

OTHER NATIONS

While young people increasingly belong to "the correct social and political organizations," such as the Komsomol, they are also the most likely group to perform such "politically deviant" acts as refusing to vote and reading foreign books. Young people believe that because the KGB concentrates on arresting major dissidents, minor acts of defiance are "a calculated risk they were willing to take."

The Soviet Union can regain support among the young and well-off by increasing the supply and quality of goods and services. "Otherwise," Millar and Donhowe conclude, "... the best and brightest are likely to remain discontented."

Dissent in Iran

"The New Iranian Left" by Nozar Alaolmolki, in *The Middle East Journal* (Spring 1987), The Middle East Institute, 1761 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

The Iranian Left was a potent force in the political revolution that overthrew the shah of Iran in the spring of 1979. Leftists overran police and military installations in many Iranian cities, and half a million marched through Tehran streets during a May Day demonstration.

Yet four years later the Iranian Left had become a spent force, with all left-wing parties banned and scores of leftist leaders in jail.

Why did the Iranian Left collapse? The answer, says Alaolmolki, an assistant political science professor at Hiram College, lies in its "debilitating organizational factionalism."

Modern Iranian leftism began with the creation in 1941 of the Tudeh or "party of the masses," a Communist party aligned with the Soviet Union. During the 1960s, young Marxist militants angered by the Tudeh's tacit support of the shah created violent Maoist "new left" parties, such as the Komalah ("committee"), a Kurdish guerrilla movement.

After Mao Zedong's death in 1976, the Chinese regime supported the shah, causing Iranian Maoists to choose more esoteric role models. The Paykar ("struggle") faction said that the only Communists who were not "bourgeoisie" and "anti-revolutionist" were the North Koreans. A Komalah spinoff, the Communist Party of Iran, said that Albanian dictator Envar Hoxha was the only "true hero of the international communist revolution," even though the Albanian regime supports Ayatollah Khomeini. These "deep ideological cleavages," Alaolmolki says, frequently led to factional warfare, such as Maoist attacks on the Tudeh.

Ayatollah Khomeini's regime has created "ideological confusion" among leftists, as Marxist doctrine has little to say about combating theocracy. The Ayatollah's condemnation of the United States has led many leftist leaders and the Tudeh to support him, leaving the left divided.

The new Iranian leftists are more pragmatic than their predecessors. The Komalah has become Iran's largest leftist party by replacing violent Maoism with political education in "Islamic socialism" as its main tool for winning support. However, Alaolmolki concludes, "the persistence of ideological disputes" and Khomeini's repression bar a leftist revival.