

Antoine Gessler



AUTOPSY OF AN IDEOLOGICAL DRIFT

Analysis and background on the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran

Translated by
Thomas R. Forstenzer, Ph. D., RSA

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Facts don't cease to exist because one ignores them.

Notes on Dogma

Aldous Huxley

Most ignorabce can be defeated. We don't know because we don't want to know.

Brave New World

Aldous Huxley

This work is' dedicated to the memory of Abdul Gabbar

Moussa AI-HashimL

An Iraqi born in the Basrah region, Abou Fahad (his "nom de guerre") spent 40 years of his life in the struggle for true democracy in his country.

Member of the Political Bureau of the Iraqi Communist Party, Abdul defended his beliefs in armed struggle, with outstanding courage. Wounded several times, he travel/ed throughout the Middle East creating important contacts for his cause. He was forced into exile and lived as a political r_fugee in Switzerland I had the great privilege, after meeting Abou in 1994, of learning from his experiences in a complicated region of our world: difficult to grasp and approach .from an outsider's perspective. Never sectarian, he knew how to share his knowledge and very precise details. He made it possible for me to meet many major political figures: the newsmakers of recent events.

Abu was more than a friend He was a consistently kind older brother to me. He had the idea that I should carry out this research work. Unfortunately, he never had the chance to read it. Abu's heart gave out on the morning of Saturday, 30 November 2002. He was 62 years old

Wherever he may have gone, I hope that he has/ound the peace which is so absent from the lives o/hisfel/ow countrymen.

With sadness and thanks

Antoine Gessler

INTRODUCTION

On Tuesday, 17 June 2003, more than a thousand police officers carried out a huge raid in the Paris suburbs. The French Government was thus dismantling the infrastructure of Massoud Rajavi's People's Mojahedin of Iran, an Iranian opposition group recognised as terrorist in nature.

The Islamic Republic of Iran welcomed this action with relief: it had almost fallen to a coup d'Etat orchestrated by the PMOI. The aim of the coup would have been the creation of a "people's democracy" in which the social aims of the current Government would have been revised and redirected on the basis of a reformed Islam: an Islamic Democratic Republic of Iran...

But much remains unknown. Was the United States, after its military conquest of Iraq, tempted to use these very same People's Mojahedin of Iran (recognised officially by the US as a terrorist group) for the destabilisation of the Teheran government?

In 1981, two attacks decapitated the revolutionary institutions that, in 1979, had taken down the Shah. The major leaders of the Party of the Islamic Revolution (PIR) and the team around Prime Minister Ali Radja'i were assassinated by bombs, each killing separated from the other by only a few weeks. Did the PMOI really have all the tools for a putsch which would have changed the course of history?

The clerical party was still intact and solidly in place. The supporters of their government executed thousands of opposition militants, forcing their leaders into exile.

Classified as a terrorist group by the United States and by the European Union, the PMOI is largely discredited today. It was based in Iraq since 1986 and faces the full impact of Saddam 'Hussein's fall from power.

Founded in Iran under the Shah's regime, they took up armed Combat against the monarchy's police. The PMOI claims to follow an "Islamic-Progressive" ideology and continues to carry out terrorist actions against the Teheran Government.

Massoud Rajavi is their leader and his wife, Maryam, has been designated by the PMOI as the "President-elect" of Iran. They claim to be the only official opposition to

President Khatami and his eventual successors. They have created their own syncretic political thought, one that reflects their personal interests. This "radjivism" must be accepted and spread by all members of their organisation.

Having participated in the movement that overthrew Reza Shah, the People's Mojahedin broke with the supporters of the Islamic Republic in a life and death struggle for victory.

Massoud Rajavi found refuge first in France and then in Iraq. He owes everything to Saddam: the funding of the PMOI, arms and their training camps in Iraq, including their Headquarters in Camp Ashraf. The three to five thousand Iranian militants in PMOI, operating from Iraqi territory, helped maintain a high level of tension with Iran. This destabilising factor could only help Saddam Hussein, who never forgot his failure to win the war between the countries. From 1980 until 1988, Iraq and Iran were aflame with war.

On several occasions, Massoud Rajavi sent his partisans against Iran, hoping that a victory, even a modest one, would lead to a popular uprising against the clerics in power. Literally hundreds of inexperienced young men and women lost their lives due to the analytic errors of their leadership. In fact, far from a triumphal welcome for the PMOI's militia, they were confronted by a reflex of national self-preservation. The Iranian Army was in a position to tear these amateur militia units to pieces.

Since these defeats, the PMOI had to settle for periodically infiltrating small units ordered to carry out terrorist actions in Iran's big cities. The PMOI was also providing, inside Iraq, support forces for a dictatorship which ruled its people with a bloody, iron hand. This was the case right up until the intervention of the American-British forces.

Operating as a political-military sect, based on a cult of personality, the People's Mojahedin of Iran require total obedience from their true believers. The hierarchy is very structured and very strict, demanding blind obedience to the leadership. Their methods are reminiscent of Stalin's. They include the notorious model of the Moscow show trials: overwhelming their internal critics with insults, mud slinging lies, accusations of treason, selling out or being enemy agents.

Yet, after almost thirty years of struggle, the PMOI and its National Liberation Army have little to show for their efforts. They have squandered all their achievements of the Seventies and Eighties largely through their alliance with Saddam Hussein. During the last two decades, Mr Rajavi and his friends have only succeeded in cutting

themselves off from the very people who want change in Iran, but will not follow the PMOI. They have never been able to lay the foundations of that "Islamic, Democratic Republic of Iran" which is their principal aim.

Even worse, now that their protector is gone, the PMOI had no alternative but that of letting the American Army disarm their troops and close down their military bases. Perhaps they will be able to smuggle some of their members out through Turkey, Jordan or Syria. However; if they win political exile status in Europe or America, their freedom of action will be reduced to zero.

Without their sanctuary in Iraq, the organisation's leadership will have to limit their ambitions. Like their political wing, they will have to look everywhere for petitions supporting the movement. They will be fighting for a legitimacy which is disappearing with each passing day.

Since 1975-1981, all the givens have changed. Groups like the People's Mojahedin of Iran have become mere relics of the Cold War/ this particular relic is poorly understood in the West, where it is still trying to maintain its ability to cause problems for Iran.

Research is necessary to analyse hidden circles of the PMOI. We hope that this thesis, based on a wide range of sources published over the years will help advance our understanding of the PMOI.

CHAPTER 1

The end of tolerance

The People's Mojahedin were struck a mortal blow when their European headquarters was dismantled by the French in June 2003. They had already been neutralised as a force in May 2003 when the Anglo-American Coalition took over Iraq and threw out Saddam Hussein's regime. These events mark the end of an investigation that had gone on for several years and led to the end of any tolerance for the movement.

"French police questioned more than 160 members of the People's Mojahedin (the main Iranian opposition movement) last Tuesday near Paris. The police claim to have dismantled the group, which the French judicial system suspects of planning and funding terrorist operations. On 11 May, the People's Mojahedin, which numbers about 4 to 5,000 troops in Iraq (although there were once more than 15,000), agreed to turn over their heavy weapons and put their troops under the control of the American Army occupying Iraq...

While no one is certain as to the whereabouts of Mojahedin leader Massoud Rajavi, the police confirm that they questioned his wife, Maryam, aged 50. This symbolic figure of the Islamist-marxist movement had been named "Future President of Iran" by the PMOI...

In the complex of houses in Auvers-sur-Oise, headquarters of the National Council of the Iranian Resistance (NCIR, the political name used by the Mojahedin) there were more than 100 satellite dishes and 'an enormous amount of computer equipment'.

According to an Interior Ministry source, Auvers-sur-Oise had been turned into the Mojahedin's "International HQ". Up until March-April [2003], their command structure was in Iraq and only moved with the outbreak of war.

The same source, asked about the results of this police raid, announced that the operation had successfully dismantled the organization in France..."

According to the police, this raid was "one of the biggest undertaken by the DST (French Counter-intelligence) in the last 30 years". International press agencies reported that it was the result of more than three years of investigation. (1)

France thus became the first Western country to take seriously the danger posed by the PMOI.

The Associated Press underlined the significant means deployed by the French police authorities. This shows that the French security services did not take this raid lightly: even bringing in aerial surveillance helicopters.

The operation was aimed according to the Ministry, above all, "at the leaders of an organisation which threatens public order and is planning or preparing to finance terrorist acts".

During the raid, it was necessary to use explosive charges to break open "blocked doors", the police stated.

"The People's Mojahedin are the military wing of Massoud Rajavi's National Resistance Council, based in the Paris suburbs...

The raid, carried out under a search warrant issued by the Paris-based anti-terrorism investigative magistrate, Jean-Louis Bruguiere, mobilised more than 1200 officials, including 80 members of the elite GIGN: France's SWAT team.

It was carried out by the Directorate for National Internal Security (DST or French counter-intelligence) with the support of the Central Command of the Judiciary Police and under the technical direction of the RAID (France's specialised unit for hostage and terrorist incidents).

Thirteen targets were surrounded in the Val d'Oise and Yvelines departments, with a particular focus on the Auvers-sur-Oise camp which was suspected to be a refuge for many active PMOI members...

'Since May 2002, this organisation has been on the list of terrorist movements denounced by the European Union', according to an Interior Ministry press release. 'Its bases in the Paris region are considered to be used for questionable organisational, logistical and financial purposes', added the Ministry...". (2)

Right away, the PMOI mobilised its supporters throughout Europe. They set off a well rehearsed series of actions which deeply shocked a European public opinion with little exposure to such extreme methods.

"The protest actions against the arrest of the People's Mojahedin leadership continued Thursday. New demonstrations took place in Paris... In Rome, two men

poured petrol over themselves and set themselves on fire this Thursday morning. They did this during a demonstration of several dozen people in front of the French Embassy. Firemen intervened quickly to put out the burning clothes. The lives of the two men do not seem to be at risk.

At the same moment, another Iranian did the same thing in front of the Berne Railway Station in Switzerland. Despite the rapid response of the police, he suffered extensive burns and, according to the Berne Police, remains in critical condition.

The day before, three Iranian women tried to burn themselves alive in Paris. Two are hospitalised, while the third died of her wounds Thursday afternoon at the Percy Military Hospital in suburban Clamart. She was nearly dead on arrival, but survived for one day.

Also on that Wednesday, two other Iranians tried to do the same in London and in Berne. The Berne police prevented him from setting himself on fire." (3)

French Government spokesperson, Jean-Francois Cope, considered these self immolations as "obviously, extremely dramatic". He added, "Alas! It also tells us a great deal about the mindset of their leadership". Following these demonstrations, the Paris Prefect of Police barred all Mojahedin gatherings "until further orders". Moreover, a police order banned the sale, transport and use of all inflammable products in certain parts of central Paris... In an interview published in Le Monde, on Thursday, Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin declared that the police operations were aimed, "at the central nervous system of a terrorist organisation". He made clear that "It is in our national interest to make sure that all structures sheltering terrorists on our soil be dismantled."

During an interministerial meeting at the Prime Minister's office, Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of the Interior, emphasised that the materials seized at Auvers-sur-Oise justified the operation, M. Cope reported.

More than eight million dollars in cash and 150,000 Euros were taken, as well as computer equipment and dozens of satellite dishes. Neither weapons nor false papers were found.

The Quai d'Orsay (the French Foreign Ministry) let it be known on Thursday that "there was no question" of extraditing these opposition figures to Iran, despite the request of Iranian President Mohammed Khatami.

The protests showed that the outright fanaticism of the PMOI was true: that the denunciations of former Mojahedin who had escaped the Organisation's clutches were

reliable. These men and women had been speaking out for years about the internal practises of the PMOI, yet they had been stigmatised by the leadership and their sympathisers as Teheran's agent. Yet, reality shows that they were right all along. The accusation of terrorism is now accepted at the most authoritative international levels.

"The People's Mojahedin planned to attack Iranian diplomatic missions in Europe, except in France", stated the Director of French Counter-Terrorism during a press conference.

According to information gathered by this service (the DST), the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) 'was preparing for murder attacks outside Iran, including in Europe', stated the Director, Pierre de Bousquet de Florian...

During the police search at Auvers-sur-Seine, 'eight to nine million dollars in cash' was found, added the DST Director, before going on to state that the full accounting was still under way.

M. Bousquet de Florian confirmed that many OMPI leaders had returned to France since the American intervention in Iraq, including Maryam Rajavi. 'They had turned Auvers-sur-Oise into an operational headquarters for terrorism', he stated. The US intervention had 'taken away the PMOI's Baghdad Headquarters' as well as the financial support of Saddam's regime.

The DST chief underscored how dangerous the PMOI was. It was more like a sect, a cult of personality for Massoud Rajavi and his wife. In 2001, the PMOI had claimed responsibility for more than 195 terrorist attacks on Iran from its base in Auvers-sur-Oise.

Police sources stated that since 1999, the PMOI's periodical, Mojahedin, was banned in France by Ministerial order." (4)

An Uncertain Future

While the French are tracking down the People's Mojahedin, m, despite its ups and downs, continues a policy of change. Will Tehran, with its powerful position in the region, become a priority for American diplomatic initiatives? After all, on 7 May 2003, 153 the 290 members of the Majlis, the Iranian parliament, voted for normalisation of international relations and more internal reform. an open letter, cited by Agence France Presse (AFP) they were asking for greater support at home and abroad. Contacts have actually taken place to find common ground. "These meetings

could lead the way to a rapprochement between the two countries, whose diplomatic ties have been broken since 1980...A new meeting seems to have been held in early May to discuss the transfer of Al Qaida members to the United States in exchange for the neutralization of the People's Mojahedin, an armed organization based in Iraq which opposes the Islamic regime in Tehran. The US forces began disarming this group last week", sited the Geneva newspaper, Le Temps. (5)

In Washington, the possibility of a closer cooperation with the Islamic Republic no longer seems so crazy. It could come about, even if the process will be long and if threats are sometimes brandished in the midst of an initial dialogue.

In this context the PMOI could become an indirect form of blackmail, one that is extremely dangerous. After all, the United States is playing a very acrobatic game which could become unbalanced and destabilize the region even further.

But, the White House, in its security extremism could also set off a scenario approaching chaos. This would be using the People's Mojahedin with the end in view of destabilising today's Iran.

Would the Bush Administration go so far as to commit the irreversible? The French press agency, AFP, cites in this context an article in the Washington Post. If things remain only in the realm of conjecture, the fact remains that nothing prevents us from imagining that the United States could take the fatal step. "The Pentagon suggests fomenting a popular uprising to bring down the Iranian Government," the Washington Post continues. State Department could adopt this approach if Iran does not take measures against the Al-Qaida terrorist network by Tuesday," adds the daily.

Iran has denied giving shelter to terrorists. But a responsible American official, quoted by the Post, states that around ten Al-Qaida agents are hiding in Northeastern Iran, an isolated region which he admits is controlled very tenuously by Teheran. (6)

Rumours are circulating and accusations are becoming pointed. The whole world already understands that the will of President George W. Bush is the law of the land. He can decide whatever he wants in the absence of any opposition from international opinion. In the West, reactions have remained strictly verbal and indicate a deep apathy.

And this is without taking into consideration the American domestic scene. The most extremist elements are pushing the White House to intervene.

"The Iranian Government, accused by Washington of harbouring Al-Qaida members and of developing arms of mass destruction, is a major problem for the United

States. It should be replaced, in the view of American Congressmen... Jane Harman, Representative of California and member of the House Intelligence Committee, thus stated that she considered Iran as 'a more clear and present danger than was Iraq last year'. However she hopes for a peaceful solution.

The Senator and candidate for the Democratic Presidential nomination, Joseph Lieberman, believed, from his perspective, that "regime change" in Iran was the solution to the threat posed by Teheran to Washington.

He, nonetheless, excluded a military operation in order to avoid provoking an anti-American reaction by those Iranians who support the United States.

Jay Rockefeller, vice chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee seemed to be equally prudent. He told CNN that he thought good news would be heard from Iran. He went on to state that it would be "extremely reckless to try to destabilise the regime in Teheran based on any prediction of popular support for such a move", reported the Associated Press at the end of May 2003. (7)

From his side, Mr. Kamal Kharazi, the Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran gave an interview at the same time to reporters from the French daily Le Figaro, setting the stage for the raids in France in June, 2003.

"...Does the Iraqi issue justify the development of Iranian-American contacts?

-We have had contacts with the Americans concerning Afghanistan and, today, we continue them on the subject of Iraq.

They cannot reach any conclusions if they do not take place in a climate of equality and a spirit of cooperation.

However the Americans make promises but do not keep them...

- Since the Americans have disarmed the People's Mojahedin in Iraq, this opposition movement's leaders have exiled themselves in France. What is your reaction to this?

- In fact, this represents a complex problem for France. The Mojahedin are included on the list of terrorist organisations created by the European Union. France, therefore, cannot give them political asylum...". (8)

Which way out?

Why did France choose the tough line to neutralise the PMOI? Paris fears, quite logically, that Rajavi's supporters will use its territory to mount terrorist operations

against Iran, claiming authorship from Europe. After all, since America took control of Iraq, the Mojahedin have lost their support bases, close to their targets.

In any case, in tomorrow's Iraq, there is no place for the People's Mojahedin of Iran. Massoud Rajavi and his followers must find new geographic strong points and new strategies. Their paramilitary arm, the "National Liberation Army of Iran" has lost direct access to the Iranian border. This brings a dramatic halt to their incursions on the ground: a genuine catastrophe for these forces who believe:

"The military arm of the resistance is the best guarantee of the fall of the clerical regime". (9)

From now on, the leadership of the PMOI knows that Turkey (their ideal base) will provide them with no help at all.

"The resistance has repeatedly requested that the Turkish Government provide bases and support for its fighters in Turkey's frontier provinces to facilitate their comings and goings toward Iran. But Ankara has refused this request". (10)

This is a stance which will not change. Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Government fears, above all, that the Kurds in northern Iraq would not be tempted to take their fate in their own hands and establish their own State as an outcome of the Second Gulf War. This would spread the contagion to Turkey's Kurdish minority. Ankara has, therefore, locked its eastern flank. The People's Mojahedin of Iran have hardly any choice but to begin moving their activities to Europe. To do this, they can count on active support from a certain "Progressive International" which has hoped for years to weaken the West. This ultra-Left has no roots in the traditional political currents of thought, even using the idea of "democracy" as bait to lead the unsuspecting into the maze of a kind of instinctive socialism.

Understanding the different forces which are allying to impose on humanity a future which will be no better for us, but very much so for its handful of elites requires a strange journey indeed. In the image of Dante's circles of Inferno, we must advance through the different prophets of these "nomenclatures" who, from the tears and suffering of their base, grab all the profits of violence. This includes artificially creating a counterfeit setting to provide violence with a comfortable context.

Chapter 2

Rajavism

The Sixties, the time of the PMOI's birth, are defined in black and white. Perhaps the colours red and white would be more accurate since the East-West conflict deeply divided the mid-20th Century world. On one side, the Soviet bloc under Moscow's command gathered in the Warsaw Pact. It was held together by a rigid Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. On the other, stood the western countries inside the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) led by the United States. They were bound together by their belief in the triumph of capitalism. Yet, this bipolarization of the planet never led to any big armed conflict, nuclear or conventional, between the two blocs.

However, right up until 1989, when the Berlin Wall fell and Communism as a governing system began to recede rapidly, many crises threatened world peace: like the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Happily, the two super powers, equal in force, always avoided using their nuclear arsenals other than as strategic dissuasion. A direct clash between the Soviet Union and America would have inevitably led to the destruction of whole populations.

Moscow and Washington, on the other hand, set off local points of conflict which opened the way for their bids to control strategic regions. Whether it was in Asia, Latin America, or Africa, these centripetal forces led back to the Kremlin or the White House. It was basically in the Middle East that the East-West rivalry found its most serious field of action: the key to access to extraordinary oil reserves.

It is in this basic paradigm that it is best to understand the birth of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran. Like many similar organisations, the PMOI was not bom ex nihilo. It comes right out of our contemporary history. This was a period of chances and changes which shed light on the triple political nature of the PMOI: political, religious and social. Like his "colleagues" elsewhere, Massoud Rajavi invented nothing new.

Today, the movement harshly denies its references to Marxism:

"The label of Islamist Marxist was used by the Shah's SAVAK and imitated by Islamic regime to be used as an attempt to subvert the Mojahedin's social base." (11)

The organisation is not fully wrong in its denials. In 2003, it is true; the movement is no longer Marxist or even Islamist in the traditional sense of the term. Having adapted progressive political ideas and Koranic interpretations, the Great Leader has forged a personal syncretism which owes little to *Das Kapital*, the bible of pure socialism, or to a Koran of unbreakable laws. Rajavism has clearly eclipsed all other references.

Coming on stage

Despite a rhetoric which today seeks political correctness behind many invocations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the PMOI is deeply marked by the revolutionary principles adopted at birth.

As Ahmad Goreishi and Dariush Zahedi have analysed it, the revolutionary process follows a very precise cursus, one which is applicable as a common model for all movements regardless of peoples and borders.

"Revolution is a process which sets off basic political, socio-economic and ideological changes. The revolutionary end to an existing regime is brought about by the meeting of two sets of correlating variables: the internal defects of the regime and its vulnerability and the coordinated action of social groups and individuals who oppose it. The achievement of a successful revolution requires a conscious effort of the revolutionaries aimed at the fall of the existing order. Finally, the relation between popular discontent and the fall of the regime depends on the skills of the revolutionary leaders and (in)competence of those in power". (12)

Iran, by its geographical position and richness beneath its ground, is at the point of conflict between the Americans and the Soviets. Having organised the fall of Dr Mossadegh in 1953 and restoring Reza Shah to the throne, the United States won the first round. They moved into Iran like a conquered country, overarming the sovereign's troops. The Shah himself reigned as an absolute monarch in Teheran to play the policeman of the Persian Gulf. But, in the Sixties the hopes of the popular majority formed the base for the demands of groups who, concluding that legal and non-violent political struggle was impossible, chose armed struggle.

In Iran, as the authors of *Iran in the 20th Century* emphasise, "the new generation was still fascinated by the Mossadegh experience and had other models taken from revolutionary and independence movements in the Middle East, North Africa, Asia and Latin America. For these young militants, ideological barriers did not exist. They no longer rejected Marxism, which they knew well, without, at the same time, turning away automatically from Islam. Less fascinated than their elders by the technical and economic success of Europe, they were more aware of the violence caused by imperialism". (13)

Like the Red Brigades and Prima Linea in Italy, the Rote Armee Faktion of Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhoff in Germany, the Red Army of Japan and Action Direct from France, guerrilla movements inspired by Marxism-Leninism broke out around the world.

These were groups that cultivated their knowledge with readings of Leon Trotsky, Fidel Castro and, above all, the movement best-seller, Mao Tse Tung's *Little Red Book*.

They included combat cells that took Che Guevara and General Giap as their models. "Rigid, violent and doctrinaire, these groups seemed more Stalinist than Stalin. Iron discipline, a reflex for secrecy, self criticism, and private life sacrificed to the organisation: a sect syndrome", suggested Jean Sevilla. (14)

Young Iranians crossed the Rubicon and organised resistance combat groups. Moved by the ideology of the Ultra-Left, they aimed to install proletarian rule by terrorist attacks.

"Many of the young intellectuals who saw the repression of June 1963, who had seen the hopes for political representation held by the National Front for the Liberation of Iran and even Tudeh swept away, turned to more radical solutions, often close to despair", according to historians. (15)

"Who are these people? Sons of merchants, civil servants students and engineers. With no hope of being followed by the people, they chose violence because the old nationalist and revolutionary forces of the Fifties had had their day and decomposed. They also saw that all the hopes of the Opposition were used against them by the regime. Thus they think only defiance and sacrifice can provide the examples to keep youth from submitting," reports the French weekly *L'Express*. (16)

The first, the People's Fedayeen took action. They were led by Bijan Jazani (executed in 1975) who had learned his craft in the Tudeh (the Iranian Communist Party). After

bloody skirmishes with the army and police, they took terrible losses and were contained. But the example had been given. The Sazeman-e-Mojahedin-e-Khalq, the People's Mojahedin of Iran was created on 6 September 1965 by Mohammad Hani, as well as Sa'id Mohsen and Ali-Asghar Badi'zadegan, two other young intellectuals. It was about to enter on the scene.

"Mohammad Hanifnejad, the founder of the People's Mojahedin of Iran was an agricultural engineer and a Moslem intellectual. Born in 1938 in Tabriz, capital of Azerbaijan province, he was an anti-Shah activist. " (17)

Condemned to death by a court martial, he was executed on 25 May 1972.

Soon others would join and together they would decide to act. Analysts point out that "The founders of the People's Mojahedin born between 1938 and 1940 came to the same conclusion as the People's Fedayeen about the impossibility of a parliamentary solution... They met each other at the University of Teheran and, beginning in 1965, they formed study groups inspired by Marxist models and by Shi'ism in several cities. Some of them joined Palestinian training camps in Jordan and Lebanon after the Six Day War of 1967. This helped radicalise the organisation". (18)

CHAPTER 3

From joining up to prison

In 1971, the People's Mojahedin of Iran decided to do battle with the regime in order to avoid leaving only the Fedayeen involved. They undertook attacks, sabotaging electric lines in order to disrupt the prestigious festivities organised by the Shah to mark 2500 years of the Persian Empire.

They were betrayed by a police informer who had infiltrated them. Sixty-nine of the highest leaders were arrested.

Tried in 1972, eleven of them, including Massoud Rajavi, were condemned to death. Two, including Massoud Rajavi, escaped execution due to a campaign to mobilise Western public opinion. Confronted with foreign pressure, the Shah retreated, but claimed that those pardoned had cooperated with the imperial regime's secret police.

How had the current supreme leader of the PMOI gotten to that point? One of his anonymous, but authorised biographers has this to say:

"Massoud Rajavi was born in 1948 in the city of Tabas in the Northeastern province of Khorassan. The youngest of five brothers, he has a law degree from the University of Teheran... In secondary school, Mr Rajavi was a sympathiser of Ayatollah Teleghani and of Mehdi Bazargan's Freedom Movement. He encountered the Mojahedin at University and join up in 1967. He was in direct contact with the movement's founder, Mohammad Hanifnejad, and was later promoted to the Central Committee... ". (19)

After his arrest, Massoud Rajavi led the fight from his jail cell. He rose to the highest positions of the movement, due to the execution of the chiefs of the PMOI.

"Like the People's Fedayeen, the PMOI organised 'communes' in the prisons. These functioned as support groups, sharing meals and common cells. Above all, they developed as study groups and for spectacular actions reported outside including hunger strikes. An important split took place during this prison period -in 1975 - between the "religious faction" of the Mojahedin. They kept the same name. But

another current of thought clung only to the Marxist school and changed its name later to Peykar. Contemporary historians conclude that this split led not only to bloody fights inside the prisons, but to a decline in the PMOI's image among the clerics. This loss of prestige included those who remained within an Islamic point of view. (20)

His long imprisonment would not be without effect on the political thought of the PMOI as defined by its main leader. Only the most abstract theories can take form in a cell, cut off from the real world. Programmes developed in such a setting will be limited to a "virtual reality" belonging only to their author. It is worthwhile remembering that it was during his imprisonment after the failed 1923 putsch that Adolf Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*.

Without any other guidance than those learned during their careers of revolutionary struggle, the ideologues of today's Proletarian Left never thought that their analyses had nothing to do with the hopes and realities of the people they presumed to lead. This was because they were so steeped in the underlying doctrines of the International Progressive "Movement" of the Seventies.

It has taken only two decades for history to refute the illusions of those who believed that humanity would welcome them as saviours. Having been convinced of the absolute truth of their faith, these small groups - Trotskyist, neocharismatic or simply "revolutionary" - continue to repeat their mantra without seeing that no one is listening out there in the desert.

From Prison to the revolution

The People's Mojahedin continued their guerrilla actions while their leaders re-imagined the world and settled scores with "deviationists" in jail. Bombs went off in May 1972 during American President Richard Nixon's visit to Teheran. Others struck at symbols of Western power in the country, including the offices Pan Am airlines and Shell oil. It was part of a strategy to provoke a hardening of the Shah's regime. But it failed.

Simultaneously, throughout the world, similar organisations were following the same path.

Visiting Professor at Harvard, Berkeley and UCLA, professor at France's elite ENA, specialist in geopolitics and strategy, Gerard Chaliand is, without question, the author of the best analytical works available today on the subject of terrorism.

In his classification of terrorist movements, he devotes an entire chapter to "anti-imperialist or revolutionary groups without a mass base, usually committed to class struggle and armed struggle - almost exclusively in the form of urban guerrilla warfare - in non-democratic countries. This type of movement took root first in Latin America, like the Marighella group in Brazil, Uruguay's Tupamaros, and the Argentinean Monteneros. Within this category, we also find, with small variations, the small Turkish extreme left groups, [and] the Fedayeen and the People's Mojahedin of Iran. The efforts of these groups, given the weakness of their social support, usually lead to failure, the hardening of the State and the rise to power of the most repressive elements". (21)

The Tupamaros who turned Montevideo into a bloody arena were crushed by the forces of order after nine years of battle. Founded in 1963, the Tupamaros National Liberation Movement, named after Tupac Amaru, the rebel Inca chief (whose name would later be used in Peru in the Nineties) carried out waves of attacks in Uruguay. They killed an American diplomatic counselor and kidnapped the British Ambassador. It was not until 1972 that the Uruguayan Government finally ended this urban guerrilla warfare.

In Iran, as well, the Shah's police gave back blow for blow and struck hard against those carrying out guerrilla actions. Yet, despite its losses and the thinning of its ranks, the PMOI was never able to reach the masses: the force it needed to create radical change in the pre-determined "historical sense".

On the other hand the fight carried out by the group against the monarchy gave it a particular aura and attracted to it an overexcited, romantic youth. This did not take place until 1978, when we see all the different elements of the country go into the street and risk their lives to overthrow the Shah. The Iranian Revolution had nothing to do with class struggle, however: "It did not involve, in any form, the movement of the poor to throw out the rich, or of the Proletarian against the possessing classes". (22)

CHAPTER 4

From revolution to rebellion

When, on 1 February 1979, the Air France plane landed at Mehrabad Airport in Teheran, a new page opens in the country's history. On board the plane, Ayatollah Khomeini, the man who for years led the struggle against the Shah, returns after a long exile. Neauphlele Chateau was only his last address. He returns the victor, carried high by an enthusiastic crowd.

The king, a few days earlier, on 16 January made the trip in the other direction. He left a country beset with revolutionary risings. Like all revolutions, the one that decided Iran's fate did not happen without some elements of chance. And, like all revolutions, it will finish by "devouring" its own children when the time comes to settle accounts.

"The dynamic of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was not driven by any real class struggle, in the socio-economic sense of the term. It was the absence of freedom, the corruption which rotted the system and the social injustices which resulted from them that were perceived as the causes of suffering and pushed forward collective action...The Iranian Revolution was no simple struggle between interests. Iranians were far from being obsessed only with material issues, symbolised as money. They sought, above all, political reform and the reorganisation of 'civil society' even if they did eventually hope for economic results as well", writes Rouzbeh Sabouri. (23)

The departure of Reza Shah would be, notably, a time for liberating political prisoners. The Chief of the People's Mojahedin of "an is once again free to act, again entering the life of a country from which he had been isolated for almost eight years.

