

APPROACH OF THE BA^ʿTH PARTY TO THE KURDISH QUESTION IN IRAQ AFTER 1968¹

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One of the landmarks in the history of modern Iraq is the coup or revolution of 17–30 July 1968. At that time several political forces in Iraq were dissatisfied with the regime's policy, as they felt that President ʿAbdarrahmān ʿĀrif was a weak leader who had allowed things to drift waywards. The unfulfilled promises to establish a democratic and humane political system angered many Iraqis. A group of *baʿthist* officers led by Brigadier Aḥmad Ḓasan al-Bakr (who had been Prime Minister of Iraq in the years 1963 – 1964) decided to topple the regime. They returned to power by accomplishing two coups, one on 17 July and the other on 30 July 1968. In both instances, they prevailed by stratagem rather than through force.² In the first instance they deposed the president by allying themselves with his closest aides. In the second the *baʿthists* got rid of their inconvenient temporary allies. The victorious Socialist Party of Arab Resurrection (Ḥizb al-baʿth al-arabī al-ishtirākī), commonly the Ba^ʿth Party, created a Revolutionary Command Council under the chairmanship of Aḥmad Ḓasan al-Bakr. The RCC assumed unlimited power in the country. Ṣaddām Ḥusayn at-Tikrītī became its Vice Chairman.³

Key words: The coups of 17 and 30 July 1968; the Ba^ʿth Party in power again; pressing need to solve satisfactorily the Kurdish problem in Iraq; the Manifesto of 11 March 1970; the Charter of Patriotic Action; the Kurdish uprising; the Agreement of Algiers.

The Ba^ʿth Party and the Kurds have known each other only too well.

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² BATATU, H. *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq. A Study of Iraq's Old Landed and Commercial Classes and of its Communists, Ba'thists and Free Officers*, p. 1073.

³ ISKANDAR, Amīr. *Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, munāḏilan wa mufakkiran wa insānan* [Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, the Fighter, the Thinker, and the Man], pp. 115–119.

Theoretically, the Baʿth Party from the beginning has considered the Iraqi Kurdistan to be an integral part of the Arab world, and therefore took the view that Kurdish self-determination is impossible because it is contrary to its claim. The founder and ideologist of the Baʿth Party Michel ʿAflaq was already aware of the danger that the Arab nationalists may face when they were suppressing non-Arab minorities. For him the socialist dimension of the *Baʿthist* ideology dampened the ethnic exclusivity. In 1955, he expressed a clear view of the attitude towards national and religious minorities: “When we look at ethnic minorities, such as the Kurds, we are asking, why do Kurds or part of them fear the arabdom (al-ʿurūba)? This fear is more part of imperialist propaganda over the past fifty years, since the British and the French came to the Arab East. After all the Kurds lived for centuries along with the Arabs, and heroically defended the Arab land. And what else want the Kurdish part of the people and what are they longing for than to live a happy and worthy life and to have the same rights as others and the same duties, except for some clan leaders (az-zuʿamāʾ), whom suits the feudal relations. These people (the Kurds) do not want anything more than Arabs want.”⁴

After the coup a governmental committee prepared the first Provisional Constitution which was issued on 21 September 1968. It provided for a parliamentary form of government, but the legislative and executive powers were temporarily entrusted to the Revolutionary Command Council (Majlis qiyādat ath-thawra) until parliament was elected.⁵ One of the Baʿth Party’s declared goals was to “resolve the Kurdish question in a peaceful way”. This decision was not based on the fundamental recognition of Kurdish rights but on the need to consolidate its own position.⁶ The real power in the country was under the control of the Baʿth Party through the RCC. However, the Party wanted to instigate the illusion of a broader representation of government to prevent any possible threat to its position by the Kurds and Communists. That’s why it tried to convince them to create a patriotic government (ḥukūma waṭanīya) where the Baʿth Party would play a decisive role. At the same time, it sought to increase its popularity by announcing broad social and economic reforms, e.g. the adoption of the Agrarian Reform Law,⁷ and the promotion of a seemingly progressive anti-imperialist policy, therefore attacking imperialism

⁴ ʿAFLAQ, M. *Fī sabīl al-Baʿth* [For the Cause of the Baʿth], p. 174.

⁵ The Provisional Constitution was several times amended, in the years 1970, 1973 and 1974. In KHADDURI, M. *Socialist Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics since 1968*, pp. 32–33.

