

# X

## Democratic Alternative

Upon Massoud Rajavi's initiative, the National Council of Resistance of Iran was founded in July 1981 in Tehran. Functioning as the Iranian Parliament in exile, it was formed to overthrow the mullahs' religious dictatorship, establish a pluralistic democracy in Iran, and replace the rule of velayat-e faqih (guardianship of the supreme jurispudent) with national sovereignty. The NCR subsequently moved its headquarters to Paris.

In lengthy sessions in the second half of 1981 and early 1982, some lasting for weeks, the NCR drafted, adopted and published its constitution as well as the platform and immediate tasks of a provisional government, whose goal is to transfer sovereignty to the people of Iran. This will be done in "no more than six months after the fall of the Khomeini regime" with the election of a Constituent Assembly through a "ballot which will be direct and secret."<sup>1</sup>

Rejecting the tyrannies of both the shah and Khomeini, the NCR invited all political personalities and organizations seeking democracy, independence and national sovereignty for Iran to join. According to the NCR constitution, "the Council's decisions are made with the approval of two-thirds of the attending members, provided that no objection is made by any of the member organizations."<sup>2</sup> Membership in the NCR is conditional upon "commitment" to its ratified decisions, and every new member must submit this commitment in writing to the NCR President along with his or her application to join the NCR. As per the constitution, requests for membership are discussed and voted on in the earliest session. The determining factor is the member's practical adherence to the Council's decisions, rather than full acceptance of them or of the platform. In other words, every

Council member can stick to his or her own views, and work to get them ratified by the Council through the democratic process outlined in the NCR constitution.

Currently, the NCR has 235 members,<sup>3</sup> of different religious, non-religious, liberal and nationalist persuasions, as well as representatives of ethnic and religious minorities. They include six political opposition organizations. The remaining 229 are renowned political, cultural or social figures as well as specialists, artists, intellectuals, athletes, scientists, military officers and commanders of the National Liberation Army.

The National Council of Resistance and the Provisional Government adhere to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its related international covenants, including "freedom of association, freedom of thought and expression, media, political parties, trade unions, councils, religions and denominations, freedom of profession, and prevention of any violation of individual and social rights and of public freedoms."<sup>4</sup>

The NCR's declaration on the Relations of the Provisional Government with Religion and Denominations specifies: "All forms of discrimination against the followers of various religions and denominations in the enjoyment of their individual and social rights are prohibited. No citizens shall enjoy any privileges or be subject to any deprivations with respect to nomination for election, suffrage, employment, education, becoming a judge or any other individual or social rights, for reason of belief or non-belief in an particular religion or denomination."<sup>5</sup>

In its plan on women's rights, the NCR recognizes "the right to elect and be elected in all elections, and the right to suffrage in all referendums," "the right to employment and free selection of profession, and the right to hold any public or government position, office or profession, including the presidency or judgeship in all judicial institutions," "the right to freely choose clothing and covering," and "the right to use, without discrimination, all instructional, educational, athletic, and artistic resources; and the right to participate in all athletic competitions and artistic activities."<sup>6</sup>

The National Council of Resistance adopted a plan for the autonomy of Iranian Kurdistan, wherein it recognized the right of the people residing in that region to have their own legislative body run "the internal affairs of the autonomous region." It further specifies

that "the administration of all affairs of the autonomous region of Kurdistan," except for those related to foreign policy, national defense, national security, foreign trade and customs, "falls within the authority of the autonomous organs."<sup>7</sup>

The NCR's plan for peace with Iraq emphasizes the "undertaking of guarantees by both parties in arranging for the repatriation of both countries' refugees, and for those who have been driven out of their country, by proclaiming general amnesty and by safeguarding their lives and their properties." Article 7 of the plan emphasizes the "drawing up of the plan for a definitive peace treaty between the two countries based on full respect for national independence and sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference in internal affairs, good neighborliness and security of borders against encroachment."<sup>8</sup>

According to the Immediate Tasks ratified by the National Council of Resistance of Iran, "investigation of the crimes of the Khomeini regime's officials" will be "carried out in public courts with the presence of juries and international observers."<sup>9</sup> The Provisional Government is committed to provide "the right of defense and the right of activity for lawyers' associations."<sup>10</sup>

The Provisional Government also accepts "national capitalism and the bazaar, private and personal ownership and investment."<sup>11</sup> It believes that "enmity towards industrial countries"<sup>12</sup> derives from the backward ideas of the Khomeini regime. While rejecting "unequal relations"<sup>13</sup> in its program, it stresses that it does not "wish to and cannot live isolated from the surrounding world."<sup>14</sup>

The Provisional Government of the Democratic Islamic Republic of Iran and the National Council of Resistance will resign immediately after the Constituent Assembly's "declaration of its readiness to assume its responsibilities."<sup>15</sup> The National Legislative and Constituent Assembly will be formed at "the latest, no more than six months after the fall of the Khomeini regime and the establishment of the Provisional Government."<sup>16</sup> Appointing the new government, drafting the country's new constitution, and determining the new republican system are the tasks of the Constituent Assembly.<sup>17</sup>

### **Structure**

In addition to the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran, discussed at length in the previous chapter, other NCR member-organizations are as follows:

***The National Democratic Front (NDF)***

A secular group, the NDF was reorganized in 1979. It is comprised of respected political figures who supported the late Dr. Mossadeq in the 1950s and '60s. Mr. Hedayat Matin-Daftari, Dr. Mossadeq's grandson and a distinguished lawyer and well-known advocate of human rights in Iran for many years, is the president of the NDF. During the shah's last years, he was elected vice-chairman of the Iranian Bar Association. One of the Front's founders, Shokrollah Paknejad, a renowned political figure for two decades, was executed by the Khomeini regime in 1981.

