

VIII

Mojahedin & Iraq

In the broadest sense, the Iranian people's Resistance consists of three sections. Its social section, under the direction of the Resistance's command headquarters inside Iran, is based underground in Tehran and other Iranian cities. The political arm of the Resistance has offices in Europe and North America. The Resistance's President-elect, Mrs. Maryam Rajavi, the NCR's central office, and its 18 committees are in Paris. There are also offices of the President-elect in Europe and North America. The military arm of the Resistance, the National Liberation Army of Iran, is based along the Iran-Iraq border frontier.

As for the Mojahedin, some of its sections are in Iran and others operate from the border region within the framework of the National Liberation Army. Abroad, the offices and chapters of the Mojahedin were dissolved in 1994 and all members and facilities put at the disposal of the President-elect's offices.¹ Only the organization's press spokesmen are presently abroad.

Iran-Iraq War

When the Iran-Iraq War erupted and Iraqi forces crossed into Iran in 1980, the Mojahedin condemned the occupation of Iranian territory, declared their readiness to defend the homeland and immediately dispatched large numbers of their members and supporters to the southern and western fronts. From the very first weeks of the war, the Revolutionary Guards harassed and mistreated the Mojahedin fighters, arresting many. In a series of articles in November 1980, *Mojahed*, newspaper declared the organization's readiness to continue fighting at the fronts, but warned against further arrests and imprisonment.

A State Department unclassified report sent to Chairman Hamilton in 1984 noted: "Iraq invaded Iran (September 1980)... Mujahedin units went to the front immediately. They were tolerated by the fundamentalists only in the first hectic days of the war, and most were soon expelled."² During the war, a number of Mojahedin supporters were killed and many captured. Years later, when Iraq was preparing to release all Iranian POWs in 1989, these Mojahedin completed the necessary legal processing and returned to the ranks of the organization.

In June 1982, Iraqi forces withdrew from Iranian territory to behind the international borders. From then on, only Khomeini and his regime insisted on perpetuating the war. Coining slogans about "liberating Qods via Karbala," the regime made the most of the conflict to clamp a lid on domestic dissent. After June 1982, the Mojahedin saw no reason for continued hostilities. Characterizing the conflict as an unpatriotic war contrary to the interests of the Iranian people, they demanded an end to the fighting. Since the regime's reluctant acceptance of a cease-fire in 1988, its officials have gradually acknowledged the terrible price paid for prolonging hostilities. Over 1,000 billion dollars in economic damages³, and several million casualties and refugees attest to the validity of the Iranian Resistance and Mojahedin's opposition to the war. Today, their position is supported by all Iranians.

NCR Peace Policy

On January 9, 1983, Tariq Aziz, then Deputy Prime Minister of Iraq, met with Massoud Rajavi, the NCR President, at the latter's residence in Auvers-sur-Oise, France. The two issued a joint communiqué on the need for a cease-fire and a solution to end the devastating conflict. The statement reads in part: "Sayed Aziz explained to Mr. Rajavi the position of Iraq in sincere desire to realize peace between Iraq and Iran, on the basis of full independence and territorial integrity, respect of the free will of the people of Iraq and the people of Iran..."⁴

Mr. Rajavi "explained the views held by the just resistance of the Iranian people, about the peaceful settlement of the disputes between the two countries which might be achieved through direct negotiations between the two sides within the framework of the sovereignty and the territorial integrity of both countries regarding the mutual respect

by both countries of the non-intervention policy in the other's internal affairs and their respective neighbourly relations...⁵ He stressed that the Khomeini regime will not accept peace unless in the position of absolute desperation and weakness. Reiterating his condemnation of every sort of harassment of civilians, Mr. Rajavi asked the Iraqi government to take into consideration the immunity and the security of Iranian cities, villages and defenseless civilians. He also requested particular attention, in conformity with the Geneva Convention, to the case of Iranian POWs, especially the military personnel.⁶

On March 13, 1983, the NCR presented a peace plan, unanimously adopted by its members. It states: "The National Council of Resistance hereby declares that it considers the 1975 Treaty (preceded by the Algiers agreement the same year) and the land and river borders stipulated in the aforementioned treaty as the basis of a just and permanent peace between the two countries."⁷ The NCR declaration underscored the need for an "immediate declaration of cease-fire," "withdrawal by both countries of their forces to the border lines as specified in the protocols on Re-demarcation of Land Borders between Iran and Iraq and the protocol on Demarcation of Iran-Iraq Water Borders and the Descriptive Minutes of the Maps and Aerial Photographs," "exchange of all prisoners of war within a maximum period of three months after the declaration of the cease-fire," and "taking the question of determining the damages due to the war to the International Court of Justice in order to determine the damages due to the war and the manner in which Iran's rights should be met."

