view, saying, “We used to be of the opinion that the Democratic Party’s program was a plan to maintain the relations within the capitalist system¹¹⁵.” Komala, after the formation of the Communist Party of Iran, did not prioritize the national interests of the workers class in Kurdistan. Accordingly, as it had introduced itself as the representative of the proletariat, it considered itself as its historical duty to fight against the bourgeois forces in Kurdistan and Iran. In fact, in the traditional society of Kurdistan, there was no class in reality called as ‘the industrial proletariat’, nor any there used to exist any factory and industrial center in Kurdistan whose labor force would join the ranks of the proletariat, since it was a semi-feudal society instead of a capitalist one, and on the other hand, the majority

114. Documents of the 7th Congress of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, 09/29/1985, Article Four, page 60 of the decisions of the Congress

115. Bahman Seyyedi, *Three Years with Ibrahim Alizadeh*, 2009

of the KDP forces were from the toilers, peasants and farmers of Kurdistan and it could not be considered as a bourgeois force then.

The war between Komala and the Democrats tended to continue with the formation of the Communist Party of Iran and the theoretical dominance of Mansour Hekmat in the party. Hekmat was a member of the leadership of the Communist Fighters Alliance of Iran (Sahand) and had formed the Communist Party with Komala and several other small organizations; he, as an Iranian-Persian communist did not care about Kurdistan. Having no other chance to do his activities in other parts of Iran, he had come to Kurdistan and later joined Komala and tried to remove the foot prints of nationalism from the ideology of the party and turned it into a proletarian party instead. Rashad Mostafa Soltani states about the formation of the Communist Party of Iran¹¹⁶ and the integration of Komala in this organization and also the split from the national issue of the Kurds as: “The golden key of the strongholds in Komala were voluntarily handed to a Persian fascist group, who had approached the party as ‘guests’. The group used to continue its activities secretly so as to colon the same Pan-Iranian illusions, ‘the motherland’ and ‘the precious borders’ with us, what appeared quite pleasant to us since we did not have a profound knowledge of the theory. Unfortunately, they

116. Komala had changed its name to the Kurdish organization of the Communist Party of Iran, but the name Komala and its organizational structure had been preserved and were only subject to the orders of the Communist Party of Iran.

had taken control of the Komala leadership, since we did not have confidence; if we had, we would not have allowed them to abuse us¹¹⁷.”

The influence of the Pan-Iranian ideas of the Persian leaders of the Communist Party of Iran and their disregard for the Kurdish issues, of course in addition to Marxist ideological justifications and class warfare, played an important role in the war against the Democratic Party. It is clearly stated through the documents of the 7th congress of the KDP at that time, that “the Sahandians, meaning Manosur Hekmat and Iranian Communist Fighters Organization, were seemed to have the mission to weaken the national-democratic movement in Kurdistan or even make it fall, but who had entrusted this mission to them? It is not clear at the moment, but it will be clear in the future, and it is very surprising that a group of Kurdish intellectuals, once joined Komala just by the Kurdish motivations, would accept to be applied as the political means of a few people with evil soul and intent and without thinking and analyzing their intentions, would carry out their conspiracies against the Kurdistan Revolution and even to trigger some ignorant and inexperienced youth for this war!¹¹⁸” Abdullah Mohtadi later, in a meeting with members of his party in Gothenburg, Sweden, confirmed this analysis, and maintained that Mansour Hekmat was the one who

117. Rashad Mustafa Soltani, telephone interview with the author

118. Documents of the 7th Congress of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, 09/29/1985, Article Four, Page 60 of the Decisions of the Congress

imposed the war against KDP on Komala¹¹⁹; what is considered as the darkest turning point in the history of Kurdish struggles in Iran; this war eventually resulted in weakening of both parties and the nationalist movement in Kurdistan and the defeat of this movement also.

119. ISKRA, Journal of the Worker - Communist Party of Iran, February 27, 2004

Chapter Five

Conclusion

The Kurdish question has remained as one of the unresolved challenges of the last century in the Middle East. The land of the Kurds is divided into four countries: Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria; the first division took place after the Battle of Chaldoran in 1514, later legislated and recognized in the Treaty of Zahab in 1639, following which the Iranian Kurdistan was separated from the other parts of Kurdistan. However, the Kurds have been in struggle against the Persian and Ottoman empires for their rights since and it has given a nationalist essence to the Kurdish uprisings over the years. Sheikh Obaidullah Nahri, better known as the father of Kurdish nationalism, was the first one who began uprisings in 1880, against the Ottoman and Qajar empires to establish a Kurdish state. Kurdistan another time after the First World War had to bear a split, this time within the Ottoman part. The Ottoman Kurdistan was now divided between three countries, Turkey, Iraq and Syria. The modern country of Iran was founded in 1925, by Reza Khan Pahlavi. The governments of all four modern nations pursued discriminatory policies

against the Kurds. In Iran, for example, Reza Khan aimed to form a version of Iran that was based on the Persian identity and language and did his best to assimilate the Kurds. The Kurds, however, resisted this policy and did not surrender and staged uprisings against Reza Khan in response, among which Simko's uprising can be considered as most prominent instance.