The PMOI states:

"Massoud Rajavi was arrested on 23 August 1971. He was freed from prison on 21 January 1979". (24)

His political-military command structure had been smashed by the SAVAK's repression. Only some underground cells survived, but without any means to act.

These facts do not prevent the PMOI from rewriting its history and to proclaim boldly today:

"The Mojahedin were the real leaders of the anti-Shah revolution". (25)

At the moment that power was seized, centrifugal forces opposed each other.

They were two necessarily conflicting philosophical positions on the nature of the new world that was dawning. Nonetheless, the PMOI called on 1 April 1979 for the establishment of the Islamic Republic. They were avoiding a premature confrontation, since the Islamic Left had still not had time to build its base.

An explosive situation

Despite appearances, the stands were irreconcilable, even if contacts had taken place since 1972 between followers of Ayatollah Khomeini and the Politburo of the Organisation of the People's Mojahedin of Iran.

It would take two years for the hairline fracture to become a complete break.

During the parliamentary elections of August 1979, Massoud Rajavi put forward his candidacy and got 300,000 votes in the capital city.

During the winter of 1979, the situation has become extraordinarily explosive. On 4 November a group of students took take over the American Embassy in Teheran.

Now forced to take a distance from this action, which would mark them as terrorists, the People's Mojahedin now deny their role in the hostage taking. Edouard Sablier, a great expert on pre and post monarchy Iran notes that at the beginning, the PMOI was involved:

"They were about two hundred, belonging to no political group in particular, commanded by about fifteen Islamic militants who were more politically mature. Among those who climbed the fence around the Embassy on 4 November 1979 were members of the Tudeh Communist Party and Islamic-Marxist groups including the Fedayeen and the Mojahedin. Most were thrown out," writes Sablier, whose testimony on this is definitive.

The struggle with Washington went on for long months and ended with the freeing of fifty-two Americans held hostage in order to force a change in their Government's policies toward the new Islamic Republic.

But the streets did not calm down. Following months of demonstrations, in the wake of the sovereign's flight, the forces on the ground found the means to defend their claims. Again, Edouard Sablier writes:

"The raiding of the Army and Police arsenals provided every one, young and old, with pistols, rifles and submachine guns. There were hardly any homes in Iran without an arsenal of arms and ammunition: Iran is a people in arms, even if the arms are not enough for a civil war or a fight against a foreign army". (26)

This was a worrying situation for the new government which tried to organise a return of the weapons; an unacceptable demand to the PMOI. From its military-political perspective it sought to confront the State. Their aim, evidently, was an armed seizure of power. For the moment, however, they would have to wait for a better time.

Calculated coexistence

The precedent of the Bolshevik Revolution cannot be ignored. The revolutionary Left's herald, Lenin hid his ambitions in order to buy the time he needed to gather up his forces. History has shown the result. Gerard Chaliand gives us the model:

"The Party of the Marxist-Leninist type is an admirable war machine: secrecy, organisation and control. This remarkable instrument for struggle, in very difficult times, saves the movement from collapse. But, after victory, it becomes, not a tool for development, but rather a bureaucratic and police structure". (27)

As well as they could, the People's Mojahedin of Iran coexisted with the regime they hoped to overthrow. To them, it would be a victim of its lack of programmers.

This was a dynamic they were ready to push toward the final fall. Their strategy seemed adapted to the situation. Propelled to the direction of the State, very few of those who brought down the throne had any management experience.

The beginnings of the Islamic Republic were clearly chaotic, with all the attendant mistakes and excesses. The new leaders were young, full of energy, but with little in the way of knowledge and experience to carry through a smooth transition and take the reins of power without violence.

Among the revolution's priorities was the need to elect replacements for the Old Regime and have as clear a policy line as possible. During the popular referendum on the new Constitution, the People's Mojahedin decided to advocate an electoral

boycott. And, during the Presidential Election of 25 January 1980, in which Abdolassan Bani Sadr was the winner, Massoud Rajavi won 500,000 votes.

In spite of all its efforts, the government was reduced to improvising things, trying to fill gaps left by the civil servants of the Old Regime: pushed aside or in flight. This required rebuilding an administrative system, restarting the system of supply, making sure that those committed to the exiled monarch would not take advantage of the situation. This was even more dangerous since, although the Army had rallied to the new regime, many in the general staffs and in the other ranks did not view things favourably.

A true gift

During the night of Thursday 24 and Friday 25 April 1980, the Democratic Administration of Jimmy Carter attempted a helicopter-borne attack on Iran. Aiming to free the hostages, American commandos set down close to Teheran. The operation was poorly prepared and "Blue Light" sank in the sand, 350 kilometres south of the capital. Several dead, the burned out wreckage of failed equipment, and the shame of a rapid retreat were the outcomes.

The attempt, a genuine act of war carried out by one sovereign State within the recognised borders of another, was a true gift to the very young Republic, still seeking its bearings. The authorities used the event to show that enemies really were there and that they were ready to strike. It was, therefore, necessary to root out their spies and supporters inside the nation.

"This clear defeat seemed providential to Teheran at a time when Bani Sadr and even ayatollah Khomeini himself feared that no popular unity could be forged among the people," reported the French weekly, *Le Point*. (28)

The fact is that, at this time, post-revolutionary anarchy reigned in Iran's main cities. Riots broke out every day and there was bloody fighting in the streets. Siavosh Ghazi, the Agence France Presse and Premiere-Radio Suisse correspondent spoke of a potential coup d'etat aimed at the eventual establishment of a Popular Democratic Republic in Iran:

"While waiting, the Mojahedin are working to train tens of thousands of young people who now support them. They secretly hope to share power with the clerics.

According to former president Bani Sadr, they may have even proposed to the then official successor to Ayatollah Khomeini, Ayatollah Montazeri (eventually removed in 1987), a division of powers. They would get the control of the State and ideology would be given to the Guide of the Revolution." (29)

But they ran into a harsh and loud refusal. The last act was being prepared. In the absence of any solution the revolution was underway.

CHAPTER 5

From rebellion to war

From the outset, the PMOI bet on the newly elected President, Bani Sadr. A certain convergence of points of view brought them together, one that went beyond their shared differences with the religious leaders. Edouard Sablier defines it as an ideology:

"The new President believes in a sort of theological Marxism. He used his stay in Paris to reinterpret the economic teachings of the Koran as part of a social doctrine. He hopes for an egalitarian, practicing the "Tawid", or the community...

In brief, his programme was a mixture of Utopian socialism and Titoism. He took his distance from Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy and therefore he was rejected by the Communists of the Tudeh Party.

Soon, however, he would get the support of the Islamic Left organisations like the Mojahedin and the Fedayeen." (30)

The considerations that pushed the PMOI from its sectarian Leftism toward Bani Sadr are clearly evident in the movement's set of demands.

"The common platform between the two organisations was soon made public. They planned the nationalisation of industry and commerce, the expropriation of the multinationals, the expulsion of foreign experts, the creation of a citizens' army, local autonomy for the different ethnic groups, and land for the peasants and revolutionary justice," wrote Edouard Sabatier. (31)

But everything was not for the best in the best of all possible worlds. The French press reported:

'It is impossible to work in a country in which so-called students form a State within the State,' stated an impatient Abdolbasam Bani Sadr soon after his election as President of the Islamic republic. (32)

Iraq attacks

A new event was about to explode like a clap of thunder in the international community. This was to be an event of immense importance since, if it marks the Eighties, its influence reaches down to the beginning of the 21st Century.

On 22 September 1980, the Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein sent his troops to attack the Islamic Republic.

On 17 September, the tyrant had denounced the Algiers Accords signed by Baghdad and Teheran on 6 March 1976 for the division of the Shatt-Al-Arab. More than historic and territorial issues, Iraq considered that Iran was weak from internal disorder.

Secular in inspiration, the Baath Party (Resurrection), controlled as it was by Saddam's Sunnis, feared extremism among the local Shi'ites who account for 62 per cent of the population. In the South, Ali's followers were kept from any decision-making institutions and kept in intentional misery. Despite this discrimination, these very same Shi'ites -systematically persecuted—would never betray their own country throughout the war against their Iranian coreligionists.

During the first days of fighting, Iraqi soldiers penetrated about 10 kilometres inside their neighbour's territory. Quickly, however, they were surprised by the resistance they ran into. Iran had mobilised and gone to war, forgetting all its internal fights to move, with nationalist fervour, to counterattack the enemy.

After a series of battles, the Iranian "Thamen el Aemenmeh" (The Eighth Imam) counteroffensive retook Abadan and forced the invaders to retreat. Carrying the battle inside Iraq, Teheran's troops in waves of massive assaults - operations like "Kerbala" or the different phases of the one code named "Val Fajr" (Dawn) -kept breaking against the Arab lines without achieving a clear victory. It was necessary to persist until 1988 before Iran accepted a ceasefire Baghdad had been desperately seeking a way to stop the conflict it had started. A few weeks after his failed attack, Saddam Hussein did his best to get out of the trap he had fallen into. Hundreds of thousands of killed, even more seriously wounded and handicapped, economies in shatters: all factors that would continue to weigh on the development of the two belligerents.

The blood bath

In Iran, on the sidelines of this terrifying struggle, the situation was imploding. Another war was developing, inside the country.

Terrorist actions had now led to outright murders. The PMOI had, on its side, a strict, well-trained organization, at ease in' clan-destine struggle. It pushed the State toward stronger repression, leading the authorities down the road of the totalitarian approach that all violent struggles set off.

On 11 June 1981, the Majlis, Iran's Parliament, controlled by a large majority of the Party of the Islamic Republic, started a procedure to force Bani Sadr out of the Presidency.

The People's Mojahedin considered this the right time for open defiance of the regime. On 17 June, less than a week later, it set off on a new course, issuing their first military press release.

Four days later, a bomb exploded in the PIR's Headquarters, killing Ayatollah Beheshti and the party's leadership. The act, however, was not claimed overtly by the PMOI.

On 30 August, the new President, Ali Rajai and his Prime Minister, Bahonnar, lost their lives in another bombing which the PMOI again refused to "sign". Public opinion, however, saw the People's Mojahedin as the authors of both explosions.

Siavosh Ghazi insists :

At the time, after this show of force and determination, there ^ere many who thought that Rajavi's men would become the country's new masters. Did they miss their chance? In any case, hey would soon be in no position to be serious contenders for power". (33)

Surely the regime had fallen into a very obvious trap. The inex-Perienced Government, reacted hysterically. It met violence with violence in every possible direction. The repression it set off would be ferocious. Thousands if the organisation's sympathizers were arrested, tortured and put to death. The insurrectionary movement

was drowned in blood. The complexity of the situation, combined with the tensions which, for weeks had had been tearing the social fabric apart, led to an explosive mix.

The departure and the loss

Yet, before the final break, the People's Mojahedin tried very hard to create a link to the High Command, hoping that the Army would tilt toward an alliance for a coup d'etat.

The soldiers who did their duty on the Iraq front still remembered, that the PMOI had targeted their officers under the Shah.

They therefore heard these suggestions torn between their former loyalty to the Shah, their feeling of national responsibility and distrust for the Mojahedin.

In the end, the soldiers would not move. Siavosh Ghazi notes:

"By betting on the Army's intervention, the Mojahedin committed an enormous political mistake. In their view, the trial of strength with the authorities could not be settled without a general, violent confrontation. In this approach, they had provoked combat with the Revolutionary Guards. Suddenly, most of the Iranian people who had been leaning their way, showed its rejection of armed struggle and took on the role of simple observers. And the Army had not moved to join with the PMOI. (34)

A final appeal to the crowd to take to the streets met with no response. The wheel had turned and only the religious leadership was still standing.

Finally, removed from office by his political foes on 21 June, ex-President Bani Sadr went underground. On 29 July 1981, he arrived in France accompanied by Massoud Rajavi. The weekly *Le Point* was there:

"Last Tuesday at dawn (04:30) an Iranian air force supply plane which had left from a Teheran base for what was claimed to be a 'routine flight', landed at Evreux, the military airbase clearly dedicated to celebrity exiles. Bani Sadr was luckier than Bokassa. Dressed in a sport shirt, he had come back to Normandy. For others on board, it was discovery: Colonel Behzad Moezi, without doubt the plane's pilot, a friend of the former Chief of State and Massoud Rajavi, Chief of the People's Mojahedin: the organisation which, between Marx and Mohammed, opposes and opposed the Revolutionary Guards". (35)

A refugee in France, Bani Sadr would end by breaking with the Mojahedin Chief. The unity of the "resistance" abroad did not survive the differences of opinions and

unilateral exclusions practised by its leading members. The former President could not accept Massoud Rajavi's relations with the Iraqi enemy. The war, after all was still going on and the Rajavi-Tariq Aziz (Iraq's Vice Prime Minister) meeting convinced Bani Sadr to break. This was a loss that of course, the PMOI would try to turn to its own advantage, claiming that they had purged Bani Sadr. For the PMOI, any means are useful to reach their goals.

The weekly *Nouvel Observateur* had foreseen this exclusion of the former President: "Only a month ago, at the time of his firing, Bani Sadr swore that he would never leave Iran. If he decided to do so, it was to follow the example of Khomeini in the time of the Shah. Their aim is to organize the resistance outside the country while, inside the country, the clandestine organizations, notably the People's Moja-hedin carry on the guerrilla struggle.

This is a risky bet. Experience has shown that Iranian leaders who have left the country - whether it was the Shah or Bakhtiar -were quickly forgotten. But did Bani Sadr have any choice?

Recently, thousands of the regime's opponents have been arrested and the cord - was tightening around him. If he had been taken there would have been a trial and, in all probability, an execution. Of course he could have stayed in Iran and died a martyr. But the former President has never been a guerrilla fighter. For the underground groups which were protecting him, he had become more a burden than an asset. Realists, the Mojahedin and he decided to share out responsibilities among themselves, creating last 18 July a National Resistance Council directed from outside by Bani Sadr and inside by the '01 Chief, Massoud Rajavi". (36)

For the People's Mojahedin, a new phase would again occur when, in 1986, Massoud Rajavi and his leadership left France and Titled in Iraq. Siavosh Ghazi concludes:

"The Mojahedin would never again find their popular support. Despite some attempts to build alliances with other progressive movements in the country, especially in the early years of exile they would sink into an incurable isolation. Then they would opt for the unnatural alliance with Iraq. In setting up their HQ in Bagh-dad... they would lose, step by step, all their credibility. Marginalized, those who believed they could change the course of Iran's history would become a mere support force for the Iraqi Army, on probation from Saddam Hussein ». (37)

CHAPTER 6

The marks of Marxism

"A better understanding of the People's Mojahedin of Iran requires a better understanding of their ideology, which is based on a democratic and progressive interpretation of Islam," the group proclaims.

The People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran ferociously denies any accusations of "Marxism" and terrorism. Yet, since its birth and at least for its first 10 years, the group embraced a doctrine full of references to Marxism.

Following a bloody split, full of excommunications and purges, the movement's Left gave the leadership, in 1975, to Rajavi's faction. It was more inclined to include a version of Islam reflecting his views.

During the Seventies, if 'progressivism' won out in the currents of the European Left, in Iran the main force of the opposition to the imperial regime was based on the clerics.

It was difficult in these conditions to prepare a revolution without the support of the dissident clergy, with its strong influence over the people. This did not prevent the PMOI, throughout its history, from showing the matrix of the raw material from which it came. The dialectics of Marxism were bred in the bone. The organisation had internalised the revolutionary and underground principles of revolutionary warfare propounded by Che Guevara and the North Vietnamese General Giap.

Above all, it is in looking at the works of Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse Tung that these influences become clear. The author of Little Red Book, published in 1966, had a powerful impact on the ultra-Left, to which he taught many lessons.

Accused in a list

After the "9/11" 2001 attacks on New York and the Pentagon, the United States confirmed its list of foreign terrorist organisations. The legal criteria for this

designation draw on the following factors: the group's activities must pose a threat to the security of Americans abroad or to the national interest. This latter is defined as national defense, foreign relations or economic interests of the United States.

"The list contains 28 groups designated by the Secretary of State on 5 October 2001 as foreign terrorist organisations under Section 219 of the Law on Immigration and Nationality, amended by the Law of 1996 on the fight against terrorism and the death penalty.

Groups labeled "foreign terrorist organisations" are:

1. The Abu Nidal Organisation (ANU);
2. The Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG);
3. The Armed Islamic Group (GIA-from its French initials);
4. Aum Shinrikyo (Aum);
5. The Basque independence organisation, ETA (from its Basque acronym: Basque Fatherland and Freedom);
6. AI-Gama al-Islamiyya (Islamist Group);
7. Hamas (Islamic Resistance Movement);
8. Harakat al-Moujahedin (Movement of the Moujaheden);
9. Hezbollah (Party of God);
10. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan;
11. Islamic Jihad of Egypt;
12. KahaneChai(Kach);

13. Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK);
14. Tigers for the Liberation of Eelam Tamul (LTTE, or Tamil Tigers);
15. The Mojahedin-e Khalq Organisation (MEK);
16. The National Liberation Army (ELN), Colombia;
17. Islamic Jihad of Palestine;
18. Front for the Liberation of Palestine (FLP);
19. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP);
20. PFLP-General Command (PFLP-GC);
21. Al-Qaida;
22. Real IRA;
23. Armed Revolutionary Forces of Colombia (FARC);
24. Revolutionary Cells (ex-ELA);
25. The 17 November Revolutionary Organisation;
26. Party/Front for the People's Liberation (DHKP/C);
27. Shining Path "Sendero Luminoso";
28. United Self Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC).

Inclusion on this list has the following consequences:

It is prohibited to provide financial or any other material support to the groups on this list.

Representatives and certain members of these organisations could be refused entry visas to the United States or be expelled from the country.

American financial institutions are required to freeze the assets of these organisations and their agents and to so inform the United States Department of the Treasury". (39)

Just what are the accusations against the PMOI? Are we to see the People's Mojahedin as terrorists or as freedom fighters?

Mr Rajavi's followers complain:

"The State Department accuses the Mojahedin of using violence and terrorism in their struggle to overthrow Iran's regime. The main issue, however, is not how to overthrow the regime, but to understand that the mullahs must be overthrown. The Department's bureaucrats have stated repeatedly that they do not seek to overthrow the Iranian regime. It is the responsibility of the Iranians to put an end to the dictatorial reign in their country. The discussion, therefore, should focus on the right of the Iranians to resist and establish democracy ". (40)

This is a facile way to avoid the issue by declaring that "the end Justifies the means". In its arguments against the State Department's accusations, the PMOI seeks to relegate the use of terrorism to a simple strategy used for regime change.

On the use of terrorism

Once again the People's Mojahedin of Iran play semantic games. Indeed, they are well trained in them by their now-rejected Marxist education.

What is terrorism? This is the basic question and it is not easy to find a clear answer. The best specialists - like those on the TerrorWatch website, whose analysis we will use - have tried to define it:

"A combat method based on the use of terror and part of the framework of a strategy of 'the weak against the strong'. Since the start of the Cold War, no coherent and universal definition of terrorism has been adopted on the international level, thus making ineffective the many UN resolutions passed against international terrorism. In the English speaking countries alone, 212 definitions of terrorism are used, with 72 being used officially. Inside each country, each institution involved in anti-terrorist

struggle uses its own definition. Each of these definitions corresponds to the interests of each institution.

The American Department of Defense defines it as 'the calculated use of violence or the threat of violence to create fear;

designed to constrain or intimidate governments or societies to attain generally political, religious or ideological goals'.

The main problem in defining terrorism is that many continue to consider it a monolithic phenomenon. They do not take seriously enough the many different contexts in which it breaks out. Such a vision comes basically from the fact that anti-terrorist strategies most often come from being directed against terrorism's effects (anti-terrorism) than from its causes (counter-terrorism). Thus nothing really differentiates between two bombings even if they occur on two different continents and set off similar responses. On the other hand, if the aim is to anticipate terrorist activity, very different strategies would be required". (41)

These are the criteria from which the PMOI can hardly escape given that they are so characteristic of their means of action. This is all the more true in that the group itself claims the right to "armed resistance" targeting directly THE root of all the evils suffered by Iran: the United States. These are unambiguous claims:

"Having analyzed the general situation of Iran, the organization concluded that, given the Shah's governmental policy and the suppression of every form of opposition, the only possibility for a democratic alternative was to throw out the regime. A non-violent political campaign was impossible, by definition, in pursuit of this goal, given the Police State put in place by the Shah. Consequently, the Mojahedin began preparations for armed resistance. They were also critical of American policy in Iran and demanded the end of United States support for the Shah". (42)

The term "armed resistance" is really a common euphemism used by movements who also want a democratic and proletarian revolution on the lines of triumphant Marxism-Leninism. Since 1917, the Soviet Union continually headed, in one way or another far-flung world empire. This ambition met an obstacle after 1949: Mao Tse Tun's China which replaced Stalin and his inheritors in the hearts and minds of the artisans of ultra-Left internationalism. The methods stayed the same, whether taken from Moscow or Peking. The hated enemy was the same, as TerrorWatch points out:

"In the Marxist dialectic, Western capitalism and imperialism are a form of "State Terrorism". Revolution is thus a normal answer, one that justifies giving assistance to revolutionary movements

This support for Western terrorism from the countries of the East is also an application of a subtle strategy. This support has often justified integrating different categories of terrorism in a global, Marxist-Leninist revolutionary process. But, above all, terrorism has been used as a tool for destabilizing systems, even if the message of the movement in question was contrary to Marxist-Leninist principles." (43)

Revolutionary violence in service to the struggle against Washington and its designated lackey, Reza Shah Pahlevi, would thus destabilise pro-Western Iran. The Soviet Union could only rejoice. This is especially so since Moscow never hesitated to finance groups that fit into the big plan of "radiant" communism's world hegemony. Michael Voslensky, translator at the Nuremberg Trials, sent by the USSR to the World Peace Council and considered as one of the "lost eminent specialists on Soviet politics, popularised the term nomenklatura" in the West. He bears witness of the Kremlin's generosity to the movements it subsidized, in Iran as well: "The Politburo of the Central Committee often showed a singular largesse: one can only wonder about the 30,000 dollars allocated to a mysterious "Fedayeen of the Iranian People". (44)

CHAPTER 7

The basis for action

The Mojahedin's "National Liberation Army" has never really acted as an army in the Western sense of the word. After some stunning defeats during its conventional attacks, its soldiers fell back on the tried and true methods of guerrilla political terrorism. These are techniques which have advantages and disadvantages for the PMOI. On one hand, the organisation could loudly and widely claim that it had a military capability. Later, it tried to build its "legitimacy" to the Iranian diaspora - who entertained no illusions about them. Finally, it tried to establish itself as the only possible alternative to the power in place.

Most of the actions carried out inside the national borders were followed by a communique claiming responsibility. These were purely along the lines of those used by Hamas or Islamic Jihad:

Or as TerrorWatch states: "One of the objectives of terrorism is to publicise the movement and its aims. It is part of the Marxist idea of the corrosion of the social order and of armed propaganda". (45)

But, since the Liberation Army has only limited means and a limited number of recruits, especially compared to the numbers and armaments fielded by the regular Iranian Army, they can only plan small acts of force. Mortar attacks, attacks with explosive charges. Nothing important in itself, but actions that kill. Usually the victims are innocent civilians, if they are not targeted murders. This does not help the PMOI, especially when it hopes for a real Popular representation in country. And this they lack completely. It's necessary not to sink into oblivion but the use of bloody means attracts harsh criticism on the international stage. There, the decision seems clearly taken to wipe out all extremist groups preaching the use of violence. Since then, Mr. Rajavi and his friends gild the lily in grasping at prestigious straws. Many

times, he has spoken of General de Gaulle's legacy in an attempt to draw self-serving conclusions:

"To accuse the Iranian Resistance of terrorism is like accusing the American Revolutionary forces or the French Resistance to Nazi occupation of terrorism. " (46)

It suffices to draw on TerrorWatch's analysis to clearly understand the difference: ,

"In general, terrorism is only a specific act of force to destroy or kill in a non-communist or non-revolutionary conflict. It exemplified by the Resistance to the Nazi occupier during World War II, by the Israeli Irgun, by Tamil terrorism or the Afghan resistance. In the structure of the communist revolutionary process terrorism is not only a means of destruction. Often and above all it is a form of propaganda. This armed propaganda is speaking to the enemy, as well as the 'friendly' population. It aims to show the movement's success". (47)

While the People's Mojahedin clearly announced their revolutionary nature, they showed no embarrassment in calling for armed uprisings. As to the alternative they plan to pose to Ayatollah Khomeini's regime:

"The complexities of our national situation dictate that this alternative is armed and organised. This includes respect for Islam, the faith of the vast majority of Iran's population ". (48)

In the case of the PMOI, if this terminology aims to be Islamist they see the facts on the ground through a Marxist prism.

Weaken the West

From the Sixties to the Eighties, the world's bipolarization created permanent confrontations between capitalism and communism. If the situation between the two superpowers never degenerated into open conflict, the Cold War reached its height through the use of subversive means by Moscow and Washington to influence the balance of forces in their respective favor.

Expert in clandestinely and fighting in the shadows, the PMOI was an ideal lever for the application of subversive doctrine:

"The armed opposition of the Mojahedin presented a very real danger to power since its Islamist-Marxist militants were the first infantry in the February Days of 1979. In addition, they had organized and directed the first committees and kept relations on many levels with the personnel in the power structure. Many had been their fellow

travelers during the years of struggle against the Shah. In the ruling circles, everyone could have been suspected of being a Moujahid mole", historians point out.

In all the speeches and all the publications of the PMOI, the Soviet Union is rejected in the same way as American imperialism. These ultra-progressives, however untrusting of the Kremlin elders (who posed as guarantors of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy), would still play the big power game. They did so even if they were unconscious of it. They marked their differences by looking to Trotsky and Mao. But they still remained within the larger political family in common struggle against capitalism and the West.

"It involves subversion already discussed by Sun Tzu in 450 B.C.: those who master this strategy force their enemy to change his strategy without direct conflict, destroying their fortifications without attack, eating up enemy organisations without long campaigns. (The Art of War, Chapter III, 'Attacking the system together'.)

Subversion has been the principal element of the indirect strategy of the USSR (and China) from the beginning of the Sixties. At that time it was used to weaken the Western countries to change 'the balance of force'.

The balance of forces is a complex calculation, taking into account quantitative and qualitative factors in order to calculate the relationship of strategic force between the USSR and its enemies.

On the political level these factors take account of the strength of the State's social base, its form of organisation, the constitutional procedures for the relationship between the executive and the legislative organs, the possibilities of taking operational decision making, the degree and form of popular support for domestic and foreign policy."

For the USSR war was a permanent phenomenon, which depended on "direct" (military conflict) and "indirect" strategies. The latter aimed to sap the West in most varied ways.

The process of subversion:

The definition of war in the Soviet Military Encyclopaedia clearly presents the complementarity of military and other means:

"[War is] a socio-political phenomenon, a continuation of politics by force... In war, to attain political goals, armed force is the principal and decisive means, along with economic, diplomatic ideological and others".

It does not necessarily involve promoting an idea or an ideology, but weakening the adversary. This explains why the East indiscriminately supported terrorist movements of the extreme Right and the extreme Left.

The objectives of subversion are:

Ideological encirclement aims to change the doctrinal orientations of a given nation or culture. It is the most subtle and difficult element to define. Seeing it is difficult against the social and cultural changes going on at any time. An ideological encirclement was attempted during the Eighties in West Germany. Pacifism was implanted to fight against the stationing of NATO's Pershing 2 missiles in the Federal Republic.

Political encirclement involves changing the perceptions of decision-makers on key subjects and limiting their freedom to decide. Thus, the freedom of a European decision maker is very limited on the subjects of Saddam Hussein or Milosevic. One could be rapidly pushed to the sidelines.

Strategic encirclement is the creation of an environment unfavorable to the adversary. This limits his freedom of maneuver. This is the "physical" side of subversion which uses democratic rules to paralyze political or other kinds of decisions (industrial planning, for example.) (50)

CHAPTER 8

Insurrection and organisation

From its experience in the popular fight against the Shah's regime, the Organisation of the People's Mojahedin of Iran established the foundation of its action programme. The PMOI always chose insurrection, subversion and armed struggle, whether during the 1979 revolution or the break with Ayatollah Khomeini's regime, which Massoud Rajavi had supported until 1981, albeit in armed opposition.

History shows that this was a constant throughout thirty years:

"On 11 June 1981, Bani Sadr went into clandestinely calling for 'resistance to despotism' without proposing any other concrete solution than a spontaneous and suicidal insurrection. The Mojahedin announced the creation of a political alliance with the man who was still officially President on 20 June. They called for armed struggle, but no other political movement followed. The crowd did not take to the streets and it has before when Ayatollah Khomeini had called for it.

On 2] June 1981, Abdolhassan Bani Sadr was fired by the Guide after 18 months. He had never really exercised power and had never begun the fight which the democrats had hoped to see.

Analysts see this date as the beginning of "a real civil war between the Islamic regime and the People's Mojahedin commanded by Massoud Rajavi." (51)

They have never denied this civil war, despite their consistent claims of "non-violence". This description is more strategic than sincere.

"In Teheran at the end of June, the Mojahedin at last launched a Widespread terrorist campaign to destabilize a regime they felt was shaky. Too soon", reported the weekly *Le Point*.

The reality is that in 1981 the Iranian situation looked more like a failed coup d'etat than a second revolution.

If Bani Sadr's call for an insurrection had been taken up, or if the Mojahedin had found support for their armed operations, the scenario could have led to a clear seizure of power. This would have included the occupation of the main Government buildings, the confiscation of institutions and the arrest of the existing regime's representatives.

The specialised review, *L'art de la guerre* (or "The Art of War") defines the conditions of a coup:

First of all, it is essential to understand the meaning of "coup d'etat". Edward Luttwak defines it as "consisting of infiltrating a cog, small, but essential, into the State's administrative machinery. The cog is then used to keep the Government from controlling anything... Two simultaneous operations must be carried out successfully: first, imposing a new power on the governmental machinery, second, using it to impose a new power on the country". (53)

As *L'Express* described it, "The Mojahedin are trying to push the people to insurrection by multiplying street demonstrations which quickly degenerate into armed fights. A strategic error? The Iranians are not moving at all."

And the plotters were forced to leave the country, promising to return before the end of the year. This prediction did not come true and is still a dead letter today.

"He [Rajavi] thought, as did Bani Sadr, that they were actually saving the 'Islamic Revolution'. After serving as Bani Sadr's escort, the Mojahid leader had to return to Iran through its porous borders and try to reconstitute the progressive forces. Is this a dream? As Ayatollah Khomeini's supporters noted, the crowd did not take to the streets to support Bani Sadr, or to protest the executions of Mojahedin," wrote *Le Nouvel Observateur* a few days after the two men fled. (54)

No other solution was available to the PMOI than that of rallying its unconditional militants, a few thousand supporters, and declaring war.

