

14 Sept. 44

CAIRO

G 5438

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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

COUNTRY IRAQ : POLITICAL
SUBJECT Kurds Threatened with Armed Force

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DATE OF REPORT 14 Sept. 44
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Sheikh Baba Ali, who has just returned from a four-week trip through Kurdistan, bluntly denies the popular, widespread rumors that the Soviets are giving aid to and visiting the northern Kurds. He asserts that the Russians have made no move beyond the preferential treatment of Kurds in the Lake Urmia district of Iran.

Recent meetings held by the Kurds in protest against the government have been dispersed by the police with mollifying promises of an imminent government relief program, and with direct warnings from the British Embassy and RAF officers that the British Government would not put up with any trouble now and would meet any act of violence with armed force. Apparently this expedient has adequately held Mulla Mustafa and his colleagues in check. For the time being it appears that only this mortal fear of an air attack will prevent an autumn rebellion.

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OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES

Washington, D. C.

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COUNTRY IRAQ: INTERNAL

SUBJECT Personalities: Shaikh Mahmoud

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1. Shaikh Mahmoud is one of the family of Shaikh Ahmad Kakah who became chief of the Kurds following the decline of the Baban family some 150 years ago. Shaikh Ahmad's grandson, Sheikh Said, in turn became a high ranking chief, in which capacity he led many revolts against the Turks.

2. After the fall of Abdul Hamid II (1909) the young Turks, with an eye to diminishing Said's influence in Sulaimaniya, banished Said to Mosul. At Mosul Said was killed by a crowd for having a Moslem law/violated by flirting with a woman. Shaikh Mahmoud, who was with Said at the time, was injured.

3. Shaikh Mahmoud returned to Sulamaniya, but with humiliation. World War I gave him his opportunity to regain his prestige. He was at first approached by the Turks who gave him money and arms. However, with the advance of the British in Iraq he demonstrated his willingness to cooperate with them. The British authorities appointed him governor of southern Kurdistan. Following a brief exchange of this territory with the Turks and a retaking of it by the British, a British representative, one Major Noel, was surprised to discover that Shaikh Mahmoud's administration was corrupt. The resulting reduction of Shaikh Mahmoud's powers caused him to revolt in 1919; for this offense he was sentenced to death. His sentence, however, was commuted, and after a while he was allowed to return to Sulaimaniya where he in time was installed as Governor.

4. By 1922 Shaikh Mahmoud became very powerful, so much so that he was proclaimed "King of Kurdistan" by the Kurds. The Iraqi and British forces suppressed his abortive government; and he fled to Iran where he remained until 1931.

* (Washington Note: This suppression was not finally accomplished until the autumn of 1927.)

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At the time of the execution of the Anglo-Iraq Treaty on 30 June 1930, the Kurds, fortified with the suggestions of a League of Nations Committee which had suggested in 1928 that the Kurds be given certain privileges, asked that the treaty guarantee certain minority rights. When this request was ignored, Shaikh Mahmoud seized upon the opportunity to reappear in Kurdistan with arms from Iran. His revolt was again suppressed and he was exiled to Masiriyah in southern Iraq in 1931. Another revolt led by Sheikh Ahmad Barzan followed this, but it too was quelled.

Since 1931 Shaikh Mahmoud's political life has been reduced to impotence; he is now politically dead. He no longer enjoys wide prestige, partly the result of his not being permitted to live in Sulaimaniya. Nevertheless he has been treated well by the Iraq Government. In 1938 his son, Baba Ali, returned from a course of study in the United States and is now employed by the Iraq Government. Although Baba Ali is respected by the Kurds, he does not have the tribal influence of his uneducated brother Shaikh Latif who is politically active.

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