



JAM'İYAT-E MO'TALEFA-YE ESLĀMI I. HAY'ATHĀ-YE MO'TALEFA-YE ESLĀMI 1963-79

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The Islamic Coalition of Mourning Groups was born almost two years after the death of [Ayatollah Ḥosayn Ṭabāṭabā'i Borujerdi](#) in 1961. The absence of Borujerdi, the uncontested source of emulation (*marja'-e taqlid*) of Iranian Shi'ities, created a decision-making and leadership vacuum in Iran's religious establishment (*ruḥāniyat*). Hoping to take advantage of the disarray among the clergy, traditionally a very important force to contend with, the Shah was intent on pushing ahead with his modernization policies. A sequence of events, starting with the government's Bill on the formation of Local Councils (*Anjomanhā-ye eyālati wa welāyati*) on 6 October 1962 led to an escalating open confrontation between Ayatollah Khomeini – who took the helm of the politics of the Qom Religious Center – and the Shah. The birth of the Islamic Coalition of Mourning Groups can be considered as one of the by-products of this confrontation, which in turn impacted the course of this face-off.

According to this Bill candidates were no longer required to be Muslims, elected representatives were not obliged to take their oath on the Qur'ān and



women were given the right to vote for the local councils. Khomeini immediately rallied the high ranking clergy or the *ulema* of Qom (Grand Ayatollahs Sayyed Kāzem Šari'atmadāri, Moḥammad Golpāyegāni, and Sayyed Šehāb-al-Din Najafi Mar'aši) to oppose the Bill and demanded its repeal. To take the clergy's oppositional stand among the people and sensitize them, Khomeini insisted that the letters of objection written by the religious dignitaries be made public and widely distributed (Ruhāni, pp. 149-50). The widespread publicizing of the leading clergy's religious opposition to the Shah's policies was of great importance to Khomeini, who wished to sensitize, mobilize and rally the people to the cause championed by the *ulema*. To this end, Khomeini sent an emissary to the mosques, religious circles, associations and mourning groups in Tehran, heeding them to go to Qom and establish regular contact with the leading clerics (Moqaddam, p. 132). The impetus to build a bridge between dispersed Islamic religious groups in Tehran and the clergy in Qom in a systematic and organizational form came directly from Ayatollah Khomeini (Qāsempur, p. 32).

THE FORMATION PROCESS

As of around October 1962, key members of the mourning group of the Šayk-'Ali Mosque in Tehran, such as Šādeq Amāni and Moḥammad Šādeq Eslāmi came into contact with Ayatollah Khomeini. Their first mission was to print, reproduce and distribute Khomeini's declarations and letters. The second mourning group establishing regular contact with Khomeini in Qom was that of the Amindawla (Amin-al-Dawla) Mosque, known as Hey'at-e bāzār-e darvāze'ihā. This group, led by Mehdi 'Erāqi and Ḥabib-Allāh Asgarawlādi claimed some fifty members. Members of this group also became involved with the reproduction and distribution of Khomeini's declarations and letters. The third group was the Ešfa-hānis. This group was closely affiliated with Tehran's bazaar and had sought Ayatollah Morteżā Moṭahhari's guidance in order to organize itself and actively support the political clergy (*ākund-e siāsi*) after the issue of the Bill on the Local Councils. Moṭahhari had subsequently introduced Moḥammad Ḥosayni Behešti (later Ayatollah Behešti) to the group (Moqaddam, pp. 130-32, 140-42, 150; Bādāmčīān and Banā'i, pp. 34, 127-28).