On March 21, 1983, the Iraqi government formally replied to the NCR peace plan. Published by the Iraqi media on the same date, the statement read: "We hail the peace initiative expressed in the Council's statement and would like to express Iraq's desire to realize peace and to cooperate with the Council or any Iranian to that end, and to establish relations on firm grounds."⁸ The official spokesman, the Minister of Culture and Information, announced: "Iraq is ready to look into these points and has the true and honest desire to reach a just agreement with the National Council or any competent Iranian authority yearning for peace."⁹

A new chapter had been opened in the Iran-Iraq war. The National Council of Resistance had signed a peace accord with Iraq, and Khomeini's belligerence had been dealt a strategic blow. Subsequently, the Council and Mojahedin embarked on an extensive peace

campaign, from 1983 to 1986, in and out of Iran. In its April 1, 1984, declaration, unanimously approved, the NCR stressed: "The meeting between NCR President Rajavi and the Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, the proposal of a peace plan and efforts to have it adopted by international bodies and organizations, the campaign focusing on the need for peace in Iran, the calls for soldiers to disobey Khomeini's belligerent agents and desert the war fronts to join the Resistance's forces, and the calls for a halt in the bombings of cities and villages - are not only approved, but admired. Consistent with its program and that of the future provisional government, the National Council of Resistance, as the sole democratic alternative, will do its utmost to pursue its plan on the basis of safeguarding the Iranian people's interests and welfare. The NCR considers the policy of vigorous promotion of peace as tantamount to patriotism and humanitarianism." Resistance supporters demonstrated and rallied in various Iranian cities. The regime's war mobilization began to wind down, as more and more people refused to go to the fronts.

Internationally, the Iranian Resistance's tremendous effort against Khomeini's bellicosity bore fruit. On the third anniversary of the joint communiqué and NCR peace plan, more than 5,000 distinguished political figures; 221 parties, unions, syndicates, associations and assemblies from 57 countries the world over signed a universal declaration, condemning the "warlike policies," of the "medieval" Khomeini regime and expressing support for

The peace plan of 13 March 1983 that was presented by Mr. Massoud Rajavi, leader of Iranian Resistance, ...broadly welcomed by the Iranian people and also has so far drawn extensive international support. It has received the backing of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Resolution No. 849 dated 30 September 1985), the European Parliament (Document B2-527/85 dated 11 June 1985) and over 3,000 political parties, organizations and personalities.¹⁰

Some 60% of the signatories to this universal declaration were parliamentarians, representing over 500 million people throughout the world. Labor unions endorsing the Peace declaration expressed the abhorrence of millions of workers toward Khomeini who was continuing the war "in order to suppress the rising nationwide Resistance of the Iranian people."¹¹ At least 60 ministers and deputy ministers; 11 leaders, presidents and vice-presidents of the Christian

Democrat, Liberal and Socialist international; scores of parliament speakers and hundreds of parliamentary group leaders; as well as 210 members of the European Parliament and 48 members of the Council of Europe endorsed the statement. A list of the signatories was published in 1986 by the National Council of Resistance of Iran.¹²

Mullahs React

The Iranian Resistance's anti-war campaign inside Iran and the giant strides it took internationally, made life miserable for Khomeini. No longer could his regime tolerate the presence of the Resistance's leader in France. Using a combination of hostages, blackmail and concessions, the regime did its utmost to curb Mr. Rajavi's activities in France.

In December 1984, a Kuwaiti airliner was hijacked by the Khomeini regime's operatives, leading to the death of two passengers. The French daily *Le Monde*, wrote:

In the view of [the regime's prime minister] Mr. Moussavi, the extradition of the hijackers will not be considered so long as the leader of the terrorists... is not extradited. Without mentioning any names, the prime minister is referring to Mr. Massoud Rajavi, the Mujahedin leader, who is a political refugee in France.¹³

In July 1985, Tehran radio reported that "in a gathering of the ambassadors and chargé d'affaires of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Europe and the U.S.," attended by the foreign minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, the regime's prime minister had declared: "Today, extensive support is accorded to grouplets that oppose the Islamic Republic of Iran. Support has been expressed by representatives of the European and British parliaments as well as by the Socialists in France."¹⁴ In August the same year, Tehran radio quoted Moussavi as saying: "Internationally, the dependent grouplets create problems for us everyday... Take note that the [Mojahedin], who today enjoy the sanctuary given them by U.S. senators, French Socialists and the parliamentarians of Britain's sinister colonialism, are issuing these statements against us."¹⁵ A few weeks prior, Tehran radio quoted Rafsanjani as telling the French chargé d'affaires: "Saying 'we accept political refugees' is only an excuse... These [Mojahedin] are criminals, not political refugees."¹⁶ According to the minutes of confidential

negotiations between Rafsanjani and the French chargé d'affaires on the afternoon of March 30, 1985, published a year later in *Mojahed*, the French official informed Rafsanjani that French Foreign Minister Roland Dumas sought "balance and improvement in the relations between Tehran and France... Individuals such as Rajavi have had no contact with the Government of France, but with political parties in France, Italy, Britain and elsewhere because the Mojahedin consider themselves socialists."¹⁷

In 1985, the issue of the French hostages in Lebanon heated up, as did other terrorist threats by the Khomeini regime. This, coupled with the contacts between the regime and French government, coinciding with the Irangate affair in the U.S., resulted in new restrictions on the activities of Massoud Rajavi in Paris.

