

LEFTIST DISSENT IN MONARCHIC IRAN

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

SYED MOHAMMED AQDAS

CENTRE FOR WEST ASIAN AND AFRICAN STUDIES
SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL STUDIES
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY
NEW DELHI-110067, INDIA

1990

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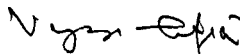


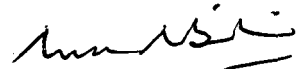
School of International Studies
Centre for West Asian
and African Studies

CERTIFICATE

Certified that the dissertation entitled "LEFTIST DISSENT IN MONARCHIC IRAN" submitted by Syed Mohammad Aqdas is in partial fulfilment of six credits out of total requirements of twenty-four credits for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy (M.Phil.) of this University. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University, or any other University, and is his own work. &

I/We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiner for evaluation.


Prof. Vijay Gupta
Chairperson


Prof. A.H.H. Abidi
Supervisor

New Delhi - 110067
Dated : 21st July, 1990

TO MY MOTHER

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

Chapter I.	The History of Left Movement in Iran: Splinter Groups	1 - 29
Chapter II.	The Tudeh and the Soviet Connection	30 - 53
Chapter III.	The Mohjahedin	54 - 86
Chapter IV.	The Fedayeen	87 - 113
	CONCLUSION	114 - 122
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	123 - 130

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I wish to express my deep sense of gratitude to my Supervisor Prof.A.H.H. Abidi for his constructive suggestion and scholarly guidance. Without his penetrating comments this dissertation would never have been completed. Despite his able guidance if there is any error, I am solely responsible for it.

I also express my thanks to all my friends who have contributed in their own way for this dissertation.

I specially thank, Bala, Venkat, Nagu, Najmu, Javaid, Rashid bhai and Computics for thier kind co-operation.

S. M Aqdas

SYED MOHAMMED AQDAS

New Delhi.

Date: 21st July 1990

HISTORY OF THE LEFT MOVMENT IN IRAN

SPLINTER GROUPS

CHAPTER I

History of Left Movement in Iran: Splinter Groups.

We are in an age of scepticism in which most of the time-honoured customs and traditions are questioned. Authority is openly challenged. Such a phenomenon is not new in the world "To dissent is human and dissent has an age old history in all societies and systems"¹. A study of bygone centuries reveals the same inquiring and dissenting attitude.

All too often institutions have allowed their traditional outlook and ways of life to depend upon the past and failed to adjust their practices to the demands of more informed and independent minded group"² In other words, we run into trouble when systems lag behind the changing sophistications and attitude of the members. As the system fail to adjust to these changes, they enter into difficult times - a revolutionary period, either mild or violent, depending upon how great the lag is. Individuals and groups come to believe that certain rules imposed by the system are crude, unfair or perhaps degrading and un acceptable. It is needless to say that they want change. This phenomenon of dissent is universal.

In the history of every nations a ^{time} comes when

1. A.H.H. ABIDI IRAN AT THE CROSS ROAD; THE DISSENT MOVEMENT(New Delhi 1989).

2. George S. Swope-Dissent:The Dynamics of Democracy(New York 1972) p. V.

people became less and less tolerant of obedience demands and want greater authority and voice, affecting their welfare." In short they dissent.

The term dissent "refers to the airing of competitive and alternative views as against the status quo at any given time and place. Such views may pertain to social, political or economic organisation in society or state"³ In short it applies to every established authority. "Authority is a process inherent in every human organization necessary to maintain the order and security which its members demand. It is a system erected for protection against disorder violence and anarchy"⁴

When an institution's authority structure becomes rigid, unfeeling and clearly unfair in the hands of its leaders, when it lacks imaginative perception to understand the impact of its clumsy actions, dissenters rebel as soon as they are able to muster enough power to do so. At some point in time the authority of the leaders diminishes to such low level that it no longer has the strength to quell the rebellion and institutions either go out of existence such as the Russian monarchy did, or it is taken over and reorganized as happened in England. But in most cases history takes a relatively smooth course. For along

3. Abidi-n.1, p.V

4. Swope-n.2, p.7

period before that abrupt change takes place. This process is similar to the process which water undergoes till it becomes ice. It is not a process of 'nochange' but one in which change is not easily perceptible. Iran was going through such a process - for quite some time but the change was clearly perceptible towards the end of 19th century.

In premodern Iran, Qajars ruled with an iron hand. The despotism of pre-modern Iran rested upon a society fragmented into diverse social entities.⁵ At a general level it represented a social formation with multiple modes of production, tribal, peasant crop-sharing and urban petty commodity production.⁶

The state for the most part, represented by monarchy, rose above the society and based itself upon the fragmentations and hence weakness of the latter.⁷ Yet the monarch who ruled supreme, could not have reigned long without relying on a ruling class which, accentuated that very structural fragmentations. The Shah and the princes, the tribal chiefs with the hereditary titles of 'Ilkhan' and Khan the tuyuldars (fiefholders) the landlords, the Governors and officials, the influential shi-i ulama, the possessers of charitable lands who constituted the ruling

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5. Ervand Abrahamian "oriental Despotation: The case of Qajar Iran IJMES volume 5 pp 7-9.
 6. John Foran "The modes of production approaches to 17th century Iran vol.20, 1988 p.351.
 7. Abrahamian-n5 p.24

class, all appropriated on considerable portion of surplus produced in three domains of production.⁸ "With the possible exception of merchants, whose economic power placed them within the ranks of ruling classes and who might have felt insecure about property and trade routes, and theoretical opposition of ulama to the temporal rulers during political crises, the rest including ulama were fairly content with the existing system"⁹

The Shah thus ruled, not by having an efficient bureaucracy or a standing army, but by relying on royal magnates whose interest, in principle, he represented. In like fashion the local magnates specially tribal Khans and Shi'i clerics also regarded king as the protector, with whom they often united in the face of enemies. The monarch's involvement in tribal rivalries, and his support to the official ulama as against dissident clerics have been the staple of pre-modern Iranians history. Thus "the traditional enemies of a disloyal group invariably became the loyal and obedient friends of the King. And with so many 'friends' the Shah needed neither bureaucracy nor a standing army in order to enforce their authority"¹⁰ It is in this context that King's word was tantamount to law. And it appealed to only one class,¹¹ more often than not to the

8. Foran-n6 p,351

9. Mehرداد Faiz Samad Zedeh- "The emergency of Iranian Bonapartism 1905-21 studies in History vol.5 no.2 (July December 1989).

10. Abrahamian-n5 p.31

11. appealed to only one class, "more often than not to the

11

ruling class, as do our modern laws."

Although the Qajars in Iran were the high priests of oriental despotism, it was during their rule that the roots of despotism started weakening in Iran. This was probably due to colonial intrusions beginning early in the nineteenth century when the despotic structure showed signs of cracking. During the same period there was gradual unification of fragmented social structure and emergence of desire for modern laws. "The state and the religious reformers, despotic King and conservative -ulama were all contributors to this process"

12

The two Russo-Persian wars of 1804-1813 and 1826-1828, both leading to Iran's military defeats and heavy territorial losses, and ensuing responses to them, marked the first cracks in the despotic structure. This happened in two distinct ways. First, the state tended to disregard its support base by remodelling itself after the fashion of the colonial powers and secondly, the base distanced itself from the state because of the latter's weakness in the face of external threats as well as its susceptibility to foreign influence. These indicate a distrust between the two that led both to seek a new basis of survival. "It was an irony however, that both came to appeal to the same base, namely the non-ruling people who later appeared as a nation.

11. Samad Zadeh n9 p.212

12. Ibid p.212

Abbas Mirza represented the first attempt by state to reform itself. His Nezam-e Jadid (new order) and divankhana (the highest organ of secular jurisdiction) were steps taken in order to endear the progressively alienating people. Similarly, the "Ulama's mistrust of the state led them to a closer identification with the people. This was signified by a shift of emphasis from Islam to the people whose leadership as a nation they assumed

13

decades later— Among later state reformers we may discern the spirit of Abbas Mirza in Mirza Taqi Khan AmirKabir, the Grand Vezir (1846-1851) He also undertook military, administrative industrial and educational reforms. His secular school Daral-Fonun, played a vital role in cotemporary Iranian politics. In order to consolidate a new base for state among the people, he took various steps. This was symbolically reflected in his newspaper. Vaqay-e-he Etefaqieh (Current Affair) that aimed at keeping the people informed about the developments inside and outside the country. This approach to the public as a means of introducing reforms was expressed thus. "The purpose of reforms and new establishments is for the awareness, the education, the good and interest of the public" 14 The people responded positively to this popular concern and united against AmirKabir's opponent. "The popular protest

13. Ibid p.219

14. Quoted in Ibid p.214

against insurgent soldiers who aimed at deposing him in 1848 was an important event in the history of Iran: the people had rallied around the Grand Vezir."¹⁵

The later reformers of the last quarter of the nineteenth Century also contributed to the breaking of the despotic structure and the integration of fragmented social structure.

The later reformers, in sharp contrast with the position taken by the earlier reformers, introduced reform measures by invoking foreign domination. The Earlier reformers like Abbas Mirza and Amir Kabir earned the hostility of British for their protectionism. Ellis, the British commercial attache, denounced as 'dogma' Abbas Mirza's policy of balancing 'the money trade' and restriction of the trade with the manufacturing nations"¹⁶ But the later reformers were more interested in collaboration with the west than in countering it. The name of Malakum Khan, the infatuated westernizer was foremost amongst the later reformers.

The western designed reforms that increasingly became synonymous with foreign dominations soon provoked opposition. The opposition to Reuter concession and its eventual abrogation in 1879 underscored this point. This stream which was mainly headed by ulama, led to the unity of fragmented social structure and reinforcing of national

15 Ibid- p.215.

16 Charles Essawi (Ed)- Economic History of Iran; 1800-1914 (Chicago 1971) P. 78

identity, which in turn led to the disintegration of despotic structure of the state.

The emergence of nation and consciousness about it was unequivocally apparent when we see a nation conscious of itself, protesting against the tobacco concession in 1891-92, behind the shi ulama. There were several social pressures which forced the ulama in nationalist directions. First was the traditional cordial relation between ulama and merchants, who supported ulama with zakat and Khoms (religious taxes). The second pressure was the need by the clerical order for a new base of survival, now that the state was falling apart.

The "nationalist impulse left its mark also on submissive westernism of the modernizing reformers."¹⁷ This change can be found in the tone of Malekum Khan the most fervent champion of westernization. He addressed the Shah thus, in his paper Ganun: "By what law do you sell these rights (Tobacco concession) and privileges our state to foreign adventurers "¹⁸

Thus, towards the end of 19th century, one can clearly discern two components of Iranian nationalism. One component was Islamic under the leadership of shi-i ulama, which came to the fore front during the Tobacco movement, and other was secular trend led by western

¹⁷ Samad Zadeh- No. 9 p 225

¹⁸ Ibid p 225

inspired reformers and intelligentsia. This study is confined to the secular trend of Iranian nationalism in general and its leftist component in particular.

One may discover the roots of Leflist movement in Iran, in the organization of the secret centre organized in Tabriz and the Social Democratic Party (SDP) of Iran in Baku. Both these organizations "were influenced by revolutionary socialism of Russian Marxism."¹⁹ While the secret centre was organized in the Tabriz by twelve young radicals associated with the journal Gonjeh Fonun and headed by one Ali Karbalayi, nick named "Monsieur", The Social Democratic Party of Iran was formed in early 1904 in Baku by a handful of emigres who had been active for some time within the Social Democratic Party of Russia. They opened a club 'Hemmat' (EFFORT) and focussed their activities among migrated workers from Iran employed in Baku oil fields. The party was headed by Narim Narimanov, an Azerbaijani school teacher who later became president of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan. Almost all the other founders of the party were intellectual from Iranian Azarbaijain. Their programme which was "mainly a translation from the economic demands of Russian Social Democrats, called for the right of workers to organize and strike," and

19 Ervand Abrahamian - Iran Between Two Revolunters (princeton, 1982) p. 77

eight hour day, old age pensions, a progressive income tax, distribution of land among those who tilled it."20 The Secret centre which soon established close ties with the Social Democrats circulated the party programme within Iran. These two Societies played active role in the constitutional revolution of 1905-1906. From Baku the SDP pressurised Shah by telegrams and threat of sending armed volunteers, to convene National Assembly. The Shah relented to the pressure.

The next summer was politically eventful. The convening of National Assembly and then the election for National Assembly were catalysit for the development of political organisation and radical newspapers through out the country. "In the capital over thirty proconstitutional society (anjumans) appeared on the political arena."21 Of all the anjumans, the most active and largest, with a membership of three thousands, was the society of Azerbaijanis. The life breath of this organisation was a confirmed leftist Hyder Khan Amu 'Ughli' who played an important role in organising the SDP in Baku. Inside the society of Azerbaijanis, Hyder established "SDP's first cell inside Iran."22

This society was most vocal in protesting against the

20 Ibid p. 77

21 Ibid p. 86

22 Ibid p. 87

Shah's denial to ratify the constitutions. It was members of this society who formed majority of the armed volunteers" created for the defence of National Assembly. Yet again "a money lender from Tabriz, probably with connection to Hyder Khan's cell of Social Democrats, assassinated Prince Amin al Sultan and promptly committed suicide outside the Parliament buildings."²³ It was in the face of such pressure, that Shah himself appeared meekly before the National Assembly, vowing to respect the constitution, and placing royal seal upon the supplementary Fundamental Law. But the Liberals who formed a majority in first National Assembly went too fast with the reforms which curtailed the economic political powers of the Ulama and royalists. This led to a understanding between ulama and royalist. They came out in the streets in late December 1908. Shaikh Fazallah Nouri the highly respected Mujtahed, called upon all devout muslims to gather in the large cannon square to defend sharia from the heathen constitutionalist. The ractionaries packed the expansive square to full capacity and at the meeting Shaikh Fazallah declared that 'the Majles Liberals, like French Jacobians were paving the ways for Socialism, Anarchism and Nihilism' . Boomed by

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23 Ibid p.87

24 Ibid p.95.

such support the Shah struck in June 1909 and imposed martial law, banned all societies and captured Tehran. But Tehran was not the whole of Iran. The armed volunteers rose in defence of revolution first in Tabriz later in Isfahan and Rasht and subsequently in most other cities including Tehran. Iran had entered an era of civil war.

In Tabriz the venue of high drama of civil war, the Leftists exploited the opportunity to consolidate themselves. The Secret Centre of Karbalayi, merging with a group of Armenian intellectuals, voted to build a 'proletarian organisation' separate from the 'democratic movement,' formalised its ties with Social-democrats in Baku, and received from caucus some one hundred volunteers. Similarly in Rasht, Yeprem Khan, headed a secret star committee and established contact with Social Democrats, Social Revolutionaries and Armenian Dashneks in caucus. In Busshire and Bandar 'Abbas, regional council of radicals took over local administration. In Mashad the city guild organised bazar strike and seized royalist governor, while a group of radicals formed a Jamiyat-i Mujahedin (Association of Fighters). Affiliating with Social Democrats in Baku the association issued an extensive proclamation. 'This manifesto was the first socialist programme, ever published in Iran'²⁵. It called for armed defense of the constitution, use of parliament for attaining 'social justice', (☺) 'eventual equality',

25 Ibid p.100

extension of suffrage to all citizens irrespective of religion and class, redistribution of Majlis seats according to size of population in each region, guarantee of right to publish, speak, organise, assemble and strike, free schools for all children, free hospitals and clinics for urban poor, sale of royal villages and 'excess' estates to landless peasants, taxation of income and wealth, not of households; an eight-hour work day and two years of compulsory military service for all adult males²⁶.

Thus, the Left movement maintained its unbroken continuity throughout the constitutional revolution and beyond. In the Second National Assembly, the division of the Left and the Right became apparent as early as 1910. The Left grouped under 'Democratic Party' while the Right conglomerated under 'Moderate Party'. The Democrats were led by the survivors of the pre-1906 radical society. Outside the Parliament, Democrat Party was mainly organised by Hyderkhan and Mohammed Amin Rasul Zadeh. Hyderkhan who later became the first secretary of Communist party, served as organisation's executive secretary and linked Democrats in Tehran to the Social Democrats in Baku. Rasul Zadeh who after the Russian revolution became a Menshevik leader in Baku, founded a newspaper entitled Iran-i Now (New Iran) which served as

26 "The program of Association of fighters in Mashad" Donya (winter 1964) p 89-97

party organ. 'It contained discussions of social reform, summerized the history of European Socialism, and sought to propogate in Iran, for the first time, the fundamentals of Marxism' .

27

The program of Democratic Party was heavily based on the manifesto of Social Democrats. Indeed there were little more than the desire to be accepted by 'Conservative Public' which snatched from them the word 'Socialist'. The radical programme of the party soon won over other radical elements. The Armenian Dashnak party, declaring that the Democrats were a progressive party, formed an alliance with them against reactionary feudalism. And te Social Democrats of Baku instructed their members to dissolve their branches in Iran and join

28

the new organisation' .

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had a favourable impact on the leftist movement in Iran. Of the countries on the Russian periphery, persia in 1917-18 presented a very favourable conditions for the extension of Bolshevik

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revolution' . The country's chaotic conditions specially in the North provided ready made catalyst for a revolutionary movement. The first attempt to organise a movement along communist line was made by veteran - Social Democrats, who gathered in Baku and announced the formation of the

27 Ervand-N p 104

28 Ibid p 105

29 Sepehr Zabih, communist movement In Iran (Berkely 1966) p 1

Justice Party (Firqeh-i Adalat). It started mobilising oil field workers for recruitment in the Red Army, sent a delegate to the forthcoming sixth Bolshavik congress in Petrograd, and established bilingual Azeri-Persian paper called 'Huriyat' (Freedom). Assadallah Khan Ghafer Zadeh was its first Secretary. The Adalat party captured Persian Consulate in 1918 and forced the Consul General, Mohammed Saed, to flee. Ghafarzadeh was assassinated while trying to establish contact with Kuchek Khan, the Jangali leader.

