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NOVELLA || ENGLISH

SERXWEBUN

Dersim, Graveyard

Jine stood by the grave. Beside her were her father Serkan, her siblings Soreş and Mere, relatives, childhood friends, school acquaintances... Some sobbed loudly, others wailed quietly, still others remained in silent, deep grief. Little Mere cried the most. Jine also wept – but inwardly. No sound escaped her, no tear was visible. She was not a daughter of the Orient who openly showed her feelings. For her, death was an immutable truth that befell every living thing. That was life. One did not die with the dead. Jine knew this. And yet – her mother Asrin was only forty-seven when a malignant tumor in her brain defeated her. She was still young. Jine could not accept this death. It profoundly shook her, for it was unjust. Death was for everyone, yet not at this age. If only she had grown old like her grandfather and then died – Jine would have mourned, certainly, but not like this. Because her mother was still working, rushing through her daily life, living right in the middle of life. She was devoted to life; she loved it.

Perhaps the greatest and at the same time most just work of God was that he had made all living things mortal. Tall or small, beautiful or ugly, fat or thin – death made no distinction. It was life's most egalitarian truth; neither wealth nor beauty nor youth could stop it. Death was the only certainty common to all. Perhaps that is why Jine found it easier to accept the justice of death than the injustice of life.

She knew: the roughly eight billion people living on Earth today would presumably be gone in a hundred years. Time granted privileges to no one. Death was life's quietest yet most powerful arbiter.

While people wept and wailed around her, Jine thought about all this. Perhaps her mother should not have been buried, but cremated. She had learned about this in India. The people of Dersim followed the old Raa-Haq teaching – a philosophy that sought life in harmony with nature, justice, and truth. They washed their dead, shrouded them, and then consigned them to the earth, according to their own rituals. 3

Living beings are born, grow up, and die. No one dies with us. Life goes on. Everyone continues their own reckoning. As long as one was loved, one is remembered. And then perhaps forgotten. But Jine would never forget her mother. Because she loved her very much.

Asrin worked in a chocolate factory in Stuttgart. She was a good mother, almost like a friend to her children. When Jine finished high school and wanted to move to Berlin, her father Serkan was against it. For him, a girl could not go to a big city alone. She should stay in Stuttgart until she finished her studies. But Asrin had supported her daughter: "Go, my child! May your path be open! Go! See the world! What do you want in Stuttgart?" she had said.

As the people at the cemetery slowly lowered Asrin's coffin, Jine stepped forward. She took a handful of earth, kissed it, placed it on her forehead, and let it fall onto the coffin along with the flowers. Mere, the youngest sister, screamed through her tears: "Asrin! Asrin! Where are you going?" The

onlookers could not withstand this desperate cry and burst into tears. Mere had always called her mother by her name.

Life begins with birth and ends with death. What will we see in its spring, what will we experience? Like a strip of film, life flows on. And one day, it ends. Perhaps not. Jine did not want to believe in God in a world full of oppression, exploitation, and torture. And yet she wondered: Who created man? Just as a table does not come into being without a carpenter, neither could nature, the universe, or man be without a creator. Jine was agnostic. Sometimes she believed in God, sometimes not. If he existed – would he really care about humans in the infinite cosmos? On the other hand – could God also not have arisen from nothing? Did he not also have a creator?

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Jine – Between Heaven, Earth, and Memory

Jine wished that people who die in love would pass into another world. That her mother would go to paradise or be resurrected one day. But on such questions, she thought more like a materialist. Heaven and hell – that was nothing more than the world itself to her. She did not want to imagine an afterlife. Just as a tree grows, ages, withers, and finally turns into earth, so was perhaps the life of man. We were children of nature. We were born, grew up, aged – or died suddenly from an illness.

Explaining nature and the universe exceeded Jine's understanding. That is why she switched from philosophy to political science after two semesters.

Marx had said: "The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it." This

sentence had deeply touched Jine. But she was not a Marxist. She no longer wanted only to interpret, but to change – even if only a little. Because humans were not divine beings. As long as there was theft, deception, lies, envy, exploitation, oppression, and malice, there would also be police, prisons, and laws. Jine did not believe that a classless, exploitation-free, borderless world was possible today. Perhaps in 250 or 500 years. But she did not even want to think about the present world. And yet – visions had to exist. Her vision was a world where all people have equal rights: work, housing, an income that covers basic needs, freedom, and a self-determined life. Jine was a realist. And she wanted to practice realistic politics.

Jine's Journey: The Silence of the Mountains and Berlin's Call

To reflect on her mother's death was like a meditation on nature and the cosmos: necessary, even healing. But at some point, the human mind had to put such thoughts aside. Grief could not turnt into an endless loop.

When she reached her uncle's house, Jine's body was marked by exhaustion. Mere was still screaming, hitting the walls angrily. Jine and Soreş took her in their arms, trying to calm her. The little girl resisted for a long time, but with time, the crying gave way to silence.

Jine had lived in the mountain district of Dersim for twelve years. Most of her childhood friends had gone to the guerrilla; the others had developed a political consciousness. Her mother's death caused her thoughts to collide with this militant past. And yet – she did not truly know Dersim. Apart from the genocide of 1937, which her mother had told her about, her knowledge of the region's history was limited. The

fortress of Pertek, the National Park in the Munzur Valley – she would see all of this for the first time.

Dersim, located in the Upper Euphrates region of North Kurdistan, was surrounded by the Munzur Mountains and the Karasu River to the north and west, the Bingöl Mountains and the Peri River to the east, and the Keban Dam Lake to the south. In spring, the clear water from the springs cleansed the soul. Everything smelled fragrant. The mountain district was not far from the center.

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For two weeks, Jine explored Dersim and its surroundings with her childhood friends. She got used to the nature – but the presence of soldiers, tanks, and police made her feel that she was not granted the right to live on this land. Dersim was still occupied.

She thought of Berlin. She missed Germany. And she remembered Sera. She had to tell her everything. Sera was a fighting woman. Jine's circle of friends was diverse: Germans, Americans, Israelis... But her relationship with Kurds was limited to her family. Sera, however, was different. She resembled no one.

Encounter in Protest: A Smile Between Worlds

They had met at a protest march organized by Greenpeace. It was a demonstration against environmental pollution, and Sera was distributing leaflets about the Halabja gas attack. Jine took one and smiled. Sera smiled back and asked:

- What is your name?
- Jine
- Are you Kurdish?
- Yes, I am Kurdish.

Sera replied: "Welcome to the club!" Both smiled. After a brief conversation, they exchanged numbers. Sera continued distributing the leaflets. But for Jine, at that moment, it was clear: she would return to Berlin.

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Serkan's Silence, Jine's Burden

Jine's family, like many families from Dersim, was freedom-loving. Her father, Serkan Adan, had run a small tailor shop in Dersim before emigrating to Germany. In 1978, he emigrated, hoping to alleviate his economic worries. In Germany, too, he remained faithful to his trade – working with fabrics, needles, and great patience.

Serkan was a quiet, introverted man. Politics and philosophy were far from him, but his love for his family was deep, his respect boundless. In his heart, Serkan carried a great longing for home. He had sworn to return to Dersim every year – no matter what. His children, however, had grown up in Germany, closely interwoven with German society, alienated from Kurdish culture. As with many others from Dersim, the cultural ties had faded over time. Serkan suffered from this, but he remained silent. "As long as my children are happy, that is enough for me," he always said.

But life placed another heavy burden on him. His wife Asrin became ill. When the doctors said: "It is too late; we can no longer operate," Serkan sank to his knees. From that day on, he withdrew and fell into a deep depression. With Asrin's death, his world darkened. He was powerless, desperate.

In Dersim, Jine, together with her brother Soreş, took over their father's duties. That is why she stayed there for two weeks – yet these two weeks felt like two years to her. Every night she was woken by gunshots; during the day, she encountered soldier checkpoints on every street corner. Police and military were everywhere. Like other regions of Kurdistan, Dersim had been declared an exception zone after the 1980 military coup. Freedom of expression, seminars, organization – all that was forbidden. The once beautiful landscape was barely habitable; it resembled a ruin.

