

VII

Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?

The State Department charges the Mojahedin with using violence and terrorism in their drive to overthrow the regime in Iran. The crux of the dispute, however, is not about how to overthrow the regime, but whether the mullahs should be overthrown in the first place. Department officials have reiterated that they do not seek to overthrow the Iranian regime. Obviously, no one expects the U.S., or for that matter any other government, to seek or implement the ouster of the mullahs. It is the responsibility of the Iranian people to end the reign of dictatorship in their homeland. The argument, therefore, is about recognition of the Iranian people's right to resist dictatorship and establish democracy. Support for the current regime is unthinkable. There cannot, therefore, be more than two sides to this debate: On one side are the Iranian people, who seek liberation from religious tyranny; on the other are the holdouts from the Irangate era, who view the regime as a "permanent feature"¹ and consider dissent as violence and terrorism.

The authors have gone a step further, describing mass executions and extensive suppression as the regime's reply to the Mojahedin's terrorism.² This rationale allows the mullahs to justify their atrocities on the pretext of combating terrorism. The next step is to demand, as the regime's ambassador did at a U. N. Human Rights Commission session, that the regime be lauded for its war on terrorism, instead of censured for human rights abuses.³ This is disgraceful.

Non-violent Dissent

Immediately after Khomeini seized power, a fundamental dispute surfaced between the Mojahedin and the clerical regime. Massoud

Rajavi publicly named freedom as the Iranian people's principal demand in the revolution which had toppled the shah. His remarks launched a nationwide campaign by the Mojahedin to defend democracy. From the outset, the regime organized hoodlums - the forerunners of the *hezbollah* - to heckle and harass Mojahedin supporters, and disrupt peaceful political activities.⁴ Not a day went by without attacks somewhere in the country on their gatherings and those of other current Council members, such as the National Democratic Front.

In January 1980, Khomeini issued a fatwa, vetoing Massoud Rajavi's candidacy for the presidency.⁵ The French daily, *Le Monde*, wrote:

... According to diverse estimates, had Imam Khomeini not vetoed his candidacy in the presidential election last January, Mr. Rajavi, would have gotten several million votes. He was, moreover, assured of the support of the religious and ethnic minorities - whose rights to equality and autonomy he defended - and a good part of the female vote, who seek emancipation, and the young, who totally reject the "reactionary clergy"...

The Mojahedin have not ceased denouncing, documenting and issuing calls about "the irregularities, pressures, fraud and violence" surrounding the first round of elections. 2,500 of their supporters were wounded, 50 of them gravely, by armed bands of "Hezbollah" in the course of the election campaign... Observers appointed by the Mojahedin who protested the election fraud were expelled from the premises, beaten, and sometimes arrested...⁶

Another round of attacks on Mojahedin offices and gatherings followed, in which many of their supporters were killed or injured. In June 1980, *Le Monde* wrote:

... The objective of the popular gathering on Thursday afternoon, called by the People's Mojahedin, was to protest against attacks on their supporters and activists in the past few days...

Tens of thousands of the party's sympathizers had lined up at the entrance gates an hour before the gathering [at Amjadieh Stadium] when groups of Hezbollah began loudly protesting against the Mojahedin... chanting, "There is only one party, the Party of God, and only one Leader, Imam Khomeini."

The Hezbollah claims no precise political organization. They are notorious among the public as the shock troops... and serve as the tool of the extreme right faction of the Islamic Republic Party, directed by Beheshti... The Hezbollah tried to prevent the gathering from taking place... They attacked the entrances to the stadium... The police and Revolutionary Guards

for once observed strict neutrality. They did not turn their forces on the attackers, but they did protect them from the Mojahedin, 10 to 20 times more numerous...

Things as they stand, the choice, according to observers, is between conciliation and civil war.⁷

Lines Are Drawn

Our enemy is neither in the United States, nor the Soviet Union, nor Kurdistan, but right here, right under our nose, in Tehran.⁸

