



Of the Sins of Khalil Maleki: A Political Economy of a Unique Phenomenon

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ABSTRACT

Khalil Maleki was a unique phenomenon in the politics of twentieth-century Iran. Once in an article, I described him as ‘the odd intellectual out’¹, and in another, I wrote about his ‘strange politics’¹. While he was a committed socialist, unlike most other political forces he believed in dialogue and peaceful political activity, which virtually made him a target for political smear campaigns, although this did not save him from being put on military trial and imprisoned by the shah’s regime! These attributes summarise some of what I call his sins but there are more, and they all deserve to be mentioned briefly in this Paper. By using a political economy approach, this article investigates the issue in question.

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1. Introduction

*M*aleki had played an active role in connection with the Azerbaijan revolt of 1945-1946. Before then, he had been leading a group of younger but prominent party intellectuals whose main grievances were the bureaucratic nature of the party leadership and their subservience to the Soviet embassy in Tehran. This matter came to a head during the revolt of Azerbaijan's Ferqeh-ye Demokrat. Seyyed Ja 'far Pishevari had been a founding member of the old Communist Party of Iran, was an Azerbaijani Iranian who had spent many years in Baku and had jointed the 1920 cabinet of the Gilan insurgents, eventually returning to Iran and being arrested in 1930 as an actively communist journalist. Years later, when the group of 53 were put in prison, they did not establish a good relationship with him. They, and especially the old communist Ardashes (Ardeshir) Avanessian viewed him with contempt, but Khalil Maleki's intervention to some extent resulted in a better treatment of him¹. After Reza Shah's abdication and the release of political prisoners, Pishevari went to Tabriz, founded his newspaper Azhir (which both means Siren and Warning) and set about organising his Ferqeh-ye Demokrat (democrat party) of Azerbaijan. At this time northern Iranian provinces were under Russian occupation so the central government could not interfere much with the activities of Pishevari and his Ferqeh. Meanwhile, the Tudeh party had been organised in the style of the anti-Fascist popular fronts in the occupied countries of Germany, had attracted many intellectuals, and had established provincial organisations throughout the country, not least in Azerbaijan².

The Tudeh party Azerbaijan Committee was dominated by immigrants from the Soviet Union, many of whom, intermingling with the Soviet army, behaved contemptuously towards the indigenous population, and put the fear of communism in the hearts and minds of the middle and religious classes.

1. See Katouzian (2013)

2. See Homa Katouzian, ed., *Khaterat-e Siyasi-ye Khalil Maleki*, Second Edition, Tehran, Enteshar, 2013, pp. 252-254.

Thus, the Tudeh leadership decided to send Maleki to Tabriz as head of the provincial committee to try and bring order to the party in Azerbaijan. Maleki managed to attract a number of moderate cultural and intellectual figures to the party, tone down the ideological slogans of the immigrants, sack some of them from the party, bring down five of the six pictures of Stalin hanging from the wall, and replacing them with those of Sattar Khan, Baqer Khan, Taqi Arani, and so on, generally making himself and the party popular with the people but unpopular with many of the immigrants, Mohammad Biriya, head of the Tudeh-affiliated United Workers' Central Council in Tabriz, and the occupying Soviet army. One of the grievances of Maleki's opponents was that, while he normally spoke in Azerbaijani Turkic, he addressed official meetings in Persian¹. At last Maleki realised that much that had been wrong in the Azerbaijan party had been due to the machinations of Biriya, the arch-Stalinist of the United Workers' Central Council. Therefore, he went for a visit to Tehran to try and persuade the Tudeh leaders to remove Biriya from Tabriz, unsuspecting that, in his absence, the Soviet forces had 'banished' himself from Azerbaijan to which he was not allowed to return². Eskandari recalls that the complaints against Maleki had reached Maximov, the Soviet ambassador in Tehran, who had raised them with him³. Meanwhile, in 1943, Pishevari had been elected a Majlis deputy for Tabriz, but the Majlis had not approved his credentials on suspicion of vote rigging. Shortly afterwards he had to swallow the same bitter pill when he was sent as a Tabriz delegate to the Tudeh party's first congress⁴. As a favor to him, Maleki stopped the Tudeh leadership from making his rejection public. But this left a deeper scar than his past treatment by them, which, according to Maleki, made him avenge himself on them when he won power in Azerbaijan⁵. A description and analysis of Pishevari's

