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MARXISTS INTO MUSLIMS:
THE IRANIAN IRONY

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To: Interim Dean Mark Szuchman
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We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

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The dissertation of Abdolrahim Javadzadeh is approved.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my father whose love and support instilled in me unshakeable security and to my mother who continues to provide me with eternal and unconditional love and to my one and only sister who has been there for me every step of the way.

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Florida International University, 2007

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Professor Barry B. Levine, Major Professor

This dissertation examines the influence of Islamic ideology on Iranian Marxists during the 1979 revolution. The purpose of this study is to extricate the influence of Islamic culture, ideology, and terminology on Marxist organizations and on individuals who identified themselves as Marxists in Iran. This is especially of interest since in many ways Marxism and Islam are ideologically in conflict. Were Marxists aware of the influences of Islam in their behavior and ideology? To investigate the irony publications put forth by several Marxist organizations before and after the 1979 revolution were examined. A history of such influence both ideologically and contextually is depicted to demonstrate their political and cultural significance.

Through the study of Marxist political organs, theoretical publication and political flyers distributed during and after the revolution, the phenomenon of Marxists converting to an Islamic ideology became clearer. Many Marxist organizations were demonstrably utilizing Islamic political ideology to organize and mobilize masses of Iranians. This study shows a historical precedence of Marxists' usage of Islam in the political history of Iran dating back to early twentieth-century.

Primary and secondary Marxist literature showed that Islam was an inescapable social and political reality for Iranian Marxists. Not only was there a common upbringing but a common enemy fostered provisional collusion between the two. The internalizing the idea of martyrdom—of Shi'a Islam—was a shared belief that united Marxists with Muslims in their attempt to effect sociopolitical change in Iran. Studying Marxist publications shows evidence that many Iranian Marxists were not conscious of using Islamic ethics and terminology since Islamic beliefs are part of the taken-for-granted world of Iranian culture. This contextual belief system, pervasive within the culture and a change of political ideology is what created the conditions for the possibility of Marxists becoming Muslims.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

THE 1979 IRANIAN REVOLUTION

The path for a political culture and Islamic discourse was made prior to the 1979 revolution...the resistant Islam of Khomeini, the fundamentalist Islam of Shariati, and liberal Islam of Bazargan, and the Liberation Movement were among the nationalist constitutional culture.

John Foran

In 1979, the Iranian people gathered enough force to finally oust one of the more authoritarian rulers in the Middle East, Mohammad Reza Shah of the Pahlavi dynasty. The Shah's regime was uprooted in a matter of months despite its vast military power and Gestapo-like secret police, the SAVAK. His regime, dubbed an 'island of stability' by American President Jimmy Carter, was not able to withstand the force behind the discontent of the Iranian masses. The Pahlavi dynasty, which had ruled Iran for more than fifty years (1925 to 1979 between the Shah and his father, Reza Shah) was toppled in early February 1979. Even internationally, those who had previously come to assist the Shah no longer perceived his regime as salvageable. In the Guadeloupe Conference, the heads of four ally nations of Iran (U.S., Britain, France, and Germany), suggested that it was time for the Shah to leave.¹ Consequently, he fled the country on January 16, 1979, which marked a new era for the Iranian people. They were now ready to create a government of their own choosing, at the very least one that guaranteed basic human rights. The result was establishment of an Islamic republic. The new government, however, did not fully carry out the political and economic demands of the Iranians.

¹ Gholamreza Nejati. 2000. *tarik-e- siasi-e bist va panj saleh-e Iran (Twenty-five Years of Iranian Political History)*. (Tehran: Rasa Cultural Institute).

The Iranian revolution as a mass social revolution involved almost all classes and sectors of Iranian society against a dictator. Blue- and white-collar workers, peasants, small business owners, traditional merchants, students, intellectuals, women, and Iranian students abroad were involved in overthrowing the Shah. Marxist, Muslim, and nationalist organizations and individuals played major roles in organizing the masses. It took several months for the actors to become sufficiently organized to create a revolutionary force – a force so powerful that not even Shah’s mighty military was able to contain it.

On February 1, 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran after 14 years of exile. The enthusiasm with which millions of Iranians greeted Khomeini may have marked the first signs of the type of state that would be established in Iran. Islamic ideology, values, and ethics had played a significant role in Iranian culture for hundreds of years. After the Shah’s departure, an interim government was set up first under the name of the Provisional Islamic Republic of Iran. It took the new government almost two years to suppress the established forces in the opposition, both Muslim and Marxist. Once most of the opposition was eliminated, the Islamic Republic of Iran was established. Through the laws of Islam and under the auspices of a new Islamic revolution, more political pressure was exerted on the people. Invariably, groups in the opposition were dubbed anti-revolution and banned by the new Islamic Republic government. This held true for all groups of the opposition, both Marxist and Muslim. The new government not only restricted all sorts of political freedoms, but also dubbed as anti-Islamic many older traditions and cultural values, e.g., the *Norooz* (New Year) celebration; these were then banned.

The problem to be examined in this work involves the influence of Islamic culture and ideology on Iranian Marxist organizations. This is of special interest because the two belief systems, Marxism and Islam, are in direct opposition. Such an examination of Marxism in Iran begins with two primary questions: What culture-specific factors contributed to Marxists' conversion to Islam? Were they aware of the influences of Islam and Islamic culture? The notion of Marxists using Islam or becoming Muslims is seldom stated or implied in research on Iranian Marxists or the Islamic revolution. The subject of who converted to whose ideology is usually examined to demonstrate Muslims' use of Marxism and not widely understood as Marxists' conversion to Islam.

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to study some of the literature and print materials published by Marxist organizations in Iran to extract the traditionally overlooked Islamic terminology and ideas that pepper their literature. A secondary purpose is to examine and unveil both contextual and ideological inclinations of political Marxist organizations in Iran.²

The "contextual Islam", according to Mesbahi, was/is part of a "tripartite Islamic complex" array of "manifestations of Islam" in both pre and post revolutionary Iran:

*"Each one of these tripartite complex was acting in a separate but reinforcing function, collectively- consciously or sub-consciously- conditioning the emotive/symbolic ethos, the ideational choices, and political strategies and predicaments of all secular opposition groups and more specifically the Marxists."*³

² I am indebted to Dr. Mohiadin Mesbahi for explaining to me the meaning of "contextual Islam" for the purposes of my dissertation. Through extensive conversations he made clear the idea behind this concept and how it works in the Iranian political culture.

³ Interview with Dr. Mesbahi, October 13, 2006.

Finally, this work creates a source for those who are interested in the Iranian revolution and its outcome. It also shows how ideologies, as rigid as they may seem, are transformed and can look completely different after changes take place.

There are four facets to this research. The first studies the Islamic ideology and belief system as a political force against the Shah (Pahlavi Dynasty) and the impressions it made on Iranian Marxists. The second part delves into the ideas of Marx on religion and false consciousness vis-à-vis Iranian Marxism. The third part examines a history of Iranian Marxism as it pertains to Islam and the Islamic movement before and after the 1979 revolution. Finally, the fourth part is an examination of the significance of hybrid⁴ (Marxist-Muslim) organizations and the individuals within the Iranian opposition. The overall objective is to create a new understanding of Iranian Marxism using the sociology of knowledge to study Marxists and their relationship to Islam in Iran.

The Shah referred to the armed opposition as “Islamic Marxists.”⁵ However, the revolution became possible because of a more complex set of ideas than the Shah imagined and the cooperation among the groups within the multifaceted opposition. While it is true that the revolution was spontaneous,⁶ leaders of the opposition had to rethink and revise their ideas to adjust to popular demands. This was true for both Marxists and Muslims. The common understanding by the left in Iran is that it was Muslim leaders who borrowed from Marxist ideology, and not the other way around. It is more plausible to claim, however, especially during the revolution, that it was Marxists

⁴ Hybrid organizations are those that used both Marxism and Islam to create a third view. Naturally, some inclined more toward Islam and some more toward Marxism.

⁵ Maziar Behrooz. 1999. *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, p. 11.

⁶ Ibid. p. 13.

(some, not all) who did the ideological borrowing from Islam and who converged ideologically. This dissertation seeks to demonstrate how the self-identified Marxists could become advocates of Islam and avid supporters of the Islamic Republic government.

As the revolution progressed toward the establishment of a new state, several Marxist organizations abandoned their ideas of a separate movement and embraced Islam as a revolutionary alternative. Those who were conscious of this amalgam, including Ehsan Tabari, a prominent theorist of the Tudeh Party, claimed that they knowingly merged with Islam. They have rationalized their conversion to Islam as a new ideology as reasonable and scientific.⁷ According to Tabari, part of the reason behind the failure of the Marxists in Iran was “Marxist disbelief in religion including Islam, and their proud rejection of rich Islamic principles.”⁸ Among Marxists with overt deference to Islam are those who claim to have tactically (short-term and for the good of the revolution) borrowed ideas, but not ideology, to mobilize and organize the revolutionary masses.⁹ For them, there were two types of Islam: one form as advocated by clerics such as Boroujerdi, who defended the Shah, and another form as espoused by advocates of Ayatollah Khomeini’s revolutionary Islam. The former, dubbed reactionaries, were trying to degrade the real, resistant Islam, “an Islam whose amplifier is Imam Khomeini. These [reactionaries] were trying to provoke the oppressed Muslims of the world against our victorious revolution and the Islamic Republic of Iran.”¹⁰

⁷ Ehsan Tabari. 1992. *Kazhrahe (Diversion)*. Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications.

⁸ Ibid. p. 14.

⁹ *Donya*, Theoretical and Political Journal of the Central Committee of the Tudeh Party of Iran. No. 6, September 1980.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 18.

For some researchers, Islam is a progressive movement with answers for everything; for others it is an ideology for a resistance movement. According to Michael Fischer, “Islam creates meaning. It is what tells people how to behave, a world view that has an answer for all human problems.”¹¹ Theda Skocpol claims that “Islam is a gradual organizer with a network of clergy which resists and opposes inside and outside oppressors to mobilize people and start a revolution.”¹² For John Foran, cultural elements within Islam are useful in resistance. Foran states, “The culture of resistance is the result of many groups. They analyze the political economy using cultural elements which correspond to the experience of everyday life.”¹³ Foran further says, “the path for a political culture and Islamic discourse was made [prior to the 1979 revolution]...[the] resistant Islam of Khomeini, the fundamentalist Islam of Shariati, and liberal Islam of Bazargan, and the Liberation Movement were among the nationalist constitutional culture.”¹⁴

What I hope to achieve in this dissertation is an examination of Iranian Marxism and Marxists, and an understanding of the degree to which they have been influenced by Islam to convert to Islam. Although there is a brief look at Muslim groups and hybrid organizations, the dissertation is mainly focused on the Marxists and their Islamic inclinations. The main idea is classification of the dynamics of this relationship. The particular focus is on Iranian Marxists and culture-specific Iranian Marxism. This study

¹¹ Michael Fischer. 1980. *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*. Madison, WS: University of Wisconsin Press. p. 14.

¹² Theda Skocpol. 1994. *Revolution in the Third World*. NY: Cambridge University Press. p. 249.

¹³ John Foran. 1999. *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution*. Translated by Ahmad Tadayyon. Tehran: Rasa Cultural Services, 1999. p. 122.

¹⁴ Ibid.

follows the trajectory of Marxism and Marxists in Iran in the 20th century, and specifically, examines the Marxists' inclinations toward Islam and Islamic ethics, their ideological conversion at times, and their tradition of using Islamic terminology.

Readers must bear in mind that this work is not based on a representative sample of all Iranian Marxists, but instead is an attempt to create an ideal type (à la Weber) of those Iranian Marxists who accepted Muslim influence.¹⁵ According to Weber, ideal types are:

One-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct.¹⁶

This work is, therefore, not an exhaustive review of all literature published by Iranian Marxists, but rather those who were especially influenced by Islamic ideology and its belief system.

Methodology

In order to establish itself after the revolution, the Islamic Republic of Iran used repression to eliminate all opposition. Nonetheless, two major Marxist organizations, the Tudeh Party¹⁷ and the Fadaeean (majority)¹⁸, collaborated with the Islamic Republic state. Although they became advocates of Islam, the regime did not spare any group or individual in the opposition. As a result, even these collaborators soon became the subject of political persecution, following the elimination of other Marxist and Muslim

¹⁵ Max Weber. 1949. *Methodology of the Social Sciences*. Glencoe, Ill: Freepress.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

¹⁷ A major Marxist organization founded in 1941. See chapter 5 for more details.

¹⁸ A Marxist organization that split from the original Organization of Iranian Fadaee Guerillas a few months into the revolution. See chapter 5 for more details.

organizations. Anyone caught with written material that questioned Islam, the Islamic Republic government, or any member of the government, especially Ayatollah Khomeini, was immediately arrested and subject to execution.

While both Marxists and Muslims played a major role in organizing the opposition, the influence of Muslims on Marxists during the revolution has not been thoroughly examined. This is especially true of the influence of Islam on Iranian Marxists. Due to the nature and outcome of the revolution, study of Marxist organizations and their role during the revolution has been neglected. The most interesting part of their involvement was in providing ideological support for the new Islamic government. They were instrumental in creating a political ideology that gravitated more and more toward Islam. Some Marxists despite an ideological conflict with Islam both in realms of theology and more importantly polity, were able to make the necessary adjustments to concur with Islam. For this topic, therefore, the author has examined publications produced by some Marxist organizations and groups during the two years of upheaval (1978-1980).

Using Max Scheler and Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge as a constructionist methodology, this dissertation sets out to explain those variables active in the conversion of Marxists to Islam in Iran. The contentious politics between the Islamic Republic of Iran and leftist organizations has gone through ebbs and flows, but has always remained antagonistic. Many Iranian Marxists, to this day, are in a state of shock in observing the establishment, and consequently the perseverance, of the Islamic Republic. At first glance into any Marxist organization's literature, one would be convinced that Muslims had stolen the revolution and, contrary to its true nature, dubbed it an Islamic revolution.

Reading Iranian Marxist literature reveals an unconvincing duality: Marxists did all the work yet Muslims took the credit; the masses were secular yet the outcome was religious. Marxist literature is replete with this contradiction. How could a revolution as such, result in an Islamic Republic? The anomaly of the intention of the revolution and its consequence became the subject of many Marxist publications.

Except for Marxist literature, I was not able to find serious research referring to Marxist political activity and the outcome of the revolution. The more I researched and the more I traveled to Iran, the more strongly I saw the need for new thoughts and ideas related to Islam and Marxism. It seemed that Marxism as a Western idea should be entirely out of place in Iran, especially if it did not take into consideration Shi'a Islam as it relates to Iranian history. What would Iranians say to a ruthless criticism of Islam, as put forth by Marx? Marxist critique is not only anti-Islam and anti-traditional Islam, it is also a Western or non-Islamic concept.

The question for me was no longer how Marxists and Marxism influenced the Islamic revolution or participating Muslims. Rather, it became how Marxists were influenced by Islam and Muslims in a struggle against a despotic regime. It was not Muslims who used Marxism as a political tool, but Marxists who used Islam to seek popular support. The contention here is that Marxists were too immersed in Islam to recognize that they were deterred from criticizing Islam in a ruthless critique that Marx would have approved of. Marxists contributed to creating an Islamic republic without even realizing their role in doing so.

Research Design

For years Iranian Marxists have been entangled in an unending discussion on how to interact with the Islamic Republic of Iran. To this day they have not been able to agree on any specific political strategy. A major point of conflict has been whether they should accommodate with the Islamic regime, or try to overthrow the regime through a revolution. To this end, discourse often revolves around whether collaboration with the Islamic Republic government is a possibility. Deep rifts among Marxists have persisted for close to three decades with no concrete results. I will try to show the deep Islamic roots that exist within the purview of Iranian Marxists and that as a consequence, there persists lack of a critical view of Islam. This is in part what has caused their theoretical stagnation. Any Marxist organization contemplating political power and state building would have to seriously consider Islamic culture within Iranian society. This research uses the sociology of knowledge to examine the ideas of Iranian Marxists, specifically as they relate to the ideas of Islam and those of the Iranian Muslim movement.

I decided to study the question of Marxists and their collaboration with the Islamic regime using a collection of primary sources that was uniquely at my disposal. Once I got a hold of the collection, I had to decipher the material related to Marxists converting and collaborating with Islam and Muslims. Simple political allegiance was insufficient; to agree with an Islamic government on political issues does not demonstrate the pervasiveness of Islam. It may only indicate a short-term coalition. There had to have been more to the use of Islam by Marxists. These sources would not reveal much about the fundamentals of Islamic belief in all aspects of life, that is, in all socialization processes. Studying the question of how Marxists shifted their ideology to adhere to

Islam was the original intention of this research. However, while researching the question at hand, I came across a deeper, more profound adaptation of ideology by the Marxists – a cultural or contextual adaptation.¹⁹ To gather data illustrating both kinds of adaptation – ideological and contextual – both primary and secondary sources belonging to Marxists were examined.

For a depiction of socialization through Islam that would include all Iranian Marxists, I had to gather data from many sources. I read biographies written by Marxists, memoirs, and material pertaining to how the Islamic ethos related to struggle, e.g., martyrdom. Through these sources I realized, for the first time, the depth of Islamic belief in the construction of the social world of every Iranian, including Marxists. It became clear to me that in order to get to the depths of Islam within Iranian Marxism, I had to study not just literature but behavior, socialization processes, and more importantly culture-specific beliefs. For this purpose I used a constructionist method, Karl Mannheim's sociology of knowledge.

Constructionist sociology sets the stage by asking questions such as: Who creates the social and political definitions? Where do ideas come from? What are the circumstances that give rise to certain actions? This method of questioning does not take anything for granted. Meaning is not inherent in the act; it must be constructed. There is, therefore, a never-ending skepticism toward determinism. Set against positivist sociology, that which measures the 'out there-ness' of the causes of social phenomena, constructionism begins and ends through the 'in here-ness' of the social issue. Thus the causes for creation of an Islamic Republic in Iran can be found in the Islamism of the

¹⁹ These ideas became clear to me through conversations with Dr. Mesbahi; Associate professor of International Relations at Florida International University. He demonstrated the significance of the culture of Islam within Iranian Marxists through our discussions, which he dubbed "Contextual Islam."

Iranian population. By the same argument, the reasons behind Marxists converting to Islam before and after the 1979 revolution are to be found within Marxists themselves. The question of how Iran ended up with an Islamic republic as a consequence of the revolution can be answered by Marxists; all they need to do is look inside and observe the intensity and depth of Islamic belief within themselves. Through a constructionist argument, the religion of Islam can be treated as an independent variable. Here Islam generates, creates, struggles, and makes definitions and moral judgments.

Using Mannheim's sociology of knowledge as a method to study the roots of Islam within Iranian Marxism requires the demonstration of Islamic belief as background. Marxist leaders were brought up as Muslims and were active in Islamic groups. These are related to the depth of Islamic belief within Iranian Marxism and within Marxist individuals. Several factors proved important in understanding the extent of Islamic belief among Marxists. To begin with there was their upbringing, how they were socialized into the world through an Islamic understanding of the world. Through socialization, language is constructed. Hence their prevailing terminology, even political terminology, was Islamic. Islamic concepts such as martyrdom (*shahid*) were key ingredients used by Marxists and Muslims alike in terms of resistance and fighting against the oppressors. Furthermore, gender relations among Marxist groups adhered to the same Islamic ways of gender separation normative in Islamic upbringing. Islamic traditions were so tightly adhered to that often Marxists did not need to convert to Islam; it was their only way of life, the only world they knew. The adaptation of Islam to the political life of Marxists was both strategic and tactical. It was strategic in Islam's non-separation of religion and state, which Marxists never questioned, and tactical in acknowledging an Islamic

government as a viable anti-imperialist revolutionary alternative. The latter made many Marxists change their orthodox Marxist belief system entirely.

Included in this dissertation is a brief history of the events related to instances of Marxist-Muslim cooperation. It begins in 1920, with the cooperation of Marxists and Muslims against the central government in Iran, and against the Russian and British forces. Later, in the 1960s, following the uprising in the city of Qom, the Marxist and Muslim struggle entered a new era in fighting against the Shah. The early 1970s saw the inception of armed struggle as a new stage in opposing and later overthrowing the Shah's regime. This led to the 1979 revolution, which was the culmination of the involvement of Muslims and Marxists in the political setting.

Political discourse in Iran is usually studied and portrayed with Muslims (especially Shariati and the Mojahedin) using Marxism. In this dissertation, however, the idea is reversed. Although the author does not claim that this is the only study of Marxists becoming Muslims, it is certainly rare to find such an argument in Iranian political writing. The primary literature referred to in this dissertation is specifically used to address the question of how and why Marxists became Muslims. Once the Islamic regime announced the opposition groups to be subversive and anti-revolutionary, their books and all written material were banned. As a result books were destroyed and an attempt was made to erase a piece of history from the minds of Iranians.

In the summer of 2003, I became privy to a large collection of primary sources. They were put at my disposal by a close friend, someone I grew up with in Iran. Our discussions about Iranian Marxists and their shortcomings over the years led this person to believe that reading some primary sources would help me gain perspective on the

entire process of the 1979 revolution. These materials were books and booklets, flyers, and political newspapers banned by the Islamic regime following the political purges of all opposition groups in 1981-1982. The books were mainly by the Tudeh Party of Iran. Topics covered a variety of subjects. They were mostly on Islam and the new Islamic Republic of Iran, and how Marxists should or should not work and collaborate with the regime. At that time I had no plans to include the material in any form of writing or academic research.

Although 24 years had gone by, the topics and subjects depicted in the material still seemed alive and fresh. Many of them had later fomented splits, political positions, and events that had grave effects on the outcome of the revolution and the groups themselves. There was a rich history in every topic mentioned. My familiarity with the history of Marxist organizations in Iran during the revolution helped me sort out events and groups. This collection became the material that would enable me to dissect what had actually occurred during the revolution. With a few exceptions, almost all of the material consisted of primary sources, invaluable for a sociologist. They were views and political positions on specific events and personalities of the revolution. During the period of the formation of the new state, many groups became involved in intense political discussions to determine its future. The magnitude of this process made political actors scrutinize every political position and idea put forth by all group and parties, making groups delve into their ideology more than ever before. They either adhered to Islam and an Islamic regime or distanced themselves from it altogether.

Originally my research was to include an exclusive study of major Marxist organizations, demonstrate their adherence to Islam, especially to the Islamic Republic

government in Iran. Once the collection of material was discovered, I looked for specific references made by Marxists about collaborating with the Islamic regime. There were particular events that would require Marxists' attention; addressing these events would indicate to others the degree to which they deviated from Marxism. The direction of my initial research was to investigate Marxists' perception of ideological affinity with Islam and Muslims. The task of investigating a more profound use of Islam by Marxists came later as I was finishing analysis of the primary sources. This is the point at which the idea of contextual Islam became a viable subject for investigation.²⁰

Prior to finding this collection of materials, there were seldom primary sources available to those who lived abroad. This was especially true two years after the revolution, when all such books were banned. The collection presented an opportunity for me to reanalyze what had been originally analyzed by the original actors. Prior to reading the material, my only sources of information on the events of the revolution and the groups involved were materials published abroad. These sources included idiosyncratic interpretations of the views and events in Iran. As a result, the reader lacked an opportunity for objective interpretation and analysis. Finding this collection, therefore, was an exciting discovery, whether or not the materials would be used in a paper.

Naturally, I read the collection in quest of the sophisticated methodology through which Marxists rationalized working with an Islamic regime. Despite my original intentions, I detected not only a tactical, short-term collaboration with the Islamic regime, but a deep conversion to Islam by actors who, according to their professed ideology, should have been more critical. The ease with which some Marxist groups justified a

²⁰ The idea of contextual Islam was constructed by Dr. Mesbahi who was on my dissertation committee. Through extensive discussions with him he demonstrated how an Islamic belief system was part of everyday life of all politics and political activity including that of Marxists.

political collaboration with Muslims required a deeper understanding of the culture. The search for political and short-term acceptance of Islam led me to investigate the fundamentals of such an ideological conversion. Collaboration with an Islamic regime could indicate substantial Islamic belief and ideas within the ranks of Marxists and that was what I set out to find out.

Description of Sources

The primary sources used to depict Marxist adoption of and conversion to Islam are actual flyers, pamphlets, books, and papers published by the Tudeh Party (*hezb-e tudeh Iran*), Organization of Iranian Peoples Fadaeean Majority and Minority (*sazman-e cherik-ha-ye fadaee-e khalgh-e Iran*), Paykar (*sazman-e paykar dar rah-e azadi-eh tabagheye kargar*), Organization of Iranian Peoples Mojahedin (*sazman-e mojahedin-e khalgh-e Iran*), the Liberation and Equality Group (*goruh-e azadi va barabari*), as well as Marxist and Muslim individuals. These were the groups most active during the revolution. Secondary sources are books written in Persian about Iran and the 1979 revolution in Iran, in addition to books written by non-Iranian authors after the revolution.

The primary sources came from a collection of literature buried in the yard of an old house in a remote village of 30 to 40 families, a long drive from the capital city, Tehran. At the time of my travel in 2003, the last 10 kilometers were not paved and consisted only of a dirt road that led to the village. It is hidden in a valley in a mountainous region in northern Iran. There we found the books and booklets untouched – the way the owner had left them close to 20 years before. The owner of the books had put the books in three layers of plastic bags and then in gunnysacks, and had buried them in

the front yard of a house. We dug up the gunnysacks and carried the bags into the house. The material had remained intact. This was a collection of books, flyers, pamphlets, hand-written books, and papers, mostly of Marxist groups. The entire collection consisted of about 300 to 320 pieces. It was mainly the owner's political activity during the revolution that had motivated her to stash the collection in a safe place. These were the "banned books worth saving" according to the owner.²¹ It should be made clear that such material was available to any researcher at the time. What made it special to me was a chance to study and examine fresh and first-hand primary sources.

The owner of the collection had hidden them in fear of getting caught by the Islamic regime, which might have caused my contact a long-term prison sentence or even execution. The collection had to either be destroyed or hidden in a very safe place. For almost two years after the revolution, some groups' publications were still in circulation among leftists and Marxists in Iran. This person's duties in the organization consisted of keeping a copy of each publication. The 300+ books, booklets, and pamphlets were "probably one-tenth of the entire collection," the owner had told me. Most of the books were burned or thrown into lakes, rivers, and wells. The stashed-away collection was handpicked as qualitatively the most important items.

I was trusted with the materials not only because of the owner's long relationship with me, but perhaps more importantly, because I would be able to utilize the collection and contribute toward writing a piece of history usually not the subject of social scientific research. We had engaged in long on-going discussions on the role of Marxists during the revolution. My contention was that some Marxist groups played a major role in the stabilization of the new Islamic regime although it was ironic for Marxists to collaborate

²¹ For purposes of protecting the owner, names cannot be disclosed.

fully with an Islamic government. As a Marxist who had participated in the process of the revolution, the owner did not share my view on this irony. Along with many others they were avid supporters with years of experience and political know-how – mainly underground for several years. My informant was in charge of particular workers' unions after the revolution. These unions were pronounced illegal and later scattered. Later this person was in charge of distributing the group's written material, which also became labeled anti-revolutionary by the Islamic regime. This person was arrested and incarcerated three times for short periods of time. This had great impact in giving up the overt political life. Sharing the hidden collection seemed to relieve this person of historic responsibility. I feel as though, said my contact, "I'm liberating myself."

The owner insisted that the Marxists' approach was the only rational way to interact with an Islamic government and that an Islamic state was almost inevitable. According to this person my absence in Iran during the revolution did not allow me to have a correct view of events. The disclosure of the collection of materials was to prove this person's point that it was a rational decision for Marxists to become defenders of Islam and that reading this collection would give me a better idea of the events of the revolution. By reading the material, I was informed, I "would be able to put my delusional views in perspective."

Due to a history of despotic conditions, most Iranian opposition groups opted for very small booklets, hence extremely small print (reading some of the material required a magnifying glass.) This would make for written materials more convenient to transport and easily concealed.²² Some of the publications could fit in one's shoes, socks, hats,

²² Size of books and publications varied from a normal book size, 6 by 8 ½ inches, to 4 ½ by 6 ½ inches, and a smaller version of 3 by 5 inches.

sleeves, within the linings of jackets or pants, even some body parts. Although the Tudeh Party tried to print its work consistently the same size, it was always a matter of availability of paper, ink, and other requirements. The official political organ of the party, “*Mardom*” (people), was consistent in color but varied in size. It averaged 40 to 80 pages of small print. The more controversial topics were collected in occasional publications labeled “*Masa’el-e Emrooz*” (Current Affairs) under various names, such as “*Donya*,” (World) “*Nameye Mardom*,” (People’s Letter) and “*Zamime-ye Mardom*.” (Appendix to ‘People’) These were printed in larger size booklets.

Publications of the Liberation and Equality Group were very small – 4 by 6 inches. They had no cover and no table of contents. They usually consisted of one topic addressed on the front page. They invariably started by calling “comrades” [Marxists] and “brothers and sisters” [Muslims] to action. Publications of other groups, such as The Organization of Iranian Peoples Fadaee Guerillas (*minority*) and (*majority*) were also among this collection. However, since the majority-minority split occurred more than a year after the revolution, the subjects covered had less to do with Islam and the new Islamic regime and more to do with their own intra-organizational discussions over the split. Both organizations printed their political newspaper under the same name, *Kaar* (labor). The distinction was the two words, *aghalliyat* (minority) and *aksariyat* (majority) in their name on top of the front cover.

Among the items in this collection was a very small booklet belonging to a third group that split from the Fadaee Guerillas. This 88-page publication was published under the title, *mosahebe ba Ashraf-e Dehghani* (An Interview with Ashraf Dehghani). Ashraf Dehghani was one of the leaders of this third group, which went under the name of

Iranian Peoples Fadaee Guerillas, eliminating the word ‘organization’ from their name. Their argument revolved around the question of the legitimacy of the new Islamic regime. They labeled the new regime as despotic from the very first weeks of the revolution and refused to recognize the Islamic regime as a legitimate political body. Ideologically speaking, this group distinguished itself as the opposite of what the Tudeh Party was trying to achieve – a comprehensive collaboration with the new political body. This group was anomalous among Marxists, most of whom recognized the legitimacy of an Islamic regime from its very inception. Within the content of their political writing, the defense, justification, and rationalization of an Islamic ideology was sparse; however, their emphasis on martyrdom as a requirement of revolutionary authenticity persisted.

The ability to review these materials was invaluable. The person allowing me access had trusted me in two ways: first, that I would not reveal her identity and second, that I would put the material to good use. We had grown up together so trusting me was not a problem. What this person was more concerned about was how I would use the collection for political or academic purposes.

The reader should bear in mind that at the time of the revolution, such materials published by political groups, Marxist and Muslim, were not banned. Two to three years after the revolution, however, all political publications were pronounced ‘anti-revolution’ and ‘anti-Islamic,’ hence illegal. During this period, 1980-1982, when political persecution and oppression of the opposition was at its peak, most books and other written materials were destroyed. The fear of imprisonment, torture, or possible execution left little room for risk-taking; hence books were seldom preserved. I was able to retrieve

the materials only because they had been buried in this particular village. According to the owner, “they were too valuable a treasure to destroy.”

Once I had the more than 300 books and booklets at my disposal, I eagerly started the process of reading almost the entire collection in the next few weeks. I began by reading the titles and later the contents. Most of the materials were in an official book format; I assumed their publisher to have been the same organization that printed the material. There were no chapters, rather topics spoken about by the chairman of the party or group, or they were responses to certain other Marxist or Muslim groups.

I first separated the books by organization. Within the collection were a number of books from almost all the Iranian Marxist groups, but most of the material belonged to the Tudeh Party. They covered many topics that these organizations had written about during the years of the revolution such as the role of Marxists in the revolution, why Marxists trusted Muslims, why Marxists would collaborate with an Islamic government, why Muslims should trust Marxists who do not believe in religion and God, and the nature of the relationship between the Tudeh Party and the Islamic regime.

I remained in the village for another three days reading as much of the material as possible. With no distractions, no television, no telephone, I was able to not only read but also discuss every issue with the owner of the collection. We then headed back to Tehran with the entire collection in the trunk of the car. The owner of the collection was still apprehensive about traveling with the books. Although 24 years had gone by, I could still detect this person’s anxiety. We took the books home and I began reading all I could for the next few weeks. It was after this period that I contemplated writing about the contents of this interesting collection. Finding it was the main reason I chose the topic at hand.

With my annual visit to Iran drawing to a close, I needed to decide how to take all these items back to the states. Simply putting them in bags or suitcases was not a viable option as airport security is very tight in Iran, and bags and suitcases are thoroughly searched at several checkpoints. Although these materials were no longer banned, it was not a good idea to risk getting caught with so many of them. Books with titles from Marxist organizations would make any security officer want to take a second look. We thought of scanning every page and e-mailing the material, but that was too arduous of a task and pages usually came out distorted and unreadable. Finally, a family member suggested mailing the most important books and booklets, the ones the author absolutely needed, via DHL. This international company, which luckily had an office in Tehran, hardly checked the contents. Close to 70 books and booklets were shipped, and I handwrote the remaining useful material and quotations in a notebook.

The literature represented an amalgam of many subjects, but all were related to either the revolution or activities before the revolution. Some 80 percent of the collection consisted of the Tudeh Party's political organs and booklets. These became my main sources. After reading most of the material, I began to select those I thought would help in examining and refining my contention. My initial idea was to show the irony of Iranian Marxists' conversion into Islam. It was therefore based on ideological conversion only; how some Marxists collaborated with Muslims in stabilizing an Islamic state and how they justified it by providing ideas of legitimation. I culled the material based on the views put forth by some Marxists, especially the Tudeh Party, on how to cooperate with the nascent Islamic government. Tudeh's defense of Muslim clerics and the Islamic state was an irrevocable position held by the party. They perceived the clerics and Muslim

activists as anti-imperialist and in collaboration did all they could to solidify an Islamic political entity. This was even true, as we shall read, in forming the forces of repression, the Revolutionary Guards (*sepah-e pasdaran*). Thus all material selected was related to the main argument of this dissertation: What the Tudeh Party thought of Muslim clerics, Muslim activists, anti-capitalist ideas of Islam, necessities of forming an anti-capitalist Islamic state, legitimating the Islamic forces of suppression, viewing groups in opposition as anti-revolutionary, and most importantly the role of Ayatollah Khomeini as a revolutionary leader. Since most of the sources were repetitious in their arguments, only a handful is included here. These materials all pertain to the subject of the Islamic state and Marxists – those that illustrate the author’s argument of demonstrating the relationship between Marxist groups and Islam and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Procedure for Analysis

The selection of the literature to use for this dissertation was related to its content and organization. I chose materials put forth by groups, Marxist or otherwise, that included an analysis of the revolution, Islam, and cooperation with Muslims. Initially it had been curiosity about the types of documents that were banned after the revolution that generated interest.

Prior to finding these sources, most of what I had read about the revolution had been secondary sources published by Marxist and Muslim groups. The possibility of finding primary sources, especially from the immediate post-revolutionary era, was remote. The collection described in the previous section allowed for reviewing pertinent material firsthand. Most of the material belonging to the Tudeh Party consisted of published

question-and-answer sessions by the party. Many controversial questions were asked, and Nour-al Din Kianuri, the head of the Party at the time, responded to them.

After reviewing the available data, I decided to adopt a pattern suggested by the writings. This pattern pointed to four categories of selection. First, the materials were separated by organization. Second, Marxist organizations were chosen as they pertained to the subject at hand, how they perceived Islam and the Islamic state. Third, organizations that mostly spoke about the proximity of Islam and Marxism were selected. Fourth, a pattern of defending political Islam, vis-à-vis theological Islam, was sought. The contents of these pamphlets and books relate to the topic of this dissertation in that they mainly show the political and ideological conversion of Marxists into Islam. In this collection, contextual Islam is not mentioned since the material merely deals with ideology and perception of political power in relation to some Marxists. The content from the books is directly translated without analysis. Most of the content is straightforward and speaks to the issue at hand.

The research is therefore descriptive, using existing publications to interpret what was put forth to justify certain political practices. I also made use of additional direct sources that were published legally and illegally during the turbulent times of the revolution. This period includes one year before and one year after the takeover of the Islamic Republic of Iran (1978-1980). Some of the documents can be found in the archives and on the websites of the relevant organizations.

Since this type of content analysis of existing material has not been performed by other researchers, the available secondary literature is very limited. Most such literature was banned well into the mid 1990s. Prior to that, banned documents were not in the

public domain, denying researchers access to them. Consequently such documents not only constitute the literature review for this dissertation, they may also be recognized as a review of literature pertaining to the Iranian revolution. All of the writings are in Persian. The author translated them, at times seeking second opinions from translators in Iran.

The question was what made a Marxist-Muslim conversion possible for some Marxists? How were Marxists convinced that political adaptation to Islam would bring about a socialist or social democratic government? In addition to the collection found in Iran, I have used secondary sources to demonstrate a consistency in the usage of Islamic belief among certain Marxists. While the primary sources used here can clarify some questions related to political positions on Islam and the Islamic regime held by some Marxists, they would not give the reader a wider scope of events vis-à-vis a history of Marxists and Islam in the Iranian movement. Use of the primary sources alone would not clarify the rich history of Marxists and Islam; it would seem abstract and lacking in historical context since they could shed light only on a short period of Marxist activity and political position. It was necessary, therefore, to use other sources to provide the socio-historical content.

For this purpose I have used mainly sources written by Iranian Marxist and non-Marxist analysts and social theorists. Their material was more often than not published in Persian. A small number are also available in English, Ervand Abrahamian's²³ work, for example. These secondary sources have helped in examining the events and personalities influencing Marxists through Islam. Furthermore, since the primary sources used here are only those of Marxists, they do not mention Islamic literature and Muslims as actors.

²³ Ervand Abrahamian. 1982. *Iran between Two Revolutions*. Princeton, NJ: University Press.

This dissertation uses the sociology of knowledge to understand Marxists vis-à-vis Islam; therefore, an analysis of Islam within Iran is necessary. To this end, the writings of some prominent Muslim theorists are included. In addition, to demonstrate the influence of Muslim political activity on Marxists, a brief history of Muslim political activity is necessary. In the collection of Marxists' primary sources, contextual Islam is not depicted nor is it a matter of concern. Since, I have attempted to clarify contextual Islam through a brief history, which also includes acts, beliefs, latent values, and terminology.

Chapter four, where the main objective is to demonstrate ideological conversion of Marxists into Muslims, uses mostly primary sources to show the clear deviation taken by Iranian Marxists. These materials demonstrate how some Marxists abandoned their skepticism of religion, and more significantly, supported a state that used religiosity to stabilize an otherwise precarious regime. The primary sources are only sparsely referred to throughout the other chapters.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE

Internalization, then, implies that the objective facticity of the social world becomes a subjective facticity as well. The individual encounters the institutions as data of the objective world outside himself, but they are now data of his own consciousness as well

Peter L. Berger

Marx: Ideology, false consciousness, economic system/superstructure

To better understand why it is important to examine the irony of Iranian Marxists becoming Muslims, it is necessary to review Marx's ideas on religion and the role of religion as false consciousness, alienation, and an opiate for the masses. Marx uses religion as a dependent variable, as a symptom of a world that suffers alienation. In Iran, however, and for the purposes of this paper, religion is dealt with as an independent variable, an important social factor that generated certain behavior among Marxists in Iran. An essential point of Marx's sociology of knowledge is that ideas may work to repress a class, as does religion. The failure of Iranian Marxists to contemplate this concept is the foundation of the irony of Marxists adhering to Islam in Iran.

For Marx, false consciousness is that which confirms human servitude, rather than emancipating the species' essence. False consciousness hinders the universal class of the proletariat in its liberating and developmental role and leads the bourgeoisie to misleadingly impose its sectarian outlook as a universally valid view. The superstructure of illusion deters class emancipatory activities by obscuring both the role of reason and its objective in the historical process.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx puts forth the fullest treatment of his materialist conception of history. He states that ideas have no existence independent of physical

reality. He rejects Hegel's notion that ideas determine experience in favor of a materialist view that experience determines ideas:

The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language or real life. Conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behavior. The same applies to mental production as expressed in the language of politics, laws, morality, religion, metaphysics, etc., of a people. Men are the producers of their conceptions, ideas, etc.—real active men, as they are conditioned by definite development of their productive forces and of the intercourse corresponding to these, up to its furthest forms. Consciousness can never be anything else than conscious existence, and the existence of men is their actual life-process.²⁴

Marx argues that the essence of individuals is determined by the material economic conditions—“what they produce and how they produce”—in which they live out their very existence.²⁵

This fundamental part of Marxist analysis gives priority to the material aspect of human experience over ideal aspects of that existence. Marx can be understood as emphasizing the economic component of social experience as the decisive element, the relationship between economic institutions and other social institutions. Art, religion, science and law, for example, are captured in this model of structure and superstructure. They are derived and supported by the underlying economic structure. The superstructure includes political parties and institutions, prevailing morality, and different aspects of culture, namely religion. As sets of ideas, these play a role in determining action. In Marx's thoughts ideas can play a significant role. They are important as ideologies and at

²⁴ Robert Tucker. 1978. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (p. 154).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150

times explain the actions of men. These ideas have important effects through religion or propaganda.²⁶

Directly related to religion, Marx puts special emphasis on consciousness, the idea that humanity is a knowing species. It is not merely knowing, but knowing in relation to the material world and acting upon the material world. Consciousness is awareness of humans in their actual life process. Being conscious and productive are essentially the same. Marx claims that it is necessary to distinguish between true and false consciousness. False consciousness accepts the nature of the world uncritically. It supports, validates, and perpetuates the system of exploitation and oppression. Religion, like other forms of ideology, can in certain contexts be a vehicle for false consciousness.

Marx's discussion of religion in the 'Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right' is visible in this quotation:

Religious suffering is at one and the same time the *expression* of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of a soulless situation. It is the *opium* of the people.²⁷

This quotation seems to indicate a duality in Marx's thought about religion. It is both an expression of alienation and a perpetuation of alienation, thus false consciousness. Marx does not see religion as necessary within society, or as part of human nature. As an instrument of alienation, it is only necessary when alienation exists. Alienation is a symptom of the exploitation of one class by another, and when this exploitation ends, the

²⁶ Barry B. Levine. 1986. "Methodological Ironies in Marx and Weber." *International Journal of Moral and Social Studies*. Vol. I, No. 3: Autumn.

²⁷ Tucker. p. 54.

need for religion also comes to an end. The duality that is intrinsic to the beginning of religion is a false duality.

Religion as an illusion plays a dual role in false consciousness. On the one hand, religion creates an illusory form of happiness, and it makes those who accept it willing to accept the existing conditions of their world. It also plays an ideological role in creating false consciousness. As religion is part of the superstructure, representing the ruling economic class of a given society, it validates and justifies that economic structure. Further, religion is related to politics ideologically, and it is controlled and used by the ruling class to placate the ruled majority.

The ruthless criticism of religion by Marx does not leave the adherent any room for an unbiased view of religiosity. Marxists must address the question of religion critically. The reason Iranian Marxists did not criticize religion and Islam is two-fold. First, they lived in a culture permeated by Islam. Second, during the revolution many Marxist groups viewed Islam and an Islamic government as a truly revolutionary alternative. It is my contention that Islamic upbringing and socialization processes, which create contextual Islam, are interconnected with the acceptance of political Islam as an alternative form of revolution. To demonstrate the interconnection of contextual Islam and political Islam, the author will use the sociology of knowledge as a method to articulate and extrapolate an analysis of Islamic beliefs among Marxists in Iran. This method is used to examine the conditions that gave rise to Islamic ideas that allowed them to compete with and prevail over other philosophical ideas, such as Marxism.

Marxism, Religion and Relations of Production

According to Karl Marx, productive forces develop gradually and steadily, while relations of production are comparatively fixed at any given stage.

This produces the possibility and reality of a growing time lag between the stage of development of productive forces and the relations of production or class-structure of a given society. The irresistible growth of the productive forces then bursts through the integument of the relations of production which have become a fetter on the productive forces.²⁸

The Shah's modernization process was forced on Iranians from the top down, having created no real infrastructure to speak of. Productive forces were precarious, sporadic and irregular; they were absent in terms of creating any meaningful social force.

Infrastructure was not built, and a solid capitalist class was not formed. By the time the Shah was overthrown, Iran had only 26 miles of highway; schooling was lacking, and unemployment was rampant among rural-to-urban migrants. A few hospitals and some clinics existed, but these were mostly concentrated in the capital city of Tehran. The only economic resource that allowed for the Shah's caricature of modernization was the vast surplus of oil, especially in the 1970s. The capitalist Iranian state-monopoly that took shape had the form of a narrow skyscraper, lacking any solid foundation in the form of relatively broad, modern, private capitalist, and petty bourgeois social structures.

The social relations that had been implanted from above proved not to act as an agent of change.²⁹ The Shah's agrarian reform forced a significant number of peasants off their land and into the cities looking for work. Unlike in some Latin American countries, the state did not and could not act to build a viable infrastructure. The peasant migrant

²⁸ Eugene Kamenka. 1983. *Karl Marx*. NY: Penguin Books, p. 570.

²⁹ Boris Kagarlitsky. 1995. *The Mirage of Modernization*. NY: Monthly Review Press.

was faced with the unavailability of jobs in the cities and became marginalized.³⁰ The marginalized migrant was disconnected from his peasant background and could not forge new social bonds. His way of life was:

uncertain, [he was] no longer a peasant, but not yet an experienced worker; already an urban resident, while retaining a rural psychology...what grew up was not a proletarian but a traditionalist consciousness, since the established proletariat was overwhelmed by new arrivals from the villages. Dissatisfaction grew even more rapidly among the traditionalist and semi-traditionalist layers.³¹

The marginal first-generation urban migrants became the main opposition force, who gave their fundamental and unconditional support to an Islamic authority. They transferred their long-established belief system of Islam, with its patriarchal and traditional values, into the cities, creating the basis for one of the strongest Islamic mass movements in the Middle East. This created a fertile ground and became the seeds of the Iranian revolution. In a peculiar way, the Shah helped build the same social force that would years later produce his overthrow. Salvation came with Islam. Mosques became the only place where it was possible to criticize the Shah's regime.