Departure to Iraq

On May 1, 1985, the French chargé d'affaires met with Ali Khamenei, then the regime's president. The Frenchman offered a report on "the latest developments in normalizing Franco-Iranian relations in view of the Islamic Republic's conditions, including giving no sanctuary to terrorists and counterrevolutionaries."¹⁸ On May 21, his Iranian counterpart in Paris met with Roland Dumas to discuss "existing differences and the presence of counterrevolutionaries in France."¹⁹ When the new French Government took office in early 1986, there were more talks and deals with the regime to secure the release of the French hostages. Thereafter, began a series of comings and goings by representatives of Tehran and Paris.

Following a series of assassinations in Paris, the Iranian chargé d'affaires declared on February 14, 1986:

We have consistently informed French officials of the presence of a number of fugitive terrorists on French soil... The French officials should take note of this, and eliminate this nest of corruption in order to ensure internal security.²⁰

A month prior, the French weekly *VSD* had run an article entitled: "Tehran ups its demands as the horrifying price for the French hostages in Lebanon: Activities of exiles will be restricted and some will even be sacrificed. Example: Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the People's Mojahedin, until now protected by two squadrons of gendarmes at his headquarters in Auvers-sur-Oise. There is a risk

that he will be one of the first to be left without any protection."²¹

On the evening of April 2, a bomb exploded a few hundred meters from Mr. Rajavi's residence. The next morning, Agence France Presse wrote: "The mayor of Auvers reiterated that unless Mr. Rajavi departs, calm will not return to Auvers-sur-Oise."²² On April 16, the French daily *La Gazette* quoted "judicial sources" as saying one of three bombers "had been a political activist of the extreme right."²³ The investigative sources said "the three" whose identity had not been revealed "wanted to protest the apparently heavy traffic on the bridge."²⁴

On April 15, through its official organ *Ettela'at*, the Khomeini regime addressed the Government of France:

If the French want to reconsider their relations with Iran, they must shut down the bases of the [Mojahedin] in France. Why should the French hold themselves captive to the Americans? Expel the [Mojahedin] from your country; the U.S. knows where to take them. You can hold on to Bakhtiar and Bani-Sadr. This is the only way that our people will think of France as a friendly country.²⁵

On April 20, *The New York Times* wrote: "French officials have said that they may limit the activities of some dissidents residing in France, including Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the People's Mojahedin."²⁶

Meanwhile, a politically bankrupt Marxist group, called the "Minority," began causing trouble in a coordinated fashion in front of the Resistance leader's residence. The free rein given to these trouble-makers and to the regime's operatives, especially in light of the explosion that had already taken place, indicated the trend of future events; further limitations on Mr. Rajavi's activities were to follow.²⁷ Residents of Auvers issued a joint statement, complaining about the "repeated rampages" by the Minority group "which has caused chaos in our township and endangered our security." Other countries, fearing abductions of their citizens, were unreceptive to the idea of providing a new location for the offices and residence of Mr. Rajavi.²⁸

The National Council of Resistance held a formal session on May 23, 1986, deciding to frustrate the regime's conspiracies and pressures. Voting unanimously to send the NCR President to the Iran-Iraq border region, the move was also undertaken to enable Mr. Rajavi to reorganize the military forces of the Iranian Resistance. On June 7,

Rajavi left France for the Iran-Iraq frontier, along with 1,000 Mojahedin members.²⁹

Meeting Iraqi President

At the airport in Baghdad, Mr. Taha Yassin Ramazan, the First Deputy Prime Minister, representing the Iraqi president, headed a delegation of senior Iraqi officials, including a number from the Revolution's Command Council, the Speaker of the Parliament, and the Foreign, Interior, Culture and Information, Higher Education, Defense and Commerce ministers, to welcome the Iranian Resistance's leader.³⁰ Subsequently, Mr. Rajavi left directly from the airport to worship at the holy Shi'ite shrines in Najaf and Karbala. On June 15, Mr. Rajavi met with President Saddam Hussein. The next day, the Iraqi media reported the meeting as their top news story. They quoted the Iraqi President as saying that Iraq's relations with the Iranian Resistance were based on "peace, mutual respect of sovereignty, respect for the right of the two peoples to choose their political and ideological ways."³¹ The Iraqi President stressed that "the leadership in Iraq respects the Iranian Resistance, its ideological and political independence, and its freedom to work to achieve its objectives."³² The Iraqi President called Mr. Rajavi "an honourable guest and a crusader of peace and good-neighbourliness between the two neighbouring countries."³³

While expressing his gratitude for "the affection he had met in Iraq," Mr. Rajavi expressed appreciation "for the Iraqi government's acceptance of the Iranian Resistance's peace plan as an acceptable basis for the start of peace negotiations."³⁴ He added that he

did not conceal the fact that several years ago the Mojahedin entered into battle against Iraqi forces, but ever since Iraq proved to Iranians and the world her readiness for peace, all weapons should have been aimed at Khomeini's regime, the only party that has wanted the war to continue. This is especially so now that the Iranian people desire the attainment of peace and world public opinion has testified to this just demand of the nations.³⁵

In the meeting, Mr. Rajavi also raised the subject of Iranian prisoners of war and asked for the "special personal care and attention of the Iraqi President."³⁶ Saddam Hussein accepted this request and issued the necessary orders.