There were almost three soldiers for every person. The youth had disappeared; only the old and the children remained. This sight profoundly shook Jine's soul. Dersim was no longer just a place – it had become a name of pain.

In the Shadow of Losses: Lives Fleeing to Berlin

The day after her return to Berlin, Jine called Sera. They met in the late afternoon at Caffé Morena. Both were very happy to see each other again. Jine spoke about her mother and about Dersim. Sera wanted to comfort her, but she did not know how – and preferred to remain silent.

It was the third meeting between the two. Sera was the daughter of a German father and a Kurdish mother. Her birth name was Clarissa Lenz – a name that betrayed nothing of the stories, the ruptures, and the quiet hopes residing within her.

Her mother, Jale Dewran, came from Amed, the capital of Kurdistan. Jale's father was a building contractor; business was good, and the family lived in material security. The Dewran family was one of the few representatives of the Kurdish bourgeoisie. 9

The Scars of Dictatorship: Jale's Escape and Sera's Awakening

In the 1980s, a military junta shook the country. Arrests, house searches, kidnappings, executions, torture, unsolved murders... The state spread a paralyzing terror among the population. New suffering every day, new repression every day – so much so that people could neither live nor sleep.

Jale's father – like many other Kurdish businessmen – was one day abducted and murdered on the charge of financially supporting and sheltering the PKK. When Jale and her brother Sipan found their father's lifeless body in the middle of the street, they suffered a profound shock.

The PKK had been founded in 1978. Sipan was one of its leading fighters. Six months after their father's death, he was captured, severely tortured, and sentenced to twenty-one years in prison for "separatism." Jale's older sister was

studying medicine at the time and was an activist in the Eastern Revolutionary Cultural Associations. Two years after her father's death, she died in a clash with fascists in Ankara.

Jale was distraught. At twenty-five, she was teaching English. Although she had relatives in Amed, her pain was overwhelming. Father, brother, sister – the people she loved most had been taken from her one after the other. And the violence, the arrests, the torture – the state terror did not cease.

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Psychologically exhausted, Jale packed her bags and fled to Berlin, where she applied for asylum. Three years later, her application was approved – but Jale was no longer the same. In Berlin, she regularly went to Amnesty International, sought psychological help, and was undergoing therapy. She suffered from deep trauma.

In 1983, she met the German Thilo Lenz at Amnesty. Thilo was thirty-five, handsome, modest, a man who loved nature and people. Jale fell in love with him, they married, and in 1985, Clarissa – named Sera – was born.

Jale wanted to give her daughter a German name at all costs. Thilo insisted on a Kurdish or a hyphenated name, but Jale firmly disagreed: "I don't want anything to happen to my daughter because of her name! There are so many racists in this world! My child should be a proper German, not feel like a stranger in Germany – her own country. Her father is German, after all!" And so, she raised her daughter with this in mind.

Jale wanted Clarissa to stay away from violence and politics. But Clarissa, who knew her mother's history, reacted in the

exact opposite way. Since the age of twelve, she felt that she wasn't entirely German – that a part of her was Kurdish, and she knew her mother's pain. That's why she chose the Kurdish name "Sera" for herself. "No matter who I am – my name is Sera," she said. Her mother didn't know how to deal with this.

Uprisings, wars, destruction – Jale knew all this and wanted to protect her daughter from it. She had almost resigned herself to the injustice, the oppression, the violence. But Sera was the opposite. Even as a child, she said: "When I grow up, I'll go to Kurdistan and take revenge for you." These words simultaneously frightened Jale and made her smile. "Childish thoughts – what does it matter," she thought. She didn't take her daughter seriously.

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Sera told her mother very little, kept much secret, and the relationship between them was distant.

In 2004, Sera began studying architecture at the Technical University of Berlin. This career choice was the dream of her grandfather, whose lifeless body had once been found in the street – a man who had run a construction company for years and wished his grandchildren would become architects or engineers.

Sera was successful in her courses; she was an extremely intelligent young woman. But her deep interest in politics and her active engagement made it increasingly difficult for her to concentrate on her studies. In the fourth semester, her thought became clearer and clearer: "It is best if I quit my studies and devote myself entirely to politics." Because she knew: building a few houses in Kurdistan would not liberate the people. As long as the system did not change, as long as

colonialism was not ended, the Kurdish people would find no peace.

Kurdistan – Longing for Freedom

Kurdistan was a rich country in every respect – and this very wealth aroused the greed of the colonial powers. Sera was convinced that this ravenous greed had to be stopped. They had to be driven out of the country with everything they had brought, to clear the way for freedom and independence.

Before the guerrilla was dissolved, Sera had repeatedly considered joining it. But the political line of the PKK did not appeal to her. She was ready to die for a free and independent Kurdistan – but not for the democracy of the Turkish state. After Öcalan's abduction, the PKK had changed its strategy and abandoned the demand for an independent Kurdistan. Instead, it propagated the idea of a "Democratic Republic" within the borders of the Turkish National Pact, where Kurds and other minorities could live.

Sera firmly rejected this approach: "Kurdistan is a country; the Kurds are a nation. Turks, Arabs, and Persians have occupied Kurdistan and must leave this country." She was radical. And she often said:

"There are two things in the world that are of the highest value: freedom and independence. Every means is legitimate to achieve them."

Jine listened to Sera with astonishment. She wanted to help her, even become active herself. But Jine was a woman who thought more with her mind than with her heart – rational, weighing every option.

Despite her radical views, Sera was humorous, open, tolerant, warm, and extremely likeable. She didn't pressure anyone but touched people. She didn't have a boyfriend; only one ideal existed in her head: the freedom and independence of Kurdistan. Her love for this ideal was almost mythical. Sera was like a bomb about to explode – but this bomb was filled with the voice of justice and freedom.

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Saturday Night

Jine and Sera first went to Caffé Milchbar, then to the Non-Tox club. A DJ was playing underground techno there; everyone was dancing exuberantly, losing themselves in the music.

No sooner had they entered than Sera said with bright eyes: "Just look! Western society has become a pleasure society. Everyone is dancing, letting go of their stress. No war, no oppression, no torture. People are free! And we should commit a crime in Kurdistan just because we want the same thing? My mother doesn't understand me!" Then she let the rhythm take her and began to dance.

Her dance was so impressive that Jine retreated to a corner and watched her with admiration. At that moment, someone bumped into her from the side. The man was not drunk, but he struggled to stay on his feet. He apologized politely. Jine

smiled slightly, looked him in the eyes and asked: "Is everything okay?" The man replied: "Yes, yes, everything is fine," and thanked her.

His name was Elias. He was pleasant, with a childlike purity and a deep gaze. He invited Jine for a drink, and she accepted. After getting their drinks, he asked: "Shall we go outside?" That was fine with Jine – Sera was completely lost in her dancing anyway. "Let's go," she said.

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They found a quiet spot on the banks of the Spree. Elias asked why she was sad. Jine told him everything. Elias repeatedly said how sorry he was, but added that nothing could be done about it. They exchanged phone numbers and returned. Sera was still dancing. Jine didn't want to disturb her; she herself was not in the mood to dance anyway. Her head was utter chaos: Dersim, her mother's death, Sera... and now Elias too.

Sera came over to her. Together they went into the side room and sat down in the chill-out area. The room was quiet, beautifully decorated. A DJ in the corner, a few people... There, Jine and Sera talked for a long time about politics, philosophy – and about Elias.

Between Love, Loss, and Political Clarity

Sera said she kept herself away from sexuality. She had experienced her first love at sixteen, followed by two other relationships. No one had been in her life for a year – and she didn't want anyone either.

Jine thought differently about it. For her, love was like lightning: it came suddenly and struck deep. Love was the foundation of family and humanity for her. Without love, one could not live, she said. Love was as natural as birth, life, and death. Sera understood her, but her mother's experiences had deeply shaped her. Her greatest love was Kurdistan. Sera always spoke openly and clearly. She knew exactly what she wanted and spoke with self-confidence.

