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IRANIAN REVOLUTION AND MAO'S CHINA: A CASE STUDY OF SOUTH-SOUTH RELATIONS DURING THE COLD WAR

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During the 1960s, the People's Republic of China presented itself as the hub of world revolution. The article studies China's engagement with Iranian revolutionary groups in the 1950s and 1960s, showing how the Sino-Soviet Split and China's subsequent outreach to Iranian student groups in Western Europe fractured opposition to the Shah along the lines of Europe's Cold War divisions. This article draws on digitized and translated materials obtained from the Chinese Foreign Ministry Archive (CFMA) during the period when it was accessible (2004–2012). The author has consulted memoirs of many Chinese officials in charge of Sino-Third World affairs and those engaging in Sino-Iranian relations in particular. Besides, the use of memoirs and post-2012 work in such archives as the Shanghai Municipal Archives can fill in the gaps for certain areas of post-1965 foreign policy. The research also makes use of much up-to-date western scholarship on Sino-Iranian relations under Mao, in order to contextualize the historical episode.

The paper also underscores the crucial role that intermediaries such as Algeria, Albania, and Romania played in granting China a foothold into Western European milieus and Iran at a time of Beijing's diplomatic isolation, and in the making of Sino-Iranian relations in the 1960s. South-South relations were thus mediated through Europe in spite of aspirations of an open world order that would permit formerly colonized peoples to interact directly with each other. It will be demonstrated that, as Maoist calls for the "encirclement of cities" failed and China re-established relations with the Shah's Iran in 1971, Maoism's legacy was perhaps more defined by its weakening of the Iranian left and retrenchment of inter-state relations, rather than socialist internationalism or an open world of people-to-people internationalism.

Finally, this article also highlights the need for further research into South-South ties during the Cold War, and a particular focus on the interaction between non-state actors in the Global South. It is by remaining attentive to these specific geographies that provided a biotope for South-South encounters, and the legacies of socialist internationalism for "South-South" encounters that historians may develop the conversation about the Cold War in the Third World further still.

Key words: China, Soviet Union, Iran, Maoism, South-South relations, communism, student movements.

ІРАНСЬКА РЕВОЛЮЦІЯ ТА КИТАЙ МАО: НА ПРИКЛАДІ ВЗАЄМИН ПІВДЕНЬ-ПІВДЕНЬ ПІД ЧАС ХОЛОДНОЇ ВІЙНИ

Лі Цзє

Протягом 60-х років Китайська Народна Республіка представляла себе центром світової революції. У статті досліджується причетність Китаю до іранських революційних угруповань у 1950-х і 1960-х роках, демонструючи, як китайсько-радянський розкол та подальша китайська пропаганда серед іранських студентських груп у Західній Європі розкололи опозицію проти шаха згідно з європейськими розподілами під час холодної війни. Цей доробок заснований на оцифрованих та перекладених матеріалах, отриманих з архіву Міністерства закордонних справ Китаю (CFMA) в період, коли доступ до нього не був обмеженим (2004–2012). Автор також проаналізував мемуари багатьох китайських чиновників, відповідальних за відносини між Китаєм та країнами третього світу, а також тих, хто брав участь у китайсько-іранських відносинах. Крім того, використання мемуарів та співробітництво після 2012 року з Шанхайським муніципальним архівом може заповнити прогалини у деяких сферах зовнішньої політики після 1965 року. Для того щоб визначити контекст цього історичного епізоду, автор звернувся до західних новітніх досліджень китайсько-іранських відносин за часів Мао.

У статті також підкреслюється вирішальна роль, яку такі посередники, як Алжир, Албанія та Румунія, відігравали у наданні Китаю опори в західноєвропейському середовищі та Ірану під час дипломатичної ізоляції Пекіна, а також у формуванні китайсько-іранських відносин у 1960-х роках. Таким чином, відносини південь-південь були опосередковано реалізовані через Європу, незважаючи на прагнення створити відкритий світовий порядок, який дозволив би колишнім колоніальним народам безпосередньо взаємодіяти між собою. Оскільки маоїстські заклики до «оточення міст» зазнали невдачі, а Китай відновив відносини з шахським Іраном у 1971 році, спадщина маоїзму більше характеризувалась ослабленням іранського лівого руху та відходом від міждержавних відносин, ніж соціалістичним інтернаціоналізмом чи відкритим світом інтернаціоналізму від народу до народу.

Автор також висвітлює необхідність подальших досліджень взаємин південь-південь під час холодної війни, а також приділяє особливу увагу взаємодії між недержавними суб'єктами Глобального Півдня. Приділяючи увагу регіонам, які забезпечили біотоп для зустрічей представників південь-південь, а також спадщині соціалістичного інтернаціоналізму, історики можуть більш детально дослідити тему холодної війни в третьому світі.

Ключові слова: Китай, Радянський Союз, Іран, маоїзм, відносини південь-південь, комунізм, студентський рух.

Introduction

In 1963, a delegation of Iranian students bound for the People's Republic of China landed at the airport in Rangoon, Burma, a stopover on their journey from Frankfurt. Burmese officials at the airport greeted the scruffy Iranian students, seated them into a limousine, and drove them to a luxury hotel, where they were provided exquisite meals. As they departed from the hotel the next morning to return to the airport for their flight to Beijing, however, their transfer – a mere taxi – was more modest. Once they arrived at the airport, the Chinese Ambassador to Burma went there to see them off and explained the discrepancy in their treatment. The Burmese had been waiting for a high-ranking Albanian delegation; when they had asked the Iranian students

where they were from; they mistook "Tehran" for "Tirana" and provided them with luxury accoutrements. An unamused Albanian delegation boarding the same flight to Beijing as the Iranian students explained that they had been housed six to a room in the run-down hostel intended for the Iranians [Sulmaan Wasif Khan 2018: *398*].

The students' journey to the People's Republic of China – and the misunderstandings along the way – illustrates the ambition and disorganization of Beijing's interaction with the Third World and leftist actors during the 1960s. Particularly in the wake of the Sino-Soviet split, Beijing presented itself as the first among equals amidst formerly colonized countries and as the centre of the world revolution. This article examines Chinese engagement with Iranian students in the 1960s, exploring how Beijing's engagement with the Third World fractured the Iranian left. In particular, this piece examines the Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party (*Sāzmān-e Enqelābī-yeh Hezb-e Tūdeh-yeh Irān*), as well as the Tudeh Party from which it emerged. Focusing on the period from the late 1950s to 1971 (when the People's Republic of China established formal diplomatic relations with Iran), this article sets aside the reception of "Maoism" among Iranian intellectuals in the 1970s. While I engage with Iranian student politics in Western Europe – the subject of a vast number of books – this paper is focusing less on "Maoism" as an intellectual and social phenomenon in the West, and more on actual operational links between the PRC and Iranian activists.

As such, this research contributes to several historiographical conversations. Although the history of Chinese foreign relations during the Cold War, and, to a lesser extent, the history of the Pahlavi regime's relations with the United States are well-researched, fewer scholars have examined relations between China and Iran [Chen Jian 2001; Shen Zhihua and Li Danhui 2011; Jeremy Friedman 2015; Gregg Brazinsky 2017; Sulmaan Wasif Khan 2018; Roham Alvandi 2014; Roham Alvandi 2018]. Works by scholars of international relations and policy analysts, like John Garver's 2006 book on Sino-Iranian relations over the course of millennia or John Parker's 2008 book on Sino-Iranian relations since the Islamic Revolution offer an indispensable starting point, but they are disconnected from trends in the historiography of the Cold War and international history that have focused more on decolonization and the role of non-state actors [John Garver 2006 & 2008]. Scholars of Iranian studies, in contrast, have devoted renewed attention to both the original Tudeh Party as well as student groups and left-wing groups such as the Fedayan that waged guerrilla war against the Shah's regime and formed their own international networks in the 1970s [Ervand Abrahamian 1992; Peyman Vahabzadeh 2010 & 2019; Ali Rahnema 2021]. Scholars of Chinese and intellectual history have, likewise, begun to reinterpret the history of Maoism as a global phenomenon, exploring the reception of Maoist thought in Western Europe in particular [Quinn Slobodian 2012; Alexander C. Cook 2014; Julia Lovell 2019]. In spite of all of these rich studies, however, we still lack for an Iranian equivalent of what Julia Lovell has done in showing how Chinese outreach had lasting effects on the left in countries like Indonesia, Peru, or India. Perhaps the closest equivalent are books produced by Iranian institutions that aim more at discrediting Maoism's Iranian afterlives than situating them into the historiographical conversations mentioned above.