This would be their position even if the disappointed in their own ranks were many and would grow since Rajavi rallied to the Iraqi dictatorship. The membership of the Mojahedin would melt like snow in the sunshine.

Against the backdrop of political and media lobbying in the West plus a few successful terrorist actions inside Iran, the PMOI has shown itself more than a little inclined to repeat the Pang Ossian mantra: All's for the best in all possible worlds. (55)

Many observers have noted this:

"What is more, whatever level of support that the Mojahedin enjoyed within the Iranian population, this sympathy was quickly undermined when they sought refuge in Iraq during its war with Iran.

The intensity of this hatred for the Mojahedin among ordinary Iranians was amply demonstrated during the last months of the war. The people of a small border village killed the Mojahedin soldiers who had crossed from Iraq to 'liberate them'. This was done before the Iranian forces could come to their defense." (56)

To the ultra-Left

In the framework of its revolutionary activities, the PMOI admits in its own words that it was had a certain penchant:

"The activities of the Mojahedin require secrecy and no one knows of the existence of the organisation." (57)

As can be seen in the following outline of the career of the Mojahedin, this has been their consistent doctrine. Up until 1975, at least, this was the same source and aim (with some nuances) of all their language. Despite some modifications of language after that date, which marks their internal schism, it would be misleading to see the PMOI as the antithesis of an International Ultra Left.

This is a real programme shared by all the movements that claim to work for revolutionary political progressivism. Terror-Watch describes the key stages:

"The Marxist concept of revolution integrates terrorism as one of its steps toward building an egalitarian society. The different Phases of that revolution can be summed up as follows:

The Marxist revolutionary process:

1 - Formation of a core group as the revolutionary base and creating subsidiary cells to spread the ideology.

2- Corroding the social order through strikes, demonstrations, riots, terrorism and sabotage.

3- Popular education and psychological preparation. Terrorism becomes guerrilla activity and training camps are set up.

4-New social structures are put in place in "liberated" zones, which are used as guerrilla bases.

5- Guerrilla warfare develops into people's war.

To carry through all of these revolutionary steps, the Mojahedin recruited, from the outset, young men and women who had broken away from the monarchist system.

The lack of any free space, the muzzling of all means of self expression, each a need for a single party system, as well as the systematic persecution of all opposition led to the creation of "an army of the shadows." (58)

"[Massoud Rajavi] was able to forge a political party which combined Islam and socialism in a secret and effective military organisation. This structure, with its iron discipline, could avoid the reach of the clerical authorities...". (59)

Dozens of militants organised subversion from their clandestine organisational base. Gerard Chaliand identifies the sociological origins of those who crossed the line and joined the ranks of such organisations:

"The most mobilisable elements are very often urbanized youth, partly intellectual and partly educated. They have lost their class standing and are at the margins. Without future prospects, they carry within themselves a latent discontent.

It is much more difficult to mobilise the most underprivileged. those without hopes for change and little inclination to take risks because of the dependency and misery with which they live. It is essential to create a middle level leadership.

The higher leadership group usually is in place. They are already in the decision making circle or among those intellectuals who will soon rally to the movement". (60)

Repression

In Iran, the young who joined the PMOI as soon as the Shah fell grew rapidly. They were swept along by the hope of building a different world. These sympathisers could take to the streets, demonstrate, distribute pamphlets and organise logistics. How many of them would be willing to take up a rifle and coldly pull the trigger to kill someone?

This was Iran dominated by an insurrectional climate. The repression would lash out blindly. This would unleash a real crisis in a society which was just beginning to find its way.

The regime, driven mad by the attacks of 1981 and by the tension which continued to threaten its rule, accelerated its campaign of arrests and executions. This would later help the PMOI to claim all these dead, despite the fact that they were really the result of a major governmental mistake.

History has kept memories of this dark period alive: "High school boys and girls were especially moved. Numerous young people of the petite and middle bourgeoisie were looking for their identity and absolute answers. They were attracted by the enthusiasm and radicalism of the Islamic extreme Left". (61)

The reaction's violence shows clearly the inexperience of those leadership groups who, after the revolution, took over the State. As we have already said, all revolutions "devour" their children.

Under the circumstances, the persecutions doubtless ate up those who were innocent, as well as militants who had no blood on their hands. They would, with the passage of time, surely change their social outlook.

This is a conclusion shared by specialists:

"The liquidation of the People's Mojahedin in 1980-1985 struck the young, boys and girls together, well beyond the ranks of the organisation. 'Why were there so many executions? Aren't these young people part of the people?' was a common question. This was a double denial of justice: the young persons, 'their family's flowers' would have had the time to learn and they came from the people". (62)

Unfortunately, the beginning of the Eighties was not a time for understanding or discussion. The massacre would weigh heavily on Teheran's relations on the international level. For years, they would serve as justification for the legitimacy of the Mojahedin's fight.

There is still an act of homage to be given to those who died so uselessly. Recognition should be given to their loved ones who were so deeply wounded. An official mea culpa is necessary to close the dichotomy within society, which is not fully healed from these repeated trauma.

"[The] repression [was even] more terrible and systematic than that meted out to the royalists. This time the fissure went right through the middle of families and within whole groups friends". (63) Today, the wounds are still raw.

CHAPTER 9

A troubling report

The American Government put together a list of accusations and complaints against Massoud Rajavi's People's Mojahedin of Iran.

This was published in an official report on 31 October 1994. Throughout this fully documented file "the State Department refers to the Mojahedin as a terrorist group and maintains that they do not constitute a desirable or viable alternative to the current regime". (64)

Faithful to its tested propaganda methods, the PMOI responded with a book entitled *Democracy Betrayed*, published by the organisation's political wing: the Resistance Council for Iran. This latter group is based in France, in the Paris suburb of Auvers-sur-oise. Many citations from this book are used throughout our study.

The pamphlet begins by calling into serious question the competence of the institutions who wrote the accused analysis in the United States.

"The report is characterized by numerous contradictions, falsifications and distortions of simple, unequivocal facts set in the past and present. It is also marked by the use of no new sources and the Selective use of old stories. The impression is a lack of professionalism

The Department explains that many government agencies Participated, but the final product is questionable. It is on the level of a final paper by a first year student...

The Department of Defense (including the Defense Intelligence agency and the four armed services, the Justice Department, the Treasury and the Department of Transportation, the National intelligence Council, the National Security Agency and the CIA are among those cited". (65)

They went on to underscore insignificant details that were erroneous. This is a method of choice for the KGB experts who know all the secrets of effective disinformation. Yet nothing is said of the basic findings!

The Mojahedin refute minor elements but fail to show the irrelevance of the facts brought against them. Moreover, they have no irrefutable evidence against the report. As always in the inimitable dialectical style used by ultra Left movements, they launch personal attacks on some of the experts cited in the report. In mudslinging at one or another of them, do the Mojahedin really believe that they can hide their true nature?

So that the reader can judge for himself the seriousness of Washington's work in preparing this report, here is the list and accomplishments of those who were called in to advise.

From the outset, it should be noted that their references are solid and nothing was left to chance. The Commission included:

Dr Ervand Abrahamian, Professor at the City University of New York;

Dr Shaul Bakhash, Clarence Robinson Professor of History at George Mason University;

Dr Bahman Baktiari, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Maine;

Dr Ali Banuazizi, Professor of Social Psychology at Boston College; Dr James A. Bill, Director of International Studies at the College of William and Mary;

Dr Richard Bulliet, Director of the Middle East Institute at Columbia University;

Dr Patrick Clawson, Institute for the Study of National Strategy at National Defense University;

Dr Richard Cottam, Emeritus Professor of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh;

Dr Graham Fuller, political science specialist based in Washington, D.C.;

Dr Mark Gasiorowski, Associate Professor of Political Science at Louisiana State University;

Dr Gregory Gause, Associate Professor at Columbia University, former staff Expert on Arab and Islamic Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations;

Dr Jerrold Green, Director of Business Research at the State Department and former Director of Middle East Studies at the University of Arizona;

Mr W. Scott Harrop, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Virginia;

Dr Eric Hooglund, Editor-in-Chief of the Middle East Journal;

Dr Farhad Kazemi, Professor of Political Science at New York University;

Dr Nikki Keddie, Professor of Political Science at the University of California;

Dr Geoffrey Kemp, Research Associate at the Carnegie Foundation for International Peace;

Dr Mohsen Milani, Professor of Political Science at the University of South Florida;

Dr Roy Mottahadeh, Professor of History at Harvard University;

Mr Mehdi Noorbaksh, Research Institute on Islamic Studies, Houston, Texas;

Dr Rouhallah Ramazani, Emeritus Professor of the Woodrow Wilson Department of Government and Foreign Affairs, at the University of Virginia;

Dr Khosrow Shaken, Assistant Editor of the Iranian Encyclopaedia of Columbia University and founding member of the League for Human Rights in Iran;

Dr Gary Sick, Senior Research Scholar, Associate Professor of Political Science at Columbia University;

Dr John Waterbury, Director of the Centre for International Studies at Princeton University, former Director of the humanitarian organisation, Human Rights Watch for the Middle East, former Iran correspondent of the BBC;

Dr Mark Zonis, Professor of Political Economy at the University of Chicago.

To sum up, this is the very cream of the United States' political science community. This seriously damages the assertions of the PMOI.

This, however, does not prevent Mr Rajavi's movement from bitterly complaining that it was not consulted. Doubtless, he thought he would have the opportunity to present his cosmetised history and to try to impose it as the only practical truth.

Half truth=half lie

Using the consummate art of wielding half truths and half lies, the PMOI does succeed in manipulating its environment with remarkable effectiveness. We will return to this many times.

Let us however provide an hors d'oeuvre by referring to a simple agency press release dated April 2003:

“Five hundred supporters of an Iranian opposition organisation based in Iraq marched through the centre of Washington on Saturday. They demanded the end of attacks by American and Iranian forces on their bases.

A spokesperson for the National Resistance Council of Iran, the political wing of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran called the attacks by American forces on the Mojahedin camps ‘bewildering and regrettable’... The American Army announced on Thursday that it had attacked Iranian Mojahedin combatants in Iraq and that the Bush Administration considered them terrorists...

The spokesperson, Alireza Djafarzadeh, described any information concerning any involvement of the Mojahedin in Iraq's internal affairs as ‘absolute lies’.” (66)

Clearly, these were “absolute lies” since the PMOI owed everything to Saddam Hussein and would never have had a chance to act spontaneously concerning Iraq's

internal affairs. The Rais would never have permitted it, unless he called them for punctual tasks. On those “jobs”, the PMOI is as quiet as a mouse.

In their frenzied rejection of what they were politically and of the things they did in the context of their fight, the Mojahedin are trying to recreate a long lost virginity. They want to appear to public opinion as acceptable and legitimate.

It is precisely this legitimacy that they lack in Iran. So they do everything to find it, especially in Europe. Yet they still have to jettison a heavy past. It betrays them in the present and echoes down the future.

Observers worry that: “In order to cultivate the support of influential foreign governments, especially of the United States, and make themselves more attractive to the Iranian people, the Mojahedin have recently announced their conversion to the principles of liberal democracy. However, lingering doubts exist as to the seriousness of their commitment and to the degree to which they have really renounced their previous ideology (or what they will really renounce if they ever come to power)”.
(67)

Only George W. Bush’s Government shows no pity and no understanding toward overt anti-imperialists. In addition they bear the guilt of having murdered several of his fellow Americans.

The unpardonable crime

Washington, especially the Republican Administration strongly influenced by the neo-conservatives and the Christian extreme right, has declared total war on international terrorism. The 9/11 attack provoked a powerful reaction, a syndrome made even deeper by the fact that this was only the second time that the United States had been attacked on its own territory. The Japanese air attack on Pearl Harbour on 7 December 1941 had brought America into the Second World War.

Backed by a powerful popular wave of support, strongly driven by revenge, George W. Bush has been able to take on terrorism everywhere. Obviously, the words of the man in the White House rather lightly confuse causes with effects. Recent American allegations have not always shown the solidity required by prudence and justice. Indeed, if several cases put forward have remained threats without follow up, there is one axiom which is not subject to discussion: All those who pose a threat to the lives of United States citizens shall be punished, wherever they are in the world.

Thus, during the taking of Baghdad in April 2003, American Marines arrested a Palestinian militant who had long been on Washington's wanted list.

"Abou Al-Abbas has, for 18 years, been a target of American justice. On 7 October 1985, one of his organisation's commando squads took 450 passengers hostage on the Italian ship, Achille Lauro, in the Mediterranean Sea. The four terrorists killed an elderly American Jew who was in a wheel chair: Leon Klinghoffer. Later, they threw his body overboard.

The PLF demanded the freeing of 50 Palestinian prisoners in Israel. On 9 October the four pirates went to Port Said in Egypt. Two days later, American fighter planes forced the Egyptian airliner carrying them to land in Italy, where they were arrested by the Italian authorities. However, Al-Abbas, then considered only a witness, was allowed to leave the country...

Abou Al-Abbas found refuge in Baghdad. When the American- British attack began on Iraq, he may have tried, according to some American media sources, to obtain exile status in Syria. He ran into a refusal from Damascus". (68)

If the Bush Administration had not been forced to announce that Abou Al-Abbas had died of "natural causes" on Tuesday, 4 March 2004 (in a Baghdad prison controlled by the American Army) he would surely have faced a heavy prison sentence.

The United States rarely gives up. This is even more true under an Administration that has made the fight against domestic and foreign terrorism its main selling point.

In this context the ferocious denial by the People's Mojahedin of Iran of their instigating the murder of several American military officers during the 70s takes on a crucial importance. If they are guilty, they have to pay...

This is even more the case now that they no longer have sanctuary in Iraq and that the long arm of American justice will surely seek to "get" the guilty individuals.

The State Department's accusation is clear:

"The Mojahedin collaborated with Ayatollah Khomeini in the overthrow of the Shah of Iran. As an active participant in this struggle, they assassinated at least six American citizens and supported the seizure of the United States Embassy and holding its personnel as hostages...

They are: Lt. Colonel Lewis L. Hawkins, killed on 2 June 1973, Air Force Colonel Paul Schaeffer, killed on 21 May 1975, Lieutenant Colonel Jack Turner, killed on 21 May 1975, as well as three employees of Rockwell International:

Donald G. Smith, killed on 28 August 1976, Robert R. Krongrad, killed on 28 August 1976 and William C. LeCottrell, killed on 28 August 1976". (69)

At this time in Iran, terrorism was at its height. In his Memoirs, the Shah remembers this dark time:

"In 1972-1973, three American colonels were shot down in the streets of Teheran. It would be tedious to list all those who died, victims of terrorism. They were frequently people of very modest means. I think, among many others, of the taxi driver or car washer who fell to terrorist bullets while trying to fight back". (70)

Clearly, Massoud Rajavi's movement cannot avoid this accusation. It also cannot deny the facts behind the problem since the organisation's own press described the killing of one of their victims. It was presented as a "revolutionary execution".

The period around June 1963 owes nothing to chance. It was the time of the Shah's orders for major repression of the opposition.

"From the beginning of armed struggle, the Mojahedin have commemorated 3 June 1963 and have marked the example of the martyrs by executing and eliminating enemies of the people. This means the agents and protectors of the Shah's regime and its imperialist masters.

On the day before the anniversary of 3 June 1963—2 June 1973

— the PMOI executed one of the criminal agents of American imperialism in Iran. It carried out the revolutionary execution of Colonel Hawkins, who had massacred the heroic people of Vietnam". (71)

This gloating is rather troubling now that the time seems to have come to settle accounts. Once again Massoud Rajavi's organisation is trying to dilute the truth by playing on confusion. They try to blame these crimes on the political dissidence which cut through its ranks in the Seventies.

"The Mojahedin are not responsible for actions taken by others in their name. We are referring to those individuals who have removed the Koranic verse from the emblem of the People's Mojahedin of Iran... Mr Rajavi, while still in prison, condemned this Marxist group use of the 'Mojahedin' name. By underlining Islamic doctrine, he

clearly showed the differences between the Mojahedin and this group, which finally clarified things by changing its name to Peykar”. (72)

Here again, by using a simple accident of dates, we can see that the People’s Mojahedin of 1973-1975 are the very movement which Massoud Rajavi ran from his cell. Even were we to play “devil’s advocate” and admit the smokescreen descriptions of the PMOI (who use them to accuse their own competitor/comrades), it must be noted that the schism took place after the crimes under review: in 1973.

Massoud Rajavi — as the law gives the accused the benefit of the doubt — must at least answer for the coldly planned murder of Colonel Lewis L. Hawkins, himself a military officer and an advisor to the Imperial regime and an American citizen. There are no extenuating circumstances here. They claimed responsibility for this killing in unambiguous terms.

Chapter 11

The Great Helmsman at the rudder

As we have seen the People's Mojahedin of Iran reject any relationship with Marxism or Leninism. These are labels habitually used by orthodox Communist parties and their fronts (or "submarines"). Iran, like many of the countries with enormous natural resources attracted the greed of the Soviet Union. Moscow acted through the national parties that it controlled through its International.

Nonetheless, a significant number of ultra Left groups were looking for their own revolutionary identity. They, therefore, sought other ideological roots. The anti-colonialist struggles of the Fifties and the emergence of a Third World sensibility attracted young people who were looking for a model untainted by a doubtful past. For these movements who had divorced from Communists linked to Stalinism, often portrayed as traitors to the revolution, part of their salvation came from the Far East.

In 1966, a small book bound in red plastic would be brandished by Chinese students calling for support for Chairman Mao against all forms of deviationism. With his "Thoughts", soon translated into all the languages on Earth, the Great Helmsman took the rudder, influencing revolutionaries throughout the world.

"In Paris, the Little Red Book was translated in March, 1967. Thousands of hot heads dove into this tissue of foolishness, the emblem of one of the most criminal systems in history," writes Jean Sévilla. (73)

The Little Red Book went hand in hand with the student revolt of 1968 in France and violent street clashes in West Germany in 1969.

In Iran, the PMOI made no secret of having fallen under its influence.

"They (the founders) and the new members of the organization studied several schools of thought carefully, including those on Iranian history and those of other countries. This allowed them to analyse other philosophies and other theories in the light of their own considerable knowledge. They developed their own ideology based on Islam as the answer for Iran 's problems ". (74)

In the effervescence of the end of the Sixties, the Shah himself did not seem to understand where the “new gospel” was coming from.

“We saw the agitators declare that there was no contradiction between fundamentalist Islam and Soviet style socialism. This surprising finding was brought to us by the People’s Fighters (Mojahedin-Khalq) who had been trained in Lebanon and Libya”, writes the Shah in an attempt to analyse this phenomenon. (75)

This is an understandable mix up during the Cold War when all threats had to come from Stalin’s heirs.

However, without making a serious mistake, he could have looked toward Peking. In fact, all the little groups were showing signs of Maoist thinking, seen as innovative and, above all, without a corrupted past:

“Mao Tse Tung is basically anti-dogmatic and anti-authoritarian. He gives priority to the initiative of the masses over that of the apparatus; he insists on the principles of equality. He repeats that the Party cannot take the place of the masses and that the masses must free themselves” exclaimed a young woman who admired the leader of the Long March. (76)

“We are not the liberators. A nation must free itself to appreciate the value of its own freedom... There should be no limits to the freedom of people, right up to the point of armed rebellion... “, echoed the PMOI without spelling out if it accepted that rebellion could be used against itself. (77)

In the dialectic, as in practice, we can see more and more that “Rajavist” syncretism owes a lot to Maoism:

“The Mojahedin appear to operate under the illusion that, by acting alone without alliances with other opposition forces, they can overthrow the strongly ensconced clerical regime, just as Mao was able to destroy Chiang Kai-Chek’s nationalist forces”. (78)

Like Mao, we shall see the PMOI stigmatise the American paper tiger: the imperialism to defeat, source of all the world’s ills.

By the shedding of blood

“Thousands and thousands of martyrs have given their lives for the people’s interests. Let us raise their flag high, advancing on the route marked by their blood,” proclaimed Chairman Mao. (79)

The PMOI followed his example by continually citing their own “martyrs”, sacrificed on the cause’s altar and whose example must suffuse the entire struggle. The date of the 1963 uprising thus became an heroic gesture which the movement claimed as its own.

“Despite the suffering caused by the pressures brought to bear by the Shah regime, and despite the sufferings of arrests, torture and persecution, each year, since 1972, special ceremonies have been organised to mark Khordad 4 (‘3 June,) to commemorate the martyred founders of the PMOI.. However, the first anniversary of Khordad 4 after the victory of the revolution had a special significance and a special content. American imperialism which held up political power had been smashed by the glorious victory of the February Revolution “. (80)

The struggle against imperialism, in the form of the United States, was the sword’s edge of the International working tirelessly for the Great Red Dawn. Mao issued an unambiguous appeal. If the progressive forces which, almost everywhere, were engaging in subversion and the destabilisation of governments in the Western camp learned how to coordinate among themselves, victory was close:

“Peoples of the world unite to defeat the American aggressors and their lackeys. Let the people listen only to their own courage, dare to give battle, confront difficulties, advance in wave upon wave and the whole world will be theirs. The monsters will be wiped out”. (81)

The People’s Mojahedin of Iran, who had carefully studied the major revolutionary theories, blew the same trumpets:

The explosions mentioned above prove the fact that the peoples must imperatively unite to confront the enemies of the people. those who massacre and pillage nations. The only way of uprooting world imperialism is unity of action “. (82)

Chairman Mao did not limit himself to ideology. He gave useful advice on how to act in the face of an adversary with superior force. This meant transforming an external aggression into a factor for victory:

“In the case of an enemy attack, if the conditions exist to fight back, our Party will surely take the position of legitimate defense to wipe them out, resolutely, radically, integrally and totally (do not lightly give battle, only fight if we are sure or winning). Under no circumstances should we permit ourselves to be intimidated by the terrifying image of the reactionaries”. (83)

The PMOI also included the use of supposed threats which underlay the very nature of imperialism. It was necessary to continually motivate the militants by showing them which devil to fight:

“As long as the fighting people of Iran exist, we can use imperialist threats and pressures to develop our revolution and the freedom of our people. The imperialists and their mercenaries are those who should fear starting another Vietnam for themselves “. (84)

To carry out the struggle against Chiang Kai Chek’s Government, Mao Tse Tung based his action on the Communist Party and its leadership structure. The defeated armies of the Kuomintang (KTM) fell back on the island of Taiwan while Mao gave a country as large as a continent to the Communist Party alone. He lays out his “recipe” clearly:

“To make revolution, it is necessary to have a revolutionary party. Without a revolutionary party, without a party based on Marxist- Leninist theory and Marxist-Leninist revolutionary style, it is impossible to lead the working class and the great popular masses to victory against imperialism and its lackeys”. (85)

The People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran wanted, for its part, to be an alternative to the Shah’s regime. But it did not want to share that role. Under its banner, it called for all other revolutionary currents of thought to fuse with them. This was a unitary obsession which led inevitably to a single party system:

“The MKO of Iran, by inviting all the parties, organisations and popular forces to come together in cooperation and unity of action against the imperialism enforced by American military teams, is following the lines of its brothers in action against imperialism... It is therefore very clear that the inevitable death of imperialism can only be provoked by a politically correct line, vigilant resistance and the indefatigable will of the people. There is no other way. Let us make Iran the cemetery of imperialism and replace it by the people’s will “. (86)

Wiped out before it could put its theories and programmes into practice, the PMOI today promises free elections if, by chance, it ever wins control of Iran. It even swears to accept the will of the majority:

“If people do not vote for us (‘till we have overthrown the mullah regime,) we will remain in Opposition and hold firmly to our principles “. (87)

Obviously, the PMOI cannot say so explicitly, but throughout its “transition” programme they clearly explain that the people cannot ignore them since they embody

the people. They will show' that, better than anyone else, they know the people's hopes.

But even if the Iranian nation turned away from the theocracy under which it lives today, there is no evidence that the voters would overwhelmingly elect Maryam Rajavi and her alter ego: her husband. The former would be the President. The latter would be the grey eminence of an organisation that would not flinch from using violence as the means to reach its goals. History is full of examples in which a minority, attaining power through resignations or dissensions within the ruling group, confiscates the entire country, taking away the use of all rights.

The religious side

While Rajavi's Mojahedin refuse to admit any official Marxist affiliation, they openly claim to be Islamic. Or, rather, they say that they follow the very specific interpretation of Islam which can be found in the teaching of the thinker, Ali Shariati. He was born in 1933 and came to France in 1960 with an excellent academic record in Iran. In a country permanently marked by the 1848 February Revolution — the first democratic revolution that succeeded, however briefly in creating equal access to political rights—he learned of the struggles in the Third World. Ali Shariati spent much time with those working for Algerian independence.

“Among the thinkers who influenced the young was also Ali Shariati who recast Islam as a religion of struggle in the service of Third World liberation and restored a Shi'ism with its original confrontational content: in his view it had to be an anti-imperialist weapon and a vector for the creation of new social relations,” writes Paul Balta. (88)

The People's Mojahedin took much from Shariati, who was also a noted opponent of the Shah who jailed him in 1975. This did not prevent his writings from circulating in hundreds of thousands of copies by the time he died in 1977.

“Islam, in this view, is underpinned by an ultra Leftist ideology which comes out most clearly with the People's Mojahedin. They combined Islam with Marxism and made the link between the Moslem community and the proletariat”, write Fhrad Khosrokhavar and Olivier Roy. (89)

The People's Mojahedin of Iran, like Ali Shariati, want to create a “Democratic Republic” in which all class struggle will be banned:

“They share many common themes with the writings and sayings and declarations of Ali Shariati, an Islamic theorist who was not a member of the clergy.

He imagined an ideology through the fusion of certain aspects of Shi’ia Islam and Marxism. Shariati believed that true Moslems, instead of concentrating on the ceremonial and ritual parts of their religion to prepare for Paradise, should imitate the example of Imam Hussein who gave his life in the fight against injustice and tyranny. Shariati argued that the forces of injustice in the modern world were personified by the arbitrary rules of despotism, as well as imperialism and capitalist exploiters.

Repeating Shariati’s views, the Mojahedin saw the truth in such statements as ‘it is the duty of all Moslems to join in the continuity of Imam Hussein in struggling to create a society without classes and in destroying all forms of capitalism, despotism and imperialism’.” (90)

“The Mojahedin ideology is based on a democratic and progressive interpretation of Islam...,” proclaim the PMOI. But which Islam are they talking about? (91)

The Mojahedin demanded that true believers no longer follow the advice of the religious leaders. They were seen by the Mojahedin as agents of tyranny and exploitation. Therefore, they developed a discourse which led to the logical conclusion that the entire religious Establishment was useless.

This form of ideology is considered anathema by the Iranian religious Establishment, even by those who do not support the idea of velayat-e-fagih (rule by the Islamic jurists). It is also rejected by the commercial class of shopkeepers and bazari, as well as most in the professional and business classes. (92)

CHAPTER 11

Hopes dashed

When Mr Massoud Rajavi, Chief of the People's Mojahedin, became a refugee in France in July 1981, along with former President Bani Sadr, he thought that his stay in Paris would be brief. For him, Teheran's Islamic regime was close to exhaustion and "the approaching end of the bloody dictatorship" was near, reported the French daily *Le Monde*. (93)

At the beginning of the 80s, few experts thought that the Islamic Republic of Iran would survive past the century's close. There were simply too many internal tensions, too many splits and power struggles. Isolated internationally, Iran would have to run into a period of radical change.

The PMOI's language never varied: the horror reigning in Iran, the regime cornered, Khomeini was finished and the Mojahedin would free the country.

It was essential to keep the movement's base motivated. To make them believe that it was only a question of time. Next year in Teheran! Yet, nothing happened as it had been ceaselessly repeated that it would.

Worse, as the years passed by, the standing of the Mojahedin fell slowly, but surely. Vincent Huguex looked back in 1994, writing: "Who is threatening the Islamic Republic? Certainly not the armed movement of the People's Mojahedin, based in Iraq. The danger is within: a slow dilution of the regime's rhetoric in factional conflict". (94)

Yet, for its supporters, the PMOI's struggle would surely succeed, given the Government's political bankruptcy.

On 24 April 1990, the Iranian secret service assassinated Professor Kazem Rajavi, older brother of Massoud, near the village of Coppet on Lake Léman in Switzerland.

He was the representative of the National Resistance Council to the Swiss Confederation.

Nine years before his death he was interviewed by the Geneva daily, La Suisse:

“Two thousand Mojahedin have been executed in Iran. We know that another twelve thousand are rotting in Khomeini ‘s prisons “. Former Ambassador to the U.N. and to Senegal for the Islamic Republic which had overthrown the Shah in January 1979, Mr Kazem Rajavi was now in Geneva. He had left his country for political reasons.

A pair of large eyeglasses framed his regular features, with his sweeping gestures but a truly Oriental self control, speaking in a slightly accented French, Mr Rajavi went on:

“Personally, I am not a Mojahed. I feel very close to my brother Massoud who leads the movement. Together with former President Bani Sadr he is organising the resistance to Khomeini’s regime from Paris.

This is a regime which is failing completely, which does nothing but expand the cemeteries after having turned the country into a gigantic prison.

— Your brother is fighting alongside Bani Sadr. However, the former President was more than compromised in his dealings with the imam...

— Bani Sadr never really had power. He could not even appoint a school teacher. He worked from within to keep Khomeini from going too far, right up until the full scale massacre. He even called for fair trials of the Shah ‘s former dignitaries. But no one listened to Bani Sadr.

— The Iranian Communist Party, the Tudeh, still supports Khomeini.

— First of all, you need to know that the Tudeh Communist Party has very little impact on the Iranian people. I think that this political group is hoping to repair its ‘historical mistake’. It has never completely recovered from not having supported Dr Mossadegh.

— In your view, who holds the real power in Iran?

— Khomeini does. He personally rules in the name of a rather childish Islam. But Khomeini is shrinking as a figure. He loses more and more of his personal power every day. He is an old charlatan... We have reached the apogee of horror in Iran. They are executing pregnant women.

Families who want to reclaim the bodies of the victim must pay a tax for the bullet. For each bullet taken from the corpse of those shot, the relatives must pay the equivalent of 400 Swiss Francs... Khomeini, under these conditions, will not hold on for long “. (95).

Yet, Rajavi and his people underestimated the national consciousness which forged unity around the leaders. The Iraq War was at its height. And that was when the Supreme Leader chose to put himself under Saddam Hussein’s jurisdiction.

The alliance of Massoud Rajavi with former President Bani Sadr had been severely strained as time went by. In July 1981, they

announced the creation of a National Resistance Council (NRC). This was to be a Parliament bringing together all elements of the anti- Khomeini resistance. In fact, very quickly, this organ became a tool only for the People’s Mojahedin. They used purges and took advantage of resignations. They would use it as their ‘political front’. Yet, the PMOI was incapable of winning the slightest significant victory.

