

Turkey and Kurdistan In the Cauldron of the Iraq War

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While the rulers of Turkey tried mightily to do everything they could during the Iraq war to be of service to their imperial masters in Washington, there was perhaps no other country whose contribution to the war effort fell so far below US expectations. The Pentagon had relied on being able to make use of Turkey's large military forces and of its favourable location so close to Iraq. Yet despite strenuous efforts by Turkey's rulers to comply, the imperialists and reactionaries ran into a swirl of contradictions that they had arrogantly ignored, not least the determined opposition of millions of people in Turkey, as well as Iraq itself, and the thorny contradictions posed by the issue of Kurdistan.

Turkey's Rulers Wanted to Go to War

On 7 October 2003, the Turkish Parliament, an eager supporter of the US/UK-led occupation of Iraq, gave the government authorisation to send troops to Iraq. It was obvious that an agreement on this had been reached long beforehand, at the demand of Turkey's US masters. Long before the Turkish Parliament's decision, US Deputy of Defence Paul Wolfowitz had presumptuously declared during a visit to Ankara that Turkish assent was "assured". The decision of the Parliament was mere lip service, a fig leaf. The real authority in the Turkish state is the Turkish army. From top to bottom the army is a lackey of the US imperialists, so they desperately wanted to go into Iraq as a guardian for the US-UK occupiers of Iraq. The blood of US soldiers, "johnnies" in Turkish, is considered by the imperialists to be worth more than that of Turkish soldiers, so the deployment of 10,000 Turkish troops was intended to be a cheap deal for the imperialists. An 8.5 billion dollar US credit to the Turkish government was to be the payment for this blood. Thus, the first reason for the Turkish parliament's approval was to get its soldiers on the front lines on behalf of the occupiers.

The second goal of Turkey's rulers was to prevent the potential establishment of a Kurdish state of any sort. Turkey's rulers have long been haunted by the decline of their prestige and power from the glory days of the Ottoman Empire, when Istanbul, then Constantinople, ruled over many different peoples of a far-flung region, including the Armenians, Kurds and a large part of the Arab world. This empire was taken apart bit by bit, and Turkey's rulers today are terrified at the possibility that the establishment of a viable Kurdish political entity in northern Iraq could act as a magnet that rips the millions of Kurds within Turkey's own borders out of their grip. At the same time, they were salivating at the possibility of putting their troops in Iraqi Kurdistan, with its major oil fields.

And the US Needed Them

Iraq was occupied by US and British forces on 9 April 2003, but unfortunately for the US and UK the Iraqi people did not meet them with flowers as the invaders had proclaimed they would. The situation now is far from the peace, democracy and stability they prophesied. These were empty illusions designed only to throw sand in the face of the people. It was clear to the Maoists what the imperial Pax America was going to mean for the masses, and even less experienced masses knew from the experience in the Balkans and Afghanistan generally what lay ahead.

The question of Iraq is bound up with the strategy of the US imperialists to reshape the Middle East region overall. Any regime that does not respond to the needs of the US imperialists is a target. The US even wants to restructure close US allies like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and others too. In addition, the US wants to compel other less compliant reactionary regimes in the region, like Syria and Iran, to submit to its overall plan. The Turkish troops they wanted to send into Iraq were therefore not intended simply to serve as fighters for the US-UK in Iraq, but also as fighters for them more widely in the region.

The unity between the Turkish regime and the US is not based on some mutual sharing of a strategic common aim; instead, Turkey is being more tightly harnessed in the service of US aims. The Turkish army was built up after the Second World War to serve the US imperialists in their contention with the rival Soviet imperialist bloc. It was forged into the fifth-largest army in the world and armed with modern military equipment by the US imperialists. It is now being restructured to serve the plans of the US in the Balkans and the Middle East as regional gendarmes, a cheap rent-an-army for the US.

