REFORMERS AND REVOLUTIONARIES IN MODERN IRAN

New perspectives on the Iranian Left

Edited by
Stephanie Cronin
40 The report, almost certainly written by some intelligence authority, was published in the newspaper Kayhan, 5 August 1965, two weeks after his arrest. See Appendix for the full text.

41 As a matter of fact, Maleki had been undergoing a heart operation in Austria before the June revolt, and returned to Iran a few months after it. See Khaterat-e Siyasi, 2nd edn. Introduction.

THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION AND THE LEGACY OF THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT

Maziar Behrooz

During the early 1970s, the National Iranian Radio and Television (NIRT) began broadcasting a new American TV series named “The Guerrillas.” The series was a not-too-well-produced story about Allied commando operations behind Nazi lines during the Second World War in Europe. It was dubbed in Persian, but the name of the series was translated as “gurilla,” which in Persian can only mean “gorilla.” What possible relation there might be between commando operations and the mighty ape was left to the imagination of poor Iranian viewers. Such was the sensitivity of the imperial regime of Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi to the term “gerrilla” (“cherik” in Persian) that the NIRT had to resort to such ridiculous innovation. The sensitivity of the imperial regime was accompanied by a touch of respect for the guerrillas. In 1976, the shah went on record praising the guerrillas by saying: “The determination with which they fight is quite unbelievable.” Who were these guerrillas of the 1970s and how did they come to be both feared and respected by the imperial regime? The years 1970–71 constituted a turning point in the shah’s perception of his place in history and in his regime’s relationship with the opposition. During the course of this period, Iran’s imperial navy occupied three islands in the Persian Gulf, signaling the beginning of the shah’s attempt to assert Iran’s domination of the region in relation to the Persian Gulf’s Arab states on the eve of the British evacuation. The latter year, 1971, was the year in which the imperial regime celebrated 2,500 years of Persian empire in Persepolis-Shiraz. Here, the shah opened the ceremonies by standing in front of Cyrus the Great’s tomb at Pasargad (near Shiraz), asking him to rest assured as all was well with the empire under the shah’s leadership. The celebrations were a grand and expensive ceremony, before the eyes of world leaders, attesting to the shah’s majesty at the peak of his power. A year earlier, in one of the seminaries of the holy city of Najaf in Iraq, not far from Imam Ali’s tomb, Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah al-Musavi al-Khomeini
The Revolution and the Guerrilla Movement

Maziar Behrooz

Has given a series of lectures arguing for an Islamic state under the guardianship of the ulama, thus making a clear break between his movement and those who still supported the Shah's regime. In February 1971, a group of clerics, including some of the leading figures of the Islamic movement, proclaimed the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This event marked the beginning of the end for the Shah's regime and paved the way for the eventual victory of the Islamic Revolution.

The Shah had been in power for 26 years, but by the late 1970s, his rule was increasingly challenged by both internal and external forces. The economy was struggling, with high inflation and unemployment, and the Shah's efforts to maintain control over the oil industry were met with resistance. The Shah's suppression of political dissent, including the suppression of the People's Mujahedin of Iran (MEK) and the Islamic Republic of Iran, led to widespread protests and a growing desire for change. The Shah's decision to allow the Persian Gulf War to escalate and his failure to address the economic and social concerns of the Iranian people further contributed to his downfall.

The Islamic Republic of Iran was declared on February 11, 1979, and the Shah was forced to flee the country. The new government, led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, established an Islamic theocracy that sought to restore order and stability to the country. The Islamic Republic faced significant challenges, including the Iran-Iraq War, the Afghan War, and the struggle for influence in the region. However, the Islamic Republic's commitment to Islamic principles and its rejection of Western values and institutions allowed it to resist external pressures and maintain its sovereignty.

The revolution was a remarkable event in world history, and its impact was felt not only in Iran but also in the region and beyond. The Islamic Republic of Iran's ability to resist external pressures and maintain its sovereignty was a testament to its resilience and determination. The revolution also had a profound impact on the Muslim world, inspiring similar movements in other countries and shaping the course of Islamic history.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has faced significant challenges since its establishment, including political instability, economic difficulties, and international isolation. However, the government has taken steps to address these challenges and has made significant progress in areas such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure. The Islamic Republic of Iran's commitment to Islamic principles and its rejection of Western values and institutions continue to be its guiding principles, and its ability to resist external pressures and maintain its sovereignty remains a testament to its resilience and determination.
Iran in the 1960s

The imperial regime had closed the 1950s by consolidating its rule following the CIA-backed coup of 1953 and the toppling of the nationalist government of Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh. Except for severe repression, the economy remained stagnant, and the country's foreign trade was confined to a small number of goods, mainly textiles and carpets. The government continued to rely on American aid, and the resolution of the country's economic problems was considered of utmost importance.