Ghaffarzadeh's successor as party secretary was Mir Jafar, later to be known as Javed Zadeh and still later as Pishwari. He held the post of Secretary till the Red army landed in Enzeli, after which the committee moved to

³⁰
Persia'. In June 1920, it convened in Enzeli its first major congress. The Congress adopted the title 'Communist Party of Iran' (Firqeh-i Komonist-i Iran) and elected

³¹
Sultan Zadeh as the first secretary of the party'

The Communist party of Iran alongwith Jangali's claimed to have formed in Gilan a Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran. By the end of 1920, the Soviet Socialist Republic in Rasht - reinforced by the Red Army - was preparing to march into Tehran with its

30 Ibid p 12

31 Abrahamian, n 19 p 115

guerilla force. This was the only time when Leftist in Iran came close to capturing power. But in the meantime Soviet Union decided to withdraw its support because of the division in the leadership on this issue and mainly because the economic burden of this adventure proved too much for the nascent communist state. At this juncture, 'The man on the horse back' Rezakhan emerged and nipped the communist attempts in the bud. He defeated the Jangali movement mainly by retaining friendly relationship with Soviet Union and thus obtaining its evacuation and partly by establishing contact with secular radical wing of the rebel movement. In retaliation, the religious wing of the Jangali movement killed Hyderkhan, outlawed communist party, forced Ehsanullah Khan to leave with Red Army and tried to kill Khalu Qurban. The communists in Iran were on the defence.

After the destruction of Soviet-Socialist Republic in Gililan the communist party went through a major transformation. It changed the focus of its activities from north to interior specially Tehran. It discouraged provincial revolt, toned down the call for armed insurrection, tried to democratise bourgeoisie, unite the country against British imperialism, consolidate the party organisation and create viable trade unions through out

32
Iran'

As Reza Shah's power became more consolidated, communist activities in Iran gradually declined. In June 1931, in an attempt to cope with the communists, the government introduced a Bill in the Majlis to outlaw all genuine or disguised political organisation engaged in communist activities and propoganda. This Bill easily passed into law. By this time, however, the communist party of Iran was under ground. The nail on the coffin was hammered by sending off the rest to prison.

During the 1930.'s, hardly one heard of Iranian communist party or Iranian communist movement. However, a nucleus of a new Marxist organization was found by Iranian intellectuals, educated and trained in European countries, notably Germany, France and occasionally in Soviet

33
Union' .

In this context the role of the nucleus known as the 'Erani Circle' or 'Group of Fifty-three' was very important. Although by this time 1931 law banning 'Communist Ideology' was already in vogue. Erani's group set out to indoctrinate the intellectuals in the fundamentals of communism. The target group grew in number as the European educated students returned to Iran. 'Donya' was designed to carry their education in Marxist doctrine begin in Europe, and to extend it to

33 SepehrZabih, Left in Contemporary Iran (London 1986),

other Iranians, in their native language and on a

34

sophisticated level' .

The central figure among the 'fifty three' was a thirty-six year old Professor of Physics named Taqi Erani. The dominant characteristic of Erani's writing and teaching was its scientific method, which attempted to explain the main principles of Marxism-Leninism in relatively simple language. This group was arrested and tried in 1937.

In September, 1941 with the overthrow of Reza Shah's regime, following the joint Anglo-Soviet military intervention in Persia, the Persian communist movement

35

revived' . Both internal and external factors contributed to this revival. In this situation, when general amnesty was granted to 'less dangerous' political prisoners, twenty-seven younger members of the famous 'fifty-three' announced formation of 'Hizb-e Tudeh-e Iran' (party of Iranian masses) in Tehran on 29 September, 1941. As succeeding years proved, it was the 'only consistently

36

well organised political party of Iran' . At least for three decades from then, this party and its splinter groups spearheaded the Leftist movement in Iran.

34 Zabih n 29 p 66

35 Zabih n 29 p 71

36 Abidi, n 1 p 159

In 1940's, the Tudeh party could boast of 25000 members and perhaps half a million in affiliated trade unions. It was banned in 1949 for an attempt on Shah's life. It surfaced again in 1950s but it failed to bury its distaste for Mosaddeq and support him fully. With fall of Mosaddeq and restoration of the Shah in 1953, the Tudeh suffered considerable repression at the hands of the regime. Its leadership went into exile in East Germany and its rank and file grew passive or converted to more acceptable political ideas. By 'the 60's the Tudeh party's core membership dwindled to 2000 and by 1973, perhaps to 37 500'. The party was victim of history.

Only in the late 70's with the first germination of active opposition in Iran did the Tudeh party bestir itself. It joined into a coalition of disparate opposition contesting Shah's rule and played important role in the revolution that brought Imam Khomeini to power. Yet, it fared little better than other opposition groups in 38 Khomeini's Iran and was eventually banned in 1983'.

During its chequered existence, the Tudeh was infected several times by the problem of internal dissension, conflict and defection. The basic reason³⁷

37 Us Dept of state Bureau of Intelligence and Research : World strength of communist party org. (1960s and 1970s) 38 Zabin, n 29 p 25

for such a fate was its strong Soviet connection, which was invoked more than once by its dissenting members as the cause of their estrangement. The first such problem which besieged the Tudeh party was in 1940's. It came in the aftermath of the collapse of the Iranian communist movement's second revolutionary movement, staged in Azerbaijan.

"The internal ideological crisis in the wake of the failure of resurrection in Azerbaijan was the greatest threat to the (communist) movement since collapse of Gilan

39
Republic". This crisis was led on two flanks, one by 'ultra leftists' the other by 'moderate faction'.

The first group of critics represented the leftist (ultra) tendencies among party intellectuals and advocated violence and other revolutionary methods. A leader of the faction was Dr. A Eprim whose pamphlet "Che Bayad Kard" ? (what is to be done) published in December 1946, stated very clearly the main objections of the

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faction'.

The greatest mistake of the party, according to this faction, was emphasis on numerical strength rather than on the quality of membership. They further criticised what they said, was the reliance of some

39 Zabih, n 29 p 124

40 Ibid p 128

party leaders on the course of international events to protect party from severe crisis rather than depending on its own strength as an indigenous political force' .

41

They felt that structure of the organisation was too heterogenous to be effective. They suggested as solution, to separate most militant members from the main body into a disciplined core capable of playing vanguard role. To clear party of opportunistic elements, they demanded drastic purges periodically. And most important it was suggested that the party must do all it can to fight prevalent but false belief that it was subordinate to the Soviet Union and prove that the movement was indigenous and nationalist.

TH-32173

They suggested a plan for organisational realignment. A popular front called either 'progressive' or 'democratic' front should be established, which would encompass all the present members and organs as well as other affiliated progressive elements. It should continue to advocate the Tudeh party programme which embraced the broad goals of social justice and public welfare. But they said, the vanguard party to be established within this front and called 'socialist party of the democratic front' should maintain an independent identity and use maximum

TH-3517

42

care in its recruitment process' . This vanguard should

41 Quoted, Ibid p 129

DISS



be the brain of the Leftist forces and the source of their power. The vanguard will go underground if persecuted (by the Government), it will regroup and emerge again and will continue to do so until power is seized and a government based on the masses and their common interest is formed⁴³.

'These recommendations were rejected by 'old guard' as 'humbug' and its proponents were dubbed as 'elitist' and 'vanguardist'. In protest they defected from the party.

The second and numerically larger group of critics was led by Khalil Maleki who organised "the Tudeh Socialist League of Iran" and published its criticism of the party leadership and past performance in a lengthy essay entitled Do Ravesh Baraye Yek Hadaaf (Two Approaches to One Goal). Maleki's faction demanded more democracy in the party. They also voiced criticism of the over reliance on the international development. "It particularly objected to the party having used international obligation' as a reason of supporting ~~Qavam~~ government'⁴⁴. Their desire not to provoke the wrath of Soviet Union kept them away from a forthright criticism of subordination of party to USSR.

42 Ibid p 130

43 A.E Perim : che Bayad Kard p 18, as quoted in Zabih, n 29

44 Ibid p 133

The moderate faction insisted that the Tudeh had failed to carry out its role properly in the political development of Iran. They blamed the party's exaggerated sense of historical determinism as the villain of the piece, which forced it to act in purely defensive way. Khalil Maleki published a tract in 1951 entitled 'Hizbe-e Tudeh Che migoyad va che mikurd' (what the Tudeh party says and what it did). 'In describing his reason for leaving the Tudeh, he accused the party leaders of blindly following Russians and of ~~aligning~~ ^{aligning} with the Azerbaijan

45

Democrats who 'threatened to dismantle Iran' .

In any case Jamiyat-e-socialist-Tudeh (Tudeh socialist League), could not continue for long. It failed to draw members and an editorial in Soviet News paper condemning the faction as "traitors to socialist cause, sealed its fate" ⁴⁶ and it was disbanded. In later years Khalil-Maleki returned to politics by helping to form Toilers Party.

Besides these two factions there were several other splinter groups whose political tendencies were known long after their defection. One such group was Anvarkhamei's small faction known as Jamiyat-e Rahai kar-va Andisheh

45 Ervand n 19 p 310

46 Zabin n 29 p 134

(The Society of Liberation of Deed and Thought). This group was most active in first phase of nationalist movement in 1950-52.

The faction was ideologically Marxist-Leninist, staunchly anti American, and vividly pro-Soviet advocating closer ties and unreserved subordination to the Soviet Union "It challenged the right of a loosely ideological party (the Tudeh) to represent the international movement in Iran but it denounced the Maleki faction as nationalist revisionist"⁴⁷

In course of time several other splinter groups separated from the main body of the Tudeh Party. These included:

The Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party

It was a pro-Peking wing founded in 1946 by Fereidun Keshvaraz and to other fellow members of the Tudeh central committee-Ahemed Gasemi and Gholam Hussain Forutan, after their escape to Wesern Europe. A considerable number of the Tudeh members, specially students in Western Europe and America who had been unhappy with the Tudeh joined the new wing.

The organization believed that the Tudeh was no longer a true Marxist-Leninst party with a revolutionary character. They began to visit Peking and Havana and were able to have a guerilla training camp set up in Cuba.

47 Ibid p 135

But their flourish found a break when Cuba turn^{ed} closer to Moscow and away from Peking. This agreement within the Chinese leadership as to the force of guerilla warfare soon found echo within this organization. Some advocated Chinese type peasant uprising with a revolution starting in rural areas and then surrounding the cities. Others rejected it as not been applicable to Iranian conditions. Later, the change in China's foreign policy put an end to their hopes, specially after 1971 when Peking and Tehran recognized each other and finally when China was admitted to UNO.

Iranian Marxist Circle:

This was set up by Mehmoud Moqaddam in 1967. He was an original member of the revolutionary organisation but soon parted and set up his own group. The new faction differed only in tactics. It believed that under the existing conditions in Iran, the first step should be to set up separate Marxist circles in Iran and then join them together to form a labour party. It was opposed both to Soviet Union and the Tudeh Party.

Iranian People's Liberation Organisation :

This was set up by another founding member of revolutionary organisation Cyrus-Nahavandi in 1967, when he left it. This group, which later returned to Iran believed in guerilla activities. They were involved in many a dare devil activities like robbing banks, before they were captured and punished.

Toofan Organisation:

This faction was established in 1962 and was a Mao'ist group. It flourished in the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet rift. It sent a large number of youth to China and Cuba for training and subsequently to Iran for political activities. But it too fell into the same tract as Tudeh. By obediently following its master China it too was compromised by China's rapport with the Shah (of Iran) in 1970s'48. The Toofan played a negligible role in the revolution of 1979.

In 1969 some two hundred Tudeh members, dissatisfied with Party's aversion to political violence, formed the group called "Sazman-e-Enqalab-e Komunista-ye Iran (Revolutionary organisation of Iranian communists). This group advocated recourse to armed measures to enhance its activities. On the eve of the 1979 revolution a variety of groups pulled out of the Tudeh in order to minimise the liability associated with it. Several political groups formed "Democratic Union of Iranian People" under the writer Mahmud Behazin. This organisation was doctrinally close to the Tudeh but suffered little of its handicaps. This organisation was able to mount the support of as many as 10,000 people in favour of and armed uprising. Around 1965 the Tudeh party lost its monopoly of the left in

48 Shahrn chubin "Leftist force in Iran", Problem of communism, July august 1980 p 4.

Iran, for in that period several political groups espousing various forms of leftist radicalism emerged as a

direct result of the 1963 religious uprising.⁴⁹ The immediate mood generated by the brutal suppression of the June 1963 uprising was one of apathy and despair. But for a tiny number of young revolutionaries within the abyss of this despair the nucleus of new hope was crystallizing. For these young men "the June uprising marked the end of all forms of reformist and parliamentary struggle."⁵⁰

They were convinced that only meaningful way by which struggle can be waged against the regime was "through armed struggle, a struggle that stemmed from a carefully chalked out strategy emanating from concrete organisational network and was conducted within a dynamic

ideological framework."⁵¹ Thus "after 1963 militants, irrespective of their ideology, had to ask themselves a question. "what is to be done?". The answer was clear,

the guerilla warfare".⁵² These guerillas can be divided into five political groupings 1. The Sazman -e Cherik-haye Fedayi-e Khalq-e Iran (The organisation of the guerilla freedom fighters of the Iranian people), known as the Marxist Fedayeen. This was the most genuine Marxist Leninist group in Iran and is credited with the first major

49 Zabih n 33 p 10

50 Suroosh Irfani-Revolutionary Islam in Iran (London 1983) p 89

51 Ibid

52 Haleh Afshar-Iran A Revolution in turmoil (Mc Millan 1985) p 152

guerilla attack on the regime at Siahkal. Which "sparked off eight year of intense guerilla activities and inspired many other radicles, Islamic as well as Marxist, to take up arms against the Pahalvi regime."⁵³

2. The Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran (The Organisation of Freeddom fighters of the Iranian people) generally referred to as the Mojahedin. This group took inspiration from two different ideologies, Islam and Marxism. Its "ideology can be described best as combination of Islam

⁵⁴ and Marxism". The striking feature of the Mojahedin was the fact that hey successfully cemented together such divorce themes as Shi-notion of martyrdom, classical Marxist theories of class struggle and historical determination and neo-Marxist concept of arms struggle, guerilla warfare and revolutionary heroism into one

⁵⁵ compact ideology.

The organisation suffered a Schism in 1975 owing to the ideological split in the leadership cadre of the Mojahedin "between those who had turned to Marxism and insisted to convert Mujahedin into a Marxist Leninst group and those who, confronted the Marxist by adhering to the

⁵⁶ Islamic ideology of the organisation" After 1975 there existed two Mojahedin factions, Islamic and the Marxist. Although estranged against each other neither group ceased

53 Ibid p 149

54 Ervand Abrahamian - Radical Islam (London 1989) p 92

55 For further reading see chap III

56 Infant-n 50 p 103-104

its operation against their regime. The activities of Islamic Mojahedin included "bank robbery in Isfahan, a bomb attack on Israeli cultural centre at Tehran and strike in Arya

57
Mehr university" The exploits of the Marxist Mojahedin included dare devil bomb attack on ITT Office, and the police station in Tehran's northern suburb and assassination of two American military advisors.

Other independent guerilla Marxist groups included the Sazman-e Azadibakhsh-e Khalq-e Iran (the Organisation for Liberation of Iranian People), the Gorueh-e Lurestan (The Lurestan group) in mashad, Sazman-e Arman-e Khalq (The organisation of people's Idea) and the Razmandagan-e Azadi-e Tabegh Kargar (the Fighters for the Liberation of Working class). Among all these guerilla groups the Mojahedin and the Fedayeen were the most important.

In the revolutionary upheaval of 1978-79 all these leftist groups played a crucial role. The Tudeh, the Mojahedin and the Fedayeen contributed the chunk of the street demonstrators against the Shah. Inversely, they also bore the brunt of casualties suffered during the revolution. In short, their contribution in ousting the Shah and bringing Khomeini to power was phenomenal. Yet all these could not make Khomeinis Iran "GOD'S BLESSINGS" for the leftist forces and almost all of them suffered the ignominy of being banned soon after the emergence of The Islamic Republic of Iran.

THE TUDEH AND THE SOVIET CONNECTION

CHAPTER II

The twelve years between the fall of Reza Shah's autocracy in August 1941 and the establishment of Mohammed Reza Shah's autocracy in August 1953, are one of the major periods in the modern era of the Iranian history in which a political analyst can look more vividly below the political surface into the social-infrastructure of Iranian politics. In the porch of this period stands the enigmatic figure of Tudeh party, a party which has ever been so diversely interpreted by political commentators, such as the "only consistently well organised political party in Iran"¹, a genuine Marxist-Leninist party, 'messiah of the oppressed people' on the one hand and a 'Soviet Trojan horse in the heart of Iran'² and a 'local agent of Russia'³ on the other. What is astonishing however, is the fact that 'a party that was potently secular, radical and marxist could grow into a mass movement, in a country noted for its fervent shi'ism, traditional monarchism and intense nationalism'⁴.