The Iranian Marxists fought hard to create a viable social alternative but were not able to create the social bonds in their organizational efforts, unable even in their vernacular to make the necessary connection to the masses. In Iran, contrary to what Marx argued, relations of production could not compensate for the time lag because the development was not the development Marx had in mind. If the process of modern development had been a real capitalist development, and a revolutionary proletariat had

³⁰ In Latin America, as opposed to Iran, the state became an active agent in urban development by taking a major role in creating economic infrastructure, such as roads and energy supplies, and directly or through subsidies and tax concessions, promoting industry. See Bryan R. Roberts. "Urbanization, Development, and the Household," in *Comparative National Development*. (ed.) A. Douglas Kincaid and Alejandro Portes. 1994. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.

³¹ Kagarlitsky, p. 89.

been established. According to Marxist thought the Iranian revolution might have rejected religion as an alternative superstructure. The Shah's simulated modernization (development), however, did not eliminate religion; rather, it strengthened Islamic ideas and values. It did not follow Marx's ideas and Marx's ideas on an underdeveloped economy did not help understand what was in fact happening.

Scheler and Mannheim on the Sociology of Knowledge

Sociology of knowledge investigates the interconnections between categories of thought, knowledge claims, and social reality – *Seinsverbundenheit*, as Mannheim puts it, the existential connectedness of thought. Karl Marx was a pioneer in this field of study, with his theory that under certain historical conditions, economic realities determine the ideological 'superstructure' by way of socioeconomic processes. This concept remains a central issue in the sociology of knowledge. The sociology of knowledge, however, owes its decisive development to the work of Max Scheler and Karl Mannheim. According to Scheler, who first introduced the term *Wissenssoziologie* (sociology of knowledge), this method emerges as an analysis of the regularities of those social processes and structures that pertain to intellectual life and to modes of knowing. Karl Mannheim extended the idea as a theory of the existential connectedness of thought. His sociology of knowledge is concerned with intellectual and spiritual structures that inevitably take different forms in different social historical settings.

Max Scheler extended the Marxist notion of substructure by identifying different real factors, which, he believed, conditioned thought in different historical periods and in various social and cultural systems in specific ways. These real factors have sometimes been regarded as institutionalized instinctive forces, and as representing an ahistorical

concept of substructure. What limited Scheler's ideas was his insistence on the eternal life of ideas and values, which, however, was not helpful to explain social and cultural change. His ideas were developed further by Karl Mannheim.

Like Scheler, Mannheim extended the concept of substructure, suggesting that biological factors, psychological elements, and spiritual phenomena might take the place of primary economic relations in the substructure, but he did not believe that scientific and technical knowledge could be subjected to sociological analysis. He thought that the sociology of knowledge was destined to play a major role in intellectual and political life, especially in periods of crisis and conflict, by examining sociologically the conditions that gave rise to competing ideas, political philosophies, ideologies, and diverse cultural products. In his view, the sociology of knowledge technique could call intellectuals to their passion of striving for synthesis, and change their relationship to groups, organizations, and parties contending in society, giving them distance and objectivity.

The religion of Islam gave social and political protection to Iranians, and in turn the people gave that protection to clerics and Muslim organizers. They protected Islam. The protection given to Islam, by the people, by the Marxists, or even by the Shah is what Karl Mannheim would discover in Iranian life, using his sociology of knowledge method. Such methodology would dissect and demonstrate the ubiquity and intensity of Islamic belief. From its very beginning, dating back to 1920, Marxism was influenced by Islam. Once researchers study the trajectory of the Marxist movement, its modes of thought would be understood as a part of that history. A principal thesis of the sociology of knowledge is that there are modes of thought that cannot be sufficiently understood as

long as their social origins are not clear.³² Iranian Marxists were not conscious of the social origins of Islam within their ethnic interpretations of Marxism. It is indeed true that Marxist organizations were theorizing about the sociopolitical conditions in Iran. Nevertheless it would be false to deduce that all the ideas and sentiments that motivated the organizations had their origin in Marxism alone and can be adequately explained solely on the basis of their own life-experiences.

Further, according to Mannheim, sociology of knowledge as a method seeks to comprehend thought in the concrete setting of its historical-social situation, out of which individually differentiated thought only very gradually emerges.³³ Thus, it was not Marxist groups in general, or even isolated individuals within these groups, who analyzed and did the thinking about a revolution but rather certain groups who had developed a particular style of thought in an endless series of responses to certain typical situations characterizing their common position. It is incorrect to say that these groups were not a product of their historical social conditioning. Rather, it is more correct to insist that they participated in thinking further than what others had thought before them. Every group, whether Marxist or Muslim, was therefore in a two-fold sense predetermined by the fact of growing up in a specific society. On the one hand, they found ready-made situations; on the other, they realized that in those situations there were appropriate patterns of thought and conduct.

The social conditioning through Islam involved an internalization of the Islamic ethos even in the political realm generating a total acceptance of political Islam. It would

³² Karl Mannheim. 1936. *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*. NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, pp. 1-3.

³³ Ibid.

make sense for Marxists to agree with Muslims on particular ideological points, on specific political affairs leading to a tactical unity to defeat the enemy. However, given the wide separation between the two schools of thought in constructing ideal societies and the states that run them, it would be ironic, if not contradictory to collaborate in total ideology. Peter L. Berger's 'sacred canopy' proves useful to help explain how this separation of ideologies is bridged. The sacred canopy is the set of beliefs that permeate a particular culture. These set of beliefs, in the case of Iran, stem from Islamic ideology.

Peter L. Berger and the Sacred Canopy

Peter L. Berger calls the prevalence and the penetration of a social phenomenon such as religion a 'sacred canopy.'³⁴ That is, certain beliefs (in this case, Islam) become so prevalent and the taken-for-granted that all activities are filtered, recognized, and managed through them. In the case of Iran, the argument is that Islamic behavior was not only perpetuated by Muslims, who were influenced through Islam directly, but fostered by Marxists as well. For instance, while Marxists had set their ideological guidelines, they were not able to shed critical Islamic beliefs such as martyrdom. The Islamic belief in martyrdom became the canopy that hovered over all thought and all activity. Voluntarily sacrificing one's life for an ultimate cause was a precondition for achieving a better society in both Iranian Muslim and Marxist thinking. Martyrdom, in fact, guaranteed future success.

This belief regarding death is somewhat contrary to what Berger posed. Relating to death, Berger wrote:

³⁴ Peter L. Berger. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. New York: Anchor.

Witnessing the death of others and anticipating his own death, the individual is strongly propelled to question the ad hoc cognitive and normative operating procedures of his “normal” life in society. Death presents society with a formidable problem, not only because of its obvious threat to the continuity of human relationships, but because it threatens the basic assumptions of order on which society rests.³⁵

The Islamic canopy operated differently. Iranian Muslims and Marxists did not perceive the idea of death as disorder creating anomie. Dying for the cause contributed to an entirely new order. In fact, martyrdom, and certainly a culture that thrives on the notion of martyrdom, moves forward by the idea of sacrificial death. Contrary to Berger’s idea, death is encouraged in such a case. The word ‘*fadaee*’ (in Persian), used by both Marxists and Muslims at different times in the Iranian political movement, actually means ‘one who sacrifices one’s life for the cause.’ The most important idea that brought Muslims and Marxists together, especially during the years prior to the 1979 revolution, was the idea of martyrdom. To sacrifice one’s life for the cause, to become a *fadaee*, was the ultimate method not only to fight the Shah’s dictatorship but also to prove the authenticity of a revolutionary organization. Martyrdom, modesty, and patriarchal beliefs were the contextual Islamic ethos within the Iranian culture; Marxists were no exception. Marxists implemented the idea of martyrdom within their political struggle as one ultimate measure of a genuine and authentic revolutionary. Although no Marxist justified martyrdom with an Islamic rationale on the surface, the enthusiasm with which it was welcomed, without a doubt, was related to Islamic values. The culture of Shi’a Islam—contextual Islam, rationalized and further reinforced martyrdom as the unit of measurement for an Iranian revolutionary.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

Once the political and the parliamentary methods of the Tudeh Party³⁶ and the National Front³⁷ proved useless, it was time for a more serious fight, one that did not play by the established legal rules. Armed struggle was the method, but martyrdom was the engine that pushed revolutionaries forward, the midwife that gave birth to an entirely new movement. Martyrdom became the challenge of an authentic revolutionary. When the Tudeh Party and its tactics of legal-constitutional activity in fighting the Shah were gradually undermined, the question became a matter of who was more revolutionary in fighting the Shah's regime. Martyrdom, as generated by the Shi'a culture of Iran, was taken for granted³⁸ by theorists as the unit by which a true revolutionary was measured.

Generally, and consistent with Berger's notion of a sacred canopy, Islam creates meaning. It is what tells people how to behave and presents a worldview that has answers for all human problems.³⁸ Islam thus became an organizing linchpin with a network of clergy. Through Islam they were able to resist and oppose inside and outside oppressors, to mobilize people and start revolutions.³⁹

Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckman in their book, *The Social Construction of Reality*, articulate three aspects of social life that explain the social construction of reality: that society is a human product, that society is an objective reality, and that man is a social product. They use Alfred Schutz's phenomenology to understand human culture and reality as it exists. They ask, how does culture present itself to us so as to

³⁶ Other than the original Communist Party of Iran, which lasted only a few years as an organization, the Tudeh Party of Iran was the first significant Marxist organization to introduce the ideas of Marxism to Iranians.

³⁷ Mosaddegh and his colleagues established this first nationalist organization in 1949.

³⁸ Henry Munson. 1989. *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East*. Boston: Yale University Press.

³⁹ Theda Skocpol. 1994. *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 241.

appear real? How is it possible that different groups of people can accept utterly different kinds of reality? For them reality is defined as “a quality of appertaining to phenomena that we recognize as having a being independent of our own volitions.”⁴⁰ Thus reality is that which appears as independent of our own will or choosing. Reality is something that exists outside of our will; it is there, outside of us, available to everyone. Berger and Luckmann’s definition implies that we do not choose reality; it is imposed upon us. Culture becomes reality for us apart from any intentional act on our part – a force of its own. We learn how to think and feel as we are programmed into a culture through socialization. Thus culture appears natural and real to us because it is intrinsic to the way we exist. It is not the individual that creates reality but rather the culture; it is a social construction and not an individual opinion.

There are three phases to the construction of social reality, according to Berger and Luckmann. First is ‘externalization’– the ongoing outpouring of human beings into the world, both in their physical and mental activity.⁴¹ The way in which we create and externalize this new world is through culture. Culture has two primary attributes. It is transmitted through time, and it produces meaning. Both elements are important, but the production of meaning is what makes culture potent. Culture produces human quality. Participants within a context are guided to believe, value, think, and feel in specific ways.

The next step is ‘objectivation’– to make something an object that had not been one. It is what makes meaning real. Without assigning meaning, human action and interaction would be impossible. Once meaning has been objectified, it takes on the

⁴⁰ Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann. 1966. *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*, New York: Anchor. p. 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

characteristics of facticity – meanings become facts. Meanwhile, through our upbringing we get stories about the world, which work as legitimations – stories that give the social and power relationships a cognitive and moral basis. Social worlds need legitimation because humans are constantly in search of meaning.

The third process is ‘internalization.’ The word socialization means the internalization of a society’s culture, and is related to the very beginning stages of the process. It is important for four reasons. First, during these beginning years, a child is completely dependent upon his or her parents. All that the child needs to survive comes from the primary caregivers. Second, this period of time is the most emotionally charged that an individual will experience. Because our strongest memories are the ones that are emotionally charged, events, explanations, and language are imprinted securely upon the brain and are most readily recalled. Third, the self is produced through primary socialization. Humans are not born with a self. We acquire it through language-learning and role-taking. We come to know the crucial roles, status positions, values, beliefs, interpretive schemes, ideas, concepts, and all that function in the place of instinct during this time. Finally, during socialization, there are no competing worlds. Therefore, there is no problem of identification because there are no significant other worlds from which to choose. There are no competing voices, no options; we do not have a choice in the truths and realities we are given.

One of the functions of legitimation is to make the socially constructed world appear natural and not the result of human agency. And no knowledge, according to Berger and Luckmann, does this as well as religion. There are four benefits of using religion as legitimation in the construction of reality. First, human institutions are seen as

manifestations of the underlying structure of the universe. Second, religion defines disorder as evil. Through order-making, we impose order on geography by creating state and national boundaries; we impose order by defining endless varieties of human behavior by classifying them as, for example, male or female. Third, religion permits individuals to feel an ultimate sense of rightness. Fourth, religion provides integration for marginal situations. There is no circumstance or experience for which religion does not provide a framework of meaning. Everything is brought under an umbrella.

Internalization of religious beliefs does not take place only in church or mosque or synagogue; it is found in the most intricate parts of social relations.

Thomas Luckmann, in his book, *The Invisible Religion*,⁴² presents a significant argument in deconstruction of the association between religion and religious institutions. He suggests that this association, and the empirical decline of attendance at these public institutions, led sociologists in the 1960s to assume a progressive decline in religion and the advance of secularization. Sociologists, according to Luckmann, saw churches as ‘islands of religion (or irrationality)’ in an increasingly secularized world.⁴³ But, he says, religion is not coextensive with its institutional form, but has a much wider basis in society. It is ‘the conditions under which “transcendent,” superordinated and “integrated” structures are made socially objective.’⁴⁴ That is, religion is the general condition that locates the individual in society. Secularization, the separation between religion and everyday life, was more visible when Luckmann wrote this piece. Not many sociologists believe secularization to be as forceful today. Luckmann suggested that while institutions

⁴² Thomas Luckmann. 1967. *The Invisible Religion*. New York: Macmillan.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

are an example of religious behavior, they do not constitute the whole religion. In fact, religion as a system of meaning is necessarily social, though not institutional in origin.⁴⁵

Individuals are born into societies that have constructed sacred worldviews. These worldviews are then passed on to children through processes of socialization, and become the basis through which the individual becomes a person both on a social and individual level. This is very similar to Berger and Luckmann's analysis of internalization—the worldview that is perceived as objective becomes the basis for individual subjective action in the world.

Max Weber's Causality and Probability

Weber's notion of causality can be helpful to further explain the historical intersection of practicing Iranian Marxists with Islamic beliefs and concepts. Max Weber did not share the view that the social sciences are unable to construct general causal explanations of historical events or societal development.⁴⁶ Weber created a middle realm between the generating of abstract laws characteristic of the natural sciences and the accumulation of historically specific facts that some believed must guide the social sciences. He thought of the determination of causality as an attempt to establish the probability that a series of actions or events are related. His notion of causality is very different from the traditional scientific usage, which sees it as the positing of permanent and necessary relationships between variables. While in natural science, (X) temperature above 100 degrees centigrade will cause (Y) water to boil, in social science, social relationships are not carried out with that fixed and singular causal 'elegance.' Thus

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 44.

⁴⁶ Fritz Ringer. 1997. *Max Weber's Methodology: The Unification of the Cultural and Social Sciences*. Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press. pp. 74-77

sociologists cannot say with the same degree of certainty that an increase in education among a population, for example, will result in fewer children. Sociologists can, however, set out to determine the set of factors that, when taken together, have a causal correlation with a particular outcome. Using ideal types, the sociologist can develop general arguments that establish a probable relationship between a combination of causes (e.g. Islamic upbringing, belief in martyrdom) and a particular consequence (Marxists becoming Muslims).

According to Weber, developments in the intellectual, psychological, political, and religious spheres have relative autonomy even though they may all mutually influence one another. There is no pre-established harmony between the content of an idea and the material interests of those who become its advocates, i.e., a causal relationship. Weber's intense interest in social change made him work to create an interpretive system different from that of Marx. He attempted to show that the relations between systems of ideas and social structures were diverse. He believed that causal connections went in two directions, rather than just from the economic (productive) system to the superstructure. In the case of Iranian society, the different variables involved in making Marxists behave as Muslims—upbringing, a fighting ideal, tyranny, the struggle against a tyrant, martyrdom, and a race for a revolutionary authenticity—historically induced Marxists to become Muslims.

Marx on Religion

Religion is not just about belief. There is also a social dimension of acceptance and support from a community of believers. Placing oneself in such a community provides a clear social identity. This social identity may take place on a micro level—

emotional support, and also on a macro level—political affiliation. Karl Marx’s historical materialism has focused on the macro level—the role of economic and social power relations. The key idea for Marx is that ideologies are systems of ideas that, although they may be false, nonetheless appear as appealing and correct. Ideologies function as a real historical force in determining how individuals and groups see themselves and the world. Ideologies are products of the interaction of previous beliefs with changing social and psychological circumstances. They provide answers for various social and political needs, while simultaneously constraining individual perception and action, by systematically misrepresenting true social relations and possibilities.⁴⁷

According to Marx, social systems are characterized by three major properties: economic, ideological, and political. Their economic function is related to reproduction of human material life through the production and distribution of goods. The institutions through which this ongoing reproduction is achieved are called the ‘economic base’ of society. This economic base in turn functionally determines the social relations of production’ as specific structures of ownership, power and control over productive forces, and the social division of labor through which material production and distribution are organized.

The ideological function that especially addresses the contextual belief system is concerned with the mental reproduction of human life through the production and distribution of ideas. These are the ideas through which people come to identify themselves and to make sense of the world they live in; they are fundamental in answering questions related to belief about society, nature, identity, morals, ethics, and priorities. People are not born with these ideas; the ideas have to be constantly produced

⁴⁷ Scott Mann. 1999. *The Heart of a Heartless World: Religion as Ideology*. New York: Black Rose Books.

and distributed through institutions. Finally, the political function is concerned with overall social integration through dispute regulation, adjudication, law and defense, ultimately grounded in the legitimate use of coercion and violence.

According to Marxian thought, the social belief system and its ideas are programmed into each new generation through moral education prior to any significant development of the individual's critical thinking system. From this point on, according to Marx, the life process of the exploited masses is constructed towards continuous and active development of such ideas. This takes place without the opportunity for any sort of examination or critique. According to Maurice Godelier:

For the installation and maintenance in power of part of society (the male sex, an estate, a caste or class), repression is less effective than adherence, and physical or psychological violence counts for less than intellectual conviction, which brings with it acquiescence, if not the co-operation, of the dominated.⁴⁸

Therefore, religious ideas and practices are integral to the production relations of the economic base and do not merely reflect or endorse such relations. According to Marxist thought, however, just as capitalism will outlive its usefulness as a force for progress in human life and will threaten to destroy the very conditions that make human life possible, so will religious ideas. They serve predominantly to obstruct true perceptions, rationalize exploitative social relations, and nurture false hope.

Anti-theological thinkers, like Marx, address religion as a human construct without the need for a supernatural or transcendental other. This allows for the examination of the role played by religion as a social human artifact, and the nature of religion as an institution.

⁴⁸ Maurice Godelier. 1988. *The Mental and the Material*. London: Verso. (p. 156).

The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of men, is a demand for their *real* happiness. The call to abandon their illusions about their conditions is a call to *abandon a condition which requires illusions*. The criticism of religion is, therefore, the embryonic criticism of this *vale of tears* of which religion is the *halo*.⁴⁹

Marxist analysis of religion has been challenged by some social scientists as over-emphasizing the negative aspects of religion and ignoring its potentially revolutionary aspects. This approach sees Marx viewing religion purely as an ideological instrument by which the ruling class prevents the working class from either realizing that they are being exploited or from acting against the structures that enable that exploitation.

The rise of Islam in the Middle East, and particularly in Iran during the 1979 revolution, is a specific example of this rationale. Islam, especially in the last decades, has been frequently associated with challenges to totalitarian authority and despots in the Middle East. The rise of Islamism in the realm of politics can also be seen as a response to neo-colonialism. It has functioned as a movement frequently challenging, rather than validating, economic relations. In this light, Islam in the Middle East has some similarities with Liberation Theology in Latin America. Catholic Liberation Theology in Latin America has provided a voice for the poor under totalitarian dictatorships. Adherents of Liberation Theology, as distinct from the typical practice of the Catholic Church, which traditionally defended state authority, have generated challenges to governmental policies. Both these religious movements can be seen as challenging political power rather than legitimating it.

The answers given by these two religious protest movements should be seen by Marxists to be a form of illusion. Although they act against political oppression, their

⁴⁹ Karl Marx. *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*. In Robert C. Tucker. (1978). *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company. (p. 54).

answer will not ultimately resolve the problem, which is essentially economic. It should have been obvious to Marxists who followed Marx more seriously that despite Islam's claim as a revolutionary movement, it was not directed toward fundamentally challenging and changing the economic system. They might question some forms of the superstructure, changing the individuals in power, changing the political structure from monarchy to parliamentarian, but they do not critique the capitalist system. In Marxist terms, they are a form of false consciousness buttressing capitalism.

According to Marx, religion is desired, sought after, and practiced by a majority of the population, but the majority cannot see what is behind the religion and in the desire to believe in it. Religion is something that people hold onto in order to fulfill a certain desire. Religion is used by the rulers to suppress the population, but it suppresses people in an unseen form. In the Iranian setting, Marx's ideas on religion would have to be inverted to fully grasp the role of religion. During the reign of the Shah, there was an emphasis on religion as a way of life, determining social relations, and also as a protest movement. While the Shah would emphasize modernization people insisted on an Islamic ethos. Despite Marx's analysis, when it comes to the specific period of the Shah (the ruler) and the masses (the oppressed), it was the oppressed who insisted on religiosity and Islam, and not the ruler. In the latter parts of the twentieth century in Iran, religion came from the bottom, not the top.

Martyrdom and Metaphysical Idealism

As an ex-Hegelian, Marx equated metaphysical idealism with religion. Marx observed that idealism in belief—Marxists believing in martyrdom, for example—leads to metaphysical idealism, which leads to 'theological prejudice.' The logic of Marx's

view is not hard to comprehend. Any theory that takes the problem of knowledge seriously enough to distinguish between the self as object and the self as knower or subject, is potentially idealist, because it is only as an ideal that the two can consciously become one. It concludes by giving more importance to the theoretical ‘copies of reality’ than to reality itself.

The basis for criticism of religion, according to Marx, is that *man makes religion, religion does not make man*. In other words, religion is the self-consciousness and self-feeling of man who has either not yet found himself or has already lost himself again.

For Iranian Marxists to adhere to Marx’s criticism of religion, they would have had to undertake a thorough critique of Islam. Yet, contrary to what Marx argues, the significance and prestige of Islam in the process of modernization did not diminish but rather increased. As Marx argued, the criticism of religion

...disillusions man so that he may think, act, and fashion his own reality as a man who has lost his illusions and regained his reason; so that he may revolve about himself as his own true sun. Religion is only the illusory sun about which man revolves so long as he does not revolve about himself...It is the task of history therefore, once the *other-world of truth* has vanished, to establish the *truth of this world*...Thus criticism of heaven is transformed into the criticism of earth, *criticism of religion* into the *criticism of law*, and the *criticism of theology* into *criticism of politics*.⁵⁰

Marxists in Iran did not criticize the religiosity of the masses and religious leaders because they held the same values. This revolution was not a criticism of the past; it was to welcome the past. It left no room for criticism of the traditions and the illusions created by religion. In fact, Marxists were thinking of ways to interact with the masses through more religion, not less. In many ways Marx was both used and confused by Iranian Marxists.

⁵⁰ Karl Marx. *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*. In Robert Tucker, p. 54.

For Marx, a successful revolution would mean emancipation from Islam, especially in the political realm. However, Iranian Marxists would not even analyze or begin to critique Islam and its permeating social roots. Marxist affinity with Islam was maintained in Iran through politics and thus through the culture. It is now, more than ever, the language of political discourse.

In the next chapter the reader will become familiar with the concept of contextual Islam and what it meant as a political background for Marxists. Contextual Islam, ubiquitous in everyday social relations was significantly present in the practices, ideas and ideologies. It especially influenced many Marxist groups in the realms of politics in formation of the state.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXTUAL ISLAM AND POLITICAL ISLAM

Sacred is that sphere of life derived from social life that incorporates all the so called higher elements of life, such as reason, morality, science, sociality, conceptualizations, and the soul; distinguished from and opposed to the profane sphere of life.

Durkheim

Following Mesbahi's ideas regarding contextual Islam we can see that it acts as a 'sacred canopy' in Iran. It is the penetration of the Islamic ethos and Islamic belief. At the taken-for-granted level it filters, recognizes, and manages all social activities. In this dissertation I refer to two types of Islam, Islamic political ideology and Islamic belief in everyday-life. They are distinct in that they contain qualitatively distinct forces. Islam as political ideology is substantially different from Islam as a value system – the Islam that permeates life and comes from within. Political ideology is more tangible, observable, and measurable. One can research Islamic political ideology by mere examination of written material and spoken words. It is apparent and empirically measured. However, contextual Islam, which saturates beliefs, mannerisms, attitudes, gender roles, and generally all aspects of social relationships, is more difficult to examine. Belief systems are latent within socialization processes and not often expressed at a conscious level. Therefore, they survive, transferred from one generation to the next, without criticism. It is the prevalence of such a belief system that Mesbahi referred to as contextual Islam.

Karl Marx perceived religion as an agent of social control and a realm of life in which the individual immerses him/herself in the supernatural, in illusions, thereby giving the individual false hope. From his perspective, it is a distortion of a person's being, because society is distorted. Religion is the heart of a heartless world, the

painkiller (opium) of the suffering masses in the world. Religious delusions function to throw a veil over the irrationalities of the systems of production.⁵¹ For Marxists, religion should be questioned and analyzed thoroughly, especially when attempting to convey the message to the masses. Iranian Marxists, however, have failed to address the question of religion, both in the culture of Iran and in matters of the state. They abandoned their skepticism about Islam, distanced themselves from a critique of religion, and were unable to create a political atmosphere in which religion was discussed and questioned.

Who, if not the Marxists, should question religion and religiosity? How important was it to generate the discourse that delved into the depth of religion and Islamic belief? Furthermore, how important was it for Marxists to be able to separate religion and the state? The separation of these two entities involves hundreds of years of history. Certainly Marxists had to be aware that as alienating, illusive, and vague as religion is, in the hands of the state it could be an even more powerful instrument. To be sure, it is not the intention of this researcher to hold Marxists accountable for deep-seated Islamism in Iran. Iranian Marxists are the product of the same environment and Islamic ethic, behavior and belief as all Iranians; Islam is as much a part of their lives as it is for any other Iranian. But as self-conscious leaders, why have Marxists taken a non-skeptical view of religion throughout their political life? More concretely, could Marxists ever have questioned Islam and Islamic views in Iran? The answers to these questions are complicated and require serious research. Marxist groups are an important part of the Iranian political movement and one needs to investigate whether they ever had the

⁵¹ Robert Tucker, ed. 1978. "Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

opportunity to confront Islamic belief. How did the prevalence of Islam allow Marxists to become a significant political weight in the politics of Iran?

Even those who opposed the Islamic Republic government failed to further examine the role of Islam as a belief system. They looked to destroy the regime but never questioned its ideology, the same force that has been responsible in keeping the Islamic Republic in power 28 years after the revolution. Marxists tacitly accepted Islam, even though Marxism treats religion as an ideology that alienates the masses. This has been true both contextually, within the culture as a sacred canopy, and as political ideology – organizations and groups that strategically and tactically have collaborated with Islamic groups and the Islamic state.

Many Marxist groups argue that the Islamic Republic of Iran has remained in power only through suppression, control, imprisonment, and torture of its political opponents. What they neglect to realize is that for almost three decades, the Islamic Republic has used Islamic belief to its advantage at a social level to create a hegemonic ideology⁵². Much of its authority stems from its adherence to Islamic ideology. The Islamic Republic of Iran came to power through virtual nation-wide consensus. Millions of Iranians greeted Ayatollah Khomeini at the airport in Tehran when he first set foot back in the country. The Islamic Republic is not a coincidence, not an anomaly. It is the high degree of correlation between what people believe and what their government represents that has kept the Islamic Republic in control of the state.

⁵² The perception of hegemony developed by Antonio Gramsci indicates that in order for the definition of the state to remain meaningful the notion of the state should include the underpinnings of the political structure in civil society such as religion, the educational system, the press, and all the institutions which helped to create in people certain modes of behavior and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

The author contends that Islamic belief so thoroughly permeated Iranian society and culture that Marxists could not have been aware of the depth of Islamism within themselves and the masses of Iranians. In fact, Marxists had little choice but to submit to Islam, either contextually, because of their socialization into an Islamic culture, or ideologically, because Islam was too powerful a political force to counter, hence the notion of Marxists becoming Muslims. As mentioned in the introductory chapter, there were three components that made the irony of Marxists becoming Muslims unnoticeable.

The three components of this “*tripartite complex*”, according to Mesbahi, included:

*“first, the contextual Islam, the pervasive Shi’a culture and socialization, especially with central figures of Shi’a Islam, Imam Ali and more specifically Imam Hussein, and the story of the martyrs of Karabala which acted as the visible and invisible sacred context, second, the ideological Islam, Islam as a potent and competing anti-Shah and anti imperialist revolutionary ideology, and third, the ruling Islam, Islam as the unavoidable political reality of the prevailing power structure ruling and controlling Iran immediately after the revolution.”*⁵³

According to Mesbahi, Marxists:

*“had been raised, like millions of other Iranians, with the first, almost as their social and emotive oxygen, had to intellectually compete and respond to the second, and finally had to make a political choice and adopt a survival strategy in dealing with the reality of the third”. The saga of Marxists dealing with Islam thus took place in a complex environment imbued with variations of Islam in its cultural, ideological and governing manifestations.”*⁵⁴

This chapter examines both the prevalence of Islam in the culture of Marxists and in the political ideology of resistance, which lent itself to the formation of an Islamic state. Islam prevailed in political resistance, fighting the Shah’s tyranny, mobilization of the people, and more importantly, the ability of Muslims (clerics) to organize a state – all of which Iranian Marxists failed to achieve. As a result, Marxists had to follow in the

⁵³ Interview with Mesbahi, Oct. 13, 2006.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

footsteps of Muslims in these major realms of political life, mainly due to the legacy of resistance left by Muslims in the Iranian political movement. Marxists converted to and accepted Islam in three areas: 1) radicalism and resistance, 2) martyrdom, and 3) formation of an Islamic state under the notion of Shi'a Islam's authority of the Jurist (*velayat-e faghih*).

In these three areas, Marxists were so profoundly influenced that their conversion to Islam was seamless. A resistance movement established by Islamic ideology, the notion of martyrdom as instrumental to achieving liberation, and the formation of a state based on an Islamic ethos prevailed in all aspects of political life. Marxists observed and learned from the sacred canopy of Islam; their political learning had come from Islamic ideology. These three major criteria determined the power relations among all those involved in political thought, life, and activity.

Islam: Resistance and Revolution

According to John Esposito, a leading expert on Islam, during the Iranian revolution, Shi'a Islam

proved to be an influential and powerful tool with deep native roots. It was able to organize a common goal for political-religious leadership for the common historical identities and beliefs and values. It also generated an ideological structure, and through this structure gave meaning and legitimacy to an oppressed and oppressor movement. To an extent where a variety of groups were able to join in, clerics like Khomeini, Mottahari, Taleghani, and Beheshti, in cooperation with more secular and non-cleric figures, created reformist and revolutionary ideologies.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ John Esposito. 1990. *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. p. 40.

According to Sadegh Zibakalam, a leading Iranian observer,⁵⁶ Muslim leaders were able to speak the people's language in demanding what the Shah had neglected to achieve. People's expectations, demands, social hopes, and political wishes materialized through Islam. People who were neglected, oppressed, and exploited under the forces of despotism were able to use religion to demonstrate their discontent.⁵⁷ Zibakalam views the 1979 revolution as a victory that was mainly led by Muslim intellectuals with Islamic expertise. He claims that their usage of Islam created a massive revolution. According to many Marxist organizations, including the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas (OIPFG)⁵⁸ and the Tudeh Party,⁵⁹ it was the Marxists who did most of the organizing and agitating, especially during the years prior to the revolution. Marxists claimed that during the revolution Muslim clerics had deceitfully stolen the revolution and labeled it 'Islamic.'⁶⁰

Who did the organizing during the revolution and what underlying reasons caused Marxists to become Muslims or use Islam as an ideology? The argument is that a history of the transformation of Marxists into Muslims made this conversion of ideology so unobstructed and effortless that it seemed almost natural. The seamless usage of Islam by Marxists is precisely why research on this issue has been virtually nonexistent. While it

⁵⁶ Sadegh Zibakalam. 1999. *Moghaddame-yee Bar Enghelab-e Eslami (An Introduction to the Islamic Revolution)*. Tehran: Rozaneh Publications.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Established in 1970, this was the main Marxist guerilla organization in Iran. It advocated an armed struggle against the Shah. See chapter 4 for details.

⁵⁹ The main Marxist political organization in Iran. It was founded by former members of the Communist Party of Iran in 1941. Unlike the OIPFG, this group condemned armed struggle. See chapter 4 for details.

⁶⁰ *Kar*, OIPFG (Minority) Publication, no. 166, April 1983.

may seem controversial and ironic to both ideologies, this adaptation of Islam by Marxists has not been the subject of many papers or books.

Islam, as claimed by many of the researchers, gave rise to the revolution in 1979. This claim is not limited to Muslims alone. Among the researchers are leftists and Marxists who have reached the same conclusion. Islam, so deeply rooted in Iran, was significant in determining not only the consequences of revolution but also the path it followed. According to Skocpol:

In Iran, uniquely, the revolution was made—but not everyone will note, by any of the modern revolutionary parties on the Iranian scene. Not by Islamic guerillas or by the Marxist guerillas, or by the communist Tudeh Party, or by the secular-liberal National Front. Instead it was made through a set of cultural and organizational forms thoroughly socially embedded in the urban communal enclaves that became the centers of popular resistance to the Shah. ... No innovative revolutionary propaganda retailed to the masses overnight, in the midst of a societal crisis, can serve this purpose. But a worldview and a set of social practices long in place can sustain a deliberate revolutionary movement. ... All sectors of Iranian society were coalescing under the rubrics of Shi'a Islam, following Khomeini. After the Shah definitively broke with the clergy, the political center of gravity shifted toward firm political opposition, and later, revolution.⁶¹

In this light, there is consistency between her view and what took place during the 1979 revolution in Iran. Acceptance of Shi'a methods and vision—radicalism, martyrdom (*shahadat*), and Shi'a Islam's idea of authority of jurist (*velayat-e faghih*)—was clearly noticeable among Marxist organizations.

Some Marxist organizations toned down their analyses of a social-political revolution, deliberately overlooking their irreconcilable differences with religion and religious political alternatives. To conform to the religion of Islam is especially an

⁶¹ Skocpol, Theda. *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994. p.250.

anomaly for Marxists since Islamic ideology does not separate itself from the state and state-run institutions. Skocpol believes this ideology deliberately made the revolution:

Revolutions are not made deliberately by revolutionaries or mass-based movements. ... [But] if ever there has been a revolution deliberately made by a mass-based social movement aiming to overthrow the old order, the Iranian revolution against the Shah surely is it.⁶²

According to Skocpol, ideologies reveal through action the practical strategies that revolutionary leaders follow as they act to bring about outcomes. In Iran the ideology of Islam functioned as guidance for revolutionary leaders.

The strong roots of Islam and Islamic culture in Iran are hardly a mystery to anyone familiar with Iranian culture. The role and significance of Islamic ethics in social and political movements are as profound in organizations as they are in individuals in Iran. Islamic ethics can also be observed in non-Islamic or secular organizations. For example, gender relations established within Marxist groups attest to this lifestyle of patriarchy, which in Iran, in addition to the enduring influence of native culture, also stems from Islamic ideology.⁶³

Forrest Colburn refers to an intellectual culture as a prevailing paradigm: the Islamic values, expectations, phraseology, iconography, and implicit rules that expressed and shaped collective intentions and behavior in the Iranian revolution. Like other authors, he believes that Islam as a belief system and Muslims as organizers were better prepared to lead the masses:

Several factors explain the success of Islam as a revolutionary force where Marxism-Leninism had failed. The clerics in Iran had a wider and more effective organizational base than the Marxists from which to mobilize popular opposition to the Shah. And Islam had a resonance and legitimacy with the entire population

⁶² Skocpol, p. 241.

⁶³ Farah Azari, ed. 1983. *Women of Iran: The Conflict with Fundamentalist Islam*. London: Ithaca Press.

that Marxism-Leninism could only aspire to have. Finally, the moral authority of Islam protected the clerics from the kind of brutal suppression encountered earlier by secular organizations.⁶⁴

Islam's moral authority did not make a difference to the way the Shah perceived his enemies. He nonetheless thought that the Muslims, in cooperation with the Marxists, had conspired to topple his regime. He dubbed the Iranian political movement prior to the 1979 revolution as the 'black and red conspiracy,' the 'infiltration of communists into Muslim ranks,' 'Marxist-Muslims,' and many other combinations of names.⁶⁵

Condescending intentions in these names notwithstanding, the proximity of Marxists and Muslims in theory and practice was undoubtedly present. Almost one year prior to the February 1979 revolution, an article written in the state-sponsored newspaper, *Ettela'at*, on December 25, 1977, accused Ayatollah Khomeini of treason and resistance against progress and women's liberation: "The red and black reactionaries have recognized him [Khomeini] as the most appropriate person to fight against the Iranian revolution⁶⁶ [referring to the Shah's 'white revolution']." It further accused Khomeini of being the main figure in trying to establish a "colonial plan devised by the red and lack."⁶⁷ The article referred to the conspiracy of Islamic movements in the Middle East, coordinated with communists led by the Soviet Union.

⁶⁴ Forrest Colburn. 1994. *The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. p. 31.

⁶⁵ Ervand Abrahamian. 1988. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, pp. 575, 607-611.

⁶⁶ Red symbolized Marxists, and black represented Muslims. This color coding was used mainly by the Shah's government.

⁶⁷ Emadeddin Baghi. 1991. *A Survey of Iran's Revolution (barressi-e enghelab-e Iran)*. Tehran: Saraee, p. 226.

The Shah's efforts to connect the two political movements never ceased. It was brought to the public's attention even after his Prime Minister, Jamshid Amouzegar,⁶⁸ was ousted and replaced by Ja'far Sharif-Emami.⁶⁹ In a special meeting in the parliament, Sharif-Emami spoke about the same conspiracy. Evidently, he perceived Marxists as the perpetrators and Muslims as the victims. To fight against the government through violence is not the Iranian people's way of doing things. And if people

were all good Muslims, they would not fight their government, so obviously someone else is responsible. Documents have shown that Marxists were the main cause, but they realized that it is not possible to do it alone. So they recognized that under these conditions, they could achieve their goals through religion. They infiltrated the religious ranks. Slogans chanted by the people (on different religious occasions) testified to these communist directives. From what we have observed, the slogans were completely Marxist.⁷⁰

Marxists would rationalize their collaboration with Muslims only in the context of politics. This connection between Marxists and Muslims, including their motives and the extent of their cooperation, manipulation, and sincere camaraderie, remain a largely unexamined social phenomenon. To many Muslims, the notion of cooperation and/or manipulation by Marxists is intolerable and offensive. Emadeddin Baghi, an Iranian social scientist, believes that Marxists practiced an "arrogant manipulation" on Muslims. He states:

Marxists think of themselves as the only vanguard of anti-imperialist struggle in the world. They monopolize any struggle against oppression and imperialism. They think of any religious or non-Marxist force as bourgeois, petite bourgeois, or

⁶⁸ Appointed as Prime Minister by the Shah in 1976 as a measure of reform, he replaced Amir Abbas Hoveida, whose government lasted 13 years.

⁶⁹ Appointed as Prime Minister by the Shah to replace Jamshid Amouzegar, he submitted the members of his cabinet to the Shah on August 27, 1978. His government lasted only until November 6, 1978.

⁷⁰ Baghi, p. 247.

feudalist. They believe that religious groups would not be able to lead people's anti-imperialist struggles, and because they [Muslims] lack essential understanding of imperialism, they end up in conciliation with imperialism.⁷¹

Baghi's statement contains an element of truth. What is more important is whether in the case of Iran, the above statement was true. On the contrary, however, it was Iranian Marxists who were doing most of the converting. This alteration enabled the Marxists' monopolization, as he calls it, of the resistance movements. It also explains the Marxist justification of the viability of Islamic belief. The intellectual arrogance referred to by Baghi was wishful thinking on the part of Marxists. It also became a trap that led Marxists to immerse themselves in contextual Islam.

Islamic Resistance and Radicalism

Organizations such as the Fadaeean of Islam (*Fadaeean-e Eslam*) had long ago started an Islamic resistance movement, going back to the time of the Shah's father, Reza Shah. They were the first organized group of Muslims to gather some popularity through their actions. In 1945, Mojtaba Navvab Safavi founded Fadaeean of Islam. He wrote a small pamphlet under the title *Religion and Vengeance, (din va entegham)*, attacking the non-religious and promising them an Islamic revenge. He was referring to Reza Shah's attack on Islam and religion; the Shah was putting pressure on religious institutions and individuals to shed their lives of religious activity and belief. Fadaeean, to prove their serious belief in what they claimed, assassinated Ahmad Kasravi, a prominent secular writer of the time.⁷² They protested women entering the bazaar and mosques without proper Islamic cover. They protested against Hazhir, the Prime Minister; they attacked

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Abrahamian, p.318.

liquor stores, and they made a point of traveling to Palestine to fight against Israel.⁷³ In 1948, Prime Minister Hazhir's parliament denounced Islam as the official religion of Iran. This political act may have caused his death. Ironically, the assassin, a member of the Fadaeean of Islam, was the same person who had earlier been exonerated by Hajir's government for assassinating Kasravi.⁷⁴ In 1950, the Shah, despite his own tendencies, appointed General Haj Ali Razmara to calm the growing discontent. But before Razmara could begin to control a movement that would give rise to strong nationalist sentiment, he was assassinated.⁷⁵

An important Muslim group that continued its role in the opposition leading the revolution was the Council of Islamic Alliance (*shora-ye ettehad-ye eslami*). This group did not recognize the legitimacy of the Shah's government and began its political opposition by refuting three major actions:

1. Eliminating the religiosity of representatives
2. Taking an oath on *ketab-e asemani* (divine book) and not the Koran
3. Giving women the right to vote and be elected to the parliament⁷⁶

They disagreed with these actions because they represented the Shah's effort to dispose of religion in his government. This was a verbal struggle, but there were other activities carried out by this group. On January 21, 1964, several young followers of the committee followed through with the plan to assassinate Prime Minister Hassan Ali

⁷³ Mehdi Abdkhodae, *Ashnae ba Navvab Safavi: Fadaeean-e Islam az Aghaz ta Emrooz*, (*Getting to Know Navvab Safavi: Fadaeean of Islam, from Beginning to Today*), Tehran: Manshour-e-Baradari, No. 27, April 1980.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Razmara was one of the most prominent generals in the Shah's army. He was among military personnel with deep understandings of politics and political power, which made him a potential threat to the Shah. He was assassinated in the winter of 1952.

⁷⁶ Changiz Pahlavan, "negahi beh shoraha-ye ettehaieh-ye eslami" (*A Look at Councils of Islamic Alliance*). *Andisheye Jame'e*, (1990). No. 5, p. 9.

Mansour. The Shah's government took this as a serious blow, and many important figures among the clergy were arrested or executed; Ayatollah Khomeini was exiled to Turkey. The Alliance carried on sporadic activities from 1964 to 1970, but was not able to gather more popularity. According to Pahlavan:

Since the 1960s, leftist guerilla thought and armed struggle had won over all opposition groups and large sectors of nationalists, and even religious people showed interest and were attracted to it...under these conditions, the Council of Islamic Alliance became vulnerable and lost its practitioners. Important figures of the Alliance started working with the Mojahedin (Muslim guerrilla group) and defected from the Alliance.⁷⁷

But activities of radical clerics and Muslims did not cease, and they continued their political provocation. Their activities, with the aid of Marxist guerillas, were setting the stage to overthrow the Shah.

The Shah's regime began a consensus-building program with the implementation of a referendum on land reform under the guise of a "white revolution." Its emphasis was land reform, and its main amendments were:

1. Annulment of landlord-serf relations
2. Nationalization of all forestland
3. The sale of state-owned factories to finance the land reform
4. Profit sharing for workers in the manufacturing sector
5. Election reform
6. Compulsory education [in rural areas] through an 'education army'

Khomeini's response to the referendum was swift and direct; he called it anti-constitutional. As a result, the clergy's resistance shifted into a new phase. In Khomeini's telegram to the Prime Minister Amir Alam on October 18, 1962, he pointed to the unconstitutionality of the mandates. He added that the people of Iran would surely

⁷⁷ Pahlavan, pp. 9-11.

resist such laws and would not remain quiet.⁷⁸ Several days later, in a more provocative letter directly to the Shah, Khomeini addressed Alam's endeavors as subversive. He mentioned that Alam had continued to act against the constitution and had taken measures, through his thugs, to censor the media.

“Mr. Alam has openly proclaimed his differences with the Koran and the constitution. ... [He] thinks that by changing the name of the Koran to the Divine Book he can pronounce it as unofficial and replace it with any other holy book such as Avesta [the book of Zoroaster] or the Bible. On behalf of the Iranian people, I shall ask you not to trust such people whose sycophant behavior has put the blame on you for their anti-constitution and anti-religious acts.”⁷⁹

Several days earlier, however, before Khomeini's letter, the Shah had paid a visit to the city of Qom. After the prayer and the Islamic ritual, he made a vehement speech about the religious opposition:

Some ignorant and backward people whose brain has not developed yet always stand in the way of progress. The black reactionary [Muslim] does not understand, and for a thousand years his brain has not developed. He thinks that life is to be spent somehow finding some money to live on and some food to eat and a place to sleep. ... Well, living on the dole no longer exists [referring to *khums* and *zakat*]. In the new six-step laws, we have thought of everyone. But who will oppose such law? Black reactionaries, the ignorant who are dense and malicious. The destructive reds are obvious, and coincidentally, I hold less of a grudge against them. He [the communist] openly says that I want to give the country to foreigners [Soviets]; there is no deception and lying on his part... they are forthcoming with what they believe in.⁸⁰

After the military raid and the killing of several of the clergy in Qom, Khomeini sent the Shah several harsh messages. But during his speech on the anniversary of original Islamic Martyrs of Shi'a Islam (in the incident of Karbala), Khomeini gave his sharpest criticism yet:

⁷⁸ Nejati, Gholamreza. *Tarikh-e siyasi-e bist va panj sale-ye Iran (Twenty-Five Year Political History of Iran)*. Volumes I, Tehran: Rasa Cultural Institute, p. 223.