National Liberation Army

In 1986, the military forces of the Mojahedin and Iranian Resistance had expanded significantly, requiring a reorganization. By then, the Iranian people had realized the Khomeini regime's belligerence, and public discontent over the war had spread throughout the country. The citizenry enthusiastically welcomed the Resistance's campaign for peace. The Mojahedin and Mr. Rajavi's move to the Iranian frontier generated a new morale and a sense of hope among the people of Iran. On the one hand, the Resistance and its leadership were more accessible than in Paris, thousands of kilometers away. On the other, for the first time, Iranians saw the prospect for an end to the Iran-Iraq War and the establishment of peace looming. Thousands of young Iranians, men and women, rushed to join the Resistance on the border.

In June 1987, the formation of the National Liberation Army of Iran along the Iran-Iraq frontier was officially announced. NLA units had begun operations against the *Pasdaran* several months prior.

There is no credibility to the Department's contention that the presence of the Iranian Resistance's military arm in the border region runs counter to the interests of the Iranian people and consequently, has "discredited them among the Iranian polity."³⁷ Massoud Rajavi's departure for the Iran-Iraq border strip and formation of the NLA brought many advances for the Iranian Resistance. It enabled the Resistance to expose Khomeini's efforts depicting Iraq and the United States as the Iranian people's main enemy and discredit the regime's propaganda campaign aimed at blaming them for the war. Following the withdrawal of Iraq from Iranian territory and its readiness to negotiate a peaceful settlement, only Khomeini sought to prolong the war. An internal analysis of the conflict by the regime stressed that "peace, in those circumstances, was very dangerous and a victorious peace was not an option." Khomeini considered the war as a strategic weapon in his battle to hang onto power. He had repeatedly vowed to fight on as long as one building was left standing in Iran.

Essentially at the initiative of the U.S. and the United Nations Security Council's other permanent members, the body adopted a number of resolutions, including Resolution 598 in July 1987, denouncing the mullahs' belligerence and calling for an immediate cease-fire. The international consensus on the need to end the

devastating conflict is the best testament to the legitimacy of the positions taken by the Mojahedin and Iranian Resistance. Anyone remotely familiar with the U.S.'s position on the hostilities cannot but feel revulsion at the hypocrisy of the State Department's allegations today against the Mojahedin.

The Iran-Iraq War left two million casualties, three million refugees, 1,000 billion dollars in damages and destroyed 50 cities and 3,000 villages on the Iranian side alone. On the basis of an opinion poll conducted by the Iranian Resistance inside the country, 83% of Iranians opposed the war, 7% supported the conflict and the remaining 10% were neutral. Millions of Iranians endured the daily cost of the war's perpetuation with the flesh and blood of their children, and with their own homelessness, destitution and misery. Thus, the Iranian Resistance had to make peace a strategic slogan, despite the risks or adverse publicity. The Resistance was, is and will remain proud of its peace policy. Are the policy planners of the Near Eastern Bureau suggesting that the Iranian Resistance should have remained silent about Khomeini's belligerence, allowed him to dump all the nation's human and material resources into the furnace of the war? Should we have stood aside as he spread the flames of this senseless conflict throughout the region with his exported fundamentalism and Islamic caliphate? Not to mention that amid Khomeini's calls for the "liberation of Qods via Karbala," the Irangate masterminds were only adding to the regime's bellicosity by providing it with weapons.

The Kuwaiti Crisis

The ultimate test of the Mojahedin and NLA's independence came in 1990, with the Kuwait Crisis. With the whole world watching, the Iranian Resistance weathered the political storm, survived the biggest military bombardment the world has ever known, and thrust back a massive onslaught by the Khomeini regime. The circumstances would have meant the end of anything less than a truly independent, nationalist movement.

The mullahs welcomed war between their two arch enemies, Iraq and the United States. In private, they concluded that the Gulf War would be very beneficial to them. Thus, in a dirty double game, they tried to push the players toward hostilities. On the one hand, as admitted later by senior Iraqi officials, Rafsanjani and other Iranian authorities repeatedly advised their Iraqi counterparts in 1991 not

to evacuate Kuwait, assuring them of Iranian backing in the event of war against the United States.³⁸ On the other hand, the mullahs told the allied forces that Iran was on their side, and condemned the occupation of Kuwait. Meanwhile, confident of the outcome, they prepared to eliminate the Iranian Resistance on the Iran-Iraq frontier and establish a religious dictatorship in that country modeled after their own. Immediately after the end of the war, the mullahs dispatched tens of thousands of revolutionary guards into Iraq.