***Association to Defend Iran's Independence and Democracy (DAD)***

Founded in 1979, DAD is comprised of religious and secular Iranians as well as specialists and technocrats. Ayatollah Jalal Ganje'i heads the group. One of Khomeini's first students, Ayatollah Ganje'i ranks far above Khamenei and Hashemi Rafsanjani in the religious hierarchy, but parted ways with Khomeini because of his emphasis on the rule of the velayat e faqih and religious despotism. Ayatollah Ganje'i was a political prisoner under the shah and a candidate for the 1980 parliamentary elections from Rasht, northern Iran. A distinguished cleric, he is a well-known opponent of the fundamentalist interpretation of Islam.

***The People's Fedayeen***

This group split from the leftist Organization of Iranian People's Fedayeen Guerrillas and vehemently opposed dependence on the former Soviet Union. The original organization was formed in 1968 and waged armed struggle against the shah's dictatorship. It was the most popular and influential of the Marxist groups. Many members and sympathizers were executed under the shah.

In post-revolutionary Iran, however, the organization came under the influence of pro-Soviet elements, and subsequently split into various factions. The People's Fedayeen left the organization and drafted their own platform for a democratic system in Iran. They applied for membership in the NCR in 1984, and were accepted as a member in 1985. Mr. Mehdi Samé, a mechanical engineer who was imprisoned by the Shah from 1970 to 1978, is the organization's representative in the National Council of Resistance.

***Towhidi Merchants Guild***

The guild was formed in 1979 by industrialists and bazaar merchants opposed to Khomeini's dictatorship. Many of its secret members continue their commercial activities in Iran. Over the years, they have played an important role in providing financial backing for the Resistance. The traditional bazaar is crucial to the Iranian economy, and its opposition to the shah in the final years of his rule was instrumental in the fall of the monarchy. Mr. Ibrahim Mazandarani, a well-known businessman from Tabriz and a political prisoner under the shah, is the Guild's representative in the NCR. The Khomeini regime executed a number of members of the Towhidi Merchants Guild in the mid-1980s for giving financial aid to the Resistance.

***Committed Professors of Iran's Universities and Schools of Higher Education***

Also founded in 1979, this group is comprised of university professors and academics. Opposed to the regime's policies, especially the "Cultural Revolution," the group soon gained the support of a large segment of Iran's scholars. Dr. Mohammad Ali Sheikhi, former head of Tehran University's Technical Faculty, is the president of the group. A graduate of metallurgical engineering from the U.K., Dr. Sheikhi is the author of several books on technical and political issues.

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The President and official spokesman of the National Council of Resistance is Mr. Massoud Rajavi. The Council has a secretariat and six secretaries who administer its affairs. The NCR's 18 committees function as the basis for the future Provisional Government. Seven of the committee chairs are from the Mojahedin, three from the National Democratic Front, one from the People's Fedayeen, one from the Committed Professors of Tehran Universities, one from the Association to Defend Iran's Democracy and Independence. The four remaining chairs are filled by independent personalities of different political persuasions.<sup>18</sup> The average age of the NCR committee chairs is over 50. Nine of them have graduate degrees from France, Britain, the United States and Germany, and eight are graduates of Iranian

universities. The Chair of the Denominations and Freedom of Religion Committee is a cleric.

In its annual session in August 1993, the National Council of Resistance elected Mrs. Maryam Rajavi as President for the transitional period.<sup>19</sup> Her term will begin after the mullahs' overthrow, and extend until the ratification of the new constitution by a freely elected National Legislative and Constituent Assembly, and the election of a new president. Her tasks will include "supreme supervision"<sup>20</sup> over "proper implementation of the NCR's declarations and decisions."<sup>21</sup> She is authorized to undertake "the duties and responsibilities of the NCR President in his absence,"<sup>22</sup> within the framework specified and ratified by the Council. The NCR's members agreed that the election of Mrs. Rajavi, as a symbol of national unity, is the best guarantee for the reconciliation of Iranian society, which has suffered severe spiritual and material harm under the mullahs. A woman head of state further ensures democracy and pluralism during the transitional period and the transfer of sovereignty to the people, they noted.

Based in Paris, Mrs. Rajavi has become the focal point of hope and attention of Iranians in the country and abroad. Since her election, thousands of Iranians, many distinguished professionals and specialists in Europe and North America, have actively involved themselves in the movement. They have written to Mrs. Rajavi, declaring their readiness to cooperate with the NCR committees and take part in the reconstruction of a prosperous Iran. Renowned Iranian artists, banned from performing or forced into exile, have also declared solidarity with the President-elect's efforts to build a free Iran. In July 1994, Marzieh, Iran's legendary singer with a remarkable 50-year record, left Iran for France to announce her support for Mrs. Rajavi.

Mrs. Rajavi, 42, a metallurgical engineer, was a leader of the Iranian student movement in the 1970s. One of her sisters was killed under the shah and another, pregnant at the time of arrest, was executed along with her husband in the Khomeini regime's prisons.

In August 1993, the NCR chose the Lion and Sun as the Council's official emblem, placing it on the Iranian flag. "Since ancient times, the Lion and Sun has been the symbol of safeguarding Iran from evil,"<sup>23</sup> said the Council. For 12 years, the national Iranian anthem, "O' Iran, Land of Pearls," has been the NCR's official anthem.

### **Deliberate Exclusion**

The Council's positions, constitution and structure, briefly reviewed in this chapter, have been detailed in its publications in the past. In the State Department's treatment of this issue, unfortunately, the authors intentionally ignored the Council as an independent entity, and discussed it as part of the Mojahedin. The report makes baseless allegations and intentionally distorts several issues to deny that the National Council of Resistance is the regime's only viable alternative.

The authors lash out at the Mojahedin for not making notorious operatives of the shah's SAVAK and bogus, non-existent groups members of the NCR. It is more than inconsistent to accord these non-entities - alliance with whom would discredit the Resistance - such stature, while belittling the Mojahedin's allies in the Council.

It is perfectly true that the Mojahedin, as the most popular political and military force in Iran, are the largest member of the National Council of Resistance. For this reason, the Council deserves all the more credit for establishing a democratic process which grants the Mojahedin exactly the same rights as other Council members. The remnants of the shah's regime and Khomeini's mullahs have tried for years to portray the Mojahedin and National Council of Resistance as one entity with two names. It is unfortunate that the Department of State has not referred to any of the detailed, well-documented responses of the Iranian Resistance.