“The movement is no longer that young and the victory over the ‘regime of the mullahs’ still awaits. So what! Their discipline is still iron, but their tongue is tied,” noted the French daily, *Liberation*’s reporter. (96)

“The hopes for a victory leading to the regime’s fall in the near future have gone away. Most of the leftwing organisations quit the National Resistance Council in 1984. Rajavi reacted to the crisis by a purge of other Council members, by reorganising it and by an ‘ideological revolution’. The result is a structure based on an absolute leader and the bizarre cult of personality around Rajavi and his new wife, Maryam,” wrote Justus Leicht. (97)

Fleeing to Iraq

The PMOI argued that its sudden flight to Baghdad was caused by “complicities” of the French Government with the Teheran regime. Yet this very Government had taken in Rajavi and his people and tolerated the NCR on its territory.

The Foreign Ministry certainly demanded that its guests promise discretion during their exile. This was never respected and several strong warnings were issued.

Resolved to “frustrate the conspiracies of the regime and the pressures” brought to bear, Massoud Rajavi left France on 7 June 1986. He moved to Iraq with about a thousand members.

This is how the People’s Mojahedin Organisation blandly explained, in a press release, that “the residence of Mr Rajavi in Iraq is necessary in order to neutralise, on the one hand, the plots of the Khomeini regime and, on the other hand, to meet the needs of a new phase of the resistance”. (98)

The press release concludes: “The National Resistance Council considers this move as indispensable for the deployment and organisation of the revolution’s armed forces and as a final step before returning to the soil of our Fatherland,” noted *Le Monde*.

This date, however, only marks the end of a process of rapprochement between Saddam and the PMOI. It had been going on for several years. Moreover, it was this alliance, strongly criticised by Bani Sadr, former Commander in Chief of the Iranian Army, which would be the cause of the explosive split between the former President and the Mojahedin leader.

Three years earlier, Tariq Aziz’s visit had not gone unnoticed:

“The Headquarters in exile of the National Council of Resistance for the Independence and Freedom of the (future?) Democratic and Islamic Republic of Iran, chaired by Massoud Rajavi in a fortress-like house in Auvers-sur-Oise, was the scene, last Sunday, of an unexpected and very important visitor: Iraqi Vice Prime Minister Tariq Aziz. The very fact that the Baghdad’s Number Two Man took the trouble to use an official visit to Paris to visit the Val d’Oise and meet with the Mojahedin leader (in the midst of full scale war between Iraq and Iran) certainly underscores the importance of this Party within the Opposition to islamic regime,” reported *Le Point* in January 1983. (99)

What had pushed the People’s Mojahedin into Saddam Hussein’s arms? This is especially interesting since it happened during the most intense period of a terrible war between the Baghdad dictator’s troops and the Iranian Army?

Whatever the case, the welcome organised for Rajavi when he arrived in Iraq looked significantly like the honours given a ruling Chief of State:

'4t Baghdad airport, Mr Taha Rassin Rainazan, the Prime minister's principal assistant, represented the Iraqi President. He led a delegation of senior officials, including members of the Command Council of the Revolution to greet the leader," trumpeted the Mojahedin in their publication. (100)

On 15 June, the Dictator in person welcomed his guest.

"Massoud Rajavi met with Saddam Hussein in June 1986. This was at time when he was fully aware that Iraq was using poison gas on Iranian soldiers and was receiving direct aid from the United States. For the Iranian people, that meeting discredited the Mojahedin, despite their claims that they remained politically independent," writes Justus Leicht. (101)

Several factors

Several factors combined to bring about what was seen as clear treason.

Iraq and the PMOI had everything to reach an understanding. Massoud Rajavi, above all, needed a base on the Iranian border. It was difficult to carry out military action from Paris, London or Washington. To win over supporters and recruit fighters, he had to win victories on the ground. He hoped, no doubt, that an Iraqi victory would be the death knell for the ayatollahs' regime and lead to his own taking power in Tehran. From Saddam's side, he needed to finish the war against Iran. It was not going according to his initial plans. He knew that he could not win on the battlefield and that the conflict could cost him his throne. the war had put the spotlight on certain Generals who were very popular with the Iraqi troops. These were actors who could eclipse the Rais. When peace was concluded in 1988, he quickly had them executed as potential rivals.

There was also a clear convergence of sensibilities between the two men. They were each Moslem, even if Saddam was a Sunni and Rajavi was a Shi'ia. They were, above all, united in their hatred of International capitalism.

They both demanded total loyalty from their subordinates and had a preference for personality cults.

"The inevitable portraits of Massoud Rajavi as leader—looking like a Younger, chubbier, more jovial Saddam Hussein — and of Maryam Rajavi, the Madonna-Matron of the movement are on the wall. They are everywhere in person, but invisible

‘for security reasons’,” reported Liberation’s journalist, after he visited the Al-Ashraf Camp in May 2003. (102)

Each of the partners surely hoped to use the other in the pursuit of his own interests.

Finally, in Iraq, the Baath Party, which held the reins of power between the Tigris and the Euphrates, was clearly part of the proletarian Left movement:

‘The Baath Party has defined the general rules governing the construction of socialism as follows:

The need to adopt socialist planning and to name to responsible positions cadres with a high political consciousness and are convinced of the ways and means.

Avoid the danger of deviating toward State Capitalism. Consolidate socialist democracy. Resist the danger of bureaucracy. Put the accent on popular control.

Place the most important sectors of production, the national wealth, foreign and domestic commerce under the people’s control.

The socialist transformation of the countryside is accomplished by the creation of collective farms, the objective and framework for applying socialism in rural areas.

Consider nationalization as the first revolutionary step toward socialism.” (103)

This political promise was written by Saddam Hussein when he was Vice Chairman of the Command Council of the Revolution and, most importantly, Chairman of the Planning Council. It was published in 1978: the tenth anniversary of the Iraqi Revolution.

CHAPTER 12

The price of alliance

The PMOI's leader confesses that he would even make an alliance with the Devil.

“One day, I asked him about his alliance with the Iraqis, who were at war with his country. Without batting an eye, he answered:

‘Lenin allied with the Germans while they were at war with his country, Russia’,” recalls Jean Gueyras, reporter for *Le Monde*.

The People's Mojahedin of Iran would go even further in their Iraqi commitment since they would act as traitors to Iran and provide support troops to Saddam.

The ties that bound the PMOI to Saddam are an open secret. Yet, Rajavi and his followers minimize it when they are not trying to deny it:

‘The Mojahedin only sought what Iraq offered from a geographical perspective: a territory with access to their country from which they could train and prepare the rising of the Iranian people and bring about the downfall of the most sinister dictatorship in history’. (104)

Always, when faced with a troubling question, the Mojahedin fall back on one of their habitual tactics. Either they claim bias, declaring that putting them in question is playing the game of the Iranian regime, or they use a jargon which we will look at more closely later on.

In spite of everything, today they no longer fool anyone. Since the fall of their protector, more information is being uncovered, all of it supporting this reaction.

“The movement is tied to Saddam Hussein's regime — for whom he, Rajavi, has done the dirty work to get his ‘residency permit’,” concludes *Liberation*. (105)

The issue of opportunity

The atrocious war between Iraq and Iran lasted eight years, from 1980 to 1988. The People's Mojahedin thought it would help them toward the conquest of power. Yet,

careful to appear as their country's saviors, they tried to hide the truth about their military and political commitments.

Playing both sides at the same time, on 13 March 1983, they presented a peace plan in their own name. Of course, the NRC had no mandate except the one it had given itself.

“The National Resistance Council declares that it considers the Treaty of 1975 (the Algiers Accords) as well as the river and land borders stipulated in it as the basis for a just and lasting peace between the two countries,” wrote the PMOI. It did not, however, explain where it had obtained the authority to take such a decision. (106)

It is clear that they have and had no legitimacy. Remember, After all, that the war had become a dangerous burden for Saddam Hussein, one which he wanted to lay down as soon as he could. The tyrant of Baghdad also tried every means to end the hostilities, calling for peace, but using his debtors to cause trouble for the Iranian enemy.

For, as the weekly *Jeune Afrique* emphasised: “Saddam Hussein has, in the first place, officially changed his ‘war aims’. The aim of annexing the Shaft-el-Arab (even if it hides other ambitions) may once have justified a victorious blitzkrieg.

For the war to go on indefinitely, much broader objectives must be proclaimed: the Iraqi Chief of State has therefore announced that he seeks to overthrow the Teheran regime, even to dismantle the Iranian State into its different nationality groups”. (107)

In this optic, the PMOI's participation would go far beyond serving as window dressing. Massoud Rajavi and his National Liberation Army would fight against their own nation, forcing Teheran to confront this distraction and reduce the troops essential to its main offensive drives. These soldiers could have made the difference between victory and defeat.

“It is true that ten thousand Peshmergas of the PDKI (Iran) of Abdulrahman Ghassemlou, two thousand Marxist-Leninists of Komala and thousands of People's Mojahedin guerrillas succeeded, since the conflict began, in immobilising 150,000 Iranian soldiers,” concluded Paul Balta. (108)

Traitors to their own people

In the midst of all this, the Mojahedin signed —again only in their own name — a peace agreement with Baghdad and, in a press release dated 1 April 1984, they issued

an “appeal to the soldiers to disobey the agents of the war mongering Khomeini, to stop the war and join the resistance forces “. (109)

This was a clear call for desertion while the Iranian nation was mobilising all elements of society and fighting with all its forces to throw back the invader. For them, it was no longer a question of saving a given regime, but of a sacrifice given for the survival of millennia of Persian culture. If many young people saw it as a way to express their religious faith, even more saw it as a fight for the survival of Persia against Arabia. This was a conflict that had gone on at regular intervals throughout history.

This low blow to the Iranian people, whom they claimed to embody, would be violently brought to bear against the People’s Mojahedin. They had no easy justification. This was all the more the case since the PMOI opened a new theatre of operations in the heart of Iran, with risk of seeming like the enemy’s Fifth Column.

Clearly playing the role given them by the Iraqi General Staff, the Mojahedin did their best to provoke a dangerous instability in their own country. They worked to create a climate of fear and anxiety in order to shake the adversary’s regime. De facto, it was a strategy to help the enemy country defeat their own people. It was Lranians like themselves whom they betrayed while dying to defend their country.

“Far from the Shaft-el-Arab, another front —just as dangerous for the regime — is immobilising a large part of the fighting forces: the urban guerrilla war. In the front rank of this battle are the Mojahedin-e-Khalq,” noted L’Express. (110)

In the framework of the war, as always, innocent civilians paid with their lives. In the rear areas, daily life became difficult for the non-combatants.

“5 March 1985. The ‘war for the cities’ begins. Attacks against urban centres have, of course, taken place before, but sporadically. The difference this time is in the intensity and extent of the raids, their systematic character and their duration. In taking the initiative in these bombings, Iraq wants once again to force Teheran to negotiate. It is striking deeply at civilian targets to incite the population to put pressure on their leaders,” writes Paul Balta in what is surely one of the best documented works on the issue. (111)

But Iran struck back, Baghdad was soon bombarded with ground to ground rockets. Once again, Saddam Hussein faced a costly loss.

He tried to stop the maneuver without losing face. Rajavi rescued him by trying to improve his image within a nation that had, for a long time, stopped believing in him. He claims that on three occasions, Saddam Hussein tried to arrive at a truce. The PMOI thus presents as a victory of its own leader the momentary halt in missile strikes on Iranian cities.

“The city war had become intolerable for the Iranian population. Rajavi ‘s intervention led to a temporary halt in Iraqi attacks. This saved thousands of Iranian lives and brought many expressions of thanks for the Chef of the Resistance,” the Mojahedin persuade themselves. (112)

But the situation was actually more intolerable for Saddam Hussein. His strategy was turning against him. Iraq denounced widely the offensive which Saddam himself had launched.

Moreover, the dictator of Baghdad easily granted ceasefires in the hopes of gaining time. He, therefore, responded favourably to a request from Prince Saud al-Faisal, the Saudi Foreign Affairs Minister. On 18 May 1985, he had called for a suspension of the attacks. It was very brief indeed: on 25 May the rockets again flew on their deadly mission.

Saddam Hussein did not accept the failure to make peace with Ayatollah Khomeini. He needed it too much. At the end of March 1985, according to Paul Balta, “The Iraqi representative to the U.N., Ryad al-Qaisi, denied the use of chemical weapons by his own country but went to declare: we will carry out total war to arrive at peace’. “Khomeini, who continually denounced “the imposed war” now rejected “the imposed peace”. “Such a peace would be worse than the war,” he explained. (112)

In fact Iran accepted the request of the Security Council inviting the two belligerents to stop the fighting. On 18 July 1988, the Imam accepted Resolution 598 which created a ceasefire.

The People’s Mojahedin showed its flag when it supported the Iraqi regime: ‘forced to drink the poisoned chalice of a ceasefire “. (113)

Teheran now won at least a moral victory in the international community when the U.N. Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar concluded, in a report of 10 December 1990, that “Baghdad is responsible for the start of the Iraq-Iran War in 1980”. (114)

Abroad as well

On the international scene, the People's Mojahedin were also working against their country. Discrediting Teheran's policies, they accused Iran of needlessly prolonging the war. As always, they tried to take credit for the return of peace. In this, they were claiming a role in affairs over which they had no control. This did not keep them from sounding triumphant.

"The huge effort of the Iranian resistance against the warmonger, Khomeini, has borne fruit, "they declared categorically.

On the level of military operations, they won no major successes. They were an irritant to their enemies. Indeed, the Mojahedin had no influence at all on the course of events.

On the other hand, they profited from the moment in obtaining financial, infrastructural and material support from Baghdad. From the start, Saddam Hussein had decided their framework of action and he must have been let down when he saw his protégés fail to attain the goals he had fixed for them.

"We give all our aid to all the nationalities and nationalist movements to overthrow the reactionary and untrustworthy regime in Iran". This extract of one of Saddam's speeches, published in *La Suisse* of 12 April 1981 has the virtue of showing unambiguously the goals and means used by the Baathists in Baghdad.

Using their structures abroad, as well as their members who were refugees throughout the world, the People's Mojahedin put their propaganda machine into high gear. Since they had real lobbying experience, they achieved some success. Faithful to their technique of harassment of "decision-makers", they brandished lists of names of those said to support them.

Pressuring legislators with their self-seeking attentions, they willfully took ordinary gestures of sympathy — which elected politicians provide several times a week to different causes — as a real commitment by the signatories to support them. Clearly, these politicians would never risk their careers on a PMOI that they only understood vaguely. It is therefore not at all surprising to note that, outside the political circles of the ultra Left, no one really knows of the "Iranian resistance".

This does not keep the Mojahedin from believing their own documents. They adore producing them to provide support for their legitimacy.

During the Iraq-Iran war, the People's Mojahedin, according to themselves, mobilised themselves to lead crowds of protestors against Teheran.

To cite the “condemnation” of Khomeini — to the benefit of Saddam Hussein — they made him the guilty party for the war on Iran. The PMOI was only following the instructions of their host. They wrote in their manifesto that ““221 parties, trades unions, associations and assemblies in 57 countries have signed a universal declaration to the entire world condemning ‘the warlike policies’ of Khomeini’s medieval regime “. (115)

These were the coercive methods used to fake petitions, a technique fully mastered by the leadership in its manipulation of elites. These classic methods of the ultra Left will be examined in a later chapter.

The curtain falls

Today’s reality must seem less glorious to the 5000 or so soldiers of the PMOI’s National Liberation Army. They were reduced to surrendering to the American troops who entered Iraq and ended Saddam Hussein’s tyranny.

“Encircled by American forces, the People’s Mojahedin, an opposition group to the Iranian regime, operating out of Iraq, agreed on Saturday to turn in its arms, announced the American Army. The agreement was reached at Baqubah, 70 km northeast of the Iraqi capital. The surrender was reported by the US Army’s Fifth Corps in Baghdad... For years the Iranians of the People’s Mojahedin launched attacks against the Islamist regime in Teheran, with Saddam Hussein’s support, from Iraqi territory,” announced the Associated Press on Sunday ii May 2003. (116)

But if the American attitude is sometimes blurred and even contradictory, the declarations of the Republican Administration of President George W. Bush leave no space for misinterpretation. We can see this in the reports of the international press.

“We intend to put an end to the terrorist and military activities of the People’s Mojahedin in Iraq,” declared the State Department spokesman, Paul Boucher. Washington wants Iraq, which supported and armed this very active formation against the Teheran regime in the time of Saddam Hussein, ‘no longer to be a source of terrorism’,” he added. (117)

The curtain has fallen, as *Le Monde*’s special correspondent, who witnessed the surrender of the Al-Ashraf Camp, reported:

“An infantry battalion, with thirty tanks, is positioned at the entrance of this huge military base which was the Mojahedin Headquarters. On Sunday 11 May, their Iraqi

based troops no longer exist as fighting forces. With their Soviet machine guns, the camp guards looked like actors who had not read the script of the blockbuster being filmed...

They will not be considered prisoners of war, but as detainees.

It is the end of an arsenal which made it possible for the Mojahedin — who claimed to have an army of 50,000 — to carry out attacks on Iran from the frontier, as well as in Iranian cities”. (118)

The defeat was severe and the collapse seems irreparable. “Without an organised military force, the resistance will have little weight,” admitted the Mojahedin themselves. But this was without imagining that ten years after writing these words, their own militia would be disarmed and cease to exist. (119)

The PMOI has lost its striking force. This is really a debacle since, without their military wing, they are restricted to the political sphere. They will try to convince themselves that better days will come. After all, the historical inevitability they represent will, according to them, lead to a victorious future.

Having based their struggle and doctrine on the National Liberation Army, even if it could only carry out terrorist attacks rather than a final assault, the Mojahedin must suddenly give up any seizure of power in Teheran.

The fact is that even if luck had given them the chance to take power, they would have had to keep it. That would have required the means of protecting their victory.

“The People’s Liberation Army will always be a fighting force. Even after victory on the national scale, during the historical period when classes have not been suppressed in our country and while the imperialist system continues to exist in the world, our Army will remain a fighting force. There must be no misunderstanding or flinching on this point,” affirmed Chairman Mao. (120)

From its perspective, the PMOI is totally identified with its armed action, even considering that:

“Maintaining an armed, organised military force, is a fundamental precondition for all serious resistance movements. Consequently, to criticise the Iranian resistance for having an Army on the Iran-Iraq frontier is, in fact, an attempt to discredit the resistance itself”. (121)

Returning to reality will be very hard indeed.

On the military level, the eradication of PMOI's commando groups that perpetrated attacks in Iran constitutes, along with the end of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the second victory of the international coalition against terrorism. Yet, with their seasoned knowledge of revolutionary warfare, their habits of working in clandestinity, their numerous well-trained militants under orders in the West (themselves seasoned in fighting from the shadows), as well as its networks of complicities in a complacent ultra Left, the Mojahedin will not yet admit they are beaten.

They still have among the most fearsome weapons of all in their attempt to baptise their Islamic Democratic Republic of Iran: subversion. This continual sapping of mentalities and opinions, usually discovered too late, needs to be identified much earlier by diagnosing the sinister aims it serves.

Chapter 13

Subversion

Having lost the game forever in Iraq and neighbouring countries, it is in Europe that the PMOI 's leaders will try to reorganise their troops.

In total breakdown, with its base in shock from the collapse of the movement's structures along the Iranian border, the organisation seems cornered. Yet, its experience in clandestinity should help in the pursuit of certain goals. It will be key to construct a weapon, as the author of the Little Red Book teaches.

“A disciplined Party, armed with Marxist-Leninist theory, practicing self-criticism and linked with the popular masses; an Army directed by such a Party; a united front of all the revolutionary groups placed under the direction of that Party: these are the three main weapons with which we defeated the enemy”. (122)

But Chairman Mao Tse Tung knew that above all, the intensive use of subversion prepares the ground.

Deprived of its military means, the PMOI has to stand up again. The war led by the Rajavis is not over. Since the continuation of terrorist attacks, publicised as military operations, is now impossible, it is essential to reorient the strategy of the struggle. The key will be the recourse to subversion.

Rotting the State

What are the means of action that come out of the decision to use subversion? Professor Robert Mucchielli has carefully described the phases involved:

“Instead of engaging troops along the borders of a nation to conquer, one will provoke inside that State, through the activities of trained subversive agents, a process of rot among the authorities. At the same time, small groups of partisan fighters, presented as ‘coming from the people themselves’ and created ‘spontaneously’ will undertake a

new form of combat right there. Their advertised goal will be to start a ‘revolutionary war of liberation’. In fact, their intent will be to accelerate the process of rot in the State within the targeted country and then take power”.

The objectives to attain are all aimed at the same goal:

“The objectives of subversion are triple. Their differentiation can only be didactic in nature since they are mutually supporting and reinforcing. They are:

demoralise the target nation and disintegrate the groups who make it up;

discredit authority, its defenders, its functionaries, its distinguished citizens;

neutralise the masses to prevent any spontaneous and general intervention in favour of the established order at the time chosen for the non-violent taking of power by a small minority.”

These steps go on until circumstances permit the final act:

“The seizure of power will be done by a small group, an infinitesimal minority, those precisely who know exactly what they want and what they are doing (moreover the group is the only one ‘in the know’). What is important is therefore that at the moment of seizing power there is no contrary intervention. Subversive action implies, consequently, imposing silence on the silent majority which expresses apathy and not opposition to the troublemakers”. (123)

For that to happen, the use of the media is a crucial means to create major disinformation concerning subversion itself. It is essential to create events that make the headlines.

On scouted ground

It was, among other reasons, through fear of serving as a sanctuary for the PMOI’s subversive activities that France decided to strike the group so strongly.

As M. Pierre de Bousquet de Florian, Director of Territorial Surveillance (DST), made clear, his agents were not acting on ground they did not know.

“Just for 2001, there were 195 attacks and terrorist actions against Iran claimed in statements from Auvers-sur-Oise,” he medicated. He added: “We have learned that they were planning actions outside Iran, aimed notably at Iranian diplomatic missions in Europe. This is a future danger, but a clear one”.

The war against Iraq and the fall of Saddam Hussein, the Mojahedin’s protector were the direct causes for the operation, the head of the DST agreed: “Even before the war, we saw people arriving from Iraq. At the start of 2003, Maryam Rajavi returned to Auvers-sur-Oise with the senior leadership. Then the real soldiers came.” According to the French intelligence services, the Mojahedin’s aim was to move their “world operational centre” — previously based in Baghdad — to the Val d’Oise. If the searches of about 20 sites in the Val d’Oise did not turn up arms or explosives, the Rajavi’s villa was, nonetheless, ‘a real Fort Apache’. “We were surprised by the security systems,” stated Pierre de Bousquet de Florian. “We found between 8 and 9 million US dollars in cash, as well as systems for coded communications”.

Fully tempered for subversive methods, the PMOI can easily mobilise its militants throughout Europe. This is a perfectly efficient machine, as the measures taken by the French Ministry of the Interior show during Operation “Théo”:

“Six persons resident in European countries (four in Germany, one in Sweden, one in Italy) received Ministerial decisions for their urgent expulsion back to these countries. Nine persons who showed an intent to commit suicide are under medical surveillance. Nine persons were held for questioning for having participated in a forbidden demonstration, Among them, two are being handed over to the police for having been filmed while buying petrol at a service station in rue Nelaton and then giving it to one of The persons who immolated themselves and died; one of them had also Interfered with the rescue squad. Furthermore, another person admitted carrying bottles of turpentine in her vehicle. She intended to immolate herself with them. Other demonstrators were allowed to go free last night after routine verification of their papers”. (124)

The DST has been investigating the PMOI for years and this instruction to the National Police was agreed by the prosecuting magistrates in April 2001. “This is a long term job which has only recently come to fruition,” the Director explained. (125) In its tracking down of terrorism, the Government has spared few means. This shows that the threat was taken very seriously indeed.

More than 1,200 police personnel from the RAID [one of France's elite SWAT teams], the DST, the Central Office for the Repression of Major Financial Crime, as well as 80 gendarmes from the Intervention Group of the National Gendarmerie [another elite SWAT team, the 'GIGN'] broke into the headquarters of the PMOI at dawn on Tuesday, 17 June. It is a large complex situated in Auvers-sur-Oise. They also broke into twelve other sites in the Val d'Oise and in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine (Yvelines)...

It should be added that almost 200 parabolic antennas and a hundred computers were seized. Their examination should allow the investigators to sharpen their knowledge of the financial circuits financing the PMOI, which run through several countries and many bank accounts.

During their searches, investigators also found radio scanners tuned to police frequencies". (126)

This is an extraordinary haul. Beyond the very sophisticated equipment they found, there was also a fortune in dollars discovered by the investigators.

For years now, the Rajavis have been living in luxury, benefiting from the odd absence of reaction from European governments.

A means of pressure

Ali Akbar Rastgou knows the People's Mojahedin very well. He joined in 1976 and ended by quitting the movement, disgusted by the methods that reigned within it. Responsible for relations of the PMOI in Germany with other leftwing groups supporting the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and the Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua, this individual has his own views on their impunity:

"How can I explain the tolerance of Europe toward the PMOI'? That's a good question... States use the PMOI against Iran. I was able to verify this when I was a 'diplomat'. During official discussions with Iran, when negotiations take too long or don't move in the direction wanted by the Westerners, the PMOI is set loose to organise demonstrations in the streets. This was an effective means of putting pressure on Iran. We know very well how to use the telephone to mobilise people... Everyone profited: the Mojahedin because they had a blank cheque to reach public opinion and the Foreign Ministries who could use them against Iran". (127)

This is confirmed by Libération:

“At a time when the French services were treating them with kid gloves, the People’s Mojahedin were a precious source for them on Iranian plans against French interests... But, this opposition movement did not only serve as auxiliaries to the French services. As their attorney confirms, Massoud Rajavi’s supporters also worked for the German, Dutch and British services... They were an ideological mercenary force”. (128)

Since then, the French secret services have been able to compile an extremely persuasive file for the prosecution.

A Big Risk

The boss of France’s Direction for the Surveillance of the Territory (DST), Prefect Pierre de Bousquet confirms the danger posed by Massoud Rajavi’s People’s Mojahedin of Iran:

“The People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) has, for a long time, been going over to a terrorist logic. Despite the organisation’s rhetoric, which claims only to be fighting against a regime, it should be noted that their attacks have usually struck many civilian victims. As to the claims of the PMOI that it wants to bring democracy to Iran, this must be understood within the paradigm of the movement’s extraordinary autocracy, where a radical cult of personality is enforced. Its members must be blindly devoted to Massoud Rajavi and his wife. The slightest criticism is severely punished. The PMOI can be considered as having followed a sectarian detour which is obvious in the fanatical behaviour of its militants: the dramatic immolations of recent days show the sad truth about them.

The DST has been working for a long time on the PMOI and, having alerted the administrative and judicial authorities on the growing danger it posed, we have been acting since April 2001 under a warrant for searches and surveillance. These last two years have been used to dissect and understand the movement’s structures and function, especially its French ‘plants’. This was a tough job, given the PMOI’s complexity and its dissembling, sectarian and hermetically sealed internal culture.

But it was the indirect consequences of the American intervention in Iraq that pushed us to accelerate our actions. The concomitant factors of the retreat to Auvers-sur-Oise of its leaders, veteran soldiers and intelligence officers coming to us from many sources were convincing. We could see that the PMOI aimed to establish its new world I—IQ in France, now that it had lost its Iraqi bases. For reasons of principle, as well as the presence of risks to our fellow citizens, we could not accept these developments”. (129)

CHAPTER 14

The DST Report

When they undertook a major police operation against the People's Mojahedin, code named "Théo", DST's agents could act on the basis of a confidential report produced two weeks before 17 June 2003.

The Figaro was able to obtain this document and publish its main citations:

"The PMOI Has Moved Its Headquarters to France

The PMOI has carried out a number of activities on French soil that are clandestine, sectarian, delinquent, and even seriously criminal. In France, the organisation has two or three hundred militants and sympathisers. Its 'hard nucleus' is made up of a few dozen militants. The organisation has been able to show its ability to mobilise people for multiple protest demonstrations (Iran- US football match in Lyon in 1998, the visits of Iranian leaders to France, notably that of [Iranian President] Khatami in 1999 and of Iranian members of parliament in February, 2001). Specialists in organising street demonstrations came from Iraq specifically for this purpose.

The PMOI has no legal representation in France. It exists de facto and its activity is organised through numerous associations, legally registered or not, which serve as a 'cover' for its members. Fourteen associations have so far been uncovered. They are made up of PMOI members, some of whom appear in the organisation's financial support network. Some of these associations carry out no visible activities. On the other hand, one of them is particularly interesting: the Iran Aid Association.

The PMOI uses the National Resistance Council of Iran as its front and has a government-in-exile domiciled at the same address as the NRC: 17 rue des Gords in Auvers-sur-Oise. Its leader, Massoud Rajavi, is represented in France by Saleh Rajavi. The most active members of this government are Mohammad Mohassedine, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Commission, Abol Ghassen Rezai, aka Moshen, political officer, and Ibrahim Zakeri, Chairman of the Counterespionage and Security Commission. The latter died recently.

Claims of Responsibility for Terrorist Acts Committed in Iran Issued from France

Since 1998, the PMOI, which had been the principal opposition party to the Teheran regime, has lost its political influence. It has radicalised its activity and increased the number of terrorist and military attacks on Iran. On 2 June 1998, the PMOI issued a press release, in French, claiming responsibility for a bombing of the Revolutionary Prosecutor's Office in Teheran. Ten people were killed or wounded. On 3 June 1998, in another press release, the movement claimed it was responsible for a mortar attack on the Pasdaran Headquarters. Two months later, a dispatch received in the Nicosia Bureau (Cyprus) of Agence France Presse claimed responsibility for the assassination of Assolah Ladjevardi on 23 August 1998. He had been the warden of Evin Prison in Iran.

In 2001, the PMOI claimed authorship of 195 attacks against Iran. The organisation makes many of these claims for actions in Iran from the PMOI's French base. They are disseminated either by fax or by the organisation's Website: <http://www.iran.mojahedin.org>

After the 11 September 2001 attacks on the United States, the PMOI stopped claiming responsibility for its actions inside Iran. This was to avoid being seen as a terrorist organisation.

Illegal Distribution of Periodicals

The PMOI puts out five journals or reviews in France which have never been registered with the legal services governing publications. They are: Iran Zamin, The Lion and the Sun, Les Nouvelles d'Iran and Mojahed. Basically they do the organisation's propaganda work.

The best known, the Mojahed newspaper was denied publication rights by a decree of the Interior Ministry in February, 1999. Yet, it continues to circulate illegally in our country. It features particularly violent language against the regime. The distribution is done by members of the organisation.

We have put together some articles that are particularly violent in tone and call outright for the physical elimination of the main leaders of the Islamic Republic of Iran: 'Death to Khomeini', 'Death to Khatami', "Death to Rafsanjani".

These titles show in a concrete and significant way how dangerous the organisation is and the incitement to violence contained in its leaders' language, published in their newspaper. The tone of these articles shows how its circulation in France constitutes a

risk for public order. It incites its readers to murder the Iran's highest leaders who, in turn, are possible official visitors to France.