⁶ GHAREEB, E. *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, p. 73.

⁷ BATATU, H. *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq*, pp. 1094–1095.

and Zionism and supported the leftist forces in other Arab countries. With the Kurds the Ba^ʿth Party was doing somewhat better than with the Communists, but this cooperation was not without conflicts either.

Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī did not reject the Ba^ʿth Party's proposals outright, but he insisted that cooperation would depend on whether the party ceased to support the faction of Ibrāhīm Aḥmad and Jalāl aṭ-Ṭālabānī. As the Ba^ʿth Party did not comply, Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī withdrew his representative from the government and, disgusted, halted his relations with it under the true justification that the party was merely trying to buy time until it consolidated its regime. Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī used also other means to show that the regime needed his cooperation. From autumn 1968, several clashes occurred between his units and the forces of leftist Kurdish leaders Ibrāhīm Aḥmad and Jalāl aṭ-Ṭālabānī. On most of these occasions Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī proved his greater skill as well as numerical superiority. In principle he refused to cooperate with the Ba^ʿth Party as it allied itself with his Kurdish opponents.⁸

Not only the Communist Party of Iraq (*al-Ḥizb ash-shuyūʿī al-ʿIrāqī*), but also the various factions of the Kurdish movement approached the Ba^ʿth Party with suspicion. As early as 1963 the Kurds were willing to co-operate with the Ba^ʿth Party and stopped their armed actions to give its attempt to overthrow the regime of ʿAbdalkarīm Qāsim greater chance to succeed.⁹ It is understandable that after the successful coup of 8 February 1963 the victorious *Baʿthists* and pan-Arabists were not eager to grant autonomy to the Kurds, and therefore the leaders of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (*al-Ḥizb ad-dīmuqrāṭī al-Kurdistānī*) soon broke up the cooperation. This led, from the summer of 1963, to armed clashes not only between the Iraqi army and troops of the KDP, but also among the various Kurdish factions. The victory of the Kurdish units under the command of Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī over the Iraqi army in May 1966 forced the government to a change of policy that culminated on 29 June with a 12-point offer to the Kurds, which became known as the Bazzāz Declaration.¹⁰ The declaration fulfilled nearly all Kurdish demands, recognized Kurdish nationality within Iraq, promised decentralization with freely elected administrative and proportional representation of the Kurds in central government. It also recognized Kurdish as an official language and undertook to establish a

⁸ McDOWAL, D. *A Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 325.

⁹ JAWAD, Saʿad. *Iraq and the Kurdish Question 1958–1970*, pp. 110–111.

¹⁰ The Iraqi Prime Minister ʿAbdarraḥmān al-Bazzāz on 29 June 1966 in a public declaration broadcast the Government's programme for a settlement of the Kurdish question. On the next day muḥallā Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī accepted the offer. In KHADDURI, M. *Republican Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics since the Revolution of 1958*, pp. 273–276.

parliamentary system of government within a year.¹¹ However, the army command disapproved the promises, so the tension, interrupted occasionally by fighting, lasted until the change of the regime in July 1968.

In the Kurdish movement itself, for some time there grew a polarization where the divisive line went through both class and social questions. On the one hand, there were adherents of Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī, the traditional feudal representative of the Kurdish tribes (the right), and on the other were the left-wing streams in the Kurdish movement, whose representatives were Ibrāhīm Aḥmad and Jalāl aṭ-Ṭālabānī. The Ba^ʿthist regime was closer to the left-wing forces in the Kurdish movement, but the regime leaders were aware of the need to negotiate with Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī, whose position was significantly stronger. With the intention of pushing the faction of Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī into the background, the government turned to the faction with a socialist ideology that showed willingness to co-operate with it.¹² The government presumed that by taking this step it would push Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī and his Kurdistan Democratic Party out of the main, central position in the Kurdish movement, and as early as during the ʿAbdalkarīm Qāsim regime it warned the loyal Iraqi Kurds to avoid misleading appeals to separatism, secession and the following of dubious leaders.¹³ It could be expected, that Ibrāhīm Aḥmad and Jalāl aṭ-Ṭālabānī would welcome the new regime, because ideologically they were much closer to the Ba^ʿth Party than to other groupings in the past, and they also had socialist as well as nationalist principles. It could also be a good opportunity to replace the autocratic feudal lord Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī in the position of chief representative of the Kurdish struggle for emancipation.