With these words, in late June 1980 Khomeini drew the lines. "Death to the Mojahedin" became the regime's motto and *Hezbollah* stepped up its attacks on the organization's centers, all legal. Two weeks prior, on June 12, 1980, in the famous speech, "What's to be done?" at Tehran's Amjadieh stadium, Massoud Rajavi had exhorted the crowd of 200,000 gathered in and out of the stadium, to "defend freedoms... freedom of speech, associations and gatherings."⁹ The non-violent resistance of thousands of Mojahedin supporters effectively frustrated the *Pasdaran* effort to disrupt the meeting with tear gas and live ammunition. Their assault left one dead, hundreds wounded and thousands beaten up, arousing the public's sympathy for the Mojahedin and disdain for the regime's crime. Even Khomeini's son, Ahmad, condemned the Revolutionary Guards' action as "treachery to Islam." The Police Chief, Deputy Interior Minister and a number of *Majlis* deputies condemned the attack. A flood of letters and telegrams of condemnation from different political organizations, various sectors of society, and members of the business community were reprinted in the media, greatly alarming Khomeini. He had to make a choice: Either back down, or step up the political onslaught on the Mojahedin. A week later, the Mojahedin revealed a tape-recording of a speech by Hassan Ayat, one of the leaders of the ruling party, in which he revealed the details of the plots. Khomeini hedged no longer, and on June 25, 1980, pointed his finger at enemy number one. The Mojahedin, he said, "are worse than infidels."

Even the organization's health clinics soon came under attack. There were more deaths and injuries, and thousands of arrests.¹⁰ Responding to a letter of complaint by Mojahedin supporters in August 1980, when the organization still engaged in public activities, Mullah Allameh, head of the revolutionary court of Bam, in southern Iran, wrote: "According to the decree of Imam Khomeini, the Mojahedin of

Iran are infidels and worse than blasphemers... They have no right to life."¹¹

Mohammad Yazdi, head of the regime's Judiciary, referred to Khomeini's order to massacre the Mojahedin and their supporters, issued months before it became public, as follows:

The Imam's hand-written judicial order condemned the [Mojahedin] - the totality of the organization and its infrastructure, and not individuals - so that there would be no hesitation in terming the activities by these individuals as waging war on God and corruption on Earth [and carrying out their execution orders].¹²

Shaul Bakhash writes about the events of that era in his book, *The Reign of the Ayatollahs*:

In February 1980, 60,000 copies of *Mojahed* were seized and burned. In Mashad, Shiraz, Qa'emshahr, Sari, and dozens of small towns, club wielders attacked and looted Mojahedin headquarters, student societies, and meetings. Since the Mojahedin meetings were often large, these attacks turned into huge melees. Some 700 were injured in the attack on the Mojahedin headquarters at Qa'emshahr in April, 400 in Mashad. Ten members of the organization lost their lives in clashes between February and June 1980.

Preachers were often the instigators of these attacks. In Qom, anti-Mojahedin marches took place after sermons by Mohammad Taqi Falsafi and Mohammad-Javad Bahonar. In Behshahr, the Mojahedin were attacked after a sermon by Fakhr ad-Din Hejazi. Hojjat ol-Eslam Khaz'ali moved from town to town to preach against the Mojahedin. "If they do not repent," he told a crowd in Shahrud, "take them and throw them in the Caspian Sea." He accused the Mojahedin of being communists, taking part in the Kurdish uprising, killing Revolutionary Guardsmen, and misleading young girls. "Even if they hide in a mouse hole," he told a Mashad congregation, "we will drag them out and kill them... We are thirsty for their blood. We must close off their jugular."...

[Khomeini] was suspicious of the Mojahedin's growing strength and disapproved of their attempts, as laymen, to appropriate to themselves the authority to interpret Islamic doctrine. In June 1980, Khomeini publicly denounced the Mojahedin as polytheists and hypocrites and contemptuously referred to Rajavi as "this lad who calls himself the leader." The Mojahedin responded by quietly closing all their branch offices and retreating further underground.¹³

Ervand Abrahamian describes the Mojahedin's political behavior as "non-confrontationalist,"¹⁴ despite the numerous attacks carried

out against them with Khomeini's blessing. He also refers to the occupation of Mojahedin offices in Ahwaz, Bushehr, Abadan, and Isfahan in the first year of Khomeini's rule, noting that the *Hezbollahis* attempted to take over the Mojahedin headquarters in Tehran, but failed due to popular support for the movement.¹⁵ Referring to Khomeini's speech in March 1980, the author writes,

The hezbollahis, no doubt prompted by the IRP, waged war on the Mojahedin. They assaulted Mojahedin offices, printing presses, and election rallies in Tehran, Rasht, Gorgan, Hamadan, Mianeh, Mashhad, Shiraz, Isfahan, Kermanshah, Khomein, Malayer, and Qiyamshahr (Shahi). These attacks caused three deaths and over 1000 casualties. The attack on the Tehran rally, which drew 200,000 participants, left twenty-three Mojahedin sympathizers seriously injured.¹⁶