According to a source, Mojahed is printed and prepared in Great Britain. The address is, however, 17 rue des Gords in Auvers-sur-Oise. The publication's post box is at 2 bis rue Dupontde-l'Eure in Paris' 20111 arrondissement. This is also the address of the ABC Live Company which provides an address for newspapers whose subscribers have moved and serves as a return address.

Finance

The PMOI needs a big budget to support its activities. These include managing its real estate, its communications system, the travel of its militants and the maintenance of its Army in Iraq. According to our information, the organisation does not use illegally obtained funds. On the other hand, the PMOI and some of its members are under indictment or civil action for misallocation of funds. This is notably the case in Germany, where significant sums of German private donations and State subsidies were used, in fact, for the purchase of arms for PMOI terrorists and militants in Iraq. Part of their finances comes from fund raising among individuals and groups of Iranian expatriates. This is done by the PMOI representatives in Europe, North America and the Middle East. Another part comes from its own members dues. They are required to pay regular "tithes" to the organisation. Finally, there was Saddam Hussein. He was the main funder, providing sums estimated at several hundred million dollars.

The identification of the financial networks of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran is anything but easy. The organisation has set up international financial circuits that are very complex. Their opaqueness is such that they are very difficult to 'read'. The source and destination of the funds are often unknown. There is a clear policy of hiding the organisation's financial operations, a source of pride to a membership tempered in clandestine operations.

The financial assets of the People's Mojahedin of Iran travel through a complicated web of bank accounts in France, throughout Europe, in North America and in the Middle East. The legal holders of these accounts are either real people or private groups, many domiciled in France.

As to the private groups, the Iran Aid Association has as its official humanitarian and social aim the collection of funds in French territory from private donors. They place the vast majority of these monies in foreign personal bank accounts, largely in Turkey and the Arab Emirates. These are countries in which all trace of the funds is lost, especially their final destination. Strongly suspected of financing the PMOI's terrorist war against Iran, as well as its terrorist operations inside the country, the Association succeeds in violating its private, non-governmental status in France, by flouting its statutes and humanitarian basis in law...

Information from many sources about the flow of these funds between a network of bank accounts shows a closed circle, difficult to penetrate and evaluate. For example, an account receives deposits from Jordan, Belgium, Germany, etc. and is then debited for new redeposits in France, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Italy, Great Britain, Switzerland, Luxemburg, the United States and so on.

The study of the accounts of certain members of the organisation shows this complexity. The large sums involved and managed by these individuals far exceeds their own professional income. They are, in fact, usually without any real profession, or business activity, at least as far as the tax authorities and social institutions are concerned. The account holders are, thus, very difficult, almost impossible to find. They are all housed at 'convenience' addresses of "convenience", where they most certainly do not reside.

Terrorist Training

We have been able to identify numerous PMOI members, recruited and housed in France, making regular trips to Iraq. This is, of course, where the National Liberation Army of Iran (NLAI) camps were: the armed wing of the PMOI. We have also established that these members have been able to use false documents or false identities. They also follow several different routes to Iraq:

passing through Jordan, Egypt, or Turkey. They make their connections through different European countries, such as Belgium and the Netherlands. The clandestine protocols are, of course, designed to avoid any tracing of their travels. Once in Iraq, the militants undergo various levels of political and military training.

The NLAI fighters coming from Iraq regularly visit PMOI HQ in Auvers-sur-Oise, while veteran soldiers are installed in France and remain continuously active in promoting the organisation.

The PMOI Declared a Terrorist Movement

After the 9/11 attacks, Washington kept the PMOI on its list Of terrorist organisations and ordered that its assets be frozen. It should be recalled that the PMOI is also on the British list of terrorist organisations. Since May 2002, it is on the European list, as well.

Since then, the PMOI uses the ‘brand name’ of the National Resistance Council of Iran (NCRI), political wing of the PMOI, with Maryam Rajavi as its Secretary General.

In the past, the Baghdad authorities used the NLAI as a support militia for defending Iraq, as in the case of the Iran War or in the repression of minorities after the first Gulf War. During the last war in Iraq, the NLAI did not join in fighting against American forces.

Activities in France

In France, the Mojahedin have been prudent, distrusting the environment. Nonetheless, they assaulted an Iranian Parliamentary Delegation visiting the country in 2001. Lately they have increased their meetings and planned spectacular actions to draw media attention to the plight of the Iranian people.

According to recent information, the PMOI planned to carry out a major campaign of demonstrations, including operations against Iranian objectives in Europe (embassies, consulates, etc.). They even considered the physical elimination of former members of movements working with Iranian intelligence (Vevak).

Along the same lines, during recent meetings, they raised the possibility of using suicide operations (immolations).

Following the intervention in Iraq and fall of Saddam Hussein’s regime, the leadership and militants of the PMOI and the NLAI fled Iraq and many came to Europe, including France.

Maryam Rajavi, Secretary General of the PMOI and Chairman of the NCR! returned to France. She has a residency visa with “refugee” status in vigour until 2006. It is under the name of X.X., and Mrs XX... She uses many aliases...

Currently, 90 people visit or reside in the Auvers-sur-Oise HQ. Others are expected. In order to house them, reservations have been made in inexpensive vacation facilities around Auvers-surOise, in the Val d’Oise.

The construction company, Algeco, was called in by the Mojahedin to add bungalows in their camp on rue Gordes. Several hundreds of square metres of housing space have been rented by the organisation in the Val d’Oise in its reorganisation on French soil”.

(130)

CHAPTER 15

The political face

Since their dramatic split with the heirs of the Revolution, the people's Mojahedin of Iran set up the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI). At first it was an effort to federate the whole opposition in exile under the umbrella of the PMOI. It was also meant to seem as part of a much larger strategy. Many still remembered that Mr Massoud Rajavi and his friends were pure and simple terrorists under the Shah. Worse, they were the terrorists aiming at the wrong targets. They were unacceptable to monarchists, even in their most desperate moments.

By hiding behind a broader front, the Mojahedin could manipulate Western public opinion as they wished. They had found the legitimacy that had eluded them for so many years.

This was why the NCRI published its lengthy defense against the US State Department's charges.

It is difficult, indeed, to see in the NCRI's summation any of the ultra Leftism that characterize the PMOI: not even their hopes to destroy international capitalism:

“The National Resistance Council of Iran (‘NCRI, was founded in 1981. The Council is a democratic coalition of Iranian groups and personalities who come from many different political camps. There are 570 members, including ethnic and religious representatives of Iran's minority communities: Kurds, Baluchis, Christians and Jews. The Council acts as the Parliament of the resistance in exile and its aim is the establishment of a pluralist, democratic and secular system in Iran. Women account for more than half the Council members.

The National Resistance Council of Iran (‘NCRI,) adheres to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and accepts international conventions. The Council believes in the separation of Church and State. Concerning national minorities, the National Resistance Council of Iran (NCRI) recognises their rights.

The economic policies of the National Resistance Council of Iran are based on free market principles, on recognition of our nation's capitalism, on the Bazaar and on

private and personal property. The Council's foreign policy is based on independence, on respect for the UN Charter and of international conventions and treaties.

On the issue of women 's rights, the Council recognises free choice for everyone in electoral rights, in access to work and the free choice of profession, as well as the right to use all the resources in the fields of education, art and sport. “. (131)

The illusion seems total. The “Russian doll” system (in which one doll after another is hidden within the biggest) seems to be in full use. Rajavi is in full acceleration. He is in one place and his wife in another, but both, in reality, head the same organization: the Mojahedin. Machiavelli is here, incarnate.

The makeover looks complete: the wolf has put on sheep's clothing. Yet, in the end, the truth broke through:

“The Mojahedin are the only component of the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI), the main armed opposition movement. Its European office is in Auvers-sur-Seine, in the Parisian suburbs.

The head of the NCRI in France is Saleh Rajavi, one of Massoud Rajavi's two brothers. The latter is the leader of the NCRI. Saleh Rajavi was questioned by the French Police in October 1999, during a sweep through Iranian opposition circles. This took place at the time of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami's visit to Paris”. (132)

A Snake's Progress

How did this situation develop and how did the PMOI fail to win control of all the Iranian opposition in exile'? Le Monde's reporter Jean Gueyras published an excellent essay on these mistakes:

“When Mr Massoud Rajavi, the Chief of the People's Mojahedin, sought refuge in France along with former President Bani Sadr he was convinced that his stay would be brief. To him, the Teheran regime was out of breath and that the bend of the dictatorship was near'. When he was asked why he chose France as his home in exile, he continuously cited Imam Khomeini's precedent. He [Khomeini] had the skill to turn Neauphle-le-Chateau into the 'ideal International Court'. Rajavi, therefore, hopes to turn Auvers-sur-Oise into a 'counter Neauphle-le-Chateau'. This will be his rostrum from which to inform the whole world about the size and reach of the resistance to the regime in Iran.’”

Paris had required that the Iranian refugee leaders sign a written statement, containing the routine text promising to avoid all political activity on French soil. This would be respected for exactly two weeks.

From mid-August, the strict measures taken by the French authorities at the beginning of the month to bar all contact between the press and the Iranian leaders disappeared, as if by magic. 'The situation is now normalized', declared Mr Rajavi, who never thought that the French authorities could effectively prevent him from continuing the fight against the Teheran regime.

Once reassured of the authorities' real intentions, the new exiles redoubled their efforts to create a 'counter Power' at Auvers-surOise, one designed to bring down the Teheran regime.

On 1 October 1981, former President Bani Sadr, using his international standing, nominated Mr Rajavi to the post of President of the National Resistance Council and tasked him with forming a "Provisional Iranian Government". The first set back: this decision was never carried out, probably because of the disagreements which already began to surface".

Political Jargon

Jean Gueyras goes on: "Worse, this institution, whose aim was to unify the entire opposition in exile, slowly became an organisation totally dominated by the Mojahedin.

In Iranian opposition exile circles, people already began to talk about the 'Massoud Rajavi's sectarian and doctrinal rigidity' and of his repetitive jargons and sloganeering. These were the barriers to all freedom of opinion. They kept the NCRI from becoming a viable solution to Iran regime.

As the years went by, the belief in having a monopoly on the 'truth' only increased the Mojahedin's sectarianism. They were still the main opposition force in Teheran, even if they no longer constituted an immediate threat to the regime. The Iranian authorities had put down sufficiently solid roots and developed working structures to resist the impact of even the Imam's death.

Parallel to the intensification of repression, the power in place had, by the beginning of 1983, finished developing State institutions and the reorganization of its

intelligence and security services. These latter had been brought up to a remarkably effective level.

The sense of impotence and despair which was rife among the representatives of the resistance in exile did not spare the opponents in Auvers-sur-Oise. The Mojahedin, of course, continued to put out triumphant statements. Yet they seemed less and less believable and slowly sapped the organization's and its leader's credibility. The whole opposition's sense of having turned into a cul de sac is partly the root of the divorce between Rajavi and his father-in-law, Bani Sadr in April 1984".

The Break With Bani Sadr

Jean Gueyras adds: "The former President of the Republic began to speak privately of the 'hegemonistic tendencies' of his son in law. He, who had been the Commander in Chief of the Army during the first two years of the Gulf War, could hardly applaud the alliance Mr Rajavi had made with the Iraqis. This happened during Mr Rajavi's famous Auvers-sur-Oise meeting with Tariq Aziz, Iraq's Vice Prime Minister and head of Foreign Affairs. Rajavi and Bani Sadr continue their 'cohabitation', but it is becoming increasingly difficult.

The straw that broke the camel's back was Mr Rajavi's proposal (as early as) December 1983 to move the NCRI to Iraq in 'a part of defensible territory' near the Iranian border. He laid out his plan to create a National Liberation Army recruited from the Mojahedin, the Kurdish Peshmergas and Iranian POWs in Iraqi camps. Mr Bani Sadr described Rajavi's plan as suicidal and warned the NCRI against all 'collaboration' with Iraq. It would turn the organisation into 'a pawn that Saddam Hussein would not hesitate to sacrifice at the right moment to get the peace he is calling for'.

Sensing the possibility of counter measures that finally happened just this last year in France, Bani Sadr warned his followers to never put themselves yonder the control of any foreign power. To avoid the shattering of the NCRI, Rajavi and Bani Sadr decided, by mutual agreement, to end their alliance, which had lasted two years and nine months, and agreed to avoid 'sterile polemics in order to keep future options open'. The departure of Bani Sadr from Auvers-sur-Oise destroyed the foundations of the NCRI, of which he was one of the pillars, even if he was never officially a member. The truce was brief. The differences were too deep to be avoided.

For Mr Rajavi, more sectarian than ever, the former President of the Republic has returned to his Khomeinist origins' and had become 'a relic of the Teheran regime'. This ostracism of Bani Sadr was, in truth, a warning to all those who believed that resistance from outside the country was doomed and had kept their internal contacts for the inevitable 'post-Khomeini era'. Such behavior, to Mr Rajavi, was worse 'than a mistake. It is treason'. (133)

It was now crucial for Massoud Rajavi to bring order within his ranks. Every discordant voice called down lightning bolts from the Chief. Faithful to Mao's ideas, behind the democratic principles he trumpeted, he imposed an iron discipline within the PMOI.

The Great Helmsman had foreseen: "Liberalism is extremely dangerous to revolutionary collectives. It is a corrosive that eats away unity, weakens the bonds of solidarity, creates passivity and leads to divergences of views. It deprives the revolution's ranks of a solid organization and rigorous discipline, prevents the application of an integral policy and cuts the Party organizations from the popular masses under their direction. It is one of the most pernicious tendencies". (134)

After Bani Sadr was mercilessly put out of the movement, it was now the turn of the Kurds to learn the PMOI's version of "democratic" collaboration inside the National Resistance Council of Iran.

About the Kurds

Soon it would be the turn of Mr Abdel Rahman Ghassemlou, leader of the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (DPIK). Mr Rajavi criticized him for "having accepted talks with Khomeini, thus recognizing his legitimacy" and asked him to leave the NCRI.

In fact, the DPIK, the only organization (with its Kurdish competitor, Komaleh) to lead an armed struggle against the Iranian regime, had met with the central government. This was "to explore the possibilities of a local cease fire." Heartbroken, Mr Ghassemlou soon left the NCRI.

From this point on, the NCR! would have no independent existence from the Mojahedin.

It was only one of the "brand names" that Rajavi uses to abuse the confidence of those who sign his petitions: from Papua New Guinea to France. Their names are packed in

under manifestos condemning the “war mongering, medieval regime of Khomeini” and praising the “peace plan put forward by Mr Rajavi, Chairman of the National Resistance Council,” Jean Gueyras concludes. (135)

The Kurdish issue was far from being settled for the PMOI. In spite of its regular denials, the National Liberation Army of Iran, under Rajavi’s control, carried out bloody attacks on the Kurds.

Retaking Control

However, there was worry within the ranks of the PMOI. Some at the base began asking questions. This was not taken well at all:

they were immediately treated as outcasts and as traitors to the cause. Inside the organization, discussion had only one purpose:

strong and loud approval of the Chief, who is always right! And there would be many opportunities for this.

At this point in the PMOI’s evolution, we must again look to Mao Tse Tung to find the most useful solution that the leadership would use to muzzle all differences of opinion:

“It is necessary to reinforce Party discipline, including: 1) submission of the individual to the organization; 2) submission of the minority to the majority; 3) submission of the lower echelon to the higher echelon; 4) submission of the entire Party to the Central Committee. Whoever violates these rules undercuts Party unity”. (136)

One could not be clearer! And, when “revolutionary divorce” became a rule, more and more spoke out to demand at least an explanation for this measure. No answer was ever given. It is necessary to silence all dissent: the Chief cannot make mistakes, the Chief is the Chief!

Jean Gueyras understands the PMOI’s double talk:

“The ‘political remarriage’ of Mr Rajavi with Mrs Maryam Azdanlou, wife of one of his closest staff members who was forced to leave her publicly, is presented as ‘one of the most important revolutionary and ideological decisions ever taken by the Mojahedin’.”

This attitude was too much for the few independent personalities who had continued to express their confidence in Mr Rajavi. The new groom succeeded in creating an almost unanimous wave of rejection within the Iranian exile community in France. He nonetheless welded his own troops in their blind and unconditional loyalty to him. Only a few dissidents fled what they now saw as a religious sect.

Yet, if the organisation's 'sympathisers' make up one big family, they have to fall back on the jargon of the 'Great Master' and accept all his explanations, including the most unlikely ones.

During their lengthy exile in Auvers-sur-Oise, Mr Rajavi and his friends have become masters in turning their failures and embarrassments into stunning victories, for their public relations. This is the way Massoud Rajavi's departure to Baghdad was explained by the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran: "the residence of Mr Massoud Rajavi has changed in order to neutralize, on the one hand, the plots of the Khomeini regime and, on the other hand, to meet the needs of the resistance's new phase".

The press release concludes: 'The NCR! considers this move as indispensable to our deployment and organisation of the revolution's armed forces. It is the last step toward our return to our country's soil'. (137)

The Terrorist NCRI

In the beginning of March 2003, the news hit the PMOI like a bombshell. Its legal front had suffered a terrible blow. The news spread through the press agencies:

"The United States has outlawed the National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCR!), political front of the People's Mojahedin, the State Department announced. The main armed opposition movement to the Iranian regime had its assets frozen.

The decision was published in the American 'official journal', the Federal Register, and puts the NCRI on the Black List of terrorist organisations. The representational offices of the organisation in the United States and around the world are targets of this decree, signed by Secretary of State Cohn Powell.

The People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran, the main element of the NCRI, was already placed on the official American list of terrorist organisations by the Democratic Administration of Bill Clinton.

The NCRI kept its offices in Washington at that time, situated just a few blocks from the White House. It also had offices in several major American cities where it organised frequent press conferences to denounce the Iranian Government.

Since Friday morning, Federal agents closed their Washington offices and placed notices on the doors stating that the movement was banned.

No one was in the offices at the time of their intervention; It is now illegal to be a member of this group in the United States.

In the past, the United States used intelligence from this NCRI to justify their concerns about the existence of Iran's secret nuclear programme...

In recent years, the Iranian Mojahedin have focused their armed actions on Iran. They have claimed responsibility for assassinations of several key figures in the regime: the former Director of Evin Prison, Assadollah Ladjevari (August 1998), and the former Army Commander during the Iraq War, General Ali Sayad Shirazi (April 1999)". (138)

Money, the Muscle of Warfare

One of the big unknowns remains the PMOI's financing. Must we believe Maryam Rajavi when she flatly claims that the money all comes from fundraising among the Mojahedin and their supporters? This was notably the case in explaining the millions of dollars uncovered during "Operation Théo". This is just the tip of the iceberg. The PMOI has a lot more at its disposal:

"... Maryam Rajavi rejoiced Thursday when she was freed thanks to the payment of 80,000 euros fixed by the Paris Court of Appeals.

The bail was paid as of Thursday morning at the Paris Appeals Court's administrative offices. Maryam Rajavi has been jailed since 21 June...

As to the 8 million dollars (7 million euros) found in the different homes of Iranian opposition members in Auvers-sur-Oise, Mrs Rajavi insisted that these funds belonged to the Iranian resistance: 'Not a euro, not a dollar comes from any government or any country,' she guaranteed, 'Even if I am not informed of the details, I am sure that the movement can account to the judicial system for each cent'. (139)

This statement is in serious contradiction with the police investigators who all note that large amounts of PMOI money circulate around the world through "dirty" networks:

“It is now up to the policemen of the DSR and the Central Office for the Repression of Major Financial Crime to untangle the threads of cash that came in directly from Iraq. Deposits in Yemen interest them especially.

This is not the first time that a country of the Arabian Peninsula has shown up in the investigation of the PMOI’s finances. On 27 February 2001, after four years of FBI investigation, seven individuals of Iranian origin were arrested in California. They are suspected of having collected more than a million dollars through a ‘Committee for Human Rights in Iran’. A large amount of this money ended up in Turkish accounts controlled by the PMOI, according to the FBI. More than \$ 400,000 may have been used to buy arms in the United Arab Emirates. The investigation, never followed up, was begun after a message was received by the FBI office in Bonn reporting that the German Criminal Police were looking into the transfer of money into Germany from Mojahedin based in the United States”. (140)

Answers From Baghdad

Once again it is necessary to look to Baghdad to find the beginnings of an answer. There, we find confirmation that the main funder of the PMOI was no other than the fallen Boss of Iraq.

One man knows the People’s Mojahedin of Iran and Massoud Rajavi particularly well. He is a very visible personality, very influential in Saddam Hussein’s regime until his defection. Brigadier General in the Iraqi Army General Staff, in charge of the secret services until 1994, Vafigh al-Sameraee, was in regular, personal contact with Saddam Hussein. Then, he broke with the Rais.

The retired General, now a refugee in London, held a job which made him extremely knowledgeable of the PMOI’s workings:

“How far back did the contacts begin between the People’s Mojahedin and Saddam Hussein?

— The regime began its relationship with them in the mid- Eighties. The People’s Mojahedin carried out several attacks on their own country during the Iraq-Iran War... It is important to recall that the People’s Mojahedin began their activities at the time of Mohammad Reza Pahlevi, Shah of Iran. In particular, they claimed responsibility for the assassination of a group of Americans.

In fact, the mental structure of the people under Rajavi's command was perfectly in line with that of the Iraqi regime. They used the same underground methods. Even inside their own infrastructure, the Mojahedin applied the same Stalinist principles. Members of the organisation used false passports to travel to European countries and raise funds to buy arms and pay for their propaganda. The organisation even had a satellite television station broadcasting programmes to Europe.

The People's Mojahedin had their own specialised prisons for their dissidents. These were detention centres at Camp Ashraf, near Baghdad, as well as at Al-Mansourieh and at Shahrban near Jabal Hamrin.

There was also a prison shared with the Iraqi services in the Al Ramadi desert. Many members of the organisation who no longer could follow its line were locked up there. In the cells, there were cases of rape and death.

What was Iraq's aid?

I especially remember a sum of 20 million Iraqi dinars received by Massoud Rajavi (1 dollar was then worth three dinars). This was before the occupation of Kuwait in 1991. At that time he had received at least 8 million dollars. He also received various sums in foreign currency to cover his propaganda expenses in Europe. Massoud Rajavi also had other sources of income, including money given by his supporters. All of this money complemented the deliveries of military equipment. After all, the Iraqi regime supported the People's Mojahedin with arms, mobile cannon, tanks, heavy artillery and even combat helicopters.

The group used the logistical support of the Iraqi intelligence services to cross the border and to send commando groups into Iran to carry out terrorist attacks.

The People's Mojahedin brutally assaulted the Kurdish towns of Jelola and Khaneghein and took an active role in the repression of the popular uprisings in Southern Iraq in 1991. They provided Iraqi intelligence with all kinds of information on what was happening inside Iran". (141)

Thus, contrary to all their propaganda, the PMOI most certainly collaborated closely with the dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein, right up to the fall of the Baath Party from power in Iraq.

CHAPTER 16

A Major Defeat

The fall of the House of Saddam was a major defeat for the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran. It began its descent into Hell. As its Leader, Massoud Rajavi, declared in reference to the Iraqi Government:

“If this ever fell, we would sink into oblivion. Our survival depends on our support from President Saddam Hussein 's regime “. (142)

On Wednesday, 16 April 2003, Jean-Claude Chapon, the special correspondent of Agence France Presse covering the American assault on Iraq, filed this story on the collapse of the PMOI.

“In Falluja, the enormous camp of the People's Mojahedin, the armed Iranian opposition supported by Saddam Hussein, was left to pillagers and stray dogs since the fighters had fled on the first day of war in Iraq. Their destination is unknown.

Wednesday, on the 28th day of the American-British invasion, a group of marauders, usually armed with Kalashnikovs, or with pistols hidden in their shirts, still patrolled the huge complex, which must have supported a self-sustaining base for its occupants only 40 kilometres from Baghdad.

Surrounded by a high wall several kilometers in length, topped with barbed wire rolls, a small antennae sprouting village had been Constructed. The houses, warehouses, garages, and offices are spread out through the centre of the camp, in the midst of lush vegetation which is most dramatic against the backdrop of this desert region.

Around the camp's centre are cultivated fields designed, no doubt, to feed the camp's personnel. An irrigation system is still working, as the dark brown colour of the soil shows, as well as the gushing water here and there into well maintained irrigation ditches.

At the entrance to the complex, on the side of the highway that leads to Jordan, two men are taking down an electric pole in order to take away the grid's wires. They become quite nervous and aggressive with the intrusion of reporters. They are from the neighbouring area and finally agree to tell us what they know of the camp.

According to them, hundreds of fighters from the movement lived there, often with their families. These Iranians, according to the two men who did not give their names, kept to themselves and never came out.

Only Iraqi trucks, generally military lorries, but sometimes unidentifiable, came and went from the camp. It had a heavily fortified, double gateway.

On the first day of the war, all of these soldiers moved out, they say. Where to? The two men know very little for certain, but they guess that they went to the Diyala region on the Iranian border...

Coalition forces bombed their bases several times, since their forces were considered part of the Iraqi Army. According to a British diplomat, they represented an 'obstacle to our operations'.

In fact, several buildings, especially in the centre of the Falluja camp were destroyed by American bombing. Yet, people in the surrounding area could not give an exact date for these air raids". (143)

The special correspondent of Liberation reported in May 2003 on the Ashraf Camp, main base of the PMOI. He confirms their route:

"The main base of the People's Mojahedin is about 100 kilometres northeast of Baghdad on the Kirkuk road. It is situated just before the village of Khaliss. The movement is tied to Saddam Hussein, for whom it carried out the dirty work to keep its 'residency rights'...

Their main office, in downtown Baghdad, was one of the first buildings pillaged and sacked by the population. The people hate them. It is now occupied by squatters.

But, at the Al-Ashraf camp, nothing seems to have changed.

Two guards watch the entrance. Further on, visitors must go through a chicane and then wait at a control point for inspection.

The movement's flag, white with a lion and the sun, is next to the Iranian flag...

The war stopped at the gates of Camp Al-Ashraf, or so it seems. Life seems peaceful. It is a small town in the middle of the desert with its own mini electrical station, and a field hospital. 'We are prepared to govern our country. A small base like this is child's play to manage'. In all, it covers 36 square kilometres. Barbed wire separates the camp from the huge, surrounding desert. Iran is about sixty kilometres away to the East. The movement is no longer young and the victory over the mullahs' regime' still awaits. So what! The discipline is still iron and the mouth is full of jargon...

On 8 April, an air raid killed seven Mojahedin and wounded ten others. The desert around the camp is full of lorries destroyed by the American bombers,” reported Christophe Ayad.

The Surrender

The future of Massoud Rajavi’s fighters now depends on American goodwill. After discussions that were severely criticised in Teheran, some 5000 People’s Mojahedin had to empty their arsenal. Having tanks, armoured personnel carriers, light vehicles, equipped with Kalashnikov light weapons, the troops of the National Liberation Army gave up their materiel as reported by Associated Press:

“The People’s Mojahedin, an Iranian opposition group operating from Iraq, started to lay down their arms on Sunday, within the framework of an agreement reached with the encircling force of American troops.

After the agreement reached Saturday evening, after two days of talks in Baqubah, 70 kms Northeast of the Iraqi capital, the Iranian opposition can keep their uniforms and have seven days to assemble all their troops in a specific place and turn in their weapons.

‘In effect, they are placing their equipment under Coalition control,’ declared General Ray Odierno, commanding the 4th Infantry Division of the US Army. ‘They have been very cooperative,’ he added.

The People’s Mojahedin are part of the military wing of the National Resistance Council of Iran (NC RI), under Massoud Rajavi. It is headquartered in the Paris suburbs ... During the Seventies, the group killed several American soldiers and civilians working on military projects in Iran. They also supported the 1979 taking of the US Embassy in Teheran. Later, they broke with the Iranian Government and undertook attacks on the Teheran regime from Iraqi territory, with the support of Saddam Hussein.

American officials added that they will not be considered as POWs, but placed in a status ‘as yet to be determined’.” (145)

From Disaster to Disaster

On the strictly military level, the PMOI and its National Liberation Army have only met with stunning defeats in their attempts to take control of any Iranian territory. The Mojahedin troops were only effective on Iraqi soil, when they had the support of Saddam Hussein's Divisions. But they are not tin soldiers. They know how to use their weaponry and they kill. Faced with unarmed peasants, they have been ferocious. However in 1984, Massoud Rajavi stated: "The Islam we preach does not excuse blood letting. We have never sought nor welcomed confrontation and violence ". (146)

These are hollow statements. It was never true, neither in the past nor in the years after. The PMOI's ideology, as we have seen, is built on the works of former Chinese Communist Party Chairman Mao Tse Tung. He was a fully tempered theoretician and practitioner of revolutionary struggle.

Very much a fringe movement on the Iranian political scene, the People's Mojahedin of Iran have always demonstrated their incapacity to take power by classical democratic means (votes, electoral campaigns, etc.). In their political logic, there is no other way to achieve their goal but by revolution, just as Mao foresaw:

"The central task and the supreme form of the revolution is the conquest of power by armed struggle. That is resolving the issue by war. This revolutionary principle of Marxism-Leninism is true everywhere, in China as in other countries". (147)

This was to be a principle followed literally. Yet, worried about the eventual repercussions of their activities on their image in the West, the Mojahedin sought smokescreens. They tried to identify themselves as patriots. After all, in Western public opinion, the times are no longer those of the Sixties and Seventies: romantic glorification of guerrilla war. Since then, countries have learned to fear terrorism, wherever it comes from and whatever its justification.

The PMOI is trying to play the card of nationalist independence movements, as if Iran was subjected to some kind of foreign occupation. The Mojahedin say:

"It is interesting to note that the Diplomatic Conference of Geneva decided in 1949 to stipulate: 'It is possible sometimes in a civil war that those considered as rebels are, in reality, patriots fighting for freedom, independence and the dignity of their country. It is not possible to speak of 'terrorism', 'anarchy or 'disorder' in the case of rebels who accept humanitarian principles ". (148)

In reality, since the turning point that was marked by the defeat of “Operation Eternal Light” in 1988, the PMOI has been reduced to sporadic attacks inside Iran: outright terrorism.

CHAPTER 17

The Failure of “Eternal Light”

The most ringing defeat suffered by the PMOI was suffered during “Operation Eternal Light”. However, keeping to their propaganda techniques, the Mojahedin have changed it - through the magic of their triumphant press releases -from an objective and obvious loss to an “historic victory”:

“On Monday 25 July 1988, the National Liberation Army of Iran launched its greatest offensive under the code name “Eternal Light “. The attack carried the Liberation Army 170 kilometres inside Iran, to the gates of Kermanshah, the largest city in Western Iran. In four days of intense combat, the Liberation Army took on 200,000 members of Khomeini’s forces and all of the regime’s material reserves and war materiel.

The National Liberation Army of Iran liberated the towns of Kerend and Islamabad, destroying enemy bases and fortifications. After having inflicted 55, 000 casualties on the regime including a large number of Corps Commanders of the Revolutionary Guards — the soldiers of the Liberation Army returned their bases along the Iranian frontier.