Jine was happy to have met Sera. But as a political science student, she viewed things less emotionally than Sera. She weighed every word, every gesture. Her head was somewhat confused, but she knew she would soon regain her composure. Her mother's death and the images from Dersim had deeply shaken her. But pity was a dangerous feeling. One had to face reality. Death was for everyone: rich, poor, old, young, good, bad... It was equally close to all. What truly troubled Jine was that she was doing nothing against oppression, exploitation, and violence. She spent her time in cafés and clubs, even though she wanted to do something concrete, tangible.

[A late afternoon in Berlin – Jine and Sera discuss the future of the Serxwebûn movement]

Jine: "I actually know what I want; my head is clear. But I don't know where to start. I couldn't go to the PKK. They no longer pursue independence. A vague confederation, democratic confederalism, democratic republic... You don't even know what they are anymore."

Sera: "The PKK? They are history. They fought for independence for twenty years, then they submitted to the

enemy and dissolved themselves. The remnants don't even know what they want."

Jine: "Öcalan's constantly changing ideas, a new organization name every month... It's driving me mad. So much contradiction – is that still normal?"

Sera: "The destiny of the Kurds has never been kind. No unity. Only a handful of socialists support them. When Öcalan came to Europe, the West gave him no chance, but handed him over to his bitterest enemy. That was one of the greatest crimes against humanity. Khomeini was allowed to stay in France for years. Was Khomeini better than Öcalan? Why didn't the West simply hand him over to the Shah?"

Jine: "Because the West has different interests. In the US, the fear of Leninism is still strong. Since Kurdish organizations have a Marxist orientation, they have a hard time."

She turns to Sera: "First, you're anti-imperialist, you occupy highways, you beat up police officers... and then suddenly you're sitting on their lap. That's a huge contradiction. A real Kurdish leader wouldn't have gone to Europe, but to the mountains of Kurdistan. These mountains have protected the Kurds to this day. They have never betrayed them. When some say, 'Öcalan has returned home – so he was always a man of the Turks,' I sometimes agree, but I'm not sure."

Sera: "I never liked Öcalan. He used to be a Stalinist. A dictator, a despot. The fact that the Kurds have liberated themselves from such a figure is a win for me."

Jine: "For me, that is not so crucial. Stalin and the Western leaders sat together at the table and signed the Potsdam

Agreement. The problem is not that the PKK is communist – it's about interests. The West only thinks of its own advantages. They supported Saddam against Iran, raised the Taliban against the Soviets – and later got their comeuppance. Öcalan and the PKK stood in the way of these interests. The fact that Öcalan wanted to start a revolution in the Middle East and impose a proletarian dictatorship on the Kurds was a catastrophe for both the West and the Kurds. The ideological structure of the PKK makes it impossible for the West – especially the US with its anti-communist stance – to directly support this organization. Any support for the PKK would mean that communism is resurging in the Middle East – and that contradicts American interests."

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Sera: "But why did the US support Rojava then?"

Jine: "Because there, in Syria, it was forced to support the PKK in the fight against ISIS. At one point, their interests overlapped. But this support can end as soon as the ISIS problem is solved. The 'friendship' of the US is not permanent; when interests change, so do allies."

Sera: "The Middle East holds the resources for the next two hundred and fifty years: oil, natural gas, waterways, strategic passages... Do you think the US will simply hand all of that over to Russia and Turkey? Does it give up so easily?"

Jine: "It's hard to say for sure. But I know one thing: whether the US stays in the Middle East will become clear when the ISIS threat is truly over. Then interests will be realigned. Perhaps new enemies, new alliances will emerge. But for the Kurds, this uncertainty is always a threat."

Sera: "The PKK was supported by Greece and Syria for a time. But when Öcalan came to Europe, everyone withdrew their support. Today, there is not a single country that supports the PKK on an official level – except for a handful of socialists."

Jine: "The Kurds are still a people in need of assistance. If they form an alliance among themselves and become a genuine force, then – and only then – could states, perhaps even the US, take them seriously." 18

The South Kurds are under the protection of the US, but that is only temporary. The US supports the Jews because it profits from it. It does not support the Kurds because it sees no benefit. The Jewish lobby works excellently. We, on the other hand, can't even manage to gather together."

Jine thought the problems of the Kurds were deeply rooted. Kurdistan was occupied by the four most despotic, chauvinistic, racist, and dogmatic states in the world. The Kurds already had enough enemies; making the US and Europe an opponent through anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist positions was unnecessary – even wrong.

At the same time, the Kurds had a problem with feudalism. For Jine, this could only be overcome through capitalism. Sera understood her well. Because she also knew: socialism is only possible as a form of society *after* capitalism. The so-called real-socialist states, which had never fully completed their capitalism, had collapsed one after the other. Socialism in a single country was not possible anyway. Marxism had cost the Kurds thirty years – and was still a burden.

[A night before the founding of Serxwebûn. Jine and Sera are sitting in a Berlin apartment, drinking tea and discussing an article by their friend Rodi Zerdüşt: "The Contradiction Between National Liberation Struggle and Submission to Occupying Powers – On the Line of the PKK and Öcalan."]

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Jine: "You know, Sera, Rodi makes a very accurate observation in his article: the existential reflex of every people living under colonial rule is similar. History always shows the same pattern: first, the people bring forth a national leadership, then they establish their own organization. Through this organization, military, political, economic, and cultural mobilization is initiated. National leadership is not just an individual – it is a will for independence crystallized in the collective decision-making. The organization is the institutionalized form of this will."

Sera: "Yes, as your friend Rodi says: If you look at the political panorama of the Kurds, you can see how this universal reflex has been distorted. Öcalan and the PKK define themselves simultaneously as the leaders of the organization, as the people's leader, and as the bearer of the national movement. But in practice, this definition does not lead to independence, but to integration with the occupying powers. The historical aspirations of the Kurdish people are hollowed out along this line."

Jine: "National leadership has three central functions: political vision, military-political organization, and economic-cultural mobilization. Rodi gives very fitting examples: From Algeria to Vietnam, from the Basques to

Eritrea – everywhere, this triangle of function, organization, and leadership created a dialectical harmony. The leaders embodied the demands of the people; the organizations carried out the practical struggle for them."

Sera: "The line of the PKK and Öcalan is in fundamental contradiction to this universal liberation path. The goal of national independence has been abandoned. Instead of striving for statehood, a concept of 'democratic people' was introduced, based on integration with the occupying powers. As Rodi emphasizes in his article, this rhetoric makes the occupation invisible. Öcalan is no longer a symbol of the people's freedom but a figure who develops integration-friendly ideas on Imrali under the supervision of the occupiers."

Jine: "The organization has also drifted off course. The PKK cadres have been incorporated into the political projects of the occupying powers and alienated the Kurdish people from the idea of independence. As your friend Rodi says: They are no longer a national liberation movement but have become a supporting pillar of the colonial status quo."

Sera: "And the worst thing: the occupation is legitimized. The current political line of Öcalan and the PKK accepts the occupation of Kurdistan as a historical reality. Terms like 'fraternity of peoples,' 'democratic republic,' or 'democratic people' are, in truth, watered-down variants of colonial ideology. Rodi is very clear: these terms suppress the aspirations of the people."

Jine: "The will of the Kurdish people is annulled. The call for freedom and independence is dismissed as 'utopia' or an 'outdated concept.' Alliance with the occupier has become an

institutional strategy. Political representation, military strength, and ideological framework are now based on integration."

Sera: "That is not a political decision, but a historical betrayal. As Rodi writes in the last section: When a colonized people abandons its perspective on national liberation and joins the occupier, it means abandoning its destiny to the mercy of others."

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Jine: "What needs to be done is obvious: this integration-friendly rhetoric must be exposed, and the original will of the Kurdish people must be reorganized on the basis of independence. Because the historical truth is – as Rodi emphasizes –: the liberation of colonized peoples does not succeed through integration into the projects of the occupiers, but through a determined struggle for national independence."

Return Home...

The Right to Self-Determination

After a small snack, they sat down at the computer and began to scour Kurdish websites and social media. Sera already knew some addresses. Although she spoke neither Turkish nor Kurdish, she was fluent in German, English, and Spanish. Jine, on the other hand, spoke Turkish, Kurdish, German, English, and French.

