

Kurds may wage mountain warfare

From Liz Thurgood
in Tehran

The Prime Minister, Dr Bazargan, made an unexpected trip yesterday to the Kurdish town of Mahabad, the heart of the rebel Western province.

Dr Bazargan's visit came soon after Government troops entered the strategic border town of Sardasht, believed to be the last remaining Kurdish stronghold. Kurdish resistance reportedly ended when the last of several thousand Kurdish refugees crossed the border into Iraq.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by several aides, one of whom was believed to be Mr Hashem Sabbaghian, the Interior Minister.

The Government's successes in Kurdistan have been given prominence in the Iranian media, but the Kurds may have been forced into the mountains from which they will engage the security forces in a long guerrilla war which Iran can ill afford.

It was not known whether the Prime Minister visited Mahabad with the blessing of Ayatollah Khomeini. If so, the clergy may have softened its hard stand on the Kurdish question. But observers in Tehran considered such a mandate unlikely, given the Ayatollah's recent denunciation of the Kurdish Democratic Party, which assumed leadership in the Kurds' struggle for autonomy.

When the fighting began in Kurdistan last month, Ayatollah Khomeini ordered Iranian air and ground forces to crush the insurrection. He also outlawed the Kurdish Democratic Party and ordered the arrests of its leaders.

Dr Bazargan was yesterday expected to attend memorial ceremonies for those killed a year ago when the Shah's troops killed hundreds of peaceful protesters in a massacre now known as Black Friday.

Yesterday's ceremonies, held at Tehran's big cemetery of Behesht-e-Zahra, were led by Ayatollah Taleghani in the presence of more than one million people.

Despite the claims of the Persian-language press and State-owned television that most Kurds were flocking to greet the army as it took over the province, independent witnesses have reported a mood of opposition among the Kurds. On Wednesday, 2,000 Kurds marched through the streets of Mahabad, protesting against the presence of Islamic Guardsmen in the area and calling for the return of KDP leaders. Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini and Dr Chassemliou who were believed to have fled to Iraq.

Meanwhile, Ayatollah Khomeini, the Islamic judge who has sent more than 80 Kurds to their deaths during the past three weeks, arrived in Mahabad yesterday and ordered Kurds still holding out in the hills to surrender and hand in their arms.

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Article - Untitled Article

Khalkhali's arrival followed a telegram to Ayatollah Khomeini from the Kurds asking Mahabad to be spared the summary justice of Iran's revolutionary courts. Sixty Kurds were arrested after the collapse of Mahabad on Monday.

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