⁷⁹ Hamid Rohani, *Barressi va tahlili az nehzate emam Khomeini*, (An analysis on Imam Khomeini's Movement), Tehran: Rah-e-Emam Publishers, 1987.

⁸⁰ Nejati, p. 224.

We can conclude that they are aiming at the fundamentals, that they disagree with foundations of Islam and clerics, and that they do not want this foundation to exist. Israel does not want Islamic clerics in this country. Israel does not want this country to have scientists, and Israel suppresses our clerical school through its black mercenaries. They suppress us, and they suppress you the people. They want to take over your economy, to destroy your commerce and agriculture, and to confiscate your riches. Israel, through its mercenaries, wants to destroy what stands in their way. The Koran is in their way and must be destroyed, the clergy are in the way and must be eliminated, our schools and other centers of science are barriers and must be destroyed, and if other clerics are later in the way, they too will also be killed, thrown from the rooftops, breaking their arms and legs. In order for Israel to reach its interests, the Iranian government has violated us to help the Israeli plan.⁸¹

The Islamic movement specifically, and the Iranian resistance movement in general, was not the same after the suppression in the summer of 1963. It became more organized and more radicalized. The new generation of Muslims was learning from other Third World movements and implementing their ideas. Even nationalists were now more active and radical.

The guerilla movements, both Marxist and Muslim, resulted from a long tradition of political culture of resistance, especially in the 1960s. Their armed opposition radicalized the Iranian opposition. The political activity against the Shah from 1963 to 1979 became more obvious with the role of many guerilla movements in opening up and forcing a political culture to the surface. The prelude to the adaptation of an Islamic ideology by Marxists was noticeable within this movement. Many Marxists did follow the Islamic traditions rooted in the culture by pursuing politics advocated by Muslim clerics who later founded the Islamic Republic. Some organizations consciously toned down their Marxist rhetoric in favor of Islam.⁸² They thought their Marxist analysis of a

⁸¹ Ibid., pp. 228-230.

⁸² See chapter 4

complete revolution would revive itself in the shrouds of Islamic concepts. This ideological change occurred only in some Marxist organizations and to address political issues that demonstrated, for example, the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic government.

It was during this period that the activities of radical clerics and Muslim activists in general constructed the political discourse for years to come. The uprisings instigated and organized by prominent clerics strongly contributed to the future events during the 1979 revolution. Almost all those who played a role in opposition to the Shah took on important political positions after the revolution. The organizers of movements during the 1960s were the leaders of the revolution in 1979. Their resistance began mainly as a consequence to the Shah's White Revolution.

By July 1978, the Shah felt the effervescence of serious opposition; he stated that there would be democracy and political freedom in Iran as in European countries:

We will have freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, freedom of press...patriotic people and those who yearn to see their country progress will opine. ...Others too will be able to express their views. ...Of course in a democracy, people will vote and we will accept their votes.⁸³

These were mere words and therefore not very appealing to a population that was already furious about his dictatorship. At this juncture, the question that concerned Iranians was just how his regime would be toppled. In effect, the Shah's deeds had rendered his words useless and were causing more anger. While he spoke of democracy, he was holding thousands of political activists in his prisons. He also added thousands of new members to his notorious secret police, the SAVAK.

⁸³ Abrahamian, p. 467.

The strength of Islam as a mobilizing force should be added to these underlying causes. The Shah's political repression is precisely what the clerics capitalized on. In explaining ideas that brought people together, many authors took Islam and Islamic culture into account. Thus, in their analysis, Islam played the most fundamental role in the 1979 revolution, and in fact was the most important underlying reason.⁸⁴ According to these authors, revolution occurred because the Shah neglected to show respect for this national religion and the clerics. As a result, all uprisings, strikes, riots, and similar activities were conducted only to construct an Islamic alternative. According to Amid Zanjani, an Iranian political theorist:

The only cause, as the first and main cause that gave rise to revolution from birth to victory, is the Shah's actions against Islam. He saw the life of his regime, gathering foreign support, and establishment of his despotism contingent upon the suppression of Islam.⁸⁵

Zanjani perceived Islam as the main threat to the Shah. Therefore, the Shah's anti-Islamic policies would work to eliminate ideas that questioned his policies. When the Shah began his fight against Islam, he thought that eliminating Islam would save his regime, resolve domestic and foreign conflicts, and guarantee the life of his empire. And since the Islamic country and population were dependent on clerics and supporters of Islam, he was faced with cleric resisters who spoke the Islamic language, reflecting the demands of Muslim Iranians.⁸⁶

Muslims utilizing an Islamic ideology toppled the Shah's regime. It is especially logical since true Muslims would resist and fight against any secular despot. Iranian

⁸⁴ Zibakalam. 1996.

⁸⁵ A. Amid Zanjani, 1989. *Enghelab-e Eslami va Risheha-ye An (Islamic Revolution and Its Roots)*, Ministry of Islamic Culture. p. 572.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 573.

political theorist, Manoochehr Mohammadi's analysis holds more accountability for Islam as a motive and ideology. He presents a conservative and religion-centric view.

Mohammadi states that

the lack of attention paid to dominant Islamic values and indifference to the demands of religious leaders provoked religious emotions in Iran... These included excessive freedoms, lack of discipline, corruption and prostitution, lack of respect to public [women's] modesty, Bahais and Zionists occupying key positions in the government, changing Islamic history, control of the economy by Bahais like Sabet Pasal and Zionist Elghanian, backward moves, and the encouragement of Iranian history before Islam.⁸⁷

Through their political struggle, Muslims dubbed the Shah the despot and the United States a foreign force that imposed its culture and faithless secular ideas on Iran. Just as the Muslims, Marxists viewed the Shah's regime and all its institutions as a puppet of the United States imperialism that maintained a dependent capitalist economy. It was the Muslims who initially introduced armed struggle by assassinating prominent figures in the Shah's regime. Following that lead, Marxists eventually started armed struggle against the Shah in Siahkal.⁸⁸ Although Muslims started their struggle as a protest movement, it eventually became a movement that demanded the overthrow of the Shah's regime. Therefore, it was both Muslims and Marxists who advocated a revolution (Islamic or social-democratic) as the only viable solution. Both schools of thought advocated nationalism. It was the most important duty of a revolutionary to defend Iran in the face of foreign aggressors or imperialists.

⁸⁷ Manoochehr Mohammadi. 1986. *Tahlili Bar Enghelab-e Eslami-ye Iran (Analysis on the Islamic Revolution in Iran)*, Tehran: Rozaneh. pp. 80-81.

⁸⁸ On February 8th 1971, a group of Marxist guerillas initiated its first armed attack on one of Shah's police precincts in the region of Siahkal. This group, in collaboration with two other groups, formed the Organization of Iranian Peoples Fadaee Guerillas. For more details see chapter 6 on Marxist organizations.

Both Marxists and Muslims were socialized into learning how an Islamic resistance movement develops as an adamant opposition to the Shah's regime especially after the 1963 uprising. Islamic activity by clerics and non-clerics permeated Iranian society after Khomeini declared his opposition against the Shah. Even the National Front,⁸⁹ a somewhat secular nationalist movement, was influenced by these activities. Led by Muslims, the Liberation Movement split from the National Front. Furthermore, the Mojahedin,⁹⁰ an armed Islamic group, was born into Iranian political life as a result. The new Marxist guerilla movement, and even some Tudeh Party members, were heavily influenced and were learning from Muslim political activity. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, a new radical political movement had been established.

Martyrdom

Marxists adopted the same ethics of Islam as advocated by Muslims. They believed in simplicity and modesty in attitude, behavior, and clothing. Accumulation of wealth was looked down upon since it connoted worldly possessions and greed. Marxists insisted on clothing that demonstrated modesty and a humble personality. Colorful clothing and music, especially the Western type, was denigrating to both groups. It was these similarities, set in an Islamic society that helped lead the Marxists to accept Islam as a sociopolitical background.

Muslims set the stage for a political struggle through several criteria. Consistent with the founders of Islam, they believed martyrdom to be a required sacrifice to achieve an ideal society. It was also a necessary method to fight against the enemy. Marxists too,

⁸⁹ See chapter 6 for details on the National Front (*jebhe-ye melli*) and Liberation Movement (*nehzat-e azadi*).

⁹⁰ See chapter 6

perceived martyrdom as a positive notion of ultimate sacrifice for the ultimate cause. Each martyr opened another window toward the new egalitarian society. Martyrdom demonstrated to the masses the Marxists' commitment to their cause. A voluntary death might under certain circumstances be considered heroic. The distinction between suicide and martyrdom is in the eye of the beholder. According to Arthur Droge and James Tabor, there are five characteristics of deaths distinguished as martyrdom:

1. They reflect situations of opposition and persecution.
2. The choice to die, which these individuals make, is viewed by the authors as necessary, noble, and heroic.
3. These individuals are often eager to die; indeed, in several cases they end up directly *killing themselves*.
4. There is often the idea of vicarious benefit resulting from their suffering and death.
5. The expectation of vindication and reward beyond death, more often than not, is a prime motivation for the choice of death.⁹¹

The Muslim ideal of martyrdom originated in a warrior culture. The ideal is one of active struggle (otherwise known as jihad) in which the will to die in the way of God is decisive. It is also significant that those who die in shipwrecks, childbirth, or illness may enjoy the rewards of the martyrs in paradise.

During the latter parts of the nineteenth century up to the 1980s, colonialism and foreign invasions in the Middle East gave rise to an entirely new understanding of martyrdom. The political events of recent decades have led to a resurgence of the ideal of actually dying as part of the struggle in the way of God. Contemporary justifications of martyrdom that do not necessarily rely on the luxuries of the otherworld are espoused by some non-Muslims. It is not only the Iranian Marxists who rationalized martyrdom, but also Palestinians and Sri Lankan Marxists, to name but two of the other examples. The

⁹¹ Arthur Tabor and James Droge. (1992). *A Noble Death*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco. p. 75.

Koran is absolutely clear on the Muslim's duty to struggle in the service of God, and on the rewards enjoyed by those slain in the course of that struggle. According to the Koran "those slain in the way of God, He will not send their work astray. He will guide them, and dispose their minds aright, and He will admit them to Paradise, that He has made known to them".⁹² While in Christianity, it is the martyr's death rather than his fighting that carries the ultimate religious significance, with Islam the opposite is true. Those who fight "in the way of God" have a special status beyond the promise of Paradise. They are "mightier in rank with God."⁹³ Their sins will be forgiven;⁹⁴ whether slain or victorious they will receive a vast reward.⁹⁵ The one certain reward associated with martyrdom is eternal life: "Do not say of those slain in God's way that they are dead; they are living, only you do not perceive."⁹⁶

A martyr is a person who chooses to suffer or die rather than give up his faith or principles; a person who is tortured or killed because of his beliefs; a person who suffers a long period of great pain or misery for his/her cause. Christian history is filled with officially proclaimed saints who tolerated persecution and died willingly for their faith – St. Stephen, John the Baptist, and most importantly, Christ himself. Just about the only warrior who became a martyr in Christianity is Joan of Arc. She killed and was willing to be killed to defend her God.

⁹² Koran, Chapter 47, verses 4-6.

⁹³ Ibid., 9:20.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 61:12.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 4:74.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 2:154.

In Jewish tradition there are also people who die for their faith. In the Masada event in the first century, Jewish Zealots decided to kill each other rather than face capture by the Romans. Like Muslims, Zealots interpreted important events in the founding period of their religion as precedents for their tactics and to mean also that “those who died in this struggle secured their places in paradise.”⁹⁷

In Islam, the definition of *shaheed* (martyr) also includes several types of death. The word *shaheed* is usually used to describe everyone from innocent children killed in war to gunmen who open fire in a crowded marketplace. Martyrdom is a powerful concept in the modern Muslim world, one that summons the earliest days of Islam’s turbulent history in the seventh century, when followers of Muhammad died defending their faith.

To seal one’s belief through one’s death was the main characteristic shared by Muslims and Marxists. Martyrdom was advocated by prominent clerics and intellectuals as a measure of resistance. Ayatollah Mottahari, a prominent cleric who was assassinated only several months after the revolution said on reviving martyrdom, that we cannot “separate ourselves from the martyrs [in Karbala] when the right moment comes.”⁹⁸ Both Mottahari and Shariati⁹⁹ opposed any mode of identification with the well-known battle of Karbala and martyrdom that did not simultaneously create a sense of heroism, sacrifice and activist commitment to control one’s destiny. Mottahari argued that those who truly

⁹⁷ Pamala Griset and Sue Mahan. 2003. *Terrorism in Perspective*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc. p. 24.

⁹⁸ Morteza Mottahari. 1982. *Ehya-ye tafakkor-e Eslami (Reviving Islamic Thought)*. Qom: Dafter-e Entesharat-e Eslami.

⁹⁹ Dr. Ali Shariati was a Muslim scholar and ideologue, who wrote many books on Islam and Islamic ideology and borrowed from Marxism in some of his political analysis. He taught Islamic history in several small towns and villages.

believed in the martyred Imam Hussein and followed his path with sacrifice were themselves martyrs. He clearly extended the sacred Shi'a history into contemporary politics. He believed in Islamic activism and harshly criticized passive Islam. If Muslims wanted to do the right thing, they would have to "refer back to our past and to our historical records."¹⁰⁰ This meant the history of Karbala and the struggle Hussein led against Mu'awiya's army.

Perhaps the most concise and articulate statement of the significance of a martyr was given by Ayatollah Taleghani. He was a radical cleric who persevered in his struggle against the Shah, and died early after the revolution on September 10, 1979. He often preached in continuance of the revolutionary movement and claimed that death or any hardship should not be feared by those who struggle to change the direction of history. He referred to the Koran in defense of martyrdom:

With a soul invigorated by light and energy, and with a vision penetrating and perceptive [the Koran] removes the barrier of the martyr's death from their path, and removes the word of their death from their tongue. [So we] consider the martyrs so alive and lofty that their spirit is life-giving and uplifting for the earthy creatures, and their dead body, unwashed and unshrouded, gives blessings to the wretched, their gravesite the site of pilgrimage for the living hearts, the boiling of their blood giving life to dead bloods.¹⁰¹

In Iran, martyrdom is a powerful weapon that is directed toward the West, the occupier, the invader, the oppressor (tyrant), and is shared by all those who believe in the struggle against the national enemy. Few places on earth revere death and martyrdom as intensely as Iran. This is partially due to the fact that Shi'a Islam was founded on the memory of Hussein's death in the battle of Karbala. During the Muslim celebration

¹⁰⁰ Mottahari, p. 94.

¹⁰¹ Seyyed Mahmud Taleghani. 1975. *Partovi az Ghor'an (A Reflection of the Koran)*. Ettehadiyyeh-ye Anjomanha-ye Eslami dar Amrica. p. 24.

known as *Ashura*, Shi'as use the commemoration of Hussein's martyrdom to dedicate themselves to the memories of the martyrs of their recent history.

Martyrdom became a notion that gave birth to an authentic and genuine Muslim revolutionary.¹⁰² It became instrumental. By the late 1960s a true revolutionary was a revolutionary who gave his/her life for the ultimate cause. A martyr withstood torture to the point of death without uttering a word. Despite the Tudeh Party's refraining from the idea of martyrdom for decades, the new Marxists had to welcome death and martyrdom. Ultimately Marxists learned that without adhering to martyrdom they would not be a true political alternative in the eyes of the Iranian masses. The death of a Marxist revolutionary not only proved to the masses the seriousness of his/her devotion but also mobilized the masses.

Karbala and the Inception of Shi'a Islam

Consider the event that gave rise to this belief in Shi'a Islam, which started with the death of two prominent Imams in the latter part of the seventh century. The concept began with a conflict between two movements which later became known as Shi'as and Sunnis. The former were followers of prophet Mohammad and his *blood* descendents, and the latter were followers of prophet Mohammad and his *political* descendents. After the death of Ali, Mohammad's cousin and son in law, Ali's elder son Hassan took over as a caliph. Ali's rule had been controversial, and he had been passed over for succession three times in a row. Hassan's takeover, although for a short period, involved constant conflict against Muawiya, a member of the rival Umayyad clan. Hassan's rule lasted only six months. However, it was his brother Hussein who had defied Yazid, Muawiya's son,

¹⁰² This terminology, "authenticity of a revolutionary" was also conveyed to me through my interviews with Dr. Mesbahi.

and challenged his political power. Hussein and 71 members of his family were martyred in Karbala, located in southern Iraq, on the 10th day of the Arabic month of Muharram in the year 680.

The killing of Hussein and the other members of his family became a symbolic turning point in the Shi'a religion. It was introduced into Shi'(ism) as the notion of freely and passionately giving one's life in the path of God. Currently, Shi'a Muslims (13 percent of all Muslims) around the world commemorate the event by mourning and self-inflicted wounds to feel compassion with the original martyrs of Islam. The followers of Mu'awiya, on the other hand, became the Sunnis, and although the conflict was over who would succeed prophet Mohammad, the Karbala event is conspicuously one of the events that marked the split between Sunnis and Shi'as.

Shi'ism became consolidated, especially with the death of Hussein. According to Seyyed Hussein Nasr, a well-known authority on Islam, Shi'ism continued as a protest movement of increasing political significance "but did not gain political power over any extensive area of the Islamic world until the Safavids conquered Persia [Iran] in 1501 and established a twelve-Imam Shi'ism as the official state religion."¹⁰³ For Iranians (or Shi'as in general), Ali symbolized a political activism to mend social injustices for the masses of poor people (*mostaz'afin*). The fact that Hussein fought to his death instilled in Shi'as the firm belief of suffering and martyrdom. In the twentieth century, especially during the 1979 revolution, he became a symbol of political resistance, revolution, and final hope. Shi'as consider visiting his tomb in Karbala second in importance only to the

¹⁰³ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "What is Islam?" in *Our Religions*, ed. Arrind Sharma. 1993. San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers. p. 433.

Hajj in Mecca. Ashura mourning sessions are regularly held in Iran to remember Hussein and his family's death and suffering, and to promote the reverence of martyrdom.

During the Iran-Iraq war, Khomeini recalled the importance of martyrs and mourning sessions, remembering martyrs for his audience of clerics. In his speech on June 20, 1982, he said:

These mourning sessions have developed young men and youths who voluntarily go to the war fronts seeking martyrdom and feel unhappy if they don't achieve it. These Ashura mourning gatherings develop such mothers who urge their sons to go to the war fronts and if they do not return, the mothers wish they had more sons to send or say we have other sons to send to the war fronts.¹⁰⁴

Shi'as identify with the death of Hussein and his struggle against Muawiya and his troops. His martyrdom has influenced nearly all that happens in the social-political world. According to Davis, it even influences how they perceive cheerfulness and having fun.¹⁰⁵ The Shi'a leader, Khomeini, decreed that good Shi'as should not decorate their homes lavishly. He believed that Muslims have to pay constant homage to Hussein's suffering at Karbala. According to Khomeini, "an Islamic regime must be serious in every aspect of life...there is no fun in Islam. There can be no fun or enjoyment in whatever is serious."¹⁰⁶ In the cities of Iran, public spaces promote religious values and remembering martyrs. Streets and alleys are named after martyrs, and artists use public spaces to draw murals of these martyrs. In a mystical way, this is how some Iranian Shi'as transcend themselves to feel the suffering endured by Hussein and his family and supporters.

¹⁰⁴ Joyce M. Davis. 2003. *Martyrs: Innocence, Vengeance, and despair in the Middle East*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan, P. 49.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

In her book, *Intellectual Trends in Twentieth Century Iran*, Negin Nabavi demonstrated the deep roots of Islamic belief in Iran. She stated that the discourse of “authentic culture” gained “prevalence in response to a combination of ‘third-worldism’ and the movement of counterculture predominant in the West.”¹⁰⁷ The more the Shah’s regime glorified the ideas of Westernization and cherished Western culture, the more leftist intellectuals, including Marxists, became interested in the authentic culture of martyrdom, somber behavior, and modesty. As Nabavi points out:

If Islam and its values became prevalent in the 1970s, it was for their worldly potentials. Religion and mysticism were old notions that, if interpreted in a new light, could bring about the change that other ideologies had failed to achieve. It is no wonder then that once the first manifestations of a religious opposition to the regime began, secular progressive intellectuals did not question the meaning of this rhetoric. Instead, they gave it their full backing.¹⁰⁸

The urgency of giving one’s life for the cause, martyrdom, became so prevalent that even participating Marxists wrote extensively on how such action could lead to adventurism. The Tudeh Party, which wanted nothing to do with the idea of death and martyrdom, persistently criticized the method and claimed it was adventuristic. Their constant criticism of sacrificing one’s life and refutation of martyrdom contributed to their lack of acceptance by the people. Even among the leaders of main Marxist organizations, members and sympathizers warned about the potential consequences of martyrdom. They warned that armed struggle does not mean getting killed for the cause. But a shift in such a deep-rooted principle was almost impossible. Even Marxists such as Bizhan Jazani, who was tortured and later executed by the SAVAK, was apprehensive

¹⁰⁷ Negin Nabavi. 2004. *Intellectual Trends in Twentieth Century Iran: A Critical Survey*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. p. 104.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

about the idea of martyrdom as mere sacrifice of blood. His warnings to his comrades follow:

To ignore the objective conditions which are relevant to the growth of the revolutionary movement; to consider the role of the vanguard out of its context, and to peddle the notion that the sensational sacrifice of some elements of the vanguard will immediately (or in a short time) attract the support of the masses, or even encourage their active participation in the struggle, is adventuristic. Such conceptions about armed struggle should be replaced by a Marxist understanding of the dynamics of society and of the revolutionary movement in general. ... Too much emphasis on the role of the "Fadaee," resorting to constant invocations of "Martyrdom" to offset the absence of a mass movement, and the belief that the sacrifice of blood is sufficient for the start of the revolution are aspects of adventurism.¹⁰⁹

Adventurism it might have been, but for that historical period, martyrdom was the driving force behind a serious struggle against a dictator who had stifled all methods of dissent for a frustrated opposition. In addition, it provided Marxists and Muslims with a method of struggle that refused to play according to the rules of a punitive political system. Martyrdom became the ultimate proof of invincibility. The individuals who did not fear being punished were strange phenomena that not even SAVAK torturers could fathom.

As argued previously, the notion of martyrdom became a unit to measure authenticity among Marxists and Muslims. Muslim groups and organizations within the opposition rejected the Shah's modernization process and were willing to give up their lives for maintaining Islamic values intact. They opposed modernization, adhering to traditional Islamic values. Major Muslim organizations made essential changes in Iranian political history. These organizations contributed significantly to setting the political discourse in Iran. A fundamental manifestation of a revolutionary was to become a

¹⁰⁹ Bizhan Jazani, "The Main Form of Adventurism in the Armed Movement," in *Voices of Terror*, ed. Walter Lacquer. 2004. NY: Reed Press. pp. 157-158.

martyr. Who could be more serious and authentic in fighting the Shah's tyranny? In the eyes of the Iranians, martyrdom finally gave birth to Marxists as serious revolutionaries. Decades of skepticism about Marxists in Iran ended with Marxists becoming martyrs. Ironically, martyrdom helped Marxists prove their authenticity. Only when they gave their lives for the first time in the Siahkal region, while fighting the Shah's army, did the population consider them real revolutionaries.

Marxists Using Islamic Ideology to Defend a Revolutionary Line

Iranian Marxists found the idea of martyrdom, although metaphysical,¹¹⁰ a practice that challenged the false consciousness of the masses. In effect they used religion, what Marx considered false consciousness, to exterminate an alternate false consciousness. Indisputably, even Marxists who believe in the idea of martyrdom do not believe in the afterlife and the story of angels awaiting them. The concept of martyrdom, however, has become a belief system for many Marxists. Moreover, in their literature, martyrdom is often referred to as a necessary condition for achieving an ideal society. Here are two examples of such usage, but from different perspectives.

Khosro Golsorkhi¹¹¹ and Karamat Daneshian,¹¹² were two Marxist revolutionaries who were tried by the Shah's military court and later executed by the Shah's military. Both Golsorkhi and Daneshian believed in the concept of sacrificing self, despite their adherence to Marxism. These two individuals represented the two types of Marxism that

¹¹⁰ It is metaphysical because martyrdom hopes to transcend revolution and resistance through the struggle and death of a martyr. A martyr's death is used to provoke and instill the idea and necessity of resistance in those who observe the act.

¹¹¹ A revolutionary Marxist poet who was executed by the Shah's regime for allegedly plotting a conspiracy against the royal family.

¹¹² A revolutionary Marxist who was also executed by the Shah's regime with the same charges as those against Golsorkhi.

developed in Iran. For Golsorkhi, Islam was ideological. It was an ideology that encouraged a struggle against the oppressor. For Daneshian however, Islam was contextual, it is in the way he was raised and socialized: his belief in martyrdom for him guaranteed a brighter future.

For Golsorkhi, a socialist economy could be represented by an Islamic state. He claimed that “in a socialist economy, Islam is acceptable as a superstructure.”¹¹³ His defense in court, while he was being prosecuted for conspiring to assassinate the Shah and his family, conveyed one of the most interesting ways Marxists adapted Islamic values contrary to their own.

During his defense, he mentioned Ali (the first Imam of Shi’a Islam) as the ‘first socialist’ and Hussein (the third Imam of Shi’a Islam) as ‘the greatest martyr of the people of the Middle East.’ He gave an intricate description of why he, as a Marxist, believed in continuing the line of Ali and his son Hussein as two martyrs who gave their lives for the oppressed. In his speech on the similarities between Marxism and Islam, Golsorkhi, conveyed the depth of Islamic belief in martyrdom among Marxist intellectuals. His synthesis of Islam and Marxism was one of a kind, yet highly acceptable in the Iranian resistance culture. On January 8, 1974, Keyhan, a state-sponsored newspaper, wrote:

Khosro Golsorkhi, defendant in row two, for his last defense, after reciting a poem, defended the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism. He dubbed himself as a follower of the school of Marx and said several words on the conditions of Iran. The main judge warned the defendant to speak only in his own defense and that he was not permitted to say anything outside of that context. After the warning, the defendant handed his [written] defense to the court’s secretary.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Alireza Samakar. 2002. *Man Yek Shooreshiam (I am a rebel)*. Tehran: Sahand Publishers. p. 74.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. p. 76.

This was Keyhan's description of Golsorkhi's defense. However, the interesting details were not mentioned. The entire defense, which lasted only several minutes, spoke volumes on how Marxism developed within the Iranian opposition. Golsorkhi began by citing a saying from Imam Hussein: '*Ennammal Hayat, va Aghidatto-Jahad*' (Life is nothing but a struggle for your belief).

I will begin my talk with a quotation from Hussein, the great martyr of the people of the Middle East. I, a Marxist-Leninist, have found, for the first time, social justice in the school of Islam and then reached socialism. In this court, I am not bargaining for my life or even my life span. I am but a drop in the great struggle of the Iranian people. A people to whom belong Mazdaks, Maziars, Babaks, Yaghoob Leith Saffaris, Amoughlus, Pasyans, Mirza Koochaks, Aranis, Roozbehs, and Vartans.¹¹⁵ Yes, I am not bargaining for my life, because I am the child of a fighting people.

He was interrupted by a state official calling him a liar; undaunted, he continued:

The real Islam in Iran has always played its part in liberation movements. Behbahanis and Khiabanis are genuine examples. Today, too, the real Islam is contributing to liberation movements in Iran. When Marx says, in a class society, wealth is accumulated on one side and poverty, hunger, and misery on the other, whilst the producer of wealth is the poor, and Ali¹¹⁶ says, a castle will not be built unless thousands become poor, we cannot deny that there are great similarities. This is the juncture of history in which we can claim Ali to be the world's first socialist. The life of Hussein¹¹⁷ represents our current life conditions, willing to give our life for our oppressed people being tried in court. He was among a minority. And Yazid¹¹⁸ had the throne [sic], soldiers, and power. He [Hussein] stood and became a martyr. Yazid occupied a part of history, but what prevailed in history was the path of Hussein. This is how, in a real Marxist society, Islam is explicable as a superstructure. And we too approve of such Islam, the Islam of Hussein.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ This list includes nationalists, Muslims, and Marxists. These are prominent figures well known for their opposition to foreign and domestic despots.

¹¹⁶ Ali was Mohammad's cousin and son-in-law. He was the first man to accept Islam as his religion after Mohammad.

¹¹⁷ Hussein was one of Ali's two sons who fought against Mua'wiah, the head of the Ommaye dynasty. According to the Shi'a sect of Islam, he is the one who upheld Mohammad's Islam and continued Shi'ism as the true path of Islam, as opposed to Sunni.

¹¹⁸ Yazid led the Ommaye army in a bloody fight against Hussein and his group.

¹¹⁹ Samakar, p. 78.

The common struggle for Muslims and Marxists was indeed the opposition to modernization and an imperialist culture. Golsorkhi spoke about censorship in Iran. Such censorship, he claimed, was not found anywhere else in the world:

This is how a mummified culture, which is the consequence of comprador bourgeois production relations in Iran, stifles progressive books and thoughts with its censorship... what must be dictated to the people of Iran is the souvenir of American imperialist culture.¹²⁰

At this point of his defense, the military judge warned Golsorkhi that his statements were irrelevant. Golsorkhi, upset about the accusation, responded that he would say nothing in his own defense, and if not allowed to state what he believed in, would rather take his seat and say nothing. Not allowed to continue, he took his seat.

The other defendant, who was executed after being sentenced by the same court, was Karamat Daneshian. His defense statement was not like Golsorkhi's and adhered to a very secular Marxist course. He included no words about Islam in his defense. The objection of this defendant, however, had the same tone against the Shah and imperialism. His examples of those international organizations resisting similar oppressive political conditions were nonreligious as well. His defense is included here to depict the difference between secular Marxist thought and Islamic Marxist thought. During his defense, he was constantly interrupted by the judge and the state attorney. He spoke of injustice throughout the world because, as he put it, there was unannounced martial law in Iran:

Military courts automatically approve their own legitimacy. ...millions of people in the armed forces, without having an active role in society or production, are busy in a useless game. The budget spent on the purchase and maintenance of this military power is as useless as the game itself... [interrupted, he continued] such

¹²⁰ Ibid.

force has no other purpose than the suppression of people's voice of liberation. The shootings of farmers, peasants, and people's fighters [political resisters] are their principle duty. Revolutions have shown that even the mightiest of powers will fall. All revolutionaries, plus the people, have always fought against class differences. Successes achieved by the oppressed in this path have proven people victorious. Liberated people, social movements on their way to liberation, reverberates the news of shedding poverty, corruption and injustice in the world. Such worldwide victories also affect the Iranian movement. In addition, the commencement of any movement is contingent upon its local conditions. If you think that with the arrest of a small group—torture, imprisonment, and execution—you can claim victory and put an end to all resistance...[interrupted, continued] Observing the resistance throughout the world you cannot conclude your triumph. Despite the prosperity reached by two-thirds of the world population, remember the heroic people of Vietnam and how they caused American imperialism to flee like a dog with its tail between its legs...[interrupted and he was not allowed to continue].

He submitted his written defense to the secretary of the court and took his seat.

Sentenced to death, five days later, both Golsorkhi and Daneshian had another chance to defend themselves.¹²¹

Golsorkhi, in his second defense, kept his Islamic Marxist ideas consistent and claimed that he was being tried because he believed in Marxist thought and that he was sentenced to death by a military court. Reiterating his Islamic beliefs while remaining a Marxist, he said: "I am a Marxist-Leninist, and I respect the Shari'a laws of Islam. I believe that nowhere in the world, in dependent countries and colonies, can a nationalist government exist unless it is built upon a Marxist infrastructure." Daneshian, in his second defense, had even stronger words for the court:

During the first mistrial, and its fascist order, you did not hear my entire defense or the defense of my friend Golsorkhi. But my defense is nothing but defending

¹²¹ Originally, five of the accused were sentenced to death. After televising the first day of trial and allowing what Golsorkhi and Daneshian said in court, an entire new political atmosphere took over in Iran. According to Samakar, televising the trials contributed to more hatred toward the Shah. To placate the population, a second chance was given to demonstrate the Shah's claim of a more open political atmosphere. Five days later, all defendants had a second chance to repent. Three of the death sentences were reduced to life in prison, but both Daneshian and Golsorkhi again received death sentences.

the rights of oppressed and poverty-stricken masses and attacking the enemy of the people. If you do not fear people's resistance, you do not believe in the death of the ruling class in Iran. History has shown this reality and will again...our belief in the victory of the Iranian people's movement and all class societies in the world is our greatest power. I should add that the ruling classes have never liked Marxism.¹²²

In Daneshian's will, there are some contextual Islamic undertones about death and martyrdom, the metaphysics of how a martyr would guarantee a better future;

Death is our most modest gift to the people. Each death is a small window closing on nihilism. And each death is a panel of mystery closing on lies, corruption, poverty, and hunger. Thus, a window will open that lets in the light of life. Let us sacrifice our life for this light – this light.

[signed by Daneshian as] People's Fadaee, Karamat Daneshian; February 8, 1974.

No Marxist in Iran has entered a life of political struggle without, sometime or another, reasoning with the statement above. The word Fadaee, (one who is willing to sacrifice his/her life for a cause) is used by both Marxists and Muslims to refer to the nature of their struggle. The concept has strong roots in Islam and comes directly from the notion of martyrdom. There is first an acceptance of one's sacrificial life and death. This gives meaning to the cause and its progress. To live a life of Fadaee is to live selflessly. To give your life for the cause is to sacrifice the ultimate human possession, one's life for the ultimate reason. A famous Marxist song popularized by Marxist Fadaeean claims that in the path of people, if one life is given, thousands will rise. It maintains that to become a Fadaee and to give your life for the cause is not in vain. According to Muslims, Islam's martyrs, Ali, Hussein, and Abbass (the brother of Imam Hussein, a great martyr of Karbala), made clear before their deaths that this would guarantee a brighter future. It would demonstrate to nonbelievers the nobility of their cause, Islam. A culture of giving life for the cause is part of tradition in Iran. According to Shi'a belief, the imitation of the

¹²² Samakar, p. 81.

fate of Hussein, the ultimate Martyr of Islam, instantly opens the gates of paradise.¹²³

Marxists too, have taken this idea for granted. They have come to believe in it as a scientific method of entering the political struggle in a metaphysical manner. The non-scientific method of martyrdom related to victory, and its inconsistency with the scientific methodology of Marxism is a clear contradiction.

Formation of State and Islam

In their overriding concern with opposition to the Shah, Iranian Marxists did not plan on the formation of a state that represented their social and political ideas. In this realm of polity, Muslims were far ahead in the game of state building. Muslims did not get a chance to practice their art of organizing a state until the revolution of 1979, but they had contemplated the possibilities decades before.

In March of 1950, a member of the Fadaeean of Islam, Khalil Tahmasbi, assassinated the newly appointed Prime Minister, Razmara. Eliminating Razmara created a political atmosphere that contributed to the rise of Mosaddegh's government. It was under such an environment that the necessity for the existence of a group such as Fadaeean of Islam was questioned. Why just a resistance movement if an Islamic republic is possible. The assassination of Razmara was agreed upon by both Ayatollah Kashani and the National Front (the group Mosaddegh belonged to), indicating its close relationship with Muslims. Fadaeean of Islam insisted on an Islamic republic, and for the first time the issue of an Islamic state was presented. However, Mosaddegh and Ayatollah Kashani disagreed. Mosaddegh had responded to their request for an Islamic republic: "Won't the gentlemen leave an Islamic ruling to another government and

¹²³ Fereydoun Hoveyda. 2004. *The Shah and the Ayatollah: Iranian Mythology and Islamic Revolution*. West Port: Prager.

request it from an Islamic government? My Government will not last forever.”¹²⁴ It was these events that made the Fadaeean of Islam less significant, to the point where their own leader, Navab Safavi, after being released from prison said, “We will begin a period of decline (*fetrat*), because the fight between Mosaddegh and the Shah is not over Islam but over power [government], but I have an Islamic contention. And while problems are not settled, I will remain quiet.”¹²⁵ In effect, Mosaddegh’s government de-prioritized the necessity of building an Islamic state.

According to Katouzian, Safavi’s silence was not indicative of neutrality. His silence only signified the Fadaeean of Islam’s disapproval of Mosaddegh’s government and hence, condoned the Shah’s return to power.¹²⁶ Although they did believe in establishment of an Islamic government they never reached their objective. In 1955, five members of the group, including Safavi himself, were arrested and executed for an attempt to assassinate the Shah’s new Prime Minister, Hossein Ala.

Despite Fadaeean of Islam’s radical acts and rejection of the secularization of Iran, the main reason for their temporary popularity, they never developed a sophisticated ideology, much less a concrete program for an Islamic government. Their priority was to instill Islamic belief from the bottom and not through the state. According to Safavi’s writings, the first principle in their ideology claimed that:

For many years there has been a curtain drawn over Islamic truth and illumination, and it has prevented the shedding of Islamic light on the hearts of children of Islam and Islamic nations in the world. Islam is a religion of practice and action. Superstition has covered the real character of Islam and the fault

¹²⁴ Gholamreza Nejadi. 1995. *melli kardan-e san’at-e naft-e Iran va codetta-ye bist-va-hasht-e mordad.. The Nationalization of Iranian Oil Industry and the Coup of 28 of Mordad*. Tehran: Resa Publications, p. 90.

¹²⁵ Katouzian, p. 39.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

belongs to religious clerics. ... Therefore, to achieve real Islam we must take superstition, sectarianism, and dark thoughts away from Islam, for Islam is a religion of worship and human salvation.¹²⁷

It did not however, mean that an Islamic state was not preferable. Among the principal beliefs of the Fadaeean was that religion should not be kept separate from politics. They criticized clerics who avoided the realm of politics and believed that the clerics had helped develop a spirit of indifference and apathy among Muslims.

Khoshniyyat wrote, "Fadaeean of Islam tried to break the frozen atmosphere of the clerical school in Qom and replace clerics' apathy and indifference with protest and struggle."¹²⁸

Among their plans, although less pronounced in their literature, was to establish an Islamic government. They believed that living according to Islam was contingent upon an Islamic state and that Islamic rulers must use their power in executing two central laws of *malzoomat va monkerat* (obligations and prohibitions). This, in fact, was as far as the Fadaeean of Islam went with politics and their program for political power. Their intent was simply to forbid and control certain items such as women's clothing and alcohol. They had, for example, never mentioned *velayat-e faghih* (authority of jurists) and its role within an Islamic state.

Many members of the Council of Islamic Alliance occupied important positions within the government of the Islamic Republic. Many considered the Council as one of the most powerful institutions in relation to political expertise in state-building. The

¹²⁷ Hossein Khoshniyyat. 1981. *Seyyed Mojtaba Navvab Safavi: aghayed, mobarezat, va shahadat. (His Thoughts, Struggles and Martyrdom)*. Tehran: Nashr-e Saraee. p. 217.

¹²⁸ Ibid, p. 227.

Council was essentially a closed, organized group seeking power, expanding Islamic values, and condemning any revision.¹²⁹

In his article, Hamid Enayat offers a summary of how clerics in this alliance were able to take on state power. It is historicist and rational, and worth mentioning because it demonstrates the level of preparedness by the clerics to take control of the state. He claims that among the reasons behind the cleric's success was

their political experience. By participating in sporadic political movements, such as the Tobacco Uprising in 1892, the Constitutional Revolution in 1906, the National and the Oil Movement in 1952, and the 1963 uprising, they gathered lots of experience. In all of these events, intellectual groups pushed aside the clergy after succeeding. But the clergy consequently learned from all of this, and by arming themselves with such experience from the very beginning, they prevented the liberals and radicals from defeating them once again.¹³⁰

Among the groups of clerics, according to Abrahamian, Ayatollah Khomeini's group was the most political and most radical. Most of the members of this group had been Khomeini's pupils. In his first work in 1945, *Discovering Secrets (Kashfol-asrar)*, Khomeini alluded to not getting involved in changing or overthrowing the state.¹³¹ But later, in the 1960s, he revised his views and insisted on the involvement of the clerics in politics and economics by organizing an Islamic state. Because "the rule of Islam is the rule of law," he claimed, "those who know the law and even beyond that, theologians, meaning clerics, must be responsible for it [the Islamic state]." It would be they "who are to protect all matters related to executing, running the bureaucracy and planning in the country."¹³² He advocated heavy involvement in politics by the clerics, but he was careful

¹²⁹ Pahlavan, p. 14.

¹³⁰ Hamid Enayat, "Iranian Revolution in 1979: Religion as Political Ideology," Translated by M.M. Lotf, in *Farhange Tose'e*, No. 4, 1992, p. 8.

¹³¹ Abrahamian, p. 587.

¹³² *Ibid*, p. 588.

about misinterpreting what an Islamic government exactly meant. The following, which Khomeini wrote in his book, *Authority of the Jurist: Islamic Rule*, (*velayat-e faghih: hokoomat-e eslami*) is quoted in Abrahamian. He stated what Islamic Jurisprudence literally means pertaining to constitutionality and law. Islamic ruling is neither tyrannical nor absolute; rather, it is ‘constitutional.’¹³³

Of course not constitutional [read contingent], meaning its contemporary usage is determined by the vote of the majority. Constitutional [read contingent], in the sense that rulers in their executing of laws are contingent upon what has been determined by the Holy Koran and the Tradition of Mohammad. This culmination of conditions is the same as Islamic laws that have to be implemented and executed.¹³⁴

Khomeini’s analysis or directives on why clerics must be involved in politics and policy making became a guideline during the revolution. Many of Khomeini’s pupils were prominent clerics: Montazeri, Khalkhali, Rafsanjani, Khamenei, Mottahari, who became powerful figures after the revolution. Their involvement in state-making, state-running, and state-ruling is hardly imaginable without Khomeini’s interpretations of *velayat-e faghih*.

Khomeini made clear his interpretation of Islamic ruling long before the revolution. The Islamic government, he wrote, “is the rule of the Divine Law upon people.”¹³⁵ Consequently there is no legislative body in the Islamic government. The supreme leader of authority in an ‘Islamic Republic’ is qualified by virtue of two characteristics: knowledge of the Divine Law and justice. Any other kind of knowledge, sacred or

¹³³ ‘Constitutional’, in Persian, *Mashrooteh*, refers to the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, but literally means ‘contingent upon’. Khomeini is playing politics with words, which is why he explains the constitutional revolution to mean a contingent revolution.

¹³⁴ Abrahamian, p. 590, and Foran, p. 543.

¹³⁵ Ruhollah Khomeini. 1978. *velayat-e faghih va jomhuri-e eslami*. (*Authority of the Jurist and Islamic Rule*). Tehran: Amirkabir. p. 59.

secular, is irrelevant. By virtue of the knowledge of the Divine Law, “the jurists have authority over the rulers.”¹³⁶ In his writing Khomeini reiterates the role of the supreme leader and claims that due to the jurist’s indisputable authority, all other positions of power fall directly under him. The jurist is knowledgeable in all Islamic laws and he is the most just.

If rulers are Muslims they ought to obey the jurists. They have to ask the jurists about the [Islamic] laws and regulations, and then act accordingly. Thus the true rulers are the jurists themselves, and the government ought to be officially given to them, not to those who because of their ignorance of the [Divine] Law have to obey the jurists.¹³⁷

On the other hand, Marxists in Iran were merely involved in the art of resistance and not what would have to be done after the revolution – literally the morning after the revolution. Muslims were obviously thinking not only about resistance but also how to build a state that would answer to the necessities of an oil-rich developing capitalist economy and keep Islamic faith ever present. The Islamic state would also be able to address issues of nationalism and patriotic fervor. Nationalism, advocated by the new Islamic Republic, captured the attention of Iranians in defending their country against the Iraqi invasion of Iran. While the government mobilized masses of Iranians with the aid of Islamic belief,¹³⁸ their political rhetoric was nationalist. Many Marxist groups and individuals, e.g., the Tudeh Party and Fadaeean (*majority*), volunteered to fight for the country with a nationalist ideology.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 60.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Iranian youth for example, were sent to the battle front with a key around their neck. Once they became martyrs they would be able to use the key to open heaven’s gate.

The Muslim preparedness in taking control of state power was another reason which eased the conversion of Marxists into Islam. Muslims, especially cleric leaders, had concrete plans on taking over the state. They had considered the idea dating back to the early 1960s. During the 1979 revolution, it was only Muslims who pushed for state-building. This was while Marxists were involved in perpetual in-fighting. Marxists' political conversion into Islam, especially during the years of the revolution, was strongly tied to the Muslim takeover of the state. In many ways Marxists thought of the Islamic Republic as a stepping stone to socialism, and at times very close to a socialist – non-capitalist – state.

The three areas of resistance, martyrdom, and state-building constructed the sacred canopy for the Iranian political movement. It was contextual Islam that Marxists learned from. Their conversion to Islam makes sense in the context of power relations. In the face of a despotic regime, who had the power to set the stage for an ultimate struggle? What was the hegemonic force in the realm of Iranian politics? In all three categories, Islamic ideology and ethos prevailed, obligating Marxists to convert.

In the next chapter I will examine how contextual Islam and the ideology of Islam became a possibility for Marxists. Through methods developed in the sociology of knowledge, I will demonstrate how Islamic belief is present in particular Iranian Marxist organizations.

CHAPTER FOUR

MARXISTS WHO BECAME MUSLIMS DURING THE 1979 REVOLUTION

Contrary to resentful sophistry and interpretation, our party's support of this thought[Khomeini's] does not indicate disagreement with democracy or betraying toward principles of civilization...our party does not believe that Khomeini or his true believers are taking Iran through the gates of the Middle Ages

Kianuri, Chairman of the Tudeh Party

In preceding chapters the reader became familiar with contextual Islam, the prevalence of Islam within Marxist and non Marxist groups and Islamic ethics as the sacred canopy. In this chapter specific Marxist organizations that converted to an Islamic ideology and approved of an Islamic republic will be examined. Many of their leaders and members were born into an Islamic culture which helped shape their thoughts and ideas. Their agents of socialization were imbued with Islamic belief and philosophy. What are the consequences of being born into this background of Islamic belief? Will it transcend in to the realms of politics and political movements? It was not only Muslim leaders of the opposition who were raised and socialized through Islam. Their Marxist counterparts went through very similar socialization processes and internalized similar Islamic beliefs. Islamic perspective was the hegemonic way of analyzing all that existed.