The Mojahedin, however, refrained from any confrontation and "participated eagerly in the parliamentary elections."¹⁷ In mentioning the mullahs' propaganda campaign against the Mojahedin, Abrahamian adds,

The regime used more than propaganda. The Chief Prosecutor on 2 November 1980 banned *Mojahed* for spreading slanderous lies; the paper did not appear regularly until early December when the organization established a clandestine printing press. The local komitehs tried to arrest Mojahedin leaders; most had already gone underground, but many prominent sympathizers and the middle-level organizers were detained and executed after June 1981. The pasdars closed down Mojahedin offices and disrupted their rallies by shooting into crowds and making mass arrests. By early June 1981, the prisons - especially in Tehran, the central cities, and the Caspian towns - contained more than 1,180 Mojaheds...

Furthermore, the hezbollahis, most probably under IRP instructions, began a reign of terror. They shot news stand owners selling Mojahedin publications; beat up suspected sympathizers; bombed homes (including that of the Rezai family); broke into the offices of the Muslim Student Association; disrupted conferences, especially the Congress of Trade Unions; and physically attacked meetings, shouting "Hypocrites are more dangerous than infidels." By 20 June 1981 these hezbollahi attacks, together with the pasdar shootings, had left seventy-one mojaheds dead...

On 27 April, the Mojahedin organized a mass march in central Tehran to protest both the closing down of Bani-Sadr's newspaper and the killing of four demonstrators in Qiyamshahr (Shahi). The march, which attracted over 150,000... waved banners declaring, "Justice for the Qiyamshahr victims"... Clearly, the regime was losing control on the streets. The following day, the Chief Prosecutor banned all future Mojahedin demonstrations...

Democracy Betrayed

In an open letter to Ayatollah Khomeini the Mojahedin reiterated their past complaints; listed those killed by the hezbollahis; pointed out that not a single one of the killers had been brought to justice; and, protesting the ban on street demonstrations, warned that if all peaceful avenues were closed off they would have no choice but to return to "armed struggle." In a letter to the president the Mojahedin exhorted Bani-Sadr, as the "highest state authority", to protect the rights of citizens, especially their right to demonstrate peacefully.¹⁸

Referring to the events of 1979-81, the State Department acknowledges these facts in its December 1984 report:

The Mujahedin have never accepted the Khomeini regime as an adequate Islamic government. When Khomeini took power, the Mujahedin called for continued revolution, but said they would work for change within the legal framework of the new regime. The Mujahedin publications emphasized their unique role as an urban guerrilla force that promised to enter candidates for the highest offices under the new political system. The Mojahedin also entered avidly into the national debate on the structure of the new Islamic regime. The Mujahedin unsuccessfully sought a freely elected constituent assembly to draft a constitution.

The Mujahedin similarly made an attempt at political participation when Mujahedin leader Masud Rajavi ran for the presidency in January 1980. Rajavi was forced to withdraw when Ayatollah Khomeini ruled that only candidates who had supported the constitution in the December referendum - which the Mojahedin had boycotted- were eligible. Rajavi's withdrawal statement emphasized the group's efforts to conform to election regulations and reiterated the Mojahedin's intention to advance its political aims within the new legal system.

In March and May 1980, Rajavi and several other Mujahedin ran in Tehran for the Islamic Assembly (*Majlis*). Moussa Khiabani, Rajavi's deputy, ran in Tabriz, and others ran in the north, where the group was strong. The Mujahedin attempted to demonstrate their broadened appeal by running on their ticket several moderate political figures...

Between the two election rounds, the Mujahedin announced that its members would disarm to prove that they were not initiating the clashes with the fundamentalists that had become endemic during the campaign. The fundamentalists responded by once again banning Mujahedin representatives from the university campuses. The group's allegations that vote tallies had been altered to deny Rajavi and Khiabani victories, were ignored.

Rajavi then began to hint that the Mujahedin were considering active opposition to the Khomeini regime. In the early summer of 1980 the Mujahedin staged several rallies in Tehran drawing up to 150,000 people to hear Rajavi promise to carry on the opposition to fundamentalist domination.

Freedom Fighters or Terrorists?

