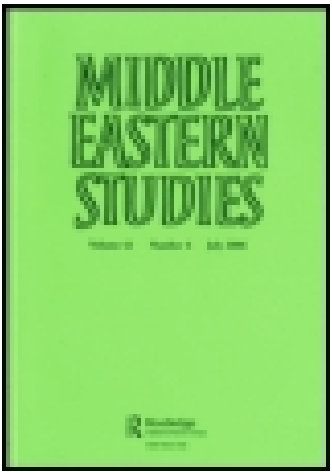

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Kasravi: The Integrative Nationalist of Iran*

Ervand Abrahamian

NATIONAL INTEGRATION

'Political Modernization' has become a sponge term. For some it has soaked up the process of building such centralized institutions as state bureaucracies, standing armies, and disciplined political parties. For others it is closely related to the breakdown of regionally independent agrarian economies into highly inter-dependent industrial economies. And yet for others, it is synonomous with the transformation of traditional cultures where subjects owe allegiance primarily to their parochial groups, and view themselves as distinctly detached from the central authorities, into modern cultures where citizens owe allegiance to the state, consider it their natural right and even civic duty to participate in public affairs, and feel that their political system – whether democratic or totalitarian – should have deep roots in the social system.

But in whatever specific way 'political modernization' is used, it is invariably associated with the general process of national integration: the integration of traditional decentralized administrations into centralized modern state bureaucracies; the integration of agrarian economies where there are few direct links between the regional units into industrial economies where these units are fused into one unitary and directly linked social system; the integration of rulers and ruled through institutions that stretch from the centre to various areas and layers at the periphery; the integration of exclusive bonds – such as to clans, tribes, religious sects, and regional groups – into more inclusive ties to the nation; and the integration of multi-cultural, multi-tribal, multi-lingual empires into new nation-states often, if not always, with one political ideology, one culture, one language, and one national identity.[1]

Although as early as the nineteenth century two such different minds as Marx and Durkheim both wrote on the transformation of independent agrarian units into inter-dependent industrial societies, it was not until quite recently that social scientists have focused their attention on the problem of political unification. This revival of interest is reflected in Clifford Geertz's much quoted article 'The Integrative Revolution: Primordial Sentiments and Civil Politics in the New States' which first appeared nine years ago in a collection of essays entitled *Old Societies and New Nations: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa.*[2] In this work Geertz showed how newly independent countries were invariably confronted by the agonizing problem of reconciling traditional affiliations – such as ties to tribes, regions, religions, languages, and ethnic groups – into modern nation-states demanding the political allegiances of all their

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citizens. He concluded that this was one of the major 'revolutions' facing the emerging states of Africa and Asia.

The concept of political unification has also been used in a somewhat different fashion by Leonard Binder in his articles 'Egypt: The Integrative Revolution' and 'National Integration and Political Development'.[3] While for Geertz national integration means the aggregation of communal groups into nations, for Binder it signifies the closing of the wide gap between elites and masses through the building of new national values and state institutions.

Binder's use of the term 'national integration' is derived predominantly from the study of Egypt where the traditional elites had almost nothing in common with the masses. And Geertz's conclusions are formulated mostly from the experiences of the newly independent African states created in the aftermath of Western decolonization. Yet their general observations are applicable to Iran in spite of the obvious considerations that Iran is not a 'new state' - its history reaches back over two thousand and five hundred years, and Shi'ism had been a common bond between the rulers and the ruled since the sixteenth century. They are applicable because, in spite of history and religion, the country in the nineteenth century was in many ways a typically unintegrated society: it was divided horizontally into a ruling court with no organizational roots among the population: and the population itself was fragmented vertically into a number of distinct sectarian, linguistic, and tribal communities.

The Iranian population – estimated at about eight million at the end of the nineteenth century[4] – was divided into a Shi'i majority; a significant Sunni minority of tribal Kurds, Arabs, Baluchis and Turkmans; and small urban concentrations of non-Muslims, such as Armenians, Assyrians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Bahayis, and Azalis. Moreover, the Shi'i majority itself was fragmented into smaller groups, especially in the Ni'mati and Haydari factions and into the Mutashari, Shaykhi, and Karimkhani sects.

Iran was also a mosaic of languages. The population of the central plateau, which totalled less than half the country, was predominantly Persian with an intermingling of Qashqayis, Arabs and Bakhtiyaris. The west and southwest were a mixture of settled, semi-setttled, and unsettled Kurds, Lurs, Bakhtiyaris, Arabs, and Mamsamis. The southeast was mostly Baluchi. The northwest was Azari with scattered settlements of Kurds, Shahsavans, Armenians, and Assyrians. The peasantry in the Caspian provinces spoke their own Iranian dialects of Gilaki, Talashi, and Mazandarani. And the population of the northwest was an amalgam of Persians, Kurds, Shahsavans, Afshars, Turkmans, and Timurs.

Much of Iranian history was a history of communal struggles: tribe against tribe, sect against sect, faction against faction, region against region. The dynasties were able to survive these conflicts – at least, for some periods of time – both by taking advantage of existing communalism and by remaining aloof from the social system. The Shahs accepted group rivalry, and invariably encouraged it, as long as this rivalry was directed at other groups and not at the central authorities: rebels were brought to heel not by a standing army nor by a large bureaucracy – for the elites had neither – but by rival communities anxious to enforce the royal writ against their own local enemies. The kings often tolerated religious minorities and unorthodox sects as long as all paid their taxes and accepted the divine right of kings: the aim was to obtain outward obedience, not inward

conviction; to make holes in men's pockets, not in their minds. The central governments delegated much of the day-to-day administration of the provinces to regional authorities as long as they were willing to mobilize their followers at times of emergency: the intention was to achieve a limited degree of political security and conformity, not an unlimited measure of administrative uniformity. And the Qajar monarchs, speaking in their own dialect of Turkish with their own tribesmen and in court Persian with their royal administrators, would have viewed linguistic diversity – had they ever contemplated the subject – as a permanent and unalterable fact of life imposed on man by God.

Increasing contact with Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century undermined this traditional relationship between state and society. The old basis of legitimacy – the divine right of kings – was gradually replaced by the concepts of elective institutions, representative governments, and inalienable rights of man. Secularism gradually eroded the political influence of Shi'ism which had served as a narrow but useful bridge spanning the wide gulf between the governors and the governed. The traditional aloofness of the political system from the social system became unacceptable as citizens viewed the government not as a distant court uninvolved in society, but, on the contrary, as the vanguard of economic and social modernization. And the old tolerant attitude toward cultural heterogeneity was gradually supplanted by an intolerant crusade for national homogeneity: tribal nomadism became associated with rural gangsterism, regional autonomy with administrative anarchy, communal variety with political incompatibility, and linguistic diversity with oriental inefficiency.