The Mojahedin and the Iranian Resistance had repeatedly stated that their presence in the border region was only to fight the religious, terrorist dictatorship ruling Iran. Immediately after the occupation of Kuwait and the Iraqi peace initiative to Tehran, the Mojahedin halted their radio and television broadcasts and stopped their publications. They did not want to be distracted from their main concern. Aware that the crisis would be to the detriment of the Iranian people and Resistance, the Mojahedin believed that the crisis would inevitably overshadow the problem posed by the Khomeini regime and its crimes. This soon proved to be the case, as Tehran rapidly gained concessions from both Iraq and the allied forces. Added to these were the billions of dollars in added revenues for the regime due to the rise in oil prices in 1990, enabling it to put a temporary lid on many of its economic crises.

The War of Cities

The authors of the report claim that the "National Liberation Army became a tool in Iraq's conflict with Iran."³⁹ In a feeble attempt to prove the point, the report goes on to say: "In 1984 and 1987, for example, the Iraqi government cast cease-fire proposals as a response to the requests of the 'peace-loving' Rajavi"⁴⁰ in a plan to "undercut the Iranian government's internal support."

The initial claim is without basis, which explains why the authors' attempt to support it is so preposterous. Actually, after the joint communiqué for peace was issued in 1983, Mr. Rajavi condemned the attacks by whichever side whenever the "war of cities" or other assaults on population centers flared up, inflicting damages on innocent civilians. In formal, public letters, all of which have been published, he called on the government of Iraq to halt such attacks, which he stressed,

are not only illegitimate and unnecessary, but give Khomeini the opportunity

to portray his wamongering policies as legitimate, serving to prolong his rule, and to delay the trend toward a just peace, which is impossible until this regime falls. These attacks seriously undermine our extensive movement inside Iran and worldwide for a just peace.⁴¹

On three occasions prior to the end of the war, the Iraqi Government reacted affirmatively, although only to a limited degree and with certain conditions, to these appeals.⁴² The first time, on February 14, 1984, Iraq accepted to "temporarily halt the bombing of Iranian cities for one week... due to Mr. Rajavi's peaceful gesture and as a goodwill initiative... on the condition that the Khomeini regime refrain from inflicting damages on (Iraqi) cities, villages and civilian targets."⁴³ The second time, the government of Iraq accepted Mr. Rajavi's request on the eve of *Id-al Fitr*, marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan. On both occasions, Mr. Rajavi was still residing in Paris. The third and last time, in February 1987, Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council decided to "accept Mr. Massoud Rajavi's request to temporarily halt the bombing of the cities, contingent upon the Iranian regime's reciprocal action."⁴⁴ The day before, the NCR President had appealed for the bombing halt in a meeting with the Iraqi President. The decision was referred to Iraq's Revolutionary Command Council. The next day, Iraqi media simultaneously reported the meeting and the Iraqi leadership's decision to stop the bombings.

The war of the cities had become intolerable for the Iranian public. Mr. Rajavi's intervention, resulting in a temporary halt in the attacks by Iraq, saved thousands of Iranian lives and prompted expressions of gratitude toward the Iranian Resistance's leader. Regrettably, the authors' hostility toward the Mojahedin and people of Iran is such that they have distorted an initiative that saved many innocent lives. In good conscience, such a humanitarian act, even by one's opponent or enemy, deserves respect. If, however, that is too much to ask, at the very least it should not be belittled.

Contrary to the authors' claims, the National Liberation Army of Iran has never fought in any front alongside the Iraqi army. Those who suggest otherwise overlook the obvious: After June 1982, Tehran's military operations from Faw to Suleimaniya were exclusively offensive, while Iraq was at all times on the defensive. The NLA, meanwhile, sought to destroy the regime's machinery of war and

suppression by attacking the Guards Corps' bases and centers on Iranian territory. In June 1988, the NLA conquered the town of Mehran. Some 40 journalists were on hand to report the victory.⁴⁵ Khomeini, presumably having guessed the NLA's next target, subsequently "drank the chalice of the poison of the cease-fire," to the disbelief of just about everyone.

Many foreign journalists and observers of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the United Nations, who have on a number of occasions visited the NLA bases, can attest to the Resistance's freedom of action. This is also evident in the Iranian Resistance's statements and positions. During the Iran-Iraq war, for example, when missiles were being fired, civilian targets attacked, or chemical weapons used, Massoud Rajavi repeatedly condemned the tactics "by whichever side, Iran or Iraq."⁴⁶ These facts notwithstanding, The regime itself has also acknowledged the Mojahedin and NLA's independence vis-a-vis Iraq. Two years after the Persian Gulf War, the state-controlled *Kayhan Havai* wrote:

In private circles, prominent Iraqis say that Baghdad does not have a free hand with the Mojahedin. Certainly, controlling an armed group that has impressive coordination and connections outside Iraqi territory does not seem an easy task for this country.⁴⁷