The 1960s saw a period of growth, with the economy recovering and political repression intensifying. The Shah is depicted as a progressive ruler, who made modern improvements.

The state of the opposition

The opposition to the imperial regime remained strong. The religious opposition continued to be a major force in the country. The Islamic opposition, which was led by Ayatollah Khomeini, continued to grow in strength.

The Khomeini movement, which was founded in the 1950s, became more radical in the 1960s. The group was based in exile in Iraq and later in Iran. The group's main goal was to overthrow the Shah and establish an Islamic republic.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.

The Shah's policies, which were seen as oppressive and decadent, were met with widespread resistance. The opposition was divided, with some groups advocating for a more gradual approach and others calling for an immediate revolution.
The political climate of the 1960s

An important aspect of a political environment of a country is one which creates an imposed political regime, not only had the regime managed to crush all independent political parties. Indeed, the regime was not interested in entertaining any kind of revolution. What it meant was one of the most unsustainable forms of political organizations; it was a failure to establish a network outside the country. That was the case in Iran, as the response of the regime to a successful overthrow of the regime was to set a new political environment. Establishing a firm and stable connection to the people and leading them to a successful overthrow of the regime contributed to the radicalization of the international environment. The radicalization of the international environment contributed to the success of Iran and the US all helping to put a new military solution to the problem of confronting the imperial regime. Mohsen Rafigi, a major opposition figure of the time.
a future provisional prime minister of the Islamic Republic, prophetically used the spirit of the coming age in his military trial in the 1960s: "We are last ones who are struggling politically in accordance with the [monar-
t] constitution. We expect the head of this court to convey this point to his
rors."
Hence, under the new circumstances, the use of violence against
violence became the centerpiece of the new generation's concerns
ning political activity, and indeed another legacy of the guerrilla move-
t was a psychological one. The challenge had become, partially at least,
to overcome the state of despair and apathy, as well as how to begin
izing under intense state repression.

Mr. Parviz Payan's The Necessity of Armed Struggle and a Refutation of
Theory of Survival best captures the mood of the new generation and is a
map for future steps. As a founding member of the Fadayianen, Payan
ached the problem as a Marxist-Leninist revolutionary who had
ly come to conclude that armed struggle was the path to overcoming
state of apathy and organizing the opposition. Written in the late 1960s,
's short but powerfully written pamphlet argued that the problem of
ute despair on the part of the people was compounded by the percep-
of the absolute invincibility of the regime. Armed action of the
gard would challenge this perception and change the two absolutes of
ition, thus paving the way for a victorious revolution.

Iranian politics and the use of violence

Before the Revolution and the Guerrilla Movement

The revolution and the guerrilla movement of the 1970s is often associated with the use of
once as the prime means of confronting the imperial regime. This ob-

This was in contrast with the following decades of political violence in
ics of this period was a development initiated by the imperial
ce. The 1953 coup and the events of 1960-63 clearly shows that it was
regime, and not the opposition, which opted for the sustained and severe
of violence to promote its socio-political agenda. Indeed, the state
ession of 1963 seems to have had a determining role in the resort to
age by a younger generation of political activists. During his interroga-
. Bishan Jazani, a major thinker of the guerrilla movement, wrote this
r. After writing on the opposition and the state repression in 1963,
ote: "There is no doubt that once the government decided to
end to the opposition (be it university students, or bazaaris and others)
 military force, it came to us that what can bring victory to the
on is resorting to violent means of struggle."

Secondly, the use of violence had been part of Iranian politics long
the guerrilla movement was launched in 1971. Many political groups
violent methods in order to further their aims before the 1970s. The
Party of Iran had an extensive network within the imperial army

before 1953 and used it for violent as well as more peaceful, intelligence-
gathering purposes. Islamic activists too used violence to further their
political agenda. The activities of the Islamic Fadaian and the Coalition
of Islamic Associations attest to this fact. To these may be added the activities
of political groups during the Constitutional Revolution, the Jangal move-
ment and other similar movements of the first three decades of the
teenth century.