Ibrāhīm Aḥmad and Jalāl aṭ-Ṭālabānī received a government contribution for their own militia, and in Baghdad they could publish their own magazine *an-Nūr* (The Light), in which they presented their views. There appeared articles stating the Ba^ʿth Party was the first ruling Arab political party that sincerely gave hand to the Kurdish people and the first to recognize its national rights.¹⁴ Both Kurdish leaders supported the Party's policy but, in return, they expected concessions to expand their own credibility between the Kurds. Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī described both Kurdish leaders as "agents of everyone who pays", which was strange when looking at his own relations with the regimes of

¹¹ SOLOMON, G. "The Kurdish national struggle in Iraq". Quoted in JAWAD, Sa'ad. *Iraq and the Kurdish Question 1958 – 1970*, p. 198.

¹² McDOWAL, D. *A Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 325.

¹³ Al-Jabha al-waṭaniya: Bajān ḥawla at-ṭaṭawwūrāt al-akhīra fī shimāl al-ʿIrāq [The Patriotic Front: Statement on the latest developments in Northern Iraq, September 1961]. In *Niḍāl al-ba^ʿth* [The Struggle of the Ba^ʿth. Documentary record], p. 147.

¹⁴ GHAREEB, E. *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, p. 75.

°Abdalkarīm Qāsim and the brothers °Abdassalām and °Abdarrahmān °Ārif. Both sides in fact sought the government's confirmation to strengthen their authority within Kurdistan, just as their tribal predecessors did.

Iran's relations with Iraq worsened rapidly since the new government came to power. Iranian Shah took seriously the socialist and Arab nationalist rhetoric, and the efforts of the Iraqi regime to improve relations with the USSR were also added. Shah, after the United Kingdom announced the withdrawal of its forces from the Gulf region in 1971, had been trying hard – with the support of the United States – to achieve the regional hegemony of Iran, what he in January 1969 demonstrated by putting forward a claim on Bahrain. In addition, with regard to Iraq, in February 1969 he decided to reopen the question of correcting the common borders, especially in the Shaṭṭ al-°Arab River.¹⁵ This, on the other hand, rose in the Ba°th Party concerns of another Kurdish war. The Party was well aware that Iran was supplying the Kurdish units of Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī with cannons and other modern weapons.

The Ba°th Party, hoping that it could succeed in weakening the support that Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī was enjoying among the Kurdish population, was forced to return to the Bazzāz Declaration, promising the Kurds in Iraq autonomous status. The Party reacted to the unfavourable development of the events by calling a 7th regional congress, which began in November 1968, but was interrupted and postponed for negotiations with the Kurds continuing at the beginning of 1969. Several new principles were adopted on the Kurdish issue in the light of what the RCC had decided in February 1969, to: 1. Recognize the existence of a Kurdish nation; 2. Establish a new university in as-Sulaymānīya and Kurdish Academy of Sciences; 3. Recognize the language and cultural rights of the Kurdish people and create an administrative framework for the development of Kurdish culture; 4. Introduce Kurdish as a language of instruction for all types of schools, including military and police; 5. Allow Kurdish writers and poets to establish their own union and to publish their works; 6. Increase the number of Kurdish TV programmes and build up a television broadcast station in Kirkūk; 7. Grant general amnesty for all those involved in violence in the north.¹⁶

This development spurred Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī to exert pressure on the government, exploiting the sharp deterioration of Iran-Iraq relations. In March 1969, his troops attacked oil installations in Kirkūk, which for a time paralyzed the oil production of the country. The government in Baghdad reacted in the summer of 1969 by the launching of a military campaign against Kurdistan, but

¹⁵ MARR, Ph. *The Modern History of Iraq*, p. 221.

¹⁶ VANLY, I. Sh. Kurdistan in Iraq. In CHALIAND, G. (ed.). *A People without a Country. The Kurds and Kurdistan*, p. 153.