1. See *Khaterat-e Siyasi-ye Khalil Maleki* (2013)

2. Ibid pp. 294-302.

3. See, *Khaterat-e Iraj Eskandari* (1993)

4. See <http://asre-nou.net/php/view.php?objnr=24456>

5. see Maleki, *Khaterat*, p.254

revolt is not a part of this paper's aims, especially as much has been written on it in books and articles¹. But Maleki's campaign against it within the party has not received sufficient attention. As mentioned, there was no love lost between Pishevari and the Tudeh leaders. But he desperately needed the control of the Tudeh provincial organization in Azerbaijan through which to implement Ferqeh's policies. Not only did the Tudeh heads dislike Pishevari, but they were also concerned about the implications of his revolt for their reputation in the rest of the country. However, he demanded that the Tudeh central committee dissolve their organization in Azerbaijan and deliver it to him.

2. Some Key Components

Maleki went to work. He passed a resolution in the central committee rejecting any attempt to dissolve the party organization in the province and launch the Azerbaijan Ferqeh outside the framework of an all-Iranian party. All this was put in a formal statement due to be published in the same evening. He writes in his memoirs:

[I] was ignorant of the spirit of Stalinist internationalism. The good and model internationalist was [Abdossamad] Kambakhsh who through his machinations postponed the publication of the central committee's statement, rushed to the Soviet embassy next morning and brought an order from them for the central committee to reverse their decision and dissolve their organisation in Azerbaijan. And so, next day, instead of critical comments, full-length photos of Pishevari and Gholam Yahya were published in Rahbar, the party's newspaper organ².

Eskandari says that he posted a very 'polite and fraternal' letter of the central committee from Paris addressed to the Soviet Communist Party saying that another party in Iran (i.e. Ferqeh) was not needed. But when he returned to Iran, his central committee colleagues told him that they had

1. For example, Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992. Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War, the Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*, Oxford, Rowman and Littlefield, 2006; Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and the Struggle for Power in Iran*, London and New York, I. B. Tauris, 2000.

2. see Maleki, *Khaterat*: 310

been summoned to the Soviet embassy and told that this is the wish of comrade Stalin¹. Maleki and his supporters inside the party, generally known as the party reformists, continued their acutely critical attitude towards the Tudeh policy in Azerbaijan, opposed the Tudeh's short coalition with Ahmad Qavam's cabinet, and felt both ashamed and angry at the collapse of the Ferqeh, and hence the failure of the Tudeh's policy². This was catastrophic not only for Ferqeh but also for the Tudeh party and its leaders. Eskandari had told Anvar Khomeh'i that not until the last moment had they expected this catastrophe, but were thinking that the Ferqeh would resist, unaware of the fact that the Soviets had advised them against it: 'when I heard the news of the flight of Pishvari and the Democrats and learned the Soviets had told them not to resist, it was so unexpected and insufferable that I sat down and cried hard for a whole hour³.' Eskandari himself says that 'for me personally this event was a great shock'⁴.

To show the extent of the sense of shame that visited the party critics it is best to refer to the reaction of Sadeq Hedayat who thus far had been a party sympathiser and at whose home the meetings of the Maleki group were being held. He wrote in a long letter to Fereydon Tavalloli, a well-known poet and satirist as well as party reformist, from Tehran to Shiraz:

After the great test which we took – and which was apparently for the sake of freedom but in fact for its destruction – no-one can do anything anymore... And, one has to be truly a decedent of Daryush ... to be fooled by these silly antics. The story is long and puzzling, but the betrayal had many sides to it. And now the Tudeh are wallowing in their own shit in order to cover up the truth. Anyway, we must eat our own shitty glories spoon by spoon and say how nice it is too⁵.

There was an outcry in the party and a demand for the trial of the party leaders. A meeting of around sixty leaders and cadres was convened which

1. see *Khaterat-e Iraj Eskandari*: 174

2. see Katouzian (2004). *The Strange Politics of Khalil Maleki*

3. see Anvar Khomeh'i (1984: 372)

4. see *Khaterat-e Iraj Eskandari*: 237.