Nevertheless, the use of violent means for political ends in all of the cases
mentioned above were either random or unsystematic, and, at any rate,
tactical rather than strategic. The goal of the guerrillas was not to conduct a
simple, single act of violence followed by the danger of exposure to the
SAVAK and possible decimation. Other experiences in the 1960s had shown that
utility of such acts. The fact that neither open nor underground political
activity seemed possible only added to the urgency of finding a solution. The
gal was (and here the movement can be separated from the others) to initiate a
violent means of struggle from point zero and sustain the movement under
severe repression. This is another legacy of the movement. The guerrilla
movement's use of violence was highly influenced by developments among
liberation movements internationally as well as by current socio-political
developments in Iran. Hence the use of the term "armed struggle" to distin-
guish the guerrilla movement's use of violence from violence used before.

"Armed struggle" was used for a number of purposes. It was used as self-
defence against the regime's security forces. It was used in an offensive
manner in order to establish the vanguard-underground organization.
Furthermore, it was used as a propaganda tool to declare the existence of
the organization and attract others. It was used as a means of punishing the
regime for its harsh dealings with different segments of society, particularly
the student population. It was used torender support to acts of civil disobedi-
ence. And finally and ideally, it was to be used to create a people's army to
overthrow the regime in a successful revolution.

For the guerrilla movement (both Islamic and Marxist), justification of
violent means of struggle had several layers.

First, it was argued that the regime had left no other means of activity by
shutting down all legitimate political parties, independent trade unions, and
free associations, and had made a mockery of Iran's constitutional rule and
its parliament. In his memoirs, Mohsen Nejat-hoseini, a member of the
MKO, captured the sentiments of the guerrillas by noting: "In a situation
where the shah's regime was suppressing the nationalist and freedom-seeking
voices by relying on its armed mercenaries, talk of political [matter of]
struggle was adventuresome. Combating the shah's regime empty-handedly
was a type of suicide."

The starting point for this line of thinking was the 1953 coup, and its final
turning point was the 1963 repression and the shah's reform program. In their
polemics against those who rejected armed struggle (e.g. both Tudeh and non-
would be that of the establishment of the vanguard organization. In this phase, the vanguard would attack the dictatorship, declare its existence to the people, and organize the revolutionary elements who were ready to take arms and join the struggle. In this phase, armed actions would have the form of armed propaganda and would prepare the vanguard in terms of military, organizational, and political experiences for the future revolutionary participation of the people. The second phase would be one of a mass-based revolutionary movement. In this phase, a people's army would be formed. Iran saw armed struggle as both a military and a political process. Although he saw armed action in the area of all other topics and strategies, he indirectly criticized Ahmadinejad and the Fadayan for not paying enough attention to the political side of the movement, and warned them of the dangers of sectarianism and adventurous policies.

A factor which worked against the guerrillas in Iran, and one which they did not take note of, was Iran's social class formation. In many Third World countries, where a dictatorship leaves no other avenue of open political change short of violent means, it is often the case that class formation provides the necessary conditions for protracted armed resistance in rural areas in support of, or as a part of, urban resistance movement. Many victorious liberation movements (e.g. Vietnam, Cuba and China) were supported by a revolutionary peasantry which was willing and able to lend support, for a prolonged period of time, to a vanguard, urban, armed movement. The movements which were successful were usually active in societies where the majority of the population was rural, and more importantly, where the population was highly susceptible to political and revolutionary agitation.

Twentieth-century Iranian society has shown two major tendencies: First, urban areas have always been the determining factor in any major political change, student on other otherwise. Secondly, the Iranian peasantry lacks significant revolutionary potential and has remained, for the most part, politically passive. According to Nikka Keddie, Iran's inactive peasantry mainly results from its arid geography, which produces a poor and scattered peasant population with much control by landlords.

To the above elements must be added the fact that the guerrillas had almost no experience in urban warfare and organization. This meant that the movement had to start from zero and was not able to acquire experience gradually and in practice. The above factors forced the inexperienced but highly motivated guerrillas to concentrate their struggle in urban centers, where the state was better able to exert political control. Consequently, from the very beginning, the guerrilla movement in Iran had to become a more difficult task and less opportunity to organize on a mass basis when compared to other movements around the world. An analysis of the movement's ultimate failure in leading the 1979 revolution needs to take these factors into consideration.