Fortunately, new sources allow us to address some of these questions. This article draws from digitized and translated materials obtained from the Chinese Foreign

Ministry Archive (CFMA) during the period when it was accessible (2004–2012). Admittedly, the value and range of materials leave something to be desired. Even when it was fully open, the CFMA only contained materials up until 1965, a period when China's engagement with Iran was limited to support for revolutionary groups. True, the use of memoirs and post-2012 work in such archives as the Shanghai Municipal Archives can fill in the gaps for certain areas of post-1965 foreign policy [Qian Qichen 2006; Wang Bingnan 1985; Liu Xiao 1986; Yang Gongsu 1999; Xiong Xianghui 2006; Wu Xiuquan 2009; Shi Zhe 2015].

Drawing on these sources, this article uses the PRC's outreach to the Iranian left to highlight three broad points. Firstly, even as the proximate causes of the Sino-Soviet Split had nothing to do with Iran, the Split sharpened cleavages among the Iranian left. Those who saw the struggle against the Shah's despotism more in terms of decolonization than anti-capitalism, or who saw armed struggle as the optimal political tactic gained a powerful external patron. Over time, however, China's abandonment of world revolution and younger Iranian activists' search for indigenous models of revolution exacerbated these fractures within the Iranian left. Over the long term, Chinese outreach splintered the Iranian left and assisted the Shah's regime and, later, Islamist opponents, in consolidating their power.

Secondly, this split among Iranian leftists found geographical expression along the lines of Europe's Cold War division. The Soviet Union and its Eastern European satellites gave refuge to tens of thousands of Iranian socialists, but neither Moscow nor the Tudeh Party conceded ideological ground to the critique emanating from the PRC or the Tudeh Party. State socialist regimes could squelch Maoist critiques on their home territory, but were less effective in countering these charges in the battle for hearts and minds in Western Europe. As a result, the Maoist challenge saw the Tudeh Party neutered from an organization with aspirations to organize the Iranian Diaspora in all of Europe to one confined to the Iranian socialist diasporas in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Thirdly, while the story of Sino-Iranian relations in the 1960s is a story of "South-South" relations, these relations were mediated through newly independent states such as Algeria and Iraq, Eastern European mavericks like Albania and Romania, and indeed within a divided Europe itself. Given that the PRC lacked full diplomatic recognition, Beijing often had little recourse but to work with radical actors nominally committed to overthrowing their own government rather than regimes in power themselves.

More broadly, this article demonstrates that "South-South" relations were often chimerical in the 1960s. In the early 1960s, states like those mentioned in the last paragraph proved crucial nodes of connectivity between partially recognized states like the People's Republic of China and radical activists based in Western Europe who sought to topple "despotic" regimes. Even as the PRC presented itself as a hub for world revolution and an "open" world of people-to-people relations, its diplomatic outreach underscored the importance of states and Europe as platforms for South-South diplomacy.

Roads to Beijing (1941–1962)

The starting point for our story is Iran in the 1940s. There, young Iranian intellectuals looked up to the Soviet Union for its modernization of the country. In 1941, Iranian socialists founded the Tudeh ("Masses") Party, uniting older Iranian Marxists educated in Europe with a younger generation educated in Iran [Ervand

Abrahamian 1982: *283–287*]. It commanded some of the most influential newspapers in the country, could mobilize strikes, and was novel in devoting attention to the role of women in Iranian political life. London and Washington feared that the Tudeh Party could win upwards of forty percent of the vote if fair elections were held [Ervand Abrahamian 1982: *300*]. This, combined with the Soviet sponsorship of independent Azerbaijani and Kurdish statelets in north-western Iran following the conclusion of the Second World War, lead Western observers to fear that Iran was on the brink of disintegration, revolution, or both [Ervand Abrahamian 1982: *304*].

Ultimately, however, these fears proved overstated. Stalin withdrew the Soviet troops protecting the Kurdish and Azerbaijani experiments in May 1946 in exchange for negotiations over a Soviet oil concession in northern Iran [Odd Arne Westad 2005]. The Soviet leader's explanation that Iran lacked the economic base for socialism was cold comfort to tens of thousands of pro-Soviet Kurds and Azerbaijanis forced to flee to the Soviet Union. Likewise, the three Tudeh Party members appointed to Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam's government in August 1946 were forced out of the government. Absent Soviet occupying forces, the Iranian Parliament refused to ratify the oil concession agreement, and the Iranian government cracked down on the Tudeh Party. Following a failed assassination attempt against the Shah in February 1949, the Tudeh Party was banned. After the 1953 coup d'état against Prime Minister Mohammed Mossadeq, the Shah's regime subsequently arrested, imprisoned, or executed Tudeh Party members [Abrahamian 2015: *53*]. Members of the Party's leadership fled to the USSR, where they sought to reincorporate into the Party those Azerbaijani and Kurdish activists that had fled for the Soviet Union in 1946 [Abrahamian, 2015: *455*]. Hence, by the mid-1950s, the Tudeh Party's operations had been moved to the Soviet Union. Initially housed in camps outside of Baku, the Iranian "socialist diaspora" was gradually integrated into institutions like Soviet radio stations and universities in Tajikistan [Abrahamian, 2015: *198*].

Moscow's granting of refuge to the Tudeh Party led to strained relations with the Shah's regime. In November 1955, Tehran joined the Baghdad Pact, an anti-Soviet military alliance that included the United States, the United Kingdom, Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan. In the summer of 1956, however, in an effort to improve Soviet relations with Iran ahead of a visit from the Shah and Queen Soraya to the USSR, CPSU Politburo member Otto Wille Kuusinen suggested transferring the leadership of the Tudeh Party to the German Democratic Republic (GDR) [Peyman Vahabzadeh, 2010]. The Iranian Communists had few options for reaching an Iranian public from the Soviet Union, but a base in East Berlin would provide them "with connections to the outside world – that is, with Iranians and Iranians in West Berlin" [1]. Iranian nationals could travel freely between East and West Berlin, and as Tudeh Party Central Committee member Nurredin Kianouri noted, Iranian censors did not check mail addressed from West Berlin to Iran [Peyman Vahabzadeh 2010]. Moving the Tudeh Party to the GDR would remove a major stumbling block in USSR–Iran relations and allow Iranian Communists to reach Iranians themselves more effectively. Soviet officials decided that the optimal place for a meeting between the leadership of the Tudeh Party and the East German Socialist Unity Party (SED) would be in

[1] Peyman Vahabzadeh, 2010, *A Guerrilla Odyssey: Modernization, Secularism, Democracy and the Fadai Period of National Liberation in Iran*. Syracuse, New York : Syracuse University Press, p. 20.