It was very clear that occupying Iraq would not be easy, and the occupiers quickly hit this reality hard. Even the Pentagon HQ has admitted that the national resistance of Iraq is on a stronger organisational footing than it was earlier. In the beginning, the fact that it was not more organised reflected the reactionary character of the Saddam regime. It was against the nature of things to think that such a regime would actually be able to mobilise genuine national resistance against the imperialists. Yet, as has been seen in the example of the town of Um ul Ghasr, where the first ground fighting in the war took place, the potential did exist to mobilise the people to fight against the invaders. But anyone who compares the fighting conducted by the Saddam forces with Stalingrad or Vietnam is operating under illusions. It was the US itself that set up the Saddam regime, and it was the US too that prodded it to wage the eight-year war against the Iranian regime in the 1980s.

From the beginning of the occupation, the imperialists' situation in Iraq was not easy or comfortable, but it grew steadily worse, and now they need new mercenaries to do their fighting. One of their chief motivations to bring in Turkey's Army was a belief that it would represent the presence of a Muslim country, or, as the New York Times put it, this would "change the image of the occupation from that of a solely Western effort to one that is multi-ethnic as well as multinational". In other words, this would cover the ugly colonial nature of the occupation with a thin veneer of "Islamic-friendly" respectability and strengthen the argument that this was not a war against Islam. This was an approach based on ignorance and arrogance that soon backfired.

Turkey and the Middle East

For the imperialists, the Middle East has long been a region of great interest, including because of the value of petrol. During the First World War, the British imperialists had a very large force stationed there. Using the age-old strategy of divide and conquer, they cultivated local ruling classes as their legs in the region. The global balance of forces changed significantly with the Second World War, and the US took over as chief imperialist. Israel, the Turkish military and the Shah of Iran became the US's strongest legs in the region. Soviet social-imperialism also had some influence and strength, through the regimes in Syria and Iraq, while the Germans played a lesser, economic role.

Following the collapse of the Soviet-led Warsaw Bloc, a power vacuum arose in the region that the US was determined to fill. This is what they set out to do in the Gulf War, and are doing even more emphatically now. Seizing Iraq has become key to the US drive for world hegemony.

It is very clear that their plans for the occupation of Iraq and other parts of the Middle East are ultimately rooted in these interests, and are aimed, first, at strategic control of petrol and energy resources, because the US imperialists are the main consumers of petrol and energy resources in the world today. Their alarm at the economic crisis is pushing them to take a more aggressive stance. It is thus a top priority for them to gain greater control of these energy sources. They also want to prevent the euro from becoming even more influential in the area, and they want to prevent the possibility of a stronger relationship developing between Russia, France and local forces in the region. Third, they want to guarantee the survival of Israel.

For these purposes they are seeking hegemony over the Middle East as a whole. And hegemony in the Middle East is a cornerstone for US strategic domination of the entire world.

As was seen with Noriega in Panama, it is difficult to keep control of reactionary comprador regimes like those in Iraq, Iran and others - they need new lackeys who can fight on their behalf in the region. Thus, the US changed the last government in Turkey, which was not capable of serving American interests well, and took the new Islamic government and turned it into a war cabinet for the US. The US will also try to use the Islamic influence of the new government to strengthen its influence throughout the region. So the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan and his cabinet have been raised to the level of the government in the service of this imperialist need.

The European imperialists are very uncomfortable at seeing Turkey becoming practically the fifty-first state of the US. They have their own calculations about their interests in the region, and how Turkey could serve them. The European powers, home to hundreds of thousands of Kurdish exiles, tried to exploit the problems Turkey's rulers face with the Kurdish rebellion, not out of any concern for the Kurdish masses, but in order to curb the growing US influence.

This is a crucial factor in the ongoing discussion of integrating Turkey into the European Union. But Turkey, which belongs to the US from head to toe, is not so reliable for the EU.