While addressing the first party congress, Iraj iskandari summed up the party position thus. 'The aim

- 1.- A.H.H. Abidi - Iran at the crossroads (New Delhi 1989) p.159
- 2.- Sepehr Zabih- Communist Movement in Iran (Berkely 1966), p.331
- 3.- Shahram Chubin- 'Leftist Forces in Iran, Problems of Communism, (July-August 1989) p.3
- 4.- Ervand Abrahamian- Iran Between Two Revolutions (Princeton, 1982) p.X 1

of the Tudeh party is to unite the masses - workers, the peasants, the traders, the craftsmen and the progressive intellectual, of course these classes have economic differences.....in contemporary Iran, however, these differences are overshadowed by common struggle against imperialism, against absent landlords, against exploiting capitalists and against industrial robber barons. Our duty is to unite the exploited classes and

5

forge a party of masses' .

Marxism and other socialist philosophies have been a continuous attraction for atleast a segment of western educated Iranians right from the turn of the present century. Once the Bolshevik revolution became a reality the main sources of intellectual penetration of Iran

6

shifted from 'West European countries to Soviet Russia' From 1917 to 1921 the Soviet backed communists were active openly in the Northern Region of Iran. But between 1921 and 1941, Iran and Soviet Union had a fairly normal relation at governmental level which squeezed the open activities of the Iranian Communists.

7

The emergence of a nucleus known as 'The Group of 53' , which was the total number of individuals arrested and convicted in 1937, shows that communism had come to stay

5.- Rehbar 4th Sept 1944.

6.- Sepehr Zabih- Left in Contemporary Iran (London 1986) p.1

7.- Other Leftist group including 'Group of 53' are discussed in chapter-1.

in Iran. The regime acted vigilantly and entered into a pact with Turkey, Iraq and Afghanistan in order to cooperate with each other, in controlling Soviet sponsored leftist organizations and movements.

But the war time occupation of Iran by Anglo-Soviet forces changed the situation dramatically under the Anglo-Soviet ultimatum, Reza Shah abdicated in favour of crown Prince Mohammed Reza Shah and hurriedly left the country. The fall of Reza Shah, temporarily ended the politics of state control and socio-political conditions of Iran were favourable for a novel venture in the realm

8
of politics' .

Both external and internal factors contributed to the emergence of a genuine communist movement, of the former, the most important was the physical presence of the Red Army in Northern Iran which underscored the return of Russian influence after a lapse of more than two decades. Internally, the principal factors were the legacy of Reza Shah, changes in social conditions over the preceding twenty years and the new political environment created by weakening of Iranian State.

As a result of Reza Shah's modernisation programme both the capitalists and the labour force had expanded considerably but they had remained largely deprived of an opportunity to alter the pattern of political relation in accordance with such changes. The consequent

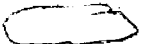
grievances of these social forces coupled with the abrupt removal of the restrictions on the freedom of political activity produced conditions favourably to the formulation of radical political organization.

The Tudeh party emerged immediately after the abdication of Reza Shah and release of 'less dangerous' prisoners under general amnesty. Twenty seven younger members of the famous 'fifty three', imprisoned in 1937, announced formation of a political organisation on 29 September, 1941 in Tehran and christened it as Hizb-e Tudeh-e Iran (party of Iranian Masses). The founders of the party selected sulayman-Iskandari as the Chairman of the party.

The immediate goals the party set before itself were - release of the rest of the 'fifty three', recognition of Tudeh as a legitimate organisation, publication of a daily newspaper, and formulation of a programme that would not antagonise the Ulema as the previous secular programme had done but would attract veteran democrats, socialists, communist as well as young marxist and even non-marxist radicals.

These goals were achieved within the next six months. Government extended amensty to all political dissidents imprisoned during Reza Shah's regime, including the rest of 'fifty three in mid October 1941. The recognition of the Tudeh party came officially in early February 1942 when the police issued it permit to

hold public service to commemorate the first anniversary of Arani's death. In mid-February, the party obtained a daily organ when a daily called 'Siyasat' (Politics) was revived. Moreover a daily called 'Mardom' (people) was also launched.

The provisional programme issued by the Tudeh party in late February 1943 reflects the confidence gained by ^{the party} during its initial success. The programme  called for eliminating the vestiges of Reza Shah's dictatorship, protection of constitutional laws, civil liberties and human rights, safe guarding rights of all citizens specially the masses and participation in the world-wide struggle of democracy against fascism⁹. The main aim of the provisional programme was to unite all citizens against both internal fascism encouraged by Reza Shah's gang and international fascism led by Hitler.

It is significant that despite party's strong connection with the Soviets and its leaders' ideological commitment to Marxism-Leninism the party kept marxist demands out of its programme.

The reasons forwarded by the Tudeh leaders for not calling themselves 'communists' despite being Marxist-Leninist and pro-soviet are the following: clergy-phobia, 1931 law banning all collective ideologies, twenty five years of government propoganda that had

9.- Tudeh Party; "Provisional Party Programme" Siyasat (22 Feb. 1942)

'installed in the segments of population a hostile attitude towards socialism, communism and soviet union, revolution and realisation that the industrial working class still constituted a small fraction of total

10
 population'. Radmanesh made it clear in his address thus 'a true communist must always adapt marxism to local conditions. If an Iranian communist adopts wholesale the programme of any communist party in an industrial country, he will undoubtedly fail to appeal to the broad masses. Consequently, he cannot be considered a true communist. On the contrary he should

11
 be considered a political provocateur'.

After formulating the provisional programme, the Tudeh turned its attention to its organization. The first provisional Conference of 1943 brought thirty-three observers from provinces and eighty-seven delegates from Tehran. Each delegate represented ten members. As for the strength of the party, Tudeh had six thousand members spread over the country, a quarter of them were intellectual, (rushanfekran) and most of the rest were workers, artisans, craftsmen. The Conference hammered out detailed programme in order to replace the provisional one, designed a structure on the basis of 'democratic centralism' elected a provisional central

10.- S. Iskandari. Address to first "Tehran Conference" Rahbar (23 Jan. 1943)

11.- B. Alavi - Panjah-o-Sah Nafar (The Fifty Three) (Tehran 1944) p.189

committee as the leadership of the whole organisation pending the convening of first party congress.

The new programme spelled out specific proposals to attract the target groups in the masses, going beyond the call to unite masses, it furnished specific programme to attract 'workers, peasants, women and such members of middle class (Tabqeh-i mutawassateh) as intellectuals, small land owners, craftsman, traders and

low ranking government employees'¹². It made progressive promises to all the groups. To workers it promised labour legislation, an eight-hour day, paid vacations, pay for Fridays, over-time scales, disability insurance, government subsidised houses, pension and ban on child labour. Its land reform programme was aimed at wooing peasants whom it promised redistribution of state and crown lands, buying of private estates by government and their resale to landless at low interest rates, retention of larger portion of harvest for share croppers, election of kadkhudas by village community elimination of feudal levies and obligations, formation of an agricultural bank and village co-operatives and construction of rural clinics, village schools and irrigation project. To women, it pledged political rights, welfare assistance for indigent, mothers and equal pay for equal works. For workers and traders it offered viable guilds, state subsidised workshops, and protection from foreign competition. To salaried middle class, it promised job security, higher income, lower

taxes, state control on rent and food prices, and government project to employ university and high school graduates. The programme also called for 'national independence from all forms of colonialism and imperialism, protection of civil liberty and human rights, observance of constitutional law particularly the separation of Judiciary from the Executive and a special Supreme Court to try public officials who in recent years had violated the fundamental law' .¹³

The programme of the Tudeh party was in keeping with its decision to participate in the forthcoming election to Fourteenth Majles. The attempt to play to the gallery was only transparently disguised. The Tudeh party clearly reposed its faith in constitutional development rather than in armed revolution. A party intellectual argued that 'the experience of Spain had shown to Iran the danger of premature revolution' .¹⁴

Moreover, a party communique inter alia made the Tudeh support for constitution abundantly clear. It said 'our enemy smear us with the label (communist) to frighten capitalists and traders. The Tudeh party is fully committed to the fundamental law of the land. Because we believe that 'communism' is a social ideology suitable for social conditions that do not exist in Iran' .¹⁵ It

12.- Tudeh Party - n.9

13.- Ibid - 12 Feb. 1989

14.- H. Masavat - How to change the system (a pamphlet).

15.- "Tudeh Party and Partitionship in Foreign Policy" Rahbar (17 May 1944)

can be safely observed that 'upto dual crises of Azerbaijan and the Soviet Union - Iranian relations from 1944 to 1947 the Tudeh was not organisationally or ideologically a true communist party' ¹⁶ .

As to the party structure, an elaborate programme was hammered out on the basis ^{of} 'democratic centralism'. Democratic centralism is the doctrine espoused by Lenin just after the revolution. It lays down that 'conflicting opinion and views should be fully expressed and widely discussed at all levels of party hierarchy and that the central committee should take them into account while making a decision, but once a decision has been made the policy must be unquestionably accepted and carried out by all party members' ¹⁷ . But objectively considered democracy and centralism do not go hand in hand. Indeed, the paradoxical principle is in general involved in early phase of a communist party, when central control is problematic and there is need to fuse the values of democratic participation with central command authority'. Hence the Tudeh party's initial commitment to the principle of democratic centralism.

The party rules and regulations approved by conference stressed the need for both 'strong centre'

and democratic-behaviour' ¹⁸ . It structured the party

16.- Zabih - n6- p.3

17.- D. Robertson- The Penguin Dictionary of politics (London, 1985) p.29

18.- Abrahamian- n4 p.289

into local branches at places of work, provincial conference, provincial control committee and party congress and national central committee.

The Tehran Conference elected fifteen founding members and the future Tudeh leader to provisional central committee. In addition to Sulayman Iskandari who was re-elected Chairman, the committee included - Dr. Mohammed Bährani; Dr. Morteza Yezdi; Iraj Iskandari; Nuruddin Alamuti; Abdul Hossen Noshin; Ali Kobari; Nosratallah Ezazi, Ibrahim Mahazari; Reza Rusta; Dr. Ferydoun Kashavarz; Ardashar Ovanessian; Dr. Reza Rodmanesh; Ali Amir Khizi and Zia Alamuti' .

A social survey of the early leadership of Tudeh Party indicates the following facts:

(1) They came largely from younger generation. If one excludes sulayman Iskandari, the average age of the committee members was only thrity seven. Peshavari, the most important survivor of earlier communist movement declined to go their way dubbing them as 'young

inexperienced intellectual' .

(2) They were from Persian speaking intellegentsia residing in Tehran, coming in general from the upper middle class including four aristocrats, four civil servants, one judge, three professors, one doctor, one lawyer, one theatre director, two former teachers, one ex-pharmacist and only one factory worker. So there is

19.- Ibid. p.289

20.- Shahram, n3, p.3

an element of truth in the criticism that the early leadership of Tudeh did not represent 'workers, toilers

21

and intellectuals' .

There was significant differences between the leadership of communist party of Iran, before two decades, and the leadership of the Tudeh party. Whereas the founders of the Tudeh party were young, resident of Tehran and persian speaking, the surviving communist leaders were natives of Azerbaijan and Azeri speaking. Whereas the Tudeh founders were university educated intellectuals who had reached marxism through the left wing movements of Western Europe, the leaders of the communist party of Iran were activists and self taught intellectuals who had reached the same destination through leninism of Russian Bolshevik Party. Whereas the Tudeh founders, as European educated marxists, saw politics through the class perspective only, the communist leaders, having experienced the ethnic genocide of caucasus and the regional revolts of Khaibani and kuchek khan tended to see society through communal as well as class perspective.

Galvanised by the Tehran Conference, the Tudeh started spreading its branches all over the country. The industrial areas of North and textile manufacturing centres of Isfahan were its special targets. In some places, it created new organisation while in other areas

21.- Lenczouski George, " Communist Movement in Iran", Middle East Journal (Vol.1 1944,) p.29

...it created new ones. In Isfahan Tudeh obtained a ready made organization when it was joined by a group of radical intellectuals and militant trade unionists, who in 1942 had led a series of successful strikes in the textile mills. In Mashad, it created a branch by merging two existing groups of persian-speaking intellectuals and Turkish speaking workers.

By the time, it joined the electoral fray for the Fourteenth majlis. In 1973, the Tudeh was 'the only party with a determined policy, a well-designed

structure and a nation wide organisation'²². In the provinces north of Tehran, it has branches in all the twenty one cities with a population of over twenty thousand and in nine towns with population between ten to twenty thousand. In the provinces south of Iran it had opened branches and secret cells. In six of the twenty-three cities with population over twenty thousand. Moreover, the party published six major newspapers, Rahbar, Mardom and Razm in Tehran, Rasti (Truth) in Mashad Azerbaijan in Tabriz and Jowdat (Bounty) in Ardabel. The party's strong showing in the north can be explained by the radical history of Gilan and Azerbaijan, the new factories located in Tehran and Mazandaran, and the support given by the Soviets. Its relative weakness in south was due to the British and more important the reluctance of the Tudeh to move into

22.- Abrahamian- n4, p.291

the vital oil industry while the war in Europe

²³
continued' .

In the election, Tudeh did fairly well when eight out of twenty three Tudeh sponsored candidates won in the election. Of the eight who won, two won in Gilan, two in Khurasan, one in Tehran province, one in Mazandaran, one in Isfahan and one in northern christian constituency. The party secured nearly 200,000 votes. It also secured more than 13% of votes cast in the whole country and in the process it established itself as a political force to reckon with. Incidentally, it was for the first time in the Iranian history that a secular radical organisation had found popular support. The election, because of its limited victory and exposure, it provided to the Tudeh members, made them realise their effectiveness. The other indicators of party's popularity among the masses were the massive funeral procession of Suleyman Iskandari, of about twenty five thousand members and large circulation of the party mouth piece 'Rahbar'.

In organising labour, the Tudeh support a major victory, when on May day of 1944 at its behest four federations of unions merged to form central council of Federated Trade Unions of Iranian Toilers and workers. What sent shivers down the spines of wealthy was the fact that the union not only organised all urban wage earners, including women but it also taught them how to

fight for better conditions. The Tudeh demonstrated its clout over workers by defeating the company unions and organizing seven day strike in Textile Mills in Isfahan. The Tudeh contributed much in the pressure group politics in Iran.

When the party convened its first party congress in Tehran (August 1944) it had quite a few things to review. The congress included 168 delegates representing 25,800 members²⁴. It included 27 wage earners, as delegates and used both Azeri and Persian in conducting the meetings.

A new party programme was debated and adopted in the congress, drafted predominantly by Radmanesh, ovanessian and Iraj Iskandari. While retaining the programme hammered out in provisional conference of Tehran it added 'two significant but vague clauses and one change in the emphasis'²⁵. The old programme had mentioned neither the linguistic nor the religious minorities. The new programme demanded a complete freedom of minorities in matters relating the religion and culture and complete social equality between all citizens of the Iranian nation (mellat) irrespective of citizen's religion and birth. The old programme emphasised the need to unite masses against fascism, despotism and supporters of Reza Shah. The new programme

24.- World Strenght of communist Party Organisation
(Washington, 1962)

25.- ^{See} Abrahamian, n4 for a detailed discussion.

stressed the importance mobilising the 'exploited classes against the exploiting feudal and capitalist classes'. The programme thus became socialist in context

while remaining constitutional in form'²⁶ The leadership pattern remained almost the same. Till this stage, Tudeh was not ideologically and organizationally a true communist party. Hence, initially, it was perceived to be a democratic party espousing freedom of press, speech and assembly. 'While it generally supported the Soviets, the support was given when the Western countries (led by United States and Great Britain) fighting Nazism, were closely aligned with the Soviet Union to resist Nazi invasion, crush the German war machine, and terminate hostilities in Europe. Thus supporting Soviet policies at that time cannot be

equated with espousing Marxism-Leninism'²⁷

1944 to 1946 was the most successful time for the Tudeh Party. While protesting against, government's refusal to grant oil concession to the Soviet Union in October 1944, outside the Masles, it drew 3500 demonstrators. The tudeh, in short, "was stimulating the

masses to think and act politically"²⁸. The Tudeh achieved its greatest success when Govam gave three cabinet positions to Keshvar, Yaxdi and Iraj albeit

26.- Ibid, P-215

27.- Zabih - n6, p.3

28.- New York Times (15 June 1965)

under soviet pressure.

Soviet Connection

It may be noted that the Tudeh was created in a back drop of anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran, war situation and resultant social upheaval. Till 1944, when Allied victory was assured, Moscow's fate was hanging too precariously to allow it to devote its attention to its interests in Iran. But once the victory was assured Soviet activity in Iran intensified.

When Ivanovich Kavtardze the Soviet emissary placed in Tehran the Soviet demand of oil concession in Northern Iran to exploit oil. Simultaneously the Tudeh denounced sa'id 'demanding his resignation and granting of oil concession to Soviet Union'²⁹. Which to say the least was against the interest of their nation. The party described Iran's Northern Region including the provinces of Azerbaijan and Mazandaran on the caspian sea 'as the legitimate security perimeter (Harim-e

Amniyat) for Soviet Union'³⁰. In Tehran Tudeh demonstrators were transported in Soviet army trucks and 'openly escorted by armed soviet soldiers. Despite the Tudeh's fury and Soviet threat the Iranians stood firm. Dr. Mosaddeq introduced in the majles a bill prohibiting any Minister from negotiating oil concession with

29.- I.J. Lederer W.S. Vucinich Soviet Union and Meddleast : Post World War II Era, p.58

30.- Ibid. p.58

foreigners without prior approval of the Parliament'³¹

In Moscow's attempt to establish a communist dominated separatist movement in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan 'Soviet agents worked closely with disaffected elements whether they might be marxists or the feudal tribal chiefs'³².