Beijing, where the Eighth Congress of the Communist Party of China was scheduled to take place on September 15–27, 1956 [Gregg Brazinsky 2017]. The PRC itself had no relations with the Shah's regime in Tehran, which established relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) that same year. While the PRC had established relations with Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan, and Yemen from 1955–1956, Iran thus remained a closed door to Beijing's influence in the Middle East. Meeting with Kianouri in Beijing, SED General Secretary Walter Ulbricht approved the request, but requested that the Tudeh Party base itself in Leipzig, rather than the capital, so as to be insulated from foreign intelligence [Roham Alvandi 2018]. The visit to China also allowed for the Tudeh Party to develop relations with the Chinese. Mao met briefly with Tudeh Party General Secretary Reẓa Radmanesh, while Kianouri met with Zhou Enlai. Kianouri and other representatives of Communist Parties were also invited to a special lecture on the history of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from its founding to 1949. Fittingly, one of the first publications of the Tudeh Party's print and radio infrastructure in Leipzig was a revised version of Kianouri's lecture notes on the history of the CCP [Roham Alvandi 2018]. China was thus entangled in the Tudeh Party's presence in Europe from the start.

The shift in the Tudeh Party's activities from the Soviet Union to the GDR dovetailed with the growth in the number of Iranians living and studying in Western Europe. If, in 1957, approximately 4.000 Iranian students studied abroad, then a decade later, that number had grown eightfold [Qian Qichen 2006]. Regimes like the Shah's perceived the education of technical and scientific elite in Western universities as a crucial factor in the modernization of their societies. This made for not only a larger audience, but also one more representative of Iranian society, as more and more students came from non-élite backgrounds [Qian Qichen 2006]. Those students were chosen as agents of national-economic growth arguably felt the pressures of an economic-utilitarian approach to education more acutely than any others [Qian Qichen 2006]. This was especially true for students from Iran, where the SAVAK kept a tight lid on political opposition at home. Politically, however, many of these youth still identified with the Tudeh Party, and in the late 1950s, the Tudeh Party had strong followings in Graz, Munich, Stuttgart, Cologne, and Hanover, plus smaller followings in France and Italy [Qian Qichen 2006].

Yet the context within which activists had to operate was changing. Iranian students in Western Europe mingled with students from the Third World and were exposed to anti-colonial movements like those in Algeria, the Congo, or Cuba. The writings of intellectuals like Franz Fanon and Aimé Césaire, which circulated at the campuses of Western European universities, stressed that the world was less divided along ideological lines of capitalism and socialism than along a divide between colonizers and colonized peoples structured by racism. Further afield, events like the Afro-Asian Conference in Bandung, Indonesia attempted to give structure to this inchoate sense of anti-colonial internationalism. The Tudeh Party, however, remained distant from these movements. Rather than leaning into any commonalities between the situation in Iran and countries in the colonial world, the Tudeh Party deepened its association with Moscow, formally defining itself as a Marxist-Leninist party for the first time in its history and participating formally in the activities of the international Communist movement led by Moscow, similarly to the Spanish or Greek Communist Parties, which had similarly large diasporas in

the socialist bloc [Abrahamian, 2015: *458–459*]. As Mehdi Khanbaba Tehrani, then a student in Munich, noted, young Iranians grew dissatisfied with the Tudeh Party's abject dependence on Moscow and inability to respond to a new climate of anti-colonial revolution [Abrahamian, 2015: *453–454*]. All the same, Iranian students lacked the resources to offer an alternative to the Tudeh Party's vision.

(Re)enter China. Chinese relations with Tehran, while officially nonexistent, were not without their own recent history. An Iranian delegation was invited to the 1955 Afro-Asian Conference in Bandun as representatives of an "Asian-African UN member state"[2]. Prior to the Conference, China's Foreign Ministry internally classified the countries attending what became the Afro-Asian Conference into five groups, ranging from full-fledged champions of revolution (China and Vietnam) to "anti-peace and anti-neutral countries" such as Turkey, the Philippines, and Thailand. Iran fell on the latter end of the spectrum, classified as a "close to 'anti-peace and anti-neutral' country"[3]. China's goal heading into the conference, the same report noted, ought to be to "influence" countries like Iran[4]. Iran did not represent a completely lost cause, in other words, but it remained close to the imperialist camp.

Beijing's stance toward Tehran did not improve in the late 1950s. The Chinese Foreign Ministry emphasized Iran's position on the western end of a "crescent shaped encirclement" around the PRC and the USSR, spreading from Japan and the Korean Peninsula to Southeast Asia, India, Iran, and Turkey[5]. President Kennedy's prepared remarks for his November 22, 1963 speech in Dallas, Texas, in which "he proposed encircling socialist countries with nine countries" including Iran particularly unnerved Foreign Ministry analysts[6]. Kennedy's assassination meant that the speech was never delivered, but the PRC's relations with Tehran remained virtually non-existent[7]. Instead, the PRC provided the Tudeh Party with facilities in Beijing to complement its presence in the GDR. Following a meeting between

[2] "Chinese Foreign Ministry Intelligence Department Report on the Asian-African Conference" (September 4, 1954), PRC FMA 207-00085-19, 150-153. Obtained by Amitav Acharya and translated by Yang Shanhou, available at: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112440 (accessed 20 February 2021).

[3] "Report from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, 'Draft Plan for Attending the Asian-African Conference'" (April 4, 1955), PRC FMA 207-00004-01, 1–7. Obtained by Amitav Acharya and translated by Yang Shanhou, available at: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112896 (accessed 20 February 2021).

[4] The Republic of China had, by this time, established an Embassy in Tehran, although Iran had refrained from sending an Ambassador to Taipei. It should also be noted that the PRC then did not put pressure on Iran for severing its relations with Taiwan. It was Iranian government's calculation of not to be close to Taiwan and it was determined to boost its relations with Beijing. See: "Report from the Chinese Foreign Ministry, 'existence of Diplomatic Relations Between Afro-Asian Conference Participant Countries and the Jiang Bandits'" (February 1, 1955), PRC FMA 207-00021-01, 1–2. Translated by Jeffrey Wang, available at: http:// digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/113244 (accessed 20 February 2021).

[5] "Record of Conversation from Premier Zhou Enlai's Reception of the Delegation of the North Korean Supreme People's Assembly" (June 28, 1962), PRC FMA 109-03158-01, 41–50. Obtained by Shen Zhihua and translated by Jeffrey Wang and Charles Kraus, available at: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/ document/116539 (accessed 20 February 2021).

[6] (December 19, 1963), PRC FMA 107-01027-07, 41–62. Translated by Stephen Mercado, available at: http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/165430 (accessed 20 February 2021).

7 "Record of Premier Zhou Enlai's Conversations with the President of Ghana Kwame Nkrumah" (March 8, 1964), PRC FMA 203-00623-02, 1–40. Translated by Stephen Mercado, available at: http:// digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/165410 (accessed 20 February 2021).

Tudeh Party First Secretary Reẓa Radmanesh and Mao on the sidelines of the Eighth Party Congress of the CCP in September 1956, some fifteen members of the Tudeh Party were invited to Beijing to help organize Persian- and Azerbaijani-language classes for Chinese universities and to run the Persian-language division of Radio Peking [Wang Bingnan 1985]. Together, the group formed a model of socialist internationalism, as several of the Iranians were married to Polish or Russian women and travelled with their children to Beijing [Wang Bingnan 1985]. These Tudeh Party members produced some of the first translations of the works of Mao Zedong into the Persian language; thanks to the Tudeh Party, the first printing press capable of printing the Persian language was imported to China [Wang Bingnan 1985]. Radio Peking broadcast its inaugural Persian-language programming on October 15, 1957, and in 1961 Chinese students joined the broadcast team at Radio Peking, translating articles from Chinese into Persian and serving as broadcasters [Wang Bingnan 1985].

Yet the relationship between the Tudeh Party and the People's Republic of China proved only as durable as the relationship between the USSR and the PRC. Key players in the Tudeh Party like Nurredin Kianouri were "convinced that the Chinese Revolution conformed more to the conditions of Iran than did the Russian Revolution" [John Garver 2006]. At the same time, high-ranking CPC officials like Deng Xiaoping emphasized to the Tudeh Party cadre that they were absolutely committed to maintaining the territorial integrity of Iran, rather than agreeing in principle to any Tudeh Party expressions of interest in annexing Iranian Azerbaijan to the Azerbaijan SSR in the Soviet Union [John Garver 2006]. As Deng explained to the Iranians, any Chinese acquiescence to these sentiments could be used to justify the annexation of Chinese territory to Mongolia or Korea. These conversations shored up the impression among Tudeh Party cadre that Beijing was perhaps less interested in championing socialism in Iran than in establishing ties with a strong Iranian state at arm's length from itself that could be used as a counterbalance in PRC diplomacy vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, India and the Arab World [John Garver 2006].