The EU already faces problems due to the role of the UK, Poland and others in Iraq. They don't want to add fuel to the fire by bringing Turkey into Europe. They don't want Turkey to become a Trojan horse for the US. Although they also have problems with Turkey's Islamic religion and culture, these are secondary. For their own interests, the European imperialists are willing to

accept the Islamic religion, or Kurdish nationalism, or whatever - their overriding concern is their own imperial interests. While the demands Europe is placing on Turkey have sometimes caused the country's rulers to vacillate, or to try to play both sides, sometimes winding up in a muddle, overall they are clearly in the US camp. Therefore, for the time being, Turkey is trying to force open the doors of Europe through US influence, but it knows that it cannot rely on this alone.

Islamic Party in Turkey

The Islamic-based Justice and Development Party, now the governing Party in Turkey, grew up in reaction to the military coup of 1980. Since then it has been groomed to be a "responsible" force in Turkey's mainstream politics. The Party boasts that, with regard to religion, it should be seen as the Turkish counterpart of Germany's Christian Democratic Party. The US imperialists and Turkey's rulers both like to present the country as a model for Muslim countries, where a "moderate" Islamic party defends the capitalist system under the domination of the US through a parliamentary democratic form.

While Europe, particularly Germany, is the leading investor in Turkey, the US has tight control over the Turkish military. All of the generals who sit on Turkey's National Security Council, the most powerful body in the country, have been personally involved in leading key NATO operations, such as in Bosnia and Kosovo, or even in the US war in Afghanistan. The Turkish army has played an important historic role in NATO for decades. The US also has several large military bases in Turkey, including the huge air base at Incirlik. At the end of the First World War, Turkey was a semi-colony of Germany; during the interwar period Britain and France gained greater influence, but with the US victory in the Second World War it steadily took over as the dominant force, particularly with the outbreak of the Cold War. Since then Turkey has been under the complete domination of US imperialism. Germany has the most extensive economic relations with Turkey, particularly in manufacturing, while Britain has key contracts in gas distribution and telecommunications and in the financial field. Turkey has also greatly strengthened its ties with Israel. Turkey, Israel and the US have signed three major mutual assistance agreements in recent years.

In this model of what the US wants for the region, Turkey's generals still have the decisive say on any major issue, and have staged coups against civilian governments three times since the Second World War and even pressured the forerunner of the Islamic Party from power only a few years ago. A recent Amnesty International survey reports that there are still more than a thousand political prisoners in "F-style" isolation cells (see AWTW 2001/27 on Turkey's prisons), and that, "Torture remained widespread and the perpetrators were rarely brought to justice" - this is particularly the case in the Kurdish south-east. Turkey gives a perfect idea of exactly what Bush and the US mean by a model American-style Middle East democracy.

US Power Hits a Wall

The US chieftains persisted for some time in trying to get Turkish troops sent to Iraq. For several weeks Bush and his cronies continued to argue that the costs were outweighed by the potential benefits. The decision by the Turkish state on 7 October 2003 to push forward through the Grand

National Assembly formal authorisation to send Turkish troops, despite the apparent difficulties, also demonstrated the high level of dependence of the Turkish state on US imperialism and the Turkish rulers' continued willingness to take a risk to increase their own influence in the region by showing their muscle.

Ultimately, however, they were forced to back down. It seems that the straw that broke the camel's back was the imperialists' failure to convince even their own lackeys in Iraq that this would be of help to pacifying Iraq. The opposition of even the bourgeois-feudal leaders of the Kurdish national movement in the north of Iraq meant that the US would jeopardise the support of one of its more reliable allies in the country, risking the disaffection of the Kurdish leadership and the wrath of the basic masses, especially in light of the rising anti-US resistance. It would also have antagonised the Shiites in particular, not only because the Muslims of Turkey are mainly Sunni, but more fundamentally because of the whole history of nationalist opposition on the part of all the Arab peoples to Turkish domination, extending back to Ottoman Empire days. The very emergence of Arab nationalism was bound up with the rise of opposition to four centuries of Ottoman occupation. In the eyes of the Arab masses, almost any army other than the Turkish Army would have been less of an insult and provocation. As the British Special Envoy to Iraq, Sir Jeremy Greenstock, ruefully admitted to the BBC, the idea of sending Turkish troops to occupy northern Iraq was about as popular in Baghdad as the idea of sending British troops to occupy Belfast has been in Dublin.