5. See for the full text of the letter, Hasan Qā'emiyan, *Darbāreh-ye Zohur va Ala'em-e Zohur* (on the advent and its signs), Tehran, Amir Kabir, 1962.

looked like a revolt against the central committee. As Eskandari puts it ‘the reaction of the cadres was vehement’¹. Khomeh’i quotes Maleki as having said that Ehsan Tabari had suggested the reformists should split from Tudeh and form another party, but Maleki had turned down the suggestion². Needless to say, large numbers of party members left it quietly. This was the beginning of the end for party reformists’ activity within it, and as is well known they split from the party under Maleki’s leadership in January 1948³. Yet the reason for the Tudeh party’s infamous character assassination of Maleki was first and foremost not his alleged leadership of the party split. It was his return to the political scene less than two years later to campaign against Stalinism, against the Tudeh party policies and against the policy of the right and left for the country to join Western and Eastern Blocs. Maleki was offering a serious alternative to them and their ideology both in theory and practice. Just one of his works, the prophetic *Socialism and State Capitalism*, was sufficient to incense the Tudeh leadership⁴. He denounced the Soviet Union as a chauvinist and state capitalist country by reason and evidence. He invented the term and concept Third Force, long before the term and concept Third World had emerged. The Tudeh response was never to engage in argument with Maleki; it was just to throw mud at him as a British agent, an agent of the royal court, an American agent, a SAVAK agent, and more of the same. The pamphlet entitled ‘The Third Force, the Social Base of Imperialism’, much of which was a personal attack on Maleki, is only one source out of many in the Tudeh press and the effective verbal campaigns of Tudeh members⁵.

The Tudeh mud stuck gradually over time but not immediately. 1949 was the first year that the Tudeh had to face the strong challenge offered by Mosaddeq and the National Front, a movement which not just in word but

1. see *Khaterat-e Iraj Eskandari*: 239.

2. see Khomeh’i, *Forsat-e Bozorg*: 414-415.

3. See further, Katouzian’s Introduction to Maleki, *Khaterat*.

4. see Khalil Maleki, *Sosialsim va Kapitalism-e Dowlati* (1952), reprinted in the Enqelab and Adabiyat series, no. 13, n.p., 1989.

5. see *Niru-ye Sevvom*, *Paigah-e Ejtema ‘i-ye Amperialism*, Tehran, The Tudeh party, 1952

also in deed was leading a democratic and an anti-colonialist campaign, focused on the rectification of Iranian rights from the National Iranian Oil Company. The Tudeh saw this as a double plot to wrest Southern Iranian oil from AIOC and deliver it to American companies, and to deprive the Soviet Union of a concession for North Iranian oil. While they were convinced that Mosaddeq and his supporters were agents of America and openly, indeed vehemently, advocated it in their press, it was ideologically impossible for them to oppose the principle of nationalization, especially regarding the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Hence, they came out with the slogan for nationalising oil in the south, not in the whole of the country. Maleki, along with the leaders of the National Front, insisted that the entire Iranian oil resources and industry must be nationalized, and this is what eventually happened.

On the other hand, the shah and the right-wing establishment saw Mosaddeq as none other than a British agent whom, for some reasons of expediency, they had charged to nationalise the oil. When Reza Shah cancelled the D'Arcy concession many, if not most, including Mosaddeq, erroneously believed that the aim had been to extend it by another thirty years through the ensuing 1933 Agreement. Therefore, to them, the National Front's project of oil nationalization was simply a repeat performance according to the new circumstances. The shah never gave up the belief that Mosaddeq was a British agent¹.