Iranian intellectuals, on the whole, were aware of the general problem of transforming their unintegrated society into an integrated nation-state. But they all – with one major exception – failed to direct their attention to the problem as a whole. They tended either to dismiss it offhand as one of the many difficulties confronting the country, or else to concentrate on one part of the problem, ignoring the other parts: to focus on class conflicts, forgetting the various communal cleavages fragmenting the population; to discuss the official religious minorities, oblivious to the many unofficial sects and factions within the Shi'i majority; to denounce the tribes, disregarding the other social organizations dividing the country; to advocate the elimination of the visible linguistic minorities, such as the Azaris and the Arabs, unaware of the less visible but equally large marginal-linguistic minorities such as the Gilakis and Mazandranis; and to propose reforms in order to bridge the cultural abyss between the modernized elite and the traditional masses, invariably overlooking the many gaps existing among the various groups in the masses.[5]

The one major exception was Ahmad Kasravi, the most controversial of all modern Iranian intellectuals. To some he was the 'theorist' of modernization.[6] To others he was a 'dangerous iconoclast' who was eventually and justly murdered for trying to destroy the foundations of traditional authority. For many he was the leading historian of the reform movement. To a few he used history both as a grab bag to peddle his theories, and as a weapon with which he carried out character assassinations of his opponents. For some he was a true *philosophe*, 'single-handedly bringing an age of reason and enlightenment to Iran'. For others he was a *mulla* in modern dress, attempting to replace the old superstitions with his own 'highly

confused dogma'. He was considered a broad-minded internationalist, a 'humanist' concerned with the problems of the world; or again, a narrow-minded nationalist, a xenophobe who wanted to purge all foreign words from the Persian language. Whereas some saw in him a 'petit bourgeois idealist', an ideologue for the propertied classes, and an apologist for military dictatorship, at the same time others saw in him a 'militant constitutionalist', an uncompromising enemy of the political elite, and a subversive radical whose writings offered a half-way house to many intellectuals as they moved from their Shi'i backgrounds toward the revolutionary socialist movement.

Although most of these descriptions contain an element of the truth, none defines the essence of Kasravi, For his chief concern was neither religion nor irreligion, neither democracy nor dictatorship, neither the preservation nor the overthrow of the establishment, but, far more important to him, the transformation of unintegrated traditional Iran into what he hoped would be an integrated modern Iran. He was, in fact, with all his shortcomings and contradictions, the only intellectual who even tried to tackle the problem of national integration in Iran.

KASRAVI'S LIFE: ENCOUNTERS WITH SOCIAL CLEAVAGES

Kasravi's short autobiography, *Zindigani-yi Man*, reads like a series of painful encounters with the divisions splintering Iran.[7] He was born in 1890 into a middle-class Azari-speaking family in Hukmavar, a poor agricultural district on the outskirts of Tabriz. His mother, illiterate and unconcerned about the world outside her household, came from a peasant background. But his father's father had financed the building of the local mosque and the family continued to serve as the spiritual guides of the orthodox Mutashari community in Hukmavar. However, Kasravi's father, Mir Qasim, was somewhat of a controversial figure.[8] He could not resist denouncing mullas who lived off the charity of their congregations. He persistently tried to dissuade people from going on pilgrimages and performing religious ceremonies at home, arguing that such expenditures were wrong as long as 'relatives and neighbours needed assistance'.[9] He criticized any rituals, sermons, and 'historical misinterpretations' that could inflame old antagonisms between Sunnis and Shi'is.[10] And locally more significant, he tried to bridge the gap between the Mutasharis, Shaykhis, and Karimkhanis in Tabriz:

> These conflicts between the three communities had started in the reign of Fath 'Ali Shah, when they often reached the point of bloodshed. In my father's time they rarely reached that point, but they remained one of the main problems in the country. The communities segregated themselves from each other: they prayed, studied and lived separately: they refused to intermarry: and, on the whole, they did all they could to keep alive their ancient animosities. But my father, even though he was a member of the leading Mutashari family in Hukmavar, tried his best to be friends with Shaykhis and Karimkhanis . . . I often heard him say that these conflicts had been created by foreigners.'[11]

These unorthodox views had unfortunate repercussions. The mother's side of the family drifted away: 'They were the sort who regularly performed ceremonies at home and who went on pilgrimages to Karbala at

least once every three years'.[12] And politically more unfortunate, the local Mutasharis began to harass them because of his father's associations with the Shaykhis:

> One day an unpleasant incident occurred which we always remembered with sorrow. The young and dashing nephew of Hajji Muhammad – the leading Shaykhi in Hukmavar – accosted a Mutashari lady in the Tabriz bazaar. The Mutasharis immediately used this as a pretext to inflame communalism. And because my father was a friend of the young man, Mutashari thugs threatened him as he returned home from work that evening. The following day, they broke into our home dragging him off to the Crown Prince for punishment. This incident blew into a full-scale city conflict, with the Tabriz *Shaykh al-Islam* representing the Shaykhis and the *Mujtahid* supporting the interests of the Mutasharis. And the crisis did not blow over until Tenran intervened. But by that time a family feud had begun between us and the Hajji Muhammad.[13]

Although Kasravi's father was unconventional in his social attitudes, he was very conventional in the upbringing of his son. He named him after his elder brother, Mir Ahmad, who had died on his way home from the seminary in Najaf to take up the spiritual leadership of the local Mutashari congregation. He forbade him to play with the neighbourhood urchins. He educated him to fill the gap left by his uncle's death, even forcing him to go through the 'painful' ritual of head-shaving before starting the *maktab* school.[14] And his last words on his death bed were: 'My son must continue his education, because there must always be a scholar in our family. But he must never live as a parasite, like other mullas'.[15]

Kasravi had finished only the *maktab* when his father died, but circumstances forced him to disregard this final testament. The rug market in Europe had collapsed, ruining their family carpet business in Tabriz. There was no *madrasah* school in the vicinity. And he became increasingly aware that education in his traditional society was a one-way passage into clerical ranks, a destination he had no desire to reach.[16] Consequently, he gave up his studies and found employment in the Tabriz bazaar helping manage a carpet business. For three years he successfully supported his mother and younger brothers until his father's old friends, by constant pressure and generous offers of financial help, persuaded him to enrol in a newly opened *madrasah* in Tabriz.