THE REVOLUTION AND THE GUERRILLA MOVEMENT

As mentioned, Marxist activists were largely unsuccessful in their attempts to organize the rural population in the 1960s and 1970s. The ROHDI's attempts to organize the peasantry on the Maoist model and the Fadayan's attempts to organize in both urban and rural centers clearly failed. Furthermore, unlike some other Third World countries, Iran had had very little experience in independent trade union activity. By the end of the 1960s, the imperial regime had managed effectively to control all trade unions, thereby closing them to political activity by the opposition. This lack of any meaningful avenue for expressing political dissent, coupled with a total lack of motivation for organizing the working class or the population as a whole, combined to convince younger Marxists to take up arms themselves and to develop the "armed struggle" theory.

Critiques of the guerrillas

Those who criticized the guerrilla movement did so from various perspectives. The urban-led Islamists who supported Ayatollah Khomeni were hostile to the Marxist guerrillas but were initially supportive of the Moslem guerrillas (i.e. the MKO). But the relationship between the two deteriorated steadily during the 1970s. The MKO's free borrowing from Marxism, in view of revolutionary Islam as being free of clerical leadership, and its emphasis on armed action as the only path toward victory were the causes of this deterioration. The Islamist followers of Ayatollah Khomeni were suspicious of the MKO's Marxist leanings and of course were opposed to its anti-clerical perceptions of revolutionary Islam. But the two groups maintained a cordial relationship as long as the MKO remained a unified organization. Nevertheless, by the early 1970s, Ayatollah Khomeni was already developing his views on the role of the ulama as the best form of an Islamic government. This notion ran against what the MKO stood for. When, in 1972, the opportunity presented itself for the MKO to solicit Khomeni's support, the latter refused to endorse the MKO. From this point on, the relationship between the two began to cool down. According to a key member of Ayatollah Khomeni's movement, the urban-led Islamists did not have much faith in the guerrilla movement, although it was viewed as a positive element in the anti-shah struggle. In 1973, the MKO began to distance itself from the Qooh, which further damaged the relationship between the two groups. In the same year, a substantial portion of the MKO cadres switched to Marxism and gave birth to the MKO/MHI. This episode was accompanied by a violent purge of key members of the MKO who refused to switch ideologies. The change in ideology followed by the killing of Moslem members who refused to join was a turning point and badly damaged the relationship between Moslem supporters of armed struggle and the urban-led Islamists who led the 1979 revolution.
eh activists), the proponents of the guerrilla movement argued that not
ring to armed struggle was tantamount to passivity, i.e. not taking any
and waiting for future developments. There was some justification to this
statement. After all, there is no evidence that any purely political movement was
able to be active inside Iran during 1963–77 in any meaningful manner.

Secondly, the imperial regime's victory in the wake of the 1963 events
likely decimated all political parties. Those who had attempted to
establish themselves were unsuccessful throughout the 1960s. Therefore,
important aspect of the justification for armed struggle was the creation
of a vanguard organization to fill the vacuum. Armed struggle was to
provide military/underground discipline for the vanguard; declare the exist-
ence of the vanguard to both the regime and society at large; and begin
engaging by recruiting new members. 21

Thirdly, it was argued that the post-1963 environment of well-organized,
ambiguous, and militant vanguard organization, in due time, the limitless
forces of the Khomeiny could be tapped, opening a revolutionary
cessation culminating in a final victory.

Finally, it should be noted that reorganization and the use of violent
insurgency needed a degree of self-assurance. The new generation was unique in
sense. It was ready to declare war on the imperial system even while it
tried to start from point zero. With boldness and sheer courage as their only
tool, without expecting aid from the outside, with little or no experience in
mid-action, this generation challenged the imperial regime at the height of
shah's power and simply stunned the older generation, who were mostly
still outside the country. This was a time when the older generation's
efforts to re-establish its foothold inside the country had been frustrated
reap twice, and it was forced to remain as opposition parties in exile or
inside the country.