Mosaddeq and his supporters, on the contrary, saw the Shah and the conservatives as working for Britain. In fact, they were not agents and stooges of Britain as it was thought at the time both by the National Front and Tudeh, but there is firm evidence that they did coordinate with the British on how to get rid of Mosaddeq. For example, as early as the summer of 1951, when the relations of the shah and Mosaddeq were seemingly friendly, the shah was advising the British who were still in charge of the oil

1. See Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, *Answer to History*, New York, Stein and Day, 1980. See also, Homa Katouzian, *The Persians, ancient, medieval and modern Iran*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, paperback edition, 2010, chapter 10.

industry not to export oil and shut down the Abadan refinery so that they would not have to pay Iran's revenues to Mosaddeq, since this would strengthen his hands for running the economy¹. There can be little doubt that what motivated the shah was mainly the fear of Mosaddeq and his famous slogan "the shah must reign, not rule" rather than any special service for Britain, although he was also an Anglophobe and feared Britain's hostility.

It was in this poisoned atmosphere that Maleki committed the courageous sin of campaigning against the Iranian xenophobia in a series of articles (later to be published in a book entitled *The Conflict of Ideas*) which he wrote in the *Shahed* newspaper in the bluntest and most open terms. As early as 1949, and in the midst of the oil nationalisation movement and public indignation against the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, the rising cold war and international anti-imperialist movements, Maleki launched a campaign against conspiracy theory as a most destructive barrier to the country's social and political development. He said that he did not at all wish to underrate the power, influence, interference, and unequal position of the great powers, past or present, in Iran or other colonial and semi-colonial countries. But he opposed the view, (a) that all the country's ills were due to colonialism and imperialism, (b) that all the (sometimes even minor) events in the country's affairs were due to the underhanded machinations of these powers, (c) that all the main actors in the Iranian government, politics and opposition were agents of one or another great power, (d) that it was *not* possible for the country to develop and progress except by joining one or the other cold war bloc, and (e) that all seemingly independent efforts and achievements were bound to be smokescreens motivated by a great power so as to throw dust into the people's eyes and get their way through the back door.

The contemporary reader without close knowledge and/or experience of this Iranian conspiracy theory, and its length, breadth, depth and coverage at

1. Shepherd to Foreign office, 1 July 1951, FO 248/ 1514. See further 'Kushesh-ha-ye Sefarat-e Inglis bara-ye Ta'iyn-e Nakhosht Vazir-e Iran az Melli Shodan-e Naft ta Khal'-e Yad', in Homa Katouzian, *Estebdad, Demokrasi va Nehzat-e Melli*, Tehran, Nash-re Markaz, sixth impression, 2013.

the time might find Maleki's views and arguments commonplace if not altogether bland. They must refer to the country's political literature to be able to appreciate the extraordinary nature of his systematic argument against conspiracy theory, which in part helped reinforce his detractors' heavy charges against him and his ideas¹. It is difficult to find any other political thinker, intellectual, leader or activist who led a campaign against this conspiracy theory from the late 1940's through to the late 1960's. In his 1949 article 'The Nightmare of Pessimism', Maleki described the conspiracy theory as the main cause of pessimism among the intelligentsia about the country's future prospects:

[They] have turned the British empire - which is in a process of decline, and is losing her bases one after the other - into an omnipotent, supernatural, and irresistible power. In our country's capital one can find intellectual politics-mongers who think it impossible to have a political movement independent from foreigners. If you mention India's freedom to them, they would immediately smile and express surprise at your naïveté not to realise that Nehru, Gandhi and the whole of the Indian freedom movement...are nothing but a farce. As we all know, some people also regard Hitler (certainly) and Stalin (probably) as stooges of the British².

In a following article on '*Maraz-e Esti'mar-zadegi*' (the disease of imperial-struckness) where, for the first time in the language of politics, he made use of the Persian suffix *zadegi* to indicate a pathological affliction (cf. Al-e Ahmad's *Gharbzadegi*), he said that a terrifying spectre had been made of British imperialism, and this had resulted in the Iranian people's complete loss of self-confidence. The society was 'struck', he wrote, by the illusion of British omnipotence, and this had led to the belief that the Iranians were no more than puppets in the hands of foreign powers, utterly incapable of

1. Examples abound. For four famous historical sources, all of them showing visible symptoms of the conspiracy theory, domestic and - especially - foreign, see Hossein Makki, *Tarikh-e Bistsaleh-ye Iran*, various editions, Mahmud Mahmud, *Tarikh-e Ravabet-e Siyasi-ye Iran va Inglis*, various editions, Mehdi Bamdad, *Sharh-e Hal-e Rejal-e Iran*, vols. 1-6, various editions, and Khan-Malek-e Sasani, *Siyasatgaran-e Dowreh-ye Qajar*, Tehran, n. p., n. d. (date of preface, 1959).