Germany and France were also reluctant, if not outright opposed, to such a move. Finally, the people in Turkey itself massively opposed the war, and in particular the plan to send Turkish troops into Iraq. There were meetings, protests and demonstrations of tens of thousands against Turkish participation in the war in all the major urban centres, including Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir and Adana.

In Turkish there is an expression that says, "there is shit on both ends of the stick". Ultimately, then, although the government made a big effort to get a positive response in parliament, all these factors, as well as the opposition of the masses, contradictions within the ruling class that fragmented the unity of the government, the fact that the US didn't meet the Turkish ruling class's demands regarding Kurdistan (that the US wouldn't permit the establishment of a Kurdish state), and the fact that the UN failed to give its stamp of approval to the US/UK war - all this ultimately thwarted the US effort to obtain Turkish troops as occupation forces.

But there should be no illusions that the Turkish rulers have somehow turned over a new leaf. Turkey did work for the US-UK invasion. In February 2003, Turkey opened its ports, shipping lanes and air space to the US military. US bombers that bombed Iraq's cities set off from bases in Turkey, and at least some US troops did move through Turkish territory. Despite their failure in parliament, in actuality they played a major role in helping the US war.

The Kurdish Question against the Backdrop of the War

In the world today, it is not only the voices of the imperialists and reactionaries that are being heard. The people too have resisted and are continuing to resist. The US occupation forces are being pulled into a quagmire. Those who say that it is only Saddam forces that are resisting are

wrong, and are missing the undeniable role of Iraqi nationalism. For the time being, the US's closest allies are the feudal strata among the Kurds, in particular around Masood Barzani and Jalal Talabani. The Maoists have repeatedly pointed out that this is a reflection of their class position. The so-called realistic pragmatism of the Kurdish feudal ruling class has objectively turned them into servants of US interests. The Maoist forces have long made the point that the leadership of the Kurdish forces in northern Iraq, centred around Barzani and Talabani, has promoted illusions that the US imperialists could somehow be used to further the national interests of the Kurdish people. In this situation, they seized on the war to argue that it represented a historic opening, that the Kurds had to be "realistic" and had no choice but to work with the US imperialists to the extent that they could. Unfortunately this line has had some influence among the Kurdish masses.

But before going into greater depth on the situation of Iraqi Kurdistan during the war, it is worth examining recent developments in the Kurdish movement in Turkey, which had also been moving in a direction of more accommodation with imperialism. [For more on the history and politics of the Kurdish question, see AWTW 1985/5 and 1991/16.]

In Turkey, Kadek, previously known as the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party), has tried to argue that the US will bring democracy to the region.¹ They now argue that capitalism has a democratic aspect, and that old-style colonialism has been left in the past and that the imperialist attacks taking place today represent a new-style democratic colonialism. So Kadek has even been meeting with US representatives. Consider in particular the recent arguments of Abdullah Ocalan, the historic leader of the PKK. Ocalan, who still exerts tremendous influence on the Kurdish movement in Turkey despite being in prison, made the following argument on behalf of Kadek: we don't have the aim of smashing the Turkish state or of establishing a new state. What we want is to transform the Turkish state into a democratic state where there is room for compromise and reform. Our goals are language and cultural rights that could be achieved within a democratic Turkish state. Talk of self-determination of the Kurdish nation is an outmoded concept. The Kurdish people living in the various countries of the region should demand their democratic rights within the framework of each different country. The official ideology of the Turkish state is Kemalism - this is a modern ideology. But, Ocalan argues further, the British imperialists provoked the Kurds to rise up against the Turkish state after the First World War, so the Kemalists had no choice but to smash this movement. If there had been no imperialist provocation, Kemalism could have developed into democracy. The suppressive form Kemalism took at that time can in today's conditions be transformed into a democratic form. To take the line that it is necessary to smash the state, as we used to in the past, Ocalan argues, must thus give way to a new line, the heart of which is transforming the Turkish state into a democratic republic based on reform and compromise. If the Turkish state is ready to transform in this way, we are ready to bring back our guerrilla forces based in Iraq and integrate them into the political life of Turkey. We therefore seek a general amnesty to do this. Even a good inspiring message from the Turkish state would be enough to set us on the path towards a democratic republic. Unfortunately, the Turkish state refuses to do this, so we have no choice but to maintain our armed forces. Thus concludes Ocalan's argument.