President Aḥmad Ḥasan al-Bakr, who wanted to appear as a “Father of the Nation”, soon sent emissaries to Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī for secret talks. In the negotiations leading to an agreement, both sides modified two other issues that had not been included in the Bazzāz Declaration. The first stated that the transitional period during which the individual (single) provisions of the agreement were to bring into force should not exceed four years, and that the autonomous Kurdish territory should be declared on 11 March 1974 at the latest. The second issue concerned the census that was to be held in the coming year, that is, until 11 March 1971, and based on its results, specific provisions were to be made.¹⁷

Shortly after the negotiations that began in January, in March 1970, mullā Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī concluded with the Iraqi regime an agreement that pointed back to the promises of the Iraqi government of June 1966 concerning the solution of the Kurdish question, which would give the Kurds extensive national rights,¹⁸ of which the Kurds in Turkey and Iran could only dream of. Unity in the Kurdish ranks was further strengthened by the decision of the Kurdish Revolutionary Party to merge with the Kurdistan Democratic Party led by Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī, and on the 17th of July 1970, an amended Provisional or Interim Constitution (the fourth since 1958) was published, which included most of the points from the March 1970 settlement, but one promised article of the Manifesto did not appear.¹⁹ The Kurds were instructed by the Supreme Committee for Kurdish Affairs to put down their weapons in August.

The fifteen-point peace plan, called the Manifesto of 11 March, which, in agreement with the Kurdish leaders announced the RCC, and was the most important event for the year 1970 in Iraq. The plan envisaged: 1. That the Kurds would take part in the rule; 2. That areas inhabited by the Kurdish majority would be administrated by their representatives; 3. That in these areas the Kurdish language would be besides Arabic the second official language; 4. That the planned development of Kurdish areas would begin and that the Temporary Constitution would contain Kurdish rights as well. The Kurdish New Year “Nawrūz” was declared a national holiday and the Kurds were granted the right to cultivate their nationality. Even an “Office for Affairs of the North” had been set up, directly subordinate to the government. There was a reorganization of the Iraqi government that included five Kurdish ministers, all nominated by the

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 156.

¹⁸ SLUGLETT, M. F., SLUGLETT, P. *Iraq since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*, p. 131.

¹⁹ Article 10: ... “The Kurdish language, beside the Arabic language, shall be an official language in the Kurdish area”. In KHADDURI, M. *Socialist Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics since 1968*. Appendix C, pp. 238–239.

Kurdistan Democratic Party to become a partner of the Baʿth Party.²⁰ Its leadership hoped that by implementing these measures it would be able to weaken the position of Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī.

The agreement was generally warmly welcomed by the Kurdish as well as the Arabic community, and the struggles immediately ceased. The war had been very costly for Iraq, and it severely undermined state development programmes. The agreement with the Kurds, although not entirely satisfactory, introduced an element of stability into Iraqi life and allowed many reforms to start. In October 1970, the state of emergency was abolished, which had lasted almost continuously since the fall of the monarchy in 1958. Many political prisoners, including former ministers, were released. At the end of 1970, censorship on postal services was lifted, which had lasted more than 13 years, and a month later censorship on foreign correspondents' telegrams, which had lasted for just as long, ended. On the other hand, the army entered the sphere of politics, when it was decreed that only members of the Baʿth Party could serve in the armed forces, while membership within another party was punishable by death.²¹ The biggest issue was the Baʿth Party's reluctance to share power. In practice, it looked as though the five Kurdish ministers had no decision-making authority; everything was decided in advance in the RCC. The Kurdistan Democratic Party expected to overcome this situation hoping that things would get on the right track over time. However, it could not ignore the fact that Arabization continued throughout the transition period, not only in Kirkūk and its surroundings, but also in other areas inhabited by the Kurds.

The agreement of the Baʿth Party with the Kurds was based on a sense of uncertainty, while the Kurds were concerned with the meeting of their basic requirements. However, the agreement did not succeed for several reasons, of which the main reason was the government's interest to centralize its power. The promise of autonomy was a temporary manoeuvre to gain time until the regime gained enough power to promote its direct rule. In the Baʿth Party a considerable ideological disagreement with the approach to greater concessions to the Kurds dominated the discourse. On the other hand in the Kurdistan Democratic Party, they did not realize that its contacts with Iran, Israel and the United States had caused in Baghdad a feeling of betrayal. With regard to oil reserves, both sides had focused on the fate of Kirkūk, and it was a matter in which none of the parties would show any flexibility.²²

²⁰ VANLY, I. Sh. Kurdistan in Iraq. In CHALIAND, G. (ed.). *A People without a Country. The Kurds and Kurdistan*, p. 155.