In addition to the contextual Islamic ethos there is the ideological acceptance of the philosophy of Islam. The ideological convergence was a more specific method through which Marxists were becoming Muslims. This type of convergence occurred during the 1979 revolution. The most significant part of a Marxist discourse in accepting

the ideology of Islam was put forth by the Tudeh Party and groups that joined the Tudeh Party later. Among them were the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerrillas (*majority*)¹³⁹ and the Liberation and Equality Group (*goruh-e azadi va barabari*). These three organizations specifically wrote and spoke about the acceptance of Islam as a liberating ideology. In this chapter some of their written material is examined. Through their writing one can comprehend how Marxists were able to rationalize Islam as an ideology that would mobilize Iran's oppressed. As Maziar Behrooz claims, "never before in the history of communism in Iran, and very rarely in other parts of the world, has a Marxist organization collaborated so closely with the state in the suppression of other Marxist groups."¹⁴⁰

Tudeh Party and the New Islamic Republic

Most of the material used in this chapter is selected from the Tudeh Party's organs and publications during and after the revolution. Their publications are used as primary sources and have been translated by the author. For the entire decade of the 1980s into the mid-1990s these publications were banned. Most of the material can now be found in the archives of the pertaining organization's website. The written material is related to the Tudeh Party's Chairman, Nour al-din Kianuri¹⁴¹, who was a prominent member and the spokesperson for the Tudeh Party during the revolution. He was one of the executive committee members of the Tudeh Party. He fled Iran and resided mostly in East Germany

¹³⁹ After the split within the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerrillas in June 1980, this group officially joined the Tudeh party. They later dropped the term 'guerrilla' from their name, calling themselves the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaeean- *majority*.

¹⁴⁰ Maziar Behrooz. 2000. *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*. New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 126.

¹⁴¹ Kianuri was appointed as Tudeh Party's chairman in 1970.

until 1979. During the revolution he went back to Iran and became the main spokesperson for the Party during the years of the revolution. He was appointed as party spokesman to convince both Muslims and Marxists the Party line of becoming close affiliates of the Islamic Republic. He remained a key figure even after being incarcerated by the Islamic Republic. His Islamic affiliation goes back to his grandfather, Ayatollah Fazlollah Nuri, who was a prominent clergy during the social turmoil of the 1906 Constitutional Revolution. Initially Ayatollah Nuri supported the revolutionaries but later turned against them. He was later executed by the revolutionaries.

For most Marxists working with an Islamic government was questionable, while for some Muslims the nature of a Marxist organization such as the Tudeh Party working in collusion with the Islamic government was an anomaly. The Tudeh Party's acceptance of Islam was an ideological anomaly for Marxists and Muslims. Marxists were doubtful because the newly established Islamic government was practicing its suppression through religion. Muslims did not want to believe the Tudeh leadership because they did not want to share political power with atheist, nonbelievers, *koffar*. They were Soviet-controlled communists who questioned Islam, according to Muslims. Skeptics of both sides were questioning the Tudeh leadership. Some of their discussions were meant to deliberately debunk the party's support, affiliation, and cooperation with either the left or the right, Marxist or Muslim. The Tudeh Party was accused by both religious Muslims and Marxist organizations to be conforming to the opposite side. Same controversy pertained to various smaller groups that incorporated a measure of Marxism into their Islamic ideology, e.g., Liberation and Equality Group (*goruh-e azadi va barabari*).

The following piece appeared in *Donya*¹⁴², in July 1979. At the time, an Islamic Republic government had been established but still called the Provisional Islamic Republic. There was no presidential position, but Bazargan, as Prime Minister, was head of the state. His government lasted for 275 days. The author is a prominent figure of the Tudeh Party, Ehsan Tabari, a sociologist and a prolific writer within the party who ardently defended the Islamic way of the revolution.

In the recent years, he argued, the Tudeh Party had put forth the slogan of “destruction of the anti-democratic and anti-nationalist regime of the Shah”¹⁴³ before all other organizations. According to Tabari, their party was the one to “approve with perseverance, the struggle of Khomeini’s line against what he [Khomeini] called *taghoot* [referring to an idol that was worshipped in Mecca before the advent of Islam also denoting evil and corruption]”¹⁴⁴ Tabari later explained the reasons his party supported Islamic resistance and more specifically, Khomeini’s line:

Contrary to resentful sophistry and interpretation, our party’s support of this thought [Khomeini’s] does not indicate disagreement with democracy or betraying toward principles of civilization...our party does not believe that Khomeini or his true believers are taking Iran through the gates of the Middle Ages. Furthermore, contrary to what our opposition claims, we have not dissolved into or converged with Khomeini’s line, or from ‘fear’ of being pronounced ‘illegal.’ Our politics toward our allies are not the politics of dissolution, but politics of ‘alliance and criticism.’¹⁴⁵

Alliances may have been at the bases of Iranian politics at the time, but as demonstrated later in this section, criticism of their Muslim allies did not really steer the Tudeh Party. Tabari later took a more conservative and functionalist approach by

¹⁴² *Donya*, political and theoretical journal of the Central Committee of the Tudeh party of Iran.

¹⁴³ *Donya*, July 1979, p. 6.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 7-8.

indicting the ‘ultra leftists’ who disagreed with the Tudeh Party. He claimed that their intentions are less important than are the consequences of their actions. The result of their actions of opposing the Islamic line is to defend the United States and anti-revolutionaries. Historically, he claimed, “It has not been intentions that matter rather the resulting consequences that are fomented by taking positions.”¹⁴⁶ Thus he used the popular metaphor, “The road to hell is paved with good intentions.”¹⁴⁷

Tabari’s definition of alliance and equal partners can also be interpreted in a different manner. In this case, according to the Tudeh Party, an Islamic force was the only force that could provide leadership to stabilize a revolutionary Iran. Most Marxist groups believed that it was not so much of an alliance but rather a submission that the Tudeh Party was conciliatory toward the Islamic regime. In the same article, addressing liberals and leftists, Tabari explained which group belonged to which side. Reviewing different ideas of liberals, and ‘ultra leftists’ in the opposition, he stated:

[an] anti-revolution[ary] (the operatives of imperialism and of the toppled regime) is not too hopeful for revival, [he] looks upon this line [liberals] with a minimum of desire, but hopes that supporters of this line (liberals, social democrats, and super leftist elements) will defeat Khomeini’s relentless line. This line uses the name of Mossadegh, the nationalist prime minister of Iran, in opposition to the great dignity of Khomeini. This line resents us because we voted for an Islamic Republic and Khomeini... We have repeated this ten times, we demand a union of all forces, from liberal bourgeoisie to nationalist to the most leftist along with the religious fighters, however, led by Imam Khomeini.¹⁴⁸

For the Tudeh Party it was not difficult to differentiate positions in regards to the Islamic Republic government. However, the problem was how to explain their policies to the masses. How was it that a Marxist organization became an advocate of Islam and

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

further defended the Islamic government more fanatically than the Muslims? This had to be explained especially to their supporters, and to other leftist and specifically Marxist organizations. The party spent most of its time clarifying its views on the necessity of an alliance with the Islamic Republic for supporters and Marxist and Muslim groups who were skeptical about Tudeh Party's sincerity. It must be noted that not only the Tudeh Party, but the Organization of People's Fadaeean-OIPF (*majority*)¹⁴⁹, and the Liberation and Equality Group were also having to defend—in their writings—how and why to support Islam, Muslims, and the Islamic Republic.

Tudeh and Islamic Jurisprudence

By defending the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran the leaders of the Tudeh Party isolated themselves from other Marxist groups. They abandoned other groups and organizations to demonstrate their faith in the Islamic Republic. Their perception of other groups within the opposition shows their devout following to the government. By this time the Tudeh Party had not only dominated the political arena, but had also found a strong great ally. Leaders in the Tudeh Party were confident about their policies toward the new Islamic government. Kianuri announced his party's support for all whose actions and thoughts were in accordance with their program. He claimed:

We believe that other than our party, the most steadfast and determined position belongs to true believers of Ayatollah Khomeini's thoughts on the fight against imperialism, the reactionary regime of the Shah, and the struggle for people's democratic rights and for democratic freedoms. We believe, given today's conditions, that these groups are the closest allies to the Tudeh Party.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ OIPFG-minority, which split from the OIPFG-majority, took quite a different stance on both the Islamic Republic government and Islam. They believed that the Islamic Republic was an oppressive regime and a struggle to topple it must continue.

¹⁵⁰ *Tudeh Party and Current Affairs*, Publication of Tudeh Party. October, 1979, p. 5.

Kianuri and the Tudeh Party agreed about what he called, mistakes, made by groups in the opposition, especially when it came to supporting the new Islamic government. He clarified those mistakes made by Fadaeean (Minority) and responded that, “The biggest tactical mistake made by OIPFG is their incorrect and severely negative position on the referendum [to recognize the Islamic Republic], and for not voting for an Islamic Republic.”¹⁵¹ He explained how failure to vote for an Islamic Republic was comparable to taking sides with Shapur Bakhtiar¹⁵², imperialism, and other reactionary groups. The question of a referendum was brought up repeatedly in different settings by the Tudeh Party. But accepting an Islamic referendum was a controversial decision made on the part of the Tudeh Party. For a considerable number of Iranians, from the left or the right, a vote for a referendum that recognized an Islamic constitution by a Marxist-Leninist party had raised some suspicions. During this period, nine months after the revolution, the new state’s official Islamization program was focused on establishing an Islamic government, and one of the first things to be accomplished was the writing of an Islamic constitution. This was a necessary step for Khomeini and his supporters. The idea of *velayat-e-faghih* (Islamic jurisprudence) would place Ayatollah Khomeini as *marja-e-taghlid* (source of emulation) at the head of the new government. It was established in articles 5 and 107 of the new constitution¹⁵³ which placed the power in

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Bakhtiar was the last Prime minister who took office on January 14, 1979, two days before the Shah fled Iran. His cabinet lasted just under 3 weeks.

¹⁵³ Ann Elizabeth Mayer. 2004. “The Fundamentalist Impact on Law, Politics, and the Constitution in Iran,” in *The Globalization Reader*, eds. Frank J. Lechner and John Boli. Blackwell Publishing Ltd. p. 340.

the hands of the clergy.¹⁵⁴ For the Tudeh Party, however, this was a victory for their party line. Thus Kianuri's thoughts on whether voting for an Islamic constitution would be in conflict with Marxist lines of the party was obvious: "I have to bluntly admit," he said, "that Imam Khomeini's role in steering the revolution to its original path has been very, very, positive and decisive." He affirmed that this is why the Tudeh Party "seriously supports Imam Khomeini."¹⁵⁵

For a Marxist group, power held by an Islamic state and Islamic law should raise serious questions. But the Tudeh Party was persistent about accepting Islamic authority and *velayat-e-faghih*. The Tudeh Party claimed it had already clarified its position:

We believe that *velayat-e-faghih*, while Imam Khomeini is still living, will not damage the revolution. However, it will create a problem in times after Khomeini, and we have to discuss it [whether anyone else is able to take over Khomeini's role as the supreme leader] then. We believe that for this period, the role of Imam Khomeini as a leader of our revolution is very significant and considerable. So we believe that for now, by criticizing the negative and emphasizing the positive parts of the new constitution, without venturing into the question of *velayat-e-faghih*, we must vote positively for the new constitution.¹⁵⁶

Another point of contention among groups and even the Islamic state was Khomeini's extent of authority, called *marja-e taghlid* (source of emulation). The question of ultimate authority, the power to be the final decision-maker given to Khomeini was still being debated among secular and religious intellectuals in Iran.

A majority of people observing the strong tendencies of the Tudeh Party toward Islam still found this puzzling. How could the Tudeh Party accept an Islamic

¹⁵⁴ Islamic Jurisprudence is among the significant factors delineating Sunnis from Shi'as. According to this doctrine, the Ayatollahs (sign of God), highest ranking clergy, represent Allah until the reappearance of Mehdi, the twelfth Imam as the last direct descendents of Mohammed.

¹⁵⁵ *Tudeh Party in Current Affairs*, Oct. 1979, p. 17.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p. 19.

jurisprudence and constitution led by clerics to be progressive? Kianuri, representing his party, addressed the question and reiterated the universality and significance of Khomeini, and how their party recognized his leadership right away. He stated, “From the beginning, we recognized that within Ayatollah Khomeini’s inclinations, which are absolutely within a religious framework, there are progressive elements.”¹⁵⁷ All true progressive forces in the world with these same inclinations, he claimed, “have supported the progressive politics of Ayatollah Khomeini.”¹⁵⁸

The inclusion of political Islam and more specifically, Khomeini’s line of thought (and that of his followers) was essential for the Tudeh Party. For them, Islamic belief was a force that revolution and a post-revolutionary government could not do without. In a ‘popular front’ advocated by the Tudeh Party, a mere union of the left was impossible. In their theoretical publication, prerequisites of a popular front were delineated.¹⁵⁹ In the ‘United Popular Front,’ (*jebhe-ye mottahed-e khalgh*) those political groups, parties, organizations, and such can join only if they accept the constitution of an Islamic Republic, or if they agree to join under the leadership of Imam Khomeini. To stress the line on a popular front, Kianuri pointed out the political polarization including whether other organizations such as the OIPFG (Minority) and OIPM (Mojahedin) could join. He stated that:

Those who want to join must specify their program and announce whether they want to organize an armed insurgency against the current regime and its constitution—which they call reactionary—or do they plan on working in the

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 28.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ *Mardom*, December 1979; no. 109, p. 13.

framework of democracy, whose outlines have been recognized by the [new] constitution?”¹⁶⁰

At this point in the conflict between some of the Marxist organizations and the Tudeh party creating a united popular front had become a contentious subject often referred to by Kianuri. In a later discussion, he addressed the popularity of Islam and stated that 90 percent of the population supports the Line of Imam and without considering the popular ideas, he said, “We will have found a mini popular front.”¹⁶¹ But fitting the notion of an Islamic Republic and the rare possibility to fit Muslims in a front framed by Marxists would create a problem. In addition to Iranian Marxists, there were other forces that the Tudeh Party had to immediately address. Among them were the Soviets. The Tudeh Party’s collaboration with the clergy was based on theoretical borrowing from the Soviet Union as part of a close relationship between the party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Although there were some differences within the Tudeh Party and the Soviets, they were united on general strategy, according to Behrooz.¹⁶² However, the acceptance of Islam by the Tudeh Party was even more profound than mere Soviet policy. They became advocates of Islam and even its teachings and principles.

More than one year into the revolution, the Tudeh Party’s support of Islam was not waning but became more unyielding. In theoretical organs of the party, verses of the Koran were used to explain various sociopolitical problems. The usage of Koranic verses was questioned, given the party’s belief in materialist philosophy. Those who could not make sense of Tudeh Party’s defense of Islam were convinced that the Party was trying

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁶¹ N. Kianuri, *Masa’el-e dirooz va emrooz (The Problem of Yesterday and Today)*, No. 7, May 1980. p.56.

¹⁶² Behrooz, p. 126.

to create a hybrid belief system consisting of Islam and Marxism. Supporters of the Tudeh were inquiring whether they are trying to mix Islam with Marxism-Leninism and construct a new religion. The suggestion was denied by the party and Kianuri once again referred to the Muslim majority in Iran and claims that we need to adhere to Islam because the majority of people want us to. He denied a hybrid belief system and insisted that they are not trying to deceive people.

It is in no way like that. We must deal with Islam since it's an ideology of a great majority of our population. In a society where we are trying to make fundamental changes, we cannot forego 97 or 98 percent of the people's ideology and world view...our cooperation is a sociopolitical one, not ideological."¹⁶³

Tudeh Party after the Revolution

Almost two years after the revolution, when a more stable government was in place, ideas had become more concrete and more specific. Intense political polarization had the country divided. This held true internally and externally for both the government and its supporters and those in opposition. The Islamic Republic government suppressed the opposition while stabilizing itself. Most Marxist and Islamic groups of the opposition were actively continuing their anti-regime activities. However, two major organizations, the Tudeh party and Fadaeean (Majority), became more persistent in their support for the Islamic Republic. Central to the political discourse at the time was the continued skepticism about Marxist support for an Islamic regime. It was often labeled as deceptive by critics of the left and right, Marxists and Muslims. Those aware of the ideological conflict between Islam and Marxism were skeptical:

The support of Islam and the Line of Imam by the Tudeh party and the OIPF (Majority) is a deception. Today the party supports Khomeini because people are supporting him. This is a deception because they have seen the fate of OIPFG

¹⁶³ Kianuri, "The Problem of Yesterday and Today," No. 7, May 1980. p. 48.

[Minority] and OIPM [Mojahedin].¹⁶⁴ Otherwise, the Tudeh party supports a communist system. Is an Islamic republic a step toward communism that would persuade your party to support it?”¹⁶⁵

At this stage the Tudeh Party was quite content that their support for Islamic Republic has been firmly established. They knew that the nature of such inquiry meant two things: First, that this party and ally groups support Khomeini and Islamic Republic, and that the Mojahedin and Fadaeean do not—and are in trouble for it.”¹⁶⁶ Furthermore, responding to the same concern, the Party spokesman explained that it was absolutely not the case, that the Party genuinely supported the Islamic state and there was nothing dubious about it:

We are not deceiving anyone. If we wanted to deceive, we would altogether put aside scientific socialism and become like the Ranjbaran Party¹⁶⁷ which was ultra-communist until recently and has put all that aside and speaks of Islam only. Or like these Muslim Maoists who have now joined the Majles [referring to Paykar]... This [an Islamic Republic] is not a path through which we must travel to get to socialism... we fought to establish an Islamic Republic because we see forces within it that fight against misery.¹⁶⁸

The Tudeh Party even acknowledged that the government has sent its overzealous supporters to beat up party members and cadre and to close down their offices. Their

¹⁶⁴ At this point the Islamic Republic government had labeled both Mojahedin and Fadaeean as anti-revolution. Many members and supporters had fled to Kurdistan where they continued fighting the regime.

¹⁶⁵ Tudeh party, *Shenakhtan-e dooshman va doost dar rabete ba tose'ey-e rah-e mardomi-e enghelab-e Iran (Understanding Enemy and Friend in Relation to Expanding Popular Course of Iranian Revolution)*, No. 10, November, 1980. p.58.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 59.

¹⁶⁷ Pro-Chinese group, originally called the Revolutionary Organization of Tudeh Party of Iran (ROTPI), was a Tudeh splinter group which changed its name to Ranjbaran (Toilers) a few months after the revolution and disintegrated by mid-1980s.

¹⁶⁸ Tudeh Party, *Understanding Enemy and Friend...*, p. 60.

support for the Islamic regime, however, did not wane. “They [Basijis]¹⁶⁹ sentenced party members who supported Islam to death, and even carried their execution on the spot. But as long as we believe, based on our own principles, that the Islamic government is anti-imperialist ... we will continue to support it.¹⁷⁰

Ironically, this is a period in which almost all party offices of the OIPF (Majority) and the Tudeh party were invaded and their members arrested. Summary executions of some members were carried out almost immediately. This would usually be sufficient reason for any group to question ‘revolutionary’ incentives. Tudeh Party’s response was still conciliatory while they addressed the killings. Kianuri, in his response even compared acts of the revolutionary guards to Shah’s secret police SAVAK. In Kermanshah, a city in Kurdistan:

They [revolutionary guards] arrested a party member who supported the Line of Imam and executed him within 30 minutes. ... They violated our constitutional freedoms. There is no reason to invade our offices. There is no reason to make false accusations of the party. These things are commonly practiced by the SAVAK. They burn our offices, but we will not hold the Islamic Republic accountable. ... But they have not said one word about why such invasion and plunder has taken place.”¹⁷¹

Like Job in the bible, the Tudeh Party’s patience had been put to the test. And like Job, despite all that had been endured by party members and supporters, they still believed. In their analysis of the Line of Imam and why they supported the Line of Imam, the Tudeh Party constantly used Khomeini’s statements against American imperialism while defending oppressed classes. On the other hand, they never mentioned the statements Khomeini made about socialist countries and communism. Khomeini had always spoken

¹⁶⁹ Basiji(s) were overzealous Muslim supporters of Islam and the Islamic government. They were not officially part of the military or the police force. They were armed, however, and had more political power than did the police and military.

¹⁷⁰ Tudeh Party, *Understand Enemy and Friend*... p. 61.

¹⁷¹ Ibid. p. 98.

about the Soviets as another oppressive force, especially emphasizing their secular and atheist beliefs. However, the Tudeh Party addressed the question of the Soviets very diplomatically without getting into whether the Soviet Union is detested by Khomeini. Knowing too well Khomeini's position on communism and especially the Soviets it was possible that the party deliberately refrained from addressing the question since the followers of Line of Imam were too antagonistic toward the Soviet Union. Despite the content of the question and its serious allegation made to catch the Tudeh Party at being too conciliatory, Kianuri diplomatically answers: "This is real simple. Our cooperation with other forces is based on our common points and not our differences."¹⁷²

According to some authors, the Tudeh Party's support of an Islamic Republic is only an extension of the Communist Party of Soviet Union. There is a political consistency, correlation, according to Behrooz:

The cornerstone of the Tudeh strategy was the theory of a non-capitalist path of development...developing countries under the revolutionary leadership of non-communist elements—but with close Soviet collaboration—could either bypass capitalism or put strict limitations on it, and eventually cross over to socialism."¹⁷³

There seem to be some issues, despite the Soviet policy of non-capitalist development and the Tudeh party's adherence to that, which remain inexplicable. To ensure the development of a non-capitalist path, economies and economic developments are at stake. So why is an insistence on Islam the point of the Tudeh party's conformism? Why the need to emphasize that 98 percent of the population in Iran is Muslim? The Tudeh party never mentions working with, or agreeing with, any prominent secular individual in the government. In fact, most of those who controlled and directed the

¹⁷² Ibid. p. 42.

¹⁷³ Maziar Behrooz, p. 127.

economy were secular and non-clerics. Non-capitalist development is related to the economy—the infrastructure—and not to any religion-superstructure, prevalent or otherwise.

Regarding a capitalist production system in Iran, almost none of the economic structures left by the Shah were changed. Indeed, American firms had to flee but were quickly replaced by Japanese, German, French, South Korean, and other capitalist partners in the global economy. Surely, neither the Soviets nor the Tudeh Party thought of the United States as the only industrial capitalist (imperialist) country. Furthermore, the Islamic Republic never claimed an anti-capitalist or non-capitalist economy. And even according to some Islamic Republic leaders, this revolution had nothing to do with the economy. Maybe it is the Tudeh party's definition of a non-capitalist economy that's confusing. Because if the following is their definition, put forth by the most sophisticated party leader, other party members could not have generated anything more complex. Kianuri describes the non-capitalist path of development in his own strange tautology. "The non-capitalist path has one characteristic, and that is, it separates from normal capitalist development and takes a different path, which means not allowing the unchecked development of capitalism."¹⁷⁴

The Islamic non-capitalist path should be obvious at any given moment during an examination of the religion. One should be able to read, for example, the Koran or Hadith, written on Muhammad's life experiences, and realize Islam's non-capitalist nature. Therefore, for the Tudeh party, this should not have been a problem even before the revolution. But let's examine some of what they wrote a few years prior to 1979 in their theoretical publication, *Donya*.

¹⁷⁴ Behrooz, p. 127.

Tudeh Party before the Revolution

Early to mid-1970s was a period of a more secular (non-Islamist) period of opposition. Islamic groups were active but certainly no particular organization held power over other groups. A publication of the Tudeh Party in the summer of 1975, addressed some of the most imperative issues for Iranian opposition. In one such publication, many sociopolitical concerns were mentioned. It included articles on the Soviet Union, political discussion with the Fadaee guerillas, the Shah's military, betrayals by Maoism, and a few poems.

In these publications, usually 60 to 70 pages long, an Islamic belief system or philosophy was never mentioned.¹⁷⁵ Nor was there any mention of an Islamic movement as a significant weight within the opposition, even though there were many of these publications, small and large, underground or openly active. In this period, a few years prior to the 1979 revolution, more secular allies were mentioned. Forces addressed as potential allies, although with their own weaknesses,¹⁷⁶ were seldom given the importance of alliance. One need only review a few of these publications to see that the party was more concerned with whom they could *not* work toward a revolutionary program rather than who they could fit into a 'United Front,' which became their main concern after the revolution. On different occasions, however, some clerics were referred to as those who were arrested by the Shah's secret police. The following paragraph depicts the general opposition, according to the Tudeh party:

¹⁷⁵ Donya, No. 5, August, 1975.

¹⁷⁶ Tudeh party usually addressed OIPFG and OIPM as those within the opposition yet too radical and adventuristic to be able to achieve any serious revolutionary goals.

Aggressive suppression of the SAVAK demonstrates the intensity of political tyranny. ...Attacking mosques and arresting people of faith, collecting books by progressive writers, and even seizing religious books has become part of everyday life in Iran. Prisons are filled with political prisoners. Waves of arrests have risen among workers, students, clergy, artists, writers, officers, and soldiers.”¹⁷⁷

In an analysis of how the Shah rationalized and justified his dictatorship, the clerics were mentioned, although under a different light and quite controversially. This time they are mentioned as part of the opposition, but with a conservative, rather than a progressive position. Clerics, according to this article, opposed the Shah’s policies of land reform, not from a revolutionary perspective but from a reactionary view. The article states that the “open opposition by large landowners and clerics dependent on land-owning aristocracy against the land reform program was used by the Shah to establish the foundation of his individual dictatorship.”¹⁷⁸ Ironically, the Mojahedin is mentioned on a deviating but positive note. The Tudeh Party repeatedly condemned the new urban guerilla movement that had recently prevailed in Iran and rendered Tudeh followers as incorrect for praising them. However, the Mojahedin were still perceived as sincere and a reflection of people’s anger:

A point worth mentioning is the movement among the religious groups. These groups that are fighting under the name of People’s Mojahedin have great anti-imperialist and anti-regime sentiments and also a great respect for Marxism. They fight against reactionaries who try to invoke anti-communist sentiments among religious people. Their struggle, although we reject their methods, is sincere and fits within the context of the religious movement’s fight against imperialism and the regime.¹⁷⁹

In another organ of the party, effort was made to dissociate Islam from the East and put the East in a socioeconomic context rather than a religious context. This concept

¹⁷⁷ *Donya*, No. 5, August, 1975. P. 25.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.* p. 23.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* p. 28.

in itself may remind the reader of “orientalist” thought. Orientalists—those who have studied the East, vis-à-vis the west—have found a strong correlation between Islam, non-development, and historical stagnation.¹⁸⁰ While the idea put forth in this publication may be considerably insightful, it takes away from the Tudeh party’s consistency about Iran and Islam in Iran, particularly after the revolution. So let us examine this inconsistency. An article in *Donya* entitled “*Some Current and Acute Problems of Artistic Life in Iran,*” says:

A confusing point that has worked its way into the media in the past ten years is the supposed dichotomy between Eastern civilization and Western civilization. To say that we must not be “westoxicated”¹⁸¹ and should have Eastern civilization originality, and not equate the meaning of westoxication with bourgeois civilization and equate Eastern originality with religious belief and Islam, are issues that despite good intentions of the authors, are arbitrary and will not resolve social and historical problems. Yes, capitalism and socialism are opposite of each other, but we cannot put West and East or Western civilization and Eastern civilization on opposite sides of each other.¹⁸²

The author tries to separate Islam from the East, in this case, Iran. There lies quite a difference between the ideas contained in this statement compared to what the Tudeh party claimed about the nature of Iranian revolution in 1979. In their publications after the 1979 revolution, the Islam and Islamic movement seems to be an inevitable and irrefutable feature of Iranian culture. Furthermore, not even during the revolution, that is the period before February 1979, was their analysis of revolution deeply related to Islam. In fact, they seemed to have made every effort to detach Islam from Iran, especially from

¹⁸⁰ Edward Said. 1978. *Orientalism*. NY: Random House Inc. 1978a.

¹⁸¹ A concept originally developed by Jalal Ale-Ahmad in his book *Westoxication*. He examines how and why Iranians have become so enchanted with the West and Western culture.

¹⁸² *Donya*: No. 4, June 1975, p. 48.

a political movement in Iran. But as we examine the Tudeh party's literature during and after the revolution, particularly Islam and Islamic ethics, a few points become clear.

Islamic Republic's Denunciation of the Tudeh Party

More than a year into the revolution there was much pressure on the Tudeh Party to explain its paradoxical alliance with the new Islamic government. Inquiries were made by Muslim and Marxist revolutionaries questioning Tudeh Party's incentives. And despite the Islamic state distancing itself from the Tudeh Party, Kianuri was relentless in his party's solidarity with Muslims. The question was, "Why has the party not responded to the *Islamic Republic* newspaper? The paper has denounced the Tudeh party's politics at the moment when the party has shown its alliance with the newly formed Islamic Republic government."¹⁸³

Kianuri responded, by explaining how things usually become clear later for all who originally doubt some social explanations of sociopolitical phenomenon. For example it was the communists, he says, "who originally used the word '*imperialism*' to depict how imperialism plunders and oppresses."¹⁸⁴ After a few decades, imperialism is being used by almost all who have acceded to the correct analysis of what imperialism really means." According to Kianuri, "those who denounce our politics have crass intentions at heart. Anyone serious about this revolution could not possibly question our politics and our close relations with the government of the Islamic republic." Ironically, this is precisely the period in which the Tudeh party's offices were being attacked and looted. Despite this, Kianuri offer his explanation:

¹⁸³ *Anti-revolution Can and Will Be Defeated*, Publication of Tudeh Party, Nov. 1980-Oct. 1981. p. 15.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid*, p. 17.

One must really understand that the sincere support of the Tudeh party and the true Iranian revolution, meaning the **Line of Imam** (emphasis in original text), has frustrated the enemies of the Line of Imam. It has also flustered those who are pretentiously in support of the Line of Imam, however, in opposition in deed. It has aroused their people in such way that they act destructively against the Tudeh party and its support for such genuine inclination.¹⁸⁵

In order to demonstrate the party's fidelity to the Islamic Republic, he went on to explain how this may have been an anomaly and that such writing is not within the integrity of a serious and responsible newspaper like the *Islamic Republic*. He explains that "they have accused us of many things, but our party never did and never will take steps to exacerbate the conflict between our president¹⁸⁶ and the Majles¹⁸⁷ or the conflict between the president and the clerics."¹⁸⁸ Later, he reads a quotation from *Ranjbar*.¹⁸⁹ They (Ranjbaran) claim that the Tudeh Party paints itself with ideologies that do not belong to us:

What does this mean? This means that the Tudeh party accepts an ideology, like an Islamic ideology, and pretends that they are Muslims. Then they penetrate within the clergy and create a harmony between those who get their commands from the Russian superpower and those who have accepted the prevalent social ideas—neoMuslims of Tudeh—or Tudeh members wearing the clergy turban.¹⁹⁰

The convergence of ideologies during this period was an idea that was written about in almost all organs of political organizations. Other groups were inquiring about Tudeh Party's political positions on many different issues concerning Islam and the

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁸⁶ Abolhassan Banisadr was the President at the time.

¹⁸⁷ Official Iranian parliament.

¹⁸⁸ *Anti-revolution can and will...*p. 19.

¹⁸⁹ A theoretical-political organ of *Ranjbaran*, a Maoist group that split from Tudeh party after the conflict resulting from Chinese Communist Party and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

¹⁹⁰ *Anti-revolution Can and Will Be Defeated*, p. 19.

Islamic Republic. For instance, what was the party's position on the takeover of the American embassy and hostage taking? This was especially important since some groups at the time claimed that the hostage taking feeds the bellicose wing of American politicians. Also the war against Iraq had started and Marxist groups were divided on defending their country, hence the Islamic Republic government. This position would cause them not to participate in the war and condemn it as a result. Furthermore the war in Kurdistan had become a crucial topic. Many Kurdish and non-Kurdish groups, especially Marxist, were fighting for an independent Kurdistan. Also, what did the party think about the Mojahedin? The Mojahedin, according to many followers of Islam, had deviated from Islam. The Tudeh Party, defending the Islamic government had to take a position on all those who opposed it, namely the Mojahedin. What should the party have done about them? Did the Mojahedin stand in the way of Islamic democracy and side with the liberals?

At the same time there is an intensifying conflict developing between the President Banisadr and the clergy, and the Tudeh Party had to clarify and take a position about this conflict too. What is the Tudeh Party's position?¹⁹¹

The content of the questions above address many of the conflicts that persisted after the revolution. But further, they depict an important point about the political disposition of several political players at the time. There is a clear indication that these questions undoubtedly meant to delineate and recognize both allies and enemies of the Islamic Republic. On the one hand, these questions connoted a trust toward the Tudeh Party soliciting political resolutions. On the other hand, however, Muslim supporters of

¹⁹¹This was a question posed in a question/answer session by an individual who identified himself as a true Muslim and defender of the Line of Imam.

the Islamic Republic government voiced their distrustful sentiments toward the (liberal) president and other Muslims such as the Mojahedin. Kianuri, keen on judging friend from foe, did not abandon recognition of the party as being in union with the Islamic Republic. He responded in an effort to clarify party's sincerity in collusion with the Islamic Republic and rejected conspiracy theories generated to accuse the Tudeh party of having a hidden agenda. In one particular public conference he began sarcastically with conspiratorial ideas:

The Tudeh party has invaded all of Iran, the Tudeh party controls the Line of Imam, and truthfully, it was the Tudeh party that organized the Line of Imam originally. Also, the majority of the members in Majles and the party of the Islamic Republic are really Tudeh clerics. ...Cleric(ism) and Tudeh(ism) drink from the same spring; they are two heads of the same dragon, two horses pulling the same wagon, the same union of black and red [referring to the Shah's notion of the union between Muslims and Marxists] and the same classical colonial interests of Russia and Britain.¹⁹²

Kianuri, quotes further from supporters of the Shah abroad. The source of the union between "black" and "red" is reflected in the ideas of Ayatollah Kianuri and comrade Beheshti.¹⁹³ Therefore, he concludes, the Tudeh party's principle in "defense of the Line of Imam Khomeini, in support of anti-imperialist and populist Lines of Khomeini, has been correct and indestructible."¹⁹⁴ So to summarize and give convincing response to the original complex question of who is on what side of revolutions and what is to be done with deviant Muslims like the Mojahedin, he concludes with some of Khomeini's statements: "We must all unite and gather the same forces that fought against the Shah, and we must seriously revise our thinking systems in order to refute those who

¹⁹² *Anti-revolution Can and Will Be Defeated*, p. 19.

¹⁹³ Sarcastically giving a Marxist the title of a cleric-Ayatollah, and a cleric the title of a Marxist-comrade.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

critique us.”¹⁹⁵ Union and revision may have been viable reasons for these Marxists to cooperate politically with the new Islamic government and to modify ideology in adherence to Islam. We can further explore such complication by examining some of the more relevant ideas put forth by the Tudeh party and their new allies, OIPF (Majority).

The Tudeh Party and the Fadaeean (majority) were working with the government as the conflict between the government and other organizations intensified. Given the suppression of the forces in the opposition many were questioning Tudeh Party’s incentives to work with the Islamic government. In a gathering headed by the Tudeh Party someone in the audience asked why the Tudeh party participated in last Friday’s march while flyers for the march were distributed by the Party of the Islamic Republic? What the question really indicated was how are Marxists being organized by Muslims? Kianuri’s answer is more political and rational than philosophical and organizational. He points out the common enemy, imperialism, and claims that to defeat the common enemy his party will work with anyone supporting the cause. The march, he stated, “was to declare support for the Imam [Khomeini], and support Imam Khomeini for us is to support his ideas of anti-imperialism and his popular positions.”¹⁹⁶ Tudeh’s argument revolved around the notion that their party’s cooperation with the regime was in fighting the conspiring enemies. They claimed that they were currently “defending the government of the Islamic Republic against conspiracies and pressures from imperialism, from conspiracies of anti-revolutionaries.”¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁹⁶ *The Tudeh Party and Some Conflicting Current Affairs*, from August 1979. p.15.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

Tudeh-Majority Alliance

Did the Tudeh party have strategic plans with the Islamic Republic? Were they looking to give up their socialist agenda or empowering the working class for an Islamic regime? They had previously stated that their support for the Islamic Republic is a strategic support. Did it mean that they were principally against the leadership of the working class? Kianuri representing the party responded confidently that:

we said that our cooperation with Muslims is due to fundamental social upheavals. This is a strategic cooperation, meaning we will work together to the point when socialism is constructed. ... This implies a sincere cooperation of supporters of scientific socialism with supporters of Islam and Line of Imam, and that between them and us, so far as social problems related to constructing socialism is concerned, there are no antagonistic (unsolvable) contradictions.¹⁹⁸

As the Tudeh party declared itself closer to Islam and the Islamic Republic, they distanced themselves from some of the Marxists. Following a significant division and a subsequent split within the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas (OIPFG), one sector, which later called themselves *aksariat* (*majority*), made clear distinctions between anti-regime attitudes versus attitudes supportive of the regime. The Majority, which took the latter position, drew gradually closer as a result and eventually merged with the Tudeh Party. Tudeh leaders and supporters were quite content with the new collaboration with the *majority*. The Tudeh Party's position on the split within the OIPFG was clarified by Kianuri in a question/answer session. He not only answers the question but also articulates the main difference between the two groups involved in the division:

We think it is to the organization's (Majority) advantage because any time a deviant group splits from a popular organization, it makes the organization stronger. It helps to revise and correct the organization's lines. This group of minorities, we think, is politically deviant, and as far as political struggle, adventurist. And their leaving the OIPFG is a big help for this organization to side

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 27.

with us. It speeds up the process. This way, OIPFG [Majority] will reach a perfect revolutionary line.¹⁹⁹

The majority of the members and supporters of OIPFG united with the Tudeh party and eventually merged on ideological grounds. They dropped the word ‘guerilla’ from the name of the organization and calling themselves the Organization of Iranian People’s Fadaeean (Majority). On March, 1981, they officially recognized the Tudeh Party as a workers party and the Soviets a revolutionary socialist state.²⁰⁰ Contrary to the position held by the OIPFG (Minority) that the Islamic regime was a dependent state and that it must be overthrown, the Majority believed the Islamic Republic regime to be anti-imperialist. They believed that the Islamic Republic’s political independence and anti-imperialist position were signs of the regime’s revolutionary character.²⁰¹ Two major Marxist organizations siding with the Islamic regime dealt a heavy blow to the entire Fadaee organization and other Marxist groups in Iran. According to Behrooz:

The Majority-Tudeh alliance offered its knowledge of the opposition, thereby helping the state uproot it. In the case of the Majority, its leadership initially declared its loyalty to the IRI’s constitution and declared the opposition movements (Mojahedin, Kurdish movement and other Fadaiyan [sic] factions) counter-revolutionary, offering this guidance to its supporters in August 1981: ‘the organization’s supporters must be aware of their duties in this critical situation. Uncovering the policies of the counter-revolution in the work-place, in the family, and in any place where the masses are present is one of your most important duties.’²⁰²

As a result, however, political lines of demarcation were more easily drawn.

Precarious and vague notions of whether the Fadaee organization supports the Tudeh Party, hence the regime, were no longer topics of discussion within the group. For the

¹⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 41.

²⁰⁰ Behrooz, p. 113.

²⁰¹ *Kaar*, Publication of OIPF (majority), no. 73, 27 August 1980.

²⁰² Behrooz, p. 115.

Tudeh Party and OIPF (Majority) Marxists who did not side with them in defense of the Islamic Republic had betrayed the revolution. Thus the Tudeh Party was now a party working hand in hand with a repressive regime. On the other hand, Tudeh party and OIPFG (Majority), who declared that all those against the Islamic Republic were to be considered as siding with imperialism were against all other groups in the opposition. That included other noncompliant Marxists and individuals from the former regime, in addition to liberals. For instance when the Iranian Communist League²⁰³ attacked the city of Amol, the Majority, proud of its partnership with the regime claimed that their organization along with the Tudeh Party of Iran:

From the very early moments of the attack by counter-revolutionary intruders, participated, shoulder to shoulder with the people, the Basiji, and the security forces, in their suppression and defeat. Two of our comrades and Tudeh members were wounded...and are in hospital at the time.²⁰⁴

Conflict between the new Islamic Republic government and the nonconformist organizations and individuals was rapidly growing. As Marxist organizations, the Tudeh Party and the Fadaeean (Majority) were pressed to determine the class-base of the Islamic Republic.²⁰⁵ In order to defend the Soviet thought of support for petite bourgeois and anti-imperialist government Tudeh Party had to insist on the Islamic regime to be of a petite-bourgeois background. Therefore, they had to address the relationship between

²⁰³ This was a group mainly made up of Marxist students abroad. They repatriated during and after the revolution organizing themselves in a group called the Iranian Communist League. Once the Islamic regime began its suppression of the opposition they regrouped and called themselves *Sarbedaran*. They organized an armed action against the regime in the city of Amol on January 1982. After 48 hours they retreated back into the jungles. In the preceding few months the regime captured 250 of its members and supporters who were later executed. Today they are mainly active outside of Iran and have renamed themselves The Communist Party of Iran—Marxist-Leninist.

²⁰⁴ *Kaar*, Publication of OIPF (Majority) no. 127, Feb. 1982.

²⁰⁵ For Iranian Marxists, as for many Marxists worldwide, determining the class base of any political entity will determine whether an alliance is a possibility or not.

Khomeini and petite-bourgeoisie, and why the party recognized him as representing the petite bourgeoisie. Kianuri referred to most clerics as those who belong to small and medium petite-bourgeoisie. He claimed, that “these clerics hardly come from a big petite-bourgeois background.”²⁰⁶

As far as the Tudeh Party was concerned the Islamic regime was a liberating and anti-authoritarian force. They put Iranian clerics on par with the liberation theology of Latin America. Kianuri stated that such a revolutionary religious wave has only risen recently, and if we are to analyze it correctly, we must say that in

Iran it has achieved and has expanded to its highest form, but it is not only an Iranian phenomenon. Such a revolutionary religious wave has existed in Latin America for years. There, too, lower ranks of the Catholic Church are in solidarity with the workers, and in countries such as Brazil and Argentina, they are fighting against dictators. Their solidarity is very significant. In Northern Ireland, a considerable number of Catholics defend people’s revolutionary struggle against capitalists who are mostly Protestant. If you can recall, the Pope, [John Paul II] while visiting Latin America, warned the Catholic Church against getting involved in political struggle.²⁰⁷

Therefore, he concluded, since Khomeini’s line is among the revolutionary line defending the people, the party also supports Khomeini.

By advocating Islam and defending the Islamic government Tudeh found itself constantly explaining why and how the regime was suppressing the opposition. A notorious cleric responsible for most of the executions of the anti-government groups was Hojjat-ol islam Sadegh Khalkhali.²⁰⁸ The Tudeh Party had to explain how they would support an individual like Khalkhali. What was the party’s incentive to support

²⁰⁶ Here, “big” refers to the quantity of land possessed and hence their wealth.

²⁰⁷ *What Does the Party Say?* No. 5, February 1980, p. 12.

²⁰⁸ Khalkhali was the State Attorney of the Revolutionary Court of the Islamic Republic. He was essentially responsible for persecution, prosecution, and sentencing of “anti-revolutionary” opposition.

Khalkhali? In an article in the political organ of the OIPFG (Minority) the Tudeh party was questioned on how they would support Khalkhali. Because he was a zealous Muslim who made sure an ‘anti-revolutionary’ opposition does not exist. Furthermore, he was among the parliamentary candidates the Tudeh party voted for. How did the Tudeh party justify voting for a person who had executed (or ordered the execution of) two of the party’s members? Interestingly, Kianuri treated Khalkhali like a party member in his answer. Initially he compared Khalkhali to members of the Chinese Communist Party such as Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, and Mao Zedong. He further said that while they were initially recognized as revolutionaries around the world, now they were looked upon as those who betrayed the Chinese revolution.²⁰⁹ Later, Kianuri mentions Trotsky as

one who was not trusted by Lenin but was assigned the most important revolutionary position by Lenin, the Minister of War. And again, after the revolution, Trotsky betrayed the party. Can we say that Lenin made a mistake? No, we can never say that. At the time, Trotsky’s expertise on organizing was incredibly important for the revolution. Furthermore, Lenin was aware of his [Trotsky] weaknesses. Regarding Trotsky, he said, “He does not understand Marxism.” And after a complete betrayal, Trotsky was kicked out of the party.²¹⁰

The Tudeh Party later addressed Khalkhali specifically and even paid tribute to his actions. They believed that although he may have made some grave mistakes he still with the revolution and has done great service for the people of Iran. According to Kianuri:

Khalkhali is on the same side as the revolution and has served his duties well in annihilating criminals and servants of the previous regime. We said we would vote for him because, as the revolution’s state attorney, he accomplished a great deal. He executed several hundred pawns of imperialism with utmost bravery. ... We believe that Khalkhali has made a serious mistake,²¹¹ and we wish he had

²⁰⁹ The Tudeh party’s position on China follows the Soviet’s position after the disagreement between the Chinese Communist party and the Soviet Union. After taking on the idea of “non-capitalist development,” and “peaceful coexistence” as new paths for socialism, this quarrel began. By 1961, the two countries were in heated conflict.

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 16.

²¹¹ Referring to the execution of Tudeh party members.

not. But mistakes made in Kurdistan and even more serious mistakes in the future cannot refute his great service for the revolution.²¹²

Given the controversial relationship between the Tudeh Party and the Islamic Republic, its members were faced with some aggression on behalf of the more fanatic supporters of the Islamic regime. They were attacked and beaten at times not knowing how and whether to defend themselves. They wanted to know how party members and supporters should act in the face of differences with some of the government supporters. The Fadaeean (Majority) were facing the same types of attacks and aggressions by the supporters of the Islamic Republic. They too, were Marxists who had conciliated with the regime because they held the Islamic regime as petite-bourgeois and, therefore, a progressive and anti-imperialist state. For Fadaeean (Majority) this meant that the regime's attacks against the Tudeh and their own members were not so important. While the party had told its supporters to defend the country and the Islamic regime, Basiji forces did not much care for Marxists and the non-believers. Kianuri, tried to placate the party's supporters by giving an example. He read the following paragraph from a flyer by OIPFG (Majority) in Kurdistan:

By forming organized groups, go to revolutionary guards and announce your desire to suppress anti-revolutionaries. By forming groups, help the transportation of martyrs and the wounded. ... Explain to the people the necessity of working with the revolutionary guards.²¹³

He explained that the flyer was important because his party was not the one that wrote it. The flyer belonged to the OIPFG (Majority). "This shows that there are other organizations that agree with our line," he explains²¹⁴. Here he compares Marxists and

²¹² Ibid., p. 17.

