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History of Turkish Occupation of Northern Kurdistan.

Since 1984, and especially the last few months, the domestic problems of a major N.A.T.O, Middle Eastern, and American ally state have come to the forefront of the international news scene. That state is the Republic of Turkey and it's primary troubles stem from the past seven decades of acrimonious policies directed at the indigenous ethnic Kurds. The main problem, now, is the Kurdish popular insurgency on it's hands, in Turkish occupied Northern Kurdistan. The Kurdish question has long been covered up and denied by the state of Turkey, but recent events has forced Turkey to concede that it has a serious Kurdish insurgency on its hands. Turkey's inability to deal with this situation is the result of the past seventy years of cultural, political, and human rights abuses directed against the Kurdish population. In fact, this "separatism" is so out of hand that the Turkish government has incessantly appealed to it's allies and advisories alike to help counter the escalating Kurdish asperation to succeed from the Turkish republic. Turkey's sputtering and deteriorating economy is directly related to the long Kurdish struggle for independence. Turkey has spent over eight billion dollars or twenty percent of her GDP to combat the ever deteriorating predicament in northern Kurdistan, and should spend more in the future(Laber). Because of the violence, the once prosperous tourist business of Turkey, has now lost about \$1.5 billion dollars annually since 1990. Many people now talk openly of another possible military coup, there were three major military coups during the last thirty years (Alister) These circumstances in the state of Turkey have also hurt her chances of ever joining the ever wealthy European Union and battering its ailing economic situation. The depth of Turkey's domestic and ethnic dilemma is one of the many that have arisen after the end of the cold war, yet the cold war is a simple answer to a much more complex one. The factors that have arisen to contribute to this civil war were created far before Capitalism versus Communism, East versus West, or U.S versus the Soviet Union. In order to really comprehend the holistic situation in Turkey one must first be familiar with the complete history of the Turks and Kurds.

The Kurds of Turkey constitutes, by far, the largest ethnic minority group in Turkey. The estimate of their population, however, are very dubious because of the past Turkish policy to deny the very existence of any minorities within the borders of her state. In fact, past Turkish rhetoric has been that there is no official Kurdish problem in Turkey, because officially no Kurds exist. We can ascertain that the kurds make up between twenty-five and thirty-three percent of the Turkey's population. This would put the Kurdish population about twelve to twenty million (Morris). Because of past and present forced Turkish assimilation practices, the Kurds live in all parts of the country, but most of the Kurdish population is concentrated in the southeastern part of Turkey. They represent a high percentage of the population in fifteen provinces and take up a total of thirty percent of all of Turkey (Kendal). Economically, the Kurds are the poorest inhabitants of the country. The per capita of a Kurd is one-tenth of a Turk living in Istanbul; well below the poverty line (McDowell). While the rest of Turkey has modernized and adopted some capitalistic practices, the Kurdish areas, by contrast, are underdeveloped and exploited by feudal landlords. The wealth of the area is "drained and channeled to the Turkish metropolis (Kendal)." Much of the region is relatively unchanged since the last seventy years of Turkish rule or has suffered even worse economically. The thirty million Kurds of the Middle East have lived in Kurdistan before record of modern history was kept. The very first mention of the Kurds in history was about 3,000 BC, under the name Gutium., as they fought the Summerians(Spieser). Later around 800 BC, the Indo-European Median tribes