We conclude this matter with a remark by the President of Iraq in July 1988. Speaking in the presence of a number of senior Iraqi ministers and officials, he replied to claims by Khamenei, then the regime's president. Describing the Mojahedin as the most important threat to the regime, he said: "The Mojahedin are combatants, whom we respect." He further stressed that the Mojahedin have "complete independence in their decisions," adding,

To clarify the historical record, I declare that we once asked the Mojahedin a question about their homeland, Iran. Believing that their response might reveal some information about their country and possibly result in harm to the Iranian people, they flatly rejected our request. Of course we respect their position as an independent political force.⁴⁸

Weapons

The NLA's weaponry is generally war booty obtained during different operations against the *Pasdaran*. For example, during the

"Forty Stars" operation in June 1988, in which the NLA captured the Iranian city of Mehran, the army seized \$2bn. in weapons, including 200-plus tanks, personnel carriers and heavy field guns; thousands of vehicles and medium caliber weapons; thousands of tons of ammunition; and countless small caliber weapons.⁴⁹ The NLA has also purchased some of the weapons it needs.⁵⁰ Documents on purchases of \$150 million worth of weaponry, vehicles and equipment from Western countries are available and can be published. The necessary funds are entirely a product of the Iranian people's unsparing support and assistance, both in and out of Iran, and of the revenues from the Resistance's business ventures at home and abroad. Receipts for these funds are available, and have been published over the years in the Mojahedin's publications.

In short, the Mojahedin seek only the unique opportunity which Iraq's geography provides: territory with access to their homeland, on which they can train and prepare their forces to support the Iranian people's uprising and bring about the overthrow of the most sinister dictatorship in contemporary history.⁵¹ The Iranian Resistance takes great pride in this undertaking, which only enhances its prestige among the people of Iran. Without an organized military force, the Resistance *per se* would not have carried much weight and would have had to make due with sloganeering. And where should, the report's authors suggest, the thousands of male and female combatants sought by the mullahs' regime, go?

Today, nearly four years after the Persian Gulf War, the regime persists in its efforts to export terrorism and fundamentalism and to impede the Middle East peace process. Without doubt, Khomeini's heirs are the principal threat to peace and stability in the region. Taking advantage of the special regional and international circumstances in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis, the mullahs are trying to use the Mojahedin's presence in Iraq to generate animosity against them.⁵² There is, however, increasing regional and international understanding of the Iranian Resistance's presence in the Iran-Iraq border region.

Let us also recall that prior to and after the Mojahedin move to Iraq, the United States and Europe both enjoyed excellent relations with Iraq. Many American senators and senior State Department officials traveled back and forth to that country, and Iraqi officials were received by the U.S. President.

Blatant Contradiction

Some of the State Department's baseless allegations about the Mojahedin's relations with Iraq were dealt with in the first chapter. Here, let us simply add that the Department's far-fetched allegation of Mojahedin "diplomatic activity" on behalf of the Iraqis is inherently flawed and contradicts previous allegations. Having strained so hard to depict the Mojahedin and NCR as an insignificant force with no support, inside or outside of Iran, the authors undercut their own argument. Mojahedin dependence on Iraq is among the report's basic precepts. What benefit can the Iraqis gain from the diplomatic activity of a group "shunned by most Iranians"?⁵³ How is it that suddenly Iraq needs, on the international level, the political support and, in the north and south of Iraq, the military backing of so insignificant a force? Charges of Iraqi use of the Mojahedin in its conflict with Tehran are the strangest of all.⁵⁴ According to the State Department, the Mojahedin are not a serious contender and are viewed by Iranians as worse than Khomeini. Could someone please explain, in that case, to what benefit they could be used by the Iraqis in their conflict with Tehran?

It is, to say the least, something of an oxymoron for the State Department of the sole superpower in the world to issue a 41-page report on a group it describes as shunned by most Iranians and isolated internationally, while at the same time attributing such a role to that group. The facts are clear, and the authors know best that their allegations are libelous. Their quarrel with the Mojahedin is about something else entirely – the Mojahedin's political independence and refusal to compromise on principles of democracy and Iranian independence. It goes without saying that Iranian dependence on Iraq (a country approximately one fourth of Iran in size and population) is not taken seriously by any politician for various "geopolitical reasons such as the international and strategic balance of power, and other factors such as population, historical heritage, etc."⁵⁵

Iraqi Kurds

The State Department report accuses the Mojahedin of suppressing Iraqi Kurds.⁵⁶ In chapter I we have referred to the contradiction inherent to this claim, as well. To clear the air, however,

let it be said that this example confirms that the proponents of appeasement will distort even the most evident truth if politically expedient.

In the same way that they respect the autonomy of Iranian Kurds within Iran's territorial integrity, the Mojahedin support recognition of the rights of Kurds in Iraq. Massoud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq has maintained close relations with the Khomeini regime since the first days of its rule. Barzani's group had bases inside Iran, but it did not collaborate with the Khomeini regime against the Mojahedin and never challenged them. Despite encounters in the border region, both in Iran and in Iraq, Barzani's forces and the Mojahedin combatants never opened fire on one another and have maintained and continue to maintain an amicable relationship.