From the autumn of 1962, Ayatollah Khomeini directly and systematically challenged the ambitions and policies of the Shah. During two highly charged years, culminating in Khomeini's exile to Turkey on 4 November 1964, tension between the Shah and the Ayatollah constantly escalated and Iran became a theatre of confrontation between the two men and their followers. On 9



January 1963 the Shah announced the Six Principles of his “White Revolution” (*Enqelāb-e safid*). He also announced that to stave off the false accusations and denunciations of the “black reactionary agents” and “destructive red forces” against his reforms, he would put the Six Principles to a national referendum. In anticipation of a major political showdown on the issue of the “White Revolution” and the referendum, which he opposed, Khomeini mobilized, coordinated and directed the previously wasted and unfocused energies of Islamic zealots into an effective organization.

The attack on the Fayziya Seminary School by government forces on 22 March 1963 highlighted the urgency of Ayatollah Khomeini’s directive to the scattered Islamic groups in Tehran to coordinate their resources. In the early spring of 1963, members of the Eṣfahāni group and the mourning group of the Amin-al-Dawla Mosque, both operating in Tehran, were convened to Ayatollah Khomeini’s residence in Qom (Moqaddam, pp. 127, 147). Both religious groups had been independently in contact with Ayatollah Khomeini. Uninformed about the agenda of the meeting, Ayatollah Khomeini introduced them to one another, merged them into an operational coalition and charged them with carrying out his directives (Moqaddam, p. 35). The exact official date of the formation of the Islamic Coalition of Mourning Groups is not known, but is said to be around April 1963 (Moqaddam, pp. 131-32, 149; ‘Erāqi, p. 168).

Social profile of the coalition members. The rank and file of the Coalition were non-clerical Muslim zealots who held regular religious meetings once or twice a week. Professionally, a good majority of the members were engaged in commerce and petty trade primarily in Tehran’s bazaar. It could be surmised that other than the few who had some seminary school training, the majority had a high school education at best. The Coalition had neither female nor intellectual members (‘Erāqi, pp. 166-72). A salient feature of the members was their sincere attachment to the politico-religious leadership of the clergy. They firmly believed that the sphere of obedience to and emulation from the clergy could not be strictly limited to the religious and spiritual realm and naturally included the social and political domains.

Contact with Khomeini. To establish a secure and effective channel of communication with the clergy, receive their directives and implement them, two groups, the Eṣfahānis as well as members of the Amindawla Mosque were in contact with Ayatollah Moṭahhari and held regular weekly meetings with Behešti, both of whom were students of Ayatollah Khomeini. Members of the Šayk-‘Ali Mosque, under the leadership of Šādeq Amāni, seem to have been



directly in contact with Khomeini. Şādeq Amāni had studied a regular seminary school educational program for twelve years while working in the bazaar and taught a class on morals (Moqaddam, pp. 23, 25, 135, 139). Explaining the attraction of Khomeini's message to certain members of the Coalition, Shaikh Fażl-Allāh Mahallāti, a veteran of the Devotees of Islam, maintains that once Nawwāb Şafawī's old friends realized that someone had come forth whose words and vision were similar to that of Nawwāb Şafawī, they immediately united under his banner (Mahallāti, p. 43).

Networks of religious procession. Aside from providing a space for worship, mosques organized religious gatherings and functions, engaged in charity and social works and possessed their own preachers as well as their respective mourning groups. The mourning groups, to which the majority of the Coalition members belonged, played an important religious, cultural and social role. During Tāsu'ā and Aşurā, the religious mourning groups take to the streets and display the passion, might and sense of self-sacrifice that religious ardor and conviction can summon among zealots. On these two days and especially Aşurā, Shi'ites commemorate, mourn, glorify and exalt the martyrdom of Imam Ḥosayn (q.v.) and his companions (see [DASTA](#)).