In Azerbaijan the Soviets assisted in the formation of the so called 'Democratic party a 'local version of Tudeh.'³³ The party was to stage a coup, d 'etat to occupy government building and to proclaim autonomy of Azerbaijan. In order to intimidate the Iranian army (camping in Tabriz) and to support the "popular movement" a contingent of fresh Soviet soldiers, along with a number of armed Soviet Azerbaijanis (identical in appearance and in speech with their southern brother and therefore able to blend with local population) were sent. Assured of total impunity, the local branch of the Tudeh, now renamed 'Democratic Party, set up autonomous government of Azerbaijan.

But when the central government sent troops to these provinces, Moscow decided to look the other way. This broke the back bone of separatists and their faith in Moscow as well. It proved to them that the 'fate of communist movement in Iran is only of marginal

31.- Averi Modern Iran (New York, 1965) p.102

32.- I.J. Lederer and W.S. Vucinich (Eds), n29, p.57

33.- Ibid. 57

importance³⁴ to the Soviet Union despite its claim to
 the leadership of international communist movement'.³⁴
 This realisation provoked a major split in Tudeh party
 and gradually led to the emergence of anti-Soviet or
 non-Soviet Leftist groups within Iran towards the end of
 1946. It is important to note that the first major crack
 in international communist movement did not occur with
 defection of Yugoslavia's Marshal Tito in 1948, but with
 disintegration of most powerful communist movement in
 middle East, two years earlier'.³⁵

The confessions of the high ranking Tudeh leaders,
 'after a series of trials before the military
 tribunal'³⁶ where they were allowed to defend themselves
 and express their view, gives credence to the view that
 the Tudeh was all along a 'local agent of USSR with
 which it had joined in an "unequal" relation by
 identical interest and mutually reinforcing policy'.³⁷

In Tudeh party's ties with the Soviet Union were
 both 'an asset and a liability'.³⁸ In mid-sixties for
 example Moscow followed a policy of co-operation with
 Shah and accordingly reduced its assistance to defend
 and rationalise a policy and weakened itself'.³⁹

Soviet ties were also a source of controversy with

34.- Zabih, n6, p.5

35.- Ibid. 5.

36.- See, Confession of Highranking Tudeh Leaders
 (Tehran, 1984)

37.- Chubin, n3, p.2

38.- Ibid. p.2

39.- Ibid. p.7

in the Tudeh. 'In 1948, Khalil Maleiki left the party protesting against strong Soviet links and found a party called "Third Force"⁴⁰. Similarly, in 1965 in the after math of Sino-Soviet rift, a Maoist group 'Toofan' (Typhoon) also broke away. In 1969, a group of around 200 Tudeh members, dissatisfied with party's aversion to political violence, formed the 'The Revolutionary Organization of Iranian Communists' a group that advocated recourse to armed violence, to enhance its activities. On the eve of the 1979 revolution a variety of groups pulled out of the Tudeh in order to avert the liability associated with the Tudeh, as a result of its association with the Soviet Union. But association brought advantages too. It facilitated such activities in recruitment, infiltration of agents, provision of sanctuary and exercise of diplomatic pressure, soviet funds, and access to Soviet printing press. The Soviet-sponsored clandestine radio station at Baku was an asset of the Tudeh party of which no other Leftist group in Iran could boast of'⁴¹.

From October, 1946 to February 1950, the Tudeh faced intermittent repression. Both, the alignment of forces within Iran, and preoccupation of Kremlin with Europe and far East, acted against the interests of the Tudeh. 'In Kerman, Fars and Sistan, people looted party headquarters, destroyed newspapers and forced the labour

40.- It's tenets are discussed in Chapter-1

41.- Suroosh Irfani - Revolutionary Islam in Iran (London 1983), p.73

42

organisation to flee'. In Isfahan and Khuzistan, the military took over the party organisations, the Tudeh was all but banned. This restraint of, not banning the Tudeh, can be attributed to various factors, but the most important reason was fear of Qavam, to antagonise the Soviet Union and its consequent wrath. Moreover it was conceived that the Tudeh will find it difficult to withstand the burden of recent disaster. Indeed within days the Tudeh was a house divided against itself.

An emergency plenum of Central Committee was convened on the demand of the group led by Khalil Maleki. The Plenum took drastic steps. It eliminated the post of General Secretary and replaced Central Committee with a Seven-man provisional executive committee. The Executive Committee did large-scale reshuffling of the

43

party' It publicly reaffirmed the party's support for democracy, constitutionalism and legal-parliamentary road for social change. It also announced that party would boycott the forthcoming election. But these changes did little to undo its internal division.

It took the party around two years to return to the path of revival. The second party congress convened in Tehran in 1948 helped the party to an extent, to bring itself to order. In months following the second congress, the Tudeh leaders forged two pronged strategy for its recovery. On the one hand they worked to form a

42.- Abrahamian- n4, p.305

43.- Abrahamian- n4, pp.306-307

'broad alliance of anti-royalist forces' to regain the freedom to create mass organisation, and on the other, they concentrated on strengthening the provincial branches and building cadres that will be well disciplined in the rules of 'democratic centralism' and well educated in principles of Marxism-Leninism.

In the meantime, political situation in Iran provided another chance to the Tudeh. With announcement for the election for the Sixteenth Majles, it found an opportunity to hold public meetings, although it was not allowed to sponsor candidates. Moreover, the new Premier, General Razamara, soft-pedalled the control on the Tudeh in order to placate the Soviet Union. The election of the Mosaddeq, further helped the Tudeh as, his liberal policies eased the strict police control. The Tudeh established a new newspaper and created frontal organisations to replace the banned ones. In the place of outlawed Youth and Woman organisation, 'Society of Democratic Youth' and 'Society of Democratic Women' were created. In place of CCFTU and 'Peasant's Union' it formed 'Society to help peasant'; 'Society to fight illiteracy' and 'Society for free Iran' etc. were established. In the spring of 1951, at the height of the nationalisation campaign the front organisation of the Tudeh joined in organising a series of strikes. The Tudeh wanted to take advantage out of the popular uprising to change the system.

In 1953, there was a sharp division in the party on

the subject of supporting Dr. Mossaddeq. In the end, radical section of the party carried the day. To them, 'Mossaddeq was not a national hero fighting for a national cause but a puppet of the comprador bourgeoisie, attached to American Imperialism, not a determined reformer but a vacillating Aristocrat who would ultimately make his peace with the Shah' ⁴⁴. This view was in keeping with the view of Stalin, the high priest of international communist movement, that in 1951-53 the World was sharply divided between the so-called Socialist and Imperialist countries, with no room left for nationalists like Mosaddeq.

The Tudeh, if it was true representative of Iran's toiling masses, and a nationalist party, (which it tried not calling itself), then, it had failed to prove itself. It's crusade against Dr. Mosaddeq helped in weakening the government, enabled the US to crush him and paved path for 'Iranian Generals' to go ahead with the CIA-designed coup, d'etat which toppled Mossadeq from power in August ⁴⁵ 1953 and brought the Shah back to power.

With the fall of Mossadeq and restoration of the Shah, the Tudeh suffered considerable repression at the hands of the regime. "Its leadership went into exile in East Germany, and its rank and file converted into more

44.- Irfani- n41, p.61

45.- Chubin, n3, p.7

acceptable political ideas'. By the 1960's, the Tudeh's core membership dwindled perhaps to 2000 and by 1973 perhaps to 500⁴⁶. The Tudeh's support now came mainly from professionals and intellectuals. The party appears to have been over taken by history.

Only in the late 70's with the first glimmerings of the active opposition in Iran did the Tudeh bestir itself. In 1975, the plenum of Tudeh's central committee agreed to seek a coalition among the disparate opposition groups, opposing the Shah's rule, doctrinal impunity notwithstanding. Eskandari who was accused of failing to appreciate the surge of religious feeling and its tactical implication for Tudeh, was replaced as First Secretary of the party by Nuruddin Kinouri, who had been in exile in East Germany for more than two decades.

Despite managing a come back in the years immediately preceding the revolution, the Tudeh could not become a major force in the revolution itself. It did not have the time to absorb host of ideological and tactical questions, raised by the rapid fall of old regime, the collapse of imperial army and the broad popular base of the opposition. Having been the main target of the Shah's repression it had been considerably depleted in number. By 1976-77, it had about 1000 members - while by comparison other leftist groups in

46.- World Strength of Communist Party Organization, US Department of State Bureau of Research, (Washington)

Iran numbered fifteen to twenty times more⁴⁷ . 'In early 1979, it was accorded third or fourth place among the

Leftist groups in Iran'⁴⁸ .

With the keen appreciation of its narrow base and limited social support, the Tudeh had difficult choice in early 1979. Should it throw its support behind the emerging clerical elements ? Or should it take advantage of the disorder to push for a Socialist People's Republic?, were most questions facing it. At last, the Tudeh decided to embrace the Imam, and thus started the end of the Tudeh Party.

47.- Rich. F. Star (Ed)- Year Book of International Affairs, (Stanford 1976-77)

48.- M. Shulman- New York Times [22 feb. 1979), p.9

THE MOJAHEDIN

CHAPTER-3

THE MOJAHEDIN

From the 1953 coup d'etat started a decade which slowly but surely, rejuvenated the monarchy in Iran. It was a decade which ⁱⁿ more than one way _^ belonged to the Shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. Consolidation of powers was the primary goal at which all his policies and programmes were basically aimed. It went from pampering Coup leaders with prize posts to creation of SAVAK, to crush all political parties from Tudeh to National-Front. "The Shah obtained from the United States emergency financial aid totalling \$145 million between 1953 and 1957 to ward off government bankruptcy, boost moral ^{of} _^ royalists and inject confidence into business community." ¹ National control of oil was no more the war cry but it was replaced by the compromise of convenience with British and American multinational oil companies. As a result of the new agreement "oil revenue shot up from \$340 million in 1953-54 to \$437 million in 1962-63." ² The revenue loan along with \$500 million US military aid helped the Shah to expand the armed forces "from 120,000 to 200,000 men and raise military budget from \$80 million in 1953 to \$183 million in 1963," ³

Economically relaxed and infrastructurally confident

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- 1.- Ervand Abrahamian- Iran Between Two Revolutions (Princeton 1982), p. 419
 - 2.- F. Fersharoki- Development of Iranian Oil Company (New York, 1976), p. 133
 - 3.- Abrahamian, n1, p. 42

the Shah turned his attention towards ensalving the most potent citadel of his opposition—the parliament. To start with, the elections were totally rigged and parliament was divided into two royalist— political parties better known as "YES" and "YES SIR" parties. A series of constitutional amendments were undertaken to serve the dual purpose of weakening the opposition while strengthening the Shah. Similarly, trade unions were not spared either. The genuine ones were banned and dummy trade unions were floated by SAVAK. In short all the avenues of expressing dissent were either obliterated or decisively weakened.

The Clergy—Shah relations were also sweet. His relation with the grand Ayotollahs of the time including Ayatollah—ol—ozma Borujerdi the leading Marjai—e—Taqlid and religious leaders of the shia world were friendly. Indeed, the Shah used Islam to limit the appeal of social radicalism specially Marxism. Borujerdi supported the Shah not only against the Tudeh but also the secular National Front. "Infact, in these years relationship between Shah and Ulema was so close that many critics such as Ayatollah Taleqani's right hand man caustically commented that the Clergy has become a "pillar of Pahalvi State,"

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But towards early 1960 economic crisis overshadowed Iran. The Shah's populist development programmes along with his ambitious military budgets proved too much for

the Iranian treasury. Moreover, reckless borrowing undermined Iran's foreign exchange reserves. Pushed by all these factors the Shah was forced to knock at the doors of the US and IMF for fund. He got the funds but only on the condition of implementing liberal reforms, which, to the current Western mind, was the best bullwark against communism. Thus started the White revolution which along with the brewing economic crisis deprived the regime of hard earned stability. The land reform which initially threatened the property of religious foundation and the electoral system which extended the vote to women and other reforms which paved the path for eventual recognition of Bahaism as a legitimate religion. The cumulative effect of all these were that it broke down the special relation between Ulema and the regime. The next blow in this regard was the death of Ayatollah Borujerdi and the emergence of Imam-Khomeini as the spiritual leader of Iran. Khomeini was a severe critic of Shah's modernising programme. The tension heightened when the Shah started to talk of 'lice ridden cleriks' and 'reactionary mullas.'

Thus, the Regime-Clergy estrangement sparked off a major demonstration on 5 June 1963, on the climax of that year's Moharram mournings. Unarmed demonstrators shouting 'Imam Hogein protect us from injustice' took to the streets of Tehran, Qom, Mashhad, Tabriz Shiraz and

Isfahan. The regime retaliated by using massive fire power and according to the opposition the casualty

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totalled 20,00. The immediate mood generated by the June massacre was one of apathy and despair. The Pahalvi dynasty therefore was once again wielding its authority unchallenged and more brutally than it had ever before. However, for a tiny number of young revolutionaries, with in the abyss of this despair, the nucleus of new hope was crystallizing. For these young revolutionaries, the June uprising marked the end of all forms of reformist and

⁶
parliamentary struggle. They were convinced that the only meaningful way by which a struggle can be waged against the regime was "through armed struggle- a struggle that stemmed from a carefully chalked out strategy emanating from concrete organisational network and was conducted

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within a dynamic ideological framework." The Shah's determination to use massive force, the army's willingness to shoot down thousands of unarmed demonstrators and the SAVAK's eagerness to root out the underground network of the Tudeh and National Front, all combined to compel the opposition, especially its younger members, to question the traditional methods of resistance-election boycotts, general strikes and street demonstrations. The 1963 blood bath exposed the bankruptcy of peaceful methods. After 1963, militants, irrespective of their ideology, had to

5.- Ibid. p. 21

6.- Suroosh Irfani- Revolutionary Islamic Iran (London, 1983), p. 89

7.- Ibid. p. 91

ask themselves the question "What is to be done?" The answer was clear guerilla warfare.⁸

Thus the religious uprising of 1963 is correctly considered by many commentators as the turning point in the anti-government struggle in Iran under the Shah.⁹ The suppression of basically fundamentalist shi'ite resurgents and their followers, lower middle classes and bararis, taught the opposition few important lessons. "The uprising and its suppression made them realise that;

(i) with even minimum planning Shi,ism's martyrdom philosophy was ripe for exploitation for revolutionary ends, as witnessed by thousands of chanting religious zealots who had liberally rushed towards firing machine guns and laid their bodies in front of the advancing tanks of the Shah's army.

(ii) Secular opposition groups such as the National- Front and by then discredited pro-Soviet Tudeh party could not be insisted to do battle against the well armed security forces.

(iii) The case with which these forces were able to crush the uprising stemmed from oppositions inexperienced in armed struggle and absence of a

sufficient number of trained cadres."¹⁰ The first to draw

8.- Haleh Afshar (Ed), Iran Revolution in Turmoil (MacMillan, 1985), p. 152

9.- Sepehr Zabih, Leftist in Contemporary Iran (Croumhelm 1986), p.79

10.- Sepehr Zabih, Ideology and Power in Middleast (London, 1988), p-242

the logical conclusion from above premises were the founding members of 'Mojahedin'.

At that period of time Marxism as an ideology had proved its effectiveness in the liberation struggle of oppressed people around the world. It has organised and guided many popular movements to the victory on the basis of its systematic approach. It was therefore natural for the nuclei of revolutionary guerilla movements crystallizing in Asia and Latin America to adopt this ideology for guiding their struggle. Similarly, at this period in Iranian history, conventional Islam ~~seemed to have lost ground as an inspiring ideal for~~ "seemed to have lost ground as an inspiring ideal for generating systematic, long drawn struggle against imperialism, exploitation and dictatorship, was radicalised by re-interpretation of Islam by Ali-Shariati and founding members of Mujahedin"¹¹ For the first time in the history of contemporary revolutionary struggle, Islam was crystallising as a revolutionary ideology and not as a mere emotional slogan to fuel spontaneous movement. It was this radicalised Islam along with the time tested Marxism, which produced one of the most powerful guerilla organisations in Iran called Mojahedin-e-Khalq-e Iran (people's Mojahedin of Iran).

There were important reasons, because of which the Mojahedin decided to appeal to these two political sentiments—radical shi-ism and non-Soviet Marxism. The

¹¹ - Infani, 06, PP90-91

first, because past experience showed that radical-shiism could be used to generate extremely effective political actions; ranging from a shut down of entire bazaar to mass hunger strike and ultimately to acts of violence. The second because politically articulate Iranians especially of lower middle class or even the lower echelons of upper class had shown consistent susceptibility to leftist radicalism - even though pro-soviet communism was discredited. many educated Iranians seemed to respond

12

positively to some variety of Marxism. Thus as Ruhani and Haqshenas stated years later the original good of Mujahedin was to "synthesise the religious values of Islam with the scientific thought of Marxism.....for we were convinced that true Islam was compatible with the theories of social evolution, historical determinism and

13

class struggle."

The roots of the Mojahedin reached back to the Liberation Movement of Iran (Nehzat-eAzadi-ye Iran) the nationalistic liberal and lay religious party formed in early 1960s by Mehdi Bazargan. Its members were in general Pro-Mossaddeq and were concerned that the secular outlook of the National Front had alienated clerical

14

establishment and religious masses. Bazargan was a western educated Islamic radical who was against Marxism

12.- Zabih, n 10, p. 248.