Jalal Talebani, another Kurdish leader and head of the Patriotic Union of Iraqi Kurdistan (PUK), unfortunately chose a different approach. He first wrote to Massoud Rajavi in early 1984, expressing a desire for good relations with the Mojahedin:

Greetings to my honorable and dear brother, Massoud Rajavi.
On behalf of the Patriotic Union of Iraqi Kurdistan (PUK) politburo, I would like to express my greetings and very best wishes to you and other Mojahedin brothers in your just struggle against the reactionary gang of zealots who rule Iran... We are therefore always ready to strengthen our good relationship with the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran (PMOI).⁵⁷

A couple of years later, however, Talebani formed an alliance with the mullahs' regime. In a letter to Hossein Ali Montazeri, then the designated successor to Khomeini, Talebani declared his sincere devotion and his group's readiness to cooperate with Tehran. In an effort to curry favor, Talebani's group carried out a number of attacks on the Mojahedin, who had bases in the Kurdish areas of Iraq as well as other regions. In July 1986, armed members of this group ambushed four Mojahedin members on the Kirkuk-Suleimaniya road, killing them in a hail of bullets. Mrs. Fatemeh Za'erian, five of whose immediate relatives were executed by the Khomeini regime, was among the victims. Her young child was badly wounded. Three months later, in October 1986, the PUK attacked Resistance combatants in Posht Asham village as they were crossing the border into Iran.⁵⁸ Ten were killed.⁵⁹ In other attacks in subsequent years, the same group killed or wounded more members of the Mojahedin

and National Liberation Army. Despite their ability to respond militarily, the Mojahedin never reciprocated.

Crisis Aftermath

During the Persian Gulf War, the Mojahedin and NLA evacuated all of their bases in the Kurdish areas in the north and the regions in the south of Iraq, concentrating their forces in the central region of the Iran-Iraq border. The move reduced the possibility of being caught up in the hostilities and precluded attacks from Khomeini's regime in different regions. Moreover, the Resistance sought to refrain from getting embroiled in internal Iraqi affairs.⁶⁰ The decision cost the Iranian Resistance millions of dollars in material damages; all of the installations it had constructed in those areas were abandoned, and the bases in the Kurdish region were later ravaged.

In the post-war era, the mullahs' regime took advantage of the circumstances to try to kill two birds with one stone – establish an Islamic Republic in Iraq and destroy the Iranian Resistance. In a full-scale attack on the NLA's bases in March 1991, seven Guards Corps divisions and brigades crossed the international borders and penetrated into Iraqi territory, attacking different NLA bases. During the bombardment, the NLA had scattered its forces, and could not, therefore, deploy all its combat capability on the battlefield. In 15 days of heavy fighting, the NLA crushed the Guards Corps' repeated offensives.

In these assaults, in addition to its own forces, the regime tried to make maximum use of its Iraqi Kurdish agents. According to a document captured from the Guards Corps, "all subordinate garrisons" were ordered to "accommodate as needed the passage" of the regime's Kurdish allies "subordinate to the Guards Corps' Ramezan garrison," where anti-Mojahedin operations are planned and directed. The Mojahedin made this document public at the time.⁶¹ Another document, dated March 7, 1991, is a congratulatory message from Brigadier Mohammad Ali Ja'fari, Commander of the 15th Ramezan Corps, on the "Islamic Revolution of the Muslim people of Iraq."⁶² In another document, on March 26, "the command of the Bassij resistance forces" ordered the "regional Bassij commanders nationwide" to "dispatch volunteer Iraqi forces to Qods garrison," set up by the Guards Corps.⁶³ The Revolutionary Guards captured by the Mojahedin in the course of these battles and the multitude of

documents seized were made available to international authorities and the news media. They provide indisputable proof that the mullahs were intent on destroying the Mojahedin at all costs.