The rapid advance of the National Liberation Army deep into Iranian territory and the resulting battles profoundly shook the regime. Three years later, the mullahs are still talking about its profound impact on society”. (149)

In fact, poorly prepared, botched in its execution by militants without real military experience or serious training, the attack died out quickly. Contrary to the self congratulation of the PMOI leaders, the Iranian people never greeted the Mojahedin as liberators and soldiers under Teheran’s orders had little difficulty in pushing them back over the Iraqi border.

This is confirmed by the French newsweekly *Marianne*: “Following the normalisation of relations between Paris and Teheran, the accursed couple, declared *persona non grata* on French territory, moved to Iraq in June 1986. They were with Iran’s worst enemy, Saddam Hussein. Three years before, in the midst of the Iran-Iraq War, Tariq

Aziz, then Vice Prime Minister to Baghdad's dictator was discreetly invited to Auvers-sur-Oise. The two men raised the issue of their future cooperation. Now it has been concluded. In a few months, Massoud organised his movement militarily, to the point of creating a small army of 15,000 lost soldiers.

'Advanced bases' like Camp Al-Ashraf on the Iranian border have been granted by his new allies. They have heavy armaments, armored vehicles and missiles. In exchange for this they collaborate closely with the Iraqi Army's intelligence services and take part, as well, in the dirty work of the Baathist regime. After the ceasefire between Iran and Iraq in June 1988, Rajavi launched Operation Eternal Light against the Iranian armies, worn out by 8 years of terrible combat. The fiasco is enormous! After having gone 50 kilometers into Iranian territory, the National Liberation Army of Iran (NLAI) was stopped in its advance and cut to pieces. The balance sheet: more than 1500 dead in the Mojahedin forces. This route did not, however, dampen their desire for revenge on the 'hypocrites'. (150)

Washington drew its own conclusions:

"The military background of the Mojahedin is limited. The group mounted its most significant incursion in June-July 1988. They participated in an advance coordinated inside Iran with Iraqi forces. During the same offensive, Iraqi units on other fronts used chemical weapons against Iran. The National Liberation Army briefly held the Iranian border towns of Mehran, Karand and Islamabad-e-Gharb.

The Mojahedin claimed that they had killed 40,000 Iranians, but other military observers simply confirmed that the Liberation Army had to retreat as soon as Iranian reinforcements arrived". (151)

At this time, the PMOI had seemed to have reached its optimal military strength. But it threw it away by its lack of clarity, failures in planning and in errors that withered the ranks of its supporters. Once again, and forever since, these missed chances have marked the Rajavis' historical saga.

Liberation concluded:

"The couple built a system of military camps housing an Army of about 10,000 troops, equipped with heavy armaments, well disciplined and ready for self sacrifice.

This was done with financial aid from Saddam and the ‘voluntary’ contributions of thousands of supporters spread throughout the world.

Women are half the force and hold most of the positions of command. When the Iraq-Iran War ended, the National Liberation Army of Iran unleashed its own attack. The ‘Eternal Light’ offensive would be a disaster...” (152)

Who Is Correct?

Certain members of the Mojahedin who participated in this deadly enterprise bear witness, each in their own way:

Ali Akbar Rastgou, now living in Germany was an early recruit who worked in the movement’s structure. He was a specialist on activities inside Iran:

“I first heard of the PMOI in 1974 when I was a student at Teheran University. I heard of it again in 1976, when I was studying in Germany. There was, at that time, a big confederation of Iranian students abroad. It brought Islamists and Communists under the same umbrella. Until the revolution, the Mojahedin had no real influence. But their support for Ayatollah Khomeini won them a lot of support. We joined up... From then on, I was in charge of liaison with groups on the Left to support the Palestinians and the Nicaraguans.

One of the big final attacks had been planned for 1988. Everyone was sent to Iraq. I wanted to liberate my country more than fighting for the Mojahedin. In 1986-87, I ran into the Pasdaran, the Revolutionary Guardians, who captured us. They were peasants, poor people who knew that the country was in peril and that they had to defend it. They were quite correct since we were the ones attacking it.

Our tactic was to kill without any discrimination. All you had to do was wear a beard and you were a target for us. Whom was I going to kill? These same poor people... Who was in the right? This a big question I have asked myself and so have many others. We had no right to speak. They told me: ‘You are not yet ‘cleansed’. You do not have Massoud and Maryam in your head”.

The offensive did indeed take place and it was a disaster for us. There were many deaths in our ranks. What can you do against airplanes? Some of the young fighters had not been in Iraq for more than a week. Two days before the attack, they gave them a machine gun, even if they had never before seen a weapon. No experience at

all. They were confronting Pasdarans who had been tempered in a real war. Our people didn't have a chance...

Given the losses, the leaders needed some of us to go abroad.

Since I had experience in Germany, they sent me there. And then I burned my bridges to them. Of course, I am regularly cited as a counter-revolutionary..." (153)

Another former member of the PMOI who opted for freedom speaks in the same way: "Haqqe Mani joined the People's Mojahedin 22 years ago... He criticises Rajavi for having tolerated an unacceptable casualty rate among the Mojahedin in order 'to attain very limited objectives which, in no way, justified the number of lost lives'. Rajavi, according to this dissident, explained his line as follows: The liquidation of a single supporter of the regime is worth the lives of eight of you. It is a useful sacrifice and good publicity for our movement'. (154)

By Moscow and By Baghdad

Throughout its presence in Iraq, the PMOI continually denied receiving arms from Saddam Hussein. However, once again, facts are there to show that only the now fallen Rais could have given his "friends" the materiel and logistical support for their struggle.

The American Government is categorical:

"Many of the weapons they received were purchased in the Soviet Union. In 1993, a journalist reporting from a Mojahedin base in Iraq saw 'about' 35 aging tanks, armoured personnel carriers, Chinese automatic rifles, and Russian multiple rocket launchers".

In May 1988, the New York Times described the Mojahedin forces as "basically a light infantry unit, with Soviet armoured personnel carriers and artillery". The Mojahedin Army follows Soviet-style tactics. This is a protocol that puts it on the same footing as the Iraqi Army.

During the Summer of 1988, while the attack inside Iran was going on, the Iraqis gave the Mojahedin major war booty, including small caliber weapons, motorized artillery, tanks and other arms taken from the Iranian forces.

Another reporter who visited the Mojahedin in August 1994 noted that “the arms deployed were... mainly of Russian origin”. He indicated that it was possible that they came from the Iraqi stockpile. That was at the time that the National Liberation Army of Iran claimed that its materiel had all been captured in Iran. However, their limited military means would not have been adequate to such a large seizure. (155)

On this subject, a documentary on the France 2 television network is very clear on the origins of the war materiel used by the Mojahedin.

In *Glowing Coals*, a film by Michel Honorin, the camera fully recorded the PMOI bases on the Iranian border. In camouflage uniform, the fighters were training for the final, general offensive, one that never came. They were rolling under barbed wire mesh. “The spikes,” added the narrator, “are a bit masochistic... Men and women, with weapons slung on their backs, parade by, drive tanks and fire cannon...”. (156)

The helmets worn are standard Iraqi Army issue. The rest of the materiel shown on the screen is Soviet-made.

While the United States provided the Shah with his arms, Moscow sold much of its military production to its ally, Saddam Hussein. The sausage like helmets of the tank crews, the AK-47 Kalashnikov assault rifles, Dashaka machine guns, RPG-7 rocket launchers, the pickup trucks mounted with double-barreled antiaircraft cannon, the BTR troop carriers, Katyusha truck-mounted multiple rocket launchers, the T-72 assault tanks, the MI combat helicopters all came from the USSR.

But they certainly came over the Iraqi border. It is hard to imagine that Saddam Hussein would tolerate a parallel arms market in his own country.

These are the same kinds of weapons found all over Afghanistan where the resistance used them after taking them from their enemy: the Soviets.

Repressing the Kurds

Another chapter in their history is no less than a permanent stain on the reputation of Massoud Rajavi’s People’s Mojahedin. They lost respectability from this. Having participated actively in the repression of the Iraqi Kurds, the PMOI can hardly win the confidence of Iran’s Kurds whom that often cite as supporters.

The propaganda machine worked overtime to silence assertions dealing with this black page in the PMOI’s record:

‘Defamatory and absurd statements according to which the Mojahedin participated in the Iraqi Kurdistan liquidations ‘have been repeated for 10 years and thousands of times by the Mullahs’ intelligence services. That is why these assertions have no credibility. Moreover in his official letter to the Dutch judicial authorities of July 1999 the international relations official of the Democratic Party of Iraqi Kurdistan underlined that his political group had investigated ‘rumors concerning Mojahedin units aiding Iraqi troops’. These enquiries concluded that ‘no basis in proof and no document permit any confirmation that the Mojahedin had taken part in any hostility against Iraq’s Kurdish population’’. (157)

Please note that the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, under Massoud Barzani was Saddam Hussein’s ally. Strangely enough, it is this group that provides the defense for the Mojahedin, despite the established facts.

Haqqe Mani, a PMOI dissident, knows the reality:

“It was at this time that we began our direct military collaboration with the Iraqi Army and the Mojahedin were turned into support troops helping the in the suppression of popular uprisings against Baghdad. This was to prevent the Kurds from driving all the way to the plains around the capital’’. (158)

The other leader of Iraqi Kurdistan, Jalal Talabani, Chief of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) has, for his part, clearly denounced the participation of the PMOI. He declared to reporters that “5,000 members of the Iranian Mojahedin joined forces with Saddam in the battle of Kirkuk’’. (159)

But, even more clearly, those who took part in the massacres, the soldiers under Massoud Rajavi’s orders have spoken out. They have shared eyewitness accounts:

“Mohamed Reza Eskandari, a dissident Mojahedin, now living in Holland as a political refugee was an eyewitness to the movement’s participation in this repression.. .Stationed in the Sulayman Beg region (near the ‘border’ with Iraqi Kurdistan) where the massacre of civilians took place, he states’’: ‘There was an old closed-down rail station which was our base. From this point, we attacked the Kurds, encircling them on three sides. There were eighteen dead Kurds. We buried them right there in a common ditch’.

Eskandari also talks about the Mojahedin's summary executions of unarmed Iraqi deserters and the interrogation of soldiers who had left the front in several Iraqi towns.

Eskandari also insists that the People's Mojahedin handed over to the Iraqi Army and Secret Services all those whose identity papers showed that they were Kurds.

The organization had many defectors following these operations: more than 800 fighters became dissidents. This policy was the straw that broke the camel's back. It was the apogee of the errors committed since the movement moved to Iraq". (160)

This led Liberation conclude that:

"In Iran, the Mojahedin have only the capability to carry out terrorist attacks from time to time. In Iraq, they participate in Sad- dam's repression, notably against the Kurds. Maryam had to leave her exile in Auvers in 1993 to join Massoud. The fall of the Iraqi dictator made her return to France, with twenty senior officials. Paris agreed to this. Massoud himself has disappeared". (161)

Why be shocked, then, when Yann Richard, researcher at the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI), considered a major specialist on Islam and author of Shi'ism and Islam, states that: "This group could probably be compared to the IRA or the PKK in its methods. These are rabid people who, should they actually come to power, would be worse than the present regime. They are bloody and violent madmen"? (162)

CHAPTER 18

By Bomb Blasts

Seeing the failure of any attempt to invade Iran militarily and to “free” a nation they hoped would welcome them as liberators, Massoud Rajavi’s People’s Mojahedin had to rethink their strategy. They were forced to replace their military offensives with terrorist attacks carried out by small commando groups. The PMOI returned to its origins, terrorism placed at the revolution’s service.

Careful to polish their image on the international level, the People’s Mojahedin denied any recourse to these extraordinarily cowardly methods:

“The position of the Iranian resistance on blind terrorism and blind violence has always been clear. It strongly condemns activities that endanger innocent people. Contrary to the reports and allegations, the Mojahedin never took part in activities, in Iran or elsewhere, that threatened the lives of innocent civilians “. (163)

It was not very easy to defend themselves, since the facts so abundantly show another reality. This is much more cruel and happens to be right in line with classic subversive movements. As Mao recalled:

“The revolution is not a dinner party: it is not produced like a literary work, a drawing or embroidery. It cannot be carried through successfully with so much elegance, tranquility and delicacy, or with so much sweetness, amiability, courtesy, poise and soulfulness. The revolution is an uprising: a violent act by which one class overthrows another”. (164)

Moreover, solid testimony abounds. Let us merely recall this Agence France Presse dispatch: “With 10,000 to 15,000 fighters the National Liberation Army of Iran has several bases in Iraq. It has claimed responsibility for several operations inside Iran. The most spectacular were carried out against eight oil pipelines and the Mausoleum of Imam Khomeini, the late Guide of the Revolution, near Teheran. Several Guardians of the Revolution were wounded”. (165)

implicated in the hostage taking at the American Embassy and in the assassination of six American citizens, Massoud Rajavi’s supporters have always had a weakness for using explosives.

“Bombs are the Mojahedin’s weapon of choice. They have used them frequently against American targets. On the occasion of President Nixon’s visit to Iran in 1972, for example, the PMOI set off bombs at more than 12 locations throughout Teheran”.

(166)

In their press, they take credit for their actions:

“The explosion of the American military advisor’s car. The explosion in the centre of American military espionage activities. The explosion at the gates of Reza Khan ‘s tomb where Nixon was planning a wreath laying ceremony. The explosion at the British Embassy. Several explosions along the way that were so many slaps to Nixon. Each of these operations had its own characteristics which celebrate anti-dictatorial combat and the anti-imperialist approach of our organisation’s struggle “. (167)

The French Government does not act by chance. It knows exactly what it is dealing with concerning the real nature of the PMOI:

“The leaders of the People’s Mojahedin are accused of having planned, at the time of the end of the Iraq War, of creating their ‘World HQ’, an ‘operational centre’ with terrorist aims...

In France the Iranian opposition movement has already been threatened by the authorities, notably in 1986, then during a police operation in October 1999. Yet, its members have never been prosecuted for ‘belonging to an association of criminals in relation to a terrorist enterprise...’ (168)

A Few Examples

Dead and wounded litter the field during the recent past. The PMOI, which has no problems with contradicting itself, refutes the charge of using terrorism, yet regularly claims responsibility for its actions on the ground. It involves an organisation in permanent panic of being forgotten, a threat that grows day by day, and must, therefore, motivate its militants who have never witnessed the victory announced thousands of times in the past.

On the ground, it is innocent civilians who pay the price of this bloody madness as we can see from some dispatches from the Western press:

“A new explosion took place in the night of Tuesday-Wednesday in Northern Teheran. The blast caused material damage to a public building, Iranian Radio

announced. The explosion took place in the administrative offices of the Pasdaran, in the capital's Northern residential neighbourhood. The radio gave no other details".

"A violent explosion took place Tuesday afternoon in the offices of the Revolutionary Court in Northern Teheran. Two people lost their lives and two others were wounded, according to State television. The count seems to be five dead and several dozen wounded, announced several newspapers on Wednesday. The blast caused major damage to the entry hall of the Court. According to pictures shown on television, the room is completely destroyed. . .The People's Mojahedin have claimed responsibility for this action". (169)

"The Number 2 of the Iranian Armed Forces, General Ali Sayyad Shirazi, was assassinated Saturday morning, announced the official press agency, IRNA.

According to IRNA, General Shirazi, one of the highest ranking Army commanders in the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, was killed by 'terrorists', a term usually applied to describe the opposition People's Mojahedin movement, based in Iraq.

The attack took place at the moment when the victim was going to work, stated the Iranian agency, which provided no additional details on the circumstances of this crime.

The Associated Press Bureau in Cairo received a telephone call from a People's Mojahedin spokesperson in Paris claiming responsibility for this action. The spokesman, Shahin Gobadi, read a statement emphasising that General Shirazi was a 'war criminal'. It was claimed that he was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Iranian opposition members. The spokesman did not for now add any details on the way in which the Iranian official was killed, indicating only that he was escorted by heavily armed body guards". (170)

"Mortar attacks, claimed by the People's Mojahedin, left One dead and four wounded Saturday night in Teheran. This took place in the neighbourhood of the Iranian President's residence, the Parliament and other official buildings.

According to Iranian television, a man 29 years of age, an employee in a publishing company situated across from the offices of the Judicial Services, was killed, while four others suffered wounds. The windows of the publishing house were broken and the walls damaged. Two cars were destroyed.

The Office for the Coordination of Friday Prayers is the only official building to have been damaged: windows blown out, mortar shrapnel in its walls. The remains of the mortar shells were visible at the site, at the corner of Vali-Asr and Imam-Khomeini

avenues For the television, the explosions are the work of ‘hypocrites’, or, in other words, the People’s Mojahedin, who oppose the Teheran regime and have camps in Iraq not far from the Iranian border. In a press release faxed to the Associated Press in Cairo, the Mojahedin claimed responsibility for these attacks which, they stated, targeted the residence and office of the Guide of the Revolution, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei”. (171)

‘Several mortar shells exploded inside a residential complex in Northern Teheran, close to a military installation on Monday. According to witnesses, there were two wounded. More than 10 mortar shells hit the Noor complex which has 360 apartments, according to them. You could see blood on the sidewalk. Ambulances and fire engines were sent to the scene.

Teheran Radio also reported these explosions, pointing out that they were from mortar fire. The Government has made no comment. The opposition party, the People’s Mojahedin (Khalq) claimed responsibility, claiming that the shelling hit the barracks of the Guardians of the Revolution (Pasdaran), the elite military force which operated separately from the Iranian Army.

In a release received by the Associated Press in Dubai (United Arab Emirates), the People’s Mojahedin stated that the target was the Pasdaran’s Commander, General Rahim Safavi. According to witnesses, however, the shells fell about 100 meters short.

Journalists saw eight cars destroyed in the complex. One person lost a leg, and a woman who was in a car, was slightly wounded, declared a resident of the Noor complex under cover of anonymity.

A little earlier, IRNA announced a series of explosions in Northern Teheran without any additional details. A security official, who requested anonymity, confirmed that it was a mortar attack from a nearby park. The People’s Mojahedin claimed in December that mortar fire had killed two and left eight wounded, all civilians, in Ahvaz, Western Iran”. (172)

“The People’s Mojahedin, the armed opposition based in Baghdad, carried out mortar attacks on Friday and Saturday against three cities in Western Iran: Qasr-e-Shirin, Delohran and Shalamsheh. No one was hurt, reported the Teheran Times:

‘The Mojahedin fired 18 mortar shells at Qasr-e-Shirin in the night of Friday to Saturday, wrote the English language newspaper, which is close to conservative

circles. They cite 'an informed source'. Then, Saturday morning, the 'terrorist group' fired a mortar at Delhoran...

Saturday, the Mojahedin announced an 'important skirmish' in which they fought the 23' Iranian Airborne Division on the IraqIran border. They stated that three of their soldiers were killed during this operation.

Fighting has increased for a year between the Mojahedin and the Iranian armed forces. Moreover, the Mojahedin are accused of being the source of mortar attacks against Iranian institutions in Teheran itself. Iran made the end of the Mojahedin's operations one of the conditions for the normalisation of Iran-Iraq relations, who were at war between 1980 and 1988". (173)

"Five mortar shells fell early Monday morning on a barracks in East Teheran. No one was hurt. The People's Mojahedin, the main armed formation of the Iranian opposition Army, claimed responsibility for this action in a press release.

The five shells fell on the lawn of the Hechmatieh Barracks, in the popular neighbourhood of the same name. These are the barracks where numerous Iraqi soldiers were held prisoner in the past.

This is the eighth mortar attack since the beginning of the year, each targeting official military or political buildings. Each of the attacks, many of which left victims in their wake, has so far been attributed to the People's Mojahedin, the armed opposition based in Iraq. They have claimed them.

Mojahedin actions have accelerated in recent months". (174)

"The Iranian opposition announced Tuesday violent fighting between its forces and the police and Army of the Islamic regime. Dozens of victims fell in Western Iran.

The People's Mojahedin Organisation, based in Iraq, states in a press release in Paris, that it attacked the city of Ham, in the Province of the same name, on the Iraqi border". (175)

Tuesday, Radio Teheran confirmed the attack, which left one dead and seven wounded. It stated that the aggressors were 'destroyed through the people's cooperation with the paramilitary forces and the police'. Arms and other material were captured. (176)

According to a second press release from the opposition, the local commander of the Guardians of the Revolution (Pasdaran), the regime's elite forces, was killed, with a number of his men, during the fighting that began on Sunday and lasted 24 hours: the Mojahedin say they lost 3 dead and several wounded in their own ranks.

Last month, the Mojahedin, who want to overthrow the present regime, fired mortar shells at a Pasdaran facility in Teheran”.

“A bomb exploded last night in Teheran, near the University. The People’s Mojahedin Organisation claimed responsibility for this attack. They added that it had carried out rocket grenade attacks on a centre where Islamic courts inflict corporal punishment, like flogging.

The targeted building was ‘seriously damaged’, according to the Iraq-based organisation”.

This list of attacks carried out by the PMOI is far from exhaustive. But their use of terrorism has not succeeded in winning the Mojahedin the audience they seek.

Hardening the Movement by Lock and Key

To channel the growing discontent of their base the Mojahedin need diversionary actions. Incapable of forging unity in the opposition, they must, above all, avoid desertions by activists who are sick of good words that are never followed by any effect.

As Ahmad Ghoreishi and Dariush Zahe note:

“It is important to note that the forces opposed to the present regime remain fragmented, without hope, with a weak organisation, deprived of any charismatic leaders and of an ideology able to orchestrate the coordinated action needed to separate the people from the regime...

There are several opposition groups, from absolute Monarchists to revolutionary Communists, seeking the death of the current Iranian political system. Most of them operate from exile.. None of them seems to be a serious threat to the survival of the Islamic Republic”.

More and more isolated and with declining numbers in the domestic and foreign Iranian communities, the Mojahedin metamorphosed into a cult, praising the virtues of their “infallible Chiefs”. (177)

From the moment that the leadership’s edicts took on a sacred character, any questioning of orders began a crime of heresy. As in the sects throughout Europe, we have yet to fully measure the damage done.

CHAPTER 19

Fanatical to the Point of Suicide

The day after the police operation against the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran in the Paris suburbs, European and world public opinion was shocked to discover individuals voluntarily turning themselves into human torches.

What level of fanaticism could push seemingly sane and healthy people to such extremes? Moreover, some of the "spectators" tried to block the access of rescue services which could have saved the victims' lives. The French judicial system could only note the facts and prevent any repetition.

Two Iranians suspected of preventing the intervention of rescuers while a woman was immolating herself in front of DST headquarters in Paris on Wednesday will be brought before an instructional magistrate for their criminal investigation, judicial sources made known on Friday.

The prosecutor's office stated that very early in the day a criminal enquiry possible 'obstruction of rescue services' and 'provocation to suicide'. It will soon demand an arrest warrant. The crime of obstructing rescue efforts can be punished with up to 7 years in prison.

The two prisoners bought 8 litres of petrol in a service station in Neuilly-sur-Seine, near the DST HQ. They then provided it to an Iranian woman who died yesterday in the specialized military hospital for burns, Percy, in Clamart (Hauts-de-Seine), the same source added. One of them was an obstacle to rescue workers when they tried to save the 44 year old victim, while the other was in possession of the victim's blouse and papers, judicial sources emphasized.

The two Iranians were questioned by police Tuesday morning during the operation against the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran. They were released during the evening, the judicial sources said.

One Iranian woman, arrested and questioned on Wednesday was in possession of gasoline-filled bottles and a letter explaining her intention to commit suicide. She was freed, she stated". (178)

This is the point to begin asking some difficult questions. For many years, specialists on international terrorism, like the experts on post-revolutionary Iran, have been aware of the sectarian and violent nature of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran. Numerous journalists have had a bone to pick with their propaganda. Those who gave space to the Movement's "deserters" or who expressed the slightest criticism were violently denounced as agents of Teheran, bought by the regime. But, in that Summer of 2003, reality hit.

Tom Heneghan of the British press agency, Reuters, asked himself if he was watching a sect in full collapse:

"The images of men and women spraying themselves with petrol before setting themselves on fire in the streets of several European capitals, has shed dramatic light on the last days of the main armed opposition to the Teheran regime.

Since Tuesday, several supporters of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI) have tried to immolate themselves in Paris, London, Rome and Berne.

A woman in her forties has succumbed to her wounds Thursday night in the Paris region after immolating herself the previous day to denounce the intervention of French police against Maryam Rajavi — the person whom the Iranian opposition want one day to become President of Iran.

Successive student demonstrations in the streets of Teheran and the growing pressure of the American authorities on the Iranian regime, summoned to explain its nuclear programme, could have led the Mojahedin to believe that the time had come to overthrow the authorities they have been fighting for thirty years.

However in just a few weeks, the organization has seen its military installations dismantled in Iraq, its arsenal seized by the Americans and its I-IQ in Auvers-sur-Oise, North of Paris, searched and closed down by the French police.

For many specialists on Iran, these images of men and women in flames, writhing in pain have shown the true nature of the PMOI: a sect based on the cult of personality of Maryam Rajavi and her husband, Massoud, one of the movement's founders.

'It's a sect,' says Ali Ansari, expert on Iranian affairs at Britain's Durham University. 'Their militants are strangely, passionately loyal to this couple. The now realise who they are,' he adds.

'My only hope, is that, in the event of a revolution, we won't have the People's Mojahedin in their place,' confides a young Iranian interviewed in Teheran: 'They're worse than the mullahs'.

A Sect of Iron

In 1993, the PMOI responded to the American Government, in substance, that an organization is known by its results. Let us see:

“We know, from the history of national liberation movements, that one can logically and scientifically see social and historical trends, which a political movement can only give its society what it already has. You can only believe in the promise of democracy in tomorrow’s Iran if the internal relations of the opposition are democratic today “. (180)

Now, it is precisely the internal relations of the PMOI that have no democratic content at all. The base must shut up, obey orders and, above all, not think for itself.

The weekly Marianne is very clear:

- “Massoud Rajavi and Bani Sadr took refuge in France and set up a National Council of Resistance. In Auvers-sur-Oise, where he chose to live with his brother, Massoud, leading the scraps of his organization, continues to work for the destabilization of the Islamist regime, and, by remote control, directs new terrorist attacks, proclaiming that ‘the end justifies the means’.” An iron discipline reigns within the movement. All dissent is severely punished.

The mystico-religious language, a sort of cocktail of Allah, Marx and the others, belongs more to the talk of a sect than to the speeches of a political movement. Doesn’t Rajavi see himself as the Mahdi, the hidden twelfth imam of Shi’ia martyrdom? This collective detour leads to blackmailing the dead, to an intensified cult of violence against the enemy, all the while proclaiming respect for human rights and the virtues of democracy.

Representative of God on Earth, Rajavi is the guru, married after two divorces to Maryam Azdanlou, the super militant, once wed to the organization's “Number 4”. Even the abandoned husband congratulated the newly weds. A crazy universe.” (181)

This was indeed a crazy universe, but a real one with tight rules and terrible duties. Above all, it was prohibited to criticize the wisdom of the hierarchy or the decisions it

took. Wishing to be omniscient, Rajavi was also omnipotent. He stopped at nothing to ensure the loyalty of his troops and keep a continuous control over their minds.

The militants in the Iraqi camps had, for example, to write down all their daily activities, note their thoughts and most intimate feelings. In some cases, they would have to undergo a very severe session of self-criticism:

“From 1990 on, there were meetings for confession and self-criticism that filled up all the space left for sentimental relationships:

any militant feeling any attraction for the wife of a comrade had to apologise to her in public. These sessions of confession were duly recorded on video and kept in the archives of the movement’s HQ”. (182)

The technique — tested in North Vietnamese prison camps where the Communists “brainwashed” French POWs — is laid out clearly in the Little Red Book:

“Criticism inside the Party is a weapon which helps reinforce the Party’s organization and increase its combat capacities”. (183)

As in a sect, it is forbidden to think.

Itself obedient to Marxism, fighting overtly to install in Iran a “popular democracy”, the Fedais Guerrilla Fighters Organization of Iran sees much to criticise in Rajavi’s Mojahedin:

“Some would criticize us for considering this organization as a ‘sect’. We have to tell them that a force that neither respects nor believes in any principles and whose goals and thoughts are based only on the tastes and desires of one person, when those goals resemble nothing like those of a political organization, then, in our culture, what shall we call them? Especially when its leader has a religious character.

When this organization has no shame in the 20th Century in declaring officially, over and over again, through its own radio and television that ‘thanks to the marriage of Massoud Rajavi and Maryam’ its members who suffered from epilepsy and migraines were all cured. Also, given that they go on to state that medical doctors confirm this claim of the leadership, isn’t it possible that these dishonorable doctors are capable of injecting an air-filled hypodermic needle into the veins of any of Massoud’s and Maryam’s opponents? In an organization in which a single man can put himself at the tip of the pyramid, isn’t it possible to see a beehive with only one queen bee?” (184)

These accusations are borne out by those who know the PMOI from the inside, its dissidents:

“Moreover, the Mojahedin’ ‘cultural revolution’ included completely bizarre facets... There was the reinforcement of Rajavi’s spiritual role and its dimension in the movement... From the Nineties on, he succeeded in isolating the membership completely from reality... Haqqe Mani and Mohamed Reza Eskandari agree in saying that intellectuals and culture were Rajavi’s prime targets. According to Haqqeh Mani ‘the worst insult for a militant was to denounce his cultural interests’.

The militants living in the camps of that organization were deprived of books, had no right to listen to music or the radio and were naturally cut off from television programmes”. (185)

Any discussion within the PMOI was for a single purpose:

convince doubters and establish a unanimity of thought:

“It is a tradition of the Mojahedin to hold open discussions on sensitive current issues, lasting hours, days or weeks, depending on the subject. At the end, a common point of view was created”. (186)

Rajavi the Guru

Mitra Yusufi, today a refugee in Sweden, lived for many years in the movement’s midst. She bears witness in a very informative way to how the system worked:

“We were moved to Paris. Not speaking French, I ‘stayed inside the community. It was like a sect. We spoke with special words, since the MKO had created its own vocabulary which had no relationship with the outside.

They gave us leadership lessons, or lessons about Rajavi. All that was positive came from him and all negative things that happened were results of a poor relationship of the individual to the leadership. Here are some of the slogans: ‘Negative: try to resolve problems with your own capacities, with your own strength; positive: use the ability of the leadership to resolve the problem: accept the leadership’s power. In connection with the leadership you become whole. Alone you cannot find God, but you can do it through good relations with the leadership. If you are alone, far from

God, then you are a masochist. But, if you choose the leadership as your guide, you are free immediately and all your problems are solved’.

These are the formulae drawn from the courses we had to take inside the movement. Decoded, they mean that there was no salvation without Rajavi.

In our religion, Shi’ia Islam, we celebrate the hidden Imam. We are supposed to sing the praises of our great, historic leaders of the faith. And we added Massoud and Maryam to the list we worshipped”. (187)

After his failure as a war Chief, Massoud Rajavi took on his new role as Chief of a “Church”. By creating it, he became its natural guru.