settled in the Zagros mountain region and coalesced with the Gutiums, and thus the modern Kurds speak from as Aryan language (Morris). The Kurds are mentioned by Xenophon, a Greek mercenary, as he retreated from Persia with ten thousand men in 401 BC, he says of the Kurds, "These people, lived in the mountains and were very war-like and not subject to the Persian king. Indeed once a royal army of 120,000 thousand had once invaded their country, and not a man of them came back..(Morris)." When the Arabs spread Islam to the Middle East in the seventh century, most of the Kurds gradually adopted the religion but fiercely resisted Arab rule, much like today in modern day Iraq and Syria. This is evident in a legend about the prophet Mohammed; when the prophet called all the princes of the world to embrace the new religion, they all hurried to submit to the prophet of the new religion. When the Prophet saw the Kurdish representative, named Zemin, with his giant size and piercing eyes, the prophet prayed to God that such a terrifying people never unite as a single nation (Morris). Around the tenth century the Kurds became a military force to be reckoned with in the Middle East and defended Islam against the invading Christian crusaders and defeated the Mongolian armies at both Cerq De Chavalier and the fortress of Irbile. Saladine, and the majority of his troops were Kurdish (Safrastian). The Kurds established independent principalities, that never united, but often fought each other for the benefit of foreign powers. During the harsh reign of Shah Ismail in Persia, most of the Kurds who were Sunni Muslims, allied themselves with the Ottoman Sultan Selim "the Cruel" and played the pivotal part in defeating the Persian armies at Chaldiran in 1514, and thus most of the Kurds in Iran are still Sunni Muslims among a predominately Shiite majority. The Kurdish principalities, at this time were free from the central government and struck their own coinage and had Friday prayers in the name of the local prince (Morris). At that point of Kurdish history Kurdish culture and literature flourished. This lasted until the nineteenth century when the Ottoman empire tried to expand its rule into the Kurdish territories. Using the tool of divide and conquer, the Ottomans use Kurdish tribes to fight fellow Kurds. Though, the Ottoman government gained nominal control of the Kurdish areas, they were never able to establish direct rule (McDowell). During World War One, many Kurds actually remained loyal to the Empire. They fought bravely in many battles. The Kurds inflicted such heavy damages against the Tsarist government that they almost conceded to evacuating the entire Caucasus region. Some historians also suggest, they were eighty percent of the Ottoman casualties at the infamous battle of Galilopi (Gunter). During the war the Young Turk government, in pursuit of a purely Turkic empire, massacred more than one million Armenians and seven hundred thousand Kurds. After the Ottoman loss, the Empire collapsed and was on the verge of fragmentation when a young army officer by the name of Mustafa Kemal emerged on the scene.

Following the fatal defeat of the Ottoman empire after World War one, the remnants of the former empire were divided up among the victorious allied powers, even the Turkish speaking region were to come under the mandate of foreign administration. In fact, much of Anatolia was already occupied by Greek or Armenian forces. On August 10, 1920, Turkey and the allied powers signed the treaty of Sevres. This treaty allowed for the creation of an independent Kurdish and Armenian state on the remittance of the former Ottoman empire. This treaty was to become null and void. Around the same time the Serves treaty was being discussed, Mustafa Kemal gained power of what remained of the military and political infrastructure in Anatolia. Kemal, starting in the Kurdish region and proclaiming the unity of Turks and Kurds, organized resistance to the Armenian and Georgian forces in eastern Anatolia. These forces were defeated by almost entirely Kurdish armies, who thought they were fighting for a state where, "Turks and Kurds would live as brothers and as equals (Kendal)" as stated by Mustafa Kemal. However, after the defeat of the Greek armies in western Turkey, Kemal declared to an assembly that "The state the we have just created is a Turkish state (Kendal)" Immediately after, a strengthened Turkey

