Khomeini 'will bury' Kurd rebels

From Liz Thurgood in Tehran

The crisis in the troubled western province of Kurdistan appeared to deteriorate further yesterday with a barrage of harse statements from Iran’s religious leaders who threatened to 'bury' the rebels as the Kurds fired on Government helicopters with anti-aircraft guns.

According to reports reaching Tehran, rebels fired on three government helicopters, one of which carried the Deputy Prime Minister, Morteza Chamran, who also doubles as head of the country’s national security apparatus.

The helicopters were reported to have been flying over an area not far from the rebel stronghold of Mahabad, where the Kurds were still resisting the Ayatollah’s plan to lay down their arms and surrender.

The firing was followed yesterday by an unprecedented attack on the Kurds by Ayatollah Mahmoud Taleghani, who threatened to organize a mass march to crush the rebels. Describing the revolt as a ‘black mark on the face of the Kurdish people,’ the Ayatollah said ‘Iran would not surrender to a handful of selfish people.

The Ayatollah’s attack, made during Friday prayers at Tehran University, came as a reaffirmation of the recent stand taken by the Muslem leadership on the Kurdish crisis. Taleghani, whose children are believed still alive in the new underground Moshtagh-e-iqbal guerrilla group, which will recently consolidated as separate parties. A main aim of the Ayatollah’s attack was to lay blame on the Ayatollah’s gathering in Qom.

Taleghani, underlining what appeared to be the armed forces’ increasing reluctance to enter Mahabad, said: ‘If the Army is unable to intervene because of weakness, the entire nation will march to Mahabad.’ The Kurds, he added, were receiving aid from ‘the North (the Soviet Union), an Islamic nation (thought to be Iraq), Israel and those runaway thieves’ – a reference to the former Shah’s regime, which launched the ruthless military campaign.

The regime of the late Shah was reported yesterday as a ‘united front to fight off international tricksters,’ who warned the Kurds whose revolt was being prompted by demands for autonomy and has now widened to include the demands of Iran’s Communist Party and the Qom leadership.

In Qom, Ayatollah Khomeini threatened on Thursday to bury ‘the Kurds unless they surrendered, and the Kurdish Democratic Party wants to impose Communism on the province, he said, repeating his orders for Kurdish religious leaders to help to track down the KDF leaders, Sheikh Ezatuddin Hoseini and Mr Abdur Rahman Ghasemlu.

The rebel stronghold of Mahabad was reported quiet yesterday. ‘The army is not as close as it claims,’ a Kurdish spokesman said after the state radio reported that armed units were less than three miles from the town.

The execution of 12 Iranian Left-wing dissidents has been delayed pending a retrial, according to an ad hoc committee formed to defend Iranian Socialists. Mr. Tariq, a member of the committee, said in London yesterday that Tehran had agreed to a retrial.

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