Problems of reorganization
terms of reorganization, the guerrilla movement had a monumental task
of it. As noted, all independent political, and even non-political, asso-
ciations had been smashed by the imperial regime or had come under its
control. Furthermore, the prevalent political culture of the opposition was
adapted to political or semi-political activity. There was no clear
definition of how to organize under harsh repression. In terms of how to
set up an armed vanguard revolutionary organization, there was even less
erience. Hence, a major challenge was how to develop the movement
from zero and develop a mass base among the working class and the masses
for relentless repression.

Other problems were theoretical in nature. The movement needed a clear
strategy of why and how the defeats of 1953 and 1963 had come about. Other
challenge was the clear need for an analysis of an Iranian society
which was going through profound changes. In this context, an analysis of
the shah's reform program, the nature of the shah's rule, and the role played
by external powers in Iran's internal affairs became significant issues.

In providing answers to the above problems, the MKO and the Fadaiyan,
independently from each other, developed many similar responses, but also
some different ones. They both agreed that the imperial regime was a reaction-
ding dictatorship sustained by foreigners (i.e. imperialism). Both viewed
the shah's reform program as inherently reactionary and designed to co-opt
Iran in the world capitalist system. Both had concluded that the term was
already obsolete and feudal society was being transformed into a pre-capitalist
'society that was no longer feudal. 22

In terms of armed struggle and how to go about it, the MKO provided
fewer writings than the Fadaiyan. Both groups initially agreed that the
shah's reforms had not decreased the people's opposition to the regime.
Hence, an absence of spontaneous movements on the part of the people was
due to repression. In this context, the vanguard organization could use its
minimum resources to attack the regime and ignite a general revolutionary
movement leading to victory. 23 The MKO's vision of a vanguard organiza-
tion was similar in structure to an underground communist organization,
except that its guiding ideology was its version of revolutionary Islam. The
examples of the Palestinian movement of al-Fatah and the Algerian liber-
ation movement were the MKO's models. The Fadaiyan looked to the rich
history of the international communist movement and the liberation move-
ments of Latin America, as well as the Palestinian and Vietnamese
experiments.

Among the Fadaiyan theorists, there was a clear difference of opinion on
how to start and what to expect from armed struggle. The difference was
between Massoud Ahmadzadeh and Puyan's perception and that of Mohammad
Jazani. Both Ahmadzadeh and Puyan believed that the reform programs had
intensified class contradictions in society. Therefore, in analyzing the causes of
an apparent lack of a spontaneous opposition movement, they both
pointed to the role of repression as being fundamental. Ahmadzadeh
believed that the lack of a spontaneous movement was due to violent and
long-term repression and the weakness of the revolutionary forces. 24 Hence,
in Ahmadzadeh's view, while the objective revolutionary conditions did
exist, the only other factor needed to start a successful revolution was a
consistent attack on the dictatorship. Such an attack would gradually result
in the creation of a People's Army and bring the spontaneous revolt
into the open.

Jazani saw the situation differently. He believed that the land reform
programs had eased class conflict in society for a period of time and that
objective revolutionary conditions did not exist. On the basis of this ana-
lysis, he suggested the "Armed Propaganda Theory". Jazani divided the
process of armed struggle into two phases. The first phase, he suggested,
Another angle of criticism of the guerrillas came from the Tudeh party whose main focus was the Fadayan. The main point of the Tudeh's criticism was that the Fadayan's theories on armed struggle were alien to Marxism-Leninism. The Tudeh argued that the only time armed activities could become prominent in any organization's tactics was when an objective revolutionary situation existed. Short of such a condition, armed activity as the Fadayan were planning was, according to the party, wrong. Of course, the Tudeh criticized the Fadayan white itself had only been approved by the SAVAK but proved to be utterly unable to establish any meaningful presence in the country.\(^\text{12}\)

The legacy

Iran's guerrilla movement was, first and foremost a generation's response to the shah's repression and arbitrary role. It clearly had a nationalistic aspect, which at points even gave birth to myths. The significance of the movement is not in its professed revolutionary alternative but in the Marxist or Islamist versions or in its inability to reach its ultimate goal of securing state power. In both of the above cases, they clearly failed. The guerrillas were not able to organize the khilâfah under the banner of a revolutionary movement, they failed to lead the revolution, and their revolutionary alternative seems irrelevant today. The legacy of the movement and its significance in the modern history of Iran lies elsewhere.