2. See, Khalil Maleki, 'Kabus-e Badbini: Ancheh mured darad va ancheh bimured ast' in, Hoam Katouzian and Amir Pichdad, ed., *Barkhord-e Aqayed o Ara*, Tehran, Nashr-e Markaz, 1997: 41.

improving their own lot. The phobia had gone so far, he argued, that as soon as you suggested positive steps for social progress, most would react by saying 'But they wouldn't allow it', it being obvious that the third person plural refers to British imperialism. He wrote:

There can be no doubt about the strength of imperialism. But we must find out where that strength lies which has penetrated so well down the veins and stems of our society and has thus become the turn of phrase of these gentlemen, who are struck by imperialism¹.

He went on to say that, in fact, much of this strength lay precisely in the illusion of its invincibility. It was a complex phenomenon consisting of two different - 'objective and subjective' - parts. The objective part corresponded to imperialism's real power, presence and ability to interfere in the country's affairs. But the subjective part was a figment of imagination and 'has no counterpart in reality'. If those people who had given up all hope for fear of 'the *illusion* of imperialism' tried to overcome that illusion, assess its strength no more or less than it in fact was, and – at the same time - did not underrate the strength of Iranian people, then it would be possible for Iranians to overcome the real and objective strength of imperialism. He wrote:

Some...individuals who suffer from imperial-struckness...do not even think in terms of reform, let alone take any steps towards it. This group of politics-mongers and intellectuals who suffer from the paranoia of the omnipotence of imperialism and the impotence of Iranians (and similar peoples), must justly be described as *imperial*-struck. It is very difficult to argue with those who suffer from this sickness².

'The aggrandisement of the strength of imperialism', he wrote in the subtitle to his article, 'today serves Britain's interest and tomorrow the Soviet Union's, but it will never serve the interest of Iran'. As noted above, Maleki published these articles on the subject in 1949. He was to continue in the same spirit for the rest of his life, in theory as well as practice, saying that unreasonable fear of the great powers would work against the country's

1. 'Maraz-e Esti 'mar-zadegi', *Barkhord-e Aqayed*: 43.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

interest and its ability to improve its domestic and international situation. Hence, although he was critical of Soviet domestic and international politics, he nevertheless believed that the best policy towards the Soviet as well as the American bloc was to establish friendly but independent relations with both of them. For example, at the end of January 1953, when Mosaddeq's government nationalized Caspian shipping, turning down the Soviet request for an extension of their expired concession, the Tudeh press condemned the decision while the daily *Niru-ye Sevvom* published several articles supporting it¹. Yet, on the day – 1 February 1953 – the former Caspian Fishing Company passed into Iranian hands, *Niruy-e Sevvom's* lead article, written by Maleki, ran the following headlines:

The Iranian government's refusal to renew the Soviet fishing concession must not be put down to an unfriendly attitude [towards the Soviet Union]. The Iranian people (*mellat*) wish to have friendly relations with the Soviet people, and to maintain their political, economic and cultural links with them...The Soviet government can be absolutely sure that the Iranian people have no wish to break up their friendship with the Soviet Union. But this friendship must not be based on the old lines. If the Soviet government does not respect the freedom and independence of the Iranian people, it should not expect a friendly attitude from them².

Maleki's anti-xenophobia, and his distrust of conspiracy explanations and analyses, and of the use of libel and defamation in politics, went further than may be conveyed by the above. After his last term in jail in the mid-1960s, and a couple of weeks before his death, a book on Iranian Freemason societies and their membership virtually exploded in Tehran. SAVAK documents published in the 1980's have revealed that they had secretly aided and financed that project in accordance with the shah's wishes, in all probability in order to discredit those named, and often also pictured in the three volumes, most of whom belonged to the social and political establishment. Freemasonry – at the

1. See further, Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran*, second edition, London and New York, I. B. Tauris, 1999.

