

# Iran brings in tanks to force Kurdish surrender

From Liz Thurgood in Tehran

Kurdish rebels were reported on Tuesday as columns of the Iranian military moved closer to Mahabad, the small town which is the stronghold of Kurdish rebels who demand autonomy.

In an interview with the State radio yesterday, the Joint Chief of Staff announced that the Army would enter Mahabad to "establish security" and arrest the Kurdish leaders. Major-General Mohammad Hossein Shaker gave no timetable for the entry, but, according to the Government news agency, Pars, yesterday, the Iranian military has moved to within miles of the town with tanks and heavy artillery.

The general's remarks, basically conciliatory in tone, were in sharp contrast to an earlier statement issued by the 64th Division, based at Urmieh (Rezaieh under the Shah), that it may be forced to use air and ground attacks to "flatten and destroy Kurdish hiding places." Two rebels were reported executed Wednesday after summary trials in the western town of Zanjan.

The tightening of the military noose around Mahabad followed the release of details on Wednesday of the Government's proposals to end the four-day standoff. In return for allowing the armed forces to enter the town, the Kurds would be granted certain concessions including the conversion of a military garrison into a university faculty and the

right to set up their own revolutionary forces at a later date.

The details were announced as terms of an agreement reached between Government officials and a five-man Kurdish team which visited Tehran to negotiate a settlement to fighting in the western province for the past six months.

But a member of the Kurdish team has denied that an agreement was reached. He told the local press that the purported agreement was simply the text of Government demands laid before the Kurds and was shown to Ayatollah Khomeini at an earlier meeting with the negotiators.

Observers suspected there was a considerable amount of bombast behind the political manoeuvring. Despite a series of warnings from Ayatollah Khomeini, the military was not believed to be keen for another confrontation with the stubborn tribal warriors, particularly while soldiers are facing firing squads for crimes committed against the Iranian people under the Shah's regime.

The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) rejected a call from Ayatollah Khomeini to surrender. A senior official said: "We have decided to defend ourselves and we will fight." But the Kurds are on record as saying they couldn't hope to control the towns and villages. The mountainous area close to the Iraqi border is seen by observers as a more natural terrain from which to register their demands for autonomy.

The leader of the outlawed KDP, Dr Abdur Ghassemlou, reportedly admitted as much earlier this week. He told a visitor: "We are preparing for a long war," and said that Kurdish strategy (to inflict heavy casualties on the Iranian armed forces as possible) had not yet met with success.

Iran yesterday defended its expulsion of foreign correspondent and warned that any journalist operating without official accreditation would be considered a spy. Commenting on the expulsion of seven journalists, most of whom were accused of distorting facts during the past two months, an official at the Ministry of National Guidance, Dr Ali Behradnia, said that Iran would be better served if the foreign media employed Iranians to transmit the news. Foreign correspondents, he added, sought to magnify sensational news in order to make profits.

Reuter adds from Ankara: The Turkish Prime Minister, Mr Bulent Ecevit, yesterday denied that Turkish Kurds were fighting alongside Iranian Kurds and that Turkey would not allow Iranian troops to cross its border to encircle Kurdish guerrillas.

Mr Ecevit, responding to criticism from two Kurdish members of the Turkish Parliament, said that 88 Iranian soldiers were allowed to cross into Turkey last month but purely for humanitarian reasons because they had been trapped by guerrillas on the Iranian side.



REVOLUTIONARY art has appeared on the walls and pavements of Tehran since the February Revolution saw the overthrow of the Shah. These undoubtedly unauthorised portrayals of Ayatollah Khomeini appear to draw heavily on Christian religious symbolism rather than on any traditional Islamic or Iranian school. The enthusiasm of the painters, however, is not matched by that of the customers or the street corner



sellers and the best collections are now available mostly in the stately Shia Muslim strongholds such as South Tehran, where Ayatollah Khomeini is adored. Some of the posters seem hardly more realistic than what was produced under the ousted Shah.

The most famous of the Shah's collection showed him in the sky with the caption "Shadow of God." It was printed with royal consent but was quickly withdrawn after adverse public reaction.

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