

The Kurdistan Shoras Resistance

Anarchist Federation

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Outbreaks of resistance spread rapidly across the north of the Iraq, towards the end of the Gulf War I, and were completely spontaneous, popular insurrections free from, and in spite of, the influence of Kurdish nationalism and leftist splinter-politics. What they would have achieved if they had been joined by returning Iraqi soldiers massacred along the now infamous road to Basra in the south of the country, and if the too short-lived revolt there had lasted long enough to link up the struggle, is another question.

The Northern Uprising

The main centres of the northern revolt were in the regions of Sulaimania, Kirkuk and Hawlia. As Iraqi soldiers deserted the front in their thousands (30,000 in Sulaimania!), thousands more took to the streets, organising themselves into committees (shoras) across the region. Demonstrations took place everywhere. Over 50 shoras sprung up in Sulaimania and Ba'athist centres (Ba'ath being the ruling party in Iraq), army bases and security headquarters were attacked. Listed below are examples of some of the activities in which the shoras participated.

- 1) Every Shora had its own radio station.
- 2) Every shora set up medical posts.
- 3) Each shora had a number of committees dealing with the media, the militia, medical matters, administration, finance and general assistance and the law, as well as a committee for relations between the shoras and a foreign relations committee.
- 4) The building up of a militia for resistance purposes.
- 5) On the 16th of March, 1991, the anniversary of the massacre of Halabja, the shoras incited the entire city even threatening the Kurdistan Front (KF).
- 6) On the 17th, a general meeting of all the shoras took place at the Majid Bug shora to elect a supreme shora covering the city.

(Abridged from 'The Kurdish Uprising...')

It was at this point, on March 17th, that the shoras came under attack, not from the Baathist regime, but from the Kurdistan Front (KF).

Defeat

So frightened were the nationalists by the Shoras that by March 18th they were openly calling for them to be disbanded. Through a concerted campaign of misinformation regarding a government backlash and other lies, but mainly because of their large stocks of food supplies, the nationalist parties were able to undermine the Shoras. After years of hunger and conflict, people were, naturally enough, desperate enough for security.

Given time the shoras could have created the building blocks for a society organised along libertarian lines. The 'organised left' and the nationalist parties preferred, however, to pursue their own narrow agendas and set out to destroy them with the twin tactics of propaganda and food. Sufficient confidence had yet to be built up in the shoras for the people not to be hoodwinked by the duplicity of these methods.

If the shoras had spread, this confidence, the confidence which, after all, had destroyed in the space of a few days the institutions of Ba'athist terror that had stood for decades, could have manifested itself into a completely new system of social organisation.

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