THE CHARTER AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The Coalition formulated its own charter and organizational structure. In its preamble, it posited that the spiritual and material welfare of society, as well as its physical and moral well-being were contingent upon following Islamic injunctions and their application. The preamble concluded that once the people realized that they were striving in God's cause, they would welcome sacrifices (Moqaddam, p. 156). Acknowledging the fact that all across the country devout and enlightened Muslims gathered in regular weekly religious meetings, the charter called upon them to enter into a rigorous organizational structure and pave the way for the attainment of their objectives. The charter stipulated four objectives around which Muslims were invited to join forces and cooperate within the structure of the coalition: attainment of a better understanding of Islamic teachings in the private and social realm, an improved exposition and presentation of Islamic teachings, greater application of these teachings in the practical realm and finally charting a clear and practical way for creating a model Islamic society (Bādāmčīān, pp. 50-51). The Charter was written by Eslāmi from the Şayḳ 'Ali group and Ḥabīb-Allāh (Mehdi) Şafiq from the Amindawleh group. The charter was subsequently edited by two clerics, Beheşti and Moḥammad Bāhonar.



Structurally, the affairs of the Coalition were conducted through three committees; central, finance and propaganda. The Central Committee was composed of 12 members, four representatives from each of the three groups. Members of the Central Committee were: Maḥmūd Mirfenderesky, ‘Alā’-al-Din Mir Moḥammad Ṣādeqī, ‘Ezzat-Allāh Kālili, Mehdi Bahādorān (the Eṣfahāni mourning group); Ṣādeq Amāni, Moḥammad Ṣādeq Eslāmi, Asad-Allāh Lājevārdi, Ḥosayn Raḥmāni (mourning group of the Ṣayḡ ‘Ali Mosque); Mehdi ‘Erāqī, Ḥabīb-Allāh Aṣḡarawlādi, Ḥabīb-Allāh Ṣafiq, Abu’l-Faḏl Tavakkoli (mourning group of Amindawla’s mosque) (Moqaddam, p. 151). This committee was the decision making and steering body of the organization. It was responsible for drafting and preparing plans and projects facilitating the founding of a model Islamic society. The finance and propaganda committee were also composed of the representatives of each group as well as a member of the Central Committee (Moqaddam, p. 157).

Under the six-item rubric of the “Central Committee’s Responsibilities,” there are three different references (items 1, 2 and 6) to the necessity of establishing close ties with the politically oriented clergy and the religious Sources of Emulation (marāje‘), seeking their counsel and guidance and obtaining permission and approval from them where and when necessary (Moqaddam, p. 157). The emphasis on seeking official guidance in its decisions from members of the clerical institution became the most distinguishing feature of the Coalition. On paper, it seemed as if the Coalition was voluntarily forfeiting its ultimate decision-making rights to the authority, opinion and leadership of Khomeini.

To formalize their faithful allegiance and subservience to the guiding role of the clergy, the Coalition requested Khomeini to appoint or recommend a group of clerics to supervise their activities. Subsequently the Coalition presented Khomeini with a list of possible clerical advisors. These clerics were to counsel the Organization on matters that required a religious opinion and act as Khomeini’s representatives in case he could not be readily reached. From the list, which must have been made up of his students or clerics very close to him, Khomeini confirmed Moṭahhari, Behešti, Moḥi-al-Din Anwāri and ‘Abd-Allāh Mawlā’i, who subsequently constituted the officially powerful Clerical Council, sitting at the apex of the organization (Bādāmčīān, p. 47). The Clerical Council had two main responsibilities: first, to provide intellectual and ideological guidance to members and second, to pronounce technical/religious opinions, effectively leading the way on religious and political issues. Accepting the



politically oriented clergy as the repository of Islamic knowledge and the legitimate custodian of Islamic values, norms and ethics, it was only natural that the Coalition felt obliged to seek the opinion and accord of Islamic jurists in all those realms, where the social or political overlapped or became intertwined with the religious realm (Moqaddam, p. 153).

Before the Coalition entered its operational stage as a religio-political organization, the recruitment phase was already under way. In his meetings with the leaders of individual mourning groups prior to the merger, Khomeini had informally recommended an organizational network based on 10-men cells. The directive aimed to guarantee the expansion of the organization. According to one report, by January of 1965, the Islamic Coalition of Mourning Groups had 500 operational cells in Iran with some 5,000 members. Some 300 of these cells were operating in Tehran (Erāqi, p. 170).