On June 25 Khomeini responded by a major statement against the Mujahedin, claiming their activities would derail the revolution and bring back "US dominance."¹⁹

For a year after Khomeini's remarks, the Mojahedin continued to work for democracy through peaceful political means. This era ended on June 20, 1981, when heavily armed Guards turned a peaceful demonstration called in Tehran by the Mojahedin into a blood bath. The day's events are recounted by Abrahamian:

On 20 June, vast crowds appeared in many cities, especially in Tehran, Tabriz, Rasht, Amol, Qiyamshahr, Gorgan, Babolsar, Zanzan, Karaj, Arak, Isfahan, Birjand, Ahwaz and Kerman. The Tehran demonstration, drew as many as 500,000 determined participants. Warnings against demonstrations were constantly broadcast over the radio-television network. Government supporters advised the public to stay at home: for example, Nabavi's Organization of the Mojaheds of the Islamic Revolution²⁰ beseeched the youth of Iran not to waste their lives for the sake of "liberalism and capitalism." Prominent clerics declared that demonstrators, irrespective of their age, would be treated as "enemies of God" and as such would be executed on the spot. Hezbollahis were armed and trucked in to block off the major streets. Pasdars were ordered to shoot. Fifty were killed, 200 injured, and 1,000 arrested in the vicinity of Tehran University alone. This surpassed most of the street clashes of the Islamic Revolution. The warden of Evin Prison announced with much fanfare that firing squads had executed twenty-three demonstrators, including a number of teenage girls. The reign of terror had begun.²¹

Resistance Against Tyranny

Thus, only after exhausting all peaceful avenues of political activity—and being denied all the legitimate rights of an ordinary citizen or a legitimate political movement—did the Mojahedin act, on the basis of their inalienable rights as stipulated in the Preamble to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, namely "to have recourse, as a last resort, to rebellion against tyranny and oppression,"²² and took up arms.

The right has also been recognized by the Catholic Church, which in general opposes the use of violence. In a press conference in 1986, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, the President of the Pontifical Biblical Commission, introduced a document called "Christian Liberty and Liberation," wherein it is specified: "Armed struggle is the last resort

to end blatant and prolonged oppression which has seriously violated the fundamental rights of individuals and has dangerously damaged the general interests of a country."²³ In his inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln also stressed, "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing Government, they can exercise their constitutional right of amending it or their revolutionary right to dismember or overthrow it."²⁴

Even after thousands of executions by the Khomeini regime, Massoud Rajavi still expressed the movement's willingness to abandon armed resistance in a 1984 interview:

The Islam that we profess does not condone bloodshed. We have never sought, nor do we welcome confrontation and violence. To explain, allow me to send a message to Khomeini through you... My message is this: If Khomeini is prepared to hold truly free elections, I will return to my homeland immediately. The Mojahedin will lay down their arms to participate in such elections. We do not fear election results, whatever they may be.

Before the start of armed struggle, we tried to utilize all legal means of political activity, but suppression compelled us to take up arms. If Khomeini had allowed half or even a quarter of the freedoms presently enjoyed in France, we would certainly have achieved a democratic victory.²⁵

In contrast, Hashemi-Rafsanjani had spelled out the regime's policy on the Mojahedin in a much earlier statement as follows:

Divine law defines our sentences for them, which must be carried out: 1- kill them, 2- hang them, 3- cut off their arms and legs, 4- banish them. Had we caught and executed 200 of them just after the revolution, they would not have multiplied so much.²⁶

Under such circumstances, the options for any democratic force are clear: resistance or surrender. Those who, for whatever reason, deny the right to resist and brand it violence or terrorism, wittingly or unwittingly are advocating submission to the mullahs' dictatorship. The right to resort to violence when all peaceful political avenues are blocked is an internationally recognized principle, for a political movement or government; the U.S. State Department has acknowledged this right for many countries and opposition groups.

The Iranian Resistance's position on blind terrorism and indiscriminate violence has always been clear. It strongly condemns

actions that threaten the lives of innocent people. Contrary to the report's allegations, the Mojahedin have never engaged in activities, in Iran or abroad, that endanger the lives of innocent civilians. In the past 14 years, they have issued hundreds of statements denouncing such activities as hijacking, bombing, etc. Abroad, where all can openly engage in political activity, it is the Khomeini regime that has pursued a policy of assassinating the Resistance's activists, primarily from the Mojahedin.