Shortly before going to sleep, they ran into Lisa, Jine's flatmate, in the kitchen. Around two in the afternoon, Jine and Sera retreated for a nap, while Lisa went out for a walk.

On Sunday, after six hours of sleep, they were awakened by a call from Elias. He said he was nearby and invited Jine out to eat. Jine asked Sera for advice. Sera said: "Sure, let's go." The three met at a Thai restaurant. Both Jine and Sera loved Thai cuisine.

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After dinner, they visited a video store. The shelves were full of films. Sera recommended the film *Hero*. Jine and Elias agreed. They returned home and watched the film together. Sera had already seen it twice. During the film, she enthusiastically shouted: "That's how you have to fight the enemy!"

Elias disagreed: "No. You can achieve a lot without war. You should use your mind instead of your fist."

Sera asked: "And if you are not allowed to use your mind – what then? Should you sit idle and be silent?"

Elias thought for a moment and then said: "Wars mean destruction, pain, devastation. They should not be."

Jine listened to the two in silence.

Sera turned to Elias: "Imagine you are alone on the subway in the West as a foreigner or an African. Because you know that skinheads are on the loose, you carry a weapon with you. At one stop, four or five skinheads board your carriage, where you are completely alone. What would you do? You know

they show no mercy – they will beat you to death. Would you say 'Peace' in that moment?"

Elias replied: "In such a situation, I would naturally defend myself. But that still doesn't justify wars."

Sera nodded: "Of course. But am I the one who wants war? The Kurds have only ever defended themselves until today. That's exactly the mistake. I think they should finally attack. The colonial powers must be driven out with everything they have. The Kurds don't need their language, their economy, their culture, their politics. They should all disappear!"

Jine was completely on Sera's side on this issue. Elias, however, was not to be convinced. He was a man of peace, a convinced pacifist.

Then they began to talk about the film *The Matrix*. Jine and Sera were deeply impressed by both parts. "If only the Kurds had such perfect fighters," they sighed.

Elias spoke about Bahman Ghobadi. He said he had great respect for him; his films opened one's eyes. Jine and Sera also knew Ghobadi. But they believed that one had to fight against oppression, exploitation, and violence. Ghobadi's films might show the suffering of the Kurds – but this suffering was already known worldwide. The only thing was: No one acted. "Action is needed, action!" Sera said.

The film *Hero* had been directed by Zhang Yimou and presented in the US by Quentin Tarantino. As is known, China was historically divided into seven regions, with seven kingdoms. In 221 BC, Qin Shi Huang conquered the other territories and united them under the Qin Dynasty. Thus, he

ended the wars among brothers and founded the Chinese Empire. Since then – with the exception of the Mao era – there have been no more internal Chinese wars.

The political message of the film emphasized that individuals should give up their personal ideals for the sake of the common good. Some critics accused Zhang Yimou of supporting authoritarian regimes, even justifying the Tiananmen Square massacre.

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Confucian ideals were prominent in the film: the individual should sacrifice himself for society. Personal desires were considered selfish if they did not serve the common good.

Sera watched *Hero* for the third time. She was also enthusiastic about the technical aspects of the film. The special effects had been designed by the producers of *The Matrix*.

Jine also followed the film with great interest and pleasure. While they were talking about it, she said: "The Kurds are fragmented into five parts. Their organizations and parties must be united. Violence against the enemy – yes. But there must be no violence among Kurds. Where there is democracy, violence is madness."

Elias said he thought like Jesus: "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn the other to him as well."

Sera countered: "I could never do that! Look, even after Jesus, people fought each other – Protestants and Catholics, Sunnis and Shiites, Muslims and Christians... These are senseless wars. I am also against such struggles. But our struggle is legitimate and just – against oppression,

exploitation, and violence. Anyone who calls himself human should support us!"

Elias said with a serious look that he rejected all forms of terrorism.

Jine said: "Terror is a word of Latin origin. It comes from 'terrere' and means 'to fill with dread.' Terrorism, on the other hand, is the systematization of individual actions with the aim of achieving a political goal." Then she sat down at the computer and added:

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"According to Resolution 1514 (XV) of the United Nations of December 14, 1960:

- *All peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right, they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development.*
- *In order to enable the dependent peoples to exercise peacefully their right to complete independence, all armed action and repressive measures directed against them shall cease. National integrity must be respected."*

"And according to Resolution 2708 (XXV):

- *Peoples whose independence is hindered by colonial powers have the right to defend themselves by all means at their disposal."*

Jine continued:

"The Kurdish national movement, as you can see, is legitimate and justified from beginning to end. Assigning the

term 'terrorist' to a movement that hasn't even hijacked a taxi is not legally tenable. We are talking about a struggle for rights, about resistance – not terrorism."

Elias countered: "No. Where there is violence, blood flows, people die, great suffering arises. Millions died in the two World Wars, cities were destroyed, countless people experienced unimaginable suffering."

Sera spoke with shining eyes: "That's true! But were we the ones who did that? This system was created by the Western world. On the one hand, millions died in their wars; on the other hand, fifty thousand died in the resistance of the PKK. We rise up against Turkish, Persian, and Arab despots – just as they once rose up against Hitler. Their fight is considered 'resistance'; ours is called 'terrorism.' And mostet of the dead are Kurds killed by Turks. Of course, we don't want war. But what do Arabs, Turks, and Persians want from the Kurds? Despite their rich soil, the Kurds are among the poorest people in the world. Enough! Set the Kurds free so they can go their own way!"

Sera's voice became sharper: "The PKK stands for a just cause. But its communist orientation and the killing of dissenters within its own ranks are not acceptable. If the PKK had remained nationalistic and had not lost people through internal settling of scores, I wouldn't be against it – I would even support it. However, the definition of terrorism is vague anyway. Are wars not terror? Are they not conducted in dread? Whether by individuals or by societies – what is the difference? The greatest terrorists are the Turkish state, Hitler, Saddam. Fighting them for freedom is resistance. Whether this fight is waged in the mountains, in the cities,

individually, or collectively – it doesn't matter. In the end, people die."

She paused briefly, then continued:

"The Kurds have no luck. If the PKK were not communist, but Pro-American like the UCK, no one would call it terrorist. Be that as it may... The PLO, the ANC, the IRA, the ETA – they were all once on terror lists. And today? Does anyone still call them terrorists? It's about power and success. If the PKK had been successful and had liberated Kurdistan, no one would call it terrorist. The West's classification of the PKK as a terrorist organization is purely politically motivated."

27

Jine listened attentively to Sera. Every word was deliberate; every sentence carried weight. She began to feel great sympathy for Sera. She understood her. The inclusion of the PKK on terror lists also had its reasons – the violent actions in Europe, the pressure within the organization justified this label. But she could also understand Elias. The situation of the Kurds was truly difficult. They were surrounded by despotic regimes. Hunger, thirst, poverty...

The people of Kurdistan were shattered. They could not defend themselves and could find no state in the world to lean on. Jine knew that only too well. A hungry person can neither engage in politics nor philosophy. That's why she felt that she had to do something together with Sera. But where should she start?

Elias brought up Gandhi as an example. Sera immediately interrupted him: "Gandhi was a pacifist, but he couldn't prevent the death of thousands. ETA, IRA, ANC, PLO,

Nicaragua, El Salvador... I could name many more, but it's not necessary. Everyone had to resort to violence. Was the Iraq War bad because they wanted to overthrow Saddam and Hitler? Yes, people died. But what was the situation like under Saddam and Hitler? Can the Kurds forget Anfal and Halabja? Can the Jews forget Hitler's cruelty? The Turks forbid us even our language. Can you grasp that?"

Sera's voice trembled: "When the Kurds defend themselves, it is immediately called 'terrorism.' The West rejects it – but it itself has the blood of fifty million people on its hands. They create monsters like Hitler, Mussolini, Franco, Saddam – and when they overthrow them, they call it 'resistance.' Then that is also terrorism. Is the barbarity in Kurdistan today any different from that under Saddam or Hitler? The Turks deny our existence. They refuse to recognize us as a people. They forbid our language, our culture."