THE 5 JUNE 1963 UPRISING

From the spring of 1963 to the fall of 1964, members of the Coalition played a key role as the propaganda and operational arm of Khomeini in Tehran. On the operational front, the Coalition and its members provided an array of services. They were instrumental in organizing demonstrations, public speeches, religio-political sermons and rallies. In the aftermath of these political activities and agitations, when militants and zealots were imprisoned, the Coalition financially supported them inside the prisons and their families on the outside (Mahallāti, p. 65). During tense moments of confrontation between the regime and Khomeini's partisans in Qom, more experienced members of the Coalition such as Mehdi Erāqi acted as Khomeini's bodyguards. The Coalition was instrumental in mobilizing and bringing their zealous sympathizers in the form of religious mourning groups and processions to the streets. The coordination of demonstrations in Tehran with Ayatollah Khomeini's fiery speeches in Qom, to generate a maximum political impact was also the responsibility of the Coalition. In view of the Coalition's very close ties with the bazaar, the closing of the bazaar as a traditional sign of protest against the government was left to Coalition members or sympathizers. Finally, the initial organization and mobilization of the demonstrations that occurred in Tehran after the arrest of Khomeini on 5 June 1963, was the work of the Coalition.

On the propaganda front, the Coalition is credited for printing and effectively distributing the speeches, messages and declarations of Khomeini. It is



reported that on one occasion, the Coalition distributed some 200,000 to 250,000 copies of Khomeini's declaration within two hours (10 p.m. and 12 a.m.) in Tehran, Qom, Mashad, Shiraz and Isfahan ('Erāqi, p. 170). The Coalition played a key role in dispatching fiery preachers to its provincial branches (Aḥmadi, p. 339). It also financed, printed and distributed two clandestine publications, *Be'tat* (Prophetic Mission) and *Enteqām* (Revenge). These two journals were written, edited and produced in Qom by a handful of clerics very close to Khomeini (Bādāmčīān, p. 84; Ha-shemi Rafsanjāni, p. 195). *Be'tat*, which was the more political and polemical of the two was managed by Rafsanjani, while Moḥammad-Taqi Mešbāḥ Yazdi, supervised *Enteqām*, the more theoretical and ideological publication (Hashemi Rafsanjani, p. 195). The articles in both *Be'tat* and *Enteqām* were used along with more specialized pamphlets as the reading and educational texts discussed in the 10-men cells of the Coalition (Mo'assesa-ye moṭāle'āt o taḥqīqāt-e siāsi, *Sāzmān-e mojāhedīn-e kaḏlq* I, Tehran, Political Studies and Research Institute, 2005, pp. 225-26).

The Coalition was an effective and dependable medium for informing Khomeini's supporters in Tehran of the actions, movements and events surrounding and related to the Ayatollah in Qom. It also coordinated the religio-political activities in Tehran with the tempo of Khomeini's activities in Qom. The spectacular show of force of the mourning groups in Tehran on 3 June 1963, the day of *āšurā*, started at 8 in the morning. Soon the religious procession of the mourning groups turned into a political demonstration. The crowd chanted anti-Shah and pro-Khomeini slogans, formulated by Šādeq Amāni, one of the Coalition leaders (Moqaddam, pp. 95-96). Around noon, 'Erāqi, another one of the leaders of the Coalition, addressed the large rally in front of Tehran University. Subsequently, the demonstrators/mourning groups moved to the vicinity of Marmar Palace, the Shah's residence, ending their march at the bazaar around three in the afternoon (Moqaddam, p. 96). One hour later, Khomeini went to the Fayziya Seminary School in Qom and delivered his scathing *āšura* speech against the Shah and Israel, accusing the former of waging war against Islam and the clerical establishment (*ruhrānīyat*) and the latter of scheming to uproot the Qur'ān in Iran (Moqaddam, pp. 97-99). Less than thirty six hours after this speech Khomeini was arrested, triggering off the 15th of Kordād (5th of June) uprising.