renegotiated the Treaty of Lausanne with the allies. With much more favorable terms for the Turks, but no mention of the Kurds in the treaty. Thus the Kurds went from equal partners to non-existent citizens in the new Turkish state. After the treaty of Lousanne, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk proceeded to integrate the country and start a process of Westernize the once orthodox Islamic empire. Kemal abolished the Caliphate Arabic alphabet, and adopted the western Latin alphabet, thus implementing some capitalistic measures in the name of a newly established secular government. Mustafa Kemal enacted harsh laws on Islam in general. Kemal made the Islamic call for prayer illegal and went as far as banning Islamists. The most important of these decisions against Islam, was the outlawing all Islamic holy houses of teaching. This was to have profound impacts on the spreading of Islamic fundamentalists within Turkey. This backfired against Mustafa, by forcing Islam to go underground, the form of fundamentalism that manifested in Turkey was much harsher then the ones that existed before being banned by Kemal. Kemal trying to create a nation state , came upon a problem. The new state of Turkey was a heterogeneous one, composed of multi-ethnic groups, not a homogenous one of just pure ethnic Turks, as Mustafa Kemal proclaimed. The capitalization on a new found Turkish nationalist movement yielded a well tuned systematic campaign of obliterating the essence of the Kurdish within the boundaries of newly formed Turkey. Kemal abolished all of the, " Kurdish schools, associations, publications, religious fraternities, and medressehs (McDowell)." The Kurdish nation represented such a threat to the territorial integrity of Turkey that all people and names of places were forcibly Turkicized by the government. This was to become referred to as ethnic cleansing or genocide. Old archeological monuments and structure that proved the ancient history of Kurdish people in Anatolia were systematically destroyed. The words 'Kurds' and 'Kurdistan' were eradicated from all books and publications. Anything that would lead to a separate identity of the Kurdish people were eliminated in order yield the assimilation of the ethnically different Kurdish nation. Even the Kurdish language was banned, a fact unparalleled in history! No one in the state of Turkey was allowed to speak Kurdish, even though it was the language of thirty percent of the people. All Kurdish students were feed Turkish propaganda on the ethnic ancestry of the Kurdish people, they were taught that Kurds, were a pure 'Turkic race,' whereas in actuality the Kurds are ethnically Indo-Aryan, and the Turks are a mixture of Hun-Mongolian people. The Turkish education minister proclaimed that, the Kurds had forgotten their "Turkic" language in the fastness of the mountains of southeast Anatolia, thus referring to them as, "Mountain Turks.(Gunter)." The racist spoon feed propaganda of the Turkish educational institutions has reached to such a degree of reducibility, that it is often taught in the schools of Turkey, all the great Babylonian, Summerian, Egyptian, and Hittite civilizations had been created by the Turks(Kendal). In order to hide the fact that the Kurds had lived in Anatolia four thousand years before one Turk stepped in. The Turkish intelligentsia determined the Kurds came from Central Asia five thousands years ago. The situation deteriorated to the point where to state " I am a Kurd " was a crime so serious as to warrant the death penalty under Turkey's anti-terrorist laws(Kendal). All past measures were not enough in the eyes of the Kemalist government to destroy the remnants of five thousand years of Kurdish presence in Anatolia. After these and more repressive measures were taken out, the substantial Kurdish population began to revolt from the pressures unfairly exerted on them by the oppressive and violence prone state of Turkey. The early revolts were unorganized, lacked money, and poorly supplied. They lasted, on and off, a little over thirteen years. The retribution of the Turkish army was so extreme, they almost destroyed, looted, and burned the entire eastern portion of the country. Whole villages were either deported to Western Turkey to be assimilated or, if the government knew that the particular tribe or village were not going to be assimilated that easily, they just simply massacred them. much like the Nazi massacre of Jewish civilians(Morris). Throughout these

uncivilized methods of cruelty instituted by the Turkish governmental establishment, the savage Turkish government managed to massacre or deport one million, five hundred thousand Kurdish civilians (Kendal). The repression was so haneous that the entire Eastern section of the state of Turkey was prohibited to all foreigners and under martial law for almost thirty years, so as not to disciple to the west. In contrast to Western Turkey, the whole of Eastern Turkey was made into a military camp, and it has remained that way until today. The Turkish minister of justice made the relationship of Turks and Kurds clear:

I believe that the Turk must be the only lord, the only master of this country. Those who are not of pure Turkish stock (Kurds and Armenians) can have only one right in this country, the right to be servants and slaves (McDowell).

After Kemal's death, more successive and liberal minded regimes came to power. The 1960 coup by the army attempted to Turkicize the whole of the Kurdish region. Every single street, river, mountain, village, or city was given Turkish name to the very last detail. What little hope the Kurdish population had in the hope more or less disappears as the coup never really brought out fundamental change for the Kurdish people. The rights of the Kurds were still non-existent, the Kurdish language denied to them, and their culture still prohibited. The successive coups of 1971 and 1980 always tended to bring Kurdish freedom and self-expression to a halt. To justify a coup, the army would state that there was a planned Kurdish uprising. Nevertheless, throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Kurdish nationalism did emanate in the form of small underground publications and newspapers, but they were always instantaneously banned and the editors immediately apprehended and given lengthy jail terms. Throughout all the repression, the Kurds were able to participate in political life, although under forced Turkish identities(Gunter). Today the foreign minister of Turkey, Ardal Inunu, is a Kurd; as well as his father the late president Ismat Inunu, former presidents Fahrey Koruturk, and Cevdet Sunany, even the late president Turgut Ozal claimed Kurdish heritage(Gunter). The mother of all ironies, is that two people who made the bases of Turkish nationalism were Kurds, Ziya Gokalp and Ismet Inunu, who were born in the Kurdish cities of Diarbekr(Kendal). The amount of Kurdish people successfully assimilated into main stream Turkish society is so infinitesimal that over ninety-one percent of the Kurdish population doesn't even speak one word of Turkish(Kendal). Reporter, who have only recently been allowed to enter Eastern Turkey, are amazed at how, in this integral portion of Turkey no one speaks a word of Turkish.