²¹ ABURISH, S. K. *Saddam Hussein. The Politics of Revenge*, p. 91.

²² McDOWAL, D. *A Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 323.

Arab-majority relations with the Kurdish minority gradually worsened when it turned out that the government was in essence just trying to buy time and was not seriously interested in introducing Kurdish autonomy. Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī wanted to push through Kirkūk to become the capital of the Kurdish autonomous region, not Arbīl as determined by the government. Mutual tension culminated in early December 1970 in Baghdad, with an unsuccessful attempted assassination of Idrīs, son of Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī.²³ The government, despite complaints and protests from the Kurdish side, boycotted the census out of the fear that it would appear that there the Kurds were in the majority.²⁴

The tense atmosphere continued throughout 1971, accompanied by an outward-looking fair and friendly relationship, which continued even after the dramatic failure of the attempted assassination of Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī himself, in September 1971. The assassination was allegedly planned by the ruthless Nāẓim Kazzār,²⁵ and it happened at the time when he enjoyed full support and protection of Ṣaddām Ḥusayn.²⁶ In May 1971 Ṣaddām Ḥusayn took over the chairmanship of the Supreme Committee for Kurdish affairs, allegedly trying to speed up the issue, and possibly in view of the critical crisis in Iraqi-Iranian relations, when it was good for Iraq to have Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī stronger on its side. The Kurds began to complain of inadmissible delaying of the agreed measures because the regime fulfilled only the less significant commitments adopted in the Manifesto of 11 March: meetings of the Supreme Committee for Kurdish affairs and other friendly high-level meetings were held, Kurdish textbooks were published and the Iraqi constitution was supplemented with some provisions stating that the people of Iraq consisted of two major nationalities, Arabs and Kurds. Moreover, Kurdish became an official language in the Kurdish autonomous territories, where the Kurdish population was in the majority. But the Kurdish leader was never convinced of the assurances of the *Baʿthists* and their sincerity. The growing aggressiveness of Iran and its clear intention to act – after the withdrawal of the British from the Persian Gulf at the end of 1971 – as the extended hand of the United States, led him to the

²³ GHAREEB, E. *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, p. 109.

²⁴ Le Monde, 25 May 1971. Quoted in SLUGLETT, M. F., SLUGLETT, P. *Iraq since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*, p. 164.

²⁵ Nāẓim Kazzār, an Arab of humble origin from the shīʿī community and the son of a policeman. He had come to Baghdad from the south, studied at the Technological Institute and joined the Baʿth Party in 1959. He took an active part in the massacre of Communists in 1963. In 1969 was appointed chief of the Security Police. In KHADDURI, M. *Socialist Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics since 1968*, p. 63.

²⁶ GHAREEB, E. *The Kurdish Question in Iraq*, p. 108.

conclusion that a closer alliance with Tehran would give him more certainty than vague and insufficient assurances provided by Baghdad.²⁷

Reports and evidence of riots multiplied both in Kurdistan and in the government itself. In 1971, the power struggle that had taken place since 1969 between two high-ranking *Ba'athist* officials, Generals Šālīḥ Maḥdī ʿAmmāsh and Ḥardān ʿAbdalghaffār at-Tikrītī, intensified massively. The struggle ended by the intervention of the president and removal of both men from political life.²⁸ However, tension in the leadership of the party and the country did not slacken. The Kurdish request for participation in the RCC was rejected and on 28 September 1971 an unsuccessful attempt was made to assassinate Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī.²⁹ In November 1971, the regime changed tactics and pretended to have serious interest in establishing an alliance with the Communist Party of Iraq.

At the end of 1971, the time had not yet come to the final rupture with the Kurds, and the Charter of Patriotic Action (*Mithāq al-ʿamal al-waṭanī*) proclaimed by the regime in mid-November was probably another attempt to get the widest support for the regime. The Charter reiterated the main points of the Manifesto of 11 March on Kurdish Autonomy, advocating the reorganization of the state's economy with the aim of freeing it from foreign dependence, and develop relations with "friendly socialist countries". It announced the state's responsibility for managing the economy and stressed that the aim of the revolution would be to "liberate the country's oil wealth from foreign domination and exploitation". The Charter also emphasized the necessity for the Ba'ṯh Party to work in alliance with all national, patriotic and progressive forces in Iraq.³⁰

There were good reasons for issuing the Charter of Patriotic Action. In the autumn of 1971, the regime found itself threatened from more than one side at once. First of all, there was a long-standing dispute with Iran over the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab River and other sections of the common border. This controversy has gained new tremendous proportions due to the departure of Britain from the Gulf region and the ongoing formation of the United Arab Emirates, but also

²⁷ SLUGLETT, M. F., SLUGLETT, P. *Iraq since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*, p. 165.