²¹³ Tudeh Party's Struggle against Anti-revolutionary Policy, September 1980, No. 7, p. 22.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

Muslims and states, “Our revolutionary Muslims approve of this line of thinking, and Marxists really defend our revolution, but there are some problems with their policies.”²¹⁵ The “so-called Marxists,” he said, have made some mistakes which had really made his party work harder. The crime committed by a group named Paykar²¹⁶ “against the Mojahedin, is a great historical crime in splitting Marxist forces and Islamic forces. This is creating a false Marxism in the guise of Maoism. It was blackmailing the only true Muslim force of the time.”²¹⁷

Faced with relentless suppression of the opposition by the Islamic government, the Tudeh Party found itself constantly having to justify its support for the regime. How did the party justify the suppression and what was the reason behind Tudeh party’s silence when it came to protesting the regime’s authoritarianism? They adhered to the anti-imperialist slogan and claimed that there is general agreement with the foreign policy put forth by the Islamic state. Foreign policy of the Islamic Republic revolved around the idea of anti-Americanism and interpreted by some Marxists to mean anti-imperialism. Anti-imperialism seemed to set the guidelines for the party. For example, according to the Tudeh Party:

If Ayatollah Beheshti states that our foreign policy includes an anti-imperialist, anti-American tendency, we completely agree...and when Mister Dr. Beheshti states that we respect social freedoms to the point where a political organization has not conspired against the Islamic Republic, and is free to continue its activities within the context of the law, naturally we agree with that and condone it.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Ibid. p. 23.

²¹⁶ For complete history of this organization, see the section under Marxists in chapter six.

²¹⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

The Tudeh party and OIPF (Majority) were not the only organizations inviting the population and more specifically the Marxist groups to rally around Islam. Another group, a close affiliate of the Tudeh Party and OIPF's (Majority) close ally was the Liberation and Equality Group. They too, defended Islamic ideology and the Islamic Republic government. The following section includes some of their writings, especially during and after the revolution.

The Liberation and Equality Group

Another group, not comparable to Tudeh party in size, was a newly organized group called the Liberation and Equality Group (*goruh-e azadi va barabari*). From their political line and ideology, a similar tone as the Tudeh party prevails. They seem to write with less maturity, however, and seem more concerned with grass-root activities during and after the revolution. They also address the Muslim population and emphasize the necessity to unite with Muslims. In a booklet distributed just one week before the revolution, they call on the Muslims for solidarity and reiterate the revolutionary and progressive nature of Islam and seem a bit apologetic about Marxism. Addressing “revolutionary Muslims”, they wrote:

In the name of Iranian communism, we are speaking to you, our natural allies. Yes, we recognize ourselves as your natural allies. ... You believe that in order to establish social justice, one must use progressive and revolutionary laws and values of Islam, and we believe that in order to achieve this goal, while we respect Islam as a belief and faith of a majority of the population, we must use the latest scientific achievements. And this is in no contradiction with Islamic progressive and revolutionary values, especially of Shi'a religion. Our alliance is an objective reality and despite mistakes made by zealots on your side and ours, the blood of revolutionary Muslims and communists are joining together.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ The Liberation and Equality Group, *Discussion with People's Fadaee Guerillas*, Feb. 6, 1979. p. 33.

This group seems to be more to the point with the idea of appealing to Muslims' inherent revolutionary fervency. There was a more tactical unity than strategies of political unity aimed at forming a government. They usually did not mention bigger political objectives. In their writing means through which power is distributed in the state is not mentioned. However, they employ many words used by Muslims. In the following passage they use such terminology to stress Muslim-Marxist solidarity. They appealed to sentiments and feelings of Muslims by mentioning blood and sacrificing of life, a familiar tone related to Muslim allegories and the lives of the original martyrs of Islam. In the tradition of the Mojahedin they refer to Islam's ultimate utopian society, a society similar to the Marxist version of classless communism. Two months after the revolution calling upon the revolutionary Muslims they wrote:

We are once again speaking to you, our natural allies. Yes, despite all zealous beliefs, dogmas, and closed-mindedness of the left and right, we recognize you, the true fighters against exploitation and oppression, sincere supporters of 'faithful classless society,' as our natural allies and ourselves as your true friends...our solidarity is a sacred solidarity manifested in trenches of battle and [going through] ablution²²⁰ by the blood of our best comrades... we, as our part, hold dear this blood ridden promise, like the pupil of our eyes, despite the closed mindedness and deception of opportunists on the left and right.²²¹

Despite Marxist ideas on religion and deity, this group wrote as if they also believed in God in the same manner as Shi'a Muslims. They used the Islamic terminology comfortably while addressing the Muslims. Unity with Muslims was the most important goal to achieve. Once unity was established, they move on to why and how such unity would be possible. Calling the revolution and democratic one, they wrote:

²²⁰ Cleansing the soul through the blood of the fallen comrades.

²²¹ The Liberation and Equality Group, *In the Name of Communism and Revolutionary Muslims*, April, 1979. p. 1

Our revolution has a democratic nature. People have risen to gain freedom, a true liberation for everyone and all classes; for women, men, for Turk, Arab, Armenian, Assyrian, Turkman, and Baluchi. In the vernacular of such revolution, (*Allah-o-Akbar*) ‘God is Great’, means ‘Long Live Freedom.’ For God being the greatest means that no one on earth can be superior to others and limit other people’s freedoms.²²²

They clarify whom they mean by Muslims who do not fight for freedom and equality. According to their literature, there are two different types of Muslims. There are those who nominally support Islam but believe in perpetuating capitalism and exploitation. Then there are others who are truly against capitalism and remnants of the previous regime. The latter are basically the clergy and clerics and the former, what they call, nationalist bourgeoisie. There is, they claim, “a difference between the Islamic Republic of Mr. Bazargan and Amir-Entezam, on one hand, and the Islamic Republic of Ayatollah Khomeini and Taleghani²²³ on the other hand.

To explain the collusion of Marxists and Muslims, this group uses some regional (Middle East) examples and concludes, therefore, that such solidarity is the ultimate truth of revolutionary resistance:

Why is it that the so-called Islamic government of Saudi Arabia is among the most anti-communist regimes in the region, while in Palestine communists and Muslims are united? In Algeria there are close relations between communists and Muslim Mojahedin. And the Islamic revolution in Libya is strengthened through the aid and support of communist liberation movements.²²⁴

They mention that there is a steady increase of Muslims who truly believe in independence and freedom and a united classless society using guidelines of scientific

²²² Ibid. pp. 4-5.

²²³ Ibid. pp. 10-11.

²²⁴ Ibid. p. 16.

Marxism. Everyday Muslims find it to be true that communists are not the enemies of revolutionary Islam but their most genuine and sincere comrades.²²⁵

In their publication, commemorating May 1st (Worker's Day) there was more class analysis on the state and specifically the Islamic state. Addressing workers on whether clerics were among friends of workers, they explained that the clergy make up a sector of the intellectuals of our society and we know that intellectuals are generally from the middle class. But they "may follow and defend the interests of capitalists, middle- class, or workers. Progressive clerics have acted in solidarity with the people of Iran, and have at times—especially in this revolution—directly taken on the role of leadership."²²⁶

A subtle attempt was made in this publication to minimize the shortcomings of some of the clerics. While the group condemned Bazargan and Amir-Entezam and bourgeoisie and claimed that other folks were not to be trusted, their treatment of similar thoughts among the clergy was milder. In the same publication, they mentioned Ayatollah Shariatmadari as one who supports the reconstruction of the state and its military, which is in the hands of national capitalists, who do not particularly "defend workers and toilers."²²⁷ Shariatmadari's ideas, they wrote, are held up and supported by the Islamic Republic Party of the people of Iran. On the other hand, they claimed, "the Islamic Republic Party also supports Ayatollah Khomeini's defense of the oppressed."²²⁸ The Liberation and Equality Group often defended and reiterated statements made by Khomeini and Taleghani. There is a distinct difference between two interpretations of

²²⁵ Ibid. p. 17.

²²⁶ Liberation and Equality Group on the Occasion of May 1st. 1979. p. 12.

²²⁷ Ibid.

²²⁸ Ibid.

Islam, according to the group. First, there is the conservative interpretation of Islam and then the revolutionary interpretation.

If revolutionary Islam is able to devise a clear program to achieve workers' demands, it can assume state power and will eventually be able to achieve national and democratic goals. To reach this goal, there must be a united front built that is made up of workers and revolutionary Muslims.²²⁹

There is no talk of revolutionary Marxists here. Apparently, workers are to be lead by revolutionary Muslims. Or it may imply that as long as workers are present, one can assume Marxist ideology is also present.

Ehsan Tabari and Islam

Even more interesting was a book written by another Tudeh party member, Ehsan Tabari, a sociologist educated in East Germany, who was one of the most intelligent members in this group. Like Kianuri, he comes from a religious family. His father was a well-known cleric (Sheikh Hussein Tabari) in the city of Saree, in the Caspian province of Mazandaran.²³⁰ He wrote extensively, and his ideas often gave direction to not only supporters and members of the group, but also to its central committee. The title of his book, *Kazhrahe (Diversion)* was intended to imply what he believed had happened to his party over the years. Compared to books and memoirs written by other party figures, it is rather short. Kianuri, for example, published his memoirs of over 700 pages. Tabari covers major issues related to the party during its almost 70-year lifespan. The most interesting part, related to the subject of this paper, is what he feels—or better yet, what he believes—about Islam. His main point in this book is how Marxists were, and still are, making grave mistakes by not recognizing Islam as the ideology of liberation. Marxists

²²⁹ Ibid. pp. 41-43

²³⁰ Anvar Khomei, *Khaterat-e siasi (Political Memoirs)*, (Tehran: Nashr-e Goftar). 1992.

have become isolated as a result, and this reality has become apparent to some zealous Marxists (namely himself) who “dared to compete with Islam with their shameful thoughts of failure.”²³¹ For Tabari, Marxism has now become an outsider’s point of view. It comes from the West, and Iranians who have Islam as a liberation ideology, should not waste their time looking to the West or the East for help. In a section of his book subtitled, “*Why Marxism Failed in Iran,*” he gives the following analysis:

The acceptance of their ideology can be divided into two branches of Westoxication and Eastoxication. The meaning of Eastoxication is the process by which one is intoxicated by Eastern European ideology. This has been dominated by Eastern European countries. It is obvious that Western European liberalism and Marxism, both Western ideologies, are different in content. However, the ideological difference between the two is not much when compared to Islamic culture and principles. It is obvious in comparing lifestyles of people in capitalist and socialist countries.²³²

According to Tabari, Marxism practiced by Iranians has left its advocates isolated in their own worlds. This loneliness is not, at the same time, a symptom of Iranian Marxists only. He feels that Marxists in all Islamic countries are suffering from this outcome:

Isolation and alienation of Marxists in Iran is a familiar setting for all Marxists in Islamic countries. ... While writing this memoir, with a free and open view about my close and not so close relations, things look very different today. Under the light of the Islamic Revolution, individuals and events that were once grand and significant have lost meaning and have diminished into mere shadows.²³³

For him as a Marxist, there is something in Islam that is illuminating and liberating. He is among those who do not believe Marxism has any convincing answers for social ills. The failure of Marxism in Iran does not only reflect the problems within Marxism. It is a

²³¹ Ehsan Tabari, *Kazhrahe (Diversion)*, Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications. 1992. p. 15.

²³² Ibid. p. 20.

²³³ Ibid. p. 22.

more profound phenomenon that has roots in not understanding Islam. The “alienation from people and their own nation was one of the reasons for the isolation of [Marxists].” There is another reason that led to the boycotting of Marxists in Iran. “It was the lack of belief in religion and especially the religion of Islam and their incessant disregard toward the bountiful teachings of Islam.”²³⁴ For Tabari, Islam is equivalent to a prophetic gift of life to Iranians. His usage of words like temptation, worship, and abandoning God, sounds convincingly Islamic. Islamic revolution, he believes, is

...the strong foundation of a profound cultural uprising which entirely changes the facade of the individual and society. ... The web of life of these characteristics has been knitted during the time when God was forgotten, and temptation and selfishness prevailed. All that was built by colonialism and its lackeys was destroyed by this revolution. Thus was built the human spirit by the material of worshipping God, work, sacrifice, and humanity. Such reconstruction and profound leap in spirits is not the work of Marxism.²³⁵

His views, in the book, are usually contrary to what the Tudeh party had said to that point. He further questions the sincerity of the party, even when they cooperated with the Islamic Republic, and calls it pretentious. Here, Tabari questions all types of Marxism and ends by stating that Islam is liberating and free of all rigid structure and dogma because it has God on its side.

The Tudeh party was pretending to be supportive of the Islamic Republic and the Revolution. They even agreed with the Line of Imam and condoned its social and political principles. They even briefly explained and justified, in Mardom (the official organ of the party), the Islamic Republic’s foreign policy of “neither east, nor west”²³⁶ and announced their concession to such policy. ... This so-called school of Marxism-Leninism, despite its many forms: Stalinism, Trotskyism, Maoism, Titoism, and Brezhnev’s neo-Stalinism, decisions in today’s Soviets, are all the same in content but with different interpretations. When we refute

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 23.

²³⁵ Ibid. p. 24.

²³⁶ East, in this slogan, refers to the Soviet Union and all its allies. Tabari is referring to this as an anomaly for a party that receives orders from the Soviets to concede to a slogan as such.

Marxism-Leninism, we will not have to pay attention to such interpretations since we reject both the political product of a state, which is socialism, and further oppressive politics of the Soviets. Approving Islam means total rejection of Marxism...²³⁷

Finally he rejects his party as hardheaded and uncompromising. The irony is that the Tudeh party, especially after the 1953 coup in Iran that brought back the Shah, has been labeled as the most compromising of all parties and groups. But Tabari is probably not referring to the Tudeh party compromising with the Islamic Republic. He is stating that one must have deep beliefs in Islam. Toward the end of his book he says:

Islam, contrary to Marxism, is free of such dogma and rigid structure. A war against monarchs, and defending the poor, is understood by Islam with the profound understanding of historical and popular particularities because its teachings rise from the prosperous process of God's word.²³⁸

For a few years, the convergence of Islam and Marxism in Iran seemed for some as natural as any ideological collaboration. It turned out, however, that it was not an enduring relationship. The collaboration did not last long. As soon as the Islamic regime became stable enough by repressing the opposition it was time to end the three-year accord. Both Tudeh Party and Majority were declared illegal. By early 1983, the Islamic Republic banned all material published by any Marxist organization or group including the Tudeh Party, Majority (Fadaeean), and all those that genuinely or not merged with Islamic ideology. This forced both groups to go underground and a majority of the leaders of both groups went into exile.

The subject of the next chapter is hybrid and Muslim organizations, and individuals. It is the story of how many groups and individuals converged in unity to build a solid front. Primarily, the Gilan Socialist Republic is looked at as a historical precedent to

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 26.

²³⁸ Ibid. pp. 312-315.

convergence of Marxists and Muslims. Later, the two nationalist fronts, National Front and Liberation Movement made up of both Marxists and Muslims is examined. In addition, there is a brief history of a very prominent individual who combined Islam and Marxism to explain the Iranian political trajectory. Dr. Ali Shariati, a Muslim who borrowed from Marxism theorizing on social conflict and social inequality had great influence on both Muslims and Marxists. And lastly, there is an examination of Muslim groups that played a significant role in the Iranian political opposition.

CHAPTER FIVE

HYBRIDS AND MUSLIMS

Islamic Ideology was a set of religiously charged, Islamically informed, and ideologically alert political notions articulating the specific ways through which the status quo had to be altered. As articulated by its chief ideologues, “the Islamic Ideology” was an attempt to assimilate contemporary (secular) political objectives into “Islamic” ideas.

Hamid Dabashi

Within the Iranian resistance movement in the past several decades, we can see several instances of hybrid groups, individuals, and events. Following are some of the major ones, but by no means all. They were selected based on the significant roles they played in opposition to both the Shah and his father, Reza Shah. Here they are discussed in the order in which they entered the Iranian political stage. We begin with the Socialist Republic of Gilan, a historical event that introduced Marxists to the Muslims. Also included in this chapter are the two prominent nationalist organizations, the National Front and the Liberation Movement and the Organization of Iranian Peoples Mojahedin, as well as Dr. Ali Shariati, one of the most significant Muslim theorists in Iran’s political history.

Socialist Republic of Gilan

The Gilan Republic was the first instance of ideological and organizational convergence in Iranian history. It lasted close to two years before most of its leaders, both Marxist and Muslim, were killed or imprisoned. The leadership consisted of a coalition of Muslims belonging to a movement called the “Jangal Movement”²³⁹ and Marxists who established the Communist Party of Iran. This collaboration was in response to an abrupt

²³⁹ Jangal, meaning jungle or forest, was where fighters belonging to this group lived. Members of this group were known as “Jangaliha,” those from the jungle. It was the name of a resistance group in the early 1900s. They were Muslims fighting for land reform in the northern (Gilan) province of Iran.

change implemented in Iran through England and France. During the 1920s and 1930s, modernization by western thought had set the political discourse for Iranians and Iranian political activists. The Muslims were led by Mirza Kuchak-Khan, a prominent figure involved in fighting Tehran's central government since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906. Marxists, originally from a group called "*Fergheye Democratic*" (Democratic Faction), were led by Haydar Khan (Haydar Amoughlu) and Soltanzadeh. This was the first cooperation between Marxists and Muslims as an organized political-military force. By the end of the 1920s, this movement, known as the "Socialist Republic of Gilan," with the support of the Red Army with its 1500 guerillas, was prepared to proclaim its independence and eventually take on Tehran's central government. Both movements had been active before the Russian revolution of 1917.

Although the objectives of the Marxists and Muslim factions were quite dissimilar, the means of a military takeover of the central government was commonly shared. The unprecedented alliance lasted nearly two years. The defeat of this republic was probably due more to internal conflict and a political agreement signed between the nascent Soviet Union and the new government of Iran than a military defeat, according to Katouzian.²⁴⁰ This view perceived Muslims as being responsible due to their cooperation with the central government. However, according to Moises Persits, a Russian researcher, it was the Soviet support of the wrong communists that resulted in a war between

²⁴⁰ Houmayoon Katouzian. 1987. *Eghtesad-e Siasi modern dar Iran: Estebdad va Shebh-e Modernism, 1305-1357(The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926-1979.)*Tehran: Pariroos.

Muslims and Marxists. Defeat of the republic could have been avoided had the Soviets supported Amoghlu rather than Soltanzadeh.²⁴¹

Before examining the reasons behind their conflict, however, we will inspect their points of commonality and events that led to their cooperation. It is especially important to delve into this joint activity since it was historically the first social movement that made a Marxist-Muslim convergence possible. A major contributing factor to such a close relationship was the presence of a foreign power, either the United States or Britain, and a local government supporting the foreign invaders.

The occupation of Northern provinces by Russia and southern provinces by Britain was a major factor contributing to mass protests.²⁴² Some authors believe that the conflict had deeper roots and may have started independent of a nationalist movement rejecting foreign invasions. They claim it had more to do with the defeat of the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.²⁴³ The discontent with Mohammad Ali Shah's (of Ghajar dynasty) central government, and its incapability, led to invasion by Britain and Russia. This invasion intensified mass protests, especially in the northern region of Gilan by the Caspian Sea. In clashes between the people and Russian soldiers in the Gilan region, hundreds of people were killed and injured. Russian forces found themselves in a great military quagmire with the Jangal Movement guerillas (jangalis), which consisted of small landowners in Gilan. Mirza Kuchak-Khan, a landowner himself, led this movement.

²⁴¹ Moises Persits. 1999. *A Shame faced Intervention: The Soviet Intervention in Iran, 1920-1921*, Russian Center for Strategic Researches and International Studies, Moscow.

²⁴² Ervand Abrahamian. 1982. *Iran between Two Revolutions*. Princeton, NJ: University Press, p. 137.

²⁴³ Ibid., p. 118.

After the Russian revolution of 1917, more volunteers joined the Jangal Movement, hoping to force a Russian military retreat. With the temporary withdrawal of Russian forces, Britain became the main military presence in the northern regions. By this period, other non-Muslim groups and individuals had joined the fight. Marxists, encouraged by the revolution in Russia, became more involved and even better organized. Their discontent against Britain and the Iranian central government was a major contributing factor for collaborating with the Jangal Movement. Most of the leaders from a Marxist movement, who later formed the Communist Party, were influenced directly by Bolsheviks. Their main leaders were Soltanzadeh, Ghaffarzadeh, Javadzadeh, and Haydar Khan.²⁴⁴ With Armenian origins, Soltanzadeh had spent most of his political life in a Bolshevik underground organization in Russian Azerbaijan.

Ghaffarzadeh, an old revolutionary, was the contact person for the Russian Communist Party's organ, *Iskra*, responsible for its delivery from Europe to Iran. Javadzadeh (Pishevari), who was born in Iranian Azerbaijan, was a teacher in Baku, capital of Russian Azerbaijan. While in Baku, he came in direct contact with the Bolsheviks, and became the chief editor of a leftist newspaper called *Hurryat* (freedom). Ultimately there was Haydar Khan. He was a Marxist who went underground because he did not recognize the legitimacy of the last Ghajar monarch, Mohammad Ali Shah, after the Constitutional Revolution. With Marxist tendencies quite different from the other three leaders, he continued his opposition against the government. These four later organized the Communist Party of Iran with hopes of taking over the weak central government.

²⁴⁴ Abrahamian, p. 145.

By the end of 1920, the Socialist Republic of Gilan had become a threatening force for the central government. Their coalition was able to fight against both the British forces and the Iranian central government. According to John Foran:

The Communist Party of Iran, led by Haydar Khan Amoughlu, and the Jungle Movement, led by Mirza Kuchak Khan, had formed an alliance to build a soviet socialist republic. In addition, they sent a letter to Lenin asking for assistance in ‘freeing us and all of the oppressed from the chain of Iranian and British oppressors.’ They also sent a letter to Tehran proclaiming the monarch government illegitimate.²⁴⁵

For a while it seemed as though the nascent Socialist Republic of Gilan was gathering enough popular and political support to serve as a model province for the rest of the country. It was especially important because two ideologically opposite perspectives joined forces and emphasized a strategic view of democracy. But despite desires of the population of Gilan, including Marxist and Muslim leaders, the dream quickly ended.

What the two factions had in common was a combination of political and economic objectives, but what divided them were cultural issues. The veiling of women and Islamic ethics and principles were divisive issues, while land reform and discontent toward the central government contributed to the unification.²⁴⁶

But Mirza Kuchak-Khan’s Islamic cultural beliefs did not interfere with his politics of joining forces with Iranian Marxists and the Soviets. For him it was more important to defeat or weaken the British, who were an unwelcome occupying force. He explained why he had cooperated with the Soviets:

After overthrowing the Czarist government in Russia and establishing the Soviet Republic, Iranian revolutionaries relied deeply on the fraternal solidarity of the Russian

²⁴⁵ John Foran. 1999. *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution*. Translated by Ahmad Tadayyon. Tehran: Rasa Cultural Services. p. 298.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

socialists ... and we were dreaming about getting rid of our worst enemy (after Czarist Russia) meaning England. ... Even before the Bolsheviks entered into Iranian Azerbaijan, in order to ensure victory, I wanted to contact them. So I sent some of my people to contact the Bolsheviks.²⁴⁷

On May 19, 1920, Abookov, a high-ranking Soviet military member, said to the people of Anzali, a popular port where the Soviet battle ships had docked: “One of the reasons for the Soviet military to enter [Anzali] is an invitation by the Iranian revolutionary Mirza Kuchak-Khan.”²⁴⁸

By June of 1920, Kuchak-Khan had gathered up to 8,000 troops, among them 5,000 Soviet soldiers.²⁴⁹ Britain put up minimal resistance at the port and later retreated into the city. After relaying the defeat of the British to Lenin in Moscow, the Bolsheviks emphasized that Soviet military must show no political interest in the matter and keep a low profile. According to Persits, it was a direct order by Trotsky addressed to the Soviet military that, “you must announce the news on the radio that Anzali was conquered by Kuchak-Khan and his troops and that he has requested our stay in the city and he has allowed it.”²⁵⁰ In order to secure the amicable stay of the Soviets, Trotsky requested the following:

First, that no military encounter takes place by Soviet troops with Soviet flags. [You must] insist on our absolute non-intervention [in Iranian domestic matters]. Second, Kuchak-Khan should be assisted in all matters by our volunteers, experts, and monetarily, and allow his troops to take over territories we have occupied. Third, if our battleships are needed for Kuchak-Khan’s future fights, they must raise the flags of Azerbaijan Republic and assisting Kuchak-Khan should be generally done through this Republic.²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ Persits, p. 28.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 29.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 32.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

This position facilitated Kuchak-Kahn and his Jangal Movement in working with the Soviets. With the help of the Soviets, he was able to publicly announce his program, through which he first declared the establishment of a Committee of Revolutionary War. He then announced the ousting of the British and promised the distribution of land among the peasants after they pushed further and took over Tehran. Further, he said that once the takeover of Tehran was complete, they would call the country the Iranian Socialist Republic. According to Persits, even though Iranians were following the Soviet model, there was not even one communist among their ranks at the time. The program of the Republic, besides armed struggle against the King and Britain, demanded the “support for private property [land] and Islam, for [the entire] human race, and for nullifying all agreements forced upon Iran by foreign forces.”²⁵² In this manner, forty square kilometers of the northern province of Gilan was pronounced as the Gilan Democratic Republic.

By July 1921, the Soviets decided to take their troops out of Iran; it took until December of that year for them to completely pull out. According to Persits, the Republic of Gilan suffered a defeat mainly because it refused to become another Soviet Republic.²⁵³ The Soviets pulling out of Iran on the one hand, and the distrust Kuchak-Khan had developed toward Iranian communists on the other, fomented the beginning stages of the collapse of the Republic of Gilan. For many reasons, as Persits states, Kuchak-Khan feared that “communists were trying to take over the leadership.”²⁵⁴ As a

²⁵²Ibid, p. 36.

²⁵³ Ibid, p. 99.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

result, he decided to get rid of Amoughlu, who had become one of the most prominent leaders.

Kuchak-Kahn's troops attacked the headquarters of the Communist Party and arrested Amoughlu. Kuchak-Khan and his Jangal Movement, afraid of Marxist repercussions, decided to act before they were destroyed. Haydar Khan, despite his non-conciliatory policies toward the Soviets, was killed by Kuchak-Khan's troops.

Clashes continued until October 23, 1921, when Kuchak-Khan was no longer able to resist the army with a small group of supporters. While escaping from government forces, he froze to death in the mountains of Gilan province. When his frozen body was found, his head was taken to Tehran as proof of an end to the Republic of Gilan.²⁵⁵ The death of major leaders of both groups led to disbandment of the coalition and an abrupt end to the first socialist-Muslim movement in Iran. Such convergence of ideas between the two distinctly different schools of thought did not occur again until the 1979 revolution.

On February 26, 1921, according to two Soviet experts on Iran, M. Pavlovich and Teria S. Iranski, the Soviets signed an agreement with the Iranian government to ensure their pulling out of Iran.²⁵⁶ There was controversy on whether the Soviets were actually there to aid the Iranians or more specifically, to help the Jangal Movement and the Communist Party of Iran establish a people's republic. Pavlovich and Iranski briefly mentioned the Soviet incentive to both occupy and leave Iran. According to the 1921

²⁵⁵ Ibid, p. 10.

²⁵⁶ M. Pavlovich and T.S. Iranski. 1939. *enghelab-e Iran va risheha-ye ejtemaee va eghtesadi-e an (Iranian Constitutional Revolution: Its Social and Economic Roots)*. Translated and published in Iran by M. Hooshyar (1940). p. 207.

pact, the Soviets would withdraw their troops only if the British would stop intervening in Iran and withdraw from the country.

The experience of Marxist-Muslim cooperation in the Republic of Gilan left its mark for a long time. Among those greatly influenced by this hybrid view was a secular Muslim in the city of Rasht. Mohammad Nakhshab, who began his political career in his late teenage years, founded a Muslim group with socialist inclinations under the name of the Theist-Socialist Movement (*nehzat-e khodaparastan-e socialist*). This group was among the six organizations that originally formed the National Front. Nakhshab was also among the four leaders of Liberation Movement abroad along with Ebrahim Yazdi, Mostafa Chamran, and Abbas Amir-entezam.²⁵⁷

Nakhshab, a Muslim who also believed in a secular government with socialist beliefs, was among the oldest in this group. In 1944, while still a high school student, he had become involved in politics by joining the Party of Iran²⁵⁸ (*hezb-e Iran*), a nationalist opposition group. Not long after its establishment, many members of the Party of Iran proposed to join the Tudeh Party. In a protest to the Party of Iran's joining the Tudeh Party, Nakhshab left to organize his own group. He first organized the Theist-Socialist Movement (*jonbesh-e khoda parastan-e socialist*) and later The Party of People of Iran (*hezb-e mardom-e Iran*). According to Abrahamian, neither of the groups could gather enough force to contend in the realm of politics.²⁵⁹ However, Nakhshab was the first individual Iranian who made an effort to bring Shi'a Islam together with European

²⁵⁷ Abrahamian, p. 569.

²⁵⁸ The Party of Iran was founded in 1941, mainly by a group that called itself the Committee of Engineers. It was a nationalist group that was pro socialism, and pro modernism, and because it was against foreign domination, it also attracted some Muslims and nationalists.

²⁵⁹ Abrahamian, p. 569.

socialism. It is interesting to note that Ali Shariati's father was a sympathizer of the Theist-Socialists. Consistent with his father's tendencies and influenced by Nakhshab's views, Shariati advocated similar views of secular Islam. In fact, by his own admission, Shariati was merely perfecting the same principles that commenced with Bazargan,²⁶⁰ Taleghani,²⁶¹ and Nakhshab.²⁶² [See later section in this chapter on Dr. Ali Shariati.] This was a secular religious belief that did not offend traditional merchants of the Bazaar or masses of Iranians who believed in Islam. Meanwhile it attracted new-leftist intellectuals under the banner of nationalism and secularism. It resulted in the creation of an upcoming nationalist movement, which despite the Islamic tendencies of its leaders, practiced a secular agenda. Among such nationalist groups were the National Front (*jebhe-ye melli*) and the Liberation Movement (*nehzat-e azadi*).

The National Front (*Jebhe-ye Melli*)

A major organization that made its mark in the protection of national interest was the National Front, originally founded in the fall of 1949 in Tehran by Doctor Mohammad Mosaddegh and his colleagues.²⁶³ This group was one of the most enduring, and at times, most popular political organizations advocating reform. From its founding until 1979, it went through three phases of development. As a political organization it had significant impact upon the process of social change in Iran. However, the National Front is mentioned here not for its political pertinence but rather for its members' contributions

²⁶⁰ One of the founders of the Liberation Movement in 1962. He was the first Prime Minister after the 1979 revolution.

²⁶¹ He was one of the most popular, important, and radical clerics before and during the revolution. He was not only active with Muslim clerics but also with nationalists and some Marxists.

²⁶² Ibid, 575.

²⁶³ Mohsen Modir-shanechi. 1996. *Ahزاب-e Siasi-e Iran, (Iranian Political Parties)*, Tehran: Resa.

to the formation of other Marxist groups. It was a midwife that helped give birth to many Marxist revolutionaries, many of whom later became founders of some of the major organizations, such as the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas.

In its first meeting, Mosaddegh²⁶⁴ was elected chairman. In its first political flyer, the organization made three distinct demands:

1. Just elections
2. An end to martial law
3. Freedom of the press²⁶⁵

By November 1, 1949, the National Front had openly declared itself as a political front consisting of many organizations and parties. At the time, the National Front was able to get eight of its members elected to the sixteenth congress of Majles.²⁶⁶ In March 1950, according to Katouzian, they put forth their program asking for reforms within the parliament and opposing an oil agreement between Iran and Britain. Their fight mainly revolved around legal issues, and not much attention was paid to other social and economic problems, such as social justice and the question of democracy and democratic rights.²⁶⁷

Two major factors had contributed to the creation of the National Front. First, Tudeh, as a major political group, was unable to draw Muslims to its socialist programs and Marxist ideology. Second, the presence of foreigners and their interest in Iranian oil

²⁶⁴ Mosaddegh was the first democratically elected Prime Minister in Iran. His government was overthrown in a coup on August 19, 1953, which put the Shah in power. This began the Shah's 25-year brutal dictatorship and a radical Muslim and Marxist movement to go with it. For more details, see Stephen Kinzer's *All the Shah's Men*, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc. 2003.

²⁶⁵ Abrahamian, p. 311.

²⁶⁶ Iranian Parliament.

²⁶⁷ J. Madani. 1982. *tarikh-e siyasi-e moaser-e Iran (Contemporary Political History of Iran)*, Qom: Office of Islamic Publications.

instigated deep nationalist feelings among Iranian masses. Other than the Tudeh Party, there had been no widespread movements for about twenty years. Nor had there been a political organization after the defeat of the Gilan Republic. Nonetheless, by the early 1940s, as an aftermath of the occupation of Iran by Allied forces, political activity was rehabilitated. In a short period of time, a large number of parties, committees, groups, and unions of groups were organized. Among them were nationalist groups that basically formed to protect national sovereign rights and Iranian oil. According to some authors, a nationalist organization may have been a more feasible solution to socio-political problems than the ways of a Marxist organization like the Tudeh Party.²⁶⁸

But the nationalists were not the only members of the National Front. Leftist and radical members had more in mind than parliamentarianism. Their fight was not merely a legal fight. They consisted of the Party of Iran, the Organization to Oversee Elections (*sazman-e nezarat bar entekhabat*), the Party of Iranian People, the Movement of Theist Socialists, the Population of Islamic Fadaeean (*jami'at-e fadaeean-e eslam*), and the Committee of Muslim Mojahedin (*hey'at-e mojahedin-e mosalman*).²⁶⁹ All organizations making up the main body of the National Front agreed on one principal issue, that Iranian oil belongs to Iranians. With this guideline, they were able to attract masses of people to their political arena, allowing them to build a strong front that went beyond its intellectuals' desires. They were successful in nationalizing the oil industry by 1951 and in making Mosaddegh the Prime Minister. His prime ministerial position lasted until August 19, 1953, when his cabinet was toppled by a coup with the help of the CIA and

²⁶⁸ Manoochehr Baghi. 1995. *Barressi-e Enghelab-e Iran (Examining The Iranian Revolution)*, Tehran: Saraee.

²⁶⁹ Foran, *Fragile Resistance...*

British MI-6. The Shah, who had previously fled the country fearing mass protests, was put back in power.²⁷⁰ As a result, many National Front leaders and members were arrested and imprisoned. This marked the official collapse of the first National Front.

The covert and repressed political inclinations within the National Front finally erupted in a major split. Gradually, the National Front was revived by 1965 and early from its re-inception it was divided into two factions. The more secular and modern leaders established what they called the second National Front, which was primarily formed by the Party of Iran. An alliance of four other organizations²⁷¹ established the third National Front.

The second National Front and third National Front were founded after the original National Front had ceased to exist as a result of political repression and internal conflict among its members. The second National Front, due to its many initial internal political differences, was not an enduring movement. A major factor contributing to its collapse was a cleric-led uprising on June 6, 1963. The government's severe suppression forced many in the National Front to change their political position. Some members who previously advocated legal-constitutional resistance against the regime were now convinced that possibilities for open political alternatives had been exhausted. In the face of the Shah's authoritarian regime, how effective was open resistance?

The third National Front declared its existence by the summer of 1965. This was a more radical and more skeptical group. It conducted its activities openly, but at the same time, very cautiously. The Third National Front was made up of four major opposition

²⁷⁰ Stephen Kinzer. 2003. *All the Shah's Men*, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

²⁷¹ Iranian Liberation Movement, Party of Iranian People, Socialist Party, and Student Organization of the National Front.

groups. It included the Liberation Movement, the Society of Socialists (*jame'e-ye socialist-ha*), the Party of Iranian People, and the Party of Iran. The more religious-leaning leaders, however, established the new Liberation Movement (*nehzat-e azadi*), which was, in reality, the outcome of the third National Front. In a matter of three short weeks, most of the leaders were arrested and imprisoned. This put an abrupt end to the third National Front.

A fourth National Front was created after about 12 years of non-activity. Guided by a new way of thinking, they decided to take advantage of the Shah's 'open political space.' They were more optimistic about an open political movement. In the face of a growing urban guerilla movement, an organization advocating nonviolence with no armed intentions, such as the new National Front, was good news for the Shah. On October 7, 1977, they declared themselves to be back on the political scene again.²⁷² According to the flyer, the new National Front consisted of the Socialist Society of the Iranian National Movement, the Party of Iran, and the Party of Iranian People. This was the period in which most groups announced their political activism one way or another, including the Tudeh Party, most Muslim and Marxist guerilla organizations, and the Liberation Movement. Several days later, the newly organized National Front established two important positions in a flyer. Responding to an article about "Iran and Black and Red Oppression,"²⁷³ the National Front took sides with Ayatollah Khomeini and declared that all clerics have clearly taken the side of Khomeini. They claimed that people's demand for Islam had nothing to do with the left and that the clerics' objective was not in

²⁷² Nejati, Gholamreza. 2000. *Tarikh-e siyasi-e bist va panj sale-ye Iran* (Twenty-Five Year Political History of Iran). Volume II, Tehran: Rasa Cultural Institute, p. 33.

²⁷³ This was the Shah's famous concept of a Muslim (black)-Marxist (red) conspiracy to overthrow his regime.

conflict with freedom and independence for Iran.²⁷⁴ Two of its leaders met with Khomeini in Paris to strengthen their solidarity with him specifically, and Muslims in general. Some of the more prominent leaders of the National Front played significant roles during and after the revolution.

Nationalism drove the four stages of the National Front's activity and political ideology. They were able to send a message of a) political involvement as a necessary condition for social rights, and b) organization as another necessity to achieve any socio-political objective. From the rank and file of the National Front rose many significant individuals and groups. After understanding how important it was for opposition to take a stance, they thought of expanding their political organization to mobilize and include masses of people. All major leaders and theorists in both Marxist organizations, such as the Fadaeean, and Muslim groups such as the Mojahedin, were in one way or another involved with the National Front. This was especially important since there were both Marxists, e.g. Tudeh, and Muslims, e.g. Clerics, outside and independent of the National Front.

The Liberation Movement (*Nehzat-e Azadi*)

The Liberation Movement, which had split from the third National Front, played a major role as an opposition force, especially during the few years just after the revolution. Many members of this group later broke away to form the Mojahedin, and many of the leaders made noteworthy imprints during the revolution.

This group, which endured its internal conflicts and the Shah's repressions, played a major role during the 1979 revolution. By May 17, 1962, the Liberation

²⁷⁴ Nejadi, Vol. II, p. 72.

Movement had declared itself an official group within the opposition. Three major leaders, all former members of the National Front, founded this new organization, which had stronger Islamic tendencies. The three included Mehdi Bazargan, Ezatollah Sahabi, and Ayatollah Seyyed Mahmood Taleghani. Bazargan and Sahabi were old, experienced activists with strong Islamic inclinations. Taleghani, a cleric who later became an Ayatollah, was another activist cleric heavily involved in the fight against the Shah. The Mojahedin, for instance, speak of Taleghani as one of their major ideological figures. The Liberation Movement's main declaration about its members and supporters was "Muslim, Iranian, and Mosaddegh-i."²⁷⁵ They believed in Islam as an ideology. Being Iranian implied nationalist Iranian in opposition to foreign forces, including Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Furthermore, a member had to be a supporter of Mosaddegh's belief in an independent national economy. Their main difference with the National Front, consistent with inclinations of the three founders, was greater emphasis on an Islamic ideology.²⁷⁶

After the defeat of the nationalist movement, there were no traces of the clergy. Their non-presence took the political struggle back to the universities. Some of the younger intellectual clerics, who could not find opportunities for political activity due to the Shah's despotism, began cultural activities such as publishing a magazine on the school of Shi'ism.²⁷⁷ They insisted upon a coalition of the nationalist movement and a movement based on Islamic ideology, including Tudeh and other Marxists. They felt that

²⁷⁵ One who follows the ways of Mosaddegh.

²⁷⁶ Baghi, p. 167.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

within the opposition to the Shah, there were only two groups that actively practiced their political ideology:

[They are] either revolutionary Muslims who fight, they attack the enemy and are attacked in turn, or they are non-Muslim Marxist revolutionaries. Therefore...the establishment [of Liberation Movement] reflected a historical necessity of the development of a new Islamic movement and their [Marxist] coalition into a union. And it is precisely this two-dimensional nature that enabled the Iranian Liberation Movement to accomplish its historical responsibility at the right moment.²⁷⁸

After the suppression of the clerics in the 1963 uprising, the Liberation Movement advocated a more radical position against the regime in support of the clerics.

Furthermore, it was this event that fomented a greater separation between the National Front and Liberation Movement. More pressure was put on the National Front by the Liberation Movement to condemn the regime for its murderous actions in Qom.²⁷⁹ The National Front, wanting to remain a legal and open political group, refused to take such a position. This forced the Liberation Movement to distance itself from the National Front. Now more radical Muslims, with nationalist ideas, were sympathetic to the Liberation Movement. Faced with an influx of imported western culture, they found more support for defending Islam and Iran in the Liberation Movement.

The main leadership of the Liberation Movement was deliberately avoiding an antagonistic struggle against the Shah, but younger members and supporters had other ideas. This created a duality about the nature of the Liberation Movement. In some of their documents, they referred to the concept of Mojahedin, a Muslim who thought a Jihad fights against the forces of oppression:

²⁷⁸ Documents of Iranian Liberation Movement: *The Trials of Leaders and Activists*, Iranian Liberation Movement Publications, Vol. III. 1984. pp. 7-8,.

²⁷⁹ A holy city 80 miles south of Tehran. Also the center for Islamic scholastic teachings from which clerics graduate.

After the 1963 uprising [cleric uprising in Qom] the Liberation Movement, on its path to development and growth, was able to become such Mojahedin-breeder which produced so many proud Mojaheds for the people of our country.²⁸⁰

This is referring to those who split from the Liberation Movement to found the Organization of Iranian People's Mojahedin. Therefore, it can be said that the Liberation Movement gave rise to a more radical group of Muslims, who later advocated an all-out armed struggle against the Shah. Many intellectuals, young political activists, and students, especially those with Islamic tendencies, supported the Liberation Movement. According to Nejati, the Liberation Movement was the first party with an Islamic ideology that coordinated all activities of nationalists with the clerics and the Islamic movement.²⁸¹

The Mojahedin, who had split from the Liberation Movement, had organized its own group by 1966. Radicalized by the Shah's suppression, frustrated by the Liberation Movement's reluctance, and deeply impressed by Marxist guerillas, they started their own urban armed struggle against the Shah. According to Abrahamian, "Even though the Mojahedin were Muslims, with a revolutionary interpretation of Islam, they put forth an ideology which was not much different from the Marxist Fadaeean."²⁸²

Organization of Iranian People's Mojahedin (*sazman-e mojahedin-e khalgh-e Iran*)

This organization was founded by three former members of the Liberation Movement in the summer of 1965. Mohammad Hanif-Nezhad, Ali Asghar Badizadegan, and Saeed Mohsen had split from the religious wing of the Liberation Movement to

²⁸⁰ Liberation Movement Publications, *Trials of Leaders*, p. 8.

²⁸¹ Nejati, p. 166.

²⁸² Abrahamian, p. 607.

found the Mojahedin. They were able to organize themselves amid other turmoil within the Liberation Movement. This occurred precisely when most of the leadership from the Liberation Movement was arrested under subversive charges, tried by a military court, and sentenced to years in prison.²⁸³

Hanif-Nezhad was born in 1938 in Tabriz, Azerbaijan, into a family of traditional merchants. He first joined National Front, then the Islamic Society, and finally the Liberation Movement. In 1962, he was arrested and sentenced to prison for seven months. In 1963, he graduated from Tehran University with a degree in agricultural machinery. He started his military service and became an officer before leaving the service. Disenchanted with the economy and alternative political parties, he thought of starting an underground group. The second founder of the Mojahedin was Saeed Mohsen. He was born in 1939 into a religious family in Zanjan. Active among student committees of the Liberation Movement, he was arrested and briefly imprisoned several times in 1961. He graduated from Tehran University in Industrial Engineering during the same year. After finishing military service he, like Hanif-nezhad and Badizadegan, helped found the Mojahedin. He was active in all realms of the struggle for the Mojahedin for ten years before he was arrested the last time.

Asghar Badizadegan, the third major figure and among the founders of the Mojahedin, was born in 1938 in Isfahan. He too began his political life with the Liberation Movement. He graduated with a degree in chemistry and served in the military henceforth. He served his time in an arms manufacturing factory and was later hired by the same factory. His familiarity with arms made him a good candidate for arms training, and in 1970 he was sent to Palestine to the Fattah military camps for training. After

²⁸³ Naser Harriri. 1980. *mosahebe ba tariksazan. (Interview with History Makers)*. Tehran: Tooqa.

several months of training he returned to Iran. His training was not in vain however. Before Badizadegan was sent to Palestine, the main founders of the organization had decided on commencing an armed struggle against the Shah's regime. They also studied an amalgam of Marxist books including *Economy, Money for All, Worker's Wage, Contradiction* by Mao; *State and Revolution*, and *What Is to Be Done?* by Lenin, *How to be Guerilla*, and *How to Be a Good Communist*, by Leo Chaochi, *Guerilla Warfare*, by Che Guevara, *Wretched of the Earth*, by Fanon, *Strategies of an Urban Guerilla*, by Abraham Gilan, *Revolution in Revolution*, by Regis Debray, and many others.²⁸⁴ Their studies of Islamic work were much more limited: the Koran, *Ali's Nahjbalagheh*, *The Path Traveled*, *Infinite Particle*, and *Love and Worship*. Such books may have contributed to a general understanding of Islam and morality rather than a specific political strategy.