The Kurds in Iran thought of forming a Kurdish state after the Second World War. However, previously the Kurdistan Revival Organization had been formed in 1942 as a political organization in Mahabad, and aimed to establish an independent Kurdistan. Three years later, with the aim of establishing an autonomous region for the Kurds within Iran, the organization was dissolved and the Kurdistan Democratic Party, was formed as the alternative; following which the Kurds appeared to establish a local government led by Qazi Muhammad in 1946 as the leader of the Democratic Party, what had taken almost of Iranian Kurdistan under its rule. The eleven-month-old government of Qazi was soon abolished by the central government, following which many of the party leaders were executed, imprisoned, and displaced. The Tudeh Party of Iran, the largest Soviet-affiliated Communist Party in Iran was the main source of influence on the Democratic Party. The Iranian government, however, applying various strategies seemed to benefit from the cultural overlaps between the Kurds and the Persians so as to manipulate the mentality of the Kurds in the four parts of Kurdistan,

and to cut off any potential idea of establishing an independent Kurdistan, imposing the presupposition that they are first Iranians then Kurds; what had influenced the thoughts of the Kurds in Iran remarkably.

The Democratic Party, as the only Kurdish party operated secretly during the years before the 1979 revolution. Eventually, the 18-month armed uprising of the remained members of the party against the central government failed and the protesters were killed, while the other party members and leaders were whether imprisoned or exiled to other countries. Two revolutionary Marxist ideologies and political Islam began to emerge in Kurdistan in the 1960s and 1970s; on the other hand the members of the Democratic Party had also been influenced the Marxist outlook. Kurdistan now had become the forum of activity for three political currents; following which, in the 1979 revolution, the Revolutionary Marxist Organization of the Kurdistan Toilers and the Quran School began their secret activities during these years and became active. A traditional version of Islam was already existing in Kurdistan and tended to serve the national interests of the Kurds, of course before the formation of the Quranic School, and traditional religious leaders used to have a remarkable role in the Kurdish liberation uprisings.

In 1979, the Iranian Revolution took place led by Khomeini, a Shia cleric, who sought to establish an Islamic government and respectively entitled the revolution an Islamic one. However, the Kurds took

control of the Kurdish regions after the revolution, aiming to be implemented in the procedure of compiling the constitution and achieve their 'legal' share in the government; what was rejected by the central government for several times and was followed by a series of attacks to Kurdistan by the regime. Kurds seemed to lack unity and having an united front against the government and it had become the most important factor not allowing them formulate their rights encountering the regime.

As investigated through the current research, ideology was the key factor diverging the Kurdish currents; following which several fractions came into existence. Traditional religious leaders as well as the followers of political Islam and Marxists were attacked by the central government and it made them stop fighting against the regime consequently. Under the influence of ideology, the followers of political Islam, led by Ahmad Muftizadeh, had trusted the promises of the religious leader of the Iranian Revolution, rather to see themselves closer to the government not the secular and pro-Western Kurdish parties. and due to the central government's dishonesty with him and disregard for the rights of Kurds and Sunnis in the constitution, Muftizadeh criticized the government after a few months and left Kurdistan, and he was eventually imprisoned and died after imprisonment. The Marxist ideas in the Democratic Party, what considered itself a left-wing and nationalist party, caused the three currents to secede from the party in

three stages and weaken its ranks. The traditional nationalist religious leaders in Kurdistan and their followers, especially the Rizgari Forces that also had a significant armed force, were attacked because of the predominance of Marxist ideas in the Kurdistan Toilers' Revolutionary Organization and turned into a bloody war. The Kurds eventually lost all control of the region and lost to the central government. Definitely Kurds would find the opportunity to form a national front in order to realize their interests if they would take a non-ideological approach so as to understand the plural religious, political and cultural context of Kurdistan and if they had a profound understanding of the Kurdish society, of which they were a part, they could eventually build a national armed force and realize their righteous demands through achieving their national share of the government in Iran, what they had assisted a lot to succeed.

Lack of unity and unintegrated struggles are considered as the main factors leading to the defeat of the Kurds after the 1979 revolution, encountering the central government. However, according to the outcomes of the present study, the disunity had stopped the Kurdish struggle develop through the major Kurdish cities of Kermashan and Ilam, where the nationalist activity at the beginning of the revolution was quite slow and shallow since they used to be Shia provinces and the government, that was also Shiite, was able to take advantage of this factor and attracted them towards its own front. Even after the defeat of the

armed struggles in Kurdistan, the nationalist movement used to pave its bumpy path, now in the form of civil activities, literary associations and institutions among the Kurds. At present, a new phase of nationalist ideas has grown among the Kurds and seems to develop due to the influence of social media and social networks and the easy access to free information, what the Kurds in the provinces of Ilam and Kermashan seem to show more interest in comparison to the previous times. Unity, still, appears to be the vital factor bringing the Kurds together in a single front, what can guide the Kurds towards their demands if the political parties, religious and civil movements prioritize the national interests over the ideological and organizational interests and pursue a broad vision free from the limitations of mere ideology. A nationalist liberation movement to succeed, requires the participation and efforts of all members of that society, classes and currents, regardless of their organizational scope, they all must contribute and play a role in it.

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A Critical Analysis of Kurdistan Movement Leadership in Iran

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After the First World War, Kurdistan was further divided. In Iran, Reza Shah tried to assimilate the Kurds with his policies, but they fought back with uprisings such as that of Simko. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), founded in 1945, strove for self-determination and was able to form the Republic of Kurdistan for a short time before it was crushed in 1946. In the 1960s and 1970s, Kurdish politics were influenced by Marxism and political Islam. After the revolution in Iran in 1979, the Kurds strived for political participation but were suppressed. Ideological differences weakened the Kurdish liberation movement and led to a military defeat against the Islamic regime in Iran. Despite the setbacks, civilian activities and a renewed demand for self-determination continue, particularly via social media. The realisation of Kurdish self-determination requires unity across political and religious boundaries, with a collective, non-ideological approach at the forefront.