In March 1994, Mohammad Mohaddessin, Chairman of the NCR Foreign Affairs Committee, wrote to Lee Hamilton, Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee:

I wish to reiterate what the NCR President, Mr. Massoud Rajavi, has repeatedly stressed: The National Council of Resistance of Iran vehemently condemns terrorism in all forms and under whatever pretexts; all NCR members are bound by this principle. Even in confronting the religious, terrorist dictatorship ruling Iran, which Secretary of State Warren Christopher has accurately described as an "international outlaw," we have respected this principle and remain committed to it. As a result, although many Resistance activists have been assassinated by the regime's abroad, we have never reciprocated in kind, and have referred instead the matter to judicial authorities and the international community.²⁷

Accusing the Iranian Resistance of terrorism is rather like accusing the movement for American independence, or the French Résistance against the Nazi occupation, of terrorism. In all likelihood, the regimes of King George and Adolf Hitler did just that.

Therefore, a review of the Iranian situation between 1979 and 1981, even solely on the basis of sources accepted by the State Department, reveals that the report's authors have blatantly and rather shamefully distorted the facts in claiming that after the Mojahedin lost political power to the mullahs, "they then applied their dedication to armed struggle and the use of propaganda against the new Iranian government, launching a violent and polemical cycle of attack and reprisal."²⁸ The Mojahedin are not dedicated to armed struggle. As stated, if democratic political freedoms existed in Iran as they do in the West, there would have been no need to resort to arms. Unfortunately, in their quest to appease Tehran, the authors appear determined to portray the Khomeini regime as the Mojahedin's victim, going so far as to state: "The swath of terror cut by the MKO

was matched by an equally ruthless response from the Khomeini regime, many of whose current leaders - including Rafsanjani and Khamenei - were injured in these attacks."²⁹ The proceeding is an astonishing example of fabrication within distortion. For the record, Rafsanjani and Khamenei were the targets of assassinations in 1979 and 81 respectively, before the Mojahedin's armed resistance had even begun. The attempts were made by an extremist religious group named *Forqan*, and were in no way related to the Mojahedin. How else to explain this fabrication if not as an attempt to portray Iran's "current leaders - including Rafsanjani and Khamenei" as "victims" of the Mojahedin? Such a portrayal can only seek to legitimize the crimes of these "leaders" against the Mojahedin and the Iranian people.

Attacks at Home

The distorted account continues by accusing the Mojahedin of attacking "civilians"³⁰ inside Iran. Referring to international news services, the authors lay the blame for a series of bombings on the organization. The news services cited, however, had simply quoted the regime, and reported the Mojahedin's denials.³¹ *The Los Angeles Times* wrote: "The news agency (IRNA) blamed the blast on 'agents of international imperialism' - a reference to anti-government underground groups such as the Moujahedeen, Iran's main opposition group. However, in a statement issued in Paris after Tuesday's blast, the Moujahedeen charged that the bomb had been planted by the Iranian government 'in order to blemish the image of the Iranian people's just resistance.'"³²

Some media reports had independently confirmed that the bombings could not be attributed to the Mojahedin. The next day, *The Los Angeles Times*, reprinting the same Associated Press story the State Department cites, wrote: "In Athens on Wednesday, a previously unknown Iranian group calling itself SYS claimed responsibility for the two car bomb attacks. An anonymous caller told the Associated Press that the group is a nationalist organization that aims to make Iran as uncomfortable as possible for the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini."³³ The article adds: The "Moujahedeen maintains that it does not engage in indiscriminate attacks that injure innocent civilians,"³⁴ and notes that the regime had also blamed the U.S. for the explosions. The *Times* then carries the U.S. denial.

So there we have it. Eight years after an event for which the ruling regime blamed both the Mojahedin and U.S., the incident is being used by the U.S. State Department against the Mojahedin.

Over the past 15 years, in literally thousands of news reports, the clerical regime has attributed bombings in public places to the Mojahedin. An independent study by the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group examined the facts, laying bare the regime's policy of blaming the opposition for its own terrorist acts, such as the 1994 explosion at Imam Reza's shrine.³⁵ The U.N. Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities also held the regime accountable.³⁶ Reporting to the U.N. General Assembly, the Special Representative of the Commission on Human Rights ridiculed the regime's allegations against the Mojahedin:

When political crimes are involved, it should be borne in mind that the perpetrators will try to protect themselves by dragging in red herrings and that incriminating others is usually part of the preparation and planning of a political crime. It is best, therefore, to be suspicious of very obvious clues, as is the case of the woman attempting to flee the country through the Zahedan area carrying evidence relating to the murder of Reverend Michaelian.³⁷