The “Master” of the PMOI, to almost all Moslems, found himself in a clear position of blasphemy:

“Mani and Eskanari add that traditional Islamic culture was barred from this closed world. In the movement, which was Moslem in principle, the instructions of Rajavi made it obligatory for his name and that of his wife to be praised during religious festivals. It was, therefore, his name and Maryam’s that were cried out after the act of faith, the Prayer for the Prophet and for the 12 Imams. It was as if their two names had joined the list of infallible guides”. (188)

There was no question of going beyond the imposed guidelines.

As Rajavi had said, “The end justifies the means”.

The farce had no limits and the dissidents cited above are still blinded to the extremes in which they participated. Because, now we were to find that Massoud Rajavi would claim direct contact with God:

“Everybody says that Rajavi often presented himself as directly inspired by God. They insist the he would take the floor at political meetings in claiming: ‘He whom you know has come to me in dreams. He has shown me your intimate beds and this is what He revealed...’. Sometimes Maryam Rajavi would follow, adding in a tone of utter conviction: “There are many things he cannot speak of.. . He cannot reveal everything...”. (190)

All these methods were very effective to subjugate the unhappy men and women who had fallen in the web of the Rajavi couple.

CHAPTER 20

An Army of Ants

There was no way to escape the “sect”. Some, in spite of pressure, managed to keep a distance and they dare now to speak out. They are risking their lives. This is due to the PMOI’s very strong culture of death, which only further proves how aberrant its world has become.

Liberation presents it this way: “The leadership of the People’s Mojahedin, the once Marxist organization which has lost its bearing and become a sect, has, also intensified the death wish of its militants. It could do this because the enforced military discipline is total. The rare party dissidents, those who have been able to escape, tell of the separation of husbands from wives, children from parents”. (191)

These revelations are hardly helpful to the PMOI. For it to survive, it must constantly recruit new militants. As is their wont, when it is difficult to deny that there have been desertions from its ranks, the Mojahedin put the fault on . . .the dissidents themselves!

They state:

“The People’s Mojahedin Organisation is a living being. New individuals and groups are joining the organization every day while on other days some, for reasons that are unique and understandable given their personal behaviour, are sent away or leave voluntarily. These cases are the result of an inability to tolerate the difficult conditions of the struggle against the unprecedented religious Fascism, unknown in recent Iranian history “. (192)

Let those- who having believed in and given their all for the PMOI, who came to feel that they had been betrayed and manipulated — beware. Their old friends call them supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini, collaborators, sellouts and spies, when they are not seen as compulsive liars and insane.

Exiled in Norway, Hassan Khalaj experienced martyrdom before escaping the organization's claws:

“The Mojahedin constantly talked about democracy, but in the camp I was in there was none. There were people who did not want to stay there. They were subjected to intense pressure and were even beaten. Morteza Yussefi, could not physically keep up

with the training, was exhausted and wanted to stop. While he slept, he was beaten with clubs. There was a terrible atmosphere. I asked questions, but they only answered that I had no right to know the answers. This was the beginning of my rethinking of what I was living through. Whoever protested anything was called a spy for the regime. Since I continued to ask questions, they accused me of being an agent provocateur for the Iranian Secret Police. They tortured me and practiced sleep deprivation...” (193)

Hassan, like all those who defected from the PMOI were publicly accused of being traitors. Victims of mudslinging, discredited, they were branded as “agents of the mullahs’ regime”. This was the limit, given that we know these targeted individuals having given their best to the organization were now being persecuted by their ex-comrades. The ultra-Left groups know the jargon well. They know how to use it to portray the executioner as the victim and to consign the real victim to infamy.

As Francis Guilbert wrote about Cambodia, tragically crucified by the Khmers Rouges:

“Through this journey to the heart of the Pol Pot system, we can see better how the Party ensured the docility of its personnel through increasing pressure on them, investigations and self criticism sessions . . . When he [the hero of Guilbert’s story] sees the torturers turn the situation in their own favour by portraying their victims as criminals, he rebels”. (194)

In the thought of the People’s Mojahedin, these desertions were even more unacceptable since, according to them, there is no alternative to the PMOI. She or he who did not accept, body and soul, the truths as preached by Rajavi automatically had to be agents of the Teheran regime:

“There is no fighting force competing with the Mojahedin on the Iranian political scene today... This has been true for many years. It is therefore clear that anyone in the Mojahedin who does not participate in the war of liberation against the mullahs launched by the Mojahedin must confess their inability to accept armed struggle against the mullahs.

The first question such an individual must face is: what strategy is the most effective and what other political organization provides this option?... There is no other strategy and no other organization The armed resistance is the last recourse against the mullahs ‘regime after all the other means proved futile... [F]rom the political point of

view, the individual who has left us must have a political alternative along lines which, unfortunately, are nonexistent". (195)

After them, the deluge, or rather the desert that awaits the so-called traitors. They have no present or past.

This is, indeed, a very short term approach for an organization which claims that there is no salvation outside of itself. Its opponents — like the Fedais Organisation of the Iranian People - bluntly attack this way of seeing and thinking. This is especially so since they open the Gates of Hell:

“Concerning democratic freedoms, the sect has not yet accepted any other current of thought or any other identity but its own. In its small world and its international relations, everything is in place to punish its opponents. Prison, torture, secret executions, and dozens of other violations are common and in regular use by them against their ideological opponents. At this end of the 20th Century, this is a blot on all humanity”. (196)

“The New Men”

Before taking power in Teheran, it is necessary to recreate a new “man renewed by the revolution”. This is a mirage that all the most totalitarian regimes have made their main goal. From Hitler’s Nazis to Stalin’s Communists, they all put forward this illusion of the “new man”.

For the PMOI, it is essential constantly to stimulate the bravery and fighting spirit of their members. While celebrating the Death Cult, they exult in sacrifice. Yet the People’s Mojahedin used every opportunity to show possibly doubting militants what awaited them if they ever went back to Iran:

“In their Baghdad Headquarters, the People’s Mojahedin have a private museum. It is a museum of death and sacrifice. On the walls, colour photographs show tortured bodies, some hanging from gallows or construction cranes. Behind the display windows are photos of hundreds of martyrs. To one side, things that belonged to the dead: a pendant, a pair of binoculars, eyeglasses, a handkerchief, a string of beads, poems, a goodbye letter in which the deceased declared that he never doubted the rightness of his struggle and even a Koran with a bullet hole.

Upstairs, there is a Madame Tussaud’s museum of horror, with wax people tied to execution posts, frozen in the moment of terror before they were shot. In one picture,

we can see the body of a woman —Ashraf, Massoud Rajavi's first wife — killed in February 1982 during a siege of her house in Teheran". (197)

On the military front, they faced the Pasdaran, the Guardians of the Revolution. On the internal front, there is always the enemy within: the "coward" who is only waiting for a chance to leave the Rajavi couple. For this particular enemy, it was necessary to hunt him down in the movement's ranks. Mao showed the way:

"After the armed enemies are wiped out, there will still be... enemies; those who will not miss a chance to carry out a fight to the death with us. We must never underestimate them. If we do not see and do not understand the problem in this way by now, we will commit a very serious mistake". (198)

Why then be surprised if other exiled opposition groups, frightened by this form of paranoia, have taken their distance from the PMOI? Above all, they fight against their claim to represent the Iranian people. The Fedais Organisation of the Iranian People is among the most outspoken:

"If the creation of this 'Democratic' Islamic Republic is based on current needs, namely the changes and developments in society, it should be emphasised that its democratic 'club' has been already used to put down its opponents and will be used again. What shall we believe? We think the Democratic' Islamic Republic has no basis and is only a simple, false advertisement. It is as if someone claimed to be able to control the Earth's movement around the Sun...

Basing the analysis of the activities and the documents public- shed by this sect, and in the view of all supporters of freedom, a 'Democratic Islamic Republic' in Iran's current situation can only make the situation worse and increase the repression and massacre of our people: nothing more. For this sect, the need for liberty, democracy and the right of free assembly make no sense.

In other words, the 'knights' who are betraying our country have, beginning a long time ago, abandoned the people". (199)

Having lost its way, without achieving its goals, the PMOI ended up becoming "something else". Even if the initiative appears shocking, it is, in fact, a process of mutation widespread among leftist groups. History especially that of the Second World War, is full of examples of Socialist and Communist leaders who gave up their basic ideals and joined the totalitarian movements. If we only consider Jacques Doriot, one of the most prominent leaders of the French Communist Party during the

early Thirties, the record shows that he became one of the most passionate supporters of collaboration with the Italian Fascists and then the Nazi occupiers.

In the case of its transformation from a revolutionary combat group on the ultra Left, the People's Mojahedin have become a sect serving the personality cult of a particular man and woman:

“Rajavi, during his ‘cultural revolution’, liked repeating: ‘I will make new men; give me all you own, walk on my legs and speak with my tongue “.

That revolution ran into growing resistance, especially after Massoud Rajavi married Maryam in 1985... About 600 militants left the movement in protest of the rule on ‘enforced divorce’. Rajavi had them arrested and many were imprisoned”. (200)

A Strange Revolution

The wind has shifted and events have gone on inside the PMOI to turn it into something very far from what it pretends to be in its hidden dialectics. Even the original founders would have trouble recognising an undertaking that only serves personal needs.

Their old ideological friends need not be surprised since this type of group already contains the seeds of its own unorthodox changes. Even Mao justifies this evolution:

“The circumstances are in perpetual change and, if our ideas are to adapt to new conditions, we must learn. Even those who know Marxism well and have a relatively strong proletarian stance must continue learning, taking in what is new and studying new problems”. (201)

The Mojahedin went even further and the disciple has overtaken his Chinese Master:

“Mani's disappointment deepened when Rajavi started the ‘second ideological revolution’ in 1986. During this, he imposed a new organisation on the movement and a ‘new culture’ which were heavy burdens for the membership. ‘He dissolved the Central Committee and all its members became simple militants’. Then he started this strange innovation: obligatory divorce for members. He called marriage a ‘form of slavery’. Rapavi thought that family life weakened his people's devotion to the organisation when they should be completely devoted to the movement and to himself”. (202)

This could only set off strong feelings and anger. Yet, the equation is simple: bow your head and accept without discussion or leave!

There was no place for the lukewarm. There had to be only the committed and the fanatics.

Le Monde's journalist, Mouna Naim, a major specialist on the issue, wrote:

“Their leader, Maryam Rajavi, worshiped in the North Korean style, poses as the Revolutionary Woman and has already been proclaimed as the ‘future President of Iran’. They call themselves democrats, but former members who succeeded in getting out of their grasp, tell of an organisation within which an iron discipline is imposed and all dissent is severely punished”. (203)

Everything was in place to demand the supreme sacrifice from everyone, as Jean-Pierre Perrin reported in Liberation:

“The Passion, the cult of sacrifice pushed to its paroxysm, goes hand in hand with the god-like status given Maryam, the Chief Warrior Goddess who commands the armed wing of the Mojahedin and has been named as ‘future President of Iran’. In the movement's politico-religious gibberish, Massoud Rajavi's wife is the incarnation of the perfect woman: the absolute role model. She is one who also consoles and comforts. When she appears, the militants shout, ‘Maryam, Sun of the Revolution, you will lead us to Teheran’. Her arrest was seen as sacrilege. That was why the militants made the supreme sacrifice”. (204)

The circle is closed.

CHAPTER 21

The Maryam Cult

As we have already seen, the People's Mojahedin have given women a priority role in their organisation. This is confirmed by Agence France Presse:

“The People's Mojahedin group, which was the target for a major police operation Tuesday in the Paris region, is the main armed opposition to the Iranian regime. Its leadership is made up largely of women.

This organisation, directed by Massoud Rajavi, whose wife Maryam is designated as the ‘future President of Iran’, established a Council of Direction in August 1993. It is made up of 24 women.

Moreover, women are half the troops in the National Liberation Army of Iran (NLAI), the armed wing of the Mojahedin. Maryam Rajavi is the Deputy Commander in Chief.

Until now, the sect led by Maryam and Massoud Rajavi has followed a process of several ‘mutations’. The last ‘leap’ in the organisation's development is marked by the perceived incompetence of men to hold posts in the direction. With the exception, of course, of Massoud Rajavi! The sect's direction must be done by women and, surely, the men around Rajavi have to obey and accept them. Otherwise, they are jailed and tortured”. (205)

This is a strategy based on the classic model of ‘Divide and Conquer’. However, the role of women in revolutionary movements on the Left has been quite clearly defined by the major spokesmen for Marxist-Leninist ideology. Thus, once again, Mao Tse Tung gives his advice on the issue:

“Of primary importance in building the great socialist society is to lead the mass of women to participate in productive activities. The principle of “equal salary for equal work” must be applied in production. Real equality of men and women is only achievable through the process of the socialist transformation of all of society”. (206)

However PMOI's dissidents — the female dissidents especially — show us a vision that owes nothing to the romantic mythology of the proletarian revolution:

“Moslems who joined were trying to flee the fundamentalist and fanatical interpretations of Islam, especially those concerning the status of women. In their struggle, it was never their aim to be separated from men. If they joined the Mojahedin, it was to fight against the male chauvinist domination of the clerical regime. Unfortunately, they found themselves in a misogynist movement, this time exercised by the Leader himself. Whether or not they were conscious of their rights as women or human beings, including the right to love, to choose, and to freely decide their fate, they were doubly robbed and abused.

I have always asked myself why Rajavi needed to be surrounded by women. It took me a long time to understand that they were, for him, a fortress against the men. Thanks to these women, he could dominate the males and force them to obey him and accept his status as Imam. They were also a barrier against any risk of rebellion or insurrection in the ranks.

To humiliate the men of the organisation even more, he forced them to worship his wife Maryam and even to bow down before her...

For Rajavi and his followers, competence did not have the same meaning as in the dictionary. It was measured by the degree of obsequiousness and servility...

Is the Mojahedin’s Chief, as he pretends, a fervent defender of women’s rights? The answer is negative; since the organisation’s women are deprived of their basic right to choose their male partner and to have children”. (207)

One woman has escaped this sad fate. She is the one who is the object of a cult of personality as demented as that of her husband. She represents for the PMOI’s membership the ideal woman, the model: Maryam Rajavi.

The Terrorist Madonna

Marianne investigated this phenomenon:

–“This woman, with her emerald eyes and so sweet a smile, is a pathological ‘case’. Withdrawn, secretive, unburdened by too low an opinion of herself, Maryam Rajavi, the Mistress and Muse of the People’s Mojahedin, is a surprise for the rare visitors she deigns to receive in Auvers-sur-Seine. With her hair always hidden under her Islamic scarf, the person whom the militants call the ‘Sun of the Revolution’ is a consummate user of political slogans and jargon. Denouncing the obscurantism of the mullahs in

power in Teheran, she presents her organisation as a democratic model along Western lines preaching moderate Islam, which includes women's rights. Of course, this position is at the opposite extreme from the Islamist-Marxism, in Red and Green, which never wavered throughout their years of struggle.

Her hagiographers add that Maryam Azdanlou, trained as an engineer, was heroic in her opposition to the Shah. She lost her first sister in the Savak's prisons — and then rose up against the Islamic Republic. She was then the wife of one of Massoud's lieutenants, with whom she had a daughter who is now 21. Her official biography says nothing about this union. Rather it emphasises Maryam's 'sense of organisation' which rocketed her in only a few years to the head of the movement, after her exile in France in 1982. It was, however, only in 1986 that she became a living legend, when her second marriage, this time with Massoud Rajavi, the Mojahedin's Chief, took place. It was a question of silencing the more puritanical militants. The matter was presented as 'one of the most important revolutionary and ideological decisions ever taken by the Mojahedin'. Thus, Allah was great!

Since then, Maryam would be the focus of all the spotlights, worshiped as the Madonna of the martyrs... 'Co-leader' of the organisation in 1985, she became, four years later, its Secretary General. She was also nominated to the position of 'Commander- in-Chief' of the National Liberation Army, a force estimated at 10,000 troops.

These functions, which she gave up to become 'the future President of Iran' in 1993, were voted by the National Council, the People's Mojahedin's political front.

At the same time, she joined her husband in his Iraqi sanctuary. She led military parades a few kilometres from the Iranian border". (208)

But for her husband, Massoud Rajavi, this was not his first marriage. The heart has its purposes that reason does not know, goes the popular saying:

"His wife, Ashraf, remained in Teheran in 1982 where she would be killed by the Revolutionary Guardians. Their child was kidnapped. Rajavi quickly married Bani Sadr's eighteen year old daughter. Two years later, the men did not see eye to eye anymore. Divorce was inevitable.

Rajavi fell in love again. He fell for Maryam Azdanlou, the wife of one of his lieutenants. This kind of moral turpitude is not tolerated in a party that mixes Islam and Marxism. The movement preached self-sacrifice and Puritanism, it was not acceptable for a man to shake hands with a woman. Thus, it was important to present

the lovers' marriage as a revolutionary act. As stated, it was 'one of the most important revolutionary and ideological decisions ever taken by the Mojahedin'. Even the betrayed former husband accepted this and congratulated the newly weds. The spiral into a sect went on. The cult of personality exploded". (209)

An Irresistible Rise

Enjoying being invited to mass meetings, aggressively cultivating contacts with feminist movements in Europe and America — who overlooked the eternal scarf of the personality they met — Maryam Rajavi used all the cosmetic tricks of the PMOI to advertise the organisation's struggle.

Figaro reported:

"Her return to France in the beginning of 2003 alerted the DST. Flanked by senior officials, Maryam Rajavi had mysteriously left Iraq to return to Auvers-sur-Oise. This was a worrying decision for those who for almost thirty years were watching this woman, sometimes a seductive Ambassadress, sometimes an implacable fighter. She was armed all too often with false papers and borrowed names to pursue 'the armed struggle'. Between the democratic façade and the life and death struggle against the Iranian regime, Maryam Rajavi's history is bonded to that of her organisation...

For Maryam, the time had come for diplomacy. In 1994, she was photographed with Abbé Pierre, among other celebrities, without ever respecting the duty of political silence which she had accepted on entering France. Yet, the militant is never far from the diplomat: back from Iraq in 1998, she addressed the NLA fighters, "The resistance is on the right tracks toward overthrowing the mullahs' regime ". In June 1998, an attack on the main law courts in Teheran, claimed by the Mojahedin, left several civilian victims in its wake!

Five years later, the changes in the Iraqi Context forced the 'future President' to return to France, only to be arrested and charges with possible crimes. This was a vision that, according to Western intelligence services, her worshipers could not accept. She was the object of their 'cult of personality'. (210)

Her rise was irresistible.

For Western specialists, Mrs Rajavi fools no one.

Liberation underlined the contradictions: 'In Auvers-sur-Oise, some years ago, they whispered to us, just before the interview:

'Above all do not shake hands with Maryam Rajavi'. Whether in France or Iraq, men could not greet her except from a distance: she was the Mojahedin's 'Sun of the Revolution'. The opposition Iranian woman may well denounce the mullahs' obscurantism, present her organisation as one dedicated to Western-style democracy, for freedom and modernity, and preach an alternative Islam that is compatible with women's rights, But her attitude shows nothing of her real priorities or plans.

She preaches 'freedom of dress' for women, but their militants are never seen in anything but severe raincoats, and the Islamic scarf. She is never without this costume, but does wear bright colours: but this coquettish touch is also acceptable in Teheran. Distant, secretive, listening only to herself, her face frozen in a permanent smile which tells nothing of her real personality, Maryam Rajavi remains an enigma. She never opens up, always refusing to meet with journalists.

Now aged 50, she has for twenty years been the incarnation of the movement. How did she conquer this party. which preached a Marxist-leaning Islam, without the clerics and was heroic in the armed struggle against the Shah and went On to dare to oppose Ayatollah Khomeini's seizure of power? How has she turned it into a politico-religious sect completely devoted to the Rajavi couple, each representing God on Earth?

It was in 1985 that Maryam Azdanlou began to be heard of. A metallurgical engineer, from a modest background, she was merely the wife of one of Massoud's lieutenants. Suddenly, she married the Chief. Most Iranians find her quite beautiful. But the bitter pill of divorce and remarriage had to be swallowed by a membership marked by exceptional Puritanism. Thus, their marriage was presented as a kind of mystical union, "one of the most important revolutionary and ideological decisions ever taken by the Mojahedin". Even the rejected husband congratulated the newly weds.

On the subject of the marriage, the views of the great classical singer, Marzieh, who sings Omar Khayyam, Hafez and Rumi have a special interest. The diva joined the organisation in 1994, literally fascinated by Maryam, whose friend she became: 'It

was she who dared choose her own husband, design her own wedding, and recite the texts that bind the couple together. This had never had happened in human history. Before these responsibilities were the man's...’.

Throughout this entire period, in a sort of insult to the Islamic Republic, where women were marginalised, she placed women in all the command positions. This inversion of Islamic values would be amusing, were it not organised and commanded within a strict sectarianism: the will to organise the exact opposition of what the enemy does: ‘In opposition to the rule of the mullahs with its absolute male domination, the Iranian resistance is directed, commanded and led essentially by our women.’ she made clear. We see that in the Central Committee made up exclusively of 24 women since 1993. It is also evident in the Liberation Army in which women are 30 per cent of the force, but more than 50 per cent of the officer corps”. (211)

“A New Epic Exploit”

With wry humour, sometimes a bit cutting, Jean Gueyras tells the story of Mrs Azdanlou, the new Mrs Rajavi. The most astounding concerns the jumble of embarrassed mantras served up to the membership. After all, they had to be convinced that, in the end, the newlyweds had no choice but to sacrifice themselves for the movement by marrying.

It seems unbelievable that this childish manoeuvre had any impact at all. But “the bigger the lie...”! He writes:

“Hidden away in his country bunker in Auvers-sur-Oise, Mr Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) has mastered the art of allying the useful with the pleasurable. He sugar coats his decisions, even those about his private life, with politico-ideological statements of considerable grandiloquence. Thus, in October 1982, to justify his marriage to Firouzeh Bani Sadr, daughter of the former President of the Islamic Republic only eight months after the tragic death of his first wife, Ashraf Rab’i (killed on 8 February 1982 by the Pasdaran); he published a joint bulletin of the PMOI’s Politburo and Central Committee in which his marriage was presented as ‘one of the most important revolutionary decisions ever taken by the Mojahedin’ and as an initiative which would help consolidate the unity of the Iranian nation’.

The 'historic event', however, did not stand up to the test of time and the differences that developed later between Mr Bani Sadr and his son-in-law. On this last 22 February, Mr Rajavi announced 'to his great regret' that, after 7 months of separation, Mrs Firouzeh Bani Sadr had had a religious divorce pronounced with his agreement, given in July 1984. The Chief of the Mojahedin rapidly recovered from the shock caused by this separation and has just published his decision to marry again, this time Mrs Maryam Azdanlou, a long term Mojahid militant whom he had personally promoted on last February eighth — the anniversary of the death of his first wife, Ashraf Rab'i — to the rank of co-leader of the organisation.

Normally, such a decision should not have caused any waves in the Mojahedin's Big Family, but the matter is complicated by the fact that Mrs Azdanlou was the legal wife of Mehdi Abrichamchi, "Number 4" in the sixty-odd members of the organisation's hierarchy. Once again, the sixty-odd members of the Politburo and Central Committee rushed to explain why Mr Rajavi — 'Our Great Teacher, of whom we all have the honour to be students' — had been led to consider marriage with... the wife of one of his closest collaborators.

In a rather fuzzy-styled document of 14 pages, the members of the organisation's governing bodies explain, first of all, that Mrs Azdanlou has been promoted co-leader 'on an equal level with Mr Rajavi'. This was done in the praiseworthy desire to better advance 'women's liberation', a long term plan of the Mojahedin Chief. It was, therefore, necessary, affirm the signatories with the greatest solemnity, to marry Massoud and Maryam. This was done to prevent 'women's liberation' from being relegated to the status of 'a simple bourgeois formula'. The Politburo and Central Committee members, however, do not want to create a precedent. They warn 'the Mojahedin brothers and sisters' against following this example as a general practise. They recommend it only as 'an exceptional case'.

Now it was time to deal with the tragic-comic case of Mr Abrichamchi, who had suddenly become a burdensome husband and a real weight on the conscience of the movement's leaders. These latter hint that, on 27 January, they had simply forgotten about him in naming his wife Maiyam to the organisation's highest position. It was only afterwards, they claim, that they realised that Mrs Azdanlou's promotion involved the 'revolutionary and ideological necessity' of a marriage between Maryam and Massoud. Consequently, there had to be a divorce between Maryam and Mehdi. If we are to believe the signers of this astonishing document, this final obstacle was

overcome due to the 'heroic' attitude of the couple, who voluntarily decided to separate, despite the contrary advice of Mr Massoud Rajavi. The Chief, 'inspired by his own personal, human and moral values' did not wish to break up their family.

There was a happy ending: the co-leaders of the PMOI were legally married in June, following the Prophet Mohamed's example. He, the document recalls, 'married the wife of his adopted son'. Mr Massoud Rajavi had, therefore, accomplished 'a new exploit which represents a qualitative leap forward, transcending all the achievements of the Mojahedin'. As to the rejected husband, he consoled himself in 'thanking God for having permitted [him] to participate in such a brilliant ideological decision'." (212)

Beyond these pompous and hollow declarations lurked the unhappy reality: the family had become a target for the PMOI. This would lead to intense suffering among its women and innocent children whose loved ones had made bad choices.

CHAPTER 22/Deconstructing the Couple

“Family, I hate you”. This citation from André Gide, the French author and 1947 Nobel Laureate can be described, with no exaggeration at all, as Massoud Rajavi’s motto. After all, the People’s Mojahedin sacrificed everything for their revolution.

In order for the individual to give himself up body and soul to the cause, the PMOI intervened directly in its militants’ daily lives. This was to enforce the arbitrary decisions of the ‘Great Teacher’.

As Figaro reported:

“Founded on the cult of its spiritual leader, Massoud Rajavi and his wife, Maryam, the Mojahedin organisation has often been compared to a sect by former members, forced to divorce and break with their family to join the ranks of fighters”. (213)

Mitra Yusufi, a long term member of the PMOI, and a victim of this policy of enforced divorce, breaks the silence:

“I traveled a long road. I underwent a real brainwashing and I have to be alert all the time.

The Iranian people detest Rajavi and I hate him. My story is simple. I was a young newlywed when it all started. My husband was a popular man; since he had played for the Iranian National Football team. This was the team that qualified for the World Championship in 1978 and played in Argentina. We were living in England when the revolution happened.

We returned to Iran before going to the United States. In the Eighties, we had heard bad news about things that happened to our friends. In fact, at the time, we were very cut off from the realities of Iranian society. Rajavi wanted to use my husband’s name. We agreed and we were moved to Greece to organise the movement.

When Rajavi, after his divorce from Bani Sadr’s daughter married his comrade’s wife, Maryam, we were shocked. My husband then took a strong position, saying that you cannot take another’s wife. Two days later, though, they convinced us of the opposite. We were such fools...”. (214)

Nadere Afshari also lived inside the Mojahedin. She knows the reality:

“Rajavi used the family institution as an instrument at the service of his own power. To keep the men in the organisation, he forced them to marry. To do this, he used women as bait and ‘gave’ them to his most docile servants. Yet, at the slightest sign of disobedience, he took away their wives. Women were, therefore, objects passed from hand to hand.

Thus, a docile woman like Atefeh, who had the rank of Major, was forced to divorce four times, on the personal orders of Rajavi. Her comrade, Mahboubeh Jamshidi, divorced and remarried at least three times.

Rajavi considers the family as an integral cell in his organisation. He, therefore, feels free to intervene in the marital relations of members against their own will. The truth is that he dislikes the family which always posed a problem for his ‘regime’. This was for a very good reason: it is very difficult to keep ‘the light of love for the Leader’ burning bright.

From 1991 on, marriage changed its meaning. It became a barrier which kept the organisation’s members from loving their Leader”. (215)

A third defector states:

“At this time, Rajavi also imposed on the leadership a fixed ceremony at the beginning of meetings: everyone had to place his hands on the table to make sure that no one was wearing a wedding ring, which he called ‘a slave ring’.” (216)

Deconstructing the Family

Of course, the PMOI defended itself. The impact of these statements on its internal practices on international public opinion created a very negative impression. The National Resistance Council wrote, in its response to the American accusations:

“Further on, they claim that the Mojahedin had forced couples in Iraq to divorce and send their children to Europe and the United States. Here, it must be taken into account that the individuals who wrote this report were repeating, word for word, the allegations used by the Iranian regime and by the survivors of the Shah regime.

The National Liberation Army of Iran is based in the territory of a country where family life in the camps became impossible during the unprecedented bombardments of the Gulf War and thereafter, because of the international embargo.

During the bombings, families, voluntarily and sometimes in writing, asked the organization for assistance in sending their children to Europe and the United States to live with their parents or our supporters. Despite many obstacles and risks, the movement spent millions of dollars to move these children to safe places. The alternative would have been accepting the possibility of numerous victims among them “. (217)

The facts, however, are stubborn and the eyewitness reports are very precise:

‘in the terms of the ‘Second Ideological Revolution’, children had to be separated from their families and sent abroad. Rajavi made sure personally that this order was carried out case by case, finding militants or family members living in Europe or the United States who could take the children in.

In the absence of family abroad, the children were sent to orphanages or special schools established by the Mojahedin in Germany and the Netherlands. More than 500 children were sent abroad this way: they were handed over to the organisation during a special ceremony in which the parents recited a text affirming: ‘I give my child to Massoud and Maryam’.” (218)

Yet the PMOE justified itself by comparison with others:

“Moreover, this policy is not without precedent. During the Second World War, children were separated from their families and sent outside London during the bombings. If this way of doing things is unacceptable, the State Department should have published a declaration criticising Winston Churchill “. (219)

The People’s Mojahedin Organisation of Iran could have cited two other 20th Century precedents, ones more troubling indeed.

During 1936-37, the evacuation of the children of Spanish Republicans fighting Franco’s Nationalists is one. To protect them from the bombings which struck some cities very hard, especially Madrid, young girls and boys were sent by convoy to the Soviet Union. But once the Popular Front Government was swept aside and taken over by the Communists, these kids stayed in the USSR for an orthodox Marxist-Leninist education.

The same scenario took place a few years later in Greece, during the civil war that immediately followed World War II. There again, children kidnapped for the stated motive of putting them out of harm's way remained in the USSR.

Kidnapping could also take place at home. The Hitler youth stole the minds and loyalties of children, turning them against their teachers and even their parents. The "Racially pure" S.S. breeding facilities were only a continuation of kidnap, but with the result of bringing thousands of parentless children into post-war Germany.

Uprooted, far from their country and cut off from their culture, these children became wanderers without identity. They only had that given them by the movement or the organisation which took them in hand and led them where they wanted to for their own purposes.

For more than 20 years we know exactly how the PMOI has used these kids: easier to lead, because they are more docile than adults who have developed their critical faculties. This included abandoning them to their fate when times went bad:

"In Evin, the model prison of Iran, built by the ex-Shah, one section is completely devoted to the 'curables', who undergo a reeducation programme. There, we find a certain number of inmates who discarded their former masters, like Bani Sadr's ex-body guard. But the overwhelming majority are children. They are the ones the Mojahedin threw into the street fighting, without any military or political training at all. These kids (13-15 year olds) cracked, naturally. They turned against themselves".
(220)

Education and Propaganda

The People's Mojahedin like to advertise the high level of education of their members. They pretend that women and men bedecked with diplomas, because of their advanced education, could never be victims of propaganda. There is, however, an axiom that states: "The more an individual has had advanced education, the more impermeable he is to all forms of 'brainwashing'". This is rather simplistic, because there are many cases in which Intellectuals, scientists, even highly talented artists have easily given in to the totalitarian temptation.