While the Coalition's responsibility was to disseminate every word and action of the Ayatollah and mobilize the people through demonstrations and rallies, thereby sustaining the religio-political fervor and enthusiasm that Khomeini



had generated, the government was intent on insulating Khomeini, his activities and that of his followers. It is reported that early in the morning of 5 June 1963, members of the Coalition were the first to be informed by a young envoy from Qom that Khomeini had been arrested (Bādāmčīān, pp. 66-67). The organization of the initial key demonstrations, which could be argued to have instigated the events of that historical date was planned and orchestrated by the Coalition. The two main protest marches and demonstrations one emanating from the bazaar area and the other which is said to have been led by or had the blessing of Ṭayyeb Ḥāj Rezā'i from Rey street (meydān-e bārforušan) were organized or directed by the Coalition (‘Erāqi, pp. 183-84; Ruḥāni, p. 484; ‘Āqeli, p. 156; Mirzā'i, pp. 176, 200-201, 206).

The popular uprising after Khomeini's arrest on 5 June 1963 rapidly spread from Tehran's bazaar area, the focal point of the Coalition's power base across Iran and took the Shah's regime by surprise. Shocked by the magnitude of opposition and the intensity of the protest movement, the regime was temporarily destabilized and was forced to impose Martial Law. The provocative slogans of “Khomeini or death” (*yā marg yā Komeyni*) and “Khomeini, Khomeini may God protect you; may he die, may he die, he who is your bloodthirsty enemy” (*Komeyni Ko-meyni Kodā negahdār-e to, bemirad bemirad došman-e kunḵār-e to*), chanted by the throng of demonstrators had an unequivocal message and its anti-Shah emphasis was unheard of since the hot August days of 1953 (for the slogans, see Bādāmčīān, p. 67). The 5 June 1963 uprising and the bloody repression that ensued, may be considered as the prelude to the 1979 Revolution in Iran.

The Islamic Coalition of Mourning Groups was in effect the first religio-political organization of its kind, as it was convened and summoned by a prominent religious figure in Iran's predominantly a-political clerical establishment. Neither Ayatollah Kāšāni nor Nawwāb Ṣafawī, who had previously formed their respective political organizations, had Ayatollah Khomeini's scholastic and spiritual stature, record and credentials. This was the first time that an ‘ālem (Islamic scholar) and a renowned seminary school teacher in Qom had formed a political arm, members of which were not clerics, yet possessed impeccable religious credentials. Khomeini had meticulously inquired about and examined the religio-political zeal and efficiency of each of the three groups before initiating their merger.

THE COALITION'S ARMED BRANCH



From the inception of the Coalition, a small faction led by Amāni and ‘Erāqi leaned towards the formation of an armed branch within the organization (Şadri, 2004, p. 96). Both men had been active in Nawwāb Şafawi’s Devotees of Islam. Ayatollah Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani (Akbar Hāšemi Rafsanjāni, hereafter Rafsanjani) maintains that ‘Erāqi and Amāni’s ties to and experience with the activities of Nawwāb Şafawi’s “Fedā’iān-e Eslām” was influential in their tendency towards armed struggle and the founding of the Armed Branch (Hashemi Rafsanjani, p. 241). The Armed Branch was to carry out a “positive struggle” in contrast to the propaganda and political struggle, which was dubbed as “negative struggle.” The idea of creating an armed branch does not seem to have had the approval of the majority of the Coalition members. Ayatollah Maḥallāti has suggested that the idea of an armed branch caused a theoretical split and division within the Coalition (Maḥallāti, p. 65). According to Şādeq Amāni, subsequent to an evaluation of the conditions in the country, the faction within the Coalition which favored armed struggle concluded that the appropriate response to the prevailing problems could only come out of the barrel of the gun (Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization, I, pp. 227-28).

