

NOV 13 1975

# Kurds Say CIA Betrayed Them

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London Observer

BEIRUT—Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger scuttled the revolt of the Kurdish nationalists in Iraq earlier this year, according to one of the aides of the defeated Kurdish leader, Gen. Mulla Mustapha Barzani.

The Kurds believe that Kissinger cut off aid to them—supplied through Iran and the Central Intelligence Agency—to save his larger Middle East game.

Kissinger apparently hoped that Iraq, free of the Kurdish problem he had helped to foment, would renew its rivalry with Syria, weakening opposition in Damascus to the Egyptian-Israeli withdrawal pact he was working out last spring. The plan seems to have worked—at great cost to the Kurdish movement.

The harm to Iraq, the nominal target, was nothing compared to the destruction

wrought on the Kurds, nominally the CIA's ally. An American CIA operative, who was involved in Kurdish affairs, summed up, "The Kurds were diddled; we diddled them."

Talking openly for the first time about the CIA involvement—ordered by Kissinger—in the Kurdish insurgency, a Barzani aide who was privy to the operation told me here that covert American support was central to Kurdish strategy in the Kurds' decision to defy the Baghdad government.

Through CIA channels, Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party received tens of millions of dollars' worth of weapons. The best American-supplied materiel consisted primarily of Soviet-made artillery and Sagger portable anti-tank missiles, plus a powerful American-made radio transmitter that broadcast the Voice of Kur-

distan throughout the Middle East.

Despite his disillusionment, Barzani is said by the Kurds to have forbidden his inner circle to disclose the American connection or to complain publicly until after the CIA involvement had been leaked in Washington.

The Kurds' view of Kissinger's role was reinforced by the disclosures in Washington last week that he ordered the CIA operation in his capacity as National Security Council chairman, answerable only to President Nixon. In Washington, a congressional committee confirmed that the CIA had arranged shipments of "untraceable" Soviet- and Chinese-made weapons to the Kurds via Iran.

Former Treasury Secretary John Connally, who represents several companies in the Middle East, was named in Washington as the contact man with the Shah, who was enthusiastic about the operation. The CIA also funneled financial support to the Kurds.

The military impact of the American commitment was far outweighed in the Kurds' eyes by its political significance, according to the Kurdish official. American influence was viewed as a guarantee against a doublecross by the Shah. "We would never have launched

the revolt trusting the Persians alone," Barzani's aide said. "Barzani believed the U.S. would prevent any tactical maneuver by the Shah, who ultimately has to worry about his own incipient Kurdish problem."

American support for the Kurds was pledged via the CIA in secret contacts dating back to 1972, the Kurd indicated. The agency said the Kurds were seen as a means of ousting the Iraqi Baath (Arab Socialist) regime, whose shaky new leadership appeared to be turning Iraq into a base of Soviet influence after signing an Iraqi-Soviet friendship treaty.

The CIA contacts occurred primarily in Europe, although the assistance was funneled through Iran, which has a common border with Kurdistan. The agency pleaded the need for secrecy to spare Barzani embarrassment as an "American client." To reinforce this cover story, the CIA reportedly discouraged Kurdish contacts with high-level Americans and arranged elaborate gambits like successive semi-public brushoffs for Kurds attempting to see American officials in Washington or U.S. Ambassador Richard Helms, a former CIA chief, in Tehran.

The Kurds managed to project their case to American opinion through a few journalists, but their collapse

aroused little public concern in the United States. Survivors now face difficulties even in getting visas for the United States.

The CIA also reportedly laid the political groundwork for a Kurdish-sponsored change of regime in Iraq by secret contacts in Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. But CIA "back-channel" maneuvers were never allowed to compromise the United States publicly, leaving the way clear for the abrupt disavowal that finally materialized, the Kurds say.

In the end, Barzani analysts believe, Washington pushed the Shah, perhaps even against his own judgment, to mend fences with Iraq. Iraq's move away from the Soviet connection in late 1974—when the Soviets were refused the sovereign base facilities in south Iraq they had asked for as the price for increased military support—reduced the American motive for supporting a change in regime.

The final decision was apparently made in early 1974 when Kissinger was attempting to put together the Egyptian-Israeli disengagement pact in the teeth of fierce Syrian suspicion. By letting Egyptian President Anwar Sadat arrange a solution for the Kurdish problem, Kissinger obtained Iraqi support for the Egyptian leader's diplomacy.