At that moment, Lisa came in. Elias stood up: "I'm leaving now," he said and said goodbye.

Jine, Sera, and Lisa went into the kitchen. Lisa had studied fashion design. She ran an elegant shop in Prenzlauer Berg where she sold her own designs. She traveled a lot for work: Paris, London, New York, Milan, Berlin... She had a two-room apartment in every city. That's why she moved frequently. In some months, Jine was alone at home. If a subtenant was found for Lisa's room – good. If not, it was also not a problem. Jine never talked to Lisa about Kurds or political issues. She was a very beautiful woman – tall, with short hair, just like Carrie-Anne Moss in *The Matrix*. Only Moss was a little shorter. In Berlin, Jine had attended some of Lisa's fashion shows, but she had never felt the desire to become a model herself.

Pacifist and Revolutionary – Anatomy of a Dialogue

29

A month later, Jine realized she had fallen in love with Elias. She wasn't exactly sure how it had happened. Actually, Elias's pacifist nature wasn't her type. But his modesty – perhaps also his good looks – had enchanted her. Elias had taken Friday off so they could spend the weekend together in Prague.

Sera struggled to understand how Jine could fall in love with Elias so quickly. But what could she do? Man was free – but freedom also meant responsibility. Sera loved Jine like a sister. She didn't want her heart to be broken or for her to be hurt.

Elias was twenty-seven and had studied computer science. His computer skills were excellent, but his real interest was human rights. He was an idealist. One evening, at Elias's request, Amara prepared a traditional Ethiopian dish. It was so delicious that one couldn't get enough of it. After dinner, Amara put the children to bed. Meanwhile, Leo Paulson and his wife were visiting friends. Since Elias was home, Amara didn't have to stay. She was married and a mother of two children.

After the children had fallen asleep, Amara went outside. Elias was alone in the kitchen. When Amara wanted to say goodbye, Elias asked: "How about a cigarette together?" Amara agreed. They went into the garden, lit their cigarettes, and began to chat. Elias had noticed Amara for months.

Amara also looked at Elias with her beautiful eyes – as if there were a silent attraction between them. Elias was already in love with her anyway. Amara said: "That's not possible. I have a family." But Elias didn't give up. Although Amara didn't want to, she couldn't hold back – and she slept with Elias.

Ethiopia was one of the poorest countries in the world; a people who, like the Kurds, had experienced great suffering. Elias wanted to stay in Ethiopia if Amara left her husband. After a few secret meetings, Amara one day did not come to work. When Elias's comfort dried up, he returned to Berlin. Whether fate or coincidence – Elias was now in love with Jine.

30

Jine and Elias sat in Caffé Milena in Prague. Milena was Kafka's mistress. The historic building housing the café was as enchanting as the city itself. One had to climb to the first floor. From there, one had a splendid view of the Astronomical Clock and the market square. In this beautiful setting, Jine and Elias spoke about the Kurds. But Elias persisted in his views. Jine was disappointed. "How can a person be so stubborn?" she thought.

Jine tried to explain with examples of Hitler and Saddam. But Elias was a typical Western European. In the West, everything was fine. The wars were over; people lived in prosperity. For Jine, Elias's human rights projects were futile. He didn't teach people how to fish – he served them the fish directly. Even though Jine found some of his thoughts logical, she couldn't convey the essential point to him.

Jine was one of the most decided opponents of violence. But how should resistance be organized without struggle,

without action? Would colonial powers voluntarily withdraw? Fifty thousand people had died – and yet the Kurdish language was still forbidden. So, probably more blood had to flow. The vampires could not be satisfied. The Kurds were a deeply underdeveloped people. Kurdistan was still living in feudalism. How could they be reached?

When Jine considered all this, she was astonished by the PKK. The PKK had managed to organize the feudal-influenced Kurdish type. But back then, leftist groups were mushrooming, and being a Stalinist or Maoist was a fad. Sera was right: luck had never favored the Kurds.

The PKK could have fought for independence to put an end to the political, military, cultural, and economic dominance of the colonial powers. It could have promoted Kurdistan's market integration and equipped it with Western values such as a free market economy, the rule of law, and democracy. Of course, the PKK could also have become a fundamentalist movement like the Taliban. Perhaps the Kurds even had a little luck with the Marxist orientation of the PKK. But Jine did not believe in Marxism. Too many people had been killed in the name of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Like Sera, she despised every form of dictatorship.

Jine's Decision: With Her Heart to Kurdistan

Elias worried about Jine's state of mind. For him, it was clear: in the age of space travel and communication, the Kurds first had to unite and then effectively use the media to move toward independence step by step. Everything was a matter of process. Elias said: "The Kurds

must be patient." But Jine reacted angrily: "The Kurds have been crushed under the butt of Turkey's rifle for a hundred years. Enough patience!"

Jine turned to Elias: "Look at East and West Germany, for example," she said. "The Germans were only separated for forty years – and yet they still live with prejudices, calling each other 'Ossi' and 'Wessi' to this day. Perhaps that also explains why the PKK, KDP, and YNK cannot unite. The Kurds live in different parts, as if they were parties of different countries. That is alienation. National consciousness is lacking. Everyone thinks of their party, their organization, their career – not of Kurdistan. You, as a German, should understand that. What did Willy Brandt say? 'What belongs together is growing together.'"

After the long and intense conversations in Prague, Jine and Elias returned to Berlin on Sunday evening. Prague was beautiful, but Jine drew a clear line between herself and Elias. As soon as she arrived in Berlin, she called Sera: "I'm breaking up with Elias," she said.

Sera was relieved. "Forget him," she said. "What the Westerners do is nothing but ignorance."

Jine contradicted her: "No, you're wrong there. I read on the internet recently that over five hundred Germans, Italians, and Britons have joined the guerrilla fighters."

Sera replied: "But they are all there because of communism. They are not thinking about the Kurds, but about their own ideals. Communism should first be realized in Europe and America – Kurdistan comes last. The Kurds don't have to save the world, but themselves. I'm interested in the suffering

Kurdish people. How can we free them from the clutches of the Arabs, Persians, and Turks?"

Jine said: "Okay. Let's not talk too much on the phone. It's best if we meet tomorrow." And they ended the conversation.

On Monday afternoon, they met at Caffé Morena. It was autumn, a sunny, beautiful day. When Sera arrived, she hugged Jine and kissed her on both cheeks. As they sat down, Jine said: "We have to do something for the Kurds. It can't go on like this."

Sera replied: "I am ready with body and soul. Tell me what to do."

In the last few weeks, Jine had scoured the internet, read everything about the Kurds, engaged in social media, and participated in discussions. Europe, Canada, America, Australia, Kurdistan, Germany, Japan... The Kurds were scattered all over the world. According to her research, one and a half million Kurds lived in Europe alone – five hundred thousand of them in Germany.

"Let's found an organization," Jine said.

Sera was overjoyed. "Yes! Let's do that – but what kind of organization? We have no experience."

Jine thought: "Actually, after the argument with Elias yesterday, I thought about going to South Kurdistan and, if necessary, joining the Peshmerga. I admire the struggle of Mela Mustafa Barzani. I've read a lot about him. Following in his footsteps would be an honor for me. Masoud Barzani is also doing good work. The South is now free. I don't believe

the Turks can advance as far as Kirkuk, Hewlêr, or Mosul. Of course, they want to, but it's impossible. The US would never allow that."

"I also read about the relationship between Israel and the Kurds. The real betrayal came from Shah Pahlavi. The US also made mistakes, but that is in the past. This time, they won't betray the Kurds. Because that would contradict their interests in the Middle East. They are not supporting us because of our beautiful eyes. They fought a five-year war and lost five thousand soldiers for the oil of Mosul and Kirkuk. They won't leave these resources to either the Turks or the Arabs."

34

Sera said: "Yes. We should found an organization that has no enemies – except Arabs, Persians, and Turks. The Kurds should maintain relations with all countries, just not with Turkey, Iran, and Iraq."

