

Appendix A

The Ali Hassan Al-Majid Tapes

The following are selected remarks by Ali Hassan al-Majid, Secretary General of the Ba'ath Party's Northern Bureau, from a number of meetings with senior Ba'ath officials in 1988 and 1989. Audiotapes of more than a dozen of these meetings were recovered from Iraqi government offices and from al-Majid's home in Kirkuk during the failed Kurdish uprising in March 1991.

1. Meeting with members of the Northern Bureau and governors of the Autonomous Region of Iraqi Kurdistan, April 15, 1988.

By next summer there will be no more villages remaining spread out here and there, but only complexes. It'll be just like the hen when she puts the chicks under her wing. We'll put the people in the complexes and keep an eye on them. We'll no longer let them live in the villages where the saboteurs can go and visit them. Emigration from the villages to the city is necessary in the north of Iraq.

From now on I won't give the villagers flour, sugar, kerosene, water or electricity as long as they continue living there. Let them come closer to me to hear me, so that I can tell them the things I believe and want in ideology, education and common sense. Why should I let them live there like donkeys who don't know anything? For the wheat? I don't want their wheat. We've been importing wheat for the last twenty years. Let's increase it for another five years.

I will prohibit large areas; I will prohibit any presence in them. What if we prohibit the whole basin from Qara Dagħ to Kifri to Diyala to Darbandikhan to Suleimaniyeh? What good is this basin? What did we ever get from them? Imagine how much we paid out and lost on those areas. How many good citizens are there among those people, and how many bad ones?

What went wrong? What happened? Thirty, twenty, twenty-five years of saboteur activity. Imagine how many martyrs we have!.... Now you can't go from Kirkuk to Erbil any more without an armored vehicle. All of this basin, from Koysinjaq to here [Kirkuk]...I'm going to evacuate it. I will evacuate it as far as Gweir and Mosul. No human beings except on the main roads. For five years I won't allow any human existence there. I don't want their agriculture. I don't want tomatoes; I don't want okra and cucumbers. If we don't act in this way the saboteurs' activities will never end, not for a million years. These are all just notes, but with the help of God we will apply them very soon, not more than a month from now. In the summer nothing will be left.

2. Meeting with Northern Bureau members and directors of the Ba'ath Party headquarters in the northern governorates: tape is dated May 26, 1988, but from context appears to be 1987.

(Response to a question about the success of the deportation campaign):

As a matter of fact what we have achieved is something that the party and the leadership never managed to do until 1987. Some of it was just the help and mercy of God. Nothing else. Otherwise if you just go and conduct military exercises for the troops who were used in the campaign you will have more casualties than we had. Imagine in such an exercise how many martyrs and casualties there will be!....

What happened? Are these the saboteurs? Are these the people you were afraid of? This is the reality of the saboteurs, and you have all these facilities and this capacity. They could not confront you. In the past they were confronting a division with just a few machine guns. This time they were just shelling us from far away with light artillery.

Some of you who were working here at the time when I arrived, so motivated with this duty, perhaps you said in your hearts, "OK, wait a minute! Wait a minute! The people who were here before you said the same things and then didn't do anything!" You will be forced to take action. All those years and the saboteurs still existed. At a time when we had this huge military! I swear to God it was not done in that way. All the Iraqi troops couldn't have done what we did. But this [deportation] hurt them. It kills them.

(voice identified as Abu Muhammad: Only God can do more than you. Otherwise you can do anything. This Ba'ath Party can do anything.)

The saboteurs watch the orders and directives. The orders are not that strong. The previous ones were a hundred times stronger. But they were not combined with a belief on the part of those executing them. Now that exists. We said that at that date we will start to implement the deportation campaign. And we did it everywhere, with the help of God. The same day [in 1987] they captured Qara Dagħ in retaliation.

Jalal Talabani asked me to open a special channel of communication with him. That evening I went to Suleimaniyeh and hit them with the special ammunition.¹ That was my answer. We continued the deportations. I told the *mustashars* that they might say that they like their villages and that they won't leave. I said I cannot let your village stay because I will attack it with chemical weapons. Then you and your family will die. You must leave right now. Because I cannot tell you the same day that I am going to attack with chemical weapons. I will kill them all with chemical weapons! Who is going to say anything? The international community? Fuck them! The international community and those who listen to them.