During the uneasy times of the 1970s many left-wing pro-Kurdish groups manifested sporadically throughout the Turkish state. The 1980 coup put an end to many of these organizations and political parties. After the brutal policies of the military junta that took control of Turkey, may Kurds were put in prison and executed for "separatism" which would mean anything from guerrilla warfare to simply speaking Kurdish in public. During those times of extremism, even by Turkish standards, a group of socialist-Kurdish youth began to organize and formed a political party. Their simple selfless goal was to obtain the God given right of self-determination for the worthy Kurdish nation, which included out-right independence from the Turkish mainstream government. The main leader for this independence movement was a young political science student from the Kurdish city of Urfa, named Abdullah Ocalan or Apo (Kurdish for Uncle). This group of organizers were Marxist-Lenninst in ideology and adamantly stated that the Kurds and Turks were separate people and hence forth, the Turkish military force present in Kurdistan was a belligerent action of occupation of Kurdistan. The P.K.K (Party Kereykarey Kurdistan or Kurdistan Workers Party) also called for the abolishment of tribalism, feudalism, and the "slave-like dependence of women." A great amount of the P.K.K military force were female. The P.K.K also believed the only way to attain freedom and independence were through violence,

much like the American and French revolution of mid 1700s.

To conceive the P.K.K as completely leftist is untrue, they have adapted the Communist theme of ideology to counter-weight the Turkish entity as a NATO state, so it is safe to assume that the P.K.K has chosen the Marxist path by default. Similar to the American fore-fathers choosing a republic form of government to resist the British form of government, and France choosing a parliamentary form of government to overshadow the history of monarchical reign of France. This might seem to be absurd, but not when you see a "democratic" Turkey that espouses a contradictory nationalism and places signs everywhere in Kurdistan that says, " Proud is He who calls oneself a TURK" or " A TURK is worth the whole universe(Kendal)." So accordingly, underneath all the ideology and propaganda of the Cold War, what you essentially have is two combating nationalisms.

The 1980 coup mentioned earlier pretty much halted all of P.K.K's political activities and other similar left-wing organizations. But the P.K.K's political politburo immediately regrouped in Syria and Lebanon. With help from some neighboring countries, the P.K.K was able to launch small raids into Turkey in 1984. After the attacks grew in strength and number, the Turkish government became seriously alarmed. The P.K.K was as violent as it advertised, many times killing Kurds collaborating with the Turkish government. This didn't raise their popularity with the local populous. But, one thing they did accomplish was that no other party or group in Turkey ever did, was the recognition of a Kurdish problem in Turkey and a recognition of a Kurdish people in Turkey (Gunter). Thus, the Kurdish situation was brought out to the international arena for the whole world to witness the ever dynamic predicament in Northern Kurdistan. The Kurds went from "Mountain Turks" to a "Kurdish reality in Turkey." The Turkish army then extended martial law to thirteen provinces in Eastern Turkey. The Turkish army chief of staff admitted that "condition of war...exists in southeast Turkey(Smyth)."