*Appeasing Tehran's Mullahs*, published in September while the report was being prepared, replied specifically to the allegations reiterated in Ms. Sherman's letter to Rep. Torricelli in July 1994. Three chapters of the book were devoted to detailed responses, including documents, which proved the charges were unfounded. As in previous cases, the book was provided to the State Department by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. In response to repeated objections by congressmen to the Department's refusal to hear the Mojahedin or NCR representatives, officials stated on numerous occasions that they were aware of Mojahedin publications and would consider them. They also claimed that their research team had reviewed all the Mojahedin and NCR publications from the 1960s through October 1994. The falsity of the claim only underlines their political insincerity.

In 1993, in reply to inquiries by members of Congress, the Department claimed that the Mojahedin and NCR are one and the same. Mohammad Mohaddessin, Chairman of the NCR Foreign Affairs Committee, wrote in this regard<sup>24</sup> to representatives Ronald Dellums (D-CA) and Dan Burton (R-IN). A copy of his letters was later sent to President Clinton. Mr. Mohaddessin wrote:

The [State Department's] "fact sheets" say: "The close links between the NCR and PMOI make the two organizations virtually indistinguishable." This claim is supported by the observation that "Massoud Rajavi would have sole responsibility for the appointment of cabinet ministers under the provisional government." In response, it must be asked which democratic tradition faults a close relationship between a political organization (the Mojahedin) and the political coalition (NCR) of which it is a member, and cites that relationship as indicative of the two being "indistinguishable"? In addition, does the President of the United States "not have sole responsibility for the appointment of cabinet ministers"? As specified in the NCR's constitution, Mr. Rajavi is responsible for nominating cabinet ministers, who must be confirmed by the NCR's membership, which is also authorized to impeach ministers in office. The provisional government is duty-bound to comply with the NCR's resolutions. Is this same procedure not followed in the U.S.?

In article 8 of its constitution, the National Council of Resistance specifies: "The right to question and to interpolate the Provisional Government, or any of its members, is reserved for every member of the Council."<sup>25</sup> In article 7, it specifies that the Provisional Government is duty-bound to "act in accordance with the program and the immediate tasks assigned to the Provisional Government and in accordance with the Council's future decisions" and to undertake the administration of affairs for six months. As Mr. Rajavi stressed in August 1993, when he introduced the chairs of the NCR committees, the Provisional Government is a coalition government. Only seven of the 18 chairs of the NCR committees are from the Mojahedin; the rest are renowned personalities, neither ideologically nor organizationally affiliated with the Mojahedin, of varied political views.

The State Department's claim about the two being "indistinguishable" is supported by the observation that leading NCR representatives are also closely affiliated with, if not members of, the PMOI. As mentioned, the NCR serves as a parliamentary body;



therefore, some members of the Mojahedin - or of other organizations belonging to the NCR - are also members of the NCR. Far from being concealed, this issue was publicly announced. Indeed, according to the Department's logic, the U.S. Congress and Republican Party should be faulted for being "indistinguishable," because all congressional committees and sub-committees are chaired by Republicans. As mentioned, 60% of the NCR's committees are chaired by non-Mojahedin members.

Actually, the NCR demonstrated that it is even a step ahead of democratic countries when, in the fall of 1991, it declared that any NCR representative in a given country who belongs to a member-organization must relinquish his or her membership in that organization to fulfill the responsibilities of an NCR representative without regard to any organizational duties or posts, and in complete impartiality.

#### **Ignoring the Facts**

The report asserts: "Although the NCR claims that it is a democratic organization, its practices do not sustain the rhetoric."<sup>26</sup> In another reference the report states, "The Mojahedin determined who could join... who was worthy of being given... voting rights... Critics were either squeezed out of the National Council or silenced."<sup>27</sup> The charges are utterly baseless.

As detailed earlier in this chapter, the Council's constitution entitles all members to an equal vote in the decision-making process, and all member-organizations have the right to veto. The NCR's constitution does not discriminate between members, and there are no amendments that make an exception of one or more members, under any circumstances. The NCR president is not entitled to any special powers in crisis situations, in contrast to virtually every other political organization or government, including the government of the United States of America, which grants special powers to the head of state or organization to enable it to react quickly to special circumstances.

The Iranian Resistance is confronting the most brutal dictatorship of our times; the circumstances are never ordinary. Nevertheless, all NCR decisions are made with the agreement of two-thirds of the members present, provided that no member organization vetoes the decision. Members and those familiar with the NCR's conduct over

the years will testify that all of the Council's decisions in the last 14 years have been made in a completely democratic fashion and in accordance with the above procedures. At the same time, any of the member-organizations can block the adoption or implementation of any plan by exercising their veto powers. Thus, neither the Mojahedin, nor the NCR president, nor any other person or organization can impose its will on the body. Those who accuse the NCR of not being democratic would do well to cite one single case where the Mojahedin or the NCR president have breached these constitutional regulations.<sup>28</sup>

The report states, "Once a *bona fide* coalition, the Council disintegrated in the 1980s, when many of the resistance groups that had joined in 1981 left the organization because of their objections to Rajavi's dictatorial methods and his unilateral decision to ally with Iraq."<sup>29</sup> The Department accepts that the Council was initially a viable one, and, therefore, internal democratic processes were observed at the time. The Council's constitution has not changed.<sup>30</sup>

The report bases its finding on Bani-Sadr's and the KDP's "withdrawal," and concludes that they "prompted a mass exodus."<sup>31</sup> As explained in detail in chapter I, neither Bani-Sadr nor the Kurdistan Democratic Party left the Council. Both were expelled by unanimous vote for violating the NCR constitution and program, i.e. violating the internal democratic process of the Council. There was no "mass exodus" and no "unilateral decision to ally with Iraq." The attempt to thus explain the so-called withdrawal of the KDP is so shallow that the authors have overlooked the fact that this party enjoyed active contacts with the Iraqi government and had a presence in that country long before Mr. Rajavi met with Mr. Aziz in Paris in 1983 or moved there in 1986.