The constitutional revolution of 1905 broke out while Kasravi was studying at this school. He wrote in his memoirs that he was immediately attracted by the concern of the reformers for the 'progress of the people and the future enlightenment of the country'.[17] But he also confessed that he kept his sympathies hidden, because his mother's family and his Mutashari community in Hukmavar were staunch conservatives.[18] He shut himself up in the house with a collection of books, only occasionally venturing out to watch his environment torn by a bloody civil war. In Tabriz he observed the royalists entrenched in the lower class Mutashari districts of Davachi and Sarkhab, and the constitutionalists barricaded in the more middle class Shaykhi and Armenian precincts of Nubar, Khiaban, and Amir Khizi.[19] And he heard from friends how other cities in Iran were increasingly splintered by either similar Shaykhi-Mutashari sects or old Haydari-Ni'mati rivalries: 'One of the regrettable themes in Iranian history has been this factionalism between Haydaris and Ni'matis. We

did not know exactly how these two rival groups came into existence, but we do know that since the sixteenth century and even during the constitutional revolution they divided many of the cities into antagonistic districts.'[20]

The civil war had ended by the time Kasravi graduated from the *madrasah*. At first he tried to go into business in the bazaar but family friends again pressured him into religion, arguing that Hukmavar needed a competent mulla and that they had not educated him all these years so that he would become a mere tradesman: 'If you wanted to become a merchant why did you bother to study?'[21] This was to be the last time that social pressures determined his final decision. In his maiden sermon he shocked the audience by not preaching in the usual Arabic, which only the very few educated Azaris could understand. He spent a great deal of time reading books in Turkish and Arabic on European astronomy, because the West, unlike the East, could calculate accurately the actual movement of the stars. He later remarked in his memoirs that 'it was astronomy that attracted me to Western knowledge'.[22] He sent his younger brothers to study modern subjects in a new secular school. He outraged his parishioners by not wearing the conventional attire of the mullas, such as a long cloak, a large turban, green shoes, white trousers, and an unkempt beard. Instead he wore simple shoes, short scarfs, machine-woven socks, and, perhaps more unusual, glasses for his weak eyes. And politically more dangerous, he openly criticized the conservative Mutashari *'uluma* for taking advantage of the Russian occupation in 1911 to settle old scores with their liberal Shaykhi opponents. In later years he described how he had forced himself to watch the barbarous executions of these liberal martyrs so that he would never forget the 'savagery' of the bigoted mullas.[23] These unorthodox habits and unreserved attitudes had obvious consequences. The local population of Hukmavar began to look upon him as 'an imitator of foreigners', 'a Babi sympathizer', or perhaps even 'a secret unbeliever'. And their increasing hostility finally persuaded him to give up preaching in the mosque and to become instead a teacher of Arabic in the American missionary school in Tabriz. In return for Arabic he received English lessons so that he could pursue his interests in the 'new knowledge' of the West.

At the American school Kasravi encountered another form of communalism. The student body, which, for some time, had been divided socially into Christians, Shi'is, and 'Ali-Ilahi – a Shi'i sect that raised the martyr 'Ali to the same level as the prophet Muhammad – became factionalized politically into three warring groups as a result of the World War. The Shi'is were sympathetic to the Central Powers, especially to Germany. The Armenians and Assyrians supported whole-heartedly the Allies, particularly the Russians. And the 'Ali-Ilahis refused to take sides in a European war which they felt was no concern of theirs. Although Kasravi was contemptuous of these disputes, he was unwillingly and by default dragged into them. And he escaped a severe beating at the hands of the Christians only by the timely intervention of the city law enforcement authorities. Depressed by this incident and feeling that his presence could spark off similar unpleasant incidents, he resigned from the faculty.

For a short while he was unemployed – making use of his time writing a textbook on how to learn Arabic – until the Ministry of Education, opening its first secondary school in Azarbayjan, hired him as an instructor

of Arabic. He had been teaching there for a few short months when the Russian Revolution disintegrated the Tsarist army in northern Iran. As the regiments melted away, the reformers in Azarbayjan revived their secular Democratic Party, took over the administration of Tabriz, and began to cast threatening eyes on those who had collaborated with the Russians. In Hukmavar, conservatives who had previously quarantined Kasravi as an 'undesirable liberal' now sought his protection and influence among the city Democrats. He willingly gave them this assistance, believing that 'bygones must remain bygones.'[24] And in the severe famine of 1918, when religious leaders in Hukmavar refused to distribute state food to the poor because they considered such grain as 'unclean', he, remembering his family's moral responsibility to the community, organized the Democratic Party's local food relief committee. He noted in his memoirs that he helped the destitute at a time when they needed his assistance, knowing well that their hostility would return as soon as the crisis ended.

This prediction was fulfilled sooner than expected. Before the famine was over, northern Iran was invaded by the Ottomans who immediately helped the religious conservatives to form an Ittihad-i Islam Party against the Democrats, and encouraged Azari separatists to demand the independence of Azarbayjan. Kasravi, fearing for his life in Hukmavar, especially now that his conservative mother was dead, moved to a more liberal and prosperous district within the city walls of Tabriz. This move, however, proved unnecessary, for within a few months the Ottomans were forced to retreat. And as they evacuated Azarbayjan, the local Democrats, headed by Shaykh Muhammad Khiabani, took over the administration of the whole province. Although Kasravi had great admiration for Khiabani – especially for his eloquent speeches delivered at the Shaykhi mosque in the precinct of Khiaban during the constitutional revolution, and for his role in the formation of the Democratic Party in the national Majlis – he had major differences of policy with him over communal issues. Kasravi opposed Khiabani's decision to eliminate old enemies, convinced that this would keep alive the Shyakhi-Mutashari conflicts. He spoke out against Khiabani's separatist drift: the changing of their organization's name from the Democratic Party branch in Azarbayjan to the Democratic Party of Azarbayjan; the recruitment into the party of the Azari journalists who had earlier supported the Ottoman demand for Azarbayjan independence; the establishment of a provincial council challenging the authority of the central government; and, as a last straw, the declaration of independence for the Republic of Azadistan. Kasravi, finding himself at the head of a small minority within the Democrats in Tabriz, with his life threatened and his followers in prison, decided to flee for the safety of Tehran.