Such concerns about the PRC's true intentions were interrupted, however, by the Sino-Soviet Split. Members of the Tudeh Party refused to broadcast Radio Peking's anti-Soviet content, and in 1963–1964, the Tudeh Party group left Beijing. From 1964 onward, the Persian-language section of Radio Peking became a de facto one-man operation, run by Abadin Nawai, a former Iranian Army officer who had grown disillusioned with the Soviet Union and opted to stay behind in Beijing [John Garver 2006]. Unable to establish diplomatic relations with Tehran and deprived of access to nonstate Iranian groups, China would cast a wide net as it sought to find Iranian interlocutors.

Revolutionary Organization of the Tudeh Party of Iran (1962–1966)

By the early 1960s, both Iranian student activists in Europe as well as the CCP itself looked wide and far for international partners with whom to champion their cause. The CCP found an initial contact in Fereydoon Keshavarz, a physician and former member of the Tudeh Party who had been the Minister of Culture in the short-lived Iranian government including the Tudeh Party in 1946. Following the dissolution of that cabinet, Keshavarz fled to the Soviet Union, where he grew critical of Soviet communism and wrote an anti-Tudeh Party *I Accuse* manifesto in 1958 [Sulmaan Wasif Khan 2018]. Searching for an alternative to the Soviet Union,

Keshavarz found refuge in Abd ul-Karim Qasim's Iraqi Republic; Qasim, who had staged a coup d'état against the Iraqi monarchy with the Iraqi Communist Party on July 14, 1958, invited Keshavarz to teach medicine at Iraqi universities. In 1962, Keshavarz opted to move to independent Algeria, where he was invited to lead the al-Mustafa Children's Hospital and train Algerian paediatricians. Keshavarz was animated by the project of public health in post-colonial countries that strove for independence from the superpowers, but China also had a foothold in countries like Algeria and Iraq, with whom it had diplomatic relations. Further, Keshavarz had links to China through his acquaintance with the Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha, with whom he had studied in Moscow in 1938–1939 [Sulmaan Wasif Khan 2018]. Whatever the precise channel, the CCP invited Keshavarz to visit China for a month sometime in 1962; Keshavarz accepted and made the Chinese Communists aware of the emerging Iranian student diaspora in Western Europe. If the first phase of Sino-Iranian socialist linkages had been brokered in the shadow of the Sino-Soviet alliance, this new phase was now mediated by postcolonial states like Algeria and Eastern European states that had taken Beijing's side in the Sino-Soviet Split.

Following on the meeting with Keshavarz, Beijing began to seek to engage Iranian students in Europe. Initial feelers came through Chinese students involved in the International Union of Students, an organization founded in 1946 as a non-partisan international association of university student groups and based in Prague, but which had become a tool of Soviet soft power following the 1948 Czechoslovak coup d'état. Iranian students in Prague invited a group of four Iranian student activists based in Western Europe to attend the Seventh Congress of the International Union of Students in Leningrad in August 1962. Chinese students at the Congress approached the Iranians and engaged them about the need to oppose imperialism and support national liberation movements – "a language that was recognizable to us", reflected delegate Marjid Zarbakhsh, then a student at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology [Elidor Mëhilli 2017: *47*]. Following the Congress in Leningrad, the Iranian students were taken on a tour of the Uzbek and Tajik SSRs, but Zarbakhsh recalled his feeling of disappointment that Soviet socialism had failed to eradicate systems of authority evident in Central Asia's collective farms. Exposure to Soviet reality did not undermine Zarbakhsh's belief in socialism, but ongoing world events such as the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Tudeh Party's support of Soviet foreign policy fuelled demand for a more radical stance.

Eastern European states that had not cut ties with China offered another foothold from which the CCP could contact Iranians in Europe. In advance of a conference of the International Union of Students in Bucharest, the Romanians invited both Manuchehr Sabetian, a student leader with the Confederation of Iranian Students who had also been to the 1962 IUS in Leningrad, as well as a Tudeh Party youth delegation, to the conference. Potentially through these Tudeh Party networks, Parviz Nikkhah, a student at Manchester University, was selected to attend the IUS conference in Bucharest. There, a group of Chinese students made clear to Nikkhah their wish to host an Iranian youth delegation. As if these attempts to reach young Iranians in Europe through the Soviet Union or Romania were not enough, other accounts recall Chinese students at international student conferences in Africa in 1963 speaking to Iranian student delegates there, as well [Yang Gongsu 1999]. Whether through postcolonial states like Algeria or mavericks in Eastern Europe like Romania or Albania, China was

using diplomacy with student diasporas as a way around its lack of formal diplomatic relations with "imperialist" states like Iran. Ultimately, Katy Rezvani and another Iranian student in London would travel as the initial "delegation" to the PRC in the spring or summer of 1963 [Yang Gongsu 1999].

Where China once lacked for contacts with Iranians altogether, it was now using its Eastern European contacts to organize a viable alternative in the form of Iranian students at Western European universities. During his initial trip, Rezvani met with CCP officials who emphasized the need to adapt Marxism-Leninism to their local Iranian context, showed Rezvani agriculture communes, and seated him next to Zhou Enlai at a theatre performance [Xiong Xianghui, 2006]. According to Rezvani, his Chinese hosts did not fully understand the nature of the split between Iranian students in Western Europe and the Tudeh Party, but they were eager to offer military training in any event and needed an additional native speaker of Persian at Radio Peking. Following the successful trip to China, a small group of Iranian students held a "preparatory meeting" to form the Tudeh Party in Munich in April 1964; subsequently, Rezvani travelled again to Algeria, where Keshavarz assured him that Albania could host the Tudeh Party's first Congress. In November 1964, Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha (who had sided with China in the Sino-Soviet Split) hosted the membership of the Tudeh Party – twelve people at this point – and welcomed Rezvani with a private audience on the side-lines of the Tudeh Party's first Congress [Xiong Xianghui 2006].

China and the Tudeh Party soon developed a working relationship. Interviews with former Tudeh Party cadre suggest that China provided approximately $200.000 to the organization annually throughout the 1960s [Xiong Xianghui 2006]. At roughly a million dollars in today's terms, this was a considerable sum for a country like the PRC with limited access to convertible currencies. Beyond this financial support, beginning in early 1965, several delegations of 5–6 Iranian students in Europe were provided with an all-expenses paid trip to China. There, the Iranians trained at a military university in Nanking alongside Chinese soldiers and instructors in a "national group" of their own. All exercises were conducted in Chinese, but with a Chinese translator providing live translation into Persian. Throughout their time at the military academy, the Iranians were sequestered from other international groups and were provided with specially prepared meals of Iranian cuisine, in contrast to the stewed cabbage and rice provided to Chinese rank and file soldiers [Xiong Xianghui 2006].

The courses in Nanking included military tactics and live training, but their focus lay on theoretical instruction. Chinese instructors emphasized Mao's writings on the encirclement of cities and the need to develop a revolutionary base in the hinterland of their society. The Soviet Union and Nikita Khrushchev also came in for heavy criticism as "revisionist" [Shi Zhe 2015: *54*]. Chinese instructors offered a mix of dogmatism and deference that would come to define the CPC's relationship with the Tudeh Party. On the one hand, instructors highlighted the CPC's own guerrilla war against the Japanese as a singular example of people's war from which all national liberation groups ought to learn. On the other hand, Chinese instructors stressed that foreigners knew their local context better than did any Chinese, and that they had to apply Mao's writings to their local context [Shi Zhe 2015]. Throughout, Chinese instructors emphasized the importance of building a centralized party apparatus

alongside the guerrilla struggle. While this focus on party-building and endless denunciations of "revisionism" prompted some members of the Tudeh Party to look more to Cuba as a revolutionary model for Iran, China remained an attractive patron for military training.