The reality of the situation is very different. The US adopted the policy of asking Turkey to open the door for Kadek to be integrated back into Turkey's political life. But the Turkish state asked

the US to fight the Kadek guerrillas under the claim that they are terrorist. Although the US has said the PKK is a terrorist organisation in order not to offend its Turkish allies, it has also tried not to offend the PKK by actually using force against PKK guerrillas in northern Iraq. It has tried to sit between two stools. On the one hand, the US is talking to Turkey in order to seek the elimination of the PKK, while on the other the US understands the difficulty of the plan to eliminate the PKK and therefore wants to solve this problem by opening the door for the PKK to be reintegrated into Turkey's political life. This is their main emphasis. Since the best allies the US has in Iraq are the feudal bourgeois leadership in Kurdistan, the US doesn't want to have an armed confrontation with the PKK and incur the hatred of the Kurdish people. In response to US wishes, the Turkish state enacted a law, called a "return home" law, that required guerrillas to sign a statement renouncing their previous armed struggle against the regime. The PKK responded that this was a dishonourable law, including because it also required the guerrillas to collaborate with the army and identify remaining guerrillas. The PKK said they could not accept this law, and instead demanded a general amnesty and the democratic and cultural rights of the Kurdish people.

So this was the political line being advanced by the PKK in Turkey as war broke out. A similar line of accommodation with the imperialist order had already gone much further in Iraqi Kurdistan.

In March 2003, as the US-British forces moved into Iraq to seize that country, there was surprise, confusion and anger around the world at the sight of American soldiers being accompanied by contingents of Kurdish peshmerga fighters. The peshmergas, who were given great prominence by the imperialist media, were sent by two Iraqi Kurdish parties, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), led by Talabani, and the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), led by Barzani. These two parties have been running a US-puppet Kurdish government in northern Iraq since 1991. The US had created a northern "no fly zone" after the first Gulf war that enabled the regimes of the two parties (they are historic rivals and control different territories) to operate free of Saddam Hussein's authority. As the parties were allowed to receive some revenue from the rich oil fields in the area and to control cross-border trade routes with Turkey and Iraq, both developed a fat elite that established itself over the poverty-stricken and exhausted Kurdish people in northern Iraq. They had a 40,000-strong force with some CIA-trained commandos. During the invasion, thousands of peshmerga troops were led by US commandos and CIA forces in different military operations.

To justify this, PUK leader Talabani argued that the Kurds could have no better friends than those in Washington. US President Bush repeatedly denounced the Hussein regime for its crimes against the Kurds, and prominent US government spokesmen promised fulfilment of Kurdish aspirations for an autonomous state within a federal Iraq. None of these promises has turned out to be true.

The two Kurdish parties were hoping that after the overthrow of the Saddam regime they would be allowed to consolidate and expand the power of the Kurdish autonomous regime in northern Iraq. They also hoped that since they had helped US imperialism to rape and occupy Iraq, they would be rewarded with leverage in the future central government in Iraq that has been thrown together by the US imperialists.