The resolution subsequently adopted by the 49th session of the U.N. General Assembly tacitly blamed the Tehran regime for the murder of several Christian leaders, angering the mullahs' foreign ministry.³⁸

In reference to the explosion at Khomeini's tomb in 1992, the State Department report claims that the site is visited daily by thousands of Iranians, although the regime announced that at the time of the explosion, nobody was inside and there were "no casualties."³⁹ In its concern about these "daily visits by thousands of people,"⁴⁰ the Department appears more Catholic than the Pope. It is worth mentioning that the regime has persistently tried to liken Khomeini's tomb to the shrines of the Shi'ite Imams, expending enormous amounts of money and publicity in a bid to justify and whitewash its patriarch's crimes. Comparisons equating the tomb of the most despised despot in the world with the shrines of holy religious figures are deeply resented by the Iranian people. The explosion at Khomeini's tomb by Resistance supporters was an expression of popular hatred of the regime's abuse of Islam and historical figures.

Attacks Abroad

The report claims that Mojahedin sympathizers "occasionally carry out violent attacks against Iranian government targets located in the West."⁴¹ It further states that Mojahedin members stormed the regime's diplomatic missions in a "coordinated wave of attacks" in April of 1992.⁴² The passage borrows heavily from a news article printed at the time, but fails to mention the subsequent legal proceedings that disprove the claims contained therein.

What are the facts? On April 5, 1992, thirteen Iranian fighter jets launched an air strike on a National Liberation Army base along the Iran-Iraq border strip.⁴³ The air raid was a blatant violation of U.N. Security Council resolution 598 for a cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq War. According to information published at the time, the regime's fighter jets passed through the no-fly zone, rather than central Iraq, to launch a surprise attack on resistance forces and inflict a maximum number of casualties. They flew over the base for 50 minutes, dropping 30 tons of bombs. The Saudi daily *Asharq Al-Awsat* wrote that the mullahs' regime had informed the U.S. State Department 24 hours prior to the bombardment.⁴⁴ The State Department never denied this report, nor did it condemn the attack.

The Tehran regime subsequently announced that 1,500 NLA combatants, including the Iranian Resistance's leader, had been killed in the attack.⁴⁵ The report sent shock waves through Iranian communities around the world. Many had friends and relatives volunteering in the NLA. In a matter of hours, the regime's embassies became scenes of protest. In several cases, these escalated into clashes between embassy employees and irate protesters. The incidents were not in any way organized by the People's Mojahedin Organization, and were completely spontaneous. To support its account, the State Department refers to a FBIS translation of a news report broadcast by Voice of Mojahed radio. FBIS had inaccurately translated the report, in which regard the Mojahedin lodged a formal protest at the time.⁴⁶ The actual radio broadcast never indicated the Mojahedin were responsible for the attacks.

Many of the individuals who took part in the protests were arrested by the police and later tried. In many countries, they were either acquitted or received light or suspended sentences. The key point, however, is that none of the courts evaluated these acts of

protest as a premeditated crime organized by the Mojahedin, including the court in New York. The judge in that case granted the accused utmost leniency after determining that there had been no premeditation. A court in Canada examined the case of 21 Iranians who had staged a protest against the Iranian embassy in Ottawa. In his ruling, Judge Pierre Mercier wrote: "There was no evidence the 21 accused belong to the dissident Iranian group Mujahedeen Khalq or as the Crown has alleged any terrorist group."⁴⁷ He added: "The protesters had reason to be angry given the atrocities many endured under the regime of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini..." The court also criticized the government for prolonging the case for political reasons.⁴⁸ Similar verdicts were issued in other countries. The State Department would have been better advised to respect the rulings of distinguished judges in Ottawa, New York, Paris, Stockholm, Oslo, Bonn, Bern, etc., and stay out of a judicial matter that had been investigated and deliberated for months and years by hundreds of lawyers, judges, prosecutors and juries.

Regrettably, the Department's total insensitivity toward the bombardment of an NLA base - violating U.N. Security Council resolution 598 and resulting in casualties and touching off this series of events - arouses suspicions about the motives behind these allegations. The non-reaction to the air strike emboldened the clerical regime to attack NLA bases on several other occasions.