²⁸ MARR, Ph. *The Modern History of Iraq*, pp. 215–216.

²⁹ NAKDIMON, Sh. *A Hopeless Hope* (Arab translation under the title: *The Mossad in Iraq and in the surrounding States*), pp. 258–259.

³⁰ The Charter of Patriotic Action, proclaimed by President Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr on 15 November 1971. In KHADDURI, M. *Socialist Iraq. A Study in Iraqi Politics since 1968*. Appendix B, pp. 199–229.

the unexpected increase in US military supplies to Iran.³¹ The Saudis and most new rulers in the Gulf countries, with suspicion and fears, speculated on a number of possible next steps of the Iraqi regime. The Syrians considered the Iraqi *Baʿthists* as revisionists, the Jordanians, even though they did not represent a particularly relevant force of concern, noted Iraq's radical views on the Palestinian issue, and relations with Egypt also worsened. Iran, on 30 November 1971, occupied the three strategic islands in the Hormuz Straits, and the disagreements between Iran and Iraq ended on 1 December 1971 with the interruption of diplomatic relations.³²

Economic independence, aside from political independence, was central to the regime and therefore it paid increased attention to the development of agriculture and industry in order to reduce the state's dependence on oil revenues. However, the oil wealth and its exploitation was not necessarily set to one side. Already in 1969, an understanding had been reached with the USSR on the use of oil resources by the Iraqi state, and the leadership of the Baʿth Party in 1970 began to consider the nationalization of the oil wealth of the country. As far as Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī was concerned, he changed his political orientation when he in early 1970 decided to replace Soviet help and support for American.

As part of the implementation of the *Baʿthist* programme, Iraq signed on 9 April 1972 with the USSR an Agreement of friendship and cooperation for 15 years.³³ Strengthened in this way, Iraq in the same year, after several months of negotiations adopted a popular measure: on 1 June a decree on the nationalization of oil was published.³⁴ This move marked a significant shift in Iraq's path to economic independence. Nationalization concerned mainly the Iraq Petroleum Company.³⁵ By this measure the Baʿth Party gained tremendous support in society, because this step was considered a victory for the Iraqi people. Following the Arab-Israeli war in October 1973, the Iraqi government

³¹ RUBIN, B. *Paved with Good Intentions: The American Experience and Iran*, s. 125–135.

³² NAKDIMON, Sh. *A Hopeless Hope*, p. 262.

³³ *Dějiny zahraniční politiky SSSR* [History of the Foreign Policy of the USSR]. Vol. II, 1945 – 1976, p. 636.

³⁴ AḤMAD, Ibrāhīm Khalīl, ḤUMAJDĪ, Jaʿfar ʿAbbās. *Tārīkh al-ʿIrāq al-muʿāṣir* [Contemporary History of Iraq], p. 250.

³⁵ PENROSE, E., PENROSE, E. F. *Iraq: International Relations and National Development*, p. 409.

also nationalized US and Dutch shares in the British Petroleum Company, any by December 1975 it also took over the remaining shares.³⁶

The nationalization of oil could not have come for Iraq at a more appropriate time. The remarkable rise in oil prices since the Arab-Israeli war in 1973 also produced a remarkable increase of state revenues and expenditures, which further strengthened the position of the regime and its economic power. In the period of 1972 – 1974, oil revenues increased tenfold, from 575 million to 5.7 billion US dollars. The state spent huge sums on social and infrastructural projects and increased wages and salaries, which, together with the new job opportunities generated by this economic growth, helped to bring about a significant improvement in the standard of living of the working people.³⁷ It should be added that the leadership of the Baʿth Party had the state's revenue fully in their hands and was not obliged to be accountable to anybody. The increase in oil revenues automatically increased the independence of the state towards society.³⁸