13.- Abrahamian, n 4, p. 92

14.- Ibid, p. 81

but thought that true Islam was compatible with science, progress and social reform. He like Alishariafi, demanded greater role for intelligentsia (Rawshanfekeran).

In founding the Liberation Movement Bazargan was greatly helped by Ayatollah syed Mohmud Taleqani- the maverick Clergy man who had supported Mosaddeq consistently. He made his mark as a reform minded preacher of Hedayet Mosque in central Tehran. He belived that true Islam opposed explotation of all sorts and was synonymous with social justice. He supported both representative government and rule of law as desirable and as well as compatible with fundamentals of Shi'iIslam. He was convinced that "the two most dangerous forms of despotism were that of kings and clerics."¹⁵ Taleqanis political thought can be described as combination of nationalism, mild socilism and constitutionalism- particularly political pluralism and right of free expression for all."¹⁶

The Liberation Movement truly reflected the liberalism of its founders. While forming it they declared "We are Muslims, Iranians, constitutionalists and Mosaddeqists"¹⁷ and it was this tilt towards liberalism which earned them the permission for functioning for next two years because it filled in the authority's grand scheme of anti Marxist propoganda albeit indirectly. But

15.- Ibid, p 83
 16.- Ibid, p.83
 17.- Ibid, p. "

abrupt termination came with the June 5, 1963 uprising and imprisonment of its leaders. The in-human atrocities on unarmed and defenceless demonstrators had a traumatic effect on young entrants in politics. To use a sociological term, the June 1963 uprising had brought into being a new political generation.

This new political generation caused a split in the Liberation Movement as well as ^{other} political outfits. Three young and dynamic members of the Liberation movement—namely, Mohammed Hanifneshad, Syed Mohsen, and Ali-Asghar Badizadagan formed a new discussion group ^{to} explore new ways of fighting the regime. This discussion group later formed the nucleus of the Mojahedin. These younger members like all other political activists were convinced that liberal methods were proved obsolete so the basic question they addressed themselves was not, "whether but

when and how one should take up arms." ¹⁸ The Mojahedin, in an article entitled; Armed struggle is a historical necessity; explained: "The June uprising was a turning point in Iranian history, It revealed not only the political awareness of the masses but also the fundamental bankruptcy of old organisations that had tried to resist the regime and its imperial patrons through unarmed struggle: through street protests, labour strikes and

parliamentary reforms." ¹⁹ It burried once for all the reformist movement and gave forth to the revolutionary

18.—Abrahamian, Ibid, p. 85.

19.—Irfani, n 6, p. 89

ideology of Mojahedin.

It is noteworthy that the breaking away of younger members from its parent body was not preceded by violent fist clashes and prolonged and vociferous debate within the party. Surprisingly both factions had shown appreciable restraint in not washing the dirty lines in the public, and later tried to keep a managably cooperative relationship without compromising the basic convictions. 'Mojahedin', on their part, claimed to have lost no respect for the 'nonrevolutionary' organisation and considered it to be most left wing of existing political parties. In the similar fashion the Liberation Movement argued that the uprising of June 5, 1963 - together with revolutionaries of Algeria, Cuba, and Vietnam-radicalised its younger members and prompted them to form the Mojahedin. So, if one goes by the versions of contending factions the difference between the two was only ~~of~~ method but the underlying ideology was one and the same. However, the fact remains that the Mojahedin despite their respect for the Liberation Movement were altogether an independent organisation having their own ideology, world view and methods to take on the existing rot in the political echelon of the then Iran.

Of the three founding members of the Mojahedin, Hanifneshad was the group's chief ideologue, Mohsensaïd was the group's chief organiser and Badizadegan the

group's main arms expert. All three had been close friends at Tehran University. The political activities of all the three revolved around the National Front, the Islamic Student Association and the Liberation Movement in succession till they formed the discussion group, the nucleus of Mojahedin. Not only that three had similar political experiences but also held similar educational qualifications, and hailed from lower middle class background and each had won government scholarship in order to pursue education in Tehran University. After graduating from the university each joined the military for next two years, and returned to civilian life in 1965 in the vicinity of Tehran. Here, they brought together some twenty trusted friends from their student and military servicedays, on 6 september 1965 and started a secret well structured but as yet un-named discussion group to explore contemporary issues. This group and the date they first met are now regarded as the true beginnings of the

20
Mojahedin.

For the next three years the group met twice a week regularly, and discussed myriad of topics relevant to the contemporary situation. Members were also sent to participate in the Hosainiyeh-e Ershad-the religious lecture hall set up by bazaari philanthropist and non-state clerics such as -Ayatollah Motahhari. It "recruited only those individuals with strong religious beliefs and

20.- Interview With Masud Rajavi, (7 April 1982) (Morningstar,
London)

~~anti regime sentiments.~~ It is safe if assumed that most cadres in the organisation originated from the National front rather than from other political organization of

that time." ²¹ Gradually, it spread to Qazvin, Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz and Mashad.

In keeping with the group's tilt towards two different ideologies, radicalised Islam and Marxism, the group devoted considerable time in studying religion history and revolutionary theory. In religion, Nowjal Balagah (the way of eloquence) a long collection of aphorism attributed to Imam Ali and main works of Bazargan and Taleqani were read. Literature on modern revolutions in the outside world notably in Russia, China, Cuba and literature on major critical events in Iranian history constituted the other texts.

Those who believe that Mojahedin had not taken any inspiration from Marxism and Marxism played no role in the formulation of their ideology should go through the Marxist literature and books by Marxist included in the groups intellectual training. They include "Eqtesad (Economics) and Pulbara-ye Hameh (money for all) (two popular introduction to economic theory written by two contemporary Iranian Marxists): Marx's wage labour and capital, Lenin's state and revolution and What is to be done? Liushaoqui's How to be a good communist (the famous guide to revolutionary ethics written by the well known

Chinese leader) CheGuevara's Guerilla Warfare; Frants Fanon's Wretched of the Earth; Carlos Marighella's Minimanual of Urban Guerilla and Regis Debray's Revolution

in a Revolution." ²² It may be, however, noted that the group in respect of its religious sentiments, shunned Marxist Philosophy deliberately and confined itself to Marxist economics. But the group accepted as Bible, Amar Ouzegan's 'Le-Meillcur Combat' a book which at that time was main theoretical guide of Algerian FLN and which argued that Islam was a revolutionary, socialist, democratic creed and that the only way to fight imperialism was to resort to the armed struggle and appeal to the religious sentiments of the masses.

As to the organisational structure of the Mojahedin it is clouded in mystry mainly because Mojahedin was a secret and clandestine group. The main source of our knowledge as to the organisational problem of Mojahedin is the brief article by Saed Mohsen in 1965 entitled "Cheomandazi Porshur" (An Enthusiastic outlook). In this article Mohsen argued for a limited political organisation as against extensive organizational structure. Since the political culture of the time left little scope for legitimate dissent and spies and SAVAK [○] called the shot, Mohsen argued that "harsh conditions demand precise demarcation between 'revolution' and counter-

23
 revolution." An extensive organisation will have greater scope for infiltration by governmental forces and will allow more chance for counter revolutionary activities which will lead to a successful police crackdown and lend stability to regime. This susceptibility would create anxiety and lack of confidence among the active members of society.

Mohsen laid the following principles for a limited organisational structure:

(i) The transformation of limited quantity into powerful quality, which meant that the organisation must put its energy into enhancing the the political capability of its members, basing the strength of the organization on quality and ability of its cadres rather than merely increasing its members.

(ii) Broadening political knowledge necessary to neutralize the psychological effects of repressive atmosphere created by the regime. Political training must be directed at eradicating conservatism in the cadres.

(iii) Developing recruitment skills for a revolutionary organisation aimed at attaining a dedicated membership. Because, recruitment channels could be infiltrated easily by police, failure to screen potential members could render the organisation vulnerable to total

destruction.²⁴

These guidelines were keenly followed by Mojahedin both for political and organisational purposes.. The secret of Mojahedin to grow rapidly and as a tightly knit guerilla organisation lies in the principles enunciated by Mohsen. It was for this reason that the police crackdown in 1971 and subsequent arrest of most top leaders did not jeopardise its survival. It speaks volume for the organisational strength of the Mojahedin, if one examines the way in which such a nascent organisation overcame the major crises of 1971.

In early 1969 the Mojahedin set up a central committee with the responsibility to formalise its policy and strategy. "The central committee included besides Hanifnezhad, Mohsen and Badizadegan nine others: Mohmud, Asqarizadeh, Abdul Razul, Meshkinfan, Ali Mihandust, Ahmed Rezai, Naser Sadeq Ali Bakeri, Mohammed Bazargani, Bahman

Barargani, and Masud Rajavi."^{24A} Although the organisation viewed armed struggle as the only effective mode of attack against imperialism, the central committee believed querilla warfare could succeed only if the social conditions in Iran were understood. The committee outlined a 'nine point policy for Mojahedin.'²⁵ The nine

24.- S. Mohsin, Chesmandi-e-Purshor Tehran, November 1965) translated by S. Zabih in Contemporary Leftist in Iran), p. 80

24A.- Abrahamian, n 4, p. 89

25- Zabih - 0-9, P.80

~~27. p. 27-28, 29, p. 30~~

26

point programme was as follows:

1. Iran was dominated by world Imperialism, especially US imperialism. Its economy was mainly under the control of comprador-bourgeoisie meaning that land reform was transformed the country from a 'Bourgeois-feudal' to a 'Bourgeois-Comprador' system.

2. Land reform essentially caused revolutionary potential in country side. Because real land reform was not implemented and oppressive relations in country side still existed, initiating a Chinese style struggle in country side was impossible although the potential for revolutionary activity remains.

3. Iran was essentially a Police State where the armed forces constituted the ultimate powerbase. The strength and political stability of the regime was based on the effective working of its security forces which was directed by the American Central Intelligence Agency.

4. Because antagonistic class pressures and political awareness of the Iranian masses had reached a high point, the vanguard groups did not need to expose the true face of regime to the people. But through appropriate political activities, mass alienation had to be intensified.

26.- Ibid, p. 80-81

5. By extending the struggle to the masses of people and allaying hopelessness and fear, the regime must be destabilised via disruption of police network—the main force causing disunity in the anti-government struggle.

6. The organisation whether on the basis of monotheistic ideology or on its understanding of historical experiences concluded that the religion of Islam in general and Shia school of thought in particular was central to the culture of Iranians. This meant that the revolutionary and combative tradition such as the uprising of Imam Hussain could be useful in the mobilisation of masses.

7. Because of the awareness of the anti-government forces in the cities, and because regime, under the guise of land reform was able to cover up its weaknesses in rural areas, guerilla warfare should be initiated in cities where action for destabilising the government and its police network were possible. The struggle in the cities must follow the following guidelines:

(a) Striking blows on the police network because it was the main pillar of the dictatorial imperialist regime.

(b) Safeguarding organisation against destruction by a major police crackdown. This was to be accomplished by building a strong social base in Iranian society and

preparing substitute units to fill in when required.

(c) Infiltrating the police network so that their operations were known to the organisation prior to its initiation.

8. The expansion of the guerilla warfare to the countryside. The organisation believed that the major sources of revolution consisted of the workers and the peasants. Of course, this did not imply that the struggle had its end in the cities rather the organisation believed the ultimate collapse of the regime would be achieved through guerilla warfare in cities while the overall collapse would be accomplished by surrounding the cities from rural military bases.

9. Victory would be achieved through the combined use of liberation army and rural guerilla warfare. Therefore, after struggle in the country side, the task of creating a 'people's army' must undertaken to confront the regime forces.

Along with the Central Committee an Ideological team to provide the organization with its own theoretical hand book was constituted as well. The Ideological team which in these early years played a role as as important as that of central committee was composed of a close-knit group of ten. It included six from the central committee namely, Hanifneshad, Mohsen, Asgarizadeh, Mihandust, Bohman Barargani and Rajvi, and three others: Reza-Rezai, Hosayn

Rohani and Torab Haqshenas.

The ideological team prepared a series of pamphlets designed to translate their general aspirations into a more systematic world view. This ideology can be described best as a combination of Islam and Marxism. But it is true that the original leaders of the group never publicly acknowledged that such was the group's ideology. For tactical reasons they always de-emphasised, even denied, the marxist stand. But later leaders like Ruhani and Haq Shenaz stated"our original aim was to synthesise the religious values of Islam with the scientific thought of Marxism....For we were convinced that true Islam was compatible with theories of social evolution, historical determinism, and the class struggle." Similarly, a Mojahedin hand book declared: "We say 'No' to Marxist philosophy specially to atheism. But we say 'yes'" to Marxist social thought, particularly to its analysis of feudalism, capitalism and Imperialism. While rejecting its denial of 'soul' and after life and dismissal of all religions as opiate of the masses, Mojahedin agreed that "scientific Marxism was compatible with true Islam and that it had inspired many intellectuals in Iran as well as progressive working-class

28

movements in other parts of the world.

For systematic understanding of Mojahedin ideology

27.- Abrahamian, n 4, p. 91

28.- Mojahedin Organization, Pamphlets, for translation,

See Ibid., pp. 92-93

one can as well go through the works of Ali-Shariati, the apologist of both Mojahedin and Islamic revolution. It is not because Alishariati provided ideological basis to Mojahedin. Indeed, Mojahedin ideology preceeded by years, the appearance of Ali-Shariati. There was a general agreement between them also the political and social understanding. Indeed, when Hanifnezhad died Ali-Shariati paid tribute to 'Hanif's Islam. Moreover, Shariati never claimed that Mojahedin were his disciples. But facts remained that for those busy fighting guerilla warfare against a very powerful regime, it was 'God's gift' to get some one of Ali Shariati's stature to systematically profound and justify the world view they held. Mojahedin grabbed the chance with both the hands and happily noted their views being spread both inside and outside Iran via Ali-Shariati.

The original hand books of Mojahedin argued that God had not only created the world but also set in motion the law of historical evolution. Historical evolution has created private property, class inequality and had supplanted the early egalitarian communities with class divided inegalitarian societies. Class division has brought into being oppressive-state, false ideologies and fundamental contradiction between owners and workers and between the 'modes' and the relation of production. These fundamental contradictions had generated historical dynamism propelling qualitative changes out of

quantitative ones and ensuring the destruction of all out-dated social system such as slavery, feudalism, and capitalism and the eventual appearance of just egalitarian society in which as Quran had promised "the masses will inherit the earth". The Mojahedin termed this law of evolution historical determinism (jabr-e tarkhi) and viewed it together with the concept of class struggle as an integral part of Islam. As Hanifneshad declared in his last statement "To separate the class struggle from Islam is to betray Islam".

29

Having set in motion the law of historical determinism, God periodically sent down prophets to help the masses reach their final destination. Thus, prophet Mohammed had come to establish not just a new religion but a new 'Ummat—a dynamic society in constant motion towards progress, social justice, and eventual perfection. And the message he preached was not just one of Mazhab-e Tau^hidi (monotheistic religion) but 'Nezam-e tauhidi— a classless society free of poverty, corruption, war, injustice, inequality and oppression. the prophet "has been sent to liberate mankind from all forms of oppression. From class exploitation, political repression and false consciousness."

30

But in between the period of the Prophet and

29.— Quoted in "Radical Islam" by E. Abrahamian (London 1989) p. 93

30.— M. Rajavi, 'What is to be done'? Mojahed 87 (14 June 1990)

contemporary period Mojahedin claimed Islam was betrayed. In the book called 'Nehzat-e Husayni' (Hosayn's Movement). One of the texts of Mojahedin which explained the ideology of the group, an analysis is provided that how, after the prophet, the ummayad dynasty usurped power, and created a subservient clerical stratum and diluted the 'dynamic message of Islam with 'Static' concepts borrowed from Greek philosophy.

This betrayal of Islam was fought by Imam Ali, and his family, knowing pretty well that ^{they} had little chance of victory. In this sacred duty of raising their arms against betrayal of Islam. Imam ~~him~~ himself and his seventy two companion were martyred fighting on the plains of Karbala. In the month of Maharam Sixty one years after Hijra thus, Hoosayn and his companion's had given their lives as a sacrifice (Feda) only because they were inspired by their 'social conscience' to fight on behalf of oppressed against the opperssors. Even though hope of victory was small. Thus the shemartyers were very much like Che Guevara as they accepted martyrdom as a revoiltionary duty and consider armed struggle against

class oppression as their social obligation.

The Mojahedin brought about revolutionary dimensions of traditional symbols ceremonies, and personalities crucial to Shi-ideology. In their view, Moharrom and 'Ashura' were not just annual rituals to remember Imam Hosayn's suffering but rather the occasion to revitalise one's commitments to fight all forms of oppression especially class oppression. Similarly 'Fatemah' and Zaynab, ImamAli's spouse and daughter respectively, were not only symbol of patience, dutiful and self sacrificing wives and daughters, but rather exemplary women willing to fight actively against injustice and oppression. Similarly, Jame-eh-e Imam-e zaman signified not just the return of the Hidden Imam, but rather the establishment of "Nizam-e Tauhidi".