Their 'ideology team' suggested to other members several books to read. Among them were Imam Ali's *Nahjbalagheh*. They later published a book called, *Imam Hussein*. This work included an analysis on Islam after the life of Mohammad and Hussein's struggle against the Ummaye dynasty. An important event that shaped the idea of martyrdom among Muslims, especially Shi'as, was Hussein's willingness to fight despite being disproportionately outnumbered. Islamic ideology was prevalent in this organization until the early 1970s. Members also read some Marxist works in order to enhance their understanding of other revolutions. For them, however, Islam was sufficient to explain class conflict and revolutionary activity.

²⁸⁴ *Details in History and Foundation of the Organization of Iranian People's Mojahedin*, Published by the OIPM. 1980. p. 44.

Ali Shariati

Ali Shariati was born in 1933 in Mashad, in the northeastern province of Khorasan. After graduating from high school and training as a teacher, Shariati started teaching in a village there. Several years later he started his university education and graduated with a degree in Persian Literature in 1953. With a scholarship to continue his education, he traveled to France. He finished his graduate studies and received a Ph.D. in Comparative Linguistics in 1964. His five years in France may be what instilled in him his political identity.²⁸⁵ The 1960s, the period of political turmoil in France, also educated Shariati as a political activist. He experienced one of the most radical leftist political movements in all of Europe at the time. It was through these movements that he realized the major differences between the developed and the underdeveloped countries. In many ways Dr. Shariati's ideas of using Marxism to aid the oppressed, while keeping his Islamic ideas intact, was similar to the Liberation Theology of Latin American countries. The use of these ideas in his writing reflects his understanding and personal experiences with both. He met and had long discussions with intellectuals such as Frantz Fanon²⁸⁶ and Jean Paul Sartre.²⁸⁷ While participating in political demonstrations defending the Algerian government, Shariati was injured, and this injury played an important role in his becoming even more involved in the world of political resistance. Consistent with his Islamic beliefs, he joined the Liberation Movement's chapter abroad. Two years later, he was appointed chief editor of Free Iran (*Iran-e Azad*), the National Front publication.

²⁸⁵ Nejadi, p. 78.

²⁸⁶ Famous Algerian Marxist.

²⁸⁷ French Marxist-Existentialist philosopher.

After receiving his Ph.D. in 1964, he went back to Iran. His activities in Paris, known to the government in Iran, caused his immediate imprisonment. After six months in prison, he was released, and despite his doctoral degree, he was allowed to teach only in a high school in his hometown of Mashad. Later, because of his relatively good behavior, he was permitted to teach in the university in the same city, but his tenure lasted just several months. As he was constantly under surveillance by the secret police, his ideas grew even more radical. He accepted the invitation of some politically active Muslims to speak in what became a famous mosque (*Hosseinieh ershad*) in Tehran. His lectures consisted mainly of Islamic theology, sociology, and the history of Islam, especially resistant Islam. He was warmly received by the youth, who promoted his tapes and books nationwide. For almost seven years, from 1966 to 1973, he was able to speak in the same mosque and at other gatherings.

Shariati's father had purposely chosen life in a small town and did not much care for big city glitter. He taught Islamic history in different small towns and villages in the same province. Choosing Khorasan to teach Islamic history was probably not a coincidence. It was where he was born and raised. Moreover, there was a population that did not appreciate the city and its secular living—the non-Islamic, nontraditional behaviorisms. Ali Shariati, following in his father's footsteps, was also interested in politics. They both participated in political meetings and joined a group called the Movement of Theist Socialists.²⁸⁸ These meetings probably played a big role in giving Shariati his first taste of Iranian socialist and Marxist thought.

²⁸⁸ The Movement of Socialist Theists was a group founded by Mohammad Nakhshab. They were self-proclaimed socialists who also believed in Islamic ideology and respect for private property.

In the early 1950s, when he was teaching in Mashad's high schools, he translated a book, originally written in Arabic by Abdolmajid Jodat-al-Sahar, which was highly controversial for the times, not only for questioning state authority but also for giving new ideas to the Muslim population. The title of the book was *Abuzar: The Socialist Theist*. It was about the life of Abuzar, one of the first people to join Mohammad in Islam. Abuzar defended the poor and oppressed, and fought against the rich and powerful. It seems as though Shariati, like other Middle Eastern radicals, thought of Abuzar as the first Muslim socialist.²⁸⁹ In his speeches given at the popular mosque in Tehran, he persistently used Islamic metaphors and analogies to critique the Shah's government. He never addressed the regime directly and never joined any specific group. This was why he was not perceived as a threat by the regime. The Shah's secret police SAVAK was concentrating most of its forces on the nascent guerilla movement, so speeches made in opposition of the regime seemed harmless at the time. For more than two years, Shariati was able to make his popular speeches with no consequences.

According to Zibakalam, the SAVAK thought that:

Those in opposition to Shariati, namely the conservative clergy, would eventually attack the mosque of *Husseinieh Ershad* and close it down. This would resolve the Shariati problem for SAVAK. Eliminating Shariati by closing down the mosque where he spoke, clerics would reduce tension between the SAVAK and the people.²⁹⁰

He was able to get away with the speeches only for so long. Because he spoke in a particular vernacular, using words with irony and dual meanings, he had gone undetected

²⁸⁹ Abrahamian, p. 572.

²⁹⁰ Zibakalam, p. 288.

for several years. But by 1971, he was being scrutinized closely by the SAVAK, and was finally arrested and imprisoned for eight months.

During his speeches, he distinguished two types of Islam, Alawi Shi'ism²⁹¹ and Safavi Shi'ism,²⁹² He considered those two schools of thought to be the major conflict between all Muslims in the world. He spoke about Hussein's martyrdom in Karbala as the quintessential Islamic struggle against injustice. He emphasized an unending fight against injustice, and said that the "most essential tradition of Islam is martyrdom and human activity that has been combined with the history of struggle against oppression and establishing justice and supporting human rights."²⁹³ Marxist and Muslim guerillas also believed in the ideas of martyrdom and human activity to hasten the achievement of a just system.

Doctor Ali Shariati was a significant force of opposition against the Shah's regime. He had strong convictions in Islamic beliefs, especially Islam as an ideology of resistance. He would not only qualify as a hybrid within the general Marxist-Muslim resistance movement but also a hybrid among Muslims themselves. He advocated Islamic morality but was not a cleric. And while he was a leftist intellectual, he was not a Marxist or secular intellectual.

He was one of the Muslims who applied principles of Marxism to his Islamic beliefs. He was outspoken against the Shah and his regime, especially during the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this period people attended his lectures by the thousands. Even women, who rarely attended such lectures in the mosque, were present when he

²⁹¹ Revolutionary, radical and politically active Shi'a Muslims.

²⁹² Conformists, usually controlled by the state, and politically conservative clerics.

²⁹³ Foran, p. 545.

spoke in *Husseinieh-ye ershad*. He was relentless in explaining the world as a conflicting dichotomy, a world of the oppressed and a world of the oppressor. For him the same division existed within Islam, an Islam that is utilized by the oppressors and an Islam that comes to the aid of the oppressed and justifies resistance against the oppressor.²⁹⁴ He believed that a real Islam can only be brought about and implemented by progressive intellectuals and not the clerics. He wrote:

There are two Islams. An Islam as ideology to progress in life, [to] socially advance and develop, and the other [Islam] a collection of knowledge, values, and information like the written word, principles of theology by Islamic icons. Islam as an ideology creates Abuzar,²⁹⁵ and Islam as a culture creates Ibn-Cinna [Avicenna].²⁹⁶ Islam creates believers as a culture. Islam creates intellectuals as an ideology...an uneducated individual may have understood Islam and thinks more Islamic than a cleric, a philosopher, and a master (Aref).²⁹⁷

He often disagreed with high clerics and criticized their involvement in oppressive governments. He insisted that clerics like all Shi'a Muslims must take a political stance. No longer was defending Islam as merely a religion sufficient for a true Muslim. In one of his more famous books, Islam-ology (studying Islam), he wrote:

Today, it is no longer enough to say that I disagree with religion or I believe in religion; this makes no sense. One must take a position on which religion does one believe in. The religion of Abuzar and Marvan Hokm are both Islamic. Fine, you believe in Islam, but which one, an Islam that pillages the people or one that is isolated in exile? If you claim that religion is an instrument to justify poverty, you could be right. Uthman²⁹⁸ used to say the same thing. But we can see that not only does Islam not justify poverty but advocates justice, equality, and struggle

²⁹⁴ Ali Shariati. 1992. *bavar va nabavari (Belief and Disbelief)*. Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications.

²⁹⁵ Abu-Zar was always praised by Shariati. He was among the first followers of Mohammad who resisted the enemies of Shi'a Islam in the seventh century.

²⁹⁶ A Persian Muslim philosopher and physician (980-1037) whose work started scholasticism in the Middle East.

²⁹⁷ Shariati, *Entezar (The Waiting)*. Tehran: Chapkhosh Publications. 8 p. 21.

²⁹⁸ A Caliphate who Sunni Muslims believe to be one of the four successors to Muhammad.

against poverty. In mere defense of this concept, many of the greatest in Islam have been sacrificed.²⁹⁹

Shariati's political positions and relentless critique of conformist clerics made him even more popular. His criticism against the Shah's government attracted a larger audience. The Shah's secret police grew concerned with his popularity and finally intervened and banned him from speaking in *Husseineh ershad*. By 1973, they shut down the mosque, arrested Shariati, and banned his writings.³⁰⁰ After his arrest, he spent two years in prison. He was finally released through political mediation and negotiation by the Algerian government. Despite government restrictions not to leave the country, he fled to London where he resided for the next three years. He died there in late spring of 1978. Although investigators diagnosed his cause of death to have been a massive heart attack, many still believe that the SAVAK was responsible for Shariati's death.

Shariati insisted on maintaining an independent mindset on political and social issues. He adhered fully to no extant ideology. He was particularly leery of any "isms" in political thought. Nonetheless, he thought of Marxism as one of the most comprehensive social thoughts.³⁰¹ Based on his writings and terminology, he was able to articulate a revolutionary Islam through Marxism. He felt, for example, that all Shi'a Muslims should use the day of commemoration of Hussein's killing by Mu'aviah as a day to protest oppression, or even rise for a revolution. This indeed took place starting some months before the 1979 revolution. He said inequality and poverty in Iran was a consequence of world imperialism, international Zionism, cartels, multi-national corporations, racism,

²⁹⁹ Ali Shariati. 1992. *Eslam-shenasi (Islamology)*. Chapkhosh Publications. Lesson 14. p. 73.

³⁰⁰ Abrahamian, p. 573.

³⁰¹ Nejati, p. 481.

cultural imperialism, and finally ‘westoxication.’³⁰² His usage of Marxist terminology and concepts had many people intrigued. This duality of thought created enemies and friends on both sides: Marxists and Muslims. According to Abrahamian:

[Shariati’s relationship with Marxism] was a love hate relationship. On the one hand he accepted that without Marxism one cannot comprehend society and modern history. Therefore, [he] accepted the division in society as an economic foundation, a class-based infrastructure, and a political ideological superstructure. He even confessed that almost all religions must be considered as part of the superstructure, because all rulers deceive people by the promise of heavenly rewards. He also accepted that history of people is a history of class struggle. But he adds that the main fight is over political power and not material goods. He claims that since Kane and Abel, humanity has been divided between two sides consisting of the oppressed (people) and the oppressor (rulers).³⁰³

Most of his political writings and speeches referred to a dichotomy of wrong Marxists and wrong Muslims. On the one hand were the wrong Marxists of the Tudeh Party, the ‘Stalinist kind’ as he would call them, and on the other, the conservative Muslims, who were apolitical and who held wrong interpretations of Islam. So Marxists and Muslims would think of him as either a Muslim-Marxist or an anti-Marxist Muslim. He claimed to be neither. He thought of himself as a radical thinker who got his ideas from Shi’a Islam and used the methodology of Western social science, especially Marxism, for political analysis. He defended the true Marxist from attacks by clerics who claimed Marxists to be godless, immoral, corrupt, and sinful. In a pragmatic way, he said that it is what Marxists practice—fighting against oppression and for truth—that the Koran expects. According to the Koran, its definition of *kofror kafir*³⁰⁴ refers to one’s

³⁰² Shariati, *Islamology*, lesson two.

³⁰³ Abrahamian, p. 574.

³⁰⁴ According to the Koran, *kofr* means rejecting God and His teachings, and *kafir* is a person (infidel) who rejects God and his teachings.

practice and not what is in one's mind as thought.³⁰⁵ He stated that Marxists must pay attention to the deep Islamic beliefs of Iranians. He scorned the Tudeh Party for not understanding the struggle of Muslims. It is due to this fact, he said, that not many people were attracted to this party in Iran. In his book, *The Return*, (*bazgasht*) he wrote:

Look at their [Tudeh Party] books through which they are trying to introduce themselves to our Muslim population and to the spirits of our religious people: 'Dialectical Materialism,' 'Spiritualism and Material Principles,' 'Spirits Are Material Too,' 'School of Ancient Greek Philosophy,' 'Marxism in Linguistics' (edited by Stalin), 'Dialectics of History,' etc... As a consequence, this is what our people think of the group's thoughts and actions. 'These are religion-less people, enemies of God, people, religion, ethics, and all that is sacred, all honors, all traditions. They are the destroyers of all rules, beliefs, and protestors of God, integrity, and everything. Their sole objective is to take away our religion and import non-religious beliefs from abroad, and that is all.'³⁰⁶

In the same writing, however, he showed an awareness of what some clerics would do to discredit Marxism, and defended Marxist thought by catching some clerics' deception. He said that clerics deceive people by exploiting people's ignorance, for example when a cleric lies to people and claims that *komo* [in Persian] means God, and *neest* [in Persian] means 'is not.' So *komoneest* [the Persian way of saying communist] really means there is no God. It is funny, Shariati claims, but it is a popular understanding. Furthermore, Shariati wrote:

Is it not true that we are addressing the population, a population with 90 percent peasants from villages as opposed to 90 percent proletariat like Germany? A population that belongs to feudalism and religion and not of industrial capitalism, a population that resulted from two centuries of renaissance and one century after the French revolution. This is how much effort was put into forgetting religion but not much opportunity to kick big landowners out of the village. Peasants and workers' consciousness was crammed with the Koran, prayer, and Ali.³⁰⁷ But they

³⁰⁵ *Islamology*, p. 155-156.

³⁰⁶ Shariati, *Bazgasht (The Return)*, p. 48.

³⁰⁷ Referring to Ali, Muhammad's cousin and son in law who is idolized by both Sunnis and Shi'as.

never became conscious of the truth about exploitation, the meaning of oppression, the philosophy of poverty, and alienation. Our translators and writers wrote and translated books about materialism and dialectics, linguistics, the engine of history, the refutation of Berkley's philosophies, superstitious of idealism, the nonexistence of God and spirit, and principles of ethics. But among the thousands of books they published for the people, there was no translation of *das Kapital*.³⁰⁸

There are strong Fanonist influences in Shariati's writings. Shariati, like Frantz Fanon, the radical Algerian Marxist, felt that nationalism for Third World countries was the only path to liberation. He claimed that people in the Third World could only defeat imperialism through the return to their original cultural roots. Their national and cultural traditions would help them prevail over social alienation and reach a stage of independence. In his speeches, he referred to African and Latin American intellectuals on their way to 'returning to the self.' Shariati was successful with the youth and Muslim intellectuals. Most young Islamic intellectuals also felt that Shi'a Islam could be used for a revolutionary movement and that traditional clerics were too conformist. They rejected non-political traditions of Islam having to do with prayers, absolution, scholastic teachings, and superstition of healing through religion. Like Shariati, the Muslim youth wanted to use Islam as an ideology to protest the Shah's dictatorship and foreign imperialism.

Even though he did not live to see the revolution take place, and more interestingly its consequences, he contributed immensely to ideas that mobilized the masses. Among his students were many leaders of the Mojahedin and other revolutionary Islamic groups. His desire to change Iranian society may have come true if only temporarily. In a letter to his son, he wrote:

³⁰⁸ Shariati, *bazgasht (The Return)*, pp. 48-50.

We are speaking of a society with half its population asleep and under a spell and its other half who is awake are fleeing the country. We want to wake up the spellbound and force them to 'stand up' and make those who fled return and stay.³⁰⁹

According to John Foran, Shariati bridged the gap between Khomeini, his followers, intellectuals, and students. Even though Shariati did not approve of a government ruled by clerics, in two ways his analysis was quite close to the clerics. First, he thought of Islam as a completely just system, and second, good Muslims should give power to their leading clerics.³¹⁰ Discourse on whether Shariati would approve of an Islamic Republic in Iran still continues. However, as far as Shariati was concerned, it was imperative, as he said in the letter to his son, that we wake people up. And to that he certainly contributed tremendously.

Not since the Gilan Democratic Republic were Marxists and Muslims working so closely. This time the collaboration was against a common enemy using a particular method of struggle to achieve victory. Although independent organizationally, and distinct ideologically, the Marxist borrowing of ideas from Muslims was noticeable. The idea of martyrdom, as proof of an authentic revolutionary, determined popularity of the group. Serious revolutionaries not only engaged in armed struggle they also gave their lives for it. This made an impact on other smaller groups in the opposition. They were involved in the resistance movement. But the impact was mainly made by those who used martyrdom to demonstrate a genuine revolutionary.

³⁰⁹ Nejati, p. 482.

³¹⁰ Ibid, p. 546.

CHAPTER SIX

THE ORIGINS AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF THREE MAJOR MARXIST ORGANIZATIONS

The Iranian revolution was an Islamic revolution, but in Iran there was, as elsewhere, an intellectual culture of Marxism. The adherents of this culture lost many savage battles, but they helped make the revolution possible and shaped postrevolutionary Iran.

Forrest Colburn

Three major organizations permeated the Marxist political movement in Iran: the Tudeh Party, The Organization of Iranian Peoples Fadaee Guerillas, and Paykar. Multitudes of other leftist and Marxist groups were active before the revolution, but these three groups were able to organize Iranian leftists and intellectuals more effectively than others. Part of their success was their persistence and seriousness in the struggle to topple the Shah's regime. This chapter presents a brief history of the three organizations. Their history is particularly important because in one way or another, their leaders had a relation with Islam and/or Islamic movements.

Tudeh Party

Tudeh is the oldest Marxist organization that has been able to revive itself in one form or another. It has survived the imprisonment and execution of its leaders, members and supporters, many splits, controversies among its leadership, and most importantly, a growing disappointment and disenchantment among the Iranian people. Founded in 1920, the Communist Party of Iran became the country's first Marxist group.³¹¹ There is a connection, however, between the Communist Party and the Tudeh Party that goes beyond their relationship with the Russian revolution and the Communist Party of the

³¹¹ Habib Lajvardi, *Ettehadiye-ye kargari va estehglal dar Iran (Workers Union and Autonomy in Iran)*, (Tehran: Nashre No, 1990), p. 9.

Soviet Union. It started with the participation of Iranian workers who had traveled to Russian Azerbaijan for work. In the Russian revolution of 1905, they had a chance to participate in a political-social struggle for the first time. Wanting to use their experience in an organization, they established the Party of Justice (*Hezb-e Edalat*), and the Endeavor Society (*Jamiat-e Hemmat*).³¹² The Party of Justice, also known as the Social Democratic Group, changed its name to the Communist Party of Iran in 1920.³¹³ They demanded: the end of imperialist domination in Iran; confiscation of foreign corporations; confiscation of land belonging to big landowners and its distribution among peasants and soldiers in the revolutionary army; finally, they demanded an alliance with the Soviets and the Workers International Movement.³¹⁴

To popularize their politics, they joined the Jangal Movement,³¹⁵ which was led by Mirza Kuchak Khan.³¹⁶ Ideologically, two individuals from the Communist Party played significant roles: Jafar Javadzadeh (Pishevari), who published the party's organ *The Communist*, and Haydar Khan, also known as Haydar Amoughlu, who led the central committee of the party. This was the first instance of a Marxist-Muslim convergence in Iranian history. Through efforts of the leaderships from both sides, by Mirza Kuchak Khan, Amoughlu, and Javadzadeh, the first Democratic Society was established.³¹⁷

³¹² Elaheh Kolaee, *Stalinism va hezbe tudeh (Stalinism and The Tudeh Party)*, (Tehran: Nashre Markaz, 1997), p.21.

³¹³ Ibid. p. 22.

³¹⁴ A. Sepehrzadeh, *History of Communist Movement in Iran*, trans. By M. Rafiee, Tehran: Attaee, 1986.

³¹⁵ A radical movement of small landowners that advocated armed insurgency against the Ghajar dynasty. It was led by Mirza Kuchak Khan.

³¹⁶ Leader of the Jangal Movement who played an important role in cooperating with the Communist Party of Iran.

³¹⁷ Kolaee, p. 80.

By 1920, the Communist Party denounced Reza Khan, the new monarch and a dictator, for being an obstacle to progress. They asked workers, peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie to unite against him.³¹⁸

By 1926, the Communist Party had regrouped and reiterated its view on Reza Shah as an obstacle to progress. They claimed that the only way to fight against his government was to organize workers, peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie.³¹⁹ At the same time, Reza Shah made all communist activity and literature illegal in 1931 by passing an amendment through the parliament. This move forced the Communist Party to turn inward and concentrate its activities among intellectuals. One of these, who later joined the party, was Taghi Arani, a chemist educated at the University of Berlin in Germany. He came to know Marxism while in Berlin, which motivated him to write several critical articles about Iranian culture. Upon his return to Iran, he began publishing an intellectual newspaper by the name of *Donya* (World).³²⁰ By 1931, Reza Shah had gathered enough support to denounce the Communist Party, and he proclaimed as illegal all activities by communists or communist groups. This act forced the Communist Party to go underground and conduct most of its activities among intellectuals. Taghi Arani was among them.

So complicated were Arani's articles that the government initially perceived the material as non-threatening.³²¹ Articles under titles like "*Historical Materialism*,"

"*Science and Elements of Material*," "*Meaning of Human Materialism*," "*Women and*

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ellahed Kolaee, *Stalinism and The Tudeh Party*, (Stalinism va hezb-e tudeh) Tehran: Center of Islamic Revolution Documents Publications, 1997, p. 80.

³²⁰ *Donya* remains the name of Tudeh Party's political publication to this day.

³²¹ Ervand Abrahamian. 1982. *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton, NJ: University Press, p. 198.

Materialism,” and “*Material Basis of Life and Thought*” may have been too dense for even university students. His problems came not with his theoretical writing but rather with a flyer he wrote in 1937, on May 1st, International Workers Day, and distributed on university campuses.³²² This led to his arrest and a ten-year prison sentence. During his trials he compared Iranian police with the Nazis and accused them of torture. He stated that anti-socialist and anti-communist laws were against the constitution. He said, according to Abrahamian, “If you want to imitate Western clothing, methods, facades, technology, and style of living, you must also put to work Western political philosophy.”³²³ Arani died after only ten months in prison. Controversy surrounds his death since the cause was never established.

The Tudeh Party was founded by 27 of the 53 individuals who were arrested along with Arani but were able to find each other later. Officially the Tudeh Party was established in 1941, and despite efforts by different governments to eliminate this group, it has persisted to this day. Since its inception, it has split into many more radical or more conservative groups, which exist now under different names. Some authors have argued that the Tudeh Party was originally created not as a communist party but as a united front for anti-fascist activities and constitutional rule, and this is precisely why the name “Tudeh” was chosen as opposed to the Communist Party or the Workers Party.³²⁴ There were three reasons that contributed to that decision:

³²² Ibid.

³²³ Ibid, p. 199.

³²⁴ Maziar Behrooz, 1999. *Rebels With A Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*, New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, p. 4.

1. Since communist activity had become illegal in 1931, any name making a communist distinction did not seem wise, especially since this was not perceived by members as an underground subversive organization.
2. Any name referring to Marxism or communism would undoubtedly repel and fend off clerics and religious individuals, as well as many politically radical Muslims.
3. Tudeh, meaning “mass of people,” would also attract and appeal to all sects and divisions of society, not only the working class.

According to Morshedizadeh, the name Tudeh was chosen in an attempt to conceal the real communist nature of the party since Iranians thought of Marxism as hostile to religion and Islam.³²⁵ Tudeh leaders looking to organize intellectuals, students, and workers openly could not possibly have chosen a name affiliating them with communism, Marxism, or the Soviets. Moreover, according to Abrahamian, a non-communist name would draw distinctions between the old Communist Party of Iran and the new, more youthful Tudeh Party.³²⁶ In a pragmatic sense, the anti-communist law passed in 1931 might be the reason.

The party chose a Ghajar prince, Soleiman Mirza Eskandari, as their leader because he had been an important figure during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906.³²⁷ By 1942, the new party had published its preliminary program and started its political activities in Tehran. Their first conference was held in the fall of that year. Thirty-nine members from the provinces and 87 members from Tehran attended the conference. Their initial program was based on four objectives according to Abrahamian:

1. Freeing the remaining members of 53
2. Making the Tudeh Party an official party

³²⁵ Ali Morshedizadeh, “Ahzabe Chap” (Leftist Parties), in *Iranian Social-Political Change, 1941-1979*, Tehran: Rozaneh Publishers, 2001. p. 205.

³²⁶ Abrahamian, p. 348.

³²⁷ Ibid.

3. Publishing a newspaper
4. Creating a program that, contrary to previous anti-religion programs, would not exclude clerics and would attract young Marxists and non-Marxist radicals.

It took six months for Tudeh to accomplish these plans. They started gathering in Tehran and had organized their first conference by September 1942, which was attended by 126 members (87 from Tehran and 39 from other cities). During the conference, the following membership conditions were delineated. Members must:

1. Be Iranian citizens
2. Be at least 20 years of age
3. Accept the party's ideology and structure
4. Go through a three-month training period in one of the party's branches³²⁸

The two types of Marxists who made up the main body of the Tudeh Party were quite different. This was apparent in both their class and educational background:

Founders of the Tudeh Party were mostly young Persian-speaking men from Tehran, whereas members of the former Communist Party were middle-aged, from Azerbaijan, and spoke Azari. While founders of the Tudeh Party were university-educated intellectuals who had come across Marxism through leftist movements in Western Europe, founders of the Communist Party were self-taught intellectual activists who had reached the same conclusion through Leninism of the Russian Bolshevik Party. While the founders of the Tudeh Party, these European-educated Marxists, saw politics only from the class perspective, the leadership of the Communist Party—having witnessed ethnic massacres of Ghafghaz and local uprisings of Khiabani and Mirza Kuchak Khan—saw society not only from a class perspective, but an ethnic view. These differences were not apparent from 1941-1943, but surfaced later.³²⁹

In time, these differences became a major source of conflict. Given Iranian society's lack of a working class proletariat, copying Soviet-style communism had become a problem. Conflict rose among party members from the First Congress of the party. One of the more important issues was the communist nature of the party. The issue

³²⁸ Abrahamian, p. 254.

³²⁹ Ibid. p. 349.

was whether communism was appropriate for Iran's particular social makeup.³³⁰ They were facing a political dead-end. Some members felt that the party was not serious enough about class struggle and armed struggle in achieving socialism, and that the party had replaced workers with intellectuals. Others argued that there was not enough open and democratic discussion within the central committee, which harbored too much control. Yet there were others who underscored reasons outside the party, such as political suppression and British imperialism conspiring in Iran.³³¹ Despite such political differences, they were able to publish their views concretely without seeming contradictory.

This time, however, there appeared a new line of class struggle in their program, demonstrating a new socialist/worker inclination vis-à-vis an old nationalist/ethnic line. After the first congress in 1944, the formulated principles of the party were put forth in a paper as the following:

The Main objective of the Tudeh Party is to mobilize workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals, merchants, and artisans of Iran. In our society today, there are two main classes: those who own principle means of production, and those who do not own much. The second group includes workers, peasants, progressive intellectuals, merchants, and artisans. Those who work are not rewarded for their work, and are oppressed by a small group. If the social structure is completely turned upside-down and the principle means of production is shared by the people, this class, for losing a little, will gain a whole lot in return. ... When we say our intention is to fight against despotism and dictatorship, we are not addressing particular individuals but a class structure that creates such dictators and despots. In August of 1941, many people thought that with the overthrow of Reza Shah, dictatorship would also disappear overnight. But now we are aware of the mistake we made. We can see with our own eyes that the structure that created Reza Shah still remains. Such class structures, furthermore, will create mini Reza Shahs through oligarchies in the form of

³³⁰ Kolaee, p. 91.

³³¹ Abrahamian, p. 383.

landowners and oppressive capitalists, who will control society by owning the means of production.³³²

Ideological conflicts on what takes precedent—ethnic and nationalist struggle or worker struggle—continued to persist within the Tudeh Party.³³³

An interesting development within Tudeh was its Women's Organization. The Women's Organization of the Tudeh Party, which was created in 1943, was supported by another group of women called the Society of Women. By 1949, both groups had joined to form the Society of Democratic Women. Interestingly, the members were mostly related to male members of the Tudeh Party.³³⁴ The subject of women's rights and the political activities of women was a point of contention for clerics, one that may have played a major role in creating a rift between clerics and Tudeh. The women's branch of Tudeh managed to organize women to fight for literacy, voting rights, political and social rights, equal wages, and the building of more schools for girls. This is while clerics were trying to close all institutions open to women.³³⁵

Among the most radical branches of Tudeh was its military chapter. It was announced an official chapter of the party in 1951, and by 1954 it had hundreds of members. During the same year, 500 of its members were arrested and 21 were executed.³³⁶ Tudeh was especially active in recruiting members from the working class. In their first conference, they proclaimed a neutral position toward worker's religious

³³² Abrahamian, p. 363.

³³³ Nur al-Din Kianuri, *Goftogo Ba Tarikh (Dialogue With History)*, Tehran: Negareh Publishing and Cultural Institute, 1997.

³³⁴ *Ibid.* p. 412.

³³⁵ Abrahamian, p. 413.

³³⁶ Nejati, p. 53.

affiliations, language, and political views. They organized many strikes demanding higher wages and improved work conditions for workers. According to Foran:

By 1941, only three strikes, involving 50 workers, had taken place, but by 1944, the number of strikes had reached 57. It reached a peak by 1946, with 183 strikes in total. By May 1, 1944, International Workers Day, four workers' confederations joined forces to form the Central Council of the United Trade Unions of Iranian Workers and Toilers (*shora-ye mottahed-e markazi-ye kargaran va zahmatkeshan-e Iran*). This council was led mainly by old activists of the workers movement and members of the "fifty-three." The council grew rapidly until 1946, when it claimed to have organized 335,000 members including industrial workers, artisans, merchants, non-skilled wage laborers, and service sector employees.³³⁷

In 1948, as a consequence of an assassination plot against the Shah, martial law was declared and all Tudeh Party members were arrested. Two weeks later, the prime minister announced the Tudeh Party responsible for the attempt by presenting some documents. He linked the alleged assassin to an Islamic Newspaper, the *Flag of Islam* (parcham-e eslam), Tudeh, and United Committee of the United Trade Unions of Iranian Workers and Toilers.³³⁸ Furthermore, citing the 1931 ban against communism and communist groups and literature, the Tudeh Party was proclaimed illegal and it was indicted with charges, which, according to Abrahamian, included destabilizing the constitutional monarchy, organizing hunger strikes and plotting riots in the southern region of Abadan, arming workers in the northern province of Mazandaran, and encouraging the secession of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan.³³⁹ Leaders were arrested, the

³³⁷ Foran, p. 401.

³³⁸ United Committee (Shoraye Mottahedeh) was an alliance of workers in many sectors established by some members of the original Communist Party in 1921.

³³⁹ Foran, p. 287.

party line along with its members went into disarray, and internal conflict arose.³⁴⁰

According to Katouzian, there were some members of Tudeh Party who could have spied for the government.³⁴¹ Two hundred members were arrested and some executed. With the advent of the 16th Congress, some political activity was permitted. This allowed the Tudeh Party to start publishing a political organ and begin organizing protests and strikes. Despite several years of inactivity, they were able to rebuild and organize once again.

By 1953, they had gathered more support and resurfaced. Their serious political activities enabled these Marxists to gain the trust of the population as an opposition group. All throughout the 1940s and until 1953, when the Tudeh Party failed to organize the masses to protest the coup against Dr. Mosaddegh, they had set the political discourse for Iranian opposition. On May 1, 1953, International Workers Day, they organized protests in almost all major cities. On other occasions, they were able to mobilize up to 100,000 people to participate in political protests.³⁴² But according to some of their leaders, they failed for not supporting Mosaddegh. Eskandari writes:

During the nationalist movement, we did not support Mosaddegh, who undoubtedly represented the national bourgeoisie. We believed that Mosaddegh is fighting for nationalizing Iranian oil, but American imperialist support of this movement means they are also behind it. Therefore, we mistakenly concluded that communists must not support the movement of the nationalization of oil.³⁴³

³⁴⁰ Mohammad Ali Amouee, *Dorde Zamaneh (Bitterness of History): The Memoirs of Mohammad Ali Amouee: 1941-1979*, Tehran: Anzan Publishers, 1998.

³⁴¹ Homayoun Katouzian, *Eghtesad-e Siasi modern dar Iran: Estebdad va Shebh-e Modernism, 1305-1357(The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926-1979.)*Tehran: Pariroos, 1978, p. 192.

³⁴² Kolaee. p. 89.

³⁴³ Iraj Eskandari, "What We Mean by The National Bourgeoisie," *World Marxist Review*, Sept. 1959, pp. 10-15.

Eskandari neglected to mention the role of the Soviet Union in this decision. According to some authors, the party's decisions were made with the interests of the Soviet Union in mind.³⁴⁴ The Soviet Union, Britain, and the United States had plans for the Iranian oil industry. In a speech in Majles, Mosaddegh put forth his "negative equilibrium" policy, suggesting that new concessions on Iranian oil should not be made until Iran could plan for nationalization of Southern oil under the control of Britain. To give the Soviets Northern oil concessions, and have the British already in the South, was "negative equilibrium." Tudeh published articles blaming Mosaddegh for being one-sided and claimed that all governments had spheres of influence in Iran, including the Soviets.³⁴⁵ After the 1953 coup, The Tudeh Party was seriously damaged. In a period of five years, 1953-1958, up to 3,000 members were arrested. From 1960-1963, several key members of the party fled Iran to Europe.

From the perspective of many writers, political activists, and intellectuals, the Tudeh Party contributed significantly to the defeat of Mosaddegh by withdrawing their support precisely at the moment when he needed it most.³⁴⁶ Their political positions and actions that had been based on a Soviet connection literally pushed the Tudeh Party out of the political picture. Leadership's mistake caused the arrest and incarceration of hundreds of supporters and members.³⁴⁷ Hundreds received life-sentences and dozens were executed. Many splits occurred within the party. Meanwhile, the government began a widespread campaign of labeling the Tudeh Party as a Soviet puppet and agent. Many

³⁴⁴ Behrooz, p. 5.

³⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 6.

³⁴⁶ Nejati, p. 323.

³⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 324.

who were not arrested fled to Europe, mostly to East Germany, with the help of the Soviets.

In 1962, four former members returned to Iran to start a new organization consisting of what remained of old members and supporters. By 1963, they managed to create a new publication called the *Appendix to Mardom* (*zamime-ye mardom*) through which many lost members were able to reestablish their connections with the party. For the first time, Tudeh voiced its sympathy for clerics and the movement led by the clergy. They called the uprising, led by Khomeini in 1963, an “uprising of anger and revenge against the Shah.” They praised all clerics involved and reiterated the necessity for all opposition groups to unite. By 1966, many members were arrested. This resulted in a dissipation of members and supporters, and again led to a period of inactivity. It was not until early 1970s that the Tudeh regrouped once again and published four different organs under the names *Navid*, *Mardom*, *Donya*, and *Sho’le*, meaning “good news,” “people,” “world” and “flame” respectively. By the summer of 1975, several years short of the 1979 revolution, they announced their ideology of Marxism-Leninism.³⁴⁸ During these years, heady discussions between Tudeh and Fadaee guerillas and the Mojahedin took place. Until 1978, the Tudeh Party remained an underground organization; two days after the revolution, it surfaced and announced its reemergence. The party mostly advised groups to stay away from armed struggle because it would only contribute to their martyrdom in vain. Two months before the February revolution, they wrote:

Our primary and most important responsibility of the party is to work comprehensively with popular forces and mostly with forces led by Ayatollah

³⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 328.

Khomeini. It is our duty to warn people about potential threats while we defend the progressive government of Bazargan and his national[ist] government.³⁴⁹

Anti-national bourgeoisie and anti-Islam in the 1950s, the Tudeh Party had turned completely around in support of both during the 1979 revolution. As discussed in the following sections, the Tudeh Party, of all the Marxist organizations, came closest to converging Marxism with an Islamic ideology.

Tudeh and the Soviet Union

Historically, ever since its inception, there had been a peculiar, yet robust and persistent, relationship between the Tudeh Party and the Soviet Union. This relationship has always been a “major point of controversy in the history of the Iranian communist movement.”³⁵⁰ Different political entities have generated various views on the Tudeh Party. The Shah’s regime, and also the government of the Islamic Republic, both believed the party to consist of spies working directly for the Soviets. Groups within the opposition, both Marxist and non-Marxist, were less conspiracy-driven and analyzed the Tudeh Party more politically. They believed that the Tudeh Party was so ideologically dependent on the Soviets that they were copying Soviet policies and interests despite the necessities of the Iranian working class and the oppressed. Although the close connections between the Tudeh Party and the Soviets had been clearly shown, the extent and nature of the relationship was never clear. That is, who was influencing whom? As quoted by Behrooz from one of the Tudeh Party’s original leaders, Avanesian, the Comintern outlined the Tudeh Party’s policy, which was to “fight against fascism through propaganda and other means; to fight for the establishment of democracy; and to

³⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 329.

³⁵⁰ Behrooz, p. 22.

make the Iranian people understand that the Soviet government only wanted their well-being and freedom.”³⁵¹

Extant factions within the party also had different views on the Soviet influence. The two prominent leaders, Kianuri and Tabari, felt that the party was an extension of the CPSU (Communist Party of the Soviet Union). Eskandari, however, thought of Tudeh as more independent. According to Eskandari, “The Soviets had different departments in their government that sometimes pursued contradictory policies.”³⁵² He claimed that “as long as Tudeh was operating inside Iran and had a mass following, the Soviet influence was less, but that after exile between 1960 and 1979, [when party leadership fled to] first the Soviet Union then the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the influence increased.”³⁵³ Connections between the 1953 coup and the Soviets can only be speculated upon since there are minimal sources of information. Joseph Stalin’s death five months prior to the coup to overthrow Mosaddegh’s government may have affected both entities. His death caused political instability in the CPSU. Different factions of the CPSU had started their own internal struggle to fill the vacuum left by Stalin. At the same time, the Tudeh Party was affected in their directives from CPSU. This may “explain the paralysis of the party [Tudeh] leadership in confronting 1953 coup.”³⁵⁴ According to Kinzer, the Tudeh Party’s lack of participation in defending Mosaddegh during the coup was also directly related the Soviet’s non-participation, but this time, like most of the world’s Communist Parties, Tudeh was controlled by the Soviet Union, and in times of crisis it

³⁵¹ Ibid., 23.

³⁵² Ibid, 24.

³⁵³ Ibid.

³⁵⁴ Stephen Kinzer. 2003. *All the Shah’s Men*, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons Inc. 2003, P.179.

followed orders from Moscow. On this day, however, no orders came. Stalin had died several months earlier and the Kremlin remained in turmoil. Soviet intelligence officers who would normally have been concentrating on Iran were preoccupied with the more urgent challenge of staying alive.³⁵⁵

Political turmoil in the Soviet Union and a CIA coup in Iran contributed to the demise of not only the Tudeh Party but generally the Marxist left in Iran. As Kinzer puts it:

Undoubtedly, there would have been no coup in August 1953 if not for the CIA. The CIA devised Operation Ajax, paid a large sum to carry it out—estimates of the final cost range from \$1 million to \$20 million, depending on which experiences are counted—and assigned one of its most imaginative agents to direct it.³⁵⁶

There are also some accounts of an infiltration of the CIA in the Tudeh Party. The CIA “had infiltrated the Tudeh at a very high level during the coup period, and the Lankarani brothers [Tudeh members] were in fact MI-6 [British equivalent of the CIA] agents.”³⁵⁷ As far as party politics toward Mosaddegh were concerned, “leaders of the Tudeh Party took their orders from the Soviet Union, and the Feudal reactionaries were in connection with the Brits and the Americans, and both these groups acted against the interests of the country [Iran].”³⁵⁸

After the 1979 revolution, the Tudeh Party admitted to mistakes they had made during and after the 1953 coup. They held their leadership responsible, yet never

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 210.

³⁵⁷ Behrooz, p. 25.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

mentioned the Soviet role or lack thereof in the coup. Nejati quotes from one of the documents published by the Tudeh Party after the 1979 revolution:

Not knowing the national bourgeoisie in Iran, not realizing its nature, and not recognizing the anti-imperialist characteristics of the National Front caused our party to make great mistakes. ... The party leadership, instead of defending nationalization of the oil industry throughout the country, which was supported by masses of people and a common ground among all anti-imperialist forces, came up with the slogan to nationalize the Southern oil fields and nullify the pact [made with Britain] vis-à-vis the National Front's demands.³⁵⁹

What the above quotation neglects to mention is the Northern oil fields that were contracted out to the Soviets. So when it came to nationalization of oil in Iran, the Tudeh Party was still partial toward the Soviets. As more books were written by former and current members of the Tudeh Party after the 1979 revolution, the role of the Soviets and their influence in the party became clearer. As discussed below, the Soviets may have perceived the Tudeh Party as their agents in Iran in a geopolitical context. Knowing full well that the Iranian government had in mind the interests of Britain and the United States, the Soviets did not entirely give up on the Shah. They maintained a close relationship with his government while they influenced the Tudeh Party to act on their behalf. This paradoxical relationship between the Soviets, the Shah's government, and the Tudeh Party was seriously questioned by emerging Marxists. The Sino-Soviet conflict and China's alternative to Soviet peaceful coexistence, in addition to important victories in liberation movements worldwide, deeply affected new and youthful Marxists. They were thinking of new means—other than legal and constitutional struggles, to overthrow the confident dictator. The new Marxists moved away from a Tudeh-like organization only able to function under legal and semi-legal conditions, and dependent on foreign powers, to one independent of outside influences and conditioned to operate under the

³⁵⁹ Nejati, p. 327.

extreme repression of a police state. A reverence for the Bolshevik revolution, a hallmark of the previous generation, was diluted by the experience of Chinese, Cuban, Algerian, and Vietnamese revolutions.³⁶⁰

Several questions may be raised on the relationship between the Tudeh Party and the soviets. Who consulted whom on the matters of Iranian politics? Did the Tudeh Party play a more significant role in determining Soviet attitudes toward Iran or were they mere agents of the Soviets?

This intriguing relationship is crystallized through the following events. A reform group that split from the Tudeh Party in 1948 released a communiqué in which they stated that Tudeh's program should be appropriate for Iran's socioeconomic conditions and not simply another copy of the socialist countries. The fate of the reform group was sealed, according to Behrooz, when "the Soviets condemned it... Many who joined the group started to desert once the Soviet position became clear. The group virtually ceased to exist after the Soviet condemnation."³⁶¹ Similar unpopularity of the Soviets surfaced when they abandoned the Iranian Gilan Republic and supported the Iranian government. Such sentiment was enhanced several decades later when the Soviets refused to support the nationalist movement led by Mosaddegh. However, diligent members did not cease to protect Soviet foreign policy. Tabari, a prominent and fleeing member of the Tudeh Party at the time, published an article in the party journal suggesting that all governments had a sphere of influence in Iran, including the Soviets. He claimed that "If the American government, as we mentioned, is after spheres of influence, and is interested in being strongly engaged in the post-war politics and wants its companies to explore the

³⁶⁰ Behrooz, p. 37.

³⁶¹ Behrooz, p. 32.

Baluchestan oilfields, then it is quite natural that our northern neighbor, in its international interest, do the same.”³⁶²

Many believed the 1953 coup that brought the Shah back into power could have failed had the Tudeh Party resisted. Behrooz quoting Jazani on the 1953 coup stated:

The August 19th onslaught could have become a turning point for intensifying the struggle and for the passing of the movement from a political phase to a military one. Had the head the Tudeh Party, with its inadequate forces, chosen to resist between August 17th and 22nd, [they] might have been able to defeat the coup. This resistance could have become the beginning of a revolutionary movement for mobilizing and arming masses for a people’s war against the enemy.³⁶³

While the Soviets were condemning those who split from the Tudeh party, other conflicts were broiling. The Tudeh Party’s support for the Soviets in the Sino-Soviet dispute and other disagreements caused yet another split. The Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party of Iran split from the Tudeh Party and defended China’s position in the Sino-Soviet conflict. This group was against Khrushchev’s de-Stalinization and the Soviet Communist Party’s peaceful co-existence thesis.

A contributing factor in a popular criticism of the Soviets, and thus Marxism and communism, was the relationship between the Soviets and the Shah’s regime. This led to the proposal for an armed struggle, which increased in the 1970s. Jazani comments on this relationship:

In this new situation, the Soviets gave their support to the land reform program. Soon after, the economic relations between the two countries [the Soviet Union and Iran] expanded greatly... meaning that right at a time when the regime was repressing the people and strengthening the dictatorship, a honeymoon between Iran and the Soviets was starting. This development proved, once more, that the Iranian revolutionary movement must take an independent path, vis-à-vis Soviet politics or any other foreign powers, and rely on the power of the people. [This is

³⁶² Ibid., p. 6.

³⁶³ Behrooz, p. 57.

so] since the Soviets and other powers and world movements have ignored the interests of our movement and have coordinated their relations with Iran according to their own interests.³⁶⁴

While the Tudeh Party reported to the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, it was the Soviets that made the final decisions. And it was the Tudeh Party that took directives from the Soviets during most of its activities in Iran. For the Iranian masses, the Soviet Union and the Tudeh Party represented Marxism and communism.

The Tudeh Party was one of the major organizations that converted to political Islam and accepted an Islamic Republic as a legitimate political alternative. They defended Islam and the Islamic government until they became the victims of political persecutions and widespread suppression. In the eyes of Iranians, however, the relationship between the Tudeh Party and the Islamic Republic regime was imbued with skepticism, and the Tudeh Party's defense of political Islam was constantly criticized by many other Marxist groups.

The Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas (OIPFG)

Among the new Marxist theoreticians was Masoud Ahmadzadeh. In his book, *Armed Struggle: Both Strategy and Tactic*, he wrote:

To defeat reactionaries, we need to mobilize peasants into the struggle. The only way to defeat reaction is to defeat the reactionary army and to build the people's army in a protracted guerilla war. And guerilla war is not only necessary as a military strategy in order to defeat the conventional army but also as a political strategy in order to mobilize the masses. ... This is the lesson we learned not only from Cuban but Chinese and Vietnamese revolutionary wars. Can anyone claim that Chinese masses were conscious before [their revolutionary war] that they had realized the necessity of armed struggle?³⁶⁵

³⁶⁴ Behrooz, p. 61.

³⁶⁵ Masoud Ahmadzadeh. 1971. *mobareze-ye mossallahan-e: ham strategy ham tactic*, (*Armed Struggle: Both Strategy and Tactic*). Published by the OIPFG, 1971, p. 85.

This new generation of Marxists seemed to be more confident, more daring, and ready to become martyrs at any given point. Many members of the Mojahedin and Fadaeean carried cyanide under their tongues, ready to be broken in case they were captured. They were independent, not expecting help from any foreign powers. They strongly criticized the Tudeh Party and ridiculed its conciliatory policies toward the Shah. Nothing short of an armed struggle was acceptable in the face of the Shah's despotism. As Ahmadzadeh reminded the young revolutionaries in his book:

How can we set the foundations of a movement, the path through which the masses will realize their own interests, realize their invincibility and enormous power, and be drawn into the struggle? How can we penetrate the large dam [barrier] of suppression that has made progressive leadership useless, [that has reinforced] the regime's propaganda against intellectuals and people, that has caused a rift between the necessity of a struggle and struggle itself, and [how do we] guarantee the release of the vast flood of the masses? The only way is armed action.³⁶⁶

Further, it was not only the new generation Marxists who questioned the old Tudeh Party and its conciliatory policies toward the Shah. Muslim revolutionary forces as well no longer found mere words of clerics or the National Front to be effective in the face of the Shah's repressive military and secret police. Bazargan predicted the proximity of the coming radical movement: "We are the last to politically struggle in accordance with the constitution [the law]. We expect the head of this court to convey this point to his superiors."³⁶⁷

Muslim organizations, specifically the Mojahedin, proved Bazargan right. Their armed struggle, which began in the early 1970s following the Marxist organizations, was

³⁶⁶ Ahmadzadeh, p. 79

³⁶⁷ Nejati, p. 373

much more radical and by no means constitutional or legal compared to those in the past. One could say that both new generation Marxists and Muslims had moved away from their traditional movements. New Marxists criticized and distanced themselves from the Soviets and their local branch, Tudeh, while new Muslims criticized and separated themselves from the clerics and other Muslim groups.

The Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas (*sazman-e chereekha-ye fadaee-e khalgh-e Iran*) was founded in 1971 by the joining of two groups whose activities went back to the 1960s. The first group was established in the summer of 1966 at Tehran University with the help of six students;³⁶⁸ it was later called Jazani Group.³⁶⁹ Its members studied techniques of armed struggle for a year. In 1967, due to the penetration of an informer, a former Tudeh party member who was working for the SAVAK, most members except two were arrested. Farahani and Ashtiani were able to flee to Lebanon, where they received some training at PLO camps. Farahani returned to Iran in 1969 and was able to locate three other members. After finding revolutionary conditions ripe in Iran, he returned there in 1970 with the necessary arms. The newly formed group took on two important tasks at this time. First they started a long study of rural areas in the Northern provinces; second they established contact with another Marxist group that was also working toward an armed action against the regime.

This second group had also started reading Marxist works from different parts of the world. They were especially interested in the Algerian, Cuban, and Chinese revolutions, plus the Vietnam War and the Vietcong armed struggle. Masoud Ahmadzadeh and Amir Parviz Pouyan were the group's main organizers and theorists. They had written books on

³⁶⁸ Jazani, Sooraki, Safaee Farahani, Ashtiani, Zahedian, and Ashraf.

³⁶⁹ Hamid Ashraf. 1975. *Jam'bandi-e se-saleh (A Three-year Summation)*, OIPFG Publication.

how an armed struggle could bring about a strategic and long-term revolution to the country. They were both born and raised in the Muslim holy city of Mashad.

Ahmadzadeh's father, a well-known religious man, was among the intellectuals of Mashad who organized meetings and protests against the Shah. He ardently defended Mosaddegh and his nationalist ideas, and became even more active in political movements after the 1953 coup against Mosaddegh's government. When the Shah was put back in power through the CIA's covert actions,³⁷⁰ Ahmadzadeh's family announced their solidarity with both the Liberation Movement (Nehzat-e-Azadi) and the Resistance Movement (*nehzat-e-moghavemat*), both of which were inclined towards Islam.

When Masoud Ahmadzadeh was in high school in Mashad, he organized the Society of Islamic Students, which announced its solidarity with the National Front. At eighteen, he started his university education in Tehran. During his second year in university in 1967, he, along with several other students, initiated a new underground organization with Marxist inclinations. They began their study sessions on revolutionary writings of Latin America, studying Regis Debray, a French leftist who wrote on the Cuban revolution,³⁷¹ and Carlos Marighella, who wrote, *Mini-manual of the Urban Guerilla*.³⁷² They also studied Che Guevara, the Argentine revolutionary. In 1970 Ahmadzadeh, as the main theorist of the Fadaeean, wrote his book on the necessities of an armed struggle, *Armed Struggle, both Strategy and Tactic*.

³⁷⁰ Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men...*

³⁷¹ Regis Debray. 1967. *Revolution in the Revolution? Armed Struggle and Political Struggle in Latin America*. Translated by Bobbye Ortiz. NY: MR Press.

³⁷² Carlos Marighella. 1985. *For the Liberation of Brazil*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Amir Parviz Pouyan, who was Ahmadzadeh's close friend, also joined his group in Tehran while he was attending another university. He too was originally active in Islamic societies. He later developed Marxist tendencies and joined Ahmadzadeh's group. He defended the Cuban revolution and Latin American revolutionaries. He developed a belief in armed struggle and felt that a revolutionary's first duty is to fight selflessly without the fear of losing his life. In his book, *The Necessity of Armed Struggle and Refutation of Theory of Survival*, he reiterated this idea. In it, he fundamentally dispensed with the notion of preserving the lives of leading figures in a revolutionary organization.³⁷³ He therefore laid out the idea of martyrdom as a guarantee to the survival of a revolutionary line. Although other Marxists believed and practiced martyrdom during their revolutionary lives before, Pouyan, was the first to put the phenomenon in theoretical-ideological perspective. It was not merely giving one's life for the cause; rather, doing so would:

- a) Demonstrate vulnerability of the Shah's regime
- b) Impact the population who believed in the "two absolutes"³⁷⁴ with entirely different effects compared to merely legal and political activity
- c) Prove an irrevocable path of struggle of the Marxist guerillas
- d) Encourage the masses to participate in a struggle that essentially belongs to them

³⁷³ Amir Parviz Pouyan. 1971. *radd-e teori-e bagha (Refuting the Theory of Survival)*. OIPFG Publication. Pouyan's main discussion was directed toward the Tudeh party. A concern was raised by Tudeh, while observing members of the guerilla groups and their "carelessness" in getting caught and killed. What the Tudeh party usually argued was that while selflessly sacrificing one's life is highly impressive, this would leave any group without leadership. Therefore, leaders of groups must take care not to easily get caught and possibly killed. Pouyan, on the other hand, wrote that defending this theory of survival and preservation of leaders would push revolution back, and that it was only through the actions of the vanguard, and sacrificing their lives, that people would believe in their methods of struggle.

³⁷⁴ The "two absolutes" were, according to Pouyan, 1) The Masses' belief in the absolute and undefeatable power of the Shah's military, and 2) Their own absolute powerlessness in defeating the Shah and his military.

The Marxist formulation of martyrdom put a more rational and political cloak on the phenomenon. The concept of sacrificing one's life for the cause, nonetheless, remained consistent as the theological concept of martyrdom in Islam. Consequences of martyrdom and what it would achieve were different, but the necessity of giving life for the cause remained the same.

Consisting mostly of university students, the two groups established contact and set the foundation for one of Iran's largest Marxist organizations. This group, with its strict belief in armed struggle, began its practice of revolutionary theory in 1970. In the fall of that year, one of the groups affiliated with Ahmadzadeh and his friends robbed a bank in a populated area of Tehran (Vanak) and got away with 1,600,000 rials (close to \$23,000). The money allowed the two groups, Ahmadzadeh and Jazani, to support a coalition formed to conduct the first armed attack on the Shah's regime.

A third group, led by Farahani, began an exploration of the Iran's Northern provinces (Gilan and Mazandaran). After a six-month study of the region, including both forests and mountains, they announced a tentative date to begin their attack. A total of 33 guerillas were to form both rural and urban forces. According to their theory, the rural team could survive only if supported by the urban team. They split up accordingly and began their work. Their original plan was to attack a police precinct in an area called Siahkal, confiscate their arms and ammunition, and swiftly flee the area. They labeled the action "armed propaganda." It was to break what Pouyan had referred to as the two absolutes. Theoretically, people observing such brave sacrifices by the guerillas would consciously rid themselves of both absolutes.

While the attack was perceived as successful by the group, since they confiscated arms from the precinct, some complications arose. They were surrounded by the police force in this mountainous region. With minimal food and ammunition, they were able to fight off the military up to 29 days. Delaying their arrest for so long helped the group achieve one of its goals. The entire population of the region learned of their political agenda. However, contrary to their belief, that did not necessarily translate into popular sympathy for the group. Due to lack of cooperation on the part of the rural population, many of the guerillas were held captive until military backup arrived. Ultimately, 17 out of 33 were arrested and later executed.

**Marxist Mojahedin (Paykar) *sazman-e paykar dar rah-e azadi-e tabaghe-ye kargar*
The Organization of Combat for Emancipation of the Working Class**

Islamic movements, not only in Iran, but elsewhere in the Middle East, have been able to put forth guidelines for struggle, and have led people's struggles using an Islamic ideology. In the case of Marxist Mojahedin, later called Paykar, Islam had apparently fallen short of becoming a revolutionary praxis. Several factors contributed to this, although these were never thoroughly explained by either side.

By 1974, most members of the Mojahedin were studying revolutions led predominantly by Marxists; these included Cuba, China, Algeria, and the Vietnamese Communist Party fighting against the U.S. military. By mid-1974, there were talks about converging Marxist ideology with Islamic ethics. In an abrupt move, in the fall of 1975, a published paper announced a change in the organization's ideology. It claimed the following:

After four years of armed struggle and two years of political and ideological discussion, we have reached a decision that Marxism is the only true

revolutionary philosophy. ... We first thought of combining Marxism with Islam and accepting historical determinism without dialectical materialism, but now we know that this is impossible. ... We chose Marxism because it is the true path to liberate an oppressed working class... because Islam, due to its belief in God, Prophecy, and Armageddon, cannot be a dynamic social force and [cannot] bring victory and emancipate toilers and the oppressed (workers and peasants) from oppressive structures of society, constructing a new society without oppression and exploitation where classes do not exist. Therefore, a classless society and refutation of all exploitation and oppression is not objectively achievable through Islam.³⁷⁵

The arrest and execution of original members of the Mojahedin probably contributed immensely to the conflict between Marxists and Muslims within the group. Muslims, who were forced to organize themselves in a new group, were from then on called the Muslim Mojahedin, and Marxists continued—since they were the majority—with the same name, the Organization of Iranian People's Mojahedin. Later, just before the 1979 revolution, they were referred to as the Marxist-Leninist faction of Mojahedin.³⁷⁶ During the revolution they combined forces with other Maoist organizations and picked an entirely different name for the group. In February 1979, the group officially changed its name to the Organization of Paykar (Combat) for the Liberation of the Working Class, or simply Paykar, a word meaning combat or fight. Marxist Mojahedin, not yet known as Paykar, declared its conversion to Marxism in September 1975. In their first publication they stated:

In the beginning we thought it possible to combine Marxism and Islam and accepted the philosophy of historical determinism without dialectical materialism. Now we realize that this thought is impossible... we chose Marxism because it is the correct and realistic path for the liberation of the exploited working class.³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ *Papers on Ideological Positions of Organization of Iranian People's Mujahedin, 1975*, in Nejadi, Vol. I, p. 419.

³⁷⁶ Nejadi, p. 419.

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 418-419.

In a paper distributed just after the revolution, Muslim Mojahedin accused the Marxist faction of treason, opportunism, and fratricide. They accused them of being anti-Islam and anti-revolution:

There is no doubt that an opportunist betraying faction, with a leftist facade, has dominated the Organization of the Mojahedin through an anti-revolutionary coup. [They] have taken a position against the people's liberation movement in favor of Imperialism. ...Its opportunistic nature, through a sick and psychopathic way devoid of all principle and ethics, was exposed to all by their traitor leaders.³⁷⁸

In another paper, the Muslim Mojahedin compares the Marxist faction of holding the same position as Shah's regime. They mention Islam's revolutionary nature and put their ideas into an Islamic context.

Is it not the case that Red Shi'ism, which is the real face of Islam, has consistently in its pure belief [of classless society] been the guideline of all of the oppressed on earth (verse 5, Ghassass [of the Koran]), and has it not inspired them [the oppressed] to 'wait' for this period? Now if we truly and steadfastly believe in our cause, we should have no fear of labels such as 'confused' or an Aryamehri [referring to the Shah's phrase] label such as 'Islamic Marxism.'³⁷⁹

The existence of a Marxist faction within the Mojahedin, and its sudden secession, was not a complete surprise. Since 1973, ample political discussions had been taking place within the group.³⁸⁰ According to Nejati, since no conclusions were reached, most members decided to treat this faction with a consensual silence.³⁸¹ Ironically, many of those who joined the Marxist faction were quite religious and had pious family backgrounds. Therefore, the split between the Marxists and Muslims within the Mojahedin also caused splits within families. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, and fathers and sons took sides against each other for either Marxism or Islam.

³⁷⁸ Ibid.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Behrooz, p. 71.

³⁸¹ Nejati, p. 420.

Paykar, which had its own peculiar strand of Marxism, continuously vacillated between Marxism and Islam. Its main ideological mentor was Enver Hoxha, leader of the Communist Party of Albania. This group rejected both the Soviet type and the Chinese variety of Marxism. According to Behrooz:

Post-Mao reforms in China [were] extremely hostile to both Soviet Union and China. Although they considered the United States the main enemy of the revolutionary movement in Iran, they called the Soviet Union a socialist-imperialist power, the Tudeh a Soviet fifth column, and considered the Soviet threat imminent.³⁸²

Paykar, despite its many leftist positions, in fact became more conciliatory toward the new government of the Islamic Republic. It participated in elections for the council of experts (males-e khobregan), which designed the Islamic constitution. By 1982, however, the organization had dismantled. Many of its leaders were arrested and later executed by the Islamic Republic. The most severe setback occurred when two of its leaders, Rohani and Sepasi, were arrested. While Sepasi died under arrest, Rohani cooperated with the Islamic Republic until his execution in the mid-1980s.³⁸³

In hindsight, several reasons may account for this duality and the subsequent split within the Mojahedin. First was the death of many of the original leaders. Four of the important founding members of the Mojahedin had been killed by 1972. Badizadegan, probably the most prolific writer in the group, was killed by the SAVAK in 1971. This was a great blow to the articulation and creation of ideology for the group. In the same year, 69 members were arrested, leaving the organization devoid of leadership.³⁸⁴ With

³⁸² Behrooz, p. 121.

³⁸³ Ibid., p. 123.

³⁸⁴ Ibid.

the exception of Rezaee, all central committee members, a total of 11, were arrested, removing the group's elite. They were the ones who had generated ideas and theories for the organization and who were the politically active members. This left the group vulnerable to attacks from outside and inside and prepared a fertile ground for Marxist leaders and their takeover. Secondly, the original leaders had wanted to achieve a Marxist program, giving Marxists within the Mojahedin a reason to exist. After the attack by Marxist guerillas in Siahkal in the winter of 1971, entirely new conditions prevailed within Iran's left for any group serious in its opposition. Influenced by Siahkal, the Mojahedin, denouncing the Shah, felt compelled to take action that was equally, if not more, impressive. Parallel with their actions, Marxist ideas were also implemented to create an acceptable revolutionary program. Precedents for acceptability of this program had already been set by the actions of Siahkal. Anything short of that would seem insufficiently revolutionary. Siahkal forced the Mojahedin to hasten their armed activities.³⁸⁵ According to Mojahedin's publication, Siahkal had mobilized the organization so that Fadaeean would not think they are the only vanguard of revolution.³⁸⁶

Another important factor was the opposition led by Marxists in the Middle Eastern countries, and more generally in the Third World. Revolutions in Cuba, Vietnam, China, and revolutionary movements in Latin America, especially those of urban guerilla movements such as the Tupa Maru in Uruguay, were mostly Marxist and rarely religious at the time. Consequently, prevalent ideas of resistance moved forward mostly through Marxist theories of revolution. This also contributed to huge volumes of available

³⁸⁵ Nejadi, vol. 2, p. 402

³⁸⁶ The History of Coup and OIPM's Current Line. 1975. p. 14.

literature generated by the world's Marxists. Even Shariati, who was educated in France, was influenced by thoughts of Sartre and Fanon. In this period, Islamic revolutionary literature, particularly literature of armed struggle, was rare – almost nonexistent. If revolutionary Islamic theory was to be taken seriously, it had to be originally produced by these groups themselves. This may explain why the Muslim sector of the Mojahedin was not as well equipped to conduct coherent discourse with the Marxist faction. Classics of Islam, such as the Koran, Hadith, and even Shariati's work were not sufficient to delineate strategies for revolution or tactics of armed struggle.

As shown in this chapter, three major Marxist groups in Iran were in some way affiliated with Islam and the Islamic movement. Islam could be found in their family backgrounds with fathers and grandfathers as clergy, such as Kianuri and Tabari. Or they came from a specific Islamic organization, as in the case of the Fadaee Guerillas. With Paykar, they were Muslims who turned Marxist, having split from the Mojahedin, a major Muslim organization.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Most decisively in the confrontation between the Marxists and the Islamist leadership of the revolution, the Marxists were utterly out-manuevered by the Islamists on two issues, radicalism and anti-imperialism

Maziar Behrooz

Throughout the 1960s and most of the 1970s, political movements in the Middle East were organized against the western oppressors. Nationalism was the leading just cause connecting all those who opposed the local despots and their western supporters.

Nationalist movements in the Middle East utilized secularism, Marxism, and socialism in their political struggles. Among these individuals and groups were Muslims; nonetheless, their nationalist zeal was organized through secular, socialist, and Marxist thought. The National Front in Iran, the Ba'athist Party in Iraq and Syria, Kamal Abdul Nassser in Egypt, several groups within the PLO in Palestine, and the Democratic Party of Kurdistan in both Iran and Iraq exemplified the influence of Marxist thought in the Middle East. In Iran for much of this period, Muslims, e.g., Mojahedin, Dr. Shariati, the National Front, and the Liberation Movement, borrowed from Marxist ideas to propagate their political agenda. It was quite different for Iranian Marxists however. On the surface they did not borrow from Islam, but deep within their version of Iranian Marxism strong Islamic values were found.

Iranian Marxists looked toward the overthrow of the Shah's regime and establishment of an independent social democratic state – a state that was at the same time anti-imperialist. Muslims too thought of the Shah as an American lackey and were looking for an independent, anti-imperialist state. The Shah's disdain toward the people would explain the reason that Muslims and Marxists found common grounds for

solidarity based on short-term political goals. Through this solidarity they were able to achieve their political goal and overthrow the Shah's regime. The outcome, however, demonstrated the dominance of Islam and Islamic thought among Iranians.

The Shah's modernization unlike the modernized European model which resulted in the building of a strong infrastructure was more of an empty shell. His regime's modernization process was forced on Iranians from the top down and contained no real infrastructure. Productive forces were precarious, sporadic and irregular; they were almost absent in terms of creating any meaningful social force. Infrastructure was not built, and not even a solid capitalist class was formed. There were no modern private capitalist and petite bourgeois social structures. The social relations that had been implanted from above proved not to be viable. The Shah's White Revolution, which supposedly gave land to the peasants, forced a significant number of them off their land and into the cities looking for work. Unlike in some Latin American countries, the state did not act to build a viable infrastructure. The peasant migrants were not able to find jobs in the cities and therefore became marginalized. These marginalized people were disconnected from their class and were not able to forge new social bonds. Their way of life was uncertain, to say the least.

The first-generation urban migrants became the main opposition force who gave their fundamental and unconditional support to an Islamic authority. They transferred their long-established belief system of Islam, with its patriarchal and traditional values, into the cities, creating the basis for one of the strongest Islamic mass movements in the Middle East. This created a fertile ground and the seeds of a revolution. In a peculiar way, the Shah helped build the same social force that would years later produce his

overthrow. For most Iranians, salvation came with Islam. Mosques became the only place where it was possible to criticize the Shah's regime. Although Marxists fought hard, they were not able to create the social bonds in their organizational efforts or even in their vernacular to make the necessary connection to the masses. The Shah's simulated modernization (development) did not get rid of religion; rather it strengthened Islamic ideas and values. The significance and prestige of Islam in the process of feigned modernization was increased, not diminished.

Marxists in Iran did not criticize the religiosity of the masses and religious leaders because they held the same values. This revolution was not a criticism of the past; it was to welcome the past. It left almost no room for criticism of the traditions and the illusions created by religion. To be sure, Marxists were thinking of ways to interact with the masses through more religion, not less.

The resentment toward the United States, Britain, and the local despot created a common denominator to organize a resistance movement that eventually led to the 1979 revolution. Even though non-Islamic groups – Marxists and seculars – actively participated, the revolution was dubbed an 'Islamic Revolution.' Islamic beliefs and understandings prevailed in most realms of politics and in the culture of the opposition.

As Esposito puts it:

Shi'a Islam proved that it is a most deep-rooted and everlasting tool to mobilize an effective mass movement and that it is able to create the meaning for identity and history, common values and beliefs for a strong political-religious leadership. Shi'a Islam offered an ideological framework through which it gave meaning and legitimization to the movement of repressed and the oppressed against any reactionary force, such that many diverse groups were able to join in and become active. Clerics like Khomeini, Mottahari, Taleghani, and Beheshti, in collusion

with non-cleric ideologies like Bazargan and Shariati, were able to establish revolutionary and reformist ideologies.³⁸⁷

Esposito does not mention Marxist groups in the above quotation. Was it because they blended in so well, or because they did not significantly contribute to the revolution?

Iranian Marxists were organized into several groups and were influential in shaping the Iranian political discourse, especially in the 1970s; they became one of the most serious forces within the opposition. There were more Marxists killed in armed conflict, torture and execution than any other group.³⁸⁸ In the opposition against the Shah, they played a major role in all aspects of creating an ideology, organization, and mobilization of the masses. Although they were not monolithic by any means, they held many beliefs in common with each other and also with Muslim opposition groups. Despite all of their contributions to the movement, however, Marxists were never thoroughly accepted by the Iranian masses as a force that could fulfill the ethics and belief systems of the Iranian culture. Marxists found themselves accepting the Islamic ethics and beliefs as an unchangeable social fact. They had major theoretical differences with the Muslims, yet unknowingly held many common beliefs. They converged with the Muslims contrary to their Marxist beliefs, actually becoming Muslims. This research has shown that in many ways, Iranian Marxists never abandoned their Islamic beliefs, but accepted Marxism merely on theoretical grounds. Marxists' use of Islamic beliefs and values was two-fold: contextual and ideological. Contextual Islam includes the way social relationships are concretized through socialization processes e.g., education,

³⁸⁷ John Esposito. 1990. *The Iranian Revolution: Its Global Impact*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida. p. 36.

³⁸⁸ Gholamreza Nejati. 2000. *Tarikh-e siyasi-e bist va panj sale-ye Iran* (Twenty-Five Years of Iranian Political History). Tehran: Rasa Cultural Institute. vol. I, p. 376.

family, mosque, religious rituals, etc. Ideological Islam includes accepting Islamic ideas, and social and political analysis, as ideal.

An Examination of Contextual Islam through Sociology of Knowledge

Contextual Islam, for the Iranian masses, for Marxists, and even the ruling class including the Shah is intersubjective, internalized so deeply it becomes the way of life. It is what Iranians have internalized to be subjective tool to analyze the world around them. The sociology of knowledge as a methodology can be used to dissect and demonstrate the ubiquity and intensity of Islamic belief. It reveals the origins of Marxism and its immersion in Islam from the conception of this school of thought. Marxism in Iran has been influenced by Islam dating back to 1920. Once the trajectory of the Marxist movement is examined, its modes of thought are understood as a part of the history of Iranian opposition. The principal thesis of the sociology of knowledge in examining contextual Islam is that there are modes of thought that cannot be sufficiently understood as long as their social origins are not clear. It was indeed true that Marxist organizations were theorizing on the sociopolitical conditions in Iran without realizing that they were living amidst those sociopolitical conditions. There was no such metaphysical entity as a social mind, which thought over and above the heads of these organizations, or whose ideas the group merely reproduced. According to Mannheim, sociology of knowledge seeks to comprehend thought in the concrete setting of a historical-social situation. Not many original ideas emerge outside of this history. Thus, it was not Marxist groups in general or even isolated individuals within these groups who did the thinking; rather it was certain Islamic values that developed a particular style of thought in an endless series of responses to typical situations characterizing their common position. Historically,

responses to these typical situations were set forth by Muslims and were outside the Marxist discourse. However, it is incorrect to say that Iranian Marxists were not a product of their historical social conditioning. Rather, it is more correct to insist that they participated in thinking beyond what others had thought before them. Every group, whether Marxist or Muslim, was therefore in a dual sense predetermined by the fact of growing within a particular society. On the one hand, they existed in ready-made situations and on the other, they realized that in those situations there were patterns of thought and conduct. These patterns of Islamic conduct were so strongly rooted that not even Marxists were consciously aware of their existence.

Social conditioning through Islam involved an internalization of the Islamic ethos even in the political realm. This also relates to Mannheim's particular and total ideology. It made sense for Marxists to agree on particular ideological points with Muslims, tactically uniting to defeat the enemy. However, given the wide separation between the two schools of thought in constructing ideal societies and the states that run them, it was counter intuitive when they collaborated in total ideology.

Peter L. Berger's sacred canopy further illuminates the Islamic belief and ethos in a country such as Iran. The sacred canopy of Islam, according to Berger's concept, was contextual for not just the clerics and the population, but also for Marxist intellectuals. That is, certain beliefs, in this case Islamic, became so prevalent and taken for granted that all activities were filtered, recognized, and managed through them. In the case of Iran, the argument is that Islamic behavior was not only reinforced by Muslims, who were influenced through Islam directly, but by Marxists as well. For instance, while Marxists had formed their political positions using general guidelines of secular political

Marxism, they were not able to shed the Islamic belief in martyrdom. Islamic belief in martyrdom became the canopy that hovered over all thought and all activity. Voluntarily sacrificing one's life for an ultimate cause was a precondition of achieving a better society in both Muslim and Marxist thinking. For most Marxists, as depicted in their literature, martyrdom was a unit through which the authenticity of a revolutionary was measured. It guaranteed the movement's future success.

Generally, and consistent with Berger's notion of a sacred canopy, Islam created meaning. It was what told people how to behave and presented a world view that had answers for all human problems.³⁸⁹ Islam became an organizing linchpin with a network of clergy. Through Islam they were able to resist and oppose inside and outside oppressors, to mobilize people, and to start revolutions.

Ideological Islam

In addition to the contextual Islamic belief, which was a part of life and political struggle for Marxists, there was also an ideological aspect to Marxists becoming Muslims. As demonstrated in chapter 4, the Tudeh Party and Majority Fadaeean were among those who deliberately used ideological Islam to achieve two objectives: the first was to get close to the masses, who mostly understood politics through Islamic terminology and ethics; the second was to get close to the newly established Islamic government. Alliance with the Islamic Republic guaranteed safety from persecution in addition to affiliation with political power.

Marxists borrowed Islamic ideology to theorize the nature of the economy and politics of the enemy. Islamic beliefs were borrowed to organize the masses of people

³⁸⁹ Henry Munson. 1989. *Islam and Revolution in the Middle East*. Boston: Yale University Press.

and certainly to mobilize members and supporters. Without this ideological borrowing, Marxists would not have been able to create a discourse for their particular movement. There are quite a few contrary views on this matter. Given the extant Islamic culture and political activity of the Muslims, Skocpol claims that modern revolutionary parties, including the Mojahedin and Fadaeean, had nothing to do with revolution making. She believes that revolution was made through Islamic culture.³⁹⁰ Skocpol's statements are true in relation to the days of the revolution, but not quite precise on the years leading up to the revolution. According to Nejati, the Mojahedin and Fadaeean fought against a regime that had suppressed all means of struggle. They "turned repressed conditions and hopelessness into hopefulness. They created a new political atmosphere and selflessly gave their lives where it was required. They created new values and new meaning, and cleared the path for revolution."³⁹¹

As the revolution was occurring, Muslims were able to create avenues for the Iranian people to participate and join the revolutionary groups. However, since the early 1970s, it was the Fadaee and Mojahedin guerillas that did most of the damage to the Shah's regime. There is quite a difference between what Skocpol and Nejati claim about the revolution. It is explicable however, if we understand Nejati's observation as relating to the seven years before the revolution and what led up to it, and Skocpol's as the actual revolution itself.

Agreeing with Skocpol, John Foran's analysis also included culture more than secular political groups. He found the culture of resistance and its movement to be shared among, and result from the efforts of many diverse groups. It became clear that Muslims

³⁹⁰ Theda Skocpol. *Social Revolutions in the Modern World*. New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994.

³⁹¹ Nejati. vol. I, p. 448.

and those who attached themselves to Islam created an ideology and a culture that corresponded to the experience of everyday life.³⁹²

Forrest Colburn believes that revolutions have a political mind of their own, that they are not the consequences of particular economic conditions. Revolutions occur despite the economic background. Therefore there is a separation between economic development and political actors, especially those who lead revolutions. He claims that: “there is a tense mutuality between revolutionaries and the societies that created them; neither one can be deduced from the other. Economic history does not determine political history.”³⁹³ Colburn’s statement about the role of the intellectuals also holds true. He claims that the values, expectations, phraseology, iconography, and implicit rules expressed and shaped collective intentions and behavior in the Iranian revolution. Like other authors, he believes that Islam as a belief system, and Muslims as organizers, were better prepared to lead the masses:

Several factors explain the success of Islam as a revolutionary force where Marxism-Leninism had failed. The clerics in Iran had a wider and more effective organizational base than the Marxists from which to mobilize popular opposition to the Shah. And Islam had a resonance and legitimacy with the entire population that Marxism-Leninism could only aspire to have. Finally, the moral authority of Islam protected the clerics from the kind of brutal suppression encountered earlier by secular organizations.³⁹⁴

Skocpol, Foran and Colburn have touched upon some social facts that are usually overlooked by researchers and social scientists who wrote about the Iranian revolution.

³⁹² Foran, John. *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution*. Translated by Ahmad Tadayyon, Tehran: Rasa Cultural Services, 1999.

³⁹³ Colburn, Forrest. D. *The Vogue of Revolution in Poor Countries*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994. p. 13.

³⁹⁴ Colburn, p. 31.

Although they neglect the role of Marxism and Marxists before the revolution, they concisely analyze the power of Islam and Muslims.

Developing Common Terminology

This research found concrete and historically sound common denominators and forces that converted Marxists into Islam. Although at many points of the Iranian opposition movement it may appear a mere convergence of ideas and that each converged as much as the other, it was Islam that prevailed. The contextual Islamic belief system disavowed the serious penetration of Marxian thought in Iran, yet they agreed on many points. Four factors facilitated Marxists convergence with Islam:

1. An anti-despotism ideology (movement) against the Shah
2. Anti-Imperialism, beginning with Britain and later against the United States
3. A race to demonstrate the abilities of an authentic revolutionary
4. The sacred canopy of Islamic ethics, especially that of martyrdom; the concept of Fadaee perceived as an inevitable method of struggle

Due to these factors, common organizing tactics and political terminology emerged. Nationalists, Muslim clerics, and Marxists used the same language. Beginning in the 1960s, Khomeini, as one of the main opponents of the Shah's White Revolution, linked a few political issues to add to the significance of resistance. He was able to concentrate an amalgam of issues into one overarching problem induced by the Shah's regime. It included women's right to vote (he argued that they should not have the right), land reform, and the Shah's close and unholy alliance with the United States, Israel, and international corporations. He posed this concoction as a grave threat against Islam and the lives of Muslims in an independent Iran. He mentioned the U.S. as the main enemy of Islam in all his speeches. The real nature of the U.S., according to Khomeini, was noticeable in America's foreign policy in the Middle East – supporting Israel and

exerting influence in Iran. In a speech against both the Shah and the United States, he stated:

The government of Iran has sold our independence, put us among the colonized countries and labeled Muslims inferior to animals. . . .If clerics had anything to do with it, they would not allow Iranians to be enslaved by England and the United States. If it were up to the clerics, they would not allow Israel to control Iran's economy so that Israeli goods would be sold without tariffs. . . .Should we be under American boots because we are a weak people, because we do not have dollars? The United States is worse than England, England is worse than the United States, and the Soviet Union is worse than both. . . .Today we have to deal with the United States.³⁹⁵

Such antagonism in terminology was not only used by the clerics. Many left-leaning nationalists also had the same criticism of the West. Jalal Ale-Ahmad, a Marxist and former member of the Tudeh Party, warned Iranians of Westoxication (infected, poisoned, and intoxicated by the west):

Westoxication, I say, is like being infected by cholera, or at least like putrefaction. Have you seen how it rots wheat? It is from the inside; the peel is still there but nothing remains inside. Just like the shell that's left by the butterfly on the tree. . . .and now under this banner, we remain an alienated tribe, [we are] alienated in our own clothes, our own homes, our own food, our literature, our journalism and most dangerously in our culture. We are developing Western-like [*farangeemoab*] and Western-like we look for solutions to our problems.³⁹⁶

There were also Muslim intellectuals who mentioned the U.S. and the west in general as the real cause behind all social and economic ills in Iran. Doctor Ali Shariati attacked the west and used the same word, 'Westoxication,' in his writings: "Let us, comrades, dispose of Europe, let us end the nauseating imitation of Europe, and let us

³⁹⁵ Esposito, p. 38.

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 39.

betray Europe which speaks of humanity everywhere by suppressing human beings wherever it goes.”³⁹⁷

For all those in the opposition, the idea of western culture meant a corruption of Iranian and Muslim culture. Anti-west language and terminology was found in literature written by Marxists, Muslims and nationalists. The notion of the west lurking to invade Iran and Iranian culture created a common cause, which required collective ideas to foment action. It forced members of the opposition, as far apart as they may have seemed ideologically, to look for common grounds to oppose and overthrow the Shah. The following is an example of such amalgamation of forces. It involves Islamic clerics, a Marxist-Muslim group, and Marxist groups. Hojjat-ol islam Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani,³⁹⁸ recalled how he originally met the Mojahedin in prison. It was the Mojahedin who told Rafsanjani about the Marxists and Marxism.

They [Mojahedin] told me we have a common goal [with the Marxists]. We must be united and share all [capabilities organizing for the revolution]...but we [clerics] did not accept. One of their theorists gave a short analysis of the revolution that, we [Mojahedin] learned the science of struggle from the Marxists and without them victory is not possible. On the other hand in the Iranian society one cannot fight without emphasizing Islam. Therefore, we need to construct a bridge between Marxism and Islam, so we can have both the science of struggle and its foundation which is religion. [they came up with an] analysis of religion which found no contradiction with Marxism, and they kept repeating the same methodology that there must be a fusion between Marxism and Islam.³⁹⁹

Although Rafsanjani himself was never fond of Marxism, Marxists, or any left-leaning political ideology, he recalled the proximity of Marxists and Muslims insisted upon by the Mojahedin. Furthermore, it is important to note that he was willing to meet

³⁹⁷ Ibid., p.39.

³⁹⁸ Former Iranian President (1989-1997) and currently one of the most powerful clerics in Iran

³⁹⁹ Nejadi, vol I, p. 433.

with the Mojahedin to discuss solidarity with the Marxists. The Mojahedin saw Marxists as their close allies not so much because of their philosophy, but rather due to the common goal for which they were both striving. Iranian national independence was what drew the two schools of thought together.

Theoretical Implications of this Dissertation

An interesting concept to explore as the aftermath of the Iranian revolution is the state-centered theory of revolution put forth by Jeff Goodwin.⁴⁰⁰ Goodwin argues that states largely construct the revolutionary movements that challenge and sometimes overthrow them. The success of the revolution will depend on how much resistance the state puts up against the opposition and how suppressive state institutions are used to put out the flames of mass uprisings. In other words, there could be no modern revolution before there were states; nor could there be revolutions if and when the international state system is replaced by some other mode of governance.⁴⁰¹ Part of what made the revolution in Iran a success, at least in the sense of overthrowing the old regime, was the Shah's resistance to giving some democratic rights to the political opposition. He realized he should have been more lenient with the use of his oppressive police force a few months too late. Using Goodwin's theory, one could conclude that giving some democratic rights to the population and practicing some leniency could have prevented the Iranian revolution from taking place, or at least reduced its magnitude.

Goodwin's state-centered theory also works in explaining why the Islamic Republic of Iran still remains in power. It is true that the post-revolutionary state has been

⁴⁰⁰ Jeff Goodwin. 2001. *No Other Way Out: States and Revolutionary Movements, 1945-1991*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁰¹ Goodwin, p. 40.

far more oppressive against its opposition than the Shah. For the past 28 years, Iranians have endured worse economic conditions and certainly more political repression than during the entire time the Pahlavi dynasty remained in power. Yet the Islamic government remains in power despite its opposition. What the Islamic regime has done successfully, in contrast to the Shah, is consider reform at the right moment. In the face of mass opposition, the Islamic Republic has stepped back and succumbed to some demands of the opposition. The process of presidential elections is an example of such conciliation. Were the Islamic government to suppress current social movements for reform, as the Shah had done, it would have surely fomented another social revolution in Iran. The post-revolutionary state has learned that suppressing movements at the wrong moment will bring about mass uprisings. In the past decade, the idea of Iranians voting for the president through so-called free elections is one example of such conciliation with mass political movements, albeit unorganized. Surely it seems a political paradox for a despotic regime to claim free elections of any kind.

The Subordination of Class Struggle

There is an irony in Marxists becoming Muslims. Marxists who accepted Islam ideologically did not foresee their shaky position in the new Islamic government. They anticipated secure positions of power within the state apparatus. However, they were disconnected from the Islamic government within two years after the revolution. Once the Islamic Republic of Iran was established, it proceeded to de-legitimize any type of opposition. All aspects of struggle were labeled as anti-Islam and anti-revolution when waged against the interests of the new state leadership. The clerics promoted an ideological polarization in the state system. Pitting Islam and revolution against all other

ideas as anti-revolution they justified nation-wide repression. At this point, any signs of class struggle would bring about severe punitive consequences.

According to Giovanni Arrighi, et al, once national independence is attained, the use of this ideological separation means a further narrowing of the legitimacy of the class struggle in the new national government.⁴⁰²

This tendency has two quite distinct roots. On the one hand we have regimes that have attempted to consolidate their power through an alliance with the political and economic elites of core zones. In this case, the class struggle was de-legitimized as part of the political exchange between core and peripheral elites, whereby the former respect/protect the formal sovereignty of the latter in exchange for the latter's creation within their national boundaries of an environment favorable to core capital. On the other hand, we have regimes that have the opposite route of struggle against core elites.⁴⁰³

In Iran, once revolution had reached its objectives of ousting the Shah and America, class struggle was no longer permitted. The Islamic regime branded all those who continued to struggle for nationalist, gender, class, or political rights, 'anti-revolution,' and 'anti-Islamic.' Consequently, the class struggle within the country was de-legitimized as an obstacle to the former struggle of anti-imperialism, which was itself defined as class struggle at a higher level.

Before the revolution, a moral authority of Islam protected the clerics from the kind of brutal suppression encountered earlier by secular organizations.⁴⁰⁴ The ubiquitous presence of Islamic belief within the population notwithstanding, there were a few events

⁴⁰² Giovanni Arrighi, et al. 2005. "The Liberation of Class Struggle?" In *Power: A Critical Reader*. ed. Daniel Egan and Levon Chorbajian. NJ: Pearson Education Inc.

⁴⁰³ Ibid., p. 311.

⁴⁰⁴ Colburn, p. 32.

that also worked to the advantage of the Islamic Republic. The hostage taking and the war against Iraq helped stabilize an unstable nascent government.

According to Colburn, “The invasion of Iran by Iraq in September 1980 further strengthened the clerics and undermined the radicals [opposition]. Iranians were asked to join the revolutionary guards and the army to defend the ‘Islamic homeland.’”⁴⁰⁵ Had the Marxists been better prepared by forming their own coalition among working classes would the Islamic Republic of Iran still have remained immune from scrutiny?

A comparison of the information available on the social background of the Iranian Marxist groups shows a disconnection between these groups and the working masses. Such disconnection has been a historical problem persisting for decades; it was true before and certainly after the revolution. They were most successful when they were able to organize non-working masses such as intellectuals and professionals. Iranian Marxists, those who supported armed struggle and those who did not, never managed to establish a firm base among the masses – petite bourgeois, working class or the peasantry. The appeal of Marxism seems to have been limited to the educated, the new middle class, and especially students. While Muslims were able to connect and recruit their members and supporters from the Iranian masses and the poor, Iranian Marxists failed to link up with the main classes of people who could understand their ideology and bring about social change.⁴⁰⁶

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 32.

⁴⁰⁶ Behrooz, p. 156.

Discussion

It was not the collapse of the Soviets that made social movements look for an alternative ideology because that collapse did not occur until the late 1980s and early 1990s. The Iranian revolution, and consequentially the establishment of the Islamic Republic government, played a major role in using Islam as a viable revolutionary alternative in the Middle East. For 28 years the Iranian revolution has been called the Islamic revolution. Under this title, it has used Islam to defy the west and western culture, making the Islamic alternative viable. Under the current political conditions in the Middle East, many believe in Islamic revolutions as inevitable.

However, from what was evident during the 1979 revolution in Iran, one can also question that inevitability by analyzing the specific role of Marxist organizations such as the Tudeh Party and the Majority Fadaeean. Events would have unfolded differently had these major Marxist groups not made Muslims their immediate allies. As Behrooz has argued, this alliance was partially based on the Tudeh Party as an instrument of the Soviet Union.⁴⁰⁷ While this is true, it could only qualify as an external reason behind Tudeh Party's conciliatory line. There were also internal reasons that the Party collaborated with the Islamic Republic government rather than other Marxist and non-Marxist organizations in the opposition. The Tudeh Party has had a history of conciliation and appeasement to power when it comes to a serious struggle. That is precisely why there have been so many splits within the party since its inception. To this day there are some sectors of the Tudeh Party that appease the Islamic Republic of Iran. Furthermore, the Tudeh Party decided to work with the Islamic regime because it was the best way to get

⁴⁰⁷ Behrooz, p. 148.

to power without bloodshed. The Tudeh Party refused to fight against the Islamic Republic government despite its suppression during the first few years of the revolution.

The outcomes of the Iranian revolution certainly would have been different had the majority of the Marxists not coalesced with the Islamic Republic. Yet by summer of 1981, most of the Marxist groups plus the Mojahedin were uprooted by the Islamic Republic regime. Those who joined the Islamic Republic stayed safe, at least for another year or so, but those who opposed the regime were suppressed. According to Behrooz:

The June 1981 crisis was essentially one which other Marxist elements had brought about, these being on one hand the Islamic Liberals, with the Muslim Mojahedin, and on the other the *Maktabis*, the IRP and state apparatus, backed by Ayatollah Khomeini. In this battle Marxist groups which supported the *Maktabis*, such as the Tudeh, joined the battle consciously. Those who opposed the *Maktabis*, the majority of whom also opposed the Islamic Liberals, were simply drawn into battle without preparation.⁴⁰⁸

By the mid-1980s, the organized activity of most Marxists was reduced to Kurdistan, and by the late 1980s, what little activity was conducted by Marxist groups was suppressed by the Islamic government's military in the region. Some of the members were able to flee Kurdistan and the region altogether and seek refuge in European countries. Currently their activities are limited to publications, meetings, and demonstrations against the Islamic Republic in numerous European cities.

The primary purpose of this dissertation was to study some of the literature and print material put forth by Marxist organizations in Iran in order to extract the traditionally overlooked Islamic terminology and ideas. A secondary purpose was to examine and unveil the latent contextual-cultural and the ideological-political convergence of political Marxist organizations in Iran. This convergence reveals that as rigid as they may seem, ideologies can be transformed to look completely different. For

⁴⁰⁸ Behrooz, p. 163.

example, a trajectory of ideological convergence in Iran can be shown. Originally, convergence began with the historical event of the Socialist Republic of Gilan. From this period (1920), ideology was borrowed, however precariously and momentarily. The trajectory of the Iranian opposition movement vacillated between Muslims borrowing from Marxism and Marxists borrowing from Islam. The use of Islamic ideology, terminology, and resistance, however, became prevalent for Marxists especially during the months leading up to the 1979 revolution. During the revolution, a majority of Marxists, consciously and purposefully, and with clear objectives, converged with Islamic ideology. They viewed Islam as being in the vanguard of ideas and the most comprehensive of revolutionary concepts. This ultimately marked the unprecedented mixing of two highly contradictory schools of thought. What Iranian Marxists did not and have not taken into consideration is the power and challenges of the “tripartite Islamic complex” mentioned by Mesbahi. It was formidable, and went beyond the early revolutionary period:

The power of this tripartite complex and the challenge facing the Marxist in the immediate post revolutionary period could only be appreciated if one consider its remarkable longevity way beyond its initial impact, and the fact that it has continued its relevance three decades after the revolution, as most radical and secular forces still have to deal with its cultural, ideological and political challenges ”⁴⁰⁹

It may be several years or even decades for seculars and Marxists to realize the power behind Islamic culture and ideology. Iranian Marxists were both culturally and ideologically predisposed to support the Islamic revolution. They made important contributions to the Iranian revolutionary process. They consciously and unconsciously modified their Marxist perspective to accommodate fundamental Islamic ideals and

⁴⁰⁹ Interview with Mesbahi, Oct. 13, 2006.

values. This gave their movement a more popular appeal making their political efforts against the Shah's regime more effective.