Jine considered for a moment: "No," she said. "If it serves our interests, we can also maintain relations with them. Personally, I'm not against it. But first, they have to leave our country. We must distinguish between the regime and the population."

Sera said: "But the Turks say: 'Every Turk is born a soldier.' Then we should target every Turk, shouldn't we?"

Jine countered: "No! Eighty million people live in Turkey. Kurds, Laz, Circassians, Armenians, Greeks, Albanians... There are good, conscious, unconscious people, children, elderly, people who know nothing about politics. Four million Kurds live in Istanbul alone. We have to differentiate."

Sera disagreed: "But the Turks make no distinction when they attack the Kurds. Because the PKK relies on the people, they have done everything imaginable to the Kurdish people. Five thousand villages were burned and destroyed. Four million people were displaced. Torture, pain... They cut off the head of a guerrilla fighter and held it up triumphantly. They made a rosary out of his ear, they forced our villagers to eat excrement, tore out their mustaches. In the village square, they tied a rope around men's genitals and paraded them in front of everyone. Our beautiful Kurdistan was razed to the ground. Is there greater barbarism? And we still feel sorry for them. What was the guilt of my grandfather, my aunt? I think we should answer them in the language they understand. If they try to drain the sea to catch a fish, then we should respond to their total war against our people with the same harshness."

35

Jine spoke again with great calm: "We cannot be an organization like Al-Qaeda or ISIS. We do not attack civilians; we do not kill people indiscriminately. We are not terrorists – we are resistance fighters."

Sera countered: "And what about the ETA and the IRA? How do you evaluate them?"

Jine answered thoughtfully: "If civilians die in some actions, this can be considered 'collateral damage' – as in wars. Just like the Iraq War. Personally, I find the ETA and IRA impressive. Founding an organization that makes the blood freeze in the veins of the Turks might be tempting. But we live in the age of space travel, communication, and artificial intelligence. We must choose a more effective, more ethical method. We should plan actions where no one dies, but which draw the attention of the world media to us. We must

use media, the internet, and new means of communication. Mobilize the people, open their eyes. We must use our minds. Because man's greatest weapon is his mind."

Sera asked excitedly: "And what should the organization be called?"

Jine considered: "How about 'Movement for the Independence of Kurdistan'? What do you think?"

36

Sera answered without hesitation, full of enthusiasm: "If the name is in Kurdish, it has more meaning."

Jine smiled: "Of course, I thought that too. *'Hareketa Serbexweya Kurdistanê.'* In short: *'Serxwebûn.'* In Kurdish, the word *Serxwebûn* is a deep and symbolic concept that means freedom, independence, and self-determination."

Sera continued curiously: "Have you already written the statutes and program?"

Jine shook her head: "No, not yet. I want to work that out with you on a quiet day. Once we have the program and statutes ready, we will publish them on all social media. The organization will be completely autonomous and will not use violence. Our goal is to clearly and resolutely proclaim our ideal of freedom and independence to the world."

Sera was determined: "Good. Let's start immediately tomorrow."

Jine agreed: "Agreed!"

The next day, they met again. They published the prepared text on social media. Shortly thereafter, Turkish authorities blocked access to both pages from within Turkey.

Sera said angrily: "You see? In Turkey, the demand for independence is considered separatism. Yet we only expressed our thoughts. The Turks really are the worst despots and racists I know. They don't give the Kurds a single chance."

37

She pointed to the newspaper in her hand and added: "Look here! It says: The solution to the Kurdish question can be achieved through cultural, economic, and social development – through the possibility of learning Kurdish and using this language in media and public services. This view comes from the draft Turkey report of the European Parliament, written by the Dutch Christian Democrat MEP Ria Oomen-Ruijten. No one talks about the national problem. As if the Kurds would be free from colonialism, hunger, and thirst if they spoke their language and lived their culture. Is that independence? Why are we denied our independence? What they have, we want too."

Jine nodded: "You are absolutely right. Without freedom and independence, there is no salvation for the Kurds. We must found an organization that fights until the last soldier of the colonial powers has withdrawn. Even if our lives are not enough, even if it takes a hundred years – we must start a resistance that will be passed on to the next generation."

The blocking of their pages had raised deep questions in Jine's mind. Some friends on social media had summarized it this way: "Where there is no democracy, there are no democratic avenues."

Jine and Sera were determined to examine every path to independence. The democratic means were blocked. The only option was illegal organization – but neither Sera nor Jine wanted to go that way. What had they thought, that they would be criminalized? Were freedom and independence a crime? Was resistance against oppression, exploitation, and violence punishable?

Both lived in Europe and were German citizens. In Europe, it was no crime to express such thoughts. That is why their pages had only been censored in Turkey, Iran, and Syria – and were accessed 1,245 times in just two days. That was a great success in itself.

Sera said with a determined voice: "The Turkish state is the greatest strategic enemy of the Kurds. Not only for North Kurdistan, but also for the other three parts. The South has at least achieved a certain status. The real problem is the North, where 25 to 30 million Kurds live. That is why we must focus on the North. We must turn the North into the South."

Jine agreed: "You are right. The Turkish state and its laws must never be trusted. The laws prohibit torture, but Turkey is fundamentally a torture state. Turkey itself is one continuous torture. Although racism is condemned worldwide, the Turkish military and the parties are racist through and through."

Sera planned the organization into cells of three people each. Each cell should be illegal, and one person should only know six others. If someone were arrested, at most six people could be exposed. Actions should be carried out with a maximum of six people.

Jine disagreed: "No! That is too dangerous. If the cells know each other, a network is created. If one person is caught, everything falls apart like a house of cards. We publish our program and our statutes on social media. My hope is that independent cells of three to six people will form and become active all over the world. This could eventually lay the groundwork for a popular uprising in the long term. The potential of social media is enormous."

Sera found this approach more sensible: "If it arises on its own, that would be great."

39

Jine shook her head: "Nothing happens on its own. We have to constantly launch appeals. The Turks will block our pages anyway. We first turn to the Kurdish diaspora. Then we find a way to reach the people in Turkey, in North, East, South, and West Kurdistan. This is not a task for one day. Perhaps we will spend our entire lives on it. While pursuing our professions, we dedicate all our time to the freedom of the Kurdish people. We declare resistance against prohibitions, against the impossible, against the forbidden. The whole world must hear our voice."

Jine had lowered her head. Her voice was firm, yet there was a break within her:

"In Turkey, founding an organization that is directed against the indivisible unity of the state or advocates for independence is considered a criminal offense. We all know that."

Sera wrinkled her nose slightly, narrowed her eyes, and replied:

"Yes... Article 302 of the Turkish Penal Code is clear: endangering the unity of the state and territorial integrity is punishable. But this article is primarily used to suppress the political demands of the Kurdish people."

Jine struck her knee with her fist:

"Freedom of expression, the right to organization... These rights are enshrined in both the Turkish Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights. But as soon as one peacefully demands independence, criminal proceedings are immediately initiated."

Sera looked into the distance, her voice became soft, but remained resolute:

"Our movement is peaceful. It is based on voluntarism. Anyone who confirms the 'Objective' page on our website can become a virtual member."

Jine smiled slightly, but there was seriousness in her eyes:

"Membership means contribution. For example, duplicating texts on the independence of Kurdistan, printing them out, and distributing them to those who do not have a computer..."

Sera clasped her fingers and continued: "Presenting websites that produce content on independence. Communicating with Kurds worldwide via WhatsApp, Messenger, Skype, Signal, Telegram..."

Jine narrowed her eyes: "For accessing blocked pages, there are tools like anonymous.org. If you search 'How to access blocked pages' on Google, you will find many methods."

Sera stood up, her voice grew louder: "Night actions, seminars, demonstrations... Opening literacy courses. A people with national consciousness is not easily governed!"

Jine nodded: "Our movement is a process of enlightenment – from the bottom up. Every member is both chairperson and learner. There is no leader-disciple relationship with us." 41

Sera looked directly at Jine: "Whatever we do – we must be aware that we are doing it first for ourselves. We must not waste our time on trivialities."