2. *Niru-yi Sevvom*, 1 February 1953. For the reaction of the Tudeh press see, for example, *Mardom*, the official party organ, 11/2/53. For further discussion of the subject see Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, chapter 10.

time - was universally regarded as a den of the most hardened and corrupt 'British spies. Maleki's view of the subject was more realistic as well as fairer to Iranian Freemasons. In a letter he wrote at the time, he incidentally mentioned the publication of that book, saying:

In the last two months, the publication of *Faramushkhaneh ya Framasonry dar Iran* (in three volumes) ... has been the topic of conversation in the social and political circles of Tehran. In Iran, they attach more importance to this organization than it in fact is, and show its members in a worse light than they deserve¹.

Both during Maleki's lifetime and after it - certainly as late as the early 1990's - almost all Iranian political leaders who were somehow associated with the former regime, were branded as being an agent or spy of Britain or the United States. But Freemasonry was perhaps the worst charge that could be levelled against anyone, although in some cases it did not even have a basis in fact. The advocacy of parliamentary democracy was Maleki's other great sin. It is true that Mosaddeq and the National Front believed in democracy, while the Tudeh aimed to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat. But despite his Tudeh background, therefore being expected to regard the parliamentary system as a trick of the bourgeoisie and its imperialist masters, he boldly advocated parliamentary democracy as the best system for political progress.

Maleki's political paradigm was complex and largely of his own making. He was a socialist, but no longer a Marxist, although he sometimes made use of some Marxian concepts and categories in his social and economic analyses. At the same time, he firmly believed in personal freedoms, the people's free vote in parliamentary elections, and parliamentary democracy itself. Early in 1951, in the wake of the nationalisation of Iranian oil, he wrote that oil nationalisation had been a great achievement, but that it was just the beginning for fundamental political development:

1. Maleki (Tehran) to Pichdad (Paris), 26 June 1969. See Homa Katouzian and Amir Pichdad, ed., *Nameh-ha-ye Khalil Maleki*, Tehran, Nashr-e Markaz, 2002.

The popular forces must be organised in order to establish real parliamentary democracy based on political parties, so that the people would really and genuinely be able to govern the country through their parliamentary deputies... This is an important function of the National Front coalition, and to succeed in this historic duty, its leaders and progressive members must not simply follow the existing regional and international trends, but must rely on their own initiatives... The people must be taught and educated so as to be able to earn and protect both bread and freedom... In other words, measures must be taken to enable every cook to learn the art of government and of participation in government.

He went on to add that a system had to be created where it would be possible to have both bread and freedom and to serve society's interest without sacrificing the rights of individuals:

In my view, the National Front's most important historic duty is to create... a civilization in which neither the society shall be sacrificed to the individual nor shall it be forgotten that the society is not an abstract entity, but is the sum of its individual members¹.

In September 1952, in an article whose central point was the need for public order and political discipline (which had been very rare commodities since Reza Shah's abdication in 1941) as well as social and economic legislation for development, he wrote that 'democratic discipline must replace chaos and indiscipline'. 'Yet', he went on to emphasize, the great difference between disciplined work based on social planning and priorities suggested by us, as compared to totalitarian systems, is its democratic nature. We must not sacrifice individual freedoms to public institutions, nor must we allow absolute dominion of such institutions over personal liberties². Years later he was to write on the front page of an issue of *Elm o Zendegi*: 'Communists sacrifice freedom for bread, while reactionaries sacrifice bread for freedom; we hold that bread, freedom and social welfare

1. 'Vazifeh-ye Tarikhi-ye Jebheh-ye Melli', *Barkhord-e Aqayed*: 230.

2. See, 'Sarvesht-e Tarikhi-ye Liberalism dar daw Qarn-e Akhir', *Elm o Zendegi*, 7, September 1952, reprinted in Khalil Maleki, *Nehzat-e Melli-ye Iran va Edalat-e Ejtema'i*, essays, ed. Abdollah Borhan, Tehran, Nashr-e Markaz, 1999: 37.

are not incompatible'¹. There is little scope here to elaborate on all of Maleki's sins during the Mosaddeq era. He advocated the settlement of the oil dispute in the best possible terms, especially agreement to the offer of the World Bank; serious application of the law to contain the illegal activities of both right and left; land reform to liberate landless peasants from their inhuman existence; the vote for women, and further promotion of the rights of women whom he described as 'a half of the population which brings up the other half on its lap'; educational reform; opposition to the 1953 referendum to dissolve the Majlis, etc. None was heeded and all energy was directed towards the total defeat of AIOC and the British government, even though Maleki nevertheless followed Mosaddeq, to use his own words, to Hell².