For a brief time immediately following the occupation of Iraq, the Kurdish government did seem to become more viable. This stirred the Kurdish nationalist parties in Iran as well as the PKK in Turkey to follow on the heels of the Iraqi Kurdish parties to seek US support for their own share of "Kurdish power". It was as if they suddenly believed that the US imperialists were running an open market dispensing "national liberation". Leaders of the Kurdish-based Komaleh Party in Iran joined the rush to Washington and held meetings with Pentagon officials. Komaleh openly announced this "new relationship", and shamelessly argued that at this juncture in world history US interests dictated that they parcel out autonomy to Kurds, perhaps in federal-type arrangements. Talabani, the PUK leader, played a "distinguished" role as middleman and broker for the Kurdish parties in Iran and Turkey in order to smooth their capitulation to the US imperialists and enlist their services.

The US imperialists did not take long to dash these grand illusions. Paul Bremer, the US proconsul in Iraq, summoned the Kurdish leaders on 2 January 2004 to tell them that the present Kurdish autonomous state in northern Iraq is an obstacle to US plans for Iraq and should be wound up. There is powerful opposition in Washington DC to any kind of Kurdish autonomous state. For the US, victory in Iraq means being able to forge a stable Iraq under its boots, and Kurdish national rights are an obstacle to this for a number of reasons. First, the US colonial rulers in Iraq need to tame and control the masses of Shiite and Sunni Arabs. For them this means working through reactionary feudal comprador classes and religious Shiite and Sunni authorities, and uniting some intellectuals and technocrats and wooing a section of the middle classes among these groups. So the US wants to appease the appetite of the reactionary classes and authorities within Iraq's Shiite and Sunni Arabs. But this runs counter to granting the Kurdish feudal comprador classes a big share of political and economic power. There simply isn't enough to satisfy all these compradors, and allowing the Kurds greater autonomy would also require potentially dangerous tinkering with long-established hierarchies of domination.

The US also has to take into account the interests of Turkey and Iran. After all, the reactionary classes of the dominant nations in those states are stronger and much more organised and experienced in serving imperialist interests! Turkey, which is a close US ally in NATO, vehemently opposes the emergence of any Kurdish state at all because this would stir discontent and rebellion in Kurdistan of Turkey. The Turkish state and the US are especially opposed to any attempt by the Kurdish parties to gain control of the northern Iraqi oilfields, which stretch along the borders of Kurdish areas near the cities of Kirkuk and Mosul, because this would give a lot of power to the Kurds.

Contrary to all the colourful propaganda by the Kurdish leaders in Iraq, the US is not out there to protect Kurds or parcel out autonomy. The US never planned to give any power to the masses of Kurdistan, because the interests of the peoples of the Middle East, including the Kurds, clash with US plans for the domination of this whole strategic region. But for a while it seemed as if the Kurdish feudal and comprador classes would get to consolidate their own narrow power base in northern Iraq. But how and if this will work out is uncertain. The US is putting great pressure on its Kurdish allies to give up any moves toward greater autonomy or toward control of the oil fields. In addition, the US is expected to demand the eventual disarmament of Kurdish armed forces through the merger of their peshmerga into a new US-controlled Iraqi army. New York Times columnist William Safire reports (14 January 2004) that the US colonial administrator of

Iraq, Paul Bremer, "told Kurdish leaders brusquely last week to forget the past US autonomy policy and get with the unity program".

It is a historical fact that the imperialist powers have committed horrendous crimes against the Kurdish nation. The four reactionary states oppressing the Kurds (Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria) were forged and propped up by British and US imperialism in the first place, leaving the Kurds stateless. And the imperialist powers have established a cruel pattern of relations with the Kurds since then. They have repeatedly made false promises to the feudal and bourgeois leaders of Kurdistan and then betrayed them. For example, when the US has wanted to undermine a government in Turkey or Iraq, it has encouraged and armed Kurdish forces and built up conservative nationalist forces among the Kurds who have been willing to fight for the US against the respective central government. Yet the moment the US achieved its goals, it has dropped the Kurds and left them to their fate - sometimes a very bloody one.