In the capital Kasravi joined the Ministry of Justice. As a trouble-shooter for this ministry, he travelled extensively during the next ten years, between 1920 and 1930. Returning to Azarbayjan in the wake of Khiabani's defeat, he found the tribes up in arms, while Kurds, Armenians and Assyrians fought for their own states on the shores of Lake Urmia. Visiting Mazandaran soon after the collapse of the separatist movement led by Mirza Kuchik Khan, he discovered a new aspect of the communal problem. He found that the local population spoke neither Persian nor Turkish, and, therefore, to communicate with them in court proceedings he had to learn their Mazandarani dialect. 'It was the first time I had encountered one of these marginal-linguistic groups. In fact, it was the

very first time I had even been aware of their existence in Iran.'[25] And arriving in Khuzistan at a time when the region was virtually autonomous, he experienced again, at first hand, the disruptions caused by communalism. Shaykh Khaz'al, the leading Arab chieftain, had rallied the Arab tribes, had usurped the functions normally performed by the ministries, and was now threatening to declare the independence of Khuzistan. Moreover, the local Persian minority was sharply divided into Haydari-Ni'mati factions, while the Arab majority – even though exploited by the Shaykh – felt itself 'an integral part of the Arab nation'.[26] Kasravi did his best to preserve what little remained of the Ministry of Justice, until the commander-in-chief of the army, Riza Khan, defeated the Arab tribes and re-established the authority of the central government. This victory, however, brought Kasravi into a head-on collision with the army officers, especially with the Governor General, who, while 'plundering the province in order to line his own pockets', was usurping the constitutional jurisdiction of civilian courts with unconstitutional military tribunals.[27] Finding that the Prime Minister favoured the army over the Ministry of Justice, Kasravi resigned his post in Khuzistan and returned to Tehran.

The Ministry was unable to reassign him directly to another position. So he spent the next few months synthesizing the information he had collected in the southwest on tribalism and religious factionalism into a book entitled *Tarikh-i Pansad Salah-i Khuzistan* (Five Hundred Year History of Khuzistan). By the time he finished this work he was appointed High Inspector for special disputes. This post kept him mostly in the capital, occasionally taking him to the provinces to solve especially difficult cases. One category of such cases were land disputes between neighbouring villages. He wrote in his memoirs: 'One group of peasants would claim a piece of land. Another group would put in a counterclaim. And invariably these conflicts would result in bloodshed.'[28] As High Inspector, Kasravi gained a reputation for toughness, hard work, incorruptibility, and courage. It was this last trait that ended his career in the ministry. Riza Khan, the commander-in-chief who conquered Khuzistan, had deposed the Qajar dynasty in 1925 and had crowned himself Riza Shah. Having obtained full power, he proceeded to modernize the country, while, at the same time, stabilizing his own position in the true traditional fashion – by accumulating landed estates for his own family. This he did mainly by reclaiming for himself villages that had previously belonged to the Qajars, but which sales and gifts had alienated to private citizens generations earlier. In retaliation against such reclamations, a number of evicted farmers in Mazandaran took their case to Kasravi. And Kasravi, refusing to be intimidated like other judges and believing strongly that land should belong to those who cultivated it, decided in favour of the farmers and against the Shah.[29] Not unexpectedly, the government soon pressured him to resign from the judiciary.

From the time Kasravi lost his government salary in 1930 until his assassination in 1946, he earned a living partly as a private attorney in Tehran and partly as a lecturer of jurisprudence in the Law College.[30] But most of these sixteen years were devoted to the unrelenting mission of attempting to formulate and propagate an ideology which he hoped would transform Iran from an unintegrated society into an integrated modern state. In these years, especially after the relaxation of censorship following Riza Shah's abdication in 1941, Kasravi published over fifty books,

booklets, and pamphlets. Many of them dealt, either directly or indirectly, with the theme of national integration. He discussed the problem of class divisions mainly in *Aiyin* (The Creed), *Dadgah* (Court of Justice), *Afsaran-i Ma* (Our Officers), *Sar Navisht-i Iran Chah Khvad Bud?* (What Will Be the Fate of Iran?), *Dar Rah-i Siyasat* (In Politics), *Kar va Pishah va Pul* (Work, Trade, and Money), and *Dawlat Bayad Bah Ma Pasakh Dahad* (The Government Must Give Us an Answer). He focused on the question of communalism in *Shi'igari* (Shi'i-playing), *Sufigari* (Sufi-playing), *Bahayigari* (Baha'i-playing), *Dar Piramvan-i Islam* (Concerning Islam), *Davari* (Judgment), *Zabani-i Farsi* (The Persian Language), and *Hafiz Chah Mi-Guyad?* (What Does Hafiz Say?). His general ideology was summarized in editorials, articles, and notes written for his journal *Payman* (The Promise), which appeared regularly every month between 1933 and 1942; in his daily newspaper *Parcham* (The Flag), which was published during the war and was superseded first by the weekly *Parcham-i Haftegi* (The Weekly Flag) and later by the monthly *Parcham;* and in a series of such short books as *Din va Jahan* (The World and Ideology), *Inqilab Chist?* (What Is Revolution?), *Farhang Chist?* (What Is Education?), *Dar Piramvan-i Adabiyat* (Concerning Literature), *Dar Piramvan-i Ruman* (Concerning Fiction), *Dar Piramvan-i Khurd* (Concerning Wisdom), *Zaban-i Pak* (A Pure Language), *Imruz Chah Bayad Kard?* (What Must Be Done Today?), and *Varjavand Bunyad* (Worthy Foundations). Moreover, many of his other works also dealt indirectly with the question of national integration. For example, he admitted that he had written his popular history of Iran – *Tarikh-i Mashrutah-i Iran* (History of the Iranian Constitution) and *Tarikh-i Hijdah Salah-i Azarbayjan* (Eighteen Year History of Azarbayjan) – with three main aims in mind: to show that the destiny of Azarbayjan lay with the rest of Iran; to illustrate how the reform movement had been damaged seriously by internal conflicts; and to prove that the constitutional revolution of 1905 had in the long run failed because it had been unable to eliminate the various divisions splintering the general population.[31]

KASRAVI'S IDEOLOGY OF SOLIDARISM

'Man,' according to Kasravi, 'is born with an inherent desire to progress.'[32] This creates two very different types of struggle in the world: the struggle of man against nature to improve the human condition; and the struggle of man against man to improve his personal condition.[33] The former is beneficial since it tends to integrate and solidify individuals into society. But the latter is harmful because it dissolves society into an amorphous mass of isolated and conflicting individuals.[34]

The struggle of man against man was predominant in the natural condition of humanity. Families – separated from each other by dialects, by such geographical barriers as deserts, jungles, and mountains, and by the constant competition for scarce resources – came in contact only to rob each other of 'their wives, children, and few material belongings.'[35] Fearing to be an easy prey if they settled, families were on the constant move from hiding place to hiding place. Thus, life was poor, solitary, nasty, brutish, short, and nomadic.