Furthermore, the withdrawal or expulsion of one or more members from a political coalition has never been indicative of an absence of democracy within that movement. Since the election of the Clinton administration, for instance, many top officials have been fired, or have resigned for personal reasons or because of differences with the President. Political alliances and coalitions are formed on the basis of common enemies and shared values. They are prone to change. There is no basis for inferring that a coalition is undemocratic because some individuals or parties have left it. There have been numerous cases of individuals or even groups splitting off from the

Democratic or Republican party, for example. These people have gone on to form their own platforms due to differences with other members or the party leadership. This in no way indicates an absence of democracy or the use of dictatorial methods by that leadership.

### **Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran**

Among the sources the State Department cites in describing the NCR as undemocratic is a letter from the KDP that states, "In view of our working experience with the Mojahedin between 1981 and 1986 and of their attitude toward the Iranian democratic opposition since then, we consider the Mojahedin an anti-democratic and sectarian organization who can not be trusted to be faithful to democratic aspirations of the Iranian people."<sup>32</sup> To establish the truth, or lack of it, of the allegation that the KDP's "working experience" revealed the Mojahedin to be "anti-democratic and sectarian," it is necessary to briefly review the history of relations between the Party and the Mojahedin.

Like other Iranian Kurdish groups, the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran nominated Massoud Rajavi as the democratic opposition's candidate in the 1980 presidential elections. Subsequently, Abdol Rahman Qassemloo, the KDP Secretary General, referred to Rajavi as his "elder brother." He sought a more extensive Mojahedin representation and attendance at their headquarters in Kurdistan. At the beginning of the armed resistance, a number of Mojahedin went to the KDP's political bureau headquarters on the western border of Iran. Before installing their own radio transmitters, the Mojahedin used the KDP's small transmitter for nine months to broadcast their radio messages and programs. The presence of the Mojahedin in this area provided precious political backing for the Party, which Mr. Qassemloo warmly welcomed.

In October 1981, immediately after Mr. Rajavi announced the program of the Provisional Government, the KDP joined the NCR and recognized it as "the unique alternative." In subsequent official statements, Mr. Qassemloo described his Party's alliance with the National Council of Resistance as a source of pride and honor, reflecting the desire of all the people of Kurdistan.

On the NCR's second anniversary in 1983, the KDP Secretary General asserted in his message:

The emphasis that the National Council of Resistance is the only democratic alternative is not a hollow motto, but a statement of fact, because... there are no other alternatives. The American-made monarchist groups cannot be called alternatives. Firstly, our history and bloody struggles of the past years have once and forever buried monarchy in our country. Secondly, "monarchists" and "constitutional monarchists" cannot become democratic alternatives... Since its formation, the key to the National Council of Resistance is that its main force is the People's Mojahedin, an organization which has bravely risen up against the Khomeini regime; an authentic organization which has grown from within the heart of the society and has a revolutionary history; an organization which understood that the Khomeini regime could not be overthrown except through armed struggle, the principal form of struggle. The presence of the People's Mojahedin in the National Council of Resistance guarantees the Council's non-compromise with the Khomeini regime. It also attests to the fact that the NCR is a revolutionary alternative, which will not reconcile itself to the mullahs' regime.<sup>33</sup>

In September 1983, the Mojahedin announced their views on the autonomy of the Kurds within the framework of Iran's territorial integrity. Subsequently, in a letter to the Mojahedin in the fall of that year, the KDP Secretary General described the Mojahedin's position as "a cause of joy for members of the Democratic Party and all the people of Iranian Kurdistan."<sup>34</sup> He emphasized that the policy "will be very effective in reinforcing the National Council of Resistance as the only democratic alternative."<sup>35</sup> Subsequently, the KDP politburo also praised the Mojahedin's views, adding: "The announcement of these positions is a firm response to all those who do not know the Mojahedin and think that their talk of Kurdish autonomy is tactical and that the Mojahedin do not believe in the people's right to determine their own destiny."<sup>36</sup> In an interview with Voice of Kurdistan, December 15, 1983, Dr. Qassem lou acknowledged: "The People's Mojahedin Organization played a remarkable role during the discussions and negotiations on the plan [for the autonomy of Iranian Kurdistan]. It made a tremendous effort to have this plan ratified in its present form."<sup>37</sup>

Several months later, in April 1984, the KDP, along with the Council's other members, signed a declaration stressing that the NCR was the only viable democratic alternative. It said of the Council's peace plan:

The National Council of Resistance would like to once again declare that the measures taken to date in support of peace (i.e. the meeting between the

NCR president and Iraq's vice-premier; drafting of a peace plan and efforts to have it ratified in international bodies; peace campaigns inside Iran; call on soldiers to disobey Khomeini's war directives, leave the fronts and join the Resistance's forces; and call for a halt to the bombardment of cities and towns) are not only endorsed, but praiseworthy. The National Council of Resistance, as the only democratic alternative in view of its program and that of the future government, will in future do anything in its power to advance its peace plan in the interests of the Iranian people. The National Council of Resistance considers a consistent defense of peace as patriotic, progressive, and humanitarian.<sup>38</sup>

Along with other members of the Council, the KDP also signed a declaration on September 28, 1984, which provides an unambiguous response to the State Department allegations today. The declaration reads in part:

The claim that the Council has no independent existence and what does exist is principally "a puppet of the Mojahedin" is not new. The monarchists, Bani-Sadr and his newspaper have for some time repeated this claim. Our compatriots, however, should know of the Council's internal relations and be aware that: Firstly, despite all the slander by the aforementioned newspaper, the Council has not made any political decision to date that it has not made public. Secondly, it was Bani-Sadr who unjustly benefited from an exceptional and advantageous position in the Council. Bani-Sadr, adhering to a double standard, was the Council's president and at the same time never felt bound by his signature to the Council's program and ratifications. Rajavi was criticized repeatedly by other Council members for the unusual flexibility and special consideration that he had observed in respect to Bani-Sadr since the Council's formation. Nevertheless, Council members never lost their confidence in Rajavi. Rajavi never had any political negotiations with Bani-Sadr about which he did not inform the Council, and the Council never made any decisions that Rajavi did not enact, let alone not counteract. Therefore, claims of "personal dealings" by Rajavi with Bani-Sadr, although they reflect the personal wishes of the publishers of Bani-Sadr's paper, are totally false.<sup>39</sup>