Although, the Mojahedin were also against clericalism, they targetted Imperialism and capitalism for their immediate ideological attack. Imperialism in general, and US Imperialism in particular, they believed, with the active co-operation of comprador-bourgeoisie, led by Paharvi family, had been exploiting Iranians with the help of such repressive institutions as army, the bureaucracy and secret police. Mojahedin levelled a

31.- For detailed examination of Mojahedin ideology in English, see, Chapter 3 and 4 of 'Radical Islam' by Ervand Abrahamian (London 1989)

series of political, economical and social and cultural charges against the Pahalvi regime. It maintained that despite alienation of most people from the regime, the regime continued on brute force. State terrorism constituted the basic policy of the regime. It had used fear to traumatize the public into immobility, passivity and submission: fear of economic reprisals and job insecurity, fear of foreign intervention, such as in 1953 and pervasive fear of arbitrary arrest, torture and if necessary, mass slaughter, such as in June 1963.³²

To break this spell of pervasive fear the Mojahedin advocated three courses: armed struggle, more armed struggle, and yet more armed struggle. This armed struggle was indeed supposed to start from where Imam Hosayn had left. It would reestablish that vital link between the past and posterity. The end was martyrdom, which will inspire yet more to die, to die for the cause of justice, equality and classless society. In the process it will provide solid proof of the fact that muslims, like Marxists, were ready to die fighting capitalism and Imperialism, that the Mojahedin was not a group of word tigers but it is there to do or die. The regime, they were sure would crash like house of cards, if the Mojahedin by their example of martyrdom could inspire enough people to rise in armed protest. Thus, armed struggle was the hub around which their ideology revolved.

32. Abrahamian, n 4, p. 99

As Beza Bezaei wrote in a letter to his parents shortly

As Reza Rezai wrote in a letter to his parents shortly ⁷⁸

before his death:-

....."We who have taken up arms are inspired by a revolutionary ethos that will inevitably destroy the regime..... . The example of heroism self sacrifice and martyrdom we set today will guarantee for tomorrow the

liberation of the whole people". ³³ Similarly Mehndi razai declare at his trial " only this path (the path of armed struggle) can led us to our idea ; that of a classless,

free and productive society". ³⁴ The Mujahedin , in order to reach this conclusion, of 'armed struggle, more armed struggle and yet more armed struggle, took lessons not only from Imam Hosayn but also the history of Algeria, cuba, China, Vietnam, and of their own country as well as heroes of the past like, Kuchek Khan who fought till the end, Dr. Mosoadeq, who failed only because he did not arm the people, and demonstrates of June 5, 1963 who had gone out to the streets unarmed and slaughtered like sheep.

The ideology of the Mojahedn was thus a combination of muslim themes, shi,i notions of martyrdom. Classical marxists theories of class struggle and historical determinism and Neomarxist theory of armed struggle, gurilla warfare and revolutionary heroism from Bazargan, Talaqani and ouzegan the Mojahdin derived the view that Islam whole heartedly favoured human equality, social

33.- Reza Rezai, 'Letter to My Parents' Bakhtar-e-emrvz, 51 (March 1974 quoted in Ibid, p. 99

34.- Ibid., p. 99

justice and national liberation. From Marx, they obtained their preception of class struggle from Lenin, they acquired economic interpretation of imperialism and revolutionary contempt against all forms of reformism. From cheGuevara and Debray they learnt the contemporary arguments about third world dependency and New left polemics against the old communist parties, specially against old school's preference for organisation against spontaneity, trade unions against gurilla bands, industrail workers over radical intellectuals, tactical alliances over uncompromising zeal, and ofcourse the political struggle against armed struggle. Finally, from Marighella and Gullen, they obtained modern version of Bakuninist ³⁵ strategy for making revolution", and propoganda by deed which soon intermingled with shi concept of 'Feda' (Martyrdom). The mujahedin on the strength of their ideological concepts were the first in iran to develop radical interpretation of Islam which reinforced by the late Dr. Ali Shari'ali, was the main weâpon in bringing about Islamic revolution of 1978-79.

In the spring of 1968 the Mojahedin decided to extend their activite. In a secret meeting held at Tehran, their central committee was replaced by a Central Cadre, (Kadr-e-markazi) this central cadre, in turn, restructured the whole organisation cells and groups were formed, and group members were encouraged to live a collective life in 'Cafe houses' and feasibly marry their fellow members.

35.- Abrahamian, n 4, p. 100

The central cadre also established transnational links with other opposition groups of Arab Middle East countries in order to train their cadres. Indeed, many a Mojahedin were trained in PLO camps in Jordan and Lebanon. In short, all plans were set on the path of gurilla warfare once the cadres were sufficiently trained in handling the arms.

Up to early 1971 the military operation of the Mojahedin was confined to intermittent acts of hijacking armoured trucks, blowing up power transmitters, and ambushing small numbers of gendarmes in remote and isolated highways".³⁶ On 8 February 1971, thirteen members of the Marxist Fedai' Iran launched a daring attack on gendarmes post in the village of Siahkal located in the forest of Gilan. This Siahkal incident, being the first dramatic gurilla feat in contemporary Iran, acted as a catalyst for Mojahedin and other underground groups. Now it was up to the Mojahedin to prove that 'Feda yan' were not the only vanguard of the armed struggle' so they immediately decided to stage an equally spectacular feat.

The government's preparation for the lavish festivities of the 2500 years anniversary of the monarchy in August gave all opposition including the Mojahedin a golden chance to co-ordinate acts^{of} sabotage and armed resistance. The Mojahadin were sure that because of the unusual gathering of large number of foreign guests as well as

foreign media representatives, even a minor disruption in the celebration, would draw attention of the world opinion, discredit the regime and give an enormous boost

to the infant gurilla organization"³⁷. So the Mojahedin decided to blow up the main electrical plant in Tehran and thus throw all festivities into darkness. Searching for dynamite they approached a veteran communist who, in the meanwhile had become a police informer. Consequently, the Savak traced some of the Mojahedin leaders and on 23 August rounded up thirty five members of the organisation "Four members of the group who escaped arrest tried to kidnap prince Shahram, the Sha's nephew, with the hope of exchanging for their colleagues, but his armed guard

failed the attemp^s"³⁸ Later many more were arrested. Though these arrests and subsequent execution of most was a big jolt for the Mojahedin. The group survived and its potential was evident in the subsequent years and developments.

The mass arrest and execution, in the worlds of Mojahedin removed from the scene half of its active members and shattered the organization. Nevertheless, the survivors quickly restructured the whole organization to prevent the repetition of the fiasco.

The remaining members strengthened their relationship with the PLO, Libya and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, as well as with the Iranian exiled groups.

37.- Ibid., p. 80.

38.- Abrahamian, n.4, p. 128.

Consequently through out the 1970's the Mojahedin received much publicity from the organs of these groups. The Mojahedin also published their own newspaper, Nashrieh-eKhabri-ye Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran (The newsletter of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran), and a journal 'Jungle' (Jungle) named after the Kuchek Khan's paper, along with new pamphlets including biographies and court speeches of the defendants of the mass trial. From late 1972 until 1975 the Mojahedin were able to broadcast regularly from a clandestine radiostation in Baghdad.

The Mojahedin were also active in prison. They formed tightly knit networks known as 'Kamunha' (communes) in all the major prisons where they functioned as self contained groups. Their members ate, prayed and studied together. These communes had great success in recruiting new members and even absorbing smaller muslim groups that had landed up in prison.

Out side the prison, the Mojahedin carried out a long series of daring acts. On 30-31 May 1972 on the occasion of Nixon's state visit, they exploded many bombs at US related officials and factories. One was exploded at Reza Shah's mausoleum forty five minutes before Nixon's arrival there. They also attempted to gundown General Harold-the chief of US military mission in Iran. They also bombed Jordan embassy on 3 August 1972, to protest against king Hussain's state visit and to avenge "Black September", the month in 1970 when king Hussain unleashed his troops on

PLO. The Mojahedin intensified their armed operation during 1973-1975"³⁹ These armed operations took heavy toll from the Mojahedin. In addition to the nine executed in 1972, the organization lost altogether eightythree members between 1972 and 1979.

By mid 1975 the Mojahedin had won a nationwide reputatin for organizational efficiency, revolutionary fervour and religious martyrdom. Ironically, at the height of its success, it received a severe blow. The most lethal blow that nearly destroyed the organisation came "not due to any ingenuity of the SAVAK but owing to the ideological split in the leadership cadre of the Mojahedin, between those who had turned to Marxism and insisted on converting Mojahedin into a Marxist-Leninist organization and those, who confronted to the Marxist, by adhering to the Islamic

ideology of the organization"⁴⁰ The outside world was taken by surprise when a vehemently anti-Islamic tract entitled Bayanieh-e Elam-e mavaza-e Ideolozhik-e Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran (Manifesto explaining the ideological position of the People's Mojahedin organization of Iran) declared that the organization was hence forth discarding Islam infavour of Marxism-Leninism because, Islam was a "mass opiate" and at best a petit bourgeois, utopian ideology, where as Marxism-Leninism was real scientific philosophy of the working classes and true

39.- For the detail of the MOjahedin armed operation during 1973-1975, please see, Ervand Abrahamian's *Radical Islam*, (London 1989), p. 140-143

40.- Irfani, n.6, p. 103-104

41

road for liberation of mankind."

This ideological about turn caused a sharp split within the Mojahedin. "While some members, mostly in Tehran supported the change, others, particularly in provinces, remained Islamic, refused to give up Mojahedin label and accused their rivals of engineering a coup, murdering one of leader (Sharif Vaqifi) and betraying others to police"

42

Then onwards there were two rival Mojahedin organizations.

The Marxist and muslim Mojahedin both produced their explanations for the 1975 schism. The Marxist Mojahedin claimed that they could realise that 'God and Revolution' are contradictory poles, and on reading systematically Marx, Lenin and Mao and, on understanding 'dialectical materialism' they have understood the fallacies of Islam and that Islam was the ideology of elites where as

43

'Marxism was salvation of working class"

The muslim Mojahedin argued that 'pseudo left opportunists' had carefully infiltrated the organization and had gradually taken over the top position. They have misled the young, ideologically unsophisticated recruits. They had murdered their opponents and thus in true Machiavellian fashion engineered an internal coup d'tat'. It is very difficult to lay hand on the real cause of the divide, because both the sides provide highly biased facts. So it would be in the fitness of things that

41.- Abrahamian, n. 4, p. 145

42.- Abrahamian, n. 1, p. 494

43.- Ibid, p. 493

probable causes of the split should be discussed here. The plausible ones could be:

1. Traditional individualism of Iranians.
2. Realization of the strong and wide base of clerics. This being the case, Mojahedin's Islamic mask might be torn and they might be isolated.
3. "Disillusionment of some members of the Mojahedin, with the anti-regime clergy, notably with Ayatollah
44
Khomeini."

4. The Mojahedin inability to make further headway among
45
"modern educated intelligentsia."

5. " Many Mojahedin members recruited after 1972 could not be trained in the original Mojahedin ideology, due to exigencies of the situation. So they changed over to
46
Marxism."

While infighting between the Islamic and Marxist Mojahedin continued and both went their separate ways, neither of these factions ceased its operations against the regime. "The activities of Islamic Mojahedin included a bank robbery in Isfahan, a bomb attack on Israeli cultural centre at Tehran and strike in Aryamehr

47
university. The exploits of the Marxist Mojahedin were still more daring, including bombing of ITT offices and the police station in Tehran's northern suburbs and assassination of two American military advisors.

44.- Abrahamian, n.4, p146
45.- Ibid. p. 149
46.- Irfani, n. 6, p. 110.
47.- Ibid. p. 108

By early 1976, the two Mojahedin factions had suffered such heavy losses that they began to reconsider their tactics. The Islamic Mojahedin stepped their campus activities, circulated their own and Shariati's publication and established contacts with Islamic student

society in North America and western Europe"⁴⁸ Meanwhile, the Marxist Mojahedin intensified their labour activities, called for establishment of a new working class party, started a paper called Qiyam-e kargar (worker's Revolt) and formed links with Maoists, heading the confederation of Iranian students in western Europe. It also entered into negotiation with the Feda'iyam in order to merge the

two groups. But soon the talk broke off.⁴⁹ "Their activities from the time of schism until the Islamic revolution, cost the Muslim and Marxist Mojahedin forty

two and forty seven lives respectively."⁵⁰

Although the Mojahedin failed to bring down the regime of the Shah, their work, particularly that of radicalising traditional interpretation of Islam by galvanising it with the concepts of 'martyrdom' classless society and Nizam-e Tauhidi provided a flash in the paw. If nothing else it proved by deeds that the Paharvi regime was not after all that invincible. More importantly, the Mojahedin provided the most important link between the Nehzat-e Hosayni (the movement of Hosayn) and Nehzat-e Islami (the Islamic movement), charges against them not with standing.

48.- Abrahamian, n. 1, p. 494

49.- Irfani, n. 6, p. 109

50.- Abrahamian, n. 4, p. 166

6

THE FEDAYEEN

CHAPTER IV.

THE FEDAYEEN

The uprising of the 5 June 1963 was an epoch making event in the history of modern Iran. It was certainly a turning point in the anti government struggle in Iran under the Shah. What is more the unprecedented violence and wide spread stories—often highly exaggerated—of thousands of unarmed demonstrators being mowed down by heavily armed troops had a traumatic effect on late teenagers who had recently began to take an interest in politics. To use a sociological term the June 1963 had brought into being a new political generation¹ This new generation was different from old generation in more ways than one. The older generation, having experienced the despotism of Reza Shah admired the rule of law, the separation of power and constitution of 1905-1906. But the new generation, who at the dawn of their political career under went the nerve shattering experiences of June 1963 tended to dismiss such sentiments as 'liberal irrelevancies'. The older generation thought in terms of oilnationalisation and British colonialism. But the new generation having being fired at by American troops saw US imperialism as the major threat. The older generation who received their political baptism from the movements of 1940s and early 1950s tended to speak in


1 Ervand Abrahamian - Radical Islam (London 1989) p 84

terms of non-violent struggle of political parties, trade unions professional associations street demonstrations and mass meeting. The new generations who received their political baptism from the blood bath of 1963, increasingly spoke in terms of armed struggle of underground cells, heroic martyrdom, propoganda by deed and guerilla warfare.

By some coincident of history, the June 1963 uprising came in the midst of rising tide of guerilla activity all over the world. Guerillas were having hay day, in Vietnam, Latin America and Algeria. This was the age of Castro, CheGuevara, Giap, the South American Tupamaros and the Palestinian Fedayi'yan. Everywhere youth were creating history not by traditional methods but by guerilla warfare and armed struggle.

Thus, the June 1963 uprising gave birth to a generation for which all forms of reformist and parliamentary struggle had little meaning. They were convinced that the only meaningful way by which a struggle can be waged against the regime was "through armed struggle, a struggle that stemmed from a carefully chalked out strategy emanating from concrete organisational network and was conducted within a dynamic ideological

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frame work .The question was no more whether, but how and when to take up arms. "The Shah's

~~1963~~  determination to shoot down thousands of unarmed demonstrators and the SAVAK's eagerness to root out the under ground network of the Tudeh and National Front, all combined to compel the opposition, specially its younger members to question the traditional method of resistance, election boycotts, general strikes and street demonstrations. The 1963 blood bath exposed the bankruptcy of peaceful methods. After 1963, militants irrespective of their ideology, had to ask themselves the question 'What is to be done?' The answer was clear

³
 guerilla warfare" The same ideas were elaborated by the Mojahedin in a pamphlet entitled. "5 June: the turning point of the struggle of Iranian people." Thus, "It is true that the June uprising ended in a defeat, but it is even more true that it laid the ground for the future revolutionary armed struggle. The defeat on the one hand, revealed the failure of reformist groups, and on the other hand, raised the hopes of revolutionary organisations. What is more the masses could no longer delude themselves with the idea that such a blood thirsty regime could reform itself. Thus, reformist ideas were finally laid to

⁴
 rest in cemetery of dead political ideas.
 At this period of history, Marxism as an ideology had proved its effectiveness in the liberation struggle

3 Ervand Abrahamian " The guerilla movement in Iran 1963-77, in Iran : A Revolution in Turmoil ed. Haleh Afshar (Mc Millan 1985) p 152

4 Ervand n 1 p 86

of the oppressed people around the world. It had organised and guided many a popular movements to victory on the basis of its systematic approach. It was therefore natural for the nucleus of the revolutionary guerilla movement crystallising in Asia and Latin America to adopt this ideology for guiding their struggles. During the mid-60s Marxism-Leninism was adopted in Iran by an organisation which later came to be known as Fedayeen-e Khalq, and which was the first underground organisation to carry out guerilla operation against the Pahalvi regime.