For some in the Tudeh Party, the need to acquire military training in China was particularly urgent, as they saw Iran on the verge of a peasant uprising. Since the early 1960s, the Shah had embarked on a program of land reform, culminating in the so-called "White Revolution" of 1963 that foresaw land reform and reductions in the autonomy of tribal groups, some of which pursued pastoral nomadism. One such group, the Il-e Qashqai, a Turkic tribal confederation in southern Iran, revolted against government reforms in the early 1960s. Given that Iranian students had left the Tudeh Party in large part because of what they saw as its refusal to resist the Shah's dictatorship domestically, the Qashqai uprisings seemed like a chance both to apply Maoist theories of peasant warfare and live up to their own criticisms of the Tudeh. One member of the Tudeh Party who had received training in China, Iraj Kashkuli, and his cousin travelled to Iran to join forces with the Qashqai via a younger member of the Qashqai who had studied in England [Peyman Vahabzadeh 2020]. However, the attempt to use the Qashqai revolt as a vector for Maoist revolution failed spectacularly: the Shah's gendarmerie crushed the rebellion, Kashkuli's Qashqai was executed by the regime, and Kashkuli fled to Europe [Peyman Vahabzadeh 2020]. "The idea of a peasant uprising illustrated [the] TUDEH PARTY's illusions about the realities of rural Iran" and threw into question the universal applicability of Maoist theory [Peyman Vahabzadeh 2020: *58*].

The enthusiasm of Tudeh Party for armed struggle was part of a larger turn toward armed struggle among opponents of the Shah's regime. On April 10, 1965, a member of the Shah's Imperial Guard attempted to assassinate the Shah as he arrived for work at the Marble Palace. The Shah survived, but the SAVAK arrested six young men, including Parviz Nikkhah, as complicit in the attempt. The SAVAK subsequently extracted a confession from Nikkhah in which he claimed that he and his accomplices (four of whom had also studied in the United Kingdom) sought to inspire a Chinese-style revolution in Iran. A few months later, in October 1965, a so-called Islamic Nations Party entered into skirmishes with the SAVAK in the Darband hills north of Tehran. The future head of the Office of Liberation Movements in the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mehdi Hashemi, described himself as fascinated by Maoist tactics of armed struggle in the 1960, seeking to fuse Chinese tactics of encirclement of cities with the ideas of Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb [Sulmaan Wasif Khan 2018]. Like the members of the Tudeh Party who sought to graft their vision of socialism onto the Qashqai uprisings, Hashemi claimed to have spent time in the mid-1960s working to organize tribes in Chaharmahal and Bakhtiari Province against the Shah's regime. The more the SAVAK crushed peaceful opposition at home, the more that it seemed like armed struggle alone could bring down the regime.

Even as attempts to apply Chinese military tactics to the struggle against the Shah faltered, Iranians contributed their voices to China's revolutionary outreach. As we saw earlier, in the wake of the Sino-Soviet Split, Radio Peking had been decimated, reduced to a staff of one Iranian and the Chinese students trained in the Persian language by the Tudeh Party in the late 1950s. In early 1964, Mohsen Rezvani "exiled" the aforementioned Mehdi Khanbaba Tehrani, a rival for leadership of the

Tudeh Party, to China to work for Radio Peking [Wu Xiuquan 2009]. Tehrani's main responsibility was to work with his Chinese colleagues to translate pre-produced broadcast texts from English into Persian and read them for Radio Peking's twice-daily broadcast to Iranian audiences, which took place at 7 AM and 9 PM local time in Iran [Wu Xiuquan 2009]. Yet from the start, the working atmosphere was tense. The Chinese workers trained in Persian double-checked all of Tehrani's Persian-language broadcast texts for fidelity to the original English (and through it, the original Chinese).

Not long after his arrival at Radio Peking, however, Tehrani grew frustrated with the working style as well as the broadcasting content at the station. While Tehrani ostensibly needed advance access to news items so as to prepare for broadcast, he learned of events like the successful detonation of a Chinese nuclear bomb in 1964 only one hour before broadcast. Tehrani perceived that anti-Soviet propaganda, rather than denunciations of the Shah or support for an Iranian revolution, dominated programming [Wu Xiuquan 2009]. In contrast to Western or Soviet radio programming, Radio Peking avoided reporting on political prisoners in Iran. Rather than advancing the cause of opposition groups, the PRC seemed to regard the world through the lens of ideological competition with the Soviet Union. Like the members of the Tudeh Party before him who had disagreed with Beijing's stance on ethnic autonomy, Tehrani came to believe that the PRC was no champion of revolution, but rather a conservative regime interested in an anti-Soviet alliance with Iran.

Social events with other foreign operators of Radio Peking offered Tehrani diversions from the rigidity and frustrations of work. Radio Peking employed approximately 5,000 employees total (including Chinese employees) and ran broadcasts in 24 languages when Tehrani arrived [Shi Zhe 2015]. Most foreigners were housed in "Friendship House," a compound of dormitories, apartments, and a cafeteria that had been pre-assembled in Moscow and delivered to Beijing in the 1950s [Shi Zhe 2015). There Tehrani socialized with some 1.700 Latin Americans, Arabs, Japanese, Indians, Pakistanis, West Germans, Britons, and Americans [Shi Zhe 2015]. Virtually none spoke Chinese, so English and German served as common languages among the foreigners [Shi Zhe 2015].

The staff members at Radio Peking were ideologically diverse. Furthest to the left were the Indians, who were "more Chinese than the Chinese and more Catholic than the Pope" [Sidney Rittenberg 2001: *257*]; the Chileans; and the Americans (prisoners of war from the Korean War and Maoists who had arrived in the 1960s). More moderate, in contrast, were the Lebanese, Egyptians, Iraqis, Pakistanis, Scandinavians, and Iranians like Tehrani [Sidney Rittenberg 2001: *257*]. Weekly Saturday-night mixers with drinks and music allowed this group to form relationships unthinkable anywhere else. Tellingly, when Tehrani and a Chinese coworker engaged in a tryst in a Beijing park, only to have police interrupt their encounter, the Chinese woman suggested that they pretend to be an Albanian and a North Korean so as not to upset sensibilities about foreigners with Chinese women [Sidney Rittenberg 2001]. Much as the imperative to escape American encirclement and discredit the Soviet Union as "revisionist" had forged such odd partnerships as the Iranian-Romanian or Iranian-Albanian linkages discussed earlier, Radio Peking had created an environment in which Albanian-North Korean relations seemed logical.

The group also offered a cross-section of different generational paths to anti-"revisionism". Many were younger leftists, like the older and younger brothers of Sabri Khalil al-Banna (better known as Abu Nidal, a Palestinian revolutionary who would become famous for his acts of international terrorism in the 1970s and 1980s). The former was married to a Hungarian woman, worked for the Chinese state press agency Xinhua, and frequently challenged Tehrani to backgammon; the latter taught Arabic at the Beijing Foreign Languages School [Bradley Simpson 2008]. Others were members of an older generation, such as the aforementioned Abadin Nawai; older Austrian Communists who had become acquainted with the CCP through the Comintern in the 1930s; and Hans Müller, a German doctor from Düsseldorf who had joined the People's Liberation Army during the Chinese Civil War and was married to a Japanese woman [Bradley Simpson 2008]. Whereas younger Maoists donned Chinese clothing and insisted on eating Chinese food, Dr. Müller maintained a bourgeois manner and insisted on tipping his hat to colleagues around the building [Bradley Simpson 2008]. In short, Friendship House resembled an ice core of the international socialist movement.