How can one explain that a philosopher of the stature of Martin Heidegger could have joined the Nazi Party in Germany when it came to power in 1933. The author of

Being and Time had a rare intellect, which did not keep him from joining in one of the worst regimes to bloody the 20th Century.

On the other side of the political spectrum, Raymond Aron, in his *Opiate of the Intellectuals*, described the Communist Party as more of a “sect psychologically than a Universal Church”.

Communist education exists to eliminate all traces of individualism. The cult of the leaders is a symptom of brains having given up their critical faculties.

If not, how can we understand the positions taken by Aragon and Elsa Triolet and all the other French intellectuals who, even when presented with undeniable proof, continued to support Stalin’s Soviet Union?

Closer to our own time, members of the Solar Temple sect that made headlines by their collective suicide had generally been very successful students. Nonetheless, they chose this way to get to the Planet Sirius.

Certain held management posts at the highest levels, notably in Hydroquebec. This did not protect them from being prisoners of their own making in a tragic adventure that ended in death.

Moreover, the disciples of Jacques Vorilhon, aka Rael, a former sports reporter, who are very “officially” preparing Earth for “the return of the extra-terrestrials” include doctors who claim to have cloned at least one human being, even if they have never offered any scientific proof.

Having a graduate degree is not a shelter against an effective religious or political machine.

It is only necessary for a strong personality to imprint the mirage:

“Rajavi considers himself as the centre of the world. He is the representative of God on Earth, a kind of prophet or Imam. He is the hidden Imam so sacred to Shi’ia Moslems. He feels no need to provide a basis for his authority. He is the source of all legitimacy. People are classified according the distance that separates them from this source. The more they are close and obedient, the more they are considered good and just. It is this egocentrism that inspires Rajavi’s most insane statements”. (221)

A pretended contact with God serves in this case as the best means of muzzling all opposition. That is because the “Elect” get his orders from a higher level. Who, then, would dare question them and risk the charge of blasphemy?

Smashing the Private Sphere

In Iran especially, the family space is private and untouchable. No one has the right to interfere in this circle which is the fundamental basis of human organisation.

In taking control of the family, Rajavi breaks it without a very clear aim in mind. As Vladimir Volkoff describes it with exceptional insight:

“Disinformation and influence can only be practised on the basis of a certain mass of disinformed and influenced people. The individual, the family, professional groups can all be intoxicated, but not disinformed because they naturally secrete antibodies that fight lies because they prefer the truth, and fight madness by their respect for common sense.

On the contrary, once you reach a certain quantity, individuals become a crowd. Intellectually proletarianised (what-ever their educational level), they lose their conservative reflex and their mass loses its bearings — its anchor —, rolling like a ship in a storm from one side to the other. They are now carried by their own mass and weight, ready to submit to the manipulative techniques of reassuring experts”.

(222)

And all means are good, as Rajavi says over and over again. In effect, it involves cutting the individual off from his nurturing society and makes him marginal: a “different” kind of person reinforcing the impression of having been left out:

“At one time in my life, I begged for the organisation in Germany and Switzerland. I was very unhappy doing this, because I was forced to lie. Instead of telling people that we were raising money for arms purchases, we told them that the money was for the construction of homes for orphans. This way, we played on the goodwill of Westerners.

The truth was that Rajavi didn’t need the sums raised this way. He was getting enough money from the Arabs and from Saddam Hussein. He sent us out on the streets to dominate us more and to take away any feeling of independence. We had fallen into the trap because we were opposed to the Islamic Republic and wanted to fight it”.

(223)

We have seen these people for years in front of supermarkets and shopping centres and in the streets of our cities, collecting signatures and gifts for the ‘oppressed Iranian people’. Not a word was said about the ultimate destination of this money, not

a word about their own organisation. Some posters, unending begging for small sums slipped over by an old lady, filled with pity, who understood nothing at all about the cause, except that it seemed just.

Dozens of Europeans had their charity abused. It reached such a point that, in a fair number of cases, the police quietly asked the Mojahedin to leave public places and confiscated their propaganda materials.

This was propaganda which depended on a tempered and blooded war machine.

CHAPTER 23

Using the Media

The People's Mojahedin of Iran, as we have seen, are past masters in the manipulative arts. Like many far Left organizations, they know the gears that run the media. And they are very gifted at "smoke screening" reporters:

"For years, they continuously announced 'the Great Day', the unleashing of an insurrectional situation in Iran which would sweep away, under their direction, the Iranian regime. They practised a loud political and media activism, flooding press rooms with releases on their militants' exploits' and to denounce the abuses of the Iranian authorities. They are remarkably well organised and their ability to mobilise their sympathisers gives them the capacity to organise small protest demonstrations in Europe where they have refugee status. These take place every time that an Iranian leader sets foot on the soil of this or that country". (224)

Most editorial boards of the daily press and other publications were actually besieged. Under the cover of exclusive and first hand sources, the Mojahedin worked to maintain close personal relations with reporters in order to vector their propaganda. Unfortunately, this system really works, basically due to the defects of journalists. Permanently confronted with time constraints, too many editors take few pains to get to the bottom of things by checking the information and trying to see behind the curtain.

In this context, the trap closed on them.

In addition, the Mojahedin are superb lobbyists, "tracking" down political officials, deputies, senators, etc., to get a signature which is supposed to support the PMOI's fight and provide recognition to it as the only legitimate opposition:

"The Mojahedin conducted a public relations campaign among the Western press and among political personalities, looking for political support and financial reinforcement. Exploiting the West's dislike for the behaviour of the Iranian regime, the Mojahedin put themselves forward as the alternative. To achieve their goals, they claimed the support of the majority of Iranians". (225)

In their internal logic, Rajavi and his friends consider that they were a solid investment with whom it was evidently good to be on the best of terms: tomorrow they would be the masters of Iran:

“He called himself Afchine. Regularly, he telephoned our editorial staff to announce the ‘Great Evening’: the unleashing of an insurrectionary situation in Iran which would bring down the hated mullahs’ regime. The Mojahedin’s revolution was marching forward, he declared. Then there followed an avalanche of numbered press releases, exalting the ‘exploits’ of their militants and the sacrifices of their martyrs. For Auver-sur-Oise, the time was fast approaching..”. (226)

And let anyone beware who dared to go outside the credo officially put out by the organisation! Campaigns of ‘spontaneous protest’, in letters to the editor, in visits to the editorial offices to demand the punishment of ‘guilty’ journalists were organised right away. When there was not this kind of pressure, there were veiled threats directly by telephone.

The media were so important to the Mojahedin that they did not flinch from increasing their activities, often only in an advertising’ mode. This is a way of proceeding by using the basic outline of media manipulation that Professor Robert Mucchielli describes:

“The raw material that the media use come from several sources:

violent actions by small direct action groups who (with normal or unexpected allies set off wild cat strikes, attacks, demonstrations or proclamations, and various rural or urban guerrilla campaigns) who work within the national territory; news on direct actions from friendly combat groups outside the national territory; errors and missteps by the enemy: adverse propaganda, facts and statements by the authorities, their representatives and their allies”.

Many reporters have seen this on the ground: including events uniquely staged for the cameras.

The system has endless possibilities.

Creating News

Professor Robert Mucchielli completes his analysis:

“At the same time it is absurd to believe that the guerrillas of South America are the start of a general uprising. There will be no general uprising and the organisers of the revolution don’t need a general uprising. Guerrillas exist to create a climate that the media can exploit”. (227)

To be effective in creating news, it is essential to have an experienced team of communicators, convinced of the 'cause' and throwing all their energy into winning the battle of the press:

“The movement’s public relations were given to the National Council of the Iranian Resistance (NCIR), the Mojahedin’s political front, set up until this week in a complex of four villas in Auvers-sur-Oise.

Speaking several European languages, with the heavy use of fax, electronic mail, and telephone calls, a small group of leaders regularly denounce the regime of the Iranian ayatollahs and claim responsibility for terrorist attacks. The realities of the latter are often difficult to verify.

Every one of these PR specialists agrees on one point: the People’s Mojahedin and the NCIR are very popular in Iran, even though diplomats report the contrary from Teheran.

Outside of Iranian territory, the NCIR has won extraordinary success in its ability to mobilise several thousand refugees during official visits of the Iranian leadership in Europe or to demand the liberation of their emblematic leader in Paris. This perfectly tuned media machine has brought them considerable sympathy among British MPs, as well as in the European Parliament and the American Congress, which see the NCIR as a moderate alternative to the Islamic regime in Teheran”. (228)

It involves creating incidents in order, as Professor Muchielli explains, to isolate the enemy in the Western media landscape and to brand it with: “the impression given of its isolation and of public opinion’s condemnation of it, a fortiori, the condemnation of world public opinion”. (229)

“At the time, the PMOI did not hold back from operating outside Iran and Maryam Rajavi was well placed to know this. In April 1992, she was the Secretary General when, after an Iranian Air Force raid on Iraq, Iranian embassies and consulates in 9 countries (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, Sweden and Switzerland) were assaulted by the Mojahedin. This included attacks on individuals and vandalism”. (230)

‘World public opinion was influenced in the same way:

‘spontaneous demonstrations’ of solidarity with this or that revolutionary action broke out thousands of kilometers apart and all the world’s press reported it”. (231)

Dramatising simple situations, while distorting the facts to meet their own needs, the

Mojahedin express their demands, published in press releases designed to create pity among the good people who are media consumers. They warn local authorities by subtle threats against them. In brief, they act in Europe as if they are in a conquered country. Yet, as political refugees and foreigners, they should be, at least, held to their responsibility of political 'reserve':

staying away from public activities and declarations.

One example from recent events shows the PMOI's arrogance which it would never itself tolerate if it ever governed Iran:

"The National Council of the Iranian Resistance (NCIR) demands that Maryam Rajavi should be freed as soon as possible'. That is the reason for the hunger strike which has now grown to cover about 20 cities in Europe and the United States," declared Sunday Afchine Alavi, member of the NCIR's Commission for Foreign Affairs.

Massoud Rajavi's wife, leader of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran (PMOI) 'is not in good health and she has recently had surgery,' stated Mr Alavi to the Associated Press: 'We hold the French Government responsible for her health'. Maryam Rajavi and 10 others were placed in temporary detention during the night of Saturday to Sunday after they were charged for being 'a criminal association in relation with a terrorist undertaking' and 'financing terrorism'.

The number of hunger strikers on Sunday in Auvers-sur-Oise, PMOI's HQ, was more than 100', according to Afchine Alavi, who had himself stopped eating. The Prefecture of the Val d'Oise counted 47 men and 30 women who are on a hunger strike, compared with 40 the day before. Among the strikers, "ten have refused water", according to the Prefecture.

Forty protestors assembled in front of the gates of Dr Saleh Rajavi's home. A physician goes through them several times a day to check on their health and the firefighters have established a permanent rescue station inside the gates. Sunday, toward the end of the afternoon, six persons were victims of collapse, the Prefecture stated. Five of the women among the strikers refused any treatment, while a man, not participating in the strike, felt ill, no doubt because of the heat. He was taken to the hospital, according to the same source." (232)

A Highly Refined Practise

As real political agitators, the People's Mojahedin of Iran have used many pretexts to demonstrate in the streets of Western cities, screaming and gesticulating every time a senior Iranian official visits on mission or even when an Iranian football team comes to play in Europe.

“Several Iranian opponents were not permitted to cross the Franco-Belgium border and prevented from entering French territory when the Iran-United States match was about to played Sunday night in Lyon, Interior Ministry sources stated. These Iranians, coming from Germany and the Netherlands, whose number was not given, are linked to the opposition group, the People's Mojahedin, according to the same sources. They went on to point out that most of them had no tickets to the match and ‘did not meet the requirements for visiting France’. They were refused entry, because they represented a ‘threat to public order’.

Many among them, in two buses, then blocked the A3 1 motorway for an hour this afternoon on the border between France and Luxemburg at Dudelange, before departing without further incidents.

In Lyon, one of the Mojahedin spokespersons, Mohammad Mohadessin, accused the French authorities of working in cooperation with the Iranian authorities to prevent opponents from attending the Sunday night match.

During a press conference, they particularly cited the case of Moslem Eskandar Filabi, the wrestling champion who left Iran after 1979, who was refused entry into France for political reasons”. (233)

Their methods are well worked out and extend widely:

“Twelve Canadians of Iranian origin were stopped by the border police at Paris' Roissy-Charles de Gaulle airport. The French feared that they would create disorder during the visit to Paris of Iranian President Mohammed Khatami. They were returned to their country of origin on Tuesday morning, declared the Interior Ministry. The Canadian Embassy in Paris confirmed this, without giving any details.

‘We did nothing wrong. We were simply traveling to demonstrate democratically against the Khatami regime’, Esmat Ramazani, one of the twelve sent home, declared by telephone to the Associated Press. He complained of being molested by the French officials”. (234)

Everything is orchestrated with care.

“Several thousand Iranians (2,000 according to the police, 10,000 according to the organisers) demonstrated Wednesday... to protest against the visit to France of Iranian President Mohammad Khatami.

The demonstrators were answering a call from the National Council of the Iranian Resistance (NCIR) — of which the People’s Mojahedin is a member. They brandished posters carrying the slogan: ‘Down with Khatarni’, ‘Khatami out of France’, and ‘The Mullahs Don’t Represent the Iranian People; They Should be Expelled by the U.N.’.

Some among them also carried flags with the hammer and sickle, with, in the middle a submachine gun. ‘Khatarni Terrorist’, ‘Khatami Killer’, they chanted. These were slogans announced from the rostrum by the NCIR at the entry to the Hall of Human Rights. They were also protesting against the police operations against Iranian opposition sites on Wednesday morning in Paris and its suburbs. This led to more than 30 arrests for questioning and searches”. (235)

The Responsibility of Political Prudence

What would happen if the Basques separatists or the Northern Irish factions marched through the streets of Washington, Moscow or Rome? Certain governments have lost their patience, careful to preserve public order. This was especially so in France in 1999 when rumors of terrorist attacks began to circulate and the authorities were once again alarmed:

“A major police operation took place Wednesday in the Paris region against the Iranian opposition in exile just a few hours before the arrival in Paris of the Iranian Chief of State, Mohammad Khatami. ‘Threats of an attack’ were mentioned. Police sources emphasized that the operation was jointly led by the National Anti-Terrorist Division (DNAT, in its French acronym) and the Anti-Terrorist Section of the Criminal Brigade. Sixteen individuals were detained and 15 other opponents were arrested for criminal investigation in the Paris region.

The DNAT asked the Prosecuting Magistrates for the right to carry out preventive searches given the threats of terrorist attack concerning the Iranian President’s visit’, judicial sources confirmed.

These searches took place on the rue de Vaugirard, in ConflansSainte-Honorine and in Auvers-sur-Oise (Val d’Oise). For the moment, these searches have not allowed the confirmation of an eventual terrorist threat. These searches were carried out under

article 706.24 of the Criminal Code which permits the Prosecuting Magistrates, under existing anti-terrorist measures, to ask the Chief Judge of the Paris Criminal Court to authorise them.

Several dozen police officers, CRS (military anti-riot and anti-terror police), and the Mobile Gendarmerie Brigade took up position around the European HQ of the National Council of the Iranian Resistance (NCIR) in Auvers-sur-Oise, about 50 kilometres from Paris. The NCIR, an opposition organisation to the Teheran regime, is the political 'face' of the People's Mojahedin. This group carries out armed struggle against the Islamic regime from Iraq.

Like a fortress, the NCIR HQ includes several houses on the banks of the Oise River, surrounded by a wall and barbed wire. The opponents refused entry to the police forces, who had come to search the place and check the identities of those residing there. The police were acting under a search warrant.

Hashemi Farzin, a NCRI representative, denounced 'police brutality' and the fact that many in the Iranian opposition were refused entry into France in recent days. Massoud Rajavi, leader of the People's Mojahedin, wrote a letter to French President Jacques Chirac protesting against the police action, which, according to him 'had no legal justification'." (236)

At this time, the then-Interior Minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement set forth what was at stake and recalled some basic rules:

"Defending himself against any excessive zeal by the French police, he justified Wednesday the arrests of opposition Iranians given the necessity to avoid 'violent demonstrations' on the occasion of President Khatami's visit.

'Foreigners who benefit from France's hospitality must respect our laws', declared the Interior Minister as he left the Council of Ministers meeting. France's interests must be taken into account, including by foreigners who have asked for asylum on our territory', added Mr Chevenement.

The Minister of the Interior recalled the 'incidents' that took place during the football World Cup match between Iran and the United States in Lyon. They involved 'thousands of opposition members'. 'This must no occur again at the time of President Khatami's visit'. (237)

Germany was also not proof against street demonstrations by the People's Mojahedin: "President Khatami Monday began a visit to Germany under high security protection.

Berlin wants to avoid any extreme actions during the demonstrations of opponents to the Islamic Government.

Abroad, Mr Khatami must confront another opposition: the National Council of Iranian Resistance. This movement in exile organised a demonstration against the arrival of the Iranian President near the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. The demonstrators chanted many slogans against the Chief of State. The police counted about 7,000 participants. The organisers claimed 20,000, adding that 10,000 could not come because of measures taken by the German police. The police stated that they detained 50 persons for criminal enquiries and searched dozens of homes belonging to opposition members. The border guards prevented Iranians resident in other countries from entering Germany. Thirty Swiss members of the opposition had tried to enter Germany, according to the press release of the NCIR". (238)

When the responsibility of political reserve is so systematically flouted by the very people who benefit from residence papers in a host country which shelters them to save their lives, it is not astonishing that there would be police punishment for these repetitive violations.

CHAPTER 24

Low Profile

Little remains of the People's Mojahedin Organisation of Iran after the difficult Summer of 2003. They have been hit by a criminal judicial proceeding in France, where they have been officially designated a "terrorist group that is dangerous to public order". An official ban stops all NCIR activities in the United States and the European Union has no intention of lifting its condemnation of Saddam Hussein's former servants.

Deprived of its rear bases by the fall of the Baghdad tyrant, its militants are rotting away in camps under guard by the US Army.

The National Liberation Army is no more.

But, even more important, the European media are looking closely at them, underlining their contradictions and its sect-like nature. All the French newspapers are unanimous in describing the cult of personality, iron discipline, internal oppression that characterize the PMOI. It is impossible in these conditions to have easy entry, as in the past, to editorial offices and to solicit support statements from elected officials. Moreover, most of those who allowed their names to be used by the Mojahedin have kept carefully away from any statements or any petition supporting them now. These are friends who have "Gone With the Wind" when the wolf blows outside their doors: to combine Margaret Mitchell with the children's story about the wolf and the 3 little pigs:

"Today, Saddam Hussein's former guests have never kept a lower profile.. .The glory days of the People's Mojahedin seem gone forever. The organisation, supervised by the National Council of the Iranian Resistance in Auvers-sur-Oise recruited most of its fighters in days following the 1979 Revolution. From the outset, they based their support on an intense communications campaign, targeting Western media, and systematically denouncing the mullah's policies. "We are for democracy", insists Massoud Rajavi. But the nice words of the Mojahedin have disenchanted many of their supporters". (239)

The big danger for the PMOI is inside. The organisation is risking implosion which would be their death warrant. Its militants, cut off from their source, could start questioning the leadership. We can see that their powerful role is still there in the immolations. But criticism is increasing. What damage will it do?

Their Iranian political adversaries in the West are sharp tongued and they are leaning hard on the Mojahedin's contradictions:

“The Massoud and Maryam sect calls for creating another Islamic Republic. Their Islamic Republic is accompanied by the word ‘democratic’. They want to give Khomeini's office and now Khameni's post to Massoud Rajavi. Apart from the name, there is no difference between Khomeini's Islamic Republic and ‘democratic’ Islamic Republic of Massoud Rajavi. If, at least in words, the Islamic Republic's regime calls itself anti-imperialist, Rajavi's organisation feels no shame in now making public its dependence on imperialism and reaction. For this organisation, photos taken after thousands of intrigues with no matter what American Senator are claims to glory!” (240)

Contrary to their flat claims, the People's Mojahedin do not have the support of Iranians. They report a 65 per cent, solid support. This has no basis in fact. They now find themselves isolated without any hope of setting off a popular uprising inside Iran: “Iranians, including opponents to the regime, are hostile to the movement which carries the memory of a ‘terrorist organisation’ which, in addition, was assisted, financed and armed by Iran's worst enemy: Saddam Hussein's Iraq”. (241)

The day after the election of President Khatami in 1997, the Fedayin Organisation (Minority) stated the irony: they declared baldly that the Mojahedin were finished as a representative force:

“The Islamic Republic has not been embarrassed to publicise exaggerated figures from the ballot boxes. It mobilised all its efforts to misrepresent the relatively massive turnout, concluding that the people's vote was one of confidence in the system, in the velayat e-faghih (the leadership of the Supreme Religious Guide for Life) and the Islamic Republic. Other Islamists who dream of an Islamic democracy' (!) have taken initiatives in the opposite direction! These other islamists cannot bear any reality that runs against their desires, which themselves are completely contradicted by the facts. The Mojahedin Organisation refutes the relatively massive participation of the people in these elections. According to this group and the National Resistance Council they completely invented, if the State apparatus gave out such figures, it was to compete

with the Mojahedin and their President of the Republic. According to a survey made by the Mojahedin, two thirds of the people support the President of the Mojahedin's Republic, Mrs Maryam Rajavi.

Mojahedin analysts saw things simply that way! The Islamic Republic inflated the vote for its own President in order to compete with those voting for the Mojahedin! Obviously this kind of analysis, if this is an example of their work, is worthless and does not deserve our attention. They are so infantile that they are only for the Mojahedin and their worshipers.

In the thinking of the Mojahedin, any time Massoud or Maryam Rajavi get on an airplane or land somewhere, a new phase and a new step forward are beginning. The last trip of Mrs Maryam Rajavi 'near home soil' was thus translated into a new phase for the Mojahedin's paralysed armed forces.

Without this kind of analysis, how can the Mojahedin make their troops hope that the 'Planetary Hope' and 'the President of Iran' will lead them to Teheran? The Mojahedin and all the forces that want to take decisions for the people without consulting them and without giving any importance to their opinions will only fall into the shameful state in which they now find themselves. The Mojahedin boycotted the election and have activities designed only to overthrow the regime. Their analyses are not based on any knowledge of the existing situation and how to change it, but on their own situation and needs". (242)

The Beginning of the End

The long decline which seems irreversible can now be seen to be irrefutable as well. But, in the course of future months, of future years, the Mojahedin will keep a fragment of their ability to annoy. They can still break lives and mislead a youth which will suffer the damnation of believing in their promises. This will be so, even if very many Iranians now know what they are dealing with:

'This attachment to the home country and the absence of resentment toward a regime which pushed them into exile (giving them the opportunity to find success) also explains the scant success of the opposition in exile.

Only the People's Modjahedin mobilise a part of the youth in exile, especially in Europe. Yet, their sectarianism and their use of terrorism and armed action frighten the large majority of the diaspora'. (243)

The PMOI, naturally, protests, swears on its good faith and insists on the free will of its militants:

“It is impossible to imagine that the mass of Mojahedin or their supporters who live in the different cities of Europe, the United States or Asia could be forced to do anything.. .At the very least, the authors of the report suggest that the Mojahedin carry out... propaganda of such breadth that they hypnotise tens of thousands of their compatriots and lends, body and soul, and force them to come out for large scale demonstrations throughout the world.”. (244)

Hollow words indeed when held up to rigorous analysis:

“The Mojahedin are strange. They speak to no one. They don’t mix”, says Hamed Kadam, a shepherd in the Arab village of Beyukhara near Camp Ashraf. The armed opposition group to the Iranian regime also suffers from an extraordinary lack of credibility within the Iranian population, even if its leaders claim 65 per cent support in Iran.

Teheran’s youth (most supporters of a change in regime there) see the Mojahedin as a form of extremism that promotes sexual segregation, and make references to Communist values with a tinge of fundamentalism (their female fighters, without exception, wear the scarf).

In order to clean up its image in foreign countries, the organisation bought half pages of advertising in the American press last January, even getting 150 signatures of Congressmen. This media operation did not work in preventing the American military intervention in Iraq”. (245)

Without some dramatic intervening event, Maryam Rajavi has to face French justice. But where is her husband, Massoud? According to the Interlink Website, run by former members of the PMOI who broke with the movement and try to assist those who would do the same, Rajavi planned the worst possible fate for his people.

A Ray of Hope

“Iran-Interlink revealed last year a plan laid out by Massoud Rajavi if American forces attacked Iraq. This resulted in the arrival of ‘useful’ members of the Mojahedin in Europe: three hundred, according to estimates, and growing...

Rajavi anticipated perfectly the fact that the Mojahedin could not survive in Iraq without Saddam Hussein's support. Thus, he smuggled his most useful members to Europe to reconstruct the organisation in the West.

The other part of the plan was to abandon the other members in Iraq and use them as propaganda tools, carrying out suicide attacks against Iran. But the American bombing raids forced the Mojahedin to surrender and accept their own detention and disarmament." (246)

Supposing that the People's Mojahedin of Iran stop recruiting? Would those hundreds of militants who gave their existence to a lost cause continue despite this disaster?

Nadere Afshari knows quite well how Maryam and Massoud keep their followers in line:

"By the power of repeating the legends of Abraham and Ismena, as well as mystical poetry, the organisation's members, men and women, end up killing their own instincts and repressing their feelings. This is the way they establish a disciple-teacher relationship with Massoud and Maryam Rajavi. . . Massoud pretends to have a relationship with God and the Saints of Islam. He considers himself a Saint. He wants the members to believe that all who remain at his side will go to Paradise". (247)

How can we not complete this thesis without citing Chairman Mao Tse Tung one last time. He was an expert in manipulation, and in the science of alienating a whole nation:

"In what concerns us, whether it involves an individual, a party, an army or a school, I consider the lack of an enemy against us to be a bad thing. It means we are in league with the enemy. If we are attacked by the enemy it is a good thing because it proves that we have drawn a line of demarcation between ourselves and the enemy. If they attack us violently, in portraying us in the darkest colours and in denigrating what we do, that is even better. It proves not only that we have made a clear demarcation between the enemy and us, but have also won important successes in our work". (248)

Where will other members come from? From among those abandoned in the sands of Iraq without any place to turn to. They number less than 4,000 and could easily return to their home country. Figaro reports:

"From its own side, Iran has just officially announced the amnesty of the Mojahedin. 'The Iranian Government is ready to welcome them on its territory and pardon them', announced Abdollah Ramezanzadeh, spokesman for the Iranian Government". (249)

Meanwhile, children, the mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers, even sometimes abandoned spouses and children have taken the road home, moved by the hope to finally be reunited:

“Some three hundred families of Mojahedin members, recently arrived in Iraq, assembled in front of the Mojahedin’s offices in Baghdad to demand the liberation of their children from Rajavi’s organisation”. (250)

For the luckiest, perhaps the nightmare is ending.

The Mojahedin Expelled

During 2003, which, without doubt, would be the People’s Mojahedin’s year leading to the end of the road, the wheel of destiny did turn against Rajavi. The man saw the net tighten around him.

And his final destiny will probably be like that of this old ally:

Saddam Hussein. The latter was finally arrested on Saturday, 13 December 2003, hidden in a two square metre dug out: a rat hole in a modest house in Ad-Dour.

The Rais will now have to stand trial for his crimes. His accomplices are trembling.

This is all the more so for Rajavi. Press agencies reported in November-December 2003 that: “The Governing Council for the Iraqi Transition has decided to expel the remaining 4,000 members of the Iranian People’s Mojahedin in Iraq by the end of 2003. It considers it a ‘terrorist organisation’. The announcement reads:

“The Governing Council voted unanimously to expel by the end of the year the People’s Mojahedin present in Iraq because of their black history as a terrorist organisation”.

The Governing Council indicated that it had decided to ‘close down the movement’s offices and prevent its members from undertaking any activity prior to leaving’. It also decided to confiscate the arms and money of this organisation and create an indemnity account for the victims of the former fascist regime’, according to a press release. ‘The Iraqi individuals and institutions have the right to bring charges against this organisation for its crimes and demand damages from the funds which the organisation holds inside and outside the country’. (AFP, 9 November 2003)

For his part, Iraqi acting Vice President Mohammad Ali Abtahi explained the decision as one based on the role of the Mojahedin in the repression of Shi'ias and Kurds under Saddam Hussein". (AFP, 11 November 2003)

The question is one of international law and is difficult to resolve. Labeled terrorists by Iraq and the Americans who control

The country, the PMOI has few options.

A terrorism specialist thinks that: "The leaders of the PMOI have decreed what they call a phase of patience' and 'judicial mobilisation'. This is to add the help of lawyers in assisting the PMOI members obtaining political refugee status so that they can enter Europe legally.

By small groups of five or six, they move into host countries under the cover of charitable organisations. The PMOI is reorganising to turn itself into a machine for political combat. It would like to appear to have given up armed struggle, but it is truly incapable of thinking in any other way. For now, they want people to forget the shadow of Saddam Hussein".

In any case, there is no sanctuary for the PMOI and governments who do open their borders to them will have to exert a constant vigilance. If not, their national territory could become bases for action in violation of host countries:

"The members of the Iranian opposition movement, the People's Mojahedin, will not be expelled to Iran, according to Paul Bremer, the American Civil Administrator of Iraq. Three host countries have been chosen by the UN High Commission for Refugees and the Iraqi Governing Council.

'We wanted HCR to participate in the resettlement of [the Mojahedini in three countries]', declared Paul Bremer on Coalition- controlled Iraqi television. We are working in cooperation with the Governing Council to determine how their departure will be organised and where they will go', he added". (AFP, 20 December 2003)

On 23 December sixty members of the PMOI demonstrated in Geneva against the expulsion order:

"The demonstrators, as they had on Friday, protested in front of the UN High Commission for Refugees (I-ICR) to demand its intervention. HCR's spokesman, Kris Janowski, nonetheless indicated that it was not in the UN agency's mandate because these people had no refugee status in Iraq...

When questioned, the International Committee of the Red Cross' spokesman, Juan Martinez argued that the Mojahedin were protected under the IVth Geneva Convention. This stipulates that an occupying power cannot deport people against their will, unless they are a threat to State security". (AFP, Ibid.)

Soldiers of Saddam Hussein's dirty war against their own country, the soldiers of the Massoud Rajavi's "Liberation Army" used their arms against the Iraqi people, too. The Iraqi Governing Council has brought very detailed charges against the PMOI. These are accusations that bring together many of the analyses and references presented in this work. Terrorists and sectarians, the People's Mojahedin will end by history's forgetting them, just as so many movements of their kind before them. Iran's future will inevitably be decided without them.

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