As the struggle became prolonged, the Kurdistan Democratic Party began whispering about the legitimacy of negotiating with the Khomeini regime. The issue was first raised that same year with Ibrahim Zakeri, then the Mojahedin's representative in Kurdistan. He was told privately, "If the Mojahedin will guarantee that they will overthrow the regime within six months, establishing the NCR in power, we will discontinue our negotiations with the regime for up

to six months. Otherwise, we cannot struggle for 25 years."

Negotiating with the mullahs' regime was a blatant violation of the constitution of the National Council of Resistance. The KDP had itself repeatedly emphasized that "the Council must insist on its principles. Any infringement or deviation from these principles will lead to the NCR's loss of credibility... Doubtless, the secret to success lies in respect for mutual commitments, adherence to the NCR's accepted principles, and endeavoring to put them into practice."<sup>40</sup>

By October 1983, the Khomeini regime's suppressive forces had driven the Kurdistan Democratic Party out of its last footholds in the villages and regions on the western Iranian border, forcing it to establish its bases on Iraqi soil. Since the Kurdistan Democratic Party mostly relied on local *Peshmarga*, whose sphere of activity was limited to the area wherein they lived (as opposed to educated urban combatants), this loss of territory severely reduced the Party's capabilities and demoralized its leadership, some of whom began to view their only solution as reconciliation with the mullahs.

*Kurdistan*, the KDP's official organ, first reported on the negotiations between the Party and the Khomeini regime's agents in September 1984. The policy was immediately condemned in an NCR session. The NCR President and a number of Council members warned Qassemloo against pursuing the policy, but to no avail. Finally, in a statement on November 3, 1984, the Mojahedin condemned the Party's actions and called for "mutual adherence" to the "common obligations" set forth by the National Council of Resistance.<sup>41</sup> Subsequently, the NCR President and members did their utmost to dissuade the Kurdistan Democratic Party from approaching the regime. The letters as well as the minutes of the sessions held in this regard are available.

In the NCR's session on January 7, 1985, "all of the members attending the session, except the Kurdistan Democratic Party... condemned political negotiations with the regime, described them as contrary to the signed commitments to the Council."<sup>42</sup> In that session, Rajavi addressed Qassemloo, the KDP's Secretary General, in front of all members, saying that if, as Qassemloo had stated, the Party's problem was a shortage of arms or funds, and that this was why they had caved in to the mullahs, the Mojahedin were willing to share (whatever they had). Immediately afterwards, as a goodwill gesture, Rajavi ordered the Mojahedin to give their own guns to Qassemloo's

party. To everyone's shock, Qassemloo first pointed out that he wanted metalstock automatic rifles, rather than woodstock automatic rifles, adding that he preferred money to guns. Rajavi ordered that he be provided with a map of Iran and 100,000 French francs.<sup>43</sup> Several days later, the KDP representative in France acknowledged receiving the assistance. A week later, however, Qassemloo sent the money back, and it became amply clear that shortages of funds and arms had been but an excuse, particularly since Qassemloo also demanded his "party's right of independence" to establish contacts and negotiate with the Khomeini regime.

In a message on February 11, 1985, the NCR President addressed the KDP, stating: "I sincerely and most honestly appeal to the Kurdistan Democratic Party to honor the sacrifice of our nation's martyrs, particularly the Kurdish *Peshmarga*, and announce, in no uncertain terms, its decision not to resume any political negotiations with the anti-human enemy at present or in future."<sup>44</sup> Mr. Rajavi specified: "I sincerely hope that the Democratic Party will make a firm decision and boycott all political negotiations with the illegitimate Khomeini regime... and thereby provide for the elimination of its differences [with the NCR]."

Unfortunately, the appeals were in vain. Finally, in April 1985, after six months of futile negotiations with the KDP, the National Council of Resistance unanimously decided to terminate its cooperation with the Kurdistan Democratic Party, and expelled it from the coalition on the basis that the KDP's "political negotiations with the Khomeini regime, contradicting Article 1 of the Constitution of the National Council of Resistance, are considered a fundamental violation of the Council's existence, nullifying its membership in the NCR."

Significantly, Qassemloo never sought to leave the NCR, and did his best to retain the benefits of membership while negotiating with the Khomeini regime. He knew well that he would not find other allies like the Mojahedin or other NCR members.

A Persian-language bulletin published abroad wrote at the time:

This so-called politburo of the Kurdistan Democratic Party wants... to overthrow the Islamic Republic regime and believes it is futile to negotiate with it, and at the same time sees such negotiations as useful and is willing to forego all intentions of toppling the regime. It seems that the politburo has forgotten its motto of "democracy for Iran, autonomy for Kurdistan."

While they pretend to speak from a position of strength, despite losing their lands, there are numerous indications that the inclination to negotiate with the regime actually emanates from the weakness overcoming the Kurdish fighters, unequal in strength and despairing of achieving a military victory. The politburo has therefore concluded that it must allow for political negotiations at any cost.<sup>45</sup>

As attested by the minutes of the NCR sessions, immediately after QassemLou was himself established in Iraq, he repeatedly encouraged the NCR President to move to that country. He also persistently asked the Mojahedin to assassinate Edris and Massoud Barzani, brothers who were leaders of the Iraqi Kurds and at the time residing west of Tehran. Mr. Rajavi vehemently rejected the proposals.<sup>46</sup> While a member of the NCR, QassemLou continuously asked for more and more financial, military, technical, public relations and medical support from the Mojahedin. For their part, the Mojahedin did not have any qualms about helping the KDP as much as they could.