At this point of time while Marxism-Leninism attracted young minds like nothing else, Iran was without a genuine communist organisation in the political fray. The Tudeh had almost made its exit from the political scene, under the party of 'wait and see.' Its leadership now in exile believed that the then prevailing conditions ruled out political activism. They hoped for a change in political condition of Iran which would enable the Soviets to regain their former influence. "They believed that pro-Soviet communists (the Tudeh) could only hope to outlast the regime although party members were involved in several strikes and labour unrest and their external organisation, propoganda and indoctrination activities continued unaffected."⁵ Under these circumstances, Fedayeen-e

5 Sepehr Zabih - The left in contemporary Iran (London 1986) p 11

Khalq had become most popular organisation among intellectuals and students. These students failed to see eye to eye with Tudeh's formula of outlasting the regime, rather they strongly believed that "repressive Pahlavi regime has created conditions conducive to armed resistance." ⁶ So the most conscious of Iran's youth turned towards Feday³een and supported it "to fulfil the responsibility of their consciousness and social awareness, emanating from, nobler dimension of human nature." ⁷ §

The Sazman-e Cherikhaye Feday-ie Khalq -e Iran (Organisation of Iranian People's Fedayeen Guerillas, OIPFG) Popularly known as Fedayeen, which did not adopt its name until March 1971, was formed three separate ⁸ groups that traced their origin back to the mid 1960s. The organisation came into being following the assault by guerilla unit ^{On} gendarmerie base at Siahkal in the Elborz mountains, north of Tehran. The assault known as Siahkal resurgence, heralded the start of armed struggle in Iran. Yet before they joined together to create the OIPFG the component parts of the organisation had a history of struggle. "Its eventual establishment was the result of a Marxist-Leninist analysis of Social-economic and political in Iran as well as an assessment of experiences and forces

6 Ibid p 11

7 Irfani n 2 p 90

8 Ervand n 3 p 153

of revolution and counter revolution internationally."⁹

So the origin of the constituent units of Fedayeen dates back to early and mid-1960s, when younger and more militant opposition began to emerge from the universities. Various factors lay behind the frustration felt by this younger opposition. One was the establishment of full control by the Shah in mid 60s. Another was the inactivity of the Tudeh and the National Front. They complained again and again of defeatist and conciliatory attitudes adopted by opportunist leadership of both left and right. Yet another was exposure to western culture and experience of study and ~~travel~~ abroad. During which many Iranian youths succumbed to the love of revolutionary violence, guerilla movements and national liberation, so prevalent in the Youth Culture of 1960¹⁰ " They were thus, won over by Tupamaros and its guerilla operations rather than by Tudeh and its political organisation.

This growing radicalism found its expression in several small and compact groups, among which were the three groups which later constituted OIPFG. The first group had been established as early as 1964 by five Tehran University students: Bezhani Jazani, Abbas Sourki, Ali akbar Safai Fahani, Mohamed Asthayani and

9 An OIPFG pamphlet

10 Shahrán Chubin- "Leftist forces in Iran" in Problem of Communism (July August 1980, Washington) p 11

11

Hamid Ashraf." All of them had been active in Tudeh party's Youth organisation (Sazman-e Javanan) and met in prison in 1955. "They began their political struggle by distinguishing between two separate activities public and underground".

12

As ~~soon~~ as the structure of this group was concerned it comprised three sections. The first section looked after general administration and public activity, the second was meant for members lacking in political competence to be the member of the first and the third section was the most important, which looked after the preparation for the military struggle and guerilla warfare. From the very beginning the group was very clear in its minds that "the discussion of arms struggle must be replaced by preparation for it."

13

The group accepted Marxism-Leninism as the official ideology and tested the knowledge and conviction of new entrants before giving them full fledged membership. This made the group very compact. The group espoused guerilla warfare as the strategy to bring down the government and grew more and more distant from the Tudeh party and its underground network.

This group declined to recognize Moscow as the leader of world Marxist-Leninist movement. They decried Khrushchev's attitudes against the colleagues of the

11 Ervand n 3 p 153

12 Zabih n 5 p 113

13 Ibid p 113.

late Stalin~~s~~ and his policy as revisionism. Similarly, they ~~()~~ to agree with the Soviet doctrine of peaceful co-existence with imperialist United States. Although some members had a personal leaning towards the Chinese interpretation of Marxist-Leninist principles in mid-60s. Yet officially the group maintained neutrality regarding the polarisation of the international communist movement. As far as the group itself was concerned, it believed in independent reduction of Marxist-Leninist principles and applying to Iranian conditions. To them the independent policy of the Cuban revolution presented a hopeful model. According to Jazani, the central figure and ideologue of the group, "the Cuban revolution with its guerilla movement and its relationship with that country's communist party had significant similarities with its revolutionary conditions in Iran".^{13a} The formation of the new party was to be proceeded by the unity of purpose and action of working class itself and this, in turn depended on the ration of appropriate conditions for guerilla action. Thus, the main theme of this group was arm revolution through guerilla warfare.

Bizhan Jazani, the circle's central figure, was born in Tehran in 1937. He started his political activities when he was only ten year old, becoming member of the youth organisation of the Tudeh party. From the

13a Ibid p 114

depression of the Tudeh party in 1948. Until 1953, he was very active in underground networks. "He graduated in 1963 as a political science student from the school of philosophy at Tehran university and his thesis 'Forces of Constitutional Revolution in Iran' was considered valuable

14

research in the modern history of Iran". He was in and out of prison in mid-50s as a result of his continuous political activities in later years, while serving a fifteen-years prison sentence he wrote a series of pamphlet for Fedayeen and was subsequently acknowledged as the principal exponents of guerilla operations and one of

15

the brilliant theoreticians of reborn communism." His pamphlets include Nabrad ba Dictator-i Shah (struggle against Shah's dictatorship, Tarikh-i Si Saleh-i Iran (Thirty-year History of Iran and Cheguneh Moberzeh-i Masalehaneh Tudeh-i Meshavad (How the Armed Struggle will be Transformed into a Mass struggle). In his writings, he took stock of the hopelessly disunited opposition to the Shah, a quiescent clergy, a discredited Tudeh and an ineffective National Front. The only way to mobilise an apathetic people, to assure their politicisation, he argued, was through armed struggle by the vanguard of revolutionary class. Selected armed action would be important in two distinct ways: they would undermine the myth of regimes invincibility and

followed by the inevitable circle of repression and attack, they would politicise the populace. Abbas Souraki, another student of political science was born and brought up in Shahrood, a small city in the northern province of Mazandaran. Later he moved to Tehran in order to enter the university. Like most of his comrades, he had a long record of activities in the Tudeh party's youth organisation. Even after moving to Tehran he had strong links with his comrades at Shahrood. In 1960 he was arrested and charged with forming a group called "Warriors of the Tudeh Party." Released a year later he continued his struggle to form a guerilla unit. Subsequently at the end of 1968 he was arrested with Jazani and remained imprisoned till his death in 1975.

Safai Farhani, a student of engineering, was a native of Gilan but had made the other in Tehran University. "Later years he wrote a hand book for the Fedai entitled Ancheh Yak Inqilabi Bayad Bedanad (What a Revolutionary Must Know)"¹⁶

Muhammed Ashtiyani was born in 1934, in Tehran. Before joining the Law faculty of Tehran University, he had completed his military service and was therefore, able to train his comrades in the use and keep up of light arms. Most of the later recruits of Fedai, however, did not need this training since they had

16 Ervand Abrahamian Iran between two revolutions (princeton 1982) p 484

already secured it in the arm forces. "Thus, the Shah and his rapid expansion^f military, ironically helped the guerilla movement."¹⁷

Hamid Ashraf, the youngest of the original group, was born in Tehran in 1946. He entered the Technical Faculty of Tehran university in 1966. He, then, became university^m champion in Mountaineering and Gimnostics. His political activities in left movement started while he was still at high school. At university, he was a prominent student activist. His professional underground revolutionary life began in 1969.

The Jazani group was attacked by secret police in 1967, four years after it was found. Fourteen members, including Jazani and Souraki were arrested. Following this attack two members of the group—Farhani and Ashtiyani, whose activities had been discovered by the police, left the country and join the forces of the Palestinian Revolution, in order to acquire military experience. Hamid Ashraf and two other comrades whose activities had not been discovered, set about creating a new group based on the organisation of the previous group. On the basis of work undertaken by these three, twenty two people who believed in the strategy of armed struggle, came together and formed a politico-military group and began preparatory operations.

Meanwhile, Farhani and Ashtiyani established contact

17 Ibid p 784

with the Tudeh⁶ and after spending two years with Al-Fatah, returned home to rejoin Asraf. Jazani and Souraki were kept inside prison till 1975, when they were shot dead

18

"trying to escape. The military training of these two members (Farhani and Ashtiyani) dramatically improved the guerilla warfare capabilities of the group. Meanwhile, they contacted other Marxist-Leninist groups and friends around the country for possible joint operation. Notable among them were, SAKA (Sazman-e Koministhaye Enghelabi-e Iran, the Organisation of Revolutionary Communists of Iran), the Toofan group and underground revolutionary network in Shiraz (in southern Iran). But this contact proved inconsequential until 1970-71, when the Ahmad zabeih-Pouyan group merged with the first two form of the basic framework of OIPFG.

This second group that found the Fedai was led by three students : Ahmad Zadeh, Pouyan and Meftahi. All three of them had long records of political activities in National Front and had religious leanings before succumbing to the philosophy of Marxism-Leninism. Ahmed Zadeh, the main personality of the group, came from an intellectual family well known in Mashhad for its support of Mossadeq and its opposition to the Pahalvis, since mid-1920s. He started his political activities between 1960 and 1963, when he was in secondary high school in Mashhad.

At that point of his life, he strongly believed in religion which in turn coloured his political activities until 1967 when he abandoned his religious belief

19

in favour of Marxism-Leninism. While at high school, Ahmadzadeh created an Islamic student club and participated in religious demonstration against the regime.

"But while studying Mathematics in Arya Mehr (industrial) University, he turned towards Marxism and in 1967 formed a secret circle to discuss the works of Che-Guevara, Debray and Carlos Marighella, the Brazilian communist who

20

developed the theory of Urban Guerilla warfare"

Ahmedzadeh is credited with authoring one of the most authentic works of Fedai named Mobarazeh-i aslehareh: Ham Estrategi Ham Taktik ((Armed struggle : Both a Strategy and a Tactics) . Amir Pervez Pouyan, his close colleague, had a very similar background. Born in Mashhad, he finished his elementary education there. He was active in the National Front between 1961 and 1963, and found a religious group called Ali's Movement. But while studying literature ⁱⁿ National University Tehran he was drawn towards Marxism, specially to Fidel Castro's example. He wrote a work entitled Zarurat-i Mobarazeh-i Maslehaneh Va Rad-i Teor-ye Baga ((The Need For Armed struggle and Rejection of the theory of Survival). "

In the summer of 1971, the Police surrounded a Fedayeen team house where Pouyan and other members were hiding. They ran out of ammunition after a long shoot out and committed 'revolutionary suicide'." ²¹ .

Abbas Meftahi was born and brought up in the city of Sari (In the Caspian Province of Mazandaran) where he learned Marxism at home. He came to know Aliakbar Farhani Sofaie , a teacher in Industrial Art Institute in Sari and a true believer in Marxism. Although attracted towards Marxism Meftahi performed regularly his Islamic rituals. But when he went to Tehran and took admission in Polytechnic college, he actively participated in student policies and extensively studied the works published by the Jazani group eventually became a Marxist. He was identified by the police in 1967 and was arrested after a shoot out with them and was sentenced to death in the same year.

The third group was located in Tabriz and had been formed in 1965 by a group of intellectual led by BehrouzDehqani, Ashraf Dehqani and Ali Reza Nabdell. Behrouz Dehqani was born into a family of a poor construction worker who had been active in Tudeh labour movement in 1940's. Born in Tabriz where he met Samad Behranghi, a radical writer well known throughout the rest of Iran as well as in Azerbaijan. There started

an important intellectual companionship which brought forth many praise worthy works including a five volume work on Azerbaijani folk tales. Apart from translating the master pieces of Maxim Gorki and Sean O'Casey. Behrouz Dehqani also wrote a book on the relationship between literature and society. It was through Behrangi and his literary circle that Behrouz came across Pouyan and thereby forge first link between Tabriz and the

22

Ahmedzadeh group in Tehran. Behrouz was a school teacher by profession. Ashraf Dehqani, Behrouz Dehqani's younger sister, had a very similar background like her brother. Born in Tabriz, she was brought up there, before she took to teaching in a village school close to her hometown. Ali Reza Nabdell, another youngman belonging to the same profession had almost the same environmental background save that he went to Tehran to study literature. After graduating in 1963 from Tehran University, he returned home and taught and wrote poetry. Master of both Persian and Azeri Turkish, his Azeri Poetry could not get printed as it was banned. To publicize the plight of the Azeri language under the Pahalvis, Nabdell wrote for the 'Fedai' a pamphlet entitled Azerbaijan Va Masaleh-i Melli (Azerbaijan and the National question) Like Dehqani's, Nabdell also came from the family who were active in leftist Politics in 1940s.

The three groups merged IN 1970. In the spring

of that year TAbriz and the Ahmedzadeh group amalgamated and carried out their first armed attack- the robbery of a Tehran bank to finance their future operation. In the meantime return of two member of the Jazani group, Safai Farhani and Asthiani improved the quality of the group. Different cells were formed and assigned the task of co-ordinating the cells and handling communications. Safai Farhani, as leader of the mountain guerilla unit, was dispatched to the northern province to prepare for the start an armed struggle. With the departure of this unit, Hamid Ashraf took charge of maintaining communication with Ahmedzadeh group which ultimately led to the formation of DIPFG. Although this two groups had Marxist - Leninist approach they differed regarding the tactics of armed struggle. In negotiating the merger the group hammered out a joint strategy which Hamid Ashraf summed up as follows:

"Aftermuch deliberation we reached the conclusion that it was impossible to work among the masses and create large organization since police has penetrated all sectors of society. We decided that our immediate task was to form small cells and mount physical assault on the enemy so as to destroy the repressive 'atmosphere' and show people that 'armed struggle' was only way to liberation .

Similarly, Pouyan put it as follows:

To break the spell of out weakness and inspire the

people we must resort to a revolutionary armed struggle .--
 --- To liberate the proletariat from the stifling culture,
 to clean its mind from petty bourgeois thoughts, and to
 equip it with ideological ammunition, it is necessary to
 shatter the illusion that the people are powerless." ²⁴

Ahmadzadeh further elaborated the Fedayi strategy:
 How can the masses become conscious of themselves, their
 interests and their formidable power? Persistent
 suppression, lack of leadership, constant government
 propaganda and the omnipotent presence of bayonet - all
 have combined to erect a huge barrier between the people
 and the masses and between segments of the masses. How can
 this barrier be destroyed to release the swelling torrent
 of masses? The only way is armed struggle. To defeat the
 enemy, the broad masses must be drawn into struggle. To
 smash the enemy's army, there must be a people's army. To
 create a people's army, there must be a prolonged guerilla
 warfare. A guerilla warfare is necessary not only for
 military victory but also for mass mobilisation. On the
 one hand, the mobilisation of masses is the condition for
 military and political victory. On the other hand
 mobilisation of masses is not possible without the armed
 struggle. We have learnt this not only from the experience of Cuba
 but also from those of China and Vietnam. As Debray
 has stressed 'Under present conditions the most important

24 Pervez Poyan—quoted in *Ervand* n 3 p 156

form of propoganda is successful miliatary action."

Thus the central thesis of Fedaryi was astonishingly simple; guerilla warfare, more guerilla warfare and still more gurilla warfare. After the constant defeats of Tudeh and Nalemal Front, the situation in Iran was hopeless. As Poyan puts it " the defeat of anti imperialist movements IN Iran was hopeless. As Poyan puts it " the defeat of anti imperielist movements. In Iran has enabled the reactionaries to establish a fascist state and destroy the opposition organisation and co-opt opportunistic

26

elements" In the mean time, the victories of Castro, Glap and near as well as the new born confidence of Latin American Guerillas had an exhilarating effect upon young Iranian intellectuals. They turned towards the tested weapons 'the armed struggle which to them was panaea for all political ills in Iran. As Ahmedzadeh put it " the only way is armed struggle ----- To smash the enemy's army there must be a people's army. To create a people's army

27

there must be a prolonged

In developing their simple strategy of 'guerilla warfare', Fedayi developed critiques of other political organizations. They dismissed the National Front and the Liberation Movement as petty bourgeois paper

25 Ahmad Zadeh- in Ervand n 3 p 157

26 Poyan n 24 p 156

27 Ahmad Zadeh n 25 p 159

organizations still preaching the false hope of peaceful change and free elections.

They accused the pro-chinese groups of applying Mao to Iran 'mechanically; logically refusing to accept the fact that in the last decade Iran had been transformed from feudal society to a capitalist society fully dependent on the west, uncritically accepting the notion that the Soviet Union rather than America was the major threat and talking much about armed struggle but invariably postponing the struggle on the grounds that first a viable political party had to be formed".²⁸

Their criticism of the Tudeh was even more extensive. To the founders of the DIPFG, the Tudeh party had declined after 1953 when the regime ordered a massive crack down against it. They respected the Tudeh for organizing working class during the 1940s and producing many martyrs in 1950s. But Tudeh, according to the Fedayeen was guilty of blind support to the Soviet Union, of hastily denouncing Stalin, and under estimating 'national question especially in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. The Tudeh alleged the Fedai, had held back peasant movement in 1940's, over estimated the importance of national bourgeoisie and had thereby reached false conclusion that the forthcoming revolution would be " national democratic." The main allegations of the Fedai were , however

²⁸ Ervand n 16 p 786 the following " Tudeh favoured

political struggle overarmed struggle trade-unionism over
 revolutionary militancy organizational survival over
 heroic action and parliamentary reformism over radical
 communism".²⁹

Anyway, the Fedai, believed that by the end 1950's, the
 organisational capability of the Tudeh greatly diminished
 and the leading cadres of the party either had been
 executed or had fled the country. The lower echelon of
 the party activists became totally passive or dispersed
 and formed small groups whose activities were limited to
 intellectual and ideological pursuits. Thus what remained
 of the Tudeh was where shadow of its past. Later, a
 Fedayeen publication 19, Bahman Theoretical No-6 outlined

briefly six major faults of the party thus: "³⁰

1. The mobility of the Tudeh party to correctly understand basic international affairs which led to an incorrect relationship with the communist party and government of the Soviet Union.
2. Failure to recognise the social and historical conditions of Iran and Catastrophic in attention to the anti imperialistic struggle of its people. This caused the Tudeh to lag behind the national liberation movement, thereby forfeiting the championship of this movement to the national bourgeoisie
3. The Tudeh took an incorrect position against Dr. Mossadeq and the National Front. This inconstancy

²⁹ Ibid p 488

³⁰ As Quoted in Zabih n 5 p 124

became apparent in the form of Leftism before the 30 Tir (July 1952) and Rightism after 30 Tir, ignoring the responsibility of the party in mobilising the struggle to oppose the reactionary forces of western imperialism.