During 1972, probably due to increased preoccupation with foreign affairs, disagreements in government were less visible. On the other hand, clashes with the Kurds were more frequent, and the Iraqi Security Service organized another plot to murder Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī, which on 15 July 1972 ended without success.³⁹ Deteriorating relations with the Kurds threatened that the Kurdistan Democratic Party would revive the civil war. One of the main Kurdish objections was that the census agreed in 1970 had not yet taken place. Both sides met to discuss their disagreements. However, while the Kurdish side emphasized the provisions of the Manifesto of 11 March which had not been met, the Baʿth Party repeatedly pointed out various development projects carried out in the Kurdish areas. In December 1972, when reports emerged that the oppositional faction in the Kurdistan Democratic Party wanted to split off and set up its own party, contradictions in the Kurdish ranks sharpened.

Soon it turned out that the Manifesto of 11 March was nothing but a ploy of the Baʿth Party, that wanted to take the time to redraft its Kurdish policy to its advantage. The biggest obstacle during the negotiations that followed, which continued until 1974, was the question of Kirkūk, where a third of Iraqi oil was

³⁶ STEVENS, P. Iraqi Oil Policy: 1961 – 1976. In NIBLOCK, T. (ed.). *Iraq: The Contemporary State*, p. 183.

³⁷ WHITTLETON, C. Oil and the Iraqi Economy. In CARDRI (Committee Against Repression and for Democratic Rights in Iraq). *Saddam's Iraq. Revolution or Reaction*, pp. 64–66.

³⁸ SLUGLETT, M. F., SLUGLETT, P. *Iraq since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*, p. 230.

³⁹ NAKDIMON, Sh. *A Hopeless Hope*, p. 268.

exploited, on whether it was to be incorporated into the Kurdish autonomous territory. The Kurdistan Democratic Party argued that in Kirkūk the Kurds represented the majority of the population and therefore had to be a part of Kurdistan.⁴⁰ The Iraqi government denied it, but refused to do the census demanded by the Kurdish side. By pushing an “anti-imperialist” policy the *Ba^ʿthists* in the summer of 1973 finally persuaded the Communist Party of Iraq to join them in the given situation and to create together a Progressive Patriotic and National Front,⁴¹ but the Kurdistan Democratic Party refused to join the Front and this increased the need for the regime to form a temporary alliance with the Communists.

Under the agreement between the Iraqi regime and the Kurds in March 1970, the final date for initiation of the provisions of the Manifesto of 11 March was 11 March 1974. At the end of the set deadline Ṣaddām Ḥusayn, the Vice-President of the RCC and the “strong man” of the regime, declared the recognition of the Kurdish autonomy. Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī and his Kurdistan Democratic Party felt that the regime’s offer did not meet their demands for full participation in the government, which included membership in the RCC as well. A few Kurds belonging to the Kurdish Revolutionary Party of °Abdassattār Sharīf welcomed the proposals of the regime, but Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī and his units – *peshmergas* (those facing death) – came up against armed resistance in northern Iraq. In April 1974, the Iraqi government removed five Kurdish ministers known for their support to Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī and replaced them with five others who supported the government’s plan to provide Kurdistan with some degree of autonomy. Later in April, the Iraqi government appointed the Kurd Ṭāhā Muḥyiddīn Ma^ʿrūf as Vice President of Iraq, but considering that he was a long-time supporter of the Baghdad government, it seemed unlikely to satisfy the Kurds from the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

When on 11 March 1974 the Law of Autonomy was adopted, Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī was given a two-week term to join the Progressive Patriotic and National Front. However, the Kurds saw that the promises made by the Ba^ʿth Party on the matter of autonomy stipulated in the Manifesto were not fulfilled, so in April an armed conflict broke out between Kurdish militia and Iraqi troops.⁴² Muṣṭafā al-Bārzanī had an army consisting of about 50,000 trained *peshmergas* and the same number of men in irregular units, but they lacked heavy weapons. Baghdad sent against the rebellious Kurds around 90,000

⁴⁰ McDOWAL, D. *A Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 335.

⁴¹ In Arabic *al-Jabha al-waṭaniyya wa al-qawmiyya at-taqaddumiyya*. In °ABDALKARĪM, S. *Aḍwā’ °alā al-ḥaraka ash-shuyūʿiyya fī al-°Irāq* [The Lights on the Communist Movement in Iraq], p. 151.