Some of the pertinent documents are available. One is signed by Dr. Sadeq Sharafkandi, then the Party's number-two man, later to succeed QassemLou as Secretary General and, like his predecessor, to be assassinated by the Khomeini regime. Signing as Saeid Badal, his *nom de guerre*, on April 15, 1984, Sharafkandi wrote: "On behalf of my comrades in the leadership and all members and supporters of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, particularly the personnel of the radio, I would like to extend my most sincere gratitude to the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran for two years of unrelenting support and cooperation." The statement is in reference to the lengthy period during which the "anti-democratic and sectarian" Mojahedin broadcast the KDP's daily radio program.<sup>47</sup> As Abdollah Hayaki, known as Mamousta Abdollah (the incumbent successor to the Party's leadership) had pointed out in an October 23, 1983, letter to the Mojahedin, "The Mojahedin's radio was the only possible way for the Party to broadcast Voice of Kurdistan."<sup>48</sup>

Most important was the political support the Mojahedin and other members of the NCR afforded the KDP vis-à-vis the Khomeini regime's malicious political attacks, even prior to the formation of the Council. In his first speech after Khomeini seized power in February 1979, Mr. Rajavi defended the rights of the people of Iranian Kurdistan and spoke of the need to eliminate the dual oppression



they endured.<sup>49</sup> Later, despite the mullahs' harassment and violent attacks, the Mojahedin, as the only nationwide, Muslim, democratic force, advocated defense of Kurdish rights on a national scale. Khomeini, who had issued death decrees for the Kurdish leaders, was enraged at the Mojahedin's support for the Kurds and lashed out at the organization for speaking on their behalf.

Obviously, the differences between the Kurdistan Democratic Party and the National Council of Resistance of Iran did not, as the State Department has suggested, relate to "the lack of democracy" within the NCR, but to the KDP's desire to compromise with the Tehran regime and the NCR's insistence on the need to establish democracy in Iran. Just as today, the dispute between the State Department and the Iranian Resistance relates to the issue of negotiations with this "permanent feature" and the NCR's insistence on replacing Khomeini's dictatorship with a pluralistic democracy.

Some time later, Jalil Gadani, Secretary General of the faction which split from the KDP, revealed that an associate of QassemLou had told him: "Some time ago, QassemLou reached an agreement with the regime to oppose the Mojahedin." Same old story. Opposition to the Mojahedin and National Council of Resistance is a prelude to compromise and rapprochement with the Khomeini regime. For his part, Mr. Rajavi told QassemLou and his group: "I hope that the KDP's distancing itself from us will be limited, and that its endeavors to negotiate with the regime will not prove harmful to the party. Even if the Party continues to churn out slander against us, however, I will continue to wish them well, because I hope to never see their future ruined."<sup>50</sup> The Mojahedin also emphasized that negotiating with the regime was both futile and dangerous, and would expose them to the mullahs' terrorists. Today, not only QassemLou, but also his successor as KDP Secretary General have been assassinated by the Khomeini regime's agents, confirming, however regrettably, the accuracy of the Iranian Resistance's predictions.

The National Council of Resistance also condemned the armed conflict between the KDP and Koumula (another Iranian Kurdish group) and their indiscriminate slaughter of POWs, as well as their various forms of extorting ordinary people. In this light, QassemLou's sudden transformation into a "democrat" upon his arrival in Europe is somewhat startling.

The KDP's reconciliation and negotiations with the Khomeini

regime were accompanied by blatantly undemocratic relations within the Party, as Qassemlou's former friends began revealing in spring 1988. Many of the party's veteran officials and well-known figures opposed the policy,<sup>51</sup> as did many ordinary Kurdish people, who wrote letters to the NCR President to this effect.

Qassemlou and his colleagues gradually squeezed all opponents out of key positions in the party. In 1987, Qassemlou forced the Party Congress to support a fixed slate for the politburo, designed in a way to preclude opposition to the negotiation policy. Consequently, 15 members of the leadership split off and formed the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran- Revolutionary Leadership. This new party strongly opposed the policy of negotiations with the regime and maintained close ties with the Mojahedin and National Council of Resistance.

In conclusion, it is important to note that Qassemlou's humiliating submission to the mullahs' regime severely damaged his Party's prestige. Still dreaming of the regime's moderation, after the cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq war he expressed surprise in an interview with the BBC that nobody from the regime was interested in talking to the KDP. A short while later, a Guards Corps commander in Kurdistan said nobody was interested in what he had to sell, but if he wanted, "he can return to the cradle of Islam and be granted clemency."

#### **About Democracy**

The State Department suggests that the National Council of Resistance and the Mojahedin are "undemocratic" because of their refusal to form a coalition with historically anti-democratic forces tied to the shah and Khomeini. The report states: "Other opposition groups which never became part of the Council and with whom the NCR refuses to associate include: the monarchists, notably the Iranian Constitutionalists and the Flag of Freedom Organization of Iran; and the main factions of the People's Fedayeen Guerrillas."<sup>52</sup> The report also says: "In an early demonstration of its intolerance for dissent, the Mojahedin refused to allow the participation of the Liberation movement (also known as the Freedom Party), a prominent liberal opposition group,"<sup>53</sup> and refused to admit the communist Tudeh.<sup>54</sup> The authors of the report add: "Other resistance groups were wary of the Mojahedin's brand of revolutionary Islam. The National Front

(Mossadeq's nationalist party) refused to join the Council because it objected to the concept of Islamic government. Two other Marxist organizations, which similarly objected to the religious aspect of the Mojahedin's ideology, also refused to join.<sup>55</sup> A brief look at the nature, actions and political history of these groups, for whose exclusion the State Department castigates the Mojahedin, establishes that the Department's representations about democratic concerns have been less than sincere.