The sinister US-brokered 1975 Algiers Agreement is an example of this that still burns in the memory of the Kurdish people. In 1972, US President Nixon, his adviser Henry Kissinger and the Shah of Iran came up with a plan to destabilise the then Soviet-backed Iraqi regime. The US and the Shah encouraged an insurgency by Iraq's KDP, then under the leadership of Mustafa Barzani (the father of Masood Barzani), to weaken Baghdad. On US orders the Shah of Iran secretly supported the insurgency. The Kurdish peshmergha grew to 45,000 guerrillas by 1975 and were able to push the Baghdad regime out of Kurdistan. But for the US this was going too far. With US backing, the Shah entered into the Algiers agreement with the Iraqi regime over various border disputes. The Kurds were dropped immediately. The Shah and the US cut off aid to the Kurds and gave the Iraqi regime a free hand to start a search-and-destroy operation against them. Hundreds of thousands of Kurds fled into exile, but many were forcibly returned and slaughtered by the Iraqi regime. Mustafa Barzani was allowed to go to Iran and die in exile. The masses of Kurdistan categorically condemned and repudiated Barzani's capitulation and sell-out of the Kurdish resistance, and he came to be held as a symbol of national betrayal in all parts of Kurdistan.

The reactionary classes of Kurdistan (namely the feudals and tribal heads) have always held out the offer of serving the imperialists in return for state power, like the reactionary classes of the Persian, Arab and Turkish nations have. And the imperialists have often dangled promises of such a deal in front of their noses in order to manoeuvre the Kurds for their own cynical ends. Yet a closer examination shows that it is not true that the other nations of the region were given autonomous power or genuine independence by the imperialists. Not at all! All the nations in the Middle East remain subjugated by imperialism and lack any kind of effective political and economic independence. This is why national resistance against imperialism and the fight for genuine independence are part and parcel of achieving a new-democratic revolution throughout the Middle East.

The fact that the reactionary feudal and comprador classes of the Kurdish nation did not get to have even one of the neo-colonial-type state powers that the reactionary classes of the Turkish, Arab and Persian nations have, has led to a particular situation where the Kurdish reactionary classes enjoy a certain leverage with the masses of Kurdistan. This is the leash that the imperialist powers have repeatedly been able to grab hold of to play with the aspirations of the

Kurdish nation and use it in their own interests. The imperialists' illustrious thinkers and policy-makers cynically call this "playing the Kurdish card". Yet despite the repeated betrayals by the imperialists and their long history of cynical manoeuvres, the Kurdish leaders of Iraq continue to recount fairytales about the niceties of the US. This crime must be exposed to open the eyes of the Kurdish proletarians and oppressed to the specific character of these feudal comprador classes and their political operatives, who are ultimately bound to be bought and used by the imperialist powers, and to show the burning need for the more thorough-going, uncompromising outlook of the revolutionary proletariat.

The leaders of Kurdistan of Iraq have sought to justify their treachery with the line that "the Kurds should be realistic in order to reach their goals". But this "realism" of the Kurdish leaders has caused more than enough suffering for the Kurdish masses, exactly because they have not been realistic enough to recognise that the imperialists and the reactionary states oppressing the Kurdish nation, as well as other peoples of these countries, are not and never will be the friends of the Kurdish people.

The nature of the PUK and KDP of Iraq and their ugly alliance with the US imperialists once again serves as a wake-up call to the Kurdish proletarians and toiling masses to discard their misleaders once and for all. As long as a revolutionary proletarian leadership has not been forged in Kurdistan, the bitter experience will be repeated of trusting the imperialists and the reactionary states and in the end being stabbed by them.

Footnote

1. The Turkish state regularly bans Kurdish nationalist parties, which to keep functioning openly reconstitute themselves just as regularly, in what seems to be a never-ending cycle. Kadek was the latest incarnation of the pro-PKK party, but it has recently dissolved itself and been replaced by the "Kongra-gel", the Kurdish National Congress. This reflects the policy of the leadership around Ocalan to make even greater efforts to be acceptable to the mainstream political process, with the full backing of the US administration and despite pressure from Turkey's military generals.