The desire for progress, however, took man out of this state of nature into civil society.[36] Groups of families began to coalesce in order to work

together against the elements: to grow crops, raise cattle, irrigate land, mine, manufacture, and trade their wares.[37] Eventually, common languages and urban societies came into existence. Kasravi often stressed that the English word 'civilization', derived from the Latin 'civil', originally meant not merely the ability to manufacture, but, far more important, the capacity to live harmoniously in one place.[38] He, therefore, coined a new Persian term *shahrigari* (city-living), to contrast it with *biyabangari* (wilderness-living), and to be interchangeable with the Arabic word *tamaddun* (civilization).[39]

But paradoxically, as societies developed their struggle against nature, they inevitably became fragmented by the division of labour.[40] And with the increasing division of labour, the old struggle of man against man gradually seeped back into society, turning into a torrent during the process of industrialization, when wealth was consolidated, in a few hands, when injustice and inequality reached new proportions, and when modern means of violence and mass communication were invented:

> Although such inventions as the telegraph, telephone, and steam engine are wonderful in that they help man in his battle against backwardness, they also have the harmful effect of intensifying conflict between individuals. Take for example the railway. In former ages, a farmer, isolated in his own small village, was in competition only with those in his immediate vicinity. But in the modern age, the railway has placed him in constant competition with millions of other farmers throughout the width and breadth of the whole country.[41]

This reintroduction of conflict into society was the source of all evil.[42] It disrupted mankind's march toward human progress.[43] It caused internal and international wars.[44] It diseased the body-politic, preventing some organs from performing their functions, hindering the growth of others, and eventually terminating in death.[45] Without social strife the world would be an 'earthly paradise', for only one per cent of its problems were caused by the natural environment. The other ninety-nine per cent had their origin in man's conflict with his fellow man.[46]

Since civil society was intrinsically departmentalized by division of labour, some superior force was needed to join the various parts into a larger whole. This force was *din* (a term Kasravi used to denote more than the usual meaning 'religion'), an ideology that effectively integrated the individual into a nation, instilling in him social consciousness, cultural ethos, and values oriented toward the public good:

> My use of the term *din* is different from those of others. I use it to describe an ideology that teachers people the true meaning of life and gives them a practical code of ethics. For example, what is the real function of the division of labour? Its purpose is not to give licence to the various occupations to make as much money as possible at the expense of others. On the contrary, its real purpose is to permit each profession to perform the duties necessary for the prosperity of the whole society. When groups and individuals have a code of ethics they are able to live in harmony. And living in harmony, they are able to pursue the main goal of struggling against nature.[47]

For Kasravi, only true ideologies – not coercive powers, nor laws nor state institutions – could hold together a mass of conflicting groups and

individuals into a collective nation. The state institutions were merely instruments implementing the goals of an ideology, they were not the creators of that ideology.[48] Laws, policemen, and prisons simply punished those who harmed society, they did not bring into existence societies. And government organizations could at most protect the citizen from internal and external enemies, they could not, in any real way, bind an amorphous mass of clashing wills into a coherent and organic solidarity.

Islam, in its original form, had been a genuine ideology, for it had effectively solidified, at least for an extensive period of time, a large number of separate tribes, towns, regions, and peoples – each with their own petty and rival pagan gods – into a broad Muslim Empire with One Omnipotent God. But over the years, Islam had lost its internal cohesiveness, first dividing into the Sunni and the Shi'i branches, with each later subdividing into numerous competing factions. There was, therefore, no longer a true Muslim ideology (*din*) in the contemporary world. There were, instead, a large number of small Muslim sects (*kish*). And as long as each Islamic state was factionalized by these rival sects, it was unable to achieve the internal co-operation necessary to wage the all-important struggle for national progress.[49]

KASRAVI'S VIEW OF IRAN

Kasravi, like most of his contemporaries, saw nothing but backwardness in Iran: poverty and economic backwardness; ignorance and social backwardness; and sharp fluctuations from despotic stability to chaotic instability, a sure sign of political backwardness. But unlike his contemporaries, he refused to accept the stock explanations for this deplorable state of affairs. He argued against the racial theory – advocated by anti-semitic writers – that the country's problems had their origin in the Arab invasions, by pointing out the obvious fact that Iran had been independent of the Arabs since the third century after Muhammad.[50] He criticized the liberal view that despotism had been the main factor in retarding development by claiming that the period of 'democracy' from 1905 until 1925 had produced little progress, but, on the contrary, had resulted in the absolutism of Riza Shah.[51] And he dismissed as paranoia the popularly held belief that Western Machiavellianism lurked behind Iran's misfortunes. Such claims, according to him, were unsubstantiated by facts and the actual behaviour of European states.[52] He even commented that his father, in insisting that foreigners were responsible for religious factionalism, was showing his 'ignorance' of national and international politics.[53]

Kasravi's own explanation why his environment remained backward was direct: the country was underdeveloped because it was fragmented into conflicting groups.[54] The imperialists had not created the various religious sects: they had merely manipulated what they had found in existence.[55] The Arabs had not rammed their culture down the throats of Iranians: on the contrary, the population had willingly accepted Islam; and in the first centuries it had consistently failed to unite behind rebels who had tried to overthrow the Arabs.[56] The economy was poor not because it lacked natural resources, but because the occupational groups refused to co-operate in the true fashion of the division of labour.[57] And Riza Shah had not suddenly appeared from the 'primitive jungles of Africa', but had risen up from the indigenous population.[58] In fact,

during the twenty year period when the masses had been able to elect their own representatives, they had constantly 'voted' for 'divisive politicians', thus paving the way for Riza Shah's rise to power:

> We all know that Iran is backward. Today most Iranians with a grain of intelligence are saddened by this situation. And their grief is justifiable, because our country was at one time a great empire while now it is a weak and small state. What lies at the root of this drastic decline? At the beginning of this century, reformers could answer that the main culprits were the despots who had a vested interest in keeping their subjects ignorant and unenlightened. But after twenty years of constitutional government, we cannot, in good conscience, give the same answer. For we know that the main blame rests not with the rulers but with the ruled. Yes, the chief reason of underdevelopment in Iran, perhaps in most eastern countries, is disunity among the masses.[59]
>
> . . . The worst calamity that can befall a nation is disunity. A people who share a common territory and live together should never be divided into rival factions. Contemporary Iran is a good example of a nation that has not heeded this warning – it is now suffering from the worst miseries of backwardness.[60]
>
> . . . The famous heroes of modern Iran – Amir Kabir, Sipasalar, Amin al-Dawlah, Malcolm Khan, Tabattabai, Khurasani, Tehrani, Shaykh al-Islam, Kuchik Khan, Khiabani, and Taqi Khan – all, without exception, failed to achieve any lasting reforms because they were unable to grasp this fundamental fact – that the population is torn apart into rival groups.[61]