The P.K.K then began to adopt a less hostile attitude towards the civilian population, realizing they can not operate without the help of the people. While the P.K.K ceased to attack civilians, the Turkish army's attitude towards Kurdish civilians took an even harsher tone. What happened in the days of Attaturk, were being implemented once again. It was like the situation was dormant for forty-five years, and once again it came back to live. Amnesty intentional reported the wholesale arrest and torture of Kurds in all parts of Turkey. The entire village of Sirnak, population 25,000, was demolished and it's inhabitants forced to flee(Pilger). In all the Turkish army has destroyed an estimated 1,700 Kurdish villages and towns(Montalbano). The P.K.K has successfully begun to infiltrate larger cities and organizing merchant strikes and mass protest against the Turkish government. The Turkish army and secret police reacted by covert assassinations and "death squads" that killed anyone that was even remotely linked to the P.K.K. These death squads have even killed journalists who have reported the Turkish atrocities in Northern Kurdistan. Turkey has the highest death rate for journalists in the world, even exceeding Bosnia and Tadjikistan. Many pro-Kurdish politicians and human rights activists have been killed, causing mass protest from the Kurdish population, even the protest control police open fire on unarmed civilian protesters, killing hundreds of men, women, seniors, and children indiscriminantly(Kendal). The state sanctioned DEP (People's Democratic Party), a legal political entity was forcibly closed down after their top political representatives were mysteriously assassinated, their newspaper affiliates (Ozgur Daily) bombed, and it's parliamentarians arrested. All of these went against the established Turkish constitutional laws. The lifting of Parliamentary immunity is a direct violation, but when it comes to using illegal laws against Kurdish civilians there are no limits.

Needless to say, the brutal and genocidal acts of the Turkish government have only fanned the flare of the Kurdish drive for independence. In some parts of Turkey, over ninety percent of the people support the P.K.K(Marks). When the

people see the government burning their houses, farms, and family members how can one really support the establishment? How can the people believe the government when they have publicly broken parliamentary laws by arresting Kurdish parliamentary members for speaking Kurdish? The people has two choices, the foreign occupiers or their sons, brothers, daughters, sisters, or fathers. In response to the "ethnic cleansing" and martial law, the Turkish government has also stationed over 450,000 troops in the area, backed by US made modern tanks, Apache helicopters, Super Cobra helicopters, F-16 fighter jets, and 50,000 elite contra-rebels in the Kurdish region. Many generals in the armed forces have openly talked about using chemical weapons on the Kurds (Turkey used chemical weapons on the Kurds in the 1930s, British used it in the 1920s, and Saddam Hussien used it in 1988) (Kendal).

Turkey has went as far as raiding Iraqi Kurdistan with the air planes given to them by the US. As recently as March 20, 1995, Turkey invaded Iraqi Kurdistan. They said the invasion was to search for and destroy the P.K.K, but in actuality the army couldn't fight the P.K.K. The 35,000 invading force did little more then destroying civilian villages, killing civilian Kurds, and ruining farm crops. UNHCR (United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees) reported that 10,000 Turkish Kurds, who escaped Turkey's systematic burning and destroying Kurdish villages were forcibly detained and forced to return to Turkey. The whereabouts of the refugees are unknown; knowing the Turkish track record, their hopes are dismal.

Abdullah Ocalan

It now appears that the P.K.K has ascertained itself as the voice of the Kurdish people, after seventy years of unrelenting oppression. The P.K.K's unequivocal insistence of independence is rebuffed by Ankara, who state that everyone in Turkey is equal and there are no room for minorities in Turkey. The army, an organization who operates independently from the political wing of Turkey, will not even placate a hint of even a form of diminutive local autonomy for the Kurdish people. The P.K.K is exhibiting, and for their part proving to the Kurdish masses that their violent way is the only avenue for any form of Kurdish independence. Since the creation of the irredentent Turkish state the Kurds have not received anything more then a tombstone with a forced Turkish surname. The P.K.K has given 15,000 martyrs in the span of eleven years (Marcus), the army has massacred more then 1,500,000 in the span of sixty years , more the 1,500 villages destroyed, every form of Kurdish identity denied, and their politicians and journalists killed by secret police. After all it is the US constitution that has written:

" When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.....whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter it, or to abolish it, and to institute a new government.."

It is the very example the United States has set, that the Kurdish people wants to declare their independence. For, the only thing different between the Kurdish revolution and the U.S one, is only two hundred and nine years. All oppressions are bad, all occupations are wrong, every nation has the right to decide their own fate.