The report also writes, "In December 1993, the Mojahedin stated they mistook two Turkish officials in Baghdad for Iranian diplomats and shot them dead."⁴⁹ Unfortunately, the authors have again refrained from addressing the facts. It is a matter of fact that in the circumstances ensuing from the Gulf war, the Mojahedin have been the targets of over 30 terrorist attacks in Iraq by the regime's agents. On the day of the incident in question, an automobile belonging to the regime's embassy in Baghdad approached one of the offices of the Mojahedin. The same office had been attacked shortly before by Khomeini's diplomat-terrorists using the same embassy car. The security guard at the office ordered the car to halt, but his warnings went unheeded. The guard reacted by firing at what he thought was a potential car bombing of the office. Unfortunately, one of the passengers was killed, not two as claimed in the report. Investigations later revealed that the automobile had been purchased by the Turkish diplomats a few days before the incident, and still carried the mullahs'

diplomatic license plates. The regime's embassy, of course, had not informed the Turkish diplomats of the car's past involvement in terrorist activities. The Mojahedin contacted the Turkish embassy at the time, to convey their condolences and apologies for the tragic mistake, and to inform the Turks of the details of the incident.

The November trial of two Mojahedin guards who fired on the Turkish diplomats clarified the record. Firstly, it was established that the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs had issued written warnings to the Khomeini regime's embassy on four separate occasions, demanding its diplomatic cars refrain from entering areas adjacent to the Mojahedin's offices. Secondly, the representative of the Turkish embassy in Baghdad testified that the slain diplomat had been advised not to use the car before removing the former license plates and affixing Turkish diplomatic plates. Thirdly, Iraqi guards testified that the car had been ordered to stop twice at the corner leading to the vicinity of the Mojahedin's office in Baghdad, but the driver had disregarded these warnings.

Again, the authors' accusations of Mojahedin terrorism serve to whitewash the mullahs' record. The results of investigations into numerous cases of terrorist activity by the mullahs' embassies in Baghdad, Switzerland, France, Germany and Italy, in addition to the various terrorist conspiracies that have gone to trial in Europe, lead one to reasonably conclude that Khomeini's diplomats are likely to attack the Mojahedin whenever given an opportunity.

After the publication of the report, a copy of a letter addressed to President Clinton by an Iranian supporter of the Resistance was received by the NCR's Representative Office in Washington. The Iranian stresses in his letter that he had met with Christopher Henzel of the Department's Near East Bureau before the report's publication. Mr. Henzel had asked him to provide some documents on the murder of the Turkish diplomat in Baghdad, which he promptly did. The author of the letter to the President has also questioned the impartiality of the report.⁵⁰

This section of the State Department's report is insidiously crafted to lead to the conclusion that there exists a "cycle of violent attacks and reprisals;"⁵¹ in other words, the regime's brutal crimes against the Iranian people and opposition are a consequence of the Mojahedin's military operations. The logic has been extended to foreign countries as well, where the regime's terrorism is also in

response to the Mojahedin's "violent attacks against Iranian government targets located in the West."⁵² The section entitled "Attacks in the West" expounds on the "wave of coordinated attacks" by "members of the Mojahedin" on "Iranian diplomatic missions," and on an "MKO attack on an automobile carrying Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati" in 1992, and "similar confrontations that have occurred in other European countries since 1991."⁵³ Significantly, there is no clarification that these "diplomats" were targeted with nothing more lethal than rotten eggs, presumably to paint a violent and terrorist picture of the Iranian Resistance. After detailing all of this, the authors devote only a few lines to summing up how "The Mojahedin also have been victims of Iranian government terrorism."⁵⁴

The Real Terrorist

"Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends [Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness], it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government...When a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security."⁵⁵ So declared America's founding fathers.

Using terms like "violence" and "terrorism," the authors fault the Iranian people for struggling to overthrow a tyrannical regime to secure their rights. In addition to executing over 100,000 people and imprisoning even more on political charges, the Khomeini regime has carried out in excess of 100 terrorist operations abroad against Iranian dissidents. The attacks have left 300 dead or wounded.⁵⁶ Some of the more noted cases, which occurred during Rafsanjani's presidency and with his expressed consent, include:

- The July 1989 assassination of Abdol Rahman Qassemloo, the leader of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran, and his companions in Vienna, Austria;⁵⁷
- The April 1990 assassination of Professor Kazem Rajavi, a distinguished human rights advocate and elder brother of the Iranian Resistance's leader, in Geneva, Switzerland;⁵⁸
- The August 1991 assassination of Shapour Bakhtiar, the shah's last Prime Minister, in Paris, France;⁵⁹