Rivalry was caused by divisive ideas – by conflicting theories (*andishah-ha-yi zid-i ham*), misleading concepts (*andishah-ha-yi gumrah*), absurd visions (*andishah-ha-yi bi-huvdah*), clashing assumptions (*andishah-ha-yi guvnaguvn*), corrupt sentiments (*andishah-ha-yi aluvdah*) and disharmonious ideas (*ikhtalaf-i 'aqiydah*). As Kasravi stated repeatedly and often monotonously: 'Iran is backward because false ideas and corrupt sentiments have divided the population into conflicting groups'.[62]

The ideas and sentiments Kasravi considered disruptive fall into four categories: the sectarian religious creeds; the linguistic ties; the tribal affiliations; and the class divisions that separated the governors from the governed, the rich from the poor, the 'educated elite from the uneducated masses':[63]

> One of the worst maladies afflicting Iran is factionalism. Factionalism caused by religious sectarianism: I can count fourteen separate sects in existence, each of them with their own goals and interests. Factionalism caused by tribal and linguistic differences: there are at least eight linguistic groups, each of them rival and competitor with the others. But these are only the more obvious cleavages, for there are other less obvious ones. For example, there is the factionalism caused by the wide gulf between classes – between the western educated and the traditional masses, between the city and the countryside, between the young and the old generations.[64]

Of these four categories, Kasravi directed much of his attention at the religious sects, which he often enumerated to a total of fourteen: Sunnis, Sufis, Shaykhis, Mutasharis, Karimkhanis, Bahayis, Azalis, 'Ali-Ilahis,

Jews, Armenians, Assyrians, Zoroastrians, 'dialectical materialists', and the followers of Greek philosophy. Although he had theological and metaphysical criticisms of each of the fourteen, his main objection to all of them was that they were 'states within the state':

> We have listed fourteen sects in Iran. This means fourteen separate states, fourteen separate goals, fourteen separate interests. Some readers may not deem this as very important, but it does mean that the population is divided into segregated communities, all with their own leaders and followers, all viewing the government as an antagonistic force, all reluctant to pay taxes, and all considering themselves apart from the rest of the nation. They live in this land, taking advantage of its benefits, but they refuse to behave as responsible citizens of the state.[65]

Shi'ism received the brunt of his attacks. It was a 'perversion whose origin lay neither in ethics nor in theological issues, but in a sordid struggle for dynastic power'.[66] It hindered historical progress because it refused to accept the notion that man, by his own efforts, could improve society.[67] It had proved not to be a true ideology (*din*) by the simple test that it had fractured into a number of small sects (*kish*).[68] It disrupted the country by insisting that its own laws should be enforced on the rest of the population.[69] Worst of all, it fostered anti-state attitudes. It differentiated sharply between the government (*dawlat*) and the people (*millat*); discouraged the faithful from serving in the armed forces, working in the ministries, and paying their taxes to the 'unclean' treasury. Instead it encouraged them to pray to a supra-national authority and to waste national wealth on unnecessary pilgrimages to foreign shrines. And, worst of all, it preached an anti-democratic political theory, claiming that sovereignty resided in the Imams not in the people:[70]

> Shi'ism and democracy are two contradictory forces. According to the former, the authority to rule resides in the Imam and his '*uluma*'. But according to the latter, it rests with the people and their representatives. Some Shi'i theologians, however, try to brush away this contradiction by arguing that democracy really means the rule of the majority and that the majority in Iran desire the guidance of the '*uluma*'. But this line of argument has two main fallacies. First, it ignores a fundamental principle in democracy – that no group, such as mullas, can claim special privileges. Second, it confuses true democracy, which is representative government, with majority rule, forgetting that if democracy meant the rule of the majority then Iran should have not obtained a constitution, since at the time of the revolution the bulk of the population – especially the peasantry and the lower classes – wanted royal despotism.[71]

Kasravi's critique of tribalism was less elaborate since his reading public shared an inherent prejudice against the nomadic way of life. The tribes were a 'disruptive element', rushing to arms whenever the central government showed the slightest signs of weakness.[72] They still lived in the 'state of nature', terrorizing, plundering, and murdering their more developed neighbours.[73] Economically they were unproductive, wasting time travelling from their winter to summer quarters.[74] And, most

important of all, they were petty kingdoms with their own internal autonomy:

> My objection to the tribes is not limited to the fact that they are predominantly nomadic, but that they retain their exclusive social organizations. Each tribe considers itself separate from the rest of the population, refusing to recognize the authority of the central government, ignoring the administration of the national ministries, and obeying only the commands of their own hereditary chieftains. One cannot but label such groups as enemies of the people.[75]

His opposition to the linguistic minorities started in the early days of the constitutional revolution, when the Shah had tried to sow dissension among the reformers by cultivating differences between Persian and Turkish-speaking liberals in Tehran.[75] This opposition was reinforced when the Ottomans tried to exploit Azari sentiments in Tabriz. Soon after the First World War, he attacked these separatists in a short book entitled *Zaban-i Azari: Ya Zaban-i Bastan-i Azarbayjan* (The Azari Language: Or the Ancient Language of Azarbayjan). Here he claimed that the people of Azarbayjan had originally spoken pure Azari – the Turkish words being introduced later by the Seljuks – and, therefore, their real attachment was not to Turkish but to ancient Azari, which had ceased to exist except in a few isolated villages. His opposition to the linguistic minorities, however, became more vocal during the Second World War, when the Soviets supported Azari grievances against the central government. They argued that since Azarbayjan had its own distinct language, it constituted a genuine nation (*millat*), and, consequently, had the inalienable right to form its own provincial government within the framework of the Iranian state and to use its own language in schools, offices, and law courts. Kasravi vehemently denounced such ideas on two main grounds. First, they opened up a whole Pandora's box of evils; 'If the Turkish-speakers gain these privileges, other minorities – such as the Arabs, Kurds, Gilakis, Mazandaranis, and so on – have equal claims to demand the same concessions. And if they gain them, what will remain of Iranian sovereignty?'[77] Second, he believed that linguistic diversity was inherently disruptive, arguing that: 'These languages are all good, but their existence within one state causes dissension. It is always best to have one common language in a nation.'[78] He dismissed counter-arguments that some countries, such as Belgium and Switzerland, prospered with more than one language, by retorting that Iran was neither Belgium nor Switzerland. Moreover, there was no reason why Iran should imitate the 'mistakes' of others.[79]

Kasravi directed most of his attacks at the linguistic and religious conflicts, but his first main book – *Aiyin*, – published in 1932 – was aimed at the theory of class struggle popularized by a group of Marxist intellectuals headed by Dr Taqi Arani. Although Kasravi admired Arani's intellect, and defended his group at their political trials in 1938, he attacked their theories persistently, especially after 1941 when they rallied a large segment of the intelligentsia and the urban working class into the communist Tudah Party. For Kasravi, Marxism – with such conflict-provoking concepts as 'life is a constant battle for survival', 'capitalism is exploitation', and the 'past is a history of class struggles' – destroyed social unity by dividing each nation along class lines: 'Civilization means the ability to

live harmoniously. Barbarism, on the other hand, means the lack of harmony. Socialist parties in Europe, in appealing to the masses with Marxist propaganda, are splintering their nations into competing classes, and so are threatening to revive a new age of barbarism.'[80]