Beyond the paramilitary training courses and the broadcasts at Radio Peking, the Chinese-Iranian partnership took shape through translations of the works of Mao Zedong. In the mid-1960s, three Tudeh Party members based in Prague and dissatisfied with the Party's support for Soviet "revisionism" informed Tehrani of their desire to emigrate to the West [Vincent Bevins 2020]. Two of this "Group of Three" escaped to West Berlin on passports "borrowed" from Iranian tourists to East Berlin, while another applied, successfully, to the SED to leave for the West [Vincent Bevins 2020]. The three men eventually resettled in Paris, but they lacked a stable income. Tehrani interceded, obtaining permissions and funding from China's Foreign Languages Publishing House to have the three men translate the first four volumes of Mao's Collected Works. Giving such an important ideological task to the "Group of Three" proved controversial within the ranks of the Tudeh Party, since some regarded the men as "revisionists" themselves for not leaving the Eastern Bloc sooner. All the same, the CCP officials with whom Tehrani interacted viewed this ideological disagreement as beyond their remit. "The Chinese", he explained, "said that this task was basically not related to the Party and that the Foreign Languages Publishing House decided [matters] independently. Translators could be non-Communists, and this subject did not become connected to revisionism" [Vincent Bevins 2020: 75]

Within only a few years, then, the estrangement of the Tudeh Party from China had come full circle. Merely a decade earlier, Tudeh Party leaders like Kianouri had travelled to China, assisted in the construction of socialism, and printed works on the Chinese Revolution in Leipzig. By 1963, China's relationship with any Iranian groups was nonexistent. However, as Kianouri himself conceded, by the late 1960s, the Tudeh Party's presence in West Germany and the United Kingdom had been wiped out, while its following in Italy and France was depleted [Vincent Bevins 2020]. Through a combination of socialist international networks like the IUS, states like Algeria, Romania, and Albania, and above all, the perception of Soviet complacency, the PRC had found a foothold into Western European student networks. The Soviet Union may have championed Vietnamese resistance to American imperialism and supported states like Egypt and India, but it struggled to

win the sympathies of Iranian students at Western European universities. Programs that brought students to universities in the USSR or its Eastern European satellites could only partly countervail against the general trend. That the translations of Mao's Collected Works may well have been printed on the Persian-language printing presses imported by the Tudeh and the Soviet Union to China reflected the ironies of China's evolving relationship with the Iranian left.

Disappointments and the Cultural Revolution (1966–1971)

All the same, a number of factors limited the appeal of the Chinese revolutionary project to Iranian actors. Attempts to topple the Shah's regime through armed uprisings had ended in disaster, and Iran was in the process of rapid urbanization. Given the stress that the Chinese put on the peasantry as a revolutionary subject and "encirclement of the cities" as a revolutionary tactic, Maoism's applicability to Iran seemed dubious. Worse, Chinese attempts to lead the world revolution elsewhere were faltering. In June 1965, Chinese efforts to organize a Second Bandung Conference were halted when Algerian President Ben Bella was toppled in a coup d'état. Following a failed coup d'état attempt on September 30, 1965, the Indonesian Army and armed mobs butchered members of the Indonesian Communist Party, the largest in the world outside of the PRC or the USSR, and an ally of Beijing's [Jeremy Friedman 2015].

In Beijing itself, meanwhile, the Iranians continued to find their Chinese colleagues ill-informed about international affairs. Tehrani observed one conversation between Swedish Maoists and Chinese hosts at Friendship House in which the former explained, politely, that they failed to see the applicability of the Maoist strategy of encircling the cities in light of the fact that Sweden was a majority-urban society and lacked a peasantry altogether. The Chinese accused the Swedes of mocking them, since no society could lack a peasantry. As Tehrani quoted the Chinese, "if there are no peasants in Sweden, then where do you get your food from?" [Jeremy Friedman 2015: *150*]. In Tehrani's view, the Chinese remained in the clutches of a peasant mentality that was incommensurable with the mindset of Europeans or activists with experience living in Europe, like the Iranians. Leading cadre of the party "like Deng Xiaoping had spent six months in Paris, or Zhou Enlai had spent three months in Göttingen," explained Tehrani, indicating that they had some sense of the outside world. For most CCP cadre, however, Beijing was "like Paris" – the limit of their mental world. The Chinese imagination of the world as a global countryside meant that it could never truly meet the needs of student radicals who came from urbanizing societies.

If this were not bad enough, Tehrani saw the Chinese commitment to the Iranian Left as doubtful. Already in February 1965, at a banquet for the Chinese New Year to which foreigners had been invited, Zhou Enlai came to Tehrani's table and informed him that it was possible that China and Iran would soon improve relations [Jeremy Friedman 2015]. China and Iran were, he stressed, two "ancient civilizations," and Iran offered (along with India) the most promising base for the world revolution in Asia. Zhou explained that Pakistani Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was mediating between Beijing and Tehran and that Ashraf Pahlavi (the Shah's sister) might be invited to Beijing to establish diplomatic relations [Jeremy Friedman 2015]. More gallingly still, Zhou explained that the invitation would take place at a planned event in Indonesia that April to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Afro-Asian Conference and which Princess Ashraf was

expected to attend. The Chinese seemed to regard the legacy of the Afro-Asian Conference in terms of inter-state ties between independent countries, rather than international revolution or liberation from despotic regimes.

Incensed at the encounter, Tehrani replied to Zhou that he and the other Iranians working at Radio Peking would have no choice but to boycott their work if China took such a step. Rather than responding, however, Zhou turned to small talk with Khanbaba Tehrani, practicing what German phrases from his time in Germany with Tehrani [Qian Qichen 2006]. Many of his Chinese colleagues at Radio Peking were appalled by the idea of rapprochement with the Shah, comparing it to the USSR's support for Chinese nationalist Chiang Kai-Shek during the Chinese Civil War [Qian Qichen 2006]. If Soviet support for both Chinese nationalists and the Chinese Communist Party during the Chinese Civil War demonstrated the duplicitous nature of Soviet diplomacy, the operators at Radio Beijing assumed that the PRC would never court "reactionary" actors like the Shah. The plan to invite Princess Ashraf to Beijing never came to fruition, but it seemed that China was prepared to sell out the Iranian opposition [Qian Qichen 2006]. Nor was Khanbaba Tehrani alone in these impressions. Iranian activist Vida Habjedi, who had extensive ties in the Latin American revolutionary scene, cornered two Chinese representatives at the Tricontinental Conference in Havana in 1966 and demanded to ask why they did not protest the presence of representatives from the Shah's Iran at the Conference. The Chinese remained silent and walked away [Qian Qichen 2006].

How justified were such fears? Throughout the late 1960s, the Pahlavi regime kept a suspicious eye on both China as well as Maoist groups like the Tudeh Party. The SAVAK was informed of Rezvani's initial trip to China in 1963, for instance, and tracked Kashkuli en route to his participation in the Qashqai uprisings. More broadly, according to the diaries of Asadollah Alam, the Shah's longstanding Minister of the Royal Court, as early as 1966, the Shah warned Soviet leaders about the challenge a rising China would present in international affairs [Wang Bingnan 1985]. Likewise, the Shah remained concerned about Chinese influence in Afghanistan [Wang Bingnan 1985]. Even as the Shah's views were moderated by information coming from Pakistan, he seems to have maintained an unsophisticated view of the PRC as austere and fanatical throughout the 1960s [Wang Bingnan 1985]. By the spring of 1970, however, Alam urged the Shah to consider selling oil to Beijing, even as Iran continued to recognize Taiwan as the government of China [Wang Bingnan 1985]. The Shah had a growing sense of Iran as a pivotal regional power with interests in the Middle East, East Africa, and Asia, but he hesitated to move toward Beijing ahead of the United States.