The movement played a pivotal role in overcoming the atmosphere of despair which followed the shah's consolidation of power after 1963. This was a time when all open and semi-open political and even non-political associations were either outlawed or taken over by the state. Furthermore, the events of the late 1960s showed that traditional modes of organization had become redundant when faced with the shah's mighty security forces. The guerrillas not only overcame the atmosphere of despair, they also managed to show the path of reorganization and continuation of the struggle. In this the movement was successful. By overcoming the atmosphere of despair, the movement showed that the regime was not as invincible as it claimed. The clashes of the guerrilla movement were representations of a restless generation. Studies show that while the guerrillas were unable to organize the masses, they were successful in attracting the young, educated middle class to their cause.\(^\text{13}\)

The movement's success was not only in terms of recruitment for the movement. This young, educated generation was a main beneficiary of the shah's reforms and theoretically should have provided the regime with the social support it needed. But, instead, it turned against the regime and chose to rebel against it. The rebellion began with a few and attracted many others. By the middle of the 1970s, the guerrilla movement had already created a reputation for itself and had managed to break the barriers of state censorship and repression and reach an audience among the university community. A look at the memoirs of those who were associated with the movement or directly involved in it shows a high degree of readiness among the rebellious young men and women of 1970s Iran.\(^\text{14}\)

Perhaps the most important aspect of the guerrilla movement's legacy is its redefinition of the politics of the radical Left in the post-revolutionary period. After 1979, the organizations associated with the guerrilla movement posed the most significant challenge to the new Islamic Republic. Although they were all defeated eventually, the challenge of these radical groups consumed much energy and time. Indeed, it is difficult to see how radical Left political groups could have posed any serious challenge to the Islamic Republic had these not been the guerrilla movements of the 1970s.

Without the emergence of the guerrilla movement in the 1970s, the politics of the radical Left would have been left to other groups to define. On the Marxist side, the task would have been left to the pro-Soviet Tudeh and its Marxist offshoots, none of which managed to establish their networks inside Iran in any meaningful manner. A look at these groups' networks and the manner of their followers after the revolution suggests that their popular appeal was rather insignificant.\(^\text{15}\) The post-revolution Marxist whose history was rooted in the guerrilla movement of the 1970s, the Fadayan in particular, soon became popular mass organizations and were viewed as a serious threat by the new Islamic leadership.

Among the Islamists, without the MKO and its brand of radical Islam, the Islamic-led Islamists would have been the sole interpreters of revolutionary Islam. Furthermore, the MKO's popularity, which soon posed a major challenge to the Islamic Republic, was based on its radical reputation of the 1970s.

Notes

3. The term "radical Left," as used in this paper is meant to mean those Marxist and Islamic groups which sought a revolutionary violent overthrow of the imperial regime and its replacement with a revolutionary regime that would then seek to implement reforms which would benefit the khilâfah.
5. For more on the MKO and its activities, see Ezzatollah Amir Kabir, Revolutionary Islamic Movement, Mean-
6 For more on the history of this organization, see: Ahmadzai, Radical Islam, pp. 64-76. Behroz, Rebels with a Cause, pp. 70-74. The terms “Stalinist” and “Maoist” are used throughout this chapter in a loose manner. By Stalinist, it is meant to denote dictatorial, arbitrary and repressive modes of conduct by left-wing individuals, political organizations, and regimes. The main features of Stalinism were established in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union during the reign of Joseph Stalin in the 1930s and 1940s. It was subsequently emulated by other communist and non-communist political movements. Maoism is meant to refer to any political organization which followed the guidelines of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) under Mao Zedong. Two features of the CCP guidelines are particularly relevant here: first, the belief that the peasants make up the principle revolutionary force; and, secondly, that the Soviet Invasion was a social-revolutionary state. Any organization believing or acting in both of the above is referred to as Maoist.

7 For more on Khosravi’s role in this period, see: Ramin Farnaz, Khosravi’s Life of the Revolution (in Farsi) (Paris, 1994), pp. 97-107.


10 Ibid., p. 35.

11 Ibid., p. 52.


13 Behroz, Rebels with a Cause, pp. 37-43.


16 For more on BARFI’s involvement in Herat’s Bokhari during this period, see: Shokat, Interview with Arsh Kushtad, pp. 10-11.


21 Arsh Kushtad, Interview with Arsh Kushtad, pp. 124-128.

22 For more on BARFI’s involvement in Herat’s Bokhari during this period, see: Shokat, Interview with Arsh Kushtad, pp. 124-128.