Having been jailed and banished after the 1953 coup, he still believed that open as opposed to secret political activity was possible and necessary. His argument was that if the Popular Front forces stick together and prepare themselves for the next opportunity, they will be able to succeed once again³. In the then-poisoned atmosphere of total disappointment and hit-and-run activity, this was a sin. The opportunity did come in 1960. Prodded by acute economic problems, the open hostility of the Soviet Union, and critical comments in the United States on the situation in Iran, the regime decided to relax some of the social and political constraints. That is when the second National Front was formed and Maleki organized the Socialist League. And while revolutionary blood was boiling against the Shah and America, Maleki, writing in the Socialist League's Manifesto committed a great sin. In domestic politics [he wrote] they should enter a 'life-and-death struggle' against corruption, strive for the establishment of the rule of law, and promote 'constitutional and parliamentary democracy based on a welfare state'. However, they should accept the existing system of constitutional

1. See *Elm o Zendegi*, [second series], 9, August 1960.

2. Maleki, *Khaterat*, 'Introduction'

3. See his open letter of 23 August 1953 addressed to the Iranian people and members of the Third Force party written from his hiding place, after which he gave himself up to the authorities and was imprisoned, Maleki's Letters: 294-501.

monarchy. This would not mean 'unprincipled politicking' but striving for 'revolutionary aims by peaceful means'¹.

The proposed social reform program contained a fairly detailed land reform policy and an industrial policy based on planning and state participation which explicitly rejected *etatisme*. In foreign policy, they should establish friendly relations with both East and West without compromising the country's independence². To many members of Iranian intelligentsia, intellectuals, political parties and groups, and leading reformers, this should *now* look like a very reasonable and progressive package of reforms, and a responsible attitude towards politics and society. Yet, at the time, to most of them, it smacked of collaborationism and opportunism, at best, but more often as treason. Worse than that, after obtaining the agreement of the League's central committee and consulting Gholamhossein Sadiqi and Karim Sanjabi of the central council of the second National Front, he agreed to meet the shah at the latter's invitation, where, over a three-hour discussion, he put his views to him. Shortly afterwards, Allahyar Saleh, the nominal head of the second National Front, was elected Majlis deputy for Kashan and met the shah. But there were no cries of treason in his case. The next sin was committed when in March 1961 Ali Amini became prime minister. The shah both disliked Amini and was fearful of him simply because he was an independent but loyal politician who opposed corruption, had a land reform programme, and wanted to trim some of the shah's powers. If the second National Front had conducted itself as a responsible political party they would have had a better chance. Maleki published a special issue of the periodical *Elm o Zendegi* saying that, and adding that now that Amini as a loyal reformer had formed a government, the Popular Movement, and especially the second National Front, should give him a chance and turn themselves into a constructive opposition, a

1. *Bayaniyeh-ye Jame'eh-ye Sosialist-ha*, Tehran, Manucher Safa, September, 1960.

2. See 'Tashkil-e Jame'eh-ye Sosialist-ha ra Mitavan Mored-e Motale'eh Qarar Dad', *Nabard-e Zendegi*, May 1956, reprinted in Borhan, ed., *Nehzat-e Melli*; see further *Musaddiq*: 217-8.

shadow government, rather than Amini's life-and-death foe¹. They did the opposite. They said that Amini was an American candidate, was signatory to the Consortium oil agreement, and was lying about his land reform project. Maleki had warned that Amini's failure would be followed by absolute and arbitrary government, a prediction which, as usual, turned out to be correct.