In the meantime, however, the Cultural Revolution exacerbated China's isolation from the world. While it is not the place of this piece to discuss the origins of the Cultural Revolution, what is indisputable is the chaotic effect it had on Chinese foreign policy. By the middle of 1967, Chinese Ambassadors were withdrawn from all Embassies except that in Cairo. Red Guards sought to storm and take over the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Afshin Matin-Asgari 2018: *190–198*]. In general, then, "during the Cultural Revolution, it was difficult to speak of a 'Chinese foreign policy' with the implication it contains of a policy directed by central organs, carried out at home and abroad, to achieve particular objectives in relation to other countries" [Afshin Matin-Asgari 2018: *198*].

Despite this chaos, Beijing still interacted regularly with the Tudeh Party. The military training courses in Nanking continued uninterrupted, offering TUDEH PARTY members a window into the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution". Iraj Kashkuli, the Iranian revolutionary who had participated in similar courses a few years earlier before the Qashqai debacle, noted how mandatory reading sessions of Mao's Little Red Book had been introduced before and after every meal. In the theoretical courses, meanwhile, ritualistic denunciations of Liu Shaoqi, formerly the third most powerful person in the CCP after Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, who was denounced as a "capitalist roader" during the Cultural Revolution, featured prominently [Afshin Matin-Asgari, 2018: *195*]. Likewise, the tours of China provided after the training courses now featured an excursion to the section of the Yangtze River in Wuhan where Mao had made a "record breaking" swim in 1966. A particular highlight of the trip was an audience with Mao himself in Tianenmen Square, where Chinese general and Mao's designated successor Lin Biao introduced Kashkuli to Mao. The commitment to the Cultural Revolution went both ways: wherever Kashkuli and his Iranian group were taken, they demanded to cook their own meals with Chinese kitchen staff and join in harvests with Chinese peasants.

Kashkuli and other Iranians' embrace of the Cultural Revolution contrasted with Tehrani's reaction to events at Radio Peking. Red Guards threatened to overrun Friendship House, and senior staff at Radio Peking were purged for "bourgeois habits," such as using an umbrella during rainstorms [Christian Caryl 2014: *91*]. Such events underscored Tehrani's belief that China remained a peasant society lacking the economic, social, and intellectual prerequisites to build socialism [Christian Caryl 2014]. For Tehrani, socialism revolved around the mechanization of production, and in light of China's backwardness, this, he felt, remained impossible. Worse, this disjuncture between theory and reality had given rise to "peasant" techniques of mobilization that culminated in the Cultural Revolution. Tehrani conceded that even in the late 1960s, "the Chinese tried to explain to backwardness of this society and the application of theory to the particular conditions of society" [Christian Caryl 2014: *94*]. But Tehrani rejected such mobilizational strategies as having nothing to do with Marxism. China did not destroy his faith in socialism per se, but by 1967, he had dismissed the Chinese experiment as mere "peasant socialism" [Christian Caryl 2014: *94*].

Tehrani was equally sceptical of the drivers of Chinese foreign policy. The struggles during the Cultural Revolution reflected, in Tehrani's view, clashes between leaders like Liu Shaoqi, who favoured a greater focus on industrialization, and Mao, who favoured an overwhelmingly peasant society with some light industry [Lorenz Lüthi 2008: *204*]. But when it came to foreign relations, Tehrani felt that both thought in terms of national interest, not internationalism. Any talk of an "independent path" masked how China was a reactionary regime with interest neither in building socialism nor leading the world revolution.

Events in Beijing spurred intergenerational discussions about the place of China within the history of socialism. Abadin Nawai, the former Iranian Army colonel who ran Radio Peking's Persian-language section before Tehrani and remained scarred by the experience of Stalinism in the USSR in the 1950s, grew paranoid that Stalinism had taken control of China [Alexander C. Cook 2014]. By the late 1960s, Nawai resolved to emigrate from China, but as Tehrani noted, his ideological fear of

"the capitalist world" held him back from emigrating to Western Europe. In 1970, Nawai accepted an invitation from Iranian opposition groups based in Ba'athist Iraq before emigrating again to Hungary for medical reasons [Alexander C. Cook 2014]. Nawai had eagerly left the Soviet Union for the PRC precisely because he did not view cults of personality as inherent to "socialism", but the Chinese case seemed to indicate that "socialism" inherently led in this direction. Nawai remained an anti-capitalist, but his alienation from the Soviet Union was so complete that he viewed life in a completely new setting like Baghdad or Budapest as preferable to life in Brezhnev's Soviet Union [Alexander C. Cook 2014].

Younger socialists like Tehrani saw the Sino-Soviet comparison rather differently. Tehrani scorned the Cultural Revolution, but he downplayed comparisons with the Stalinist Soviet Union. Throughout the late 1960s in Beijing, his Chinese minders refused to let him go anywhere without an escort, the notion being that "counter-revolutionary elements" sought to murder foreigners in an effort to smear China [John Garver 2006]. In contrast to what Tehrani knew of the Soviet Union, China seemed devoid of a police presence and instead relied much more on workplace denunciation to enforce discipline [John Garver 2006]. More broadly, Tehrani noted that Chinese purges were conducted in the name of a campaign against "revisionism", not claims of foreign espionage. Like the Iranian socialist Nawai one generation above him, Tehrani saw certain parallels between the Cultural Revolution and Stalinism, but he stressed the ways in which Chinese learning from the Soviet experience limited excesses. And like his elder comrade Nawai, Tehrani's disillusionment with Chinese socialism in no ways spurred a rediscovery of Soviet socialism or an embrace of capitalism. Where Nawai sought an authentic "socialism" in Eastern Europe or Iraq, the younger Tehrani retained the energy to develop an indigenous Iranian socialism.

The ideological divorce from Maoism was slower for others in the Tudeh Party. Long after Tehrani departed Beijing in 1967, TUDEH PARTY member Kurush Lashayi returned to Beijing in the late summer of 1971 for meetings with Chinese leadership [John Garver 2008]. Viewing a military parade in Tiananmen Square from a building for foreign delegations, Lashayi was told that Mao and Zhou Enlai were waiting for him on the balcony. There, he encountered an exhausted-looking Mao. When Zhou explained that Lashayi was the leader of an Iranian delegation, Mao only dimly understood until Zhou repeated "Bō sī" ("Persia") to him several times. Finally understanding, Mao told the young Iranian to "forget what you have seen here" [John Garver 2008: *107*]. Mao had established himself as a revolutionary icon, but he appeared concerned that Lashayi would blindly copy the Chinese experience and seek to apply it blindly to Iran.

Yet as Lashayi recalled, "the fact that we remained indifferent to the best advice – do not imitate the Chinese – was indicative of the extent to which we were charmed by our meeting with Mao" [John Garver 2008: *107*]. Lashayi's and other Iranians' subsequent travels to Mao's birthplace in Shaoshan with a Vietnamese delegation did little to dispel the illusion. The Cultural Revolution and China's return to international society sent some revolutionaries like Tehrani on a search for indigenous models of revolution, but the attraction of China as a global revolutionary centre died hard for others.

Conclusions

By the late 1960s, much of the romance that Iranian radicals had once associated with China had dissipated. As we saw earlier, already by the mid-1960s, China's

prestige had been damaged through events in Indonesia and Algeria, while the failure to establish a revolutionary base inside of Iran undercut the Tudeh Party's original critique of the Tudeh Party as complacent exiles unwilling to challenge the Shah on his home turf. While much of the leadership of the Tudeh Party remained entranced by "self-criticism" and worship of Mao, the Cultural Revolution had led to debates within the organization on ideological dependence on China, much as the Tudeh Party had depended too much on the Soviet Union.