Even if the war with Iran stops and the Iranians withdraw from all occupied lands, I will not negotiate with him [Talabani] and I will not stop the deportations.

This is my intention, and I want you to take serious note of it. As soon as we complete the deportations, we will start attacking them everywhere according to a systematic military plan. Even their strongholds. In our attacks we will take back one third or one half of what is under their control. If we can try to take two-thirds, then we will surround them in a small pocket and attack them with chemical weapons. I will not attack them with chemicals just one day, but I will continue to attack them with chemicals for fifteen days. Then I will announce that anyone who wishes to surrender with his gun will be allowed to do so. I will publish one million copies of this leaflet and distribute it in the North, in Kurdish, Sorani, Badinani and Arabic. I will not say it is from the Iraqi government. I will not let the government get involved. I will say it is from here [the Northern Bureau]. Anyone willing to come back is welcome, and those who do not return will be attacked again with new, destructive chemicals. I will not mention the name of the chemical because that is classified information. But I will say with new destructive weapons that will destroy you. So I will threaten them and motivate them to surrender. Then you will see that all the vehicles of God Himself will not be enough to carry them all. I think and expect that they will be defeated. I swear that I am sure we will defeat them.

I told the expert comrades that I need guerrilla groups in Europe to kill whoever they see from them [the saboteurs]. I will do it, with the help of God. I will defeat them and follow them to Iran. Then I will ask the *mujaheddin* to attack them there.²

3. Meeting with unnamed officials, August 1, 1988.

...Any Arab who changes his ethnicity to Kurdish is doing so to avoid serving in the army. This is a big problem. What shall we do about it?.... Why did Mosul [governorate] register them as Kurds? We asked them to deport every Kurd who lives there and send them to the mountains to live like goats. Fuck them! Why do you feel embarrassed by them?

We deported them from Mosul without any compensation. We razed their houses. We said come on, go, go! But those who are already fighters, we tell them from the beginning that they must go and settle in the complexes. After that we will tell them to go to the Autonomous Region. We will not get into any arguments with them. I read the pledge for them and they must sign it. Then wherever I find [passage unclear], I will smash their heads. These kind of dogs, we will crush their heads. We will read the pledge for them: I the undersigned admit that I must live and settle in the Autonomous Region. Otherwise I am ready to accept any kind of punishment including the death penalty. Then I will put the pledge in my pocket and tell the *Amn* director to let him go wherever he wants. After a period of time, I will ask where is he? They will tell me, here he is. The Ba'ath Party director must write to me saying that the following people are living in that place. Immediately I will say blow him away, cut him open like a cucumber.

Do you want to increase the Arab population with these bloody people?.... We must Arabize your area [Mosul]--and only real Arabs, not Yezidis who say one day that they are Kurds and the next that they are

Arabs. We turned a blind eye to the Yezidi people joining the *jahsh* in the beginning, in order to stop the saboteurs from increasing. But apart from that, what use are the Yezidis? No use.

4. *Northern Bureau meeting to review the campaigns of 1987 and 1988; the tape is undated, but is in a batch dated January 21 and 22, 1989.*

The most dangerous stage of the threat to Iraq was between August 1987 and April 1988. It was a dangerous situation. We started to do serious work on the military front from February 18 to September 4, 1988.

All the successive commanders of the First Corps and the Fifth Corps: Lt. Gen. Nazar [al-Khazraji] and Sultan Hashem of the First Corps and Tali'a al-Durri, the martyr al-Hadithi, Muhammad and Ne'ama Fares and Ayad of the Fifth Corps... All these men that I mentioned are commanders who have been serving in the north of Iraq since they were lieutenants. The first one among them to join the Ba'ath Party was Tali'a al-Durri.

When we made the decision to destroy and collectivize the villages and draw a dividing line [i.e. the so-called "red line"] between us and the saboteurs, the first one to express his doubts to me and before the President was Tali'a al-Durri. The first one who alarmed me was Tali'a al-Durri. To this day the impact of Tali'a is evident. He didn't destroy all the villages that I asked him to at that time. And this is the longest-standing member of the Ba'ath Party. What about the other people then? How were we to convince them to solve the Kurdish problem and slaughter the saboteurs?