4. The weakness, conservatism and misinformation regarding the August 1953 coup d'etat that led to the defeat of Tudeh party and the workers.

5. The incompetence of Tudeh leadership in surrendering to the government and betraying the masses and workers which made the Tudeh party's survival impossible.

6. Continuous diviation by the weakened Tudeh party both inside and outside the country which blocked the unification of forces with in the workers movements.

As expected, The Tudeh retorted strongly to the Fedayeen criticism. They advocated that all socialists had the duty to support the Soviet Union, the "bastion of Marxism" and that tack of quickly transforming a national bourgeois revolution into a socialist working class revolution smacked of Trofsky's notion of "Permanent revolution". The Fedayeen, they argued, underestimated the Iranian bourguisie and consequently misunderstood the nature of forthcoming revolution. The Tudeh viewed the guerillas as having "more in common with Bkurin and the nineteenth century anachists who advocated "Long Live Death " and "Propoganda by the Deed: than with Marx, Lenin and Bolshevicks, who always stressed that armed struggle should be initialated only where there was a deciplined revolutionay party present and when "objective" conditons

31
were ripe"

The Fedayeen underred by the Tudeh and other reformist arguments, went ahead with their preparations for guerilla warfare. They sent a guerilla unit under the leadership of Safai-Farhani, to the mountain of northern province of Gilan, to prepare for the start of armed struggle. They chose Gilan to establish their mountain base partly because the rugged mountains were in accessible to heavy armoutrs and partly because the forests the jungles provided thick cover against air attacks but primarily because the local peasanty had a radical tradition reaching back to the Jangali movement of 1920s. The original plan was in favour of extensive preparation for a long term guerilla operation, like living with the mountain shepherds contacting the villagers and recognising fighters from the local population . But these plans had to be concerted in early February 1971 when gendarmes in village siahal arrested one of the Fedai sympathisers. Fearing that torture would be used to extract vital information the guerillas decided to rescue their colleague. On the evening of February 8, 1971 thirteen Fedayeen armed with rifles, machine guns and hand grenades attacked the gendermerie post in the village siaekal on the edge of the Caspian forests " With this attack , later to become famous as the 'siahkal

31 F Javan, as quoted in Ervand n 16 p 487

incident', they sparked of eight years of intense guerilla activities and inspired many other radical Islamic as well as Marxist, to take up arms against the regime".

32

It marked the start of Iranian people's armed movement. According to a Fedari publication "The aim was to open the way for general struggles of the people of Iran. The hall-mark of movement was therefore not a sudden general uprising by the masses, but a calculated move by a small vanguard force. Ahmed with a creative marxism-Leninism, inspired by the will of people, and grasping the historical necessities and its own mission this small vanguard group was determined to break political deadlock in Iran."

33

It was the first major guerilla attack so the regime took it very seriously. As soon as the news of the attack and successful escape reached Tehran, the Shah sent his brother to head an expeditionary army of commandos, helicopters and SAVAK agents. After about a month long manhunt eleven Fedai were captured. Of the eleven ten faced firing squads, and one, Farhani, died under torture without revealing information about others. For the Fedai the whole affair was a military fiasco but a great propaganda success. It conclusively proved that a few determined guerillas could stake the foundation of powerful

32 Ibid p 480 33 Bizhan Jazani Capitalism and revolution in Iran

~~1979~~ Pahalvi regime. The 'Sialkal incident' really tilted the balance in favour of 'armed struggle' advocated by many a young radical groups as against other reformist opposition who believed in peaceful change.

The regime certainly thought so. It followed up the execution of Fedayeen with a series of dramatic steps. The propoganda offensive against the guerillas, accusing them of being 'atheist' and calling them tool of almost any country. Iran was not in good terms with and also agent of the defunct and discredited parties like the Tudeh. The regime over did it a bit when it arrested 51 left wing dissidents, none of whom had any Fedai connection, granted a week's unscheduled vocation to the universities of Tehran and outlawed the federation of Iranian student in Europe and America as an international

34
 communist conspiracy." The government clearly proved that it perceived guerilla warfare as the most potent threat to itself, when it increased the government salaries, decreased the present year to be 'civil servant year', raised the minimum wage and declared that in failure May 1st would be celebrated throughout Iran as the 'workers day'. Thus, the regime tried to keep all the sections of people content, paritcularly workers and intellegentsia who were most potent victims of guerilla movements.

During the months following the Siahkal, initiated

the SAVAK managed to arrest and eliminate almost all the important members of the OIPEC. The most important survivors Hamid Ashraf and Ashraf Dehqani, continued to uphold the banner of struggle. "They found eager recruits, established new cells, especially in Tehran, Tabriz, Rasht, Gorgan, Gazvin, Enzeli, started two underground newspapers-Bahman 19 (February 8) and Nabard-i Khalq (People's Struggle)- and helped to organise a number of university strikes and demonstrations to coincide with the

35

first anniversary of Siahkal." They also carried out a series of armed operations: holding up five banks: assassinating two police informers, a millionaire industrialist, and the chief military prosecutor, and bombing the embassies of Britain, Oman, and the United States, the offices of International Telephone and Telegraph, Trans-world Airlines and Iran-American society and the police head quarters in Tehran, Tabriz, Rasht,

36

Gorgan, Mashad and Abadan." Thus, despite the repeated claims of the SAVAK of having eliminated the Fedai it existed and often proved its existence with a bang.

Thus, in the wake of Siahkal, Fedayeen ran the gamut of urban guerilla operations. Their literature indicates that between Siahkal (Feb. 8, 1971) and summer of 1978, no fewer than 2,175 acts of resistance and armed attack were undertaken. Those operation resulted in a considerable

loss of life for the Fedayeen. According to one estimate Feda-i casualties were 172: 108 killed in action, 38 executed 10 tortured to death 6 missing, 5 suicides, and 7 murdered in prison.

37

By late 1975, it was clear that a stalemate had been reached in the struggle between the regime and the Fedayeen. On the one hand, the regime continued infiltrating and eliminating the Fedayeen, on the other, the Fedayeen continued to replenish their cadres and they sporadically attacked such familiar targets as banks, headquarters of western corporations, airlines and assassination of handful government officials are accomplishing various other heroic feats. But years of struggle did not bring forth mass support needed for sustained armed struggle against the regime and people's revolution looked as far as before five years.

At this crucial point, a serious ideological and tactical dispute among the leadership cadre surfaced. The Feda divided into two factions, the majority headed by Haimid Ashraf, who had evaded security forces until they killed him in ambush in August 1976, continued to believe too effectiveness of armed resistance. They insisted on continuing armed confrontation until they sparked off mass uprising. The minority faction, however, believed that

armed confrontation should be avoided and political activities including political education aimed at working class should be given priority. This faction was closer to the Tudeh party. In mid-1976, this group affiliated to the Tudeh, denounced the theory of "Propoganda by the Deed" as an aberration of Marxism, and formed the Goruih-i Munsh'eb az Sazman-i Cherikha-yi Feda'i Khalq Vabastech Beh Hizb-i Tudeh-i Iran (Group Separated from the Feda'i Guerillas and attached to the Tudeh party of Iran - known in sport as the Feda'i Munshed' .

Both the factions kept their weapons and as soon as the revolution began, surfaced as experienced armed organization eager to challenge the military might of

Pahlvi regime' . More important, they sung their differences in the wake of pre-revolutionary turmoil in 1978 and joined all other opposition forces armed and otherwise, against their common enemy - the Shah's regime. During the year the Fedayeen proved a battle-tested group matching the mojahedin. The Fedayeen were bolstered by the gradual release of their imperisoned comrades and returns of their followers from exile. The Tudeh party helped them extensively and together they constituted about 25 percent of all combatants who in February 1979, waged a successful insurrection to over throw the Pahalvi regime' .

38 T. Hyder Begundi as quoted in Ervand n 16 p 489
 39 Ibid p 489
 40 Zabih n 5 p 132

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

Main body of this essay has inquired into the dynamics of the leftist movement in Iran since its inception in early 1920s till the Iranian revolution of 1978-79. While agreeing with the point that reformist and socialist philosophy has been a source of attraction to the Iranian intellegentsia right since the turn of the present century, the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 in Russia, is considered to be the real water mark in the history of leftist movement in Iran. Being at the periphery of Russia, Iran, in 1917, presented a very fertile ground for extension of the communist revolution. Particularly, the chaotic condition in the north provided readymade catalyst for a revolutionary movement.

The first attempt to organise a movement along the communist line was made by veteran Social Democrats, who gathered at Baku and announced the formation of the Justice Party. This party transferred itself to Persia after the Red Army invaded Anzeli, the northern Iranian city port on the Caspian sea on 28 May 1920, on the pretext of protecting Bolshevik revolution from the counter revolutionaries who had sought refuge on the Iranian side of the boarders. In June 1920, the Justice Party convened in Anzeli its first major congress and adopted the title "Communist Party of Iran" (firqueh-i Komonist-i Iran) The Communist Party of Iran along with Jangalis formed in Gilan a Soviet Socialist Republic of

Iran. By the end of 1920 the Soviet Socialist Republic in Rasht, reinforced by the Red Army was preparing to march into Tehran with its guerilla force. This was the only occasion when the leftist came close to capturing power in Iran. But, in the mean time, Soviet Union decided to withdraw their support because of the dissension in the leadership and primarily because the economic burden proved too much for the nascent communist state Reza Shah grabbed this opportunity with both his hands and almost nipped the communist challenge in the bud. Ironically, he also received some support from the Soviet Union in this regard.

This was first but not the last instance where in order to salvage its own interest or to develop a friendly relationship with its government, its claim to be the vanguard of international communist movement notwithstanding. The communists in Iran got a rude shock. They could have learnt, if they had the inclination that no movement can thrive primarily on foreign support and that it is the support of the people which is most important and also that when it comes to national interest, all countries whether socialists or capitalist would sacrifice any movement how so ever close to them. But as latter Communist of Iran proved they did not learn from their first experience, at least those who were in the Tudeh did not.

The main segment of the leftist movement in Iran,

Spearheaded by the Tudeh, had always been precariously dependent on the Soviet support. From 1917 to 1921 the Soviet backed communists were active openly in the northern region of Iran. But between 1921 and 1941 Iran and the Soviet Union had a fairly normal relationship at government level which squeezed the open activities of Iranian communists. ~~But~~ the war occupation of Iran by Anglo-Soviet forces changed the situation drastically and under Anglo-soviet ultimatum Reza Shah abdicated in favour of crown prince Muhammed Reza Shah. Henceforth, the Communist could rethink of entering the political arena of Iran openly after an absence of about two decades. Both the external and internal factors contributed to the emergence of a genuine communist movement. Of the former the most important was the physical presence of the Red Army in Iran which underscored the return of Russian influence after a lapse of about two decades. Internally, the principal factor were the modernizing programmes of Reza Shah, changes in social conditions and the new political environment created by weakening of Iranian state. This communist movement was spearheaded by Hizb-e Tudeh-e Iran (Party of Iranian Masses) formed in Tehran on 29 September 1941. As succeeding years proved it was the "only consistently well organized political Party of Iran" And at least for three decades from then this party and its splinter groups spearheaded the leftist movement in Iran.

Right from its inception the Tudeh chose a middle path.

Despite its Marxist-Leninist leanings and strong soviet connections it never put marxist demands on its manifesto. Neither did it openly speak of class struggle. Rather it tried to have the best of both the worlds by keeping all the strata of the society pleased. For example, provisional programme of the party adopted in 1942 aimed at "uniting all citizens against both internal fascism encouraged by Reza Shah's gang and international fascism led by Hitler." Similarly, its detailed programme of 1943 made progressive promises to all groups. More over, since the Tudeh had interest in electoral politics it had to play to the gallery and show its faith in constitutional development rather than in armed struggle. The Tudehis went to the extent of declaring "we believe that communism is a social ideology suitable for social conditions that do not exist in Iran." Thus, the compromise policy of the Tudeh took it no where. It is true that it organised workers, and trade unionism was almost a gift of the Tudeh to Iranian political system, yet Tudeh's overrating of the power of the bourgeoisie and undermining the worth of proletariat forced it to make mistakes which decisively bolted its fate.

But the greatest weakness of the Tudeh since its inception was its blind following of the soviet union. The Tudeh went to the extent of supporting the illegitimate Soviet demand for oil concession^S_A in northern Iran. the party described Iran's northern region

including the provinces of Azerbaijan and Mazandaran as the legitimate security perimeter for the Soviet Union. This is perhaps one of the rare examples of a political party advocating such an ironic case. The Tudeh also supported the separatist movement in Azerbaijan sponsored by the Soviets. As late as 1971 the Tudeh believed that "all socialists had the duty to support the Soviet Union, the bastion of Marxism". During its chequered existence the Tudeh was infected several times by the problems of internal dissension conflict and defection. The basic reason for such a fate was its strong Soviet connection, which was invoked more than once by its ^S dissenting members as the cause of their estrangement.

The Mojahedin and the Fedayeen came to the prominence only after the Siahkal incident of 8 February 1971 when thirteen young men armed with rifle, machine guns and hand grenades attacked the gendarmerie post in the village of Siahkal on the edge of the Caspian forests. But these guerilla organizations were born soon after the religious uprising of 5 June 1963, when on the climax of that year's Moharram mournings unarmed demonstrators shouting "Imam Hossain Protect us from injustice" took to the streets of Tehran ^{by} Gorn, Mashad, Tabriz, Shiraz and Isfahan and the regime retaliated by massive fire power and massacred about 20,000 unarmed demonstrators. The immediate mood generated by the June massacre was of apathy and despair. However, for a tiny member of young revolutionaries with

in the abyss of this despair, the nucleus of new hope was crystallizing. For these young men the June uprising marked the end of all forms of reformist and parliamentary struggle. They were convinced irrespective of their ideology, that the only meaningful way ~~was~~ was armed struggle. Both the Mojahedin and the Fedayeen were born out of this conviction.

For most part, Mojahedin and Fedayeen were born out of dissatisfied members of the National Front and the Tudeh party respectively. From successful return of monarchy in Iran after 1953 coup d'etat, which brought down Dr. Mossadeq's government, started a consolidation process which saw its climax about a decade after with the brutal show of power on the demonstrators of June 1963. In the meantime the shah has been successful in sidelining almost all opposition including that from the Tudeh and National Front. The Tudeh and the National Front on their part took to conciliatory and defeatist attitude resulting in their progressive inactivity. This was the major factor which frustrate the younger men in both the parties and resulting it what may be called a 'generational split' in them. This split led to the younger and militant opposition which crystallised in guerilla forces like Mojahedin and Fedayeen.

The Mojahedin were a unique type who drew their inspiration from both Islam and Marxism. The 1963

uprising and its suppression made them realise that with even minimum planning Shi,ism's martyrdom philosophy was ripe for exploitation for revolutionary ends as witnessed by thousands of chanting religious zealots who had literally rushed towards firing machine guns and laid their bodies in front of the advancing tanks of the Shah's army. Similarly, at that period of time Marxism as an ideology had proved its effectiveness in the liberation struggle of the oppressed people around the world. Its systematic approach was an asset for any guerilla movement. Hence the Mojahedin picked its guidance. Now they synthesized both. Thus the original achievement of the Mojahedin was to synthesize the religious values of Islam with the scientific thoughts of Marxism' for they proved that true Islam was compatible with the theories of social evolution historical determinism and class struggle. The Mohjahedin reinterpreted Islam and gave new dimensions to the symbols, ceremonies and personalities crucial to Shi'iliturgy. In their views Moharram and Ashura were not just annual rituals but rather the occasions to fight all forms of oppression as Imam Hosayn did. Jame'eh-e Imam-e zaman signified not just the return of the Hidden Imam but rather the establishment of perfect society which, being classless, would be free of want, war, injustice, oppression, corruption and alienation.

The Fedayeen, like the Mojahedin were staunch

believers in guerilla warfare, believing in independent interpretation of Marxism-Leninism and its pragmatic application in Iran. They were strong critics of the Tudeh for its dependence on the Soviet Union and ignoring the concept of 'Armed Struggle.' As Ahmad Zadeh put it the Fedayeen strategy was to defeat the enemy, the broad masses must be drawn into struggle. To smash the enemy's army, there must be a people's army. To create people's army there must be a prolonged guerilla warfare. A guerilla warfare is necessary not only for military victory but also for mass mobilisation. On the one hand, the mobilisation of masses is the foundation for military and political victory, on the other hand mobilisation of masses is not possible without the armed struggle." Thus, the central thesis of the Fedayeen was astonishingly simple: guerilla warfare and more guerilla warfare.



Although these guerilla organizations could not sweep the Pahalvi regime out of power they repeatedly shattered the myth of invincibility of the Pahalvi regime. All the leftist forces, the Tudeh, the Mojahedin and the Fedayeen played a prominent role in the revolutionary turmoil of 1978-79 which brought an end to the Pahalvi regime. The years thereafter are beyond the purview of this study. But the reason why the leftist forces could not do well in Islamic republic is obvious. All of them were basically interested in the intelligentsia and never cultivated strong bases among the people. Hence when, Islamic Republic struck on them

systematically, one after another, it was predictable that there would be little popular resentment over their demise.

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