⁴² AL-KHALIL, S. *Republic of Fear. The Politics of Modern Iraq*, p. 316.

soldiers with 1,200 tanks and armoured vehicles and 200 aircraft.⁴³ The Kurds were supported by Iranian Shah who treated the radical left-wing rhetoric of the *Ba'athists* seriously and was gravely concerned about the growing Soviet influence in the region. The troops of the Kurdistan Democratic Party became, with Iranian support, a serious enemy, and the Iraqi army failed to defeat them.⁴⁴ On the home front the Ba'ath Party made capital out of the fact that the Kurds were supported by Iranian Shah and pretended that it had become the victim of an imperialistic conspiracy planned by the West and its agents. In this campaign the Ba'ath Party was supported by the Iraqi Communists.⁴⁵

In August 1974, the Kurdish war reached a new level of intensity. The government in Baghdad dispatched against *peshmergas* a large military force armed with tanks, artillery and bomber aviation. About 130,000 Kurds, mostly women, children and the elderly, found shelter in Iran. The *peshmergas* were able to continue resisting the Iraqi army only with weapons and other supplies from Iran. The conflict ended in a stalemate, a well-known outcome from other previous armed clashes between the regime and the Kurds. Moreover, the Ba'ath Party was absorbed in internal intrigues and a power struggle and therefore had an eminent interest in "resolving" the Kurdish problem as soon as possible.⁴⁶ In October 1974, King Ḥusayn of Jordan arranged a meeting between officials of Iraq and Iran. It took place during the OPEC summit conference in Algiers in March 1975, paving the way for the signing of an agreement between the two states.⁴⁷

In Algiers, on 6 March 1975, at the OPEC conference was concluded the Agreement of Algiers to stop "subversive infiltration" and both countries also agreed to end the border disputes between them. In a short time, Iran withdrew its heavy artillery and closed its borders, so the Kurds could not regroup their forces or attack the Iraqis from the Iranian territory and the Kurdish uprising collapsed. Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī felt he could not continue fighting without Iranian help and fled to Tehran. The armistice began on 13 March 1975 and a series of amnesties given to the Kurds, who fled to Iran, caused most of them to return to Iraq. Kurdish resistance collapsed; Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī had to leave the country. He left in exile and died in 1979 in the United States. In the fall of

⁴³ McDOWAL, D. *A Modern History of the Kurds*, p. 337.

⁴⁴ KUTCHÉRA, Ch. *Le Mouvement Nationale Kurde*, p. 305.

⁴⁵ ABDALKARĪM, S. *Aḍwā' alā al-ḥaraka ash-shuyū'īya fī al-ʿIrāq* [The Lights on the Communist Movement in Iraq], p. 179.

⁴⁶ SLUGLETT, M. F., SLUGLETT, P. *Iraq since 1958. From Revolution to Dictatorship*, p. 169.

⁴⁷ AL-KHALIL, S. *Republic of Fear. The Politics of Modern Iraq*, p. 24; KUTCHÉRA, Ch. *Le Mouvement Nationale Kurde*, pp. 322–323.

1978, at the request of the Shah, Baghdad had to expel from Iraq āyatallāh Khumaynī (Khomeini), who spent last 15 years as an exile in the sacred city of an-Najaf in Iraq.⁴⁸

The Agreement of Algiers meant the settlement of the Kurdish problem in Iraq under the terms of the Ba'ṯh Party, as well as the adjustment of border disputes between Iran and Iraq that dragged on since the 1930s and spoiled the mutual relations. The agreement renewed the border between the two states in the thalweg of the Shatt al-ʿArab River and fairly divided this waterway. Afterwards the Ba'ṯh Party adopted against the Kurds even harder position.

The Ba'ṯh Party by “solving” the Kurdish problem no longer needed the Communists and turned against them as well. Muṣṭafā al-Bārzānī made the biggest mistake when he believed that the outside forces, the United States and Iran, would help him to defeat the Iraqi regime, whereas they used him for their own ends. He did not realize that the Iraqi army became strong enough to beat him in the fight. It can be seen that the period of 1968 – 1975 was marked not only by the cruel defeat of the Kurds, but also by a massive redeployment of the Kurdish population. The Kurds in Iraq found themselves in a situation that was very far from the promised autonomy.

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⁴⁸ KARSH, E., RAUTSI, I. *Saddām Husajn. Politická biografie* [Saddām Ḥusayn. Political Biography], pp. 150–151.

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