So we started to show these senior commanders on TV that [the saboteurs] had surrendered. Am I supposed to keep them in good shape? What am I supposed to do with them, these goats? Then a message reaches me from that great man, the father [i.e. Saddam Hussein], saying take good care of the families of the saboteurs and this and that. The general command brings it to me. I put his message to my head.[3](#)

But take good care of them? No, I will bury them with bulldozers. Then they ask me for the names of all the prisoners in order to publish them. I said, "Weren't you satisfied by what you saw on television and read in the newspaper?" Where am I supposed to put all this enormous number of people? I started to distribute them among the governorates. I had to send bulldozers hither and thither...[4](#)

5. *Meeting to welcome Hassan Ali al-Amiri, his successor as Secretary General of the Northern Bureau, April 15, 1989.*

I would like to admit that I am not and will not be the right person for the current stable situation in the North...For this current peaceful and stable situation, Comrade Hassan Ali is the right person. I am ready to come back and do whatever you think is necessary, though I would like to remain a member of the Northern Bureau.

I hope that the comrades in the North will not ask Comrade Hassan Ali to take administrative measures and do other things that he cannot do. Because that stage is finished. It will no longer be allowed for a member of the leadership to have power over the army, because the exceptional situation is over. These powers are not being withdrawn from Comrade Hassan Ali because he is not up to the task, but because that stage has now finished.

In my first meeting in April 1987 with the army corps commanders, *Amn* and police directors, governors and Ba'ath Party directors, we decided to deport all the villagers in order to isolate the saboteurs. We made it in two stages. The first stage started on April 21 and ran until May 21. The second stage ran from May 21 to June 21. From June 22 anyone who was arrested in those areas was to be killed immediately without any hesitation, according to the directives which are still in force.

In one of the meetings with the army chiefs of staff I was asked to postpone the campaign for a month by one of our best commanders. I said no, not even for one day. From now on our slogan will be to wipe out saboteur activity. That is our objective. That is the objective of this stage. Anyone who thinks he is not capable of implementing this must tell me now, One of the best commanders, the commander of the Fifth Corps, was reluctant, despite me providing him with more facilities than the First Corps. The result now is that the saboteurs are finished, and they had frozen 40 percent of Iraqi power.

When the [September 1988] amnesty was announced, I was about to get mad. But as a responsible party member I said OK. I said probably we will find some good ones among them [the Kurds], since they are our people too. But we didn't find any, never. If you ask me about the senior officials of the Kurds, which ones are good and loyal, I will say only the governors of Erbil and Suleimaniyeh. Apart from those two there are no loyal or good ones.

I cry when I see a tragic show or movie. One day I cried when I saw a woman who was lost and without a family in a movie. But I would like to tell you that I did what I did and what I was supposed to do. I don't think you could do more than what I could do.

I would like to speak about two points: one, arabization; and two, the shared zones between the Arab lands and the Autonomous Region. The point that we are talking about is Kirkuk. When I came, the Arabs and Turkomans were not more than fifty-one percent of the total population of Kirkuk.⁵ Despite everything, I spent sixty million dinars until we reached the present situation. Now it is clear. For your information, the Arabs who were brought to Kirkuk didn't raise the percentage to sixty percent. Then we issued directives. I prohibited the Kurds from working in Kirkuk, the neighborhoods and the villages around it, outside the Autonomous Region....

Kirkuk is a mixture of nations, religions and doctrines. The people we deported from May 21 to June 21, not one of them was from the prohibited areas. But they were under the control of the saboteurs, whether they were for them or against them.

1 This presumably refers to the April 1987 chemical attack on the PUK headquarters in the Jafati Valley.

2 Following their expulsion from France in 1986, the People's Mujaheddin of Iran relocated to Iraq and came under the patronage of the Ba'ath Party.

3 The sense conveyed in the Arabic phrase is that Saddam Hussein's wish is always al-Majid's command--but not, he goes on to say defensively, in this instance.

4 The tape is cut off in mid-sentence at this point.

5 It is unclear here whether al-Majid is referring to the city or the governorate of Kirkuk.