The bloody confrontations of the Fayziya School and the June uprising created the right conditions for this faction to air its views and present its plans. The Coalition is said to have finally decided to permit the few who wished to establish an armed branch to pursue their project of recruiting suitable members and obtaining weapons (‘Erāqi, p. 205). Soon the Armed Branch became equipped with home-made dynamite, 8 revolvers and ammunition (Moqaddam, p. 273). In the meantime religiously and ideologically devoted and physically fit young men of around 20 were recruited into the Armed Branch and given weapons training (‘Erāqi, p. 206). The Armed Branch was led by Amāni and its members included ‘Erāqi, Hāšem Amāni, ‘Abbās Modarresifar and Abu’l-Faẓl Hāj Ḥaydari of the older generation and Moḥammad Boḳārā’i, Reżā Şaffār Harandi, Mortazā Nikneżād, and ‘Ali Andarzgu who were the younger recruits of between 19 and 22 years of age (Qāsempur, pp. 36-37; ‘Erāqi, pp. 214-15, Amiri, pp. 148,159).

The establishment of the Armed Branch inevitably imposed its own logic, determining the trajectory and fate of the Coalition. Preparation for carrying out armed missions was moving the Coalition from its propaganda and political phase to the execution or armed phase. The security precautions necessary for the survival of a large semi-public organization were very different from that of a small clandestine group committed to armed struggle



and political assassinations. The overlap between the two different functions and activities of the Coalition became its Achilles heel. The armed activities of the Armed Branch endangered the existence of the propaganda and political branch just as it had happened with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt of 1949. Even though the Coalition tried to shield and insulate itself from the eventual security dangers and threats that assassination missions of the Armed Branch could pose for it, the key positions of the Amāni brothers and 'Erāqi linking the political organization to the military branch compromised and undermined all precautionary provisions ('Erāqi, p. 205).

As the Coalition considered itself to be the executive arm of Khomeini and felt morally obliged to act according to Khomeini's directives, the decision to found the Armed Branch needed his approval. Three different accounts exist on Khomeini's response. 'Erāqi argues that even though from the beginning the idea of establishing an armed branch was entertained and discussed within the Coalition, Khomeini would not commit himself to approving such a body. A second account, the origin of which is unknown, suggests that Khomeini initially opposed the idea of an armed branch but then conceded to its formation (Bādāmčīān, p. 102). According to a third account, again the source or sources of which are not revealed, after the Fayziya incident and the June 5 uprising, when certain Coalition members sought Khomeini's position on the creation of an armed branch, he is reported to have said, "It is all right as long as you do not receive weapons from anywhere so that you would become dependent, instead you ought to purchase or manufacture it yourself" (Moqaddam, p. 241). Ayatollah Mahdawi Kani recalls that; "Apparently, the Imam (Khomeini) did not favor armed activities" and that "some knew that he did not approve of armed movements" (Kvājah-Sarvi, pp. 122-23).

The establishment of the Armed Branch seems to have been in spite of Khomeini's will and directives and in defiance of the Coalition's Charter. As such, the decision to create the Armed Branch of the Coalition could be considered as disobedience and insubordination. Given the Coalition's public image of the perfectly obedient follower of Khomeini's opinions and convictions, after the 1979 Revolution, the issue of Khomeini's position on the Armed Branch and armed struggle became a highly sensitive one. Through official statements, the Coalition has tried to convince the public that its decision to embark on the path of "armed jihad" was legitimized by a "religious permit" (*Aṣr-e āzādagān*, 9 Esfand 1378 Š./28 February 1999).

KHOMEINI'S EXILE AND THE ASSASSINATION OF THE PRIME MINISTER



Khomeini's exile. On 13 October 1964, the Iranian parliament ratified a highly controversial and sensitive extraterritorial agreement by a narrow margin of 74-61. Given the handpicked parliament, the relatively high votes against a government Bill demonstrated the unpopularity of the Bill. The Status of Forces Agreement, known to Iranians as the Capitulations Agreement “provided American military personnel and their dependents stationed in Iran with full diplomatic immunity” (Bill, p. 156). To Iranians the Capitulations Agreement was considered as an affront to Iran’s national sovereignty and territorial integrity. The fact that as a result of this Agreement Iranian law would no longer apply to American servicemen infuriated the public.