These developments dovetailed with shifts in the potential Iranian audience for such ideas. If 31.000 Iranians were studying abroad in 1965, then by the end of the 1970s, this number had more than tripled to some 100.000, with half that amount in the United States [Liu Xiao 1986]. The locus for organizing against the Shah's regime necessarily had to center less around East Berlin, Havana, and Nanking, and more around West Berlin and Berkeley [Liu Xiao 1986]. The growth in the number of middle-class and wealthy Iranians living in the West also allowed the Tudeh Party and other opposition groups to become less reliant on financial support from foreign states [Liu Xiao,1986]. Within Iran itself, two very different options for the radical left remained open. On the one hand, from 1966 onward, the Shah's regime ploughed vast resources into the implementation of a national cultural policy [Liu Xiao 1986]. Periodicals, university institutions, and para-state institutions like the Center for the Intellectual Cultivation of Children and Adolescents came to employ former Tudeh Party members and even Maoists in sensitive positions. Most notoriously, in 1968, Parviz Nikkhah confessed to the ideological bankruptcy of his former views and enjoyed a career in Iranian television, becoming the director of the Iranian national television service [Liu Xiao 1986]. Inayatullah Reza, a leftist who had worked at Radio Peking, Radio Moscow, and Radio Baku became the director of the Section for Soviet Literature of the Pahlavi National Library [Liu Xiao 1986]. Other former TUDEH PARTY members like Kurush Lashayi found their way into elite conclaves tasked with creating a single-party state for the Shah and designing an "ideology of the dialectic of revolution" for the regime. The Shah's regime invited former Maoists to contribute to building a cultural hegemony for the Shah's dictatorship – and many leapt at the opportunity.

On the other hand, events in Iran opened the horizon for an indigenous revolutionary model not copied from Moscow, Beijing, or Havana. On February 8, 1971, Iranian guerrillas attacked a gendarmerie post in Siahkal in northern Iran, killing several policemen. The guerrillas' determination to overthrow the regime by force – and their audacity to operate within Iran – inspired Iranian students [Yang Gongsu 1999]. As for orthodox Maoists themselves, members of the Tudeh Party faced the obvious problem that Tehran formally established relations with Beijing on August 16, 1971 and supported Beijing's entry to the United Nations shortly thereafter [Yang Gongsu 1999]. The decade saw an improvement of relations between the two countries as the Shah sought to position Iran as an independent geopolitical player and China sought to rally opposition to the "social imperialist" Soviet Union [Yang Gongsu 1999]. China's stress on crushing movements for ethnic autonomy also remained a constant theme. When Chinese diplomats met with representatives of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq conflict of the early 1970s, they repeatedly stressed that any regional disputes had to be solved "without foreign interference" and were concerned about Kurdish autonomy, noting that China had "solved the issue of legitimate nationalities" at

home [Yang Gongsu 1999: *115*]. By the late 1970s, relations had developed to the point that Iran commissioned architect Hossein Amanat to build its largest embassy in the world in Beijing, members of the Shah's extended family toured Tibet, and Chinese historical journals celebrated the millennia-long tradition of friendly Sino-Iranian relations [Yang Gongsu 1999]. China's commitment to the Shah became so strong that Deng Xiaoping accused the Soviet Union of fomenting the protests of 1978–79 that led to the Iranian Revolution [Yang Gongsu 1999]. Beijing never cut relations with members of the Tudeh Party and continued to invite Iranian socialists for consultations in Beijing well into the 1980s. More and more, however, senior CCP figures like Xi Zhongxun (Xi Jinping's father) encouraged former members of the Tudeh Party to take up positions at research institutes in China itself, stressing that the struggle for socialism in Iran could take decades [Yang Gongsu 1999].

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Maoism contributed to a fracturing of the left in Iran as much as elsewhere, setting the stage for a revival of religious and market fundamentalist forces in the 1980s [Roham Alvandi 2018]. Some members of the Tudeh Party continued to follow ultra-left orthodoxy, visiting Pol Pot's Cambodia, publishing articles opposing the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia in 1978, and attacking the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as "social imperialism" in 1979 [Roham Alvandi 2018: *129*]. These deep ideological divides made reconciliation with the Tudeh Party all but impossible – something exacerbated by the fact that Tudeh Party cadres had themselves spent decades socialized into "real existing socialism" and its ideological strictures by the time of the Iranian Revolution [Roham Alvandi 2018: *220*]. Dynamics such as decolonization and the Soviet Union's desire to maintain ideological orthodoxy in Eastern Europe make it hard to imagine an alternative world in which the Tudeh Party maintained the hegemony it had enjoyed in the 1940s. In contrast, whereas the Islamist activists that became the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) disagreed over support for liberation movements, armed struggle, and relations with Syria, not until 1986–1987 did these disagreements become so dramatic as to occasion purges.

Looking at the history of China's engagement of the Tudeh Party adds to our understanding of China during this period. Scholars have seen China as advancing a more genuine anti-imperialist agenda to that of the Soviet Union, but from the point of view of socialists from societies far from "developed" themselves, China appeared as a peasant country whose mentality and outlook made it illegible for socialist transformation [Xiong Xianghui 2006]. Beijing sought the prestige of being a primus inter pares among post-colonial states, but the Iranians' experience shows that this was an unusual kind of prestige. Even at the height of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese instructors and leaders reiterated that the Iranians had to learn from China's example but never copy it. And the Chinese state that engaged the Iranians was much more centralized and less mediated by Chinese Muslims, than the system of intermediaries that scholarship on Sino-Arab relations has underscored [Xiong Xianghui 2006]. By the late 1970s and 1980s, Beijing would use visits to Xinjiang as ways to underscore its Islamic face to Iranian leftists and Islamists, but for much of the 1960s, the Chinese state that engaged Iran was a unitary, Han Chinese one, not the more disaggregated picture we see in other accounts [Xiong Xianghui 2006].

This history also underscores the impact of Maoism on Iranian intellectual life. Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini may not be seen as inhabiting the same intellectual

space as Maoism, but when Khomeini issued his 1989 epistle to Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, he spoke explicitly of the impact of Chinese ideology on the Soviet Union [Wu Xiuquan 2009]. Likewise, Khomeini's Last Will and Testament criticized the Iranian left for "pulling your country into the fold of the Soviets or China" and indulging in "'isms' which are devoid of content among learned and inquisitive people" [Peyman Vahabzadeh 2019: *225*]. Perhaps, even more interesting than the history of the Iranian left is the legacy of Maoism among self-identified Islamist actors. Scholars have pointed to the ideological turn of Islamist ideologues like the Palestinian Munir Shafiq, the Lebanese intellectual Saoud al-Mawla, and the Lebanese militant Imad Mughniyeh from leftism to Islamism in the wake of the Sino-Vietnamese War and the Iranian Revolution [Peyman Vahabzadeh 2019]. All of these figures featured extensively in media produced by the IRGC throughout the 1980s, and as mentioned earlier, Mehdi Hashemi (the Head of the Unit for Liberation Movements) was intrigued by Maoist thought himself. Future work might focus more on the pathways and afterlives of "Maoism" inside "Islamist" organizations, setting aside the in-group and out-group markers that actors applied to themselves.

Finally, this article also highlights the need for further research into South-South ties during the Cold War. In a recent reflection on future directions for the field of international history, several scholars have called for attention to interaction between non-state actors in the Global South and to look beyond state archives toward "networks created and maintained by actors that are harder to identify in the archive". What emerges from this article is, however, perhaps a less "open" or "fluid" world of actors than one might imagine. While China aspired to ties with an imagined Iranian people, its engagement of the Tudeh Party took place with actors based in Western Europe, and was mediated through Eastern European intermediates. Encounters between Iranians and Chinese and other foreigners in Beijing itself often did as much to highlight the superficiality of their shared convictions as it did to forge a genuine internationalism, given the superficial nature of ties between countries like Iran and Albania. And in China itself, encounters with figures like Colonel Nawai or with the older Austrian Communists, were not just "South-South" but "socialist-socialist" in that they offered younger leftists a living window into debates about Stalinism. It is by remaining attentive to these specific geographies that provided a biotope for South-South encounters, and the legacies of socialist internationalism for "South-South" encounters that historians may develop the conversation about the Cold War in the Third World further still.

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