Jine spoke softly, but emphatically: "We are not a party. Not an organization. We are a completely independent popular movement. Our members can support other parties or organizations."

Sera placed her fist on her heart: "But our goal is clear: ending the occupation in Kurdistan. Our energy must serve this path."

Jine took a deep breath.

"Civil disobedience is our way."

She picked up the iPad and read out the forms of civil disobedience:

- Sit-ins
- Occupations
- Call for a general strike
- Signature campaigns
- Border crossing
- Prohibited solidarity declarations
- Tax refusal
- Refusal of military service
- Unauthorized assembly in public space
- Distribution of censored publications
- Refusal of identity checks
- Non-compliance with judicial summons
- Interference with public property without damage
- Boycott of state ceremonies
- Organization of unauthorized demonstrations
- Disregarding speech bans in public space
- Consumer boycott of certain products
- Resignation from public office
- Protest at symbolic locations

Sera, with tears in her eyes but as upright as ever:

"Our identity is clear: The religion, the faith, the ideology, the party, and the organization of every single member is: KURDISTAN."

The Solitude of a People: Kurdistan's Diplomatic Dead End

43
Sera was happy – overjoyed. It was as if she had achieved her goal, as if the Kurds were liberated and had declared their independence. Three months later, the first cells were founded, and the statutes and program of the "*Hareketa Serbexweya Kurdistanê*" were completed. But they had not yet taken to the streets; there were no actions.

On a Wednesday evening, Elias called Jine. He wanted to talk about the organization.

Jine was resolute: "No," she said. "There is nothing left to discuss. As long as you don't believe in the cause, you cannot achieve anything on this path. We are only doing this with those who truly believe in it. Don't worry."

Elias answered sincerely: "You're right. I'm not someone who could kill or kidnap anyone. But I could have supported you politically."

Elias was passionately devoted to Jine. He was willing to do anything for her. But that was exactly what Jine did not want.

"The Kurdish cause is more important to me than personal feelings," she said. "Better stay where you are." And she hung up.

In that moment, the figures of Öcalan and Mela Mustafa Barzani appeared in Jine's thoughts.

According to interview transcripts, Öcalan had once rejected the help of a Brit when he came to Damascus. Another had said about him: "He has politics, but no economy." But for Jine, the economy was precisely the most critical area that had to be addressed parallel to the freedom struggle. If the West was willing to help out of self-interest, that support should be accepted.

Barzani, on the other hand, had struggled for years to receive aid from the USA and Israel.

Jine wondered: "What should our international relations look like?"

Naturally, the peoples of the world – apart from Turks, Arabs, and Persians – were not enemies of the Kurds. But what needed to happen to establish friendly relations, at least with the First World countries?

It was obvious that the Kurds needed help and could not achieve independence alone. Had she made a mistake by rejecting Elias? She wasn't sure.

As long as the global powers – meaning influential states like the USA, Great Britain, France, and Germany – did not support the independence of Kurdistan, the demand could be as strong as it liked, it would not be heard. Of course, the Kurds had to do their homework, but the interests of the aforementioned countries could not be ignored. If it suited the interests of the USA, they could theoretically found ten different Kurdistans in a single day. If one wanted to act in

harmony with the global system, one also had to consider the interests of these states regarding one's own country. Otherwise, this path was not viable.

Sera, on the other hand, was clear in her stance from the beginning: "Elias is useless. He will be a burden to us. He is an obstacle. Everyone in the group must believe in this cause with body and soul. Expecting help from the USA and Israel is something different."

45

Jine nodded: "You're right. Above all, we must gather our own strength. Only then will the USA, Israel, and the West approach us out of self-interest. Our country is rich. Democracy can only come to the Middle East through the Kurds."

Barzani had gone so far as to once say: "I am ready to become the 51st state of the USA."

The first aid from the USA had strengthened Barzani's morale. Knowing that the greatest power in the world was behind him gave him security. He even said: "If the US protects us from the wolves, I am willing to align myself with their policy." With sufficient support, he intended to take over the oil fields of Kirkuk and hand over their operation to American oil companies. However, he did not know that the US would betray him together with Shah Pahlavi.

Jine had read a lot about Barzani, the USA, and Israel. She knew she had to be careful. International relations were vital.

She had understood: No state helps out of charity – but solely out of self-interest.

Kissinger had replied to a letter from Barzani:

"We are not a social welfare agency."

Barzani said years later: "We were destroyed by our friends. Had I known it would come to this, I would never have trusted the USA."

When Jine read these words, something tightened inside her. The USA was not the protective power of the Kurds. But they were also not fundamentally against their independence. Apart from the occupying powers – Arabs, Persians, and Turks – no state in the world could seriously oppose the freedom of Kurdistan.

The more Jine read the letters Barzani had written to Nixon, Kissinger, and later to President Jimmy Carter, the more her eyes filled with tears.

The Kurds were an oppressed people. The USA and Israel should not have left the Kurds, who were surrounded by enemies, alone – in the name of humanity. Yet neither the USA nor any other state would help the Kurds selflessly – certainly not because of beautiful eyes or noble intentions. For the world was a world of interests, not a social welfare office, not a Caritas.

The principle of self-determination had entered the international consciousness after the First World War through Woodrow Wilson's 14-Points Declaration. The goal was to create peace between peoples and grant every people the right to self-determination.

With the Treaty of Sèvres, the independence of the Kurds was partially recognized – for the first time in history, an international document contained a provision on the existence and political future of the Kurdish people. But soon the Treaty of Lausanne came into force, and the promises of Sèvres vanished into the dark archives of history. Lausanne ignored the rights of the Kurds and established a new power structure. The current situation is a direct consequence of this historical break.

47

Jine was aware of this. She knew that she had to thoroughly research this historical process. Questions such as "Why were the Kurds not represented in Lausanne?", "Who excluded them?", "What forces enabled this absence?" occupied her mind. Finding answers to these questions meant not only understanding the past but also grasping the present and shaping the future.

Between 1920 and 1972, there were no contacts between the USA and the Kurds. According to Mahmoud Othman, these contacts only began in 1972 – they were secret and not politically motivated. That is why the CIA did not speak openly with the Kurds. The reason for the American interest was the Friendship Pact between Iraq and the Soviet Union.

Relations between Israel and the Kurds dated much further back. There were rumors that the Barzani family had Jewish roots. Whether true or not – historically, the Jews had helped the Kurds the most.

A friend of Sera had once said to her: "The Kurds should not trust the Jews too much."

Jine had read about the relationship between MOSSAD and Barzani in a book published in London and Sydney:

Israel's Secret Wars – A History of Israel's Intelligence Service

The book was by Ian Black and Benny Morris of the Brookings Institution.

It stated that MOSSAD had established contact with the Kurds after the Arab-Israeli War of 1967. Following the Friendship Treaty between the Soviet Union and Iraq in 1972, the Shah of Iran had arranged a secret meeting with US President Nixon. Three years later, \$24 million was transferred to the Kurdistan Democratic Party via the CIA.

In the years when Barzani rebelled against the Iraqi regime, this uprising was supported by the triple alliance of USA–Iran–Israel. According to the book, MOSSAD had provided the Kurds with \$50,000; Yaakov Nimrodi, who had direct contact with Barzani, ensured that the latest Soviet weapons reached the hands of the Kurds. The existence of such and similar aid made Jine hopeful, and she enthusiastically told Sera about what she had read.

Sera was against Elias joining the organization. She did not trust him. "It's not because he's a Westerner," she said, "but because his character is weak. You cannot go down a path with someone who does not put his heart into the cause."

Jine understood that. "If a person is not committed to what he does with body and soul, if he is unsure of himself, then he should better keep his hands off it," she said.

Sera emphasized that she had great respect for Mela Mustafa Barzani. "But I don't love the Kurdish leaders; I love Kurdistan and the suffering Kurdish people," she said.

"That Masoud Barzani says, 'Independence is the most natural right of the Kurds,' makes me happy. But that the same Barzani declares at the end of the three-day conference of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union in Hewlêr that they, as the Kurdistan Region, have chosen unity and cohesion with the Iraqis – I don't understand that. Haven't we suffered enough under the Arabs? The goal of the Kurds should not be supposed brotherhood or unity, but separation."