As far as the Iraqi Kurdish groups were concerned, in early March, the Mojahedin sent a number of messages through the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran - Revolutionary Leadership, to the leaders of the Iraqi Kurds, explaining the regime's designs on the Iranian Resistance. The Mojahedin stressed that they did not seek to engage the Iraqi Kurds unless attacked.⁶⁴ They reiterated that the Resistance's one and only aim is to topple the mullahs' regime, which explained their presence in the central region of the Iran-Iraq border, the Iranian Resistance's only passage into Iran. They also specified that they had evacuated all their bases in other regions, including Iraqi Kurdistan. Owing to the geographical distance, at no time and at no place did the Mojahedin come into contact with Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq. But on March 11, 1991, Talebani's forces attacked a group of Mojahedin near the city of Tuz, as they were evacuating one of their bases. They killed commander Reza Karamali and wounded a number of his companions. Talebani's group also ambushed two NLA combatants near one of the Mojahedin's bases. After torturing and sexually assaulting their victims, the group murdered them and mutilated their bodies.⁶⁵ On March 25, during large-scale battles between the NLA and the regime, a platoon of 19 combatants, riding in four armored vehicles, lost radio contact with the command center. The group lost its way in the unfamiliar terrain, and mistakenly advanced several kilometers toward the city of Kelar, where they were captured by members of the Talebani group and the Kurdish Hezbollah (a proxy group of the Iranian regime). Although the Mojahedin and NLA immediately acknowledged the error and issued statements to that effect on the same day,⁶⁶ the Talebani group and other pro-regime Kurds executed 17 of them. The other two, Hassan Zolfaqari and Beshar Shabibi, were handed over to the mullahs' Guards Corps in Qasr-e Shirin (inside Iran). An official of the Talebani group, Sadeq Husseini, formally announced the news of their extradition.⁶⁷ The Mojahedin referred the case to the International Committee of the Red Cross, requesting ICRC intervention to rescue the two men. Both were later executed by the Khomeini regime.⁶⁸

The Khomeini regime is the source of all the accusations of

Mojahedin involvement in murders of Kurds in Iraq. When the internal turmoil in Iraq was at its peak, the regime's newspapers fabricated ridiculous reports of Mojahedin massacres. They claimed: "A Mojahedin woman drove a tank over the bodies of the dead and wounded,"⁶⁹ "Mojahedin forces actively collaborated with the Iraqi Ba'athist army in the suppression of the Iraqi people's uprising and committed many crimes. For this reason, the people of Suleimaniya executed six Mojahedin women,"⁷⁰ and "In Kifri, Kelar, ... the Mojahedin fought face to face with ordinary people. Popular forces killed many and arrested a number of them, including several women."⁷¹

The charges of Mojahedin involvement in the suppression of Iraqi Kurds are completely unfounded, and only serve the interests of the mullahs ruling Iran. In this context, allegations by individual Iraqi Kurds were apparently designed to serve the same ends, or to reciprocate the regime's assistance.⁷² When the unrest in Iraq ended, the Mojahedin endeavored to come to a mutual understanding with Iraq's Kurds, and thereby avoid any clashes. As Iraqi Kurds can certainly attest, senior NCR officials met with officials of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iraq in Iraq (including Iraqi Kurdistan), Europe and the United States, and enjoy amicable relations. The Department of State's adamant re-hashing of the past, three years after the event, makes one wonder. If it is so concerned about the people of Iraqi Kurdistan, why was no action taken to stop Tehran's shelling and bombardment of Kurdish areas in Iraq that killed and wounded many innocent people and left thousands more homeless throughout 1992-1994?

Means to End Tyranny

Beyond what has been said, the unreasonable bickering by the report's authors, or those who advise them, about the Mojahedin's presence in Iraq bears an important political message. These policymakers have used every opportunity to convey the message that they are not interested in overthrowing the mullahs. Obviously, the State Department is free to express its views. The question is whether the Department is suggesting that the Mojahedin forgo their struggle against the Khomeini regime, and give up on a democratic and modern government, committed to the U. N. Charter and political and economic cooperation with the international community.

The Resistance's military arm is the most serious guarantee for the overthrow of the clerical dictatorship. The NLA will carry out its duty at the suitable time, in step with the Iranian people's movement inside Iran. Moreover, many Iran experts note that the Resistance movement and NLA have been a key factor in impeding the mullahs' expansionism, terrorism and fundamentalism. The overwhelming majority of the Iranian people are enraged at 15 years of clampdown, economic deprivation, corruption and rampant plundering. They insist on the mullahs' overthrow.⁷³ Are the policymakers at the Near East Bureau suggesting that the Mojahedin stop resisting? They should realize that leaders and members of those Iranian groups seeking to negotiate and compromise with the mullahs' regime were murdered at the negotiating table.⁷⁴

Politics aside, if resistance is recognized as the natural right of a people, then the right to maintain an organized military arm, essential to any serious movement, must also be recognized. Such an army is not an abstraction, and must be based somewhere it can function. Under the circumstances, can the State Department suggest an alternative site, other than the Iran-Iraq frontier, for the Resistance's military arm?

Here, we must reiterate that the Iranian Resistance and Mojahedin, which embody the Iranian people's hope for democracy and independence, do not seek the advice of Irangate diehards in the State Department on what to do or what not to do, on how or where to resist. The Iranian Resistance represents the Iranian people's aspirations, and is continuing the path laid out by the nationalist movement of Dr. Mossadeq. In our independent pursuit of democratic principles, we seek the understanding and friendship of all nations and governments accepting the United Nations Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the legitimate right of the Iranian people's Resistance for freedom and independence. We stress that the religious, terrorist dictatorship ruling Iran is our only enemy, but we beg friendship from no one. We simply advise those who set the stage for the overthrow of Dr. Mossadeq's legal and democratic government in 1953, and who are now blindly and hysterically hostile to the Iranian people's just Resistance, not to arouse the enmity of the Iranian people again.