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The Sun (1837-1985); Sep 16, 1979; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Baltimore Sun, The (1837-1986)

pg. A2

Doc_Number: KP000110

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Tehran (Reuter)—In the mountains of Kurdistan, a group of officers who recently deserted from the Iranian armed forces are busy training Kurdish rebels to fight government troops.

It is part of the new guerrilla war that became inevitable after the regular Army and Islamic Revolutionary Guards recaptured all the towns held by Kurdish insurgents, forcing them to take to the hills.

Three months ago, Col. Esmail Aliar, a Kurd, was a staff officer in Tehran. Since then, he has discarded his special forces uniform as an Iranian ranger to don the typical outfit of the Kurdish Pesh Merga (those who face death) guerrillas—a Soviet-made Kalashnikov, a black-and-white head scarf, and baggy trousers.

What makes Colonel Aliar even more exceptional is that he was one of the few officers to have formed part of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's military committee during the February revolution. The committee took over the monarchy's shattered armed forces in the name of Iran's new revolutionary leader.

Rapidly disillusioned with the course of revolution, Colonel Aliar quit as one of the assistants to former Chief of Staff Gen. Nasser Farbod three months ago.

Now he is on the military staff of the banned Kurdish Democratic party (KDP), which is leading the underground Kurdish resistance movement on Iran's western border. He was spending the night in one

of the many Kurdish hillside villages kept under observation by government helicopters.

With him were two other officers, his brother—a major—and a Colonel Rabi'i, who said he had deserted 10 days before.

The Kurdish insurgents lost the conventional war against the government forces in 18 days.

But considering that Ayatollah Khomeini had to proclaim himself supreme commander, order a general mobilization and send all available troops to the Kurdish front to achieve victory, the insurgents consider they held out remarkably long.

After the fall of the last Kurdish stronghold, the border town of Sardasht, the insurgents disappeared into the mountains and abandoned armaments, including field guns.

In the freshly recaptured barracks in the former rebel capital of Mahabad, Army officers estimated there were still 50,000 armed Kurds hiding in the mountains.

One of Iran's most wanted men, Abdur-Rahman Qassemloo, the KDP secretary general, said in an interview in another village near Sardasht that this was probably an exaggeration. "Many of our villagers have guns. It is a tradition among the Kurds. We probably have tens of thousands of armed men, although we have not yet counted the precise number," he told

reporters.

"We have not been defeated. The fall of the towns is not the end of the war, it is the beginning of a new stage. We have not even begun our war," Dr. Qassemloo said, relaxing in the open air.

The KDP has established a secret base for guerrilla operations somewhere in the Kurdish mountains, according to Dr. Qassemloo, who said the party planned to launch guerrilla raids on towns.

Much of the insurgents' confidence is derived from the success of their kinsmen across the Iraqi border who have fought a guerrilla war against the Soviet-armed Baghdad government since 1961.

Some of the lower rank KDP officials, however, appear less sanguine about their chances of victory against the government forces. They hope the new Islamic administration will fall before winter.

"If winter comes, we must find caves. We are not ready yet, and it will be very difficult," one said.

Only a tiny proportion of the thousands of armed men who have flocked to the insurgents' banner seem to be properly trained guerrillas who could fight effectively in winter.

According to some KDP estimates, there are only a few hundred real Pesh Merga. Most of the others are volunteers quartered in villages where winter always brings supply problems. They also lack radio communications, making large-

scale coordinated actions a near impossibility.

Asked whether the Kurdish rebels were ready for a winter war, Dr. Qassemloo said: "We are certainly more ready than the Army. Armor cannot move in winter here, and the helicopters will be grounded by bad weather most of the time. Winter is on our side."

The KDP's strategy is, in its leader's words, "to have armed men everywhere and nowhere." Dr. Qassemloo, at least, is preparing for a long-term war.

While columns of Army tanks and self-propelled guns are parked around Mahabad, lightly armed guerrillas will control the main road to Sardasht a few miles from the military's protective ring.

The hills near the Iraqi border appear to be teeming with guerrillas. Some are just village militias. In daytime, they haunt the tea shops and lovingly clean their guns. At night, they move.

Some of the armed men are political refugees hiding in the hills, fearing official reprisals—like the tubby schoolteacher shaving in a village tea shop, a briefcase by his side and a revolver tucked into his cummerbund.

But there are also leftist urban guerrillas who have escaped to the mountains. Silenced and hunted by the new regime, the leftists see a guerrilla war in the Kurdish region as their last chance.

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