The joining of forces between the two very different belief systems of Marxism and Islam has shown that in the face of foreign invasion of the country, in this case foreign presence and control of the economy, historically non-allied forces would join against the common enemy. The history of collaboration between Marxists and Muslims in Iran points to one direction. It started as defiance against England and France, the foreign forces who, in the eyes of the revolutionaries, had invaded Iran. The 1979 revolution similarly involved the collaboration of Marxists and Muslims for the same sociopolitical reason, but this time against America. This lesson is pertinent and useful in analyzing what is currently happening in Iraq.

Although 28 years have passed since the Iranian revolution, awareness about what went wrong or right has not been completely discussed. It is of utmost importance that analysts of revolution and Iranian intellectuals and groups pay particular attention and analyze the past correctly—without ideological boundaries and limitations. For close to three decades still the Islamic Republic controls political and economic power in the country. The accommodation of Marxists to the Islamic movement is no longer an issue and nor is it contributing in keeping the regime in power. Does this indicate a demise or a decline in Iranian Marxism? And will Marxists and seculars be able to play a role in the future of Iran? These are questions and issues open to future research and investigation.

The issue of Islamic belief not allowing laicization/secularization to make significant inroads within the Iranian political movement since the revolution is important because after 28 years the issue of the separation of religion and state is still discussed

among Marxist and Muslim intellectuals. Such discussions are gradually beginning to make headway within the Iranian politics. Until recently, such separation had not been present in the Iranian political or sociological discourse. Although Islamic belief has prevailed for decades in Iran the gradual evolution of Iranian politics connotes a new more secular dynamic of support and opposition at work.

The 1979 revolution created an excellent opportunity for all intellectuals, Marxist or non-Marxist, to begin a process of discussion on this historically necessary issue. I hope that this dissertation may contribute to creating a source for those who are interested in the Iranian revolution and its outcome, and the relation between ideology and power. It also demonstrates the significance of Islamic belief in Iran and, more generally, in the Middle East.

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Ahmadzadeh, Masoud

One of the original founders of the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerrillas. Initially started a Marxist organization with co-founder Amir Parviz Pouyan. He was executed by the Shah's SAVAK in 1972 after undergoing torture and a brief trial along with 11 others. His book, *Armed Struggle: Both Strategy and Tactic* was used as a major source of political discourse among believers of armed struggle in the Iranian left movement.

Alam, Assadollah

Appointed as Prime Minister by the Shah in the summer of 1962. He replaced Ali Amini. Many members of his cabinet were involved in the coup against Mosaddegh in 1953 aiding the CIA and MI6.

Ale-Ahmad, Jalal

A secular intellectual who wrote in the 1960s. He popularized the term *gharbzadegi* (westoxication), those who get stung by the West and become enchantingly sycophant forgetting their own culture.

Allamehzadeh, Mohammad Reza

Among the group of 12 people who were arrested in 1974 for plotting to kidnap the Empress and Shah's oldest son. Allamehzadeh and four others including Daneshian, Golsorkhi, Teifoor Bataee, and Abbas Samakar did not confess or repent. He was originally given the death sentence but later life in prison.

Amouzegar, Jamshid

Appointed as Prime Minister by the Shah in 1976 as a measure of reform. He replaced Amir Abbas Hoveida.

Amoughlu, Heydar Khan

Originally from the Azarbaijan region, he was among the first founders of the Communist Party of Iran in 1920. He led the first Marxist-Muslim collusion to establish the Gilan Socialist Republic.

Arani, Taghi

Among the group of 53, Arani was the founder of the Tudeh Party along with 23 other members. He led the Tudeh Party until his arrest. He was a chemist educated at the University of Berlin in Germany. He came to know Marxism while in Berlin, which motivated him to write a few critical articles about Iranian culture. Upon his return to Iran, he began publishing an intellectual newspaper by the name of *Donya* (World) which later became the official name of the Tudeh Party's political organ.

Ashraf, Hamid

Born in 1946, he was the only Fadaee guerilla leader who survived the Shah's purges in the early 1970s. He led the organization in the tumultuous years from 1974 until his death in 1976. He was famous for his organizational abilities, courage and expertise to handle the SAVAK. It is said that he had escaped the SAVAK's traps up to 14 times.

Azhari, Gholam Reza

Shah's appointed Prime Minister to replace the failing government of Sharif-emami. Azhari's government only lasted from November 6, 1978 to January 16, 1979.

Badizadegan, Ali Asghar

A major figure and among the founders of the Mojahedin, he was born in 1938 in Isfahan. He too began his political life with the Freedom Movement. He graduated with a degree in chemistry and served in the military henceforth. He served his time in an arms manufacturing factory and was later hired by the same factory. His familiarity with arms made him a good candidate for arms training. By 1970, he was sent to Palestine to the Fatah military camps for training. His political life after his return lasted only one year. In 1971, he was arrested and later executed in the spring of 1972.

Bakhtiar, Shapur

The last Prime Minister in Iran appointed by the Shah. His government lasted only a few days, from January 16, 1979 to February 9, 1979.

Banisadr, Abolhassan

He was among the figures welcoming Khomeini to Paris. He was the first Iranian President after the 1979 revolution. His government lasted from December 1979 to June 1981.

Bataee, Teifoor

Arrested along with 11 others for conspiring to harm and kidnap members of the royal family in 1974. He received a death sentence after refusing to confess. Along with Golsorkhi and Deneshian, and nine others, their trial was the first televised trial of political activists in Iran. His sentence was later reduced to life in prison.

Bazargan, Mehdi

One of the founders of the Liberation Movement in 1962. He was the first Prime Minister after the 1979 revolution. He took on the position of Prime Minister just when Bakhtiar fled Iran. His government lasted 275 days before he resigned amidst accusations of conciliating with the United States.

Beheshti, Mohammad Hossein (Ayatollah)

Among the closest people to Khomeini, he helped establish the Islamic Republic Party. During the days of revolution he played a major role as the spokesperson for the Islamic Republic. On June 28, 1981, he was killed in a massive explosion inside the IRP headquarters along with much of the party's top leadership.

Behrangi, Samad

A revolutionary teacher whose teachings gave incentive to many of the Fadaee guerillas. He was from a modest background and worked among the rural Azari children and had come to identify with their suffering. His short stories in defense of a struggle against the powerful rang familiar tones in the ears of Iranian youth. He drowned in the Aras river in 1969.

Daneshian, Karamatollah

A Marxist revolutionary who was arrested and tried along with 11 others on conspiracy charges against the Shah and his family. In court he defended his ideas of the necessity of a revolution. Despite knowing full well that he would be executed he did not ask to be pardoned by the Shah. He and another member of the group, Khosro Golsorkhi were the only ones who were executed in the winter of 1974.

Dehghani, Ashraf

She led the split from Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas in May 1979. Her brother, Behrooz Dehghani, was among the original members of the two groups that later established the Fadaee Guerillas. He was tortured to death by the SAVAK. In her interview published in the same month she declared the government of the Islamic Republic the enemy of the people and declared an armed struggle against the regime. This group which called itself the Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas is also known as the Ashraf Dehghani Group.

Golsorkhi, Khosro

He was a revolutionary poet who was executed in the winter of 1974, along with Daneshian. He was arrested and put on military trial with 11 others on charges of conspiracy against the Shah's family. Knowing that the trial was televised he made his famous speech of how Islam and Marxism go hand in hand in Iran and that it is a necessity to mix the two. He and Daneshian actually managed to put the Shah's regime on trial in front of a nation-wide audience.

Haghshenas, Torab

Originally a member of the Mojahedin, he later joined the Marxist faction and became one of the main founders of the Paykar (Marxist Mojahedin) group. Before the split between the two Marxist and Muslim factions he and another member of the Mojahedin, Hossein Rohani, met with Khomeini for a political endorsement while in exile in Iraq.

Hanif-Nezhad

One of the three original founders of the Mojahedin. He was born in 1938 in Tabriz, Azarbaijan. His family was of traditional merchants. He first joined National Front, then the Islamic Society, and finally the Freedom Movement. In 1962, he was arrested and sentenced to prison for seven months. In 1963, he graduated from Tehran University with a degree in agricultural machinery. He was executed along with 11 other members of the Mojahedin in the spring of 1972.

Hormatipour, Mohammad

In cooperation with Ashraf Dehghani, he was one of the main organizers of political activity abroad (Europe) representing the Fadaee guerillas just before the revolution. Later, in 1981, he led a group that split from the Fadaee Guerillas (Ashraf Dehghani Group) under the name of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas (Liberation Army of the Iranian People). He was killed in the northern provinces by the Islamic Republic troops.

Hoveida, Amir Abbas

Longest lasting Prime Minister in Iran. He was Prime Minister for 13 years, 1963 to 1976. He was executed by the Islamic Republic in 1979.

Jazani, Bizhan

Among the main founders and theorists of the Fadaee Guerillas. He was incarcerated in Shah's prisons for five years before he was executed. He held a Ph.D. in sociology and wrote many important papers on the political sociology of Iran. His work remained among very important writings within the Iranian leftist movement.

Khiabani, Moosa

One of the most important figures of the Mojahedin after the 1979 revolution. He stayed in Iran after the main leadership of the organization fled Iran to France. He was killed by the Islamic Republic in 1981.

Khomeini, Ruhollah (Ayatollah)

Main leader of the cleric opposition before and after the 1979 revolution. In 1963 he led a cleric movement against the Shah and became a major figure in connecting many Muslim groups in opposition to the Shah. In 1964, he was sent into exile by the Shah and did not return to Iran until February 2, 1979. Upon his arrival to Tehran close to 3 million Iranians greeted him at the airport. He became the Shi'a spiritual leader of Iranians after the revolution and was declared *marja-e taqlid* (source of emulation). He also established the concept of *velayat-e faghigh* (rule of Islamic jurisprudence) (He died in June, 1989.

Kianouri, Nour-al Din

One of the executive committee members of the Tudeh Party. He fled Iran and resided mainly in East Germany until 1979. He was the main spokesperson for the Party during the years of the revolution. He became the main figure for the party to convince both Muslims and Marxists the Party line of becoming close affiliates of the Islamic Republic. He remained a key figure even after being incarcerated by the Islamic Republic.

Meftahi, Abbas

One of the three major figures to establish the Ahmadzadeh group that later joined Jazani and formed the Fadaee Guerillas. He was mainly responsible in organizing group's sympathizers in the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran. He played a key role with connecting the Jazani group to establish the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas. He was arrested and later executed by the Shah's SAVAK in 1972.

Mohsen, Saeed

He was born in 1939 into a religious family in Zanjan. Active among student committees of the Freedom Movement, he was arrested and briefly imprisoned several times in 1961. He graduated from Tehran University in Industrial Engineering during the same year. After finishing military service he, like Hanif-nezhad and Badizadegan, helped found the Mojahedin. He was executed along with 11 other members of the Mojahedin in the spring of 1972.

Mosaddegh, Muhammad

One of the main founders of the National Front in 1949, Mosaddegh was the Prime Minister of Iran from April 1951 to 19 August 1953. During his two years as Prime Minister he managed to nationalize the oil industry in Iran despite national and international controversy. He is looked upon as the symbol of nationalism in Iran. August 19, 1953, his government was toppled through a coup organized by the CIA and MI-6 to restore the Shah's government.

Paknezhad, Shokrollah

Along with two others, Naser Khaksar and Hossein Tajer-riahi, founded the Palestine Group. He was arrested during an operation against the Shah and given a long prison sentence.

Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Shah

The Shah (king) of Iran for 37 years (1941-1978). He was installed as the Shah of Iran by the Allies in August 25, 1941. His reign was interrupted by the nationalist government of Mosaddegh for a few years. He made a comeback with the help of the CIA and MI-6 in 1953. He ruled Iran with an Iron fist for decades banning and destroying the opposition through his laws and notorious secret police the SAVAK. He was overthrown in January 1979, and left the country on January 16, of the same year. He died in exile in 1980. He survived an assassination attempt in 1949

Pahlavi, Reza Shah

Originally an army commander, he became Prime Minister by the Ghajar Shah in 1923. Two years later the Majles officially deposed the Ghajars and installed Reza Khan as Shah. At this point he changed his name to Reza Shah Pahlavi. He tried to follow in the footsteps of Atta Turk, the nationalist Turkish leader. He wanted to emulate the west and bring about what he perceived to be modernity. In August 1941, after Russian and British forces invaded Iran, he was sent to exile which put an end to his rule.

Pouyan, Amir Parviz

One of the key figures in original Fadaee guerillas. He was one of the main organizers and theorists of Iranian armed struggle movement starting in 1970. He wrote *Armed Struggle and the Refutation of Theory of Survival*, to convince Iranian Marxists that there are no other ways about a serious struggle against the Shah than to declare a war against his government. He, and Peyro-naziri, a Fadaee guerilla, were killed during a shootout in 1971.

Rajavi, Masood

Among the original Mojahedin who survived the Shah's death squads by serving a prison sentence. He led the Mojahedin during the revolution but fled Iran along with Bani-Sadr, the one time president of Iran in 1981. He remains Mojahedin's main leader to this day. He became a prolific writer during his years of leadership on the matters of Islam and the philosophy of life and struggle.

Rezaee, Mehdi

A prominent activist of the Mojahedin who was arrested along with 68 others in September 1971. He was tortured by the SAVAK and later executed in the same year. During his defense he lashed out at the Shah's government and called the armed struggle against his regime a just struggle by the Iranian masses.

Rezaee, Reza

He was among the leaders of the three main branches of the Mojahedin in the early 1970s. A member of the Mojahedin's ideological team, he was arrested along with 68 other members but managed to escape. He was later killed in an armed clash against the Shah's security forces in 1972.

Rohani, Hossein

A member of the Mojahedin's ideological team, he was one of the more important figures. He later led a split from the Mojahedin to establish the Marxist branch of the Mojahedin in September 1975. He became one of the key figures in the Paykar organization. He later went to work for the Islamic Republic abandoning Paykar. Despite his conciliations with the regime he was executed.

Roozbeh, Khosro

Head of the military network of the Tudeh Party who was arrested in 1956 following massive arrests of other members the year before. He was probably the most daring of the members. He helped establish the Military Organization of the Tudeh Party in 1944. This was a group of military officers in the Shah's army who were sympathetic to the Tudeh Party. He had embraced Marxism and joined the Tudeh Party in 1943. By the time of his execution in 1958, he had 36 books and pamphlets to his name. Despite his opportunities to flee Iran he remained inside to fight. He was very critical of the Tudeh leadership who had chosen a life abroad.

Sabouri, Abdolrahim

A leader of the Fadaee Guerillas (Iranian People's Liberation Army) that split from the Fadaee Guerillas (Ashraf Dehghani Group) in 1980. He led the new group for seven months of guerilla warfare in the forests of Mazandaran and Gilan provinces. He was killed in an armed clash on March 4, 1982.

Safae-farahani, Ali Akbar

The militant leader of the Jangal Group which later contacted Ahmadzadeh group to establish Fadaee Guerillas. In 1968, after the arrest of many members of a small group he was involved with, he left Iran for Lebanon and joined the Palestinian movement for

training and arms. In 1970 Farahani and Ashtiani returned to Iran with arms and ammunition and made their first contact with Ahmadzadeh's group in August of 1970. He led the attack against a police precinct in a region called Siahkal in Gilan province. He was arrested and later executed on March 17, 1971, along with 12 other members.

Samakar, Abbas Ali

He was arrested by the SAVAK for conspiring against the royal family in 1972 along with 11 other individuals. He originally received a death sentence for not repenting and asking for the Shah's pardon. But his sentence was later reduced to life in prison. He recently wrote a book on the process of his arrest and the rest of the members who were prosecuted by the Shah's regime. It was published under the name of "I Am a Rebel" (*man yek shoreshiam*) in Iran in 2004.

Shahram, Taghi

One of the main organizers of the Marxist Mojahedin in 1974. He led the split from the Mojahedin and later called the new organization Paykar. He managed to convince a few other members of the Mojahedin with Marxist tendencies to eliminate a leader of the Mojahedin, Sharif-vaghefi.

Shariati, Ali

A sociologist in his way of detailed analysis, Ali Shariati finished his doctoral work in Paris, France. After receiving a Ph.D. in 1964, he returned to Iran. He was born in Mashad, in the northeastern province of Khorasan, in 1933. His father had purposely chosen life in a small town and did not much care for big city glitter. He taught Islamic history in different small towns and villages in the same province. Choosing Khorasan to teach Islamic history was probably not a coincidence. It was where he was born and raised, but the other reason was a population which did not appreciate the city and its secular living—the non-Islamic, nontraditional behaviorisms. Ali Shariati, following in his father's footsteps, was also interested in politics. They both participated in political meetings and joined a group called "The Movement of Theist Socialists." These meetings probably played a big role in giving Shariati his first taste of socialist or Marxist thoughts.

Sharif-emami, Ja'far

Appointed as Prime Minister by the Shah to replace Jamshid Amouzegar. He submitted the members of his cabinet to the Shah on August 27, 1978. He assumed his position as Prime Minister as he claimed to rid the country of corruption and creating a safe atmosphere for the private sector to invest and produce in Iran without any perceived danger. His government only lasted until November 6, 1978.

Shoa'ian, Mostafa

An independent Marxist who never affiliated himself with any of the Marxist organizations in Iran. A few years older than most Marxists involved in armed struggle, he was continuously critical of their analysis. In an effort to join them the Fadaee guerillas initiated political discussions with him but to no avail. The discussions were

discontinued in 1974 and continued independently. He was killed in an armed clash with the security forces in 1975.

Tabari, Ehsanollah

He was the chief ideologue of the Tudeh Party and one of its most prolific writers until 1983. He became a devout Muslim in his later years and published books on the superiority of Islam over Marxism. He wrote many books and pamphlets during his years with Tudeh. He studied in East Germany and received a Ph.D. in sociology. He was heavily involved with the party in the years of the revolution. After the Islamic Republic began its attacks against all Marxists he was imprisoned

Taleghani, Seyyed Mahmud (Ayatollah)

He was one of the most popular, important, and radical clerics before and during the revolution. He was not only active with Muslim clerics but also with nationalists and some Marxists. Taleghani was one of the founders of the Liberation Movement along with Sahabi and Bazargan. He was closely affiliated with the National Front and The Mojahedin for many years. At one point he called the Mojahedin the true Muslims. He was arrested by the Shah's security forces before the uprising of 1963. He died in 1982.

INDEX OF EVENTS

The following chronology is between 1920 and 1983, the period depicted in this dissertation. By 1983, most Marxist organizations in Iran were either destroyed by the Islamic Republic or surviving members had fled to Europe or the United States. Sources used for the chronology of events are:

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Maziar Behrooz, *Rebels with a Cause: The Failure of the Left in Iran*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 1999).

Gholam Reza Nejati, *Tarikh-e bist va panj sale-ye Iran* (The Twenty Five Year History of Iran), 2 vols (Tehran: Rasa Cultural Institute, 1992).

Kennth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle: The Conflict between Iran and America* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2004).

1916

The development of the Jangal Movement

1920

June: The first Communist Party of Iran was established.

December: A movement known as the “Socialist Republic of Gilan,” had begun.

26 February: After a military coup, a new government was established. The Soviets signed an agreement with the Iranian government to ensure their pulling out of Iran only if the British would do the same.

6 May: The Communist Party of Iran continued in collusion with Kuchak-Khan.

June: Mirza Kuchik-Khan had gathered up to 8,000 troops, among them 5,000 Soviet soldiers.

July: The Soviets had decided to take their troops out of Iran.

By 1926, the Communist Party regrouped and revised its view on Reza Shah to be an obstacle to progress. They claimed that the only way to fight against his government was to organize workers, peasants, and the petty bourgeoisie. In contact with 52 others, they were all arrested on charges of illegal communist activity in 1931.

Reza Shah, by passing an amendment through the parliament in 1931, made all communist activity and literature illegal. Articles under titles like “Historical Materialism,” “Science and Elements of Material,” “Meaning of Human Materialism,” “Women and Materialism,” and “Material Basis of Life and Thought” may have been too dense for even university students. His problems came not with his theoretical writing but rather with a flyer he wrote in 1937, on May 1st, International Workers Day, and distributed on university campuses.

1941

October: The Tudeh Party of Iran was established.

1942

An affiliate of the Tudeh Party, The Central Union of Worker’s Councils was established.

1944

Election of Tudeh members to the fourteenth Majles.

The first congress of the Tudeh Party.

Reza Shah died in exile.

1945

The Azarbaijan Democratic Party (ADP) was established.

The ADP declared an autonomous government in Azarbaijan

1946

The Islamic Fadaeean was established by Navvab Safavi

The Soviet Army withdrew from Iran

1948

The first major split in the Tudeh Party.

1949

An assassination attempt on the Shah’s life.

Tudeh Party was declared illegal.

Mosaddegh and his friends established the National Front.

1951

Razmara assassinated by Islamic Fadaeean.

Oil nationalization day.

Mossadegh became Prime Minister.

Toilers Party of Iran was established.

1952

Mossadegh resigned as Prime Minister

Under social pressure and mass protests a few days later, the Shah appoints Mossadegh as Prime Minister again. Mossadegh broke political relations with Britain.

1953

First coup attempt against Mossadegh failed.

Three days later (August 19) the second coup attempt organized by the CIA and MI-6 was successful, and Mossadegh's government was overthrown.

12 November: First mass demonstrations against the coup (in November).

7 December: University students demonstrated against Nixon's trip to Iran. Three students, Ghandchi, Bozorgnia, and Shariat-razavi were shot and killed by the Shah's military. This day is commemorated in Iran as Student's Day.

1954

Tudeh Party's printing facilities are confiscated.

First group of Tudeh military officers were executed.

1956

February: Some Tudeh Party members participated in the CPSU's twentieth congress. The party acceded with the introduction of de-Stalinization initiated by Khrushchev.

November: Tudeh Party launches its new underground radio station from East Germany under the name of *peyk-e Iran*.

1957

The Shah's notorious secret police the SAVAK was founded with the help of CIA and Israeli MOSAD.

1958

May: Khosrow Roozbeh, a prominent Tudeh Party member was executed. Tudeh Party stops political activity in Iran.

1960

July: The National Front, named the Second National Front was reorganized by some Mossadegh colleagues.

1961

The Iran Liberation Movement (*nehzat-e azadi-e Iran*) was established by Mehdi Bazargan, Ayatollah Taleghani and others.

Ali Amini appointed Prime Minister

1962

Amini's cabinet approved a land reform bill

The Shah declares his 'White Revolution'.

1963

Mass uprising began against the land reform program. The city of Qom was attacked by the Shah's army since the clergy were behind most of the organizing.

1964

Hasan Ali Mansur was appointed Prime Minister

Majles approved the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) or Capitulation Agreement.

Ayatollah Khomeini was sent to exile after attacking the capitulation rights of U.S. personnel in Iran.

1965

January: Prime Minister Mansur was assassinated and Amir Abbas Hoveyda took over the position. He remained Prime Minister for next 13 years.

April: Failed attempt on the Shah's life by an affiliate of the Revolutionary Organization, a split group from the Tudeh Party.

September: Organization of Iranian People's Mojahedin was established by three main leaders, Badizadegan, Saeed Mohsen, and Mohammad Hanifnezhad.

1967

An armed rebellion started in Iranian Kurdistan, led by Ghazi Mohammad.

March: Mossadegh died in exile.

December: Following the death of Gholamreza Takhti, a popular and internationally known wrestler, large mass protests were organized by Marxist university students against the Shah's regime. It was believed that

1968

The Jazani-Zarifi group, one of the main bodies that later formed the Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas, was discovered by the SAVAK.

Death of Samad Behrangi, a teacher who taught many of the revolutionaries that later joined Marxist organizations.

1971

February: Jangal group of the Ahmadzadeh-Farahani coalition began its guerilla activity against the Shah by attacking a police precinct in one the northern provinces in Siahkal.

April: Establishment of the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas.

The Shah's infamous General Farsio, military prosecutor general, was assassinated by the Fadaee guerillas.

May: Amir Parviz Pouyan, one of the founding members of the Fadaee Guerillas, along with another member, Peiro-naziri, was killed in a clash with the Shah's troops.

August: Iran recognizes the People's Republic of China.

September: 69 members of the Muslim Mojahedin were arrested.

1972

March: Masood Ahmadzadeh and Abbas Meftahi, both founders of the Fadaee Guerillas, and eight other members executed in Tehran.

May: Nixon and Kissinger arrived in Tehran to inform the Shah that the United States is prepared to sell Iran the conventional weapons systems it requested.

1973

The Muslim Mojahedin assassinated Louis Hawkins, an American colonel, in Tehran.

1974

The Fadaee Guerillas bombed the police precinct headquarters, assassinated one of the wealthiest Iranians, Mohammad Sadegh Fateh-Yazdi, and Major Alinaghi Niktab, a notorious SAVAK torturer.

1975

Fadaee Guerillas attack several police precincts across the country.

The Shah declares the *Rastakhiz* party the only legal political party in Iran.

Fadaee Guerillas assassinated Captain Yadollah Noruzi, head of university security forces and Abbas Ali Shahriari.

Bizhan Jazani, one of the founders of the Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas, executed by the SAVAK along with six other Fadaees and two of the Mojahedin.

Shah and Saddam sign the Algiers peace accord ending conflict between Iran and Iraq.

Conflict between Marxist and Muslim factions within the Mujahedin ends in assassination of Majid Sharif-vaghefi. He was one of the leaders of the Muslim faction who was killed by the Marxists.

Marxist faction of the Mujahedin declares an independent organization called the Organization of Iranian People's Mojahedin (Marxist-Leninist).

Marxist Mojahedin assassinated two American military advisors in Tehran.

1976

Navid, the only active part of Tudeh Party in Iran was created.

Mostafa Shoa'ian, an independent Marxist who never joined any of the Marxist groups, was killed in a street battle with the Shah's security forces.

Hossein Nahidi, a SAVAK interrogator/torturer was assassinated by the Fadaee Guerillas in Mashhad.

Bahram Aram and two other Marxist Mojahedin members were killed in a street battle in Tehran.

1977

May: Death of Dr. Ali Shariati

Amir Abbas Hoveyda was replaced by Jamshid Amouzegar as Prime Minister.

Shah and his Wife arrive in Washington D.C. and were met by a violent and organized protests by Iranian student opposition.

Fadaee Guerillas bombed government buildings in Zanzan and southern Tehran.

1978

January: President Carter and his wife arrived in Tehran. Carter called Iran the "island of stability".

Fadaee Guerillas bombed US-Iran cultural center.

7 January: An article insulting to Ayatollah Khomeini appeared in a Ettella'at newspaper. It fomented many anti-regime events.

9 January: Protests were held in the holy city of Qom against the article. Fadaee Guerillas bombed a police precinct and the building of Rastakhiz Party in Qom.

More mass demonstrations begin all over the country.

March: Red leftists and black Muslims are attacked by the Rastakhiz part as the 'unholy alliance' of the red and black.

April: Political prisoners in Ghezel Hesar prison began a hunger strike.

Student demonstrations started in Tehran and Science and Industry universities.

May: Anti-regime rioting started in 34 cities.

Mass demonstrations marked the 1963 uprising in Tehran and Qom.

The Shah replaced Nassiri with Moghaddam, as head of SAVAK.

Shah announced that the next elections will be completely free.

August: For the month of Ramadan, mass protests started in several major cities.

Demonstrations in Tehran targeted banks, movie theaters, and nightclubs.

Amouzegar resigned to be replaced by Sharif-emami.

Liberation Movement and National Front demanded Shah's removal, disbanding of SAVAK, freedom of speech, and trial of powerful officials within the Shah's regime.

Fadaee Guerillas attack a police headquarter in Tehran.

8 September: Martial law was declared in Tehran and eleven other major cities. Troops opened fire on demonstrations killing hundreds of people.

Major strike started by oil industry workers.

5 October: Khomeini left Iraq for Paris, France.

Newspapers and major industries went on strike, hunger strike by political prisoners in Tabriz.

Khomeini called for a nationwide strike in commemoration of those who were killed on September 8th Black Friday.

A number of political prisoners were freed.

Oil workers and Iranian Airline employees went on strike.

Riots continued in Tehran and British embassy was attacked.

6 November: In a nationwide television address, the Shah admitted to past mistakes and told the nation he had heard their demands.

Two-hundred and ten political prisoners were freed.

Shah declared an end to martial law and free elections.

In defiance of curfews demonstrators clashed with troops resulting in many deaths.

Khomeini called on soldiers to leave the military.

11 December: Millions of people demonstrated against the regime in Tehran. Several soldiers killed in takeover of military garrisons.

30 December: Shapour Bakhtiar appointed Prime Minister by the Shah.

1979

January: Bakhtiar submitted the names of his new cabinet.

Violent demonstrations began in the Azarbaijan provinces.

Fadaee guerillas assassinate a police commander in Tabriz, Azarbaijan.

16 January: The Shah and his family leave Iran.

President Carter expressed support for Bakhtiar, the new Prime Minister.
Hundreds of political prisoners were released.

February:

1 February: Ayatollah Khomeini returned to Iran and asked for immediate resignation of Bakhtiar.

Khomeini asked Bazargan to form a new cabinet.

Fadaee guerillas held first open commemoration of Siahkal where hundreds of thousands of supporters show up in the streets of Tehran.

Clashes between people and armed forces continued until the collapse of Bakhtiar's government.

13 February: Tudeh Party declares its reappearance in its sixteenth plenum under the leadership of Nour al-Din Kianouri. Tudeh Party announces official support for Khomeini.

Fadaee guerillas issued a list of demands to the provisional government, asking for equal rights for women, nationalization of all industry, and the expulsion of foreign military advisors.

Execution of top officials of the Shah's regime began.

18 February: Islamic Republic Party established.

In mass rally organized by the Fadaee guerillas tens of thousands of people ask for the inclusion of the Fadaees in the new government.

March:

Khomeini ordered the creation of Islamic Revolutionary Guards.

Thousands of women held demonstrations in Tehran denouncing the Islamic dress code and the Islamic government's actions against women.

Fadaee guerillas denounce forthcoming referendum for not allowing freedom of choice.

Heavy fighting began between Kurds and government troops.

Battle between Turkmans and government forces started.

May:

A group of Fadaee guerillas led by Ashraf Dehghani split from the Organization of Fadaee Guerillas, calling themselves the Iranian People's Fadaee Guerrillas.

Ayandegan, an independent newspaper shut down its operations due to a dispute with Khomeini.

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators declare support for Ayandegan in mass rallies.

June:

National Democratic Front accused Khomeini of abandoning earlier pledges to keep clergy out of state affairs.

Khomeini warned lawyers, writers, and intellectuals to act more cautiously or be destroyed by the 'same fist that destroyed the Shah'.

Demonstrations at Tehran University demanded a popular assembly to draft a new constitution.

July: Armed clashes between Kurdish *pishmarge* and government troops in Kurdinsh city of Marivan.

August: Revolutionary Guards attacked the office of Ayandegan newspaper. Hezbollah attacked a demonstration led by National Democratic Front and injured hundreds of the protestors.

Armed clashes began over the control of the Kurdish city of Paveh between government troops and Kurdish *pishmarges*. Four hundred people were killed.

Khomeini ordered general mobilization of the military to suppress the Kurdish rebellion. Kurdish Democratic Party was declared banned while it captured one of the major cities, Sanandaj.

Khomeini ordered the closing of 22 publications including National Democratic Front, Tudeh, Paykar, and Fadaeean.

Government troops executed some of the opposition members and supporters in Paveh. As informal truce was declared by the government and Kurdish fighters Khomeini rejected truce and ordered troops to crush rebellion.

October:

Fadaee guerillas held their first post-revolution meeting to iron out political differences that later led to a major split between Minority and Majority Fadaee organizations.

Women were attacked by Hezbollah as they were demonstrating for equal rights.

November:

Bazargan and his colleagues met Brzezinski in Algiers to discuss U.S.-Iran relationships.

4 November: Bazargan criticized for meeting with the Americans

Line of Imam students seized American embassy and took 62 American hostages.

6 November: Bazargan's government collapsed after 275 days and its duties were taken over by the Revolutionary Council. Prominent writers and Tudeh Party declare support for hostage taking.

December:

The new Islamic constitution was approved.

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators denounced the new constitution in Tabriz and declared support for Ayatollah Shariatmadari.

Islamic Republic of Iran denounced Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

1980

25 January: Abolhassan Banisadr was elected as the first president of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

February: Four Turkman council leaders and Fadaee supporters were killed.

Clashes between Kurdish guerillas and the new government went into its second round.

A major split in the Fadaee Guerillas occurred. Two groups calling themselves minority and majority emerged.

29 July: The Shah died in exile.

September: Saddam Hosseirn breaks peace accord and attacks Iranian borders on the 20th of September.

1981

June: Massive clashes began between Muslim Mojahedin and the Islamic Republic. Many prominent Marxist and Muslims within the opposition were executed by the new government.

A massive explosion at the headquarters of the Islamic Republic kills more than 70 top officials. Blast in Prime Minister's office killed Prime Minister Bahonar and President Rajai.

1982

26 January: Communist League (*sarbedaran*) took over the city of Amol, in the northern provinces by the Caspian sea.

February: Mousa Khiabani a major figure within the Muslim Mojahedin and several other members were killed.

March: Abdolrahim Saboori, among the leaders of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas, Liberation Army killed in a clash with the revolutionary guards.

Number of Fadaee Minority central committee members and others were killed.

Mohammad Reza Hormatijpour, leader of the IPFG, Liberation Army, killed.

1983

February-April: Tudeh Party and Fadaee Majority members arrested and executed by the Islamic Republic. Second wave of arrests and attacks on the Tudeh and Majority in Tehran and other major cities.

INDEX OF ORGANIZATIONS

Marxist Organizations

Communist Party of Iran (*hezb-e comonist-e Iran*)

This was the first organization in Iran established by Marxists in 1920. Most of the leaders from a Marxist movement who later formed the Communist Party were influenced directly by the Bolsheviks. Their main leaders were Sultanzadeh, Ghaffarzadeh, Javadzadeh, and Heydarkhan Amoghlu. With Armenian origins, Sultanzadeh had spent most of his political life in a Bolshevik underground organization in Russian Azarbaijan. Ghaffarzadeh, an old revolutionary, was the contact person for Russian Communist Party's organ, Iskra, responsible for its delivery from Europe to Iran. Javadzadeh, who was born in Iranian Azarbaijan, was a teacher in Baku, capital of Russian Azarbaijan. While in Baku, he came in direct contact with the Bolsheviks and became the chief editor of a leftist newspaper, called *Hurryat* (freedom).

Tudeh Party of Iran (*hezb-e tudeh-ye Iran*)

Main founder of this group, Taghi Arani was in contact with 52 others, known as the 53-group. They were all arrested on charges of illegal communist activity in 1931. The majority of the intellectuals arrested along with Arani were members and supporters of the original Communist Party. Officially the Tudeh Party was established in 1941, and despite efforts by different governments to eliminate this group, it has persisted to this day. Since its inception, it has split into many more radical or more conservative groups. Some are still politically active, mostly outside of Iran, under different names.

Organization of Iranian Peoples Fadaee Guerillas (*sazman-e cherikha-ye fadaee-e khalgh-e Iran*)

The Organization of Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas (*sazman-e chereekha-ye fadaee-e khalgh-e Iran*) was established in April of 1971 by the collusion of two groups whose activities went back to the 1960s. The first group, led by Jazani and Zarifi, was established in the summer of 1966 at Tehran University with the help of six students. The group was later called Jangal Group following the Siahkal incident. The second group was led by Ahmadzadeh and Pouyan. The two groups coming together declared themselves as the Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas and the New Communist Movement of Iran (*jonbesh-e novin-e comonisti-e Iran*) after the Siahkal operation. The word, 'organization' was later added to the name. The newly formed group took on two important tasks at this time. They first started a long study of rural areas in the Northern provinces and second established contact with another Marxist group that was also dwelling on an armed action against the regime.

Organization of Combat (*Paykar*) for the Liberation of the Working Class (*sazman-e paykar dar rah-e azadi-eh tabagheye kargar*)

In the case of Marxist Mojahedin, later called Paykar, Islam had apparently fallen short of becoming a revolutionary praxis. A few factors contributed to this, although these were never thoroughly explained by either side. By 1974, most members of the Mujahedin were studying revolutions led predominantly by Marxists. They included Cuba, China,

Algeria, and the Vietnamese Communist Party fighting against the U.S. military. By mid-1974, there were talks about converging Marxist ideology with Islamic ethics. In an abrupt move, in the fall of 1975, a published paper announced a change in ideology of the organization. There they claimed their Marxist inclinations and found the class analysis of Marxism to be most fitting with sociopolitical conditions of Iran.

Ideal of the Masses (*arman-e khalgh*)

This was among the smaller groups that independently reached the conclusion that armed struggle is the only way to topple the Shah's regime. It was made up of young workers led by Homayoun Katirae, Hushang Taregol, Naser Karimi. During their effort to join the Fadaee guerillas in 1979, they were arrested and later executed.

Palestine Group (*goruh-e felestin*)

This group of Marxists was led by Shokrollah Paknezhad, Naser Khaksar, and Hosein Tajer-riahi. It was mainly made up of and supported by university students. The group had Maoist tendencies, and had come to accept political struggle based on the Chinese model of starting armed struggle in the rural areas. Many of its members were arrested by the SAVAK in 1969 and given long prison sentences.

Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas (*cherikha-ye fadaee-e khalgh-e Iran*) (Ashraf Dehghani group)

This group split from the Main Fadaee organization in the Spring of 1979, just after the revolution in Iran. They were able to clarify their positions in an interview with Ashraf Dehghani. In this booklet they held the Islamic Republic to be an independent and suppressive government that continues the same political-economic agenda as the Shah.

Organization of Iranian Peoples Fadaee Guerillas (*sazman-e cherkha-ye fadaee-e khalgh-e Iran-aghalliat*) (Minority)

In June 1980, this group broke away from the main Fadaee Guerilla organization. They published their own political organ *Kar* (labor). They called the Majority opportunists. They believed that political differences over the nature and class base of the Islamic Republic government were irreconcilable.

Organization of Iranian Peoples Fadaeean (*sazman-e fadaeean-e khalgh-e Iran-aksariat*) (Majority)

This group, which moved to join the Tudeh Party later was formed as a result of the Minority split in June of 1980. They accused Minority of left-wing sectarianism. They renounced armed struggle and consistently dropped the name guerilla as part of their name calling the new organization, the Organization of Iranian People's Fadaeean (Majority).

Organization of the Worker's Path (*sazman-e rah-e kargar*)

This group was mainly made up of former Fadaee and Marxist Mojahedin (*paykar*) members or supporters who had changed their views on armed struggle while in prison. After the revolution they began their own publication under the name of *Rah-e Kargar*

(worker's path). They considered the Islamic Republic government a religious petit bourgeois-national bourgeois which is led by the clergy.

The Organization of Communist Unity (*sazman-e vahdat-e comonisti*)

Sporadically active before the revolution, this group was mainly made up of a few intellectuals in contact with the Fadaee Guerillas prior to the revolution. Between 1979 and 1981, it published *Rahae* as its official publication. They opposed the Islamic government but kept their activity limited to writing and political discourse.

Communist League of Iran (*ettehadih comonistha-ye Iran*)

Most of the members of this group, later called *Sarbedaran*, were active outside of Iran prior to the revolution. Consistent with their Maoist tendencies, they conducted a daring attack against the Islamic regime's forces in the city of Amol in June of 1981. Most members were either killed in the incident or arrested. A few surviving members fled the country and still continue with their political activities abroad. They later joined the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement, made up of many Marxist organizations worldwide. Their publication under the name of *Haghighat* continues to this day.

Muslim Organizations

Jangal Movement (*jonbesh-e jangal*)

This movement consisted of small landowners in Gilan. Mirza Kuchak Khan, a landowner himself, led this movement. So popular was the movement that even a Marxist student organization in Germany wrote articles in their newspaper, *Kaveh*, defending the Jangalis. The Gilan Republic was the first instance of ideological and organizational convergence in Iranian history. It lasted close to two years before most of its leadership, Marxist and Muslim, was killed or imprisoned. The leadership consisted of a coalition of Muslims belonging to a movement called the "Jangal Movement," and Marxists, who were organized in the Communist Party of Iran. The Muslims were led by a prominent figure who had been fighting Tehran's central government since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, Mirza Kuchak Khan. Marxists, originally from a group called "*Fergheye Democratic*" (Democratic Faction), were led by Heydar Khan (Heydar Amughlou) and Soltanzadeh. In fact, this was the first cooperation between Marxists and Muslims as an organized political-military force. By the end of 1920, the movement known as the "Socialist Republic of Gilan," with the support of the Red Army, with its 1500 guerillas, was prepared to proclaim its independence and eventually take on Tehran's central government.

Fadaeean of Islam (*Fadaeean-e eslam*)

Among those who came to organize themselves, more than any other fundamentalist organization, was the Fadaeean of Islam (Fadaeean-e Eslam). This group was organized by a young cleric by the name of Navvab Safavi in 1945. They were against all that was non-Islamic. They were against alcohol, cigarettes, movies, opium, gambling, and western clothing. Their political goal was to establish a Shi'a Islamic Republic. They

began their political activities by assassination of some government officials and famous secular writers.

Committees of Muslim Alliance (*heyat-ha-ye mo'talefe-ye eslami*)

By the 1960s, many Muslim groups were on a different path of struggle. The first group was the Committees of Islamic Alliance. The activities of some of its politically experienced members could be traced back to Mosaddegh's time, whereas some were relatively young and inexperienced. Socially, most members were small merchants. The armed struggle for this group, and many of the Islamic groups, did not seek the same goals as Marxists. While Marxists advocated armed struggle as both strategy and tactic, and a way of creating an armed uprising, Muslims had a different idea. Their aim was to physically destroy certain individuals—a more limited plan—within the Shah's government. Although they had generated a list of those to be assassinated, they were not able to get past their first target. In February 1964, they assassinated Prime Minister Mansour. Within a few weeks, all 20 members of the group were arrested and four of their leaders were executed. The rest were given 15-year to life sentences.

The Party of Islamic Nations (*Hezb-e malal-e eslami*)

There was a second group that made an effort (since they never actually carried out any armed actions) to fight against dictatorship. This group, a more educated and younger bunch than Committee of Islamic Alliance, called itself The Party of Islamic Nations. In 1965, the Shah's secret police was able to arrest 80 of its members and affiliates, 25 of whom were released and the rest imprisoned. Among the arrested were some prominent clergy.

Committee of Islamic Alliance (*Shora-ye Ettahadi-ye Eslami*)

Another major Muslim group that made significant contributions to Iranian Islamic Opposition was the "Committees of Islamic Alliance." The death of Boroujerdi opened the gates of cleric involvement in politics. Until 1961, the year Boroujerdi died, clerics were discouraged from getting involved in politics. After his death, they no longer faced opposition in this regard. Ayatollah Khomeini was among those who started this move by making contentious statements against the Shah's regime. Khomeini was able to make a more sophisticated argument in questioning the Shah. He went beyond the two main reasons for clerical conflict: opposing women's rights and opposing land reform. He posed more popular demands that involved other sectors of society. The reason this group was named the Committee of Islamic Alliance has much to do with Khomeini's role as a linchpin.

Organization of Iranian Peoples Mujahedin (*sazman-e mojahedin-e khalgh-e Iran*)

Three former members of the Liberation Movement founded The Organization of Iranian People's Mojahedin in the summer of 1965. Mohammad Hanif-Nezhad, Ali Asghar Badizadegan, and Saeed Mohsen had split from the religious wing of Liberation Movement to found the Mojahedin. They were able to organize themselves amid other turmoil within the Liberation Movement. This occurred precisely when most of the

leadership from Liberation Movement was arrested under subversive charges. They were tried by a military court and sentenced to years in prison.

Nationalist and Hybrid Organizations

National Front (*jebhe-ye melli*)

This group was one of the most enduring, and at times, most popular political organizations advocating reform. Up until 1979, it went through three phases of development. As a political organization it made some significant impacts upon the process of social change in Iran. However, the reason the National Front is mentioned here is not its political pertinence but how its members contributed to the formation of other Muslim and Marxist groups. It acted as a midwife, giving birth to many other Marxist groups and individuals. Many of these individuals later became founders of some of the major organizations, namely the Iranian People's Fadaee Guerillas. The National Front was originally founded in the fall of 1949 in Tehran.

Liberation Movement (*nehzat-e azadi*)

The covert and possibly repressed political inclinations within the National Front finally manifested through a major split. The more secular and modern leaders established what they called the second National Front. The more religious-leaning leaders, however, established the new Liberation Movement. This group, which endured its internal conflicts and the Shah's repressions, played a major role during the 1979 revolution. By May 17, 1962, the Liberation Movement declared itself an official group within the opposition. Three major leaders, former members of the National Front, founded this new organization with stronger Islamic tendencies. The three included Bazargan, Sahabi, and Taleghani.

Socialist Republic of Gilan (*jomhuri-e socialist-e Gilan*)

The Gilan Republic was the first instance of ideological and organizational convergence in Iranian history. It lasted close to two years before most of its leadership, Marxist and Muslim, was killed or imprisoned. The leadership consisted of a coalition of Muslims belonging to a movement called the "Jangal Movement," and Marxists, who were organized in the Communist Party of Iran. The Muslims were led by a prominent figure who had been fighting Tehran's central government since the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, Mirza Kuchak Khan. Marxists, originally from a group called "*Fergheye Democratic*" (Democratic Faction), were led by Heydar Khan (Heydar Amughlou) and Soltanzadeh. In fact, this was the first cooperation between Marxists and Muslims as an organized political-military force. Contrary to some beliefs, both movements were active before the Russian revolution of 1917. Although the objectives between Marxists and Muslim factions were quite dissimilar, the means of a military takeover of the central government was commonly shared. The unprecedented alliance lasted nearly two years.

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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Javadzadeh, Abdy (2006). The Culture of Suicide Bombers. A paper presented at the 2006 MPSA Annual Meeting in Chicago.

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