It is said that the Coalition, through one of its sympathizers in the Iranian parliament, received news of the government’s bill concerning the provision of diplomatic immunity to the 1,700 US military advisors in Iran, before it was deliberated in the Majles. Khomeini was informed of the Bill in advance by the Coalition, yet he had insisted on proof before reacting to it (‘Erāqi, p. 207). Once the Majles ratified the Agreement, Khomeini waited for 13 days and then on the birthday of the Shah, which was officially celebrated, he explicitly lashed out against the Capitulations Agreement, the US, Britain, the Soviet Union, Israel, the Majles, the government and the Shah.

In a highly charged and moving speech, Khomeini said, “They have sold out all of us and our independence and still celebrate by illuminating and adorning the streets [reference to the official festivities on the Shah’s birthday] the Majles and the government have shamelessly reduced the Iranian people to a status lower than American dogs. This Agreement has made us a colonized country, it has presented the Muslim people of Iran to the world as lower than savages. If the clergy had any influence they would not allow a puppet of the Americans to commit such foulness, they would kick him out. If our country is occupied by the Americans, tell us and deport us from this country. All our problems are because of this USA. All our problems are because of Israel. Israel belongs to the US, these members of the parliament belong to the US, these ministers [in the government] belong to the US and are appointed by them, if they are not why do they not stand up and shout down the Agreement? . . . May God destroy all those who betray this land, this country and betray Islam and the Qur’ān” (Moqaddam, pp. 200-207).

On the night following Khomeini’s speech, its text was printed, reproduced and distributed on a very wide scale by members of the Coalition in Tehran and a few provincial centers. ‘Erāqi was instrumental in obtaining the text



from Khomeini, transporting it to Tehran and printing it on an A-3 format. Given the inflammatory content of the speech and SAVAK's sensitivity to prevent its circulation, the Coalition's ability to efficiently distribute the text without getting arrested, constituted a victory for members of the Coalition (Bādāmčīān, pp. 107-9). Nine days after this fiery speech, Khomeini was arrested and banished. Surprisingly enough, there were no major demonstrations marking his arrest and exile.

Originally, the Armed Branch assessed the possibility of assassinating the Shah, the prime minister Maṣṣūr, two ex-prime ministers and Shah's confidants, Amir Assad-Allāh 'Alam and Manučeḥr Eqbāl (q.v.), the police chief, General Ne'mat-Allāh Naṣiri, and General 'Abd-al-Karim Ayādi, the Shah's special physician who was also known to be a Bahai ('Erāqi, p. 209; Moqaddam, p. 366). Even though there seems to have been a consensus on the assassination of the Shah, the Armed Branch reached the conclusion that in view of the Coalition's organizational weakness and un-preparedness to take power, such an act may either lead to anarchy or enable other more disciplined and structured organizations to benefit from the situation. Afraid of the consequences of eliminating the Shah, it was therefore decided not to assassinate the Shah and focus on Maṣṣūr ('Erāqi, pp. 209-10).

The fatwa to assassinate Maṣṣūr. Once the decision had been made to assassinate Ḥassan-'Ali Maṣṣūr, the Prime Minister, a fatwa had to be obtained in support of this action. Khomeini, the spiritual and temporal father of the Coalition had been approached and asked for his approval, yet he had refused to issue a fatwa or condone the assassination ('Erāqi, pp. 228-29; Aḥmadi, p. 336; Ḳal-ḳāli, p. 163; SAVAK sources as reported by Moqaddam, pp. 366, 373).