Kasravi's remedy for curing the malady was as simple as his diagnosis of the disease. It was to replace disharmony with harmony, disunity with unity, and diversity with uniformity. He hoped to supplant class conflict with occupational collaboration;[81] to replace the minority languages with Persian 'purified' of its Arabic and Turkish words;[82] to transform the heterogenous nomads into a homogeneous farming population;[83] and to supersede religious sectarianism by social solidarism where all would feel themselves an integral part of the nation:

> What is patriotism (*mihan parasti*)? Some complain, how can one love a piece of land – a village, a hill, or a field. Others claim that all men are the same, therefore we should not distinguish between the citizens of one country and the citizens of another country. And some people believe that love for a nation is a new form of paganism, distracting man from his true goal, God. But all these objections fail to understand the true meaning of nationalism. I repeat what I have often said: nationalism means the original contract for unity which individuals sign when they agree to constitute a nation. When twenty million people, sharing the same territory, form a nation, they are, in fact, agreeing to work together to improve their environment, to share jointly the hardships as well as the rewards, the grief as well as the happiness involved. For example, if there is an outbreak of tribal banditry in Kirman, the inhabitants of Azarbayjan, Khuzistan, and Gilan should willingly send help and should not shrug their shoulders and say 'it has nothing to do with me'.[84]

The strategy he advocated for attaining the goal of solidarity covered two areas: social reforms alleviating the objective differences between the various groups; and, more important, cultural reforms replacing sub-national sentiments with a strong feeling of national consciousness. The former could be accomplished directly through the political system. But the latter had to be achieved indirectly through education transforming the social system.

Riza Shah's social reforms won Kasravi's approval, especially the abolition of such 'feudal' titles as *ilkhan*, *saltanah*, and *dawlah;* the elimination of local privileges, customs, and costumes; the expulsion of the *mullas* from public life; the secularization of law; the granting of certain rights to women;[85] the creation of a modern army and a new administrative structure; and the forced settlement of some of the nomadic tribes.[86] After Riza Shah's abdication, Kasravi pressed ahead for more improvements, particularly improvements that would narrow the gulf between the classes. He advocated laws limiting wealth, so that individuals would be neither too rich nor too poor:[87] new factories were to be owned not by a few industrialists but by many 'small capitalists' with joint-stock holdings.[88] He opposed state ownership because he believed that citizens had a 'natural' right to private property.[89] 'Parasites' who did not perform necessary functions in society – such as gamblers, romantic novelists, obscurantist poets, fortune-tellers, snake-charmers, passion-play

actors, prayer-writers, and petty usurers – were to be outlawed by the state.[90] Villages were to be distributed among the peasantry, because moderate equality was desirable and 'land should belong to those who till it'.[91] And the political power of the ruling elite was to be destroyed:

> A small selfish inbred elite has been monopolizing all power in our country for the last sixty years. Only its members can become ministers, under-secretaries, generals, and heads of departments. They oppose progress, abhor the idea that we can catch up with others, and hope to perpetuate the present unfortunate condition, with the central government weak, the tribes up in arms, the ministries unable to enforce legislation, the people distrustful of the state, the majlis a picture of ridicule, and the mullas preaching false ideas to the public.[92]
> . . . This elite is powerful and well interconnected. Its members are not only in the ministries but also in all fields of public life. They have not just appeared recently, but were in power during the days of Qajar despotism, during the constitutional revolution, during the years after the revolution, during Riza Shah's reign, and now during our own time. *If we do not cut their roots they will always remain in power.* (His own stress.)[93]

The phrase 'cut their roots', however, did not mean a violent revolution. He explained its meaning in three polemics directed at contemporaries who advocated seizure of power: 'What Must Be Done Today', 'Why We Are Not Politicians', and in a collection of essays compiled under the title *Inqilab Chist*? (What Is Revolution?). Here he argued that radicals who hoped to achieve major social reforms through a violent seizure of political power would inevitably fail. They would fail because it would be impossible to unite the existing rival groups into an effective mass movement. The street riots of November 1942 had proved this: 'While some demonstrated against the government and others came out in support of the government, youngsters shouted communist slogans, mullas demanded the return of the *shari'a*, and the poor plundered stores and bakeries'.[94] Even in the unlikely event that revolutionaries were able to bypass this hurdle and carry through a successful *putsch*, their victory would be hollow, for the real problem of the country – factionalism among the masses – would remain. The seizure of power and the decreeing of legislation were useless as long as the people remained divided by 'corrupt' ideas:

> We stress that we must first and foremost deal with the problem of corruption in the masses and only later turn to other issues. For example, the distribution of villages is meaningless unless the peasant who receives land knows the ethics of life and the ability to work with fellow citizens. If he is unable to co-operate with others, land reform will merely create new problems.[95]

Thus, for Kasravi a true revolutionary in his environment was not someone who attacked the elite with slogans calling for the seizure of power, but someone who gradually undermined the elite by reforming the attitudes of the public:

> If we desire to remedy the ills of Iran in a statesman-like fashion, we must focus our attention on the source of the malady – the masses. We must save the people from corrupting ideas, instill in them a love

> for their country, arouse in them the instinct for social progress, teach them to make personal sacrifices for this collective goal, and unite them into a national consciousness.[96]

Public education, therefore, became the *deus ex machina* for Kasravi. The expansion of state lycées and literacy classes, together with the closing of parochial schools and community printing presses, would gradually replace minority dialects with one dominant language – Persian: 'The minorities must understand that diversity causes disunity and disunity prevents progress. In order to improve the condition of all, including their own, they must give up their own languages and adopt Persian.'[97] The reading of Iranian history would teach the people their national heritage and the harmful effects of religious sectarianism: 'The sects know all about the petty squabbles that created them, but they know nothing about the major calamities that have struck our country, such as the Mongol invasions. The teaching of our national history must replace the sectarian interpretations of the past.'[98] Such instruction, moreover, would convince all that they are an integral part of the nation and that racial and linguistic diversity is a relatively recent phenomenon introduced into the country by Turkic incursions.[99] The encouragement of literacy and scientific knowledge would undermine the power of the reactionary mullas for it would eliminate ignorance and popular superstitions.[100] Professional training would yield doctors, engineers, geologists and other modern professional skills needed to harness the forces of nature.[101] Proper upbringing of children would produce a new generation of citizens conscious of their responsibilities and aware of their duties in a constitutional democracy.[102] It would 'erase' class conflicts by showing each occupational group its true role in the division of labour;[103] narrow the gap between the elite and the masses by pointing out the necessary activities performed by the state, such as law and order, public administration, and social guidance;[104] and safeguard against the dangers of man fighting against man by stressing the essential need for unity in order to wage the important war against nature:

> Readers often write agreeing with us that the way out of our backwardness is through national unity. Everyone seems to realize now the advantages of eliminating internal conflicts, but many still do not realize that national unity can result only through ideological unity. Those who sincerely desire this unity must teach others the need to eradicate the false ideas that cause divisiveness in Iran. We must concentrate our efforts on exposing the fallacies and harmful effects of these divisive ideas.[105]

Strict censorship and the burning of such 'unhealthy' works as Sufi poetry, romantic novels, and religious mumbojumbo could prevent the public from being led astray.[106] 'Healthy' books – accurate histories, scientific studies, and, by implication, his own works – could guide the masses onto the right road to 'national salvation'.[107] Hierarchical and 'feudal' concepts could be gradually eroded by careful choice of vocabulary, especially by the avoidance of such obsolete but popular expressions as *sarkar* (esquire), *jinab* (Your Excellency), *hazrat* (Your Highness), *bandah* (bondsman), *ghulam* (slave), and *chakar-i khanahzadah* (household servant),[108] Moreover, a purge of the vocabulary would eliminate the

confusing terms introduced into Persian from foreign languages, especially from Arabic and Turkish.[109] The word *millat* was a case in point.[110] In Arabic it originally meant a 'religious community', but during the constitutional revolution it was widely and mistakenly used in Iran to denote the French term '*nation*'. Consequently, Iranians continued to confuse the secular concept of the modern state with the traditional notion of the religious community. Accordingly, the obvious way out of the difficulty was to replace the Arabic *millat* with the Persian term *mardum* (people). For Kasravi only by supplanting unclear alien expressions with clear Persian vocabulary would the intellectuals be able to instill the feeling of national solidarity among the people.

KASRAVI AND GÖKALP

There are striking similarities between Kasravi and Gökalp, his better-known and older contemporary in Turkey. Both were the leading theorists of social solidarism in their respective countries, having been born in mixed border regions, living through old communal conflicts, and devoting their intellectual energies to submerging these communal groups into new nation-states. Both took the daring step – in the case of Kasravi it proved to be fatal – of considering Islam as a 'historical phenomenon' which, like other major religions, had in its own time united diverse communities into one *Umma* but which could no longer function as the main cement of social solidarity. Both considered this cement to be neither laws nor institutions but a social consciousness instilled in the public through mass education. They, therefore, became first and foremost educationalists who perceived the 'revolution' not as the overthrow of the establishment but as the transformation of public values. To achieve this transformation, they gathered around themselves devoted disciples and eventually became highly intolerant of rival teachings. This intolerance was more marked in Kasravi because he – unlike Gökalp and Durkheim – saw occupational specialization produced by the modern division of labour not as a new social link, but, on the contrary, as an added threat toward social dissolution. Only total ideological uniformity could prevent final dissolution. And both were anxious to distinguish between being modernizers – which they were – and Westernizers, which they did not consider themselves to be: they were keen to adopt the technical aspects of the West, especially the means of developing the economy, but they were also equally keen to keep out the cultural aspects of the West which they deemed harmful to social solidarity, such as the liberal stress on individualism, the socialist theory of the class struggle, and the anarchist concept of the state as an 'unnecessary evil'. Since Kasravi was well-read in contemporary Turkish political thought, one is tempted to suspect that at least some of his ideas were inspired by Gokalp. These suspicions, however, cannot be proved, for he constantly claimed that 'all his theories were original', frequently accused other writers of snobbery for quoting Western philosophers, and he himself consistently abstained from citing any foreign sources.[111]

In spite of these striking similarities, there is one major difference in the political thought of the two theorists, reflecting the main contrast in the social structure of their respective countries. Gökalp, living in a state that was comparatively homogeneous after 1921, was able to adopt a Western concept of the nation – the concept that a nation was formed of a people

with a common culture, especially with a common language. He elaborated enough on this theme that three separate books have appeared in the West either discussing or translating his articles on Turkish nationalism: Uriel Heyd's *Foundations of Turkish Nationalism: The Life and Teachings of Ziya Gökalp* (London, 1950); Niyazi Berkes' *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization: Selected Essays of Ziya Gökalp* (New York, 1959); and most recently, Robert Devereux's *Ziya Gökalp: The Principles of Turkism* (Leiden, 1968). One would search in vain through Kasravi's prolific writings to find a single article on Iranian nationalism. As he admitted late in his career, 'I have never written on the theory of nationalism'.[112] The nearest he came to formulating such a theory was his passing statement that a people residing in one state – irrespective of race, creed, or language – by virtue of living in one geographical area had signed the original contract to work together harmoniously as one nation.[113] According to Gökalp, this stress on geography was a false premise – the same false premise made by the Ottomanists – for only a common culture, especially language, could provide the fundamental basis of a nation. He, therefore, concluded that the neighbouring state of Iran was formed of not one nation but of three distinct nations: Persian, Turkish, and Kurdish-speakers. While this linguistic diversity inhibited Kasravi from formulating a theory of what Iranian nationalism had been in the past and what it was in the present, it also encouraged him to discuss at length what it would be in future if only the public accepted his teachings: an integrated and unified nation with one language, one culture, one central authority, one political religion, and, most important of all, one clear goal of modernization. Kasravi, therefore, was not a theorist of Iranian nationalism but a theorist of national integration in Iran.

KASRAVI'S FAILURE

Kasravi's strategy for implementing his programme of modernization involved four consecutive stages: first, the inspiration of a group of faithful followers; second, the organization of these disciplies into a structured association; third, the conversion of the national intelligentsia through the publications of this association; and fourth, the dissemination of the new doctrine among the masses by the converted intelligentsia. The campaign would begin as a teaching group. It would expand into an intellectual movement. And it would end with the successful proselytization of the general public.

The first stage was initiated in the 1930s when Kasravi attracted a number of disciples around his monthly journal *Payman*, but the second stage was delayed by Riza Shah's prohibition of all independent organizations. This obstacle, however, was removed by the change in regime in 1941. Kasravi immediately announced the formation of the Azadigan Society, with its own printing house and its daily newspaper *Parcham*. As the first issues stressed, the aim of the Society was to wage a crusade to supplant the old fourteen sects of Iran with the new ideology of unity