49

Jine disagreed: "No. President Barzani is following his father's path, in my opinion. What would you do in his place?"

Jine had also discussed this topic with Hanife, whom she had met through social media. Hanife wrote:

"This is a long road. It won't be achieved with PKK-style bluster. The South must truly engage in politics – not just for the sake of form. The fact that the Kurds currently say they are part of Iraq is a strategic necessity. Because everyone fears your independence. Every step is interpreted through this fear. Even your most legitimate demands are met with mistrust – such as the issue of Kirkuk.

What does a leader do in such a situation? He must show the Kurds that he has not abandoned the idea of independence, and at the same time, choose language toward others that conveys political security. That is exactly what the people in the South are doing. On the one hand, they say, 'Our dream is an independent Kurdistan,' and on the other, 'We have to be

realistic, so we are part of Iraq.' If you only say 'We are part of Iraq,' no one believes it. But if you say 'Circumstances compel us to do so,' even the mistrustful feel secure.

In return for its formal link to Iraq, the South can achieve certain advantages. What is important, as Barzani often emphasizes, is that 'the Kurdish people retain their right to independence' – and that no signature is given that restricts this right. Such a guarantee would, in any case, be incompatible with American law. No one can make binding commitments for the future. And even if one did, it would have no legal effect – it would remain a personal stance.

The real question is: What needs to be done before a declaration of independence? Because you cannot simultaneously declare independence, fight against an embargo, take over Kirkuk, build institutions, and establish a system... That is impossible. Even the USA would not dare to tackle all these problems simultaneously."

What we must not forget: the reasons why the regional powers and the West are against the independence of the South differ. The USA and Western countries are not against an independent Kurdistan that causes controllable problems. Why would they be? Their concern is whether these problems are controllable.

Let's do the necessary steps first. The problem should only be to declare independence and overcome the subsequent blockade. That means: When the declaration of independence takes place, we must have a defense system with which we can withstand attacks under our own power. In this sense, Kurdistan must truly become a second Israel."

Let's wait and see. I have a feeling that the USA's Middle East plans are not yet complete. Until we declare our independence, who knows what stones will still be set in motion. That's why I really wish McCain would win – because he is a 'hawk' on Middle East issues. Every tectonic shift in the Middle East would benefit the Kurds.

Personally, I am at least waiting for the completion of the Hewlêr airport. I am very interested in whether it will really become a military base. That could give us a clue about the USA's strategic intentions in the region.

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The founding of an independent stock exchange in Hewlêr was, in any case, an extremely significant step. It was almost like an economic secession from Iraq. If you have established yourself as an independent economic entity toward international forces – how realistic is it then to still say: 'We are part of Iraq'? One must view the rhetoric of the South from this perspective. The South, which even the PKK scoffs at, is in truth pursuing a rather clever policy.

Freedom in Prison: Jale's Silent Comforting Thoughts

Jine and Sera had gone to the cinema. After all the discussions, reading, and planning, both were exhausted. About an hour and a half after Elias's call, just as Jine and Sera were about to say goodbye, they were surprised by a sixteen-person special forces unit. The police arrested Jine and Sera. Lisa was not at home – she had traveled to Paris for a month. The public prosecutor's office had issued arrest warrants for Jine and Sera.

The two gave the police detailed information about their activities.

"We did this because we believe in our cause," they said.
"We have nothing to hide."

The police could arrest them, but not much more. They could not reach the other cells of the organization.

Jine had always used a pseudonym on social media. She only knew the contacts there – with few exceptions – by their code names. She knew neither their real names nor their residences. She couldn't betray anyone because she didn't truly know anyone.

She had never received emails. Everything she had done, she had organized openly and together with Sera via the internet. Jine and Sera had long since overcome their fear. And actually, there was nothing to fear.

When Sera's mother, Jale, learned of the events, she was stunned.

"Does this have to happen to me too?" she thought. Right in the middle of Europe, her daughter had been arrested on charges of "terrorism."

At a loss, Jale visited the two in prison. But the girls were in good spirits. It seemed as if she had not come to visit but had been arrested herself.

When Jale returned home, she was somewhat reassured. Perhaps it was even better this way. "If Sera goes to prison,

nothing will happen to her," she told herself. "The prison is safer. At least far from death and killing."

Yet Jine and Sera had never intended to kill anyone. They wanted to gain media attention through actions similar to Greenpeace or Arno Funke (alias Dagobert Duck). For example, by placing and detonating a paint bomb in an empty shop on a Sunday. No one was to be harmed in their actions.

Admittedly, Sera wanted to punish Turkish, Arab, and Persian generals, police officers, soldiers, and ambassadors like ASALA. But Jine was against it.

"We live in the age of space travel, communication, artificial intelligence, and digitalization," she said. "And we must fight in a way that suits this time."

Jine knew: "If we strike back in the same way Turkey attacks us, it may be effective. But we can also achieve our goal without being as hideous and brutal as they are."

Each cell was responsible for its own actions. If some cells chose other methods, no one could stop them. All actions were to take place in the metropolises of hostile states. There would be no violent actions in Kurdistan and outside these hostile countries. In other countries around the world, the struggle should be conducted through democratic means, and actions should be implemented peacefully.

During the custody, Elias visited Jine. Jine sensed in his every movement that Elias had betrayed her. Elias could not find the courage to say it out loud.

Jine turned to him and said: "I understand you and forgive you. Perhaps you couldn't have done otherwise. Everyone acts for the cause they believe in."

Elias had brought some newspapers with him. On one front page, it read: "The organization named 'Hareketa Serbexweya Kurdistanê' stained the Egyptian Bazaar in Istanbul blue with a paint bomb on Sunday. Not even a nosebleed was reported."

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When Jine read this, a smile appeared on her face. A wave of joy surged within her.

Elias said goodbye to Jine, sad and hurt, and left the place. The relationship between Elias and Jine was now definitively over.

Jine relayed the news to Sera.

Sera was overjoyed. She hugged Jine and shouted: "Long live freedom! We did it! We did it!"

Jine smiled: "Yes, we did it. Thoughts are like air, water, and sun. No one can shackle them."

Resistance in a Besieged Geography: Jine's and Sera's Path

The fate of Kurdistan was written in an unfortunate geography. It was surrounded by the most backward, dogmatic, despotic, and racist regimes in the world. The Kurdish people had no single country to lean on or that

could defend their rights. Had the colonial powers of this region been Western; say from countries like Germany or Great Britain, they might have long since withdrawn; at the very least, they would not have resorted to policies of oppression such as language bans or cultural annihilation.

Jine and Sera knew how difficult their task was. They tried not only to bring a historical truth to light but also to understand its present echoes. They faced not only documents but walls of denial and silence. Breaking through these walls required both intellectual and emotional strength.

But both knew: however difficult this path might be – it was the only one that had to be taken. They researched and found that Lausanne was not peace – but a betrayal etched into history.

They found that in Germany, too, endangering the unity or territorial integrity of the state is punishable – especially when such actions are carried out consciously and actively. However, the North Kurdistan controlled by Turkey does not legally belong to Turkey under international law. Rather, it is a military occupation without a legitimate basis.

Some jurists even speak of an annexation – the formal integration of a foreign territory into a state.

The legal basis on which Turkey relies is the Treaty of Lausanne from 1923 – an agreement that is considered a historical injustice by many Kurds. In the previously concluded Treaty of Sèvres (1920), a part of Kurdistan was internationally recognized, and a possible autonomy or even independence was held out as a prospect. But this treaty was never implemented. The Turkish national movement under

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk rejected it and instead enforced the Treaty of Lausanne, in which the Kurdish question was completely excluded. The Kurds were not involved in the negotiations; their demands were ignored.

For this reason, Jine and Sera regard the Turks, Arabs, and Persians as occupiers in Kurdistan – because Kurdistan is an independent country, and the Kurds are an independent nation. It is a historical chapter whose effects are still felt today – and the struggle for independence remains legitimate.