Within the members of the Armed Branch, two different views competed on the necessity to obtain permission from a religious source of emulation for the act of assassination. One position, which seems to have been advocated by 'Erāqi maintained that the verdict of "corruptor on earth" had already been passed and confirmed in relation to their potential targets and they did not need to seek confirmation for their act.

The other group within the Armed Branch is said to have been represented by Ṣādeq Amāni. In contrast to the first group, this tendency was adamant on obtaining a religious permission from a source of emulation, before it proceed with its assassination project (Moqaddam, p. 245). Having failed to convince Khomeini to issue a religious edict, attempts were made to seek permission



from Ayatollah Moḥammad Hādi Milāni in Mashad (Moqaddam, p. 245). Milāni is reported to have said, “If someone can do this, this would be an obligation and should be done with a minimum of collateral damage” (Moqaddam, p. 246). The Armed Branch of the Coalition construed Milāni’s verbal statement as a valid permission to assassinate the Shah or Maṣṣur (Moqaddam, pp. 366, 374). Kalkāli suggests that even though Khomeini had not allowed the assassination, Moḥi-al-Din Anwāri, a member of the Clerical Council had opined that the murder of Maṣṣur is an obligation and you may act if you want to (Kalkāli, p. 163).

At around ten in the morning of 21 January 1965 Ḥassan-‘Ali Maṣṣur, the Prime Minister was shot twice at very close range as he got out of his car in front of the Majles by Moḥammad Boḳrā’i who was immediately arrested; his two other accomplices, Niknežād and Şaffār Harandi were arrested by the nightfall of January 21. Within ten days of the assassination, members of the Armed Branch, including ‘Erāqi and Şādeq Amāni as well as all key members of the Coalition including Anwāri, were arrested. Anwāri was a member of the Clerical Council and is said to have had close ties with the Armed Branch (Moqaddam, p. 366; Kalkāli, p.163).

On 27 April 1965, the trial of 13 defendants accused of “attempting to overthrow the regime, murder of Ḥassan-‘Ali Maṣṣur, possession and sale of illegal arms and hiding the culprits” started in a military tribunal and was over on May 16, 1965. In court, the Armed Branch’s weapons were put on display and the military prosecutor, Colonel Mir Ḥosayn ‘Ātefi, presented the pistols used by Boḳrā’i and Niknežād as important exhibits in the trial. In the tradition of “Fedā’iān-e Eslām,” the Colts had a piece of paper glued to their short barrels, which read, “Stop the autocratic rule of the Shah, the people will not accept becoming colonized, the Iranian regime is illegitimate and long live Islam, the world religion” (Moqaddam, pp. 477-78, 541). The prosecutor referred to the slogans on the Colts and concluded that the intentions, goals and objectives of the defendants could be clearly drawn from their content. The operational team of Boḳrā’i, Niknežād and Şaffār Harandi, in addition to the Amāni brothers and ‘Erāqi were sentenced to death and the remaining seven, including Anwāri were given prison terms. On 15 June ‘Erāqi and Hāšem Amāni’s death sentences were commuted to life imprisonment, while the other four were executed on 16 June 1965 (Moqaddam, p. 384-85). Those who escaped capture and imprisonment became isolated and marginalized. Some of them became active in newly formed armed organizations that later



entered the political stage. The lesson drawn by Muslim zealots from the assassination of Manşur was that a relatively small operation not only jeopardized but dealt a major blow to the totality of religio-political movements. Rafsanjani argues that the slaying of Manşur provided the regime with the necessary pretext to apply unrestrained violence against all opposition forces in society (Hashemi Rafsanjani, p. 241). The violent government backlash effectively put an end to the activities of the Coalition. In the years that elapsed between June 1965 and the release of the Coalition's key figures in 1977, the organization went through a period of hibernation and inactivity. In the meantime the baton of political opposition and armed struggle was passed on to other organizations of diverse ideological convictions, most of which had scarcely anything in common with the Coalition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

See [ii](#).

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