### **The Freedom Movement**

The Freedom Movement, led by Mehdi Bazargan, the first prime minister after the fall of the shah, is one of the State Department's favorite groups. The movement is avowedly loyal to the Islamic Republic regime, despite occasional nagging at the mullahs. It does not seek to replace that regime, and considers itself a "loyal opposition." Even after the start of mass executions in 1981, the group reiterated its pledge of allegiance.<sup>56</sup> During the executions *en masse* of political prisoners in summer 1988, the Freedom Movement emphasized that no members of the nationalist, popular groups had been killed. The party's inclusion or exclusion from the National Council of Resistance, which believes the fundamentalist regime should be replaced with a democratic government, is, therefore, a non-issue.

On many occasions, Mr. Rajavi called on the group to renounce its support for the regime and cease acting as a political foil. In 1985, when Bazargan traveled to Germany, Mr. Rajavi wrote to urge him not to return to Iran and to complicity in the regime's crimes.<sup>57</sup> Regrettably, Bazargan and his colleagues preferred to continue what they themselves described as their "cowardly and treacherous life" under the regime. Bazargan has since passed away. After his death, Mr. Rajavi commented that Bazargan's political life was a testament to the irreformability of the mullahs' regime. A decade ago, the Iranian Resistance's Leader told him that he would never be restored to power under the mullahs. Fortunately, in the last days of his life, Bazargan testified to the Khomeini regime's inability to reform. In an interview with *Frankfurter Rundschau* on January 12, 1995, Bazargan estimated the popular base of the mullahs' regime at less than 5%, adding that the mullahs "will commit so many evil deeds that they perish because of it."

### **Tudeh Party & Fedayeen Majority**

The Iranian Communist Tudeh Party was formed in 1942, during the Soviet occupation of northwestern Iran during the Second World War. The party, from its inception, acted as a KGB proxy in Iran and pursued policies dictated by the Soviets. In the 1940s, the Tudeh attracted a large following in Iran's northern provinces by manipulating the unfamiliarity of the populace with its goals and the special international circumstances prevailing at the time. Many Iranian army officers joined the Tudeh.

The Soviets distrusted Dr. Mossadeq, objecting to his opposition to special privileges for Moscow in Iran's northern oil fields. Toeing the Soviet line, the Tudeh obstructed, opposed and attacked Dr. Mossadeq. In the aftermath of the 1953 coup that reinstated the shah, the Tudeh was also suppressed. Many Tudeh members were arrested; all of their arrested leaders eventually cooperated fully with the shah. Many former Tudeh leaders later became SAVAK and court officials. The Tudeh's tainted past undermined its credibility among Iranians.

Some Tudeh leaders who had sought sanctuary in the Soviet Union and East Germany, returned to Iran with the fall of the Shah in 1979 and reestablished the party apparatus. Not surprisingly, in blind obedience to Moscow, the Tudeh collaborated with the mullahs until 1984, when they were arrested by the Khomeini regime. The party admitted to cooperating with the *Pasdaran* against the Mojahedin and other opponents. In summer of 1981, the Tudeh Secretary General, Nooreddin Kianouri, issued an outrageous call to the French government to extradite Massoud Rajavi to the Khomeini regime. The party supported the mass executions of 1981 and wrote in its newspaper that "Rajavi and U.S. imperialism" were responsible for the killings. After the arrests of 1984, and particularly after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the party slipped into oblivion.

The Fedayeen Majority is a faction of the Organization of People's Fedayeen Guerrillas of Iran. This Marxist-Leninist organization was formed in the late 1960s and waged armed struggle against the shah. After the fall of the monarchy, a major split occurred in the group and a faction calling itself the Majority joined ranks with the Tudeh in 1979. This group mimicked Tudeh policies and, much like the Tudeh, was allied with the regime until the arrest of its members in 1984. The group's treachery knew no bounds. Its members cooperated

with Khomeini's *Pasdarán* in the interrogation and torture of Mojahedin and other political prisoners.<sup>58</sup> The Majority marched in step with the Tudeh, calling Mojahedin policies "liberal" and advantageous to U.S. interests. Today, the regime and its allies essentially make the most of their hysteric enmity toward the Mojahedin.

### **The National Front**

The National Front, led by Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq, was formed in the late 1940s. It was a popular movement which represented different sectors of Iranian society. After the shah was restored in 1953, the National Front was, for all practical purposes, dissolved. In the 1960s, during Kennedy's presidency, the Second National Front was founded, but its activities came to end with the crackdown in the winter and spring of 1963. Dr. Mossadeq never endorsed the Second National Front from his home in exile. After 1963, the Third National Front was formed abroad, yet it, too, was rapidly dismantled.

In the wake of the shah's overthrow, Dr. Mossadeq's followers founded the National Democratic Front in 1979. The NDF is presently a member of the NCR.

In recent years, various individuals in Europe have occasionally announced the formation of the "National Front." Most have been linked to the regime. One, Ahmad Anvari, put out a publication, *Jebhey-e Melliyoun*, for some time in London. The publication, devoted to opposing the Mojahedin, was halted in 1991, and Anvari returned to Iran, where he closely cooperates with the clerical regime. The regime has on occasion also misappropriated the name of the National Front to issue statements against the Iranian Resistance. A recent incident involved statements issued in Washington, D.C., against the July march in support of the NCR's President-elect. In reality, however, today there is no such group as the "National Front." Perhaps the State Department can provide an organizational address indicating otherwise.

If the Department is using the term "National Front" in reference to Mr. Karim Sanjabi, the first foreign minister of the Khomeini regime and a leader of the Second National Front, it should be pointed out that in his memoirs, published in 1989, Sanjabi specified that "The National Front now lacks any organizational structure" and "the publications presently put out under the name of the National

Front... are not official organs." Sanjabi added that he had learned much to his regret that some members of the National Front had "opportunistically or to earn a living" turned to Shapour Bakhtiar and "receive salaries from him."

The authors can rest assured that nothing is left of the National Front but its name. A coalition cannot extend membership to a non-entity. Any questions in this regard can be referred to Sanjabi, now 90 years of age and a resident of the U.S.