By 1963, the second National Front had lost all legitimacy, and Mosaddeq's acute criticism of their failure led to the convenient resignation of its leaders en masse from its Central Council. There followed the formation of the third National Front which was made up of Bazargan's Freedom Movement, Maleki's Socialist League, Foruhar's People of Iran Party, and Sami's Revolutionary Iranian Peoples Party. This was Maleki's latest sin and was condemned by the Tudeh party, by followers of the second National Front, and – naturally – by the regime. In the mid-summer of 1965 Maleki and three other Socialist League leaders were arrested and put on military trial shortly afterward, Maleki receiving a three-year sentence plus the loss of his citizen's rights for five years. The SAVAK issued a long statement justifying Maleki's arrest in words, of which this is a part:

It has been announced that, during the last few days, Khalil Maleki and some of his colleagues have been arrested by the security authorities on the charge of spreading Marxist and collectivist (*eshteraki*) ideas, poisoning [the people's] minds and acting against the country's security...

3. Some Political and Ideological considerations:

According to the background, Khalil Maleki has been one of the promoters of the *eshteraki* ideology in Iran, and along with fifty-two other leaders of the Tudeh party [sic] has launched that party [sic]...and afterward, when, because of his ambitiousness, he has run into conflict with that party's leaders over party positions, has managed to persuade a group [of party members] to split with the party under his leadership. The above-mentioned person, while sticking to his [old] ideology, had been looking for an

1. See *Elm o Zendegi*, second series, special issue, 1961.

opportunity to implement his malicious ideas ...and, following the national uprising of 19 August, he was imprisoned and banished for that reason. After a while, according to the [Arabic] expression 'Public amnesia is my shield' (*nisyan al-nasu hisni*) he took sinister advantage of the forgetfulness of some people, especially the young, and in the name of sympathy for the labouring classes, securing public welfare and extending social justice, he injected dreams and mirage-like ideas in the minds of a small number of people who were prepared to work with him, so that he would thus acquire power, and in the end manage to satisfy his passion for, and his and cult of, great power.

At this juncture, Iranian society was led towards an opulent standard of living as a result of the 6 Bahman [January 1963] White Revolution and [other] progressive projects, and consequently [Khalil Maleki's group] lost its deceitful propagandist weapon. Khalil Maleki who had one day promised the reform of the workers' and peasants' living standards as a dream, and believed that it would only be possible through a series of revolutionary actions involving devastation and massacre, when he realised that [even better reforms have been carried out without any bloodshed and] the Iranian people look forward to a hopeful and brilliant future, and henceforth they would not pay any attention to the balderdash put out by Khalil Maleki and his friends, in the hope of achieving his perverse and power-seeking wishes, he looked for a new instrument, and following that, he declared the subversive riots of 5 June [1963] - which caused much financial and spiritual damage to the motherland - a national [or, popular] revolt [This, of course was not true]¹. Following that, he collaborated with other subversive clicks - whose nature is known to all the compatriots - in and out of the country, and at the same time, taking advantage of the radical sentiments of some young people, he decided to use certain Marxist theories in order to spread the seeds of anarchism, terrorism, chaos and turmoil in the [people's] minds, and, so to speak, lead them towards a red revolution. The above-mentioned

1. As a matter of fact Maleki had been undergoing a heart operation in Austria at the time, and returned to Iran a few months after it. See *Khaterat-e Siyasi*, second edition, Introduction.

person showed in the end that he is a born adventurer and anarchist who would abuse the susceptible sentiments of the country's youth in order to achieve his filthy ends, and would not shy of using any ugly means.

It is unfortunate that the security agencies of the country sometimes adopt a forgiving attitude towards such traitorous and subversive elements, and only begin to prosecute them when a number of innocent young people have been struck by their poisonous spell.

It is to be hoped that, henceforth, and in accordance with public expectations, the security authorities and responsible agencies would not give such elements so much opportunity that, using their poisonous ideas, they would instil deviant, anti-motherland and anti-religious thoughts in the simple-minded youth and [other] elements whose existence will certainly be needed for the reconstruction of Iran.

4. Conclusion

Maleki died in 1969. Reflecting on all the sins that he committed in his political life, it becomes clear that he earned the hostility both of the regime and of the opposition to it because of his greatest sin of all, namely that, on the one hand, he was not a revolutionary and, on the other, he firmly believed in progressive and democratic reform.

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