- The June 1992 abduction and murder of Ali Akbar Ghorbani, a Mojahedin member, in Istanbul, Turkey; ⁶⁰
- The September 1992 assassination of the leaders of an Iranian Kurdish group, in Berlin, Germany; ⁶¹
- The March 1993 assassination of Mohammad Hossein Naqdi, the NCR representative, in Rome, Italy; ⁶²
- The June 1993 assassination of Mohammad Hassan Arbab, a Mojahedin member, in Karachi, Pakistan.⁶³

The regime's terrorism against foreign nationals is common knowledge, and the State Department is certainly more informed than most. The most celebrated cases include the takeover of the American embassy in Tehran in 1979; the explosion of the U.S. and the French barracks in Beirut;⁶⁴ the taking of Westerners hostage in Lebanon; the decree to murder the British author Salman Rushdie; and the assassination attempts on his Norwegian publisher and Italian and Japanese translators.

The officials of the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs Bureau have often expressed a rationale that says opposition to the mullahs' export of fundamentalism and terrorism does not justify support for the Mojahedin, who also use violence and terrorism. Such logic is puzzling from a Department which talks to, negotiates with, and even supports some of the world's most violent, anti-democratic forces, who have no scruples about using violence or blind terrorism. Topping the list is the regime in Iran, with whom the officials of the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau so fervently seek a dialogue.

Although the statement that the Mojahedin and the Tehran regime simultaneously engage in terrorism may at first glance appear innocuous, but a closer look confirms that the State Department is not at all serious in its opposition to the regime. It is the Department that is always pleading for dialogue - with no preconditions no less, and the regime saying nay. For every 10 statements, letters or "fact sheets" the Near East Bureau has issued on alleged Mojahedin use of "terrorism," there is seldom one against the mullahs and their untamed terrorism. One might well ask, who is the real terrorist in Iran and the Middle East, the Khomeini regime or the Mojahedin?

If the United States genuinely believes that the Tehran regime is an "international outlaw" and the "main source of terrorism," and seeks to confront it, the worst possible approach is hostility toward

that regime's victims. There are few means available in the fight against this outlaw. Pressure, restrictions, and an international arms, oil, and technological embargo are all needed, but not enough to bring about change toward democracy and respect for international norms and covenants. The Iranian people and their resistance are the decisive factor; they will have the final say about change. Though some may not like it, international recognition of the Iranian people's Resistance is the only way to expedite change toward democracy, peace and stability in Iran and the region.

Fortunately, many U.S. senators and congressmen have endorsed the just and righteous resistance of the Mojahedin and National Council of Resistance in declarations or letters to Massoud Rajavi. A House majority wrote in summer 1992: "The NCR, backed by its military wing, the National Liberation Army of Iran, backed by the populace, and in step with strikes and demonstrations over the past few months within Iran, is capable of establishing freedom and democracy in Iran."⁶⁵ In autumn of the same year, 62 senators referred to the congressional statement, adding,

Resolutions by the U.N. Human Rights Subcommittee and the European Parliament deplored the continuing increase in terrorist activities against dissidents abroad, including the failed plot in December 1991 to assassinate Mr. Massoud Rajavi, President of the National Council of Resistance of Iran. On April 5, 1992, the Rafsanjani government, alarmed at the spread of popular protests, crossed international borders... We are convinced that the time has come for the free world to join together against the human rights abuses of the Iranian regime. Recently, a majority of the members of the U.S. House of Representatives, and 1,300 parliamentarians from 19 other countries issued statements condemning the violations of human rights in Iran and supporting the Iranian people's Resistance.⁶⁶

162 members of the House of Representatives wrote a letter to Mr. Massoud Rajavi when his brother, Dr. Kazem Rajavi was assassinated: "We...ask you as the Leader of the Iranian Resistance, to assure your countrymen that we support their peaceful and democratic aims."⁶⁷ In a letter to Mr. Rajavi in June 1984, Senator Edward Kennedy stressed: "... The Iranian people are ready for change. And they are being aided by your efforts to promote goals of peace, democracy and freedom in Iran. There are many in America who support these goals in Iran; and who feel a great sense of

Democracy Betrayed

solidarity with the Iranian people who have suffered so greatly."⁶⁸

If, however, the State Department prefers to deal with the religious, terrorist dictatorship ruling Iran rather than the Iranian people and Resistance, so be it. The Mojahedin and National Council of Resistance will go their own way, relying on the people of Iran and not slackening the pace towards the regime's overthrow and establishment of a democratic, pluralistic government in Iran.