In his memoirs, Sanjabi has written that one of his points of departure with the Mojahedin was "the latter's acceptance of the Kurdistan Democratic Party and membership of Dr. Qassem lou in the NCR." "Where did the KDP and Qassem lou get the right," he asks, "to demand autonomy on behalf of the people of Kurdistan?"<sup>58</sup> Sanjabi adds: "Qassem lou and his gang, like the Koumula, are really secessionists and are linked to the policies of foreigners. They want to cover up their true nature."

Despite his differences with the Mojahedin, Sanjabi says in his book:

The struggle and sacrifices of the Mojahedin against the despotic, ignorant and anti-Iranian regime of the mullahs are irrefutable... And one cannot deny the fact that the heroic operations of those men and women who tied bombs around their waists and sacrificed their lives to eliminate the blood-thirsty enemy are amazing manifestations of bravery and of the historic resistance of this nation against oppression and injustice. The Mojahedin have sacrificed their lives more than any other group. Thousands of them have been executed, and thousands more are suffering under torture in prisons. No movement and no organization which struggles against the mullahs' despotic regime can and must not ever ignore the tremendous impact of their struggle.<sup>59</sup>

### **Monarchists**

As far as the monarchists are concerned, claims of their existence in Iran are farcical. For all practical purposes, they are an extinct species within Iran. There is not one instance of activity by a monarchist group inside Iran that would support the notion that they have some sort of support or even actually exist.

Among Iranians abroad, there are a number of "organizations" and individuals who profess support for the monarchy. They do not, however, represent anyone or anything but themselves and their "organizations," usually a mere post office box address or an

answering service. Essentially, their only activity, at the behest of their benefactors, is to issue statements opposing the Mojahedin, for use in branding the National Council of Resistance of Iran as "undemocratic."<sup>60</sup>

More importantly, however, these groups' officials are essentially former members of the shah's regime, and are therefore implicated in that regime's crimes, especially during its last 25 years. These are the same people who were ousted from Iran by the entirety of the Iranian nation, and their return to power in Iran is about as likely as the return of monarchy to France. All political and ethical principles aside, it is common sense that union with such notorious forces would only disgrace the Mojahedin and NCR, and serve as a propaganda windfall for the regime, which would promptly label the Mojahedin as supporters of the return of monarchy to Iran. If such alliances are a gauge of democracy, we would rather leave them to these people's advocates in the State Department

For instance, one of the groups mentioned in the report is the Flag of Freedom. Previously the State Department referred to the group as the Campaign for Democracy and Human Rights in Iran.<sup>61</sup> The group is headed by Manouchehr Ganji, a former minister until the final days of the shah's regime. Ganji was also a high-ranking official of the SAVAK. During his studies abroad, he was responsible for surveillance of opposition student activities. In the 1970s, he was head of the College of Law at Tehran University, a post from which he was ousted by students for his involvement with the shah's secret police.

Another group mentioned is the Iranian Constitutionalists. According to the group's handful of members, it has never taken shape. Mehrdad Khonsari, referred to as its spokesman, has said: "We never succeeded in bringing together all of the different monarchist tendencies. It is obvious now that this is much more difficult than we had thought, and I don't think it will happen anytime in the near future."<sup>62</sup>

Indeed, any knowledgeable Iran observer cannot but regard this part of the report, its criticisms and lessons on democracy, as utterly ridiculous. In the words of the Leader of the Iranian Resistance, the best yardstick for evaluating the democratic nature of a movement is the extent to which it has put up a fight against dictatorship and the degree to which it is willing to sacrifice for democracy. If that is

the case, the Mojahedin have passed and repassed their test for three decades.

### **The Crux of the Matter**

The National Council of Resistance of Iran welcomes diverse political views and its doors are open to all democratic forces. The NCR's program represents the common denominator of the political agendas of its members. Any prospective member can join the Council by accepting its program. This does not necessarily mean that they must forgo their own political or ideological preferences. All are free to hold their own views, even if they differ from those of other members, including the Mojahedin. All can strive to add items from their agendas to the Council's platform by participating in the democratic process recognized in the Council. The groups mentioned by the State Department, however, have no record of believing in or abiding by democratic principles. The NCR has never cooperated with them, nor is there any reason to believe it will do so in the future. Any cooperation with such groups violates the NCR's founding principles and its goal to end dictatorship and establish democracy in Iran. One of the primary reasons for the Council's endurance and unity vis-a-vis the mullahs' religious, terrorist dictatorship is the insistence on these very principles and the refusal to join ranks with such groups.

After 10 years of animosity and the same old accusations against the Mojahedin and NCR, the State Department has nothing new to add to its accusations - an admission of the NCR's non-collaboration with such groups. The Department further admits that the NCR was initially a "bona fide coalition" consisting of "many elements of the Iranian opposition." In previous communications as well, the Department has confirmed that "The NCR did, at its inception, include a diverse range of Iranian opposition groups." Therefore, in all fairness it must be said that if the absence of such groups did not prevent the Department from assessing the NCR as a bona fide coalition then, it should not, logically, be a factor now. We can only conclude, therefore, that such excuses now are intended to further a policy so disgraceful that the Department hesitates to come out with it.

The Khomeini regime is at its lowest point, engulfed in economic and social crises. Corruption is rampant. The problem of succession in the religious leadership is irresolvable, creating deep splits in the



higher echelons and desertions among the ranks of the very supporters upon whom the regime relies for suppression. Public discontent is on the rise. Rafsanjani has failed, despite Western hopes to the contrary. Even many "moderation" theorists in the West have admitted that ahead lies only deepening crises. On the other hand, regardless of the State Department's allegations, there is no serious contender for power in Iran other than the National Council of Resistance. Precisely because there is such an alternative, all of the regime's problems quickly turn into political issues that threaten its existence. Therefore, the Iranian Resistance has a greater chance than ever before of establishing democracy in Iran. This does not sit right with the holdouts for Irangate and supporters of essentially the same policy that resulted in the 1953 coup.

The unrealistic inflation of persons and groups that have no chance in Iran is but a propaganda ploy to weaken the resistance. It is, moreover, futile, because the circumstances in Iran today are different from those of 1953. The Department is ill-advised to pursue a line which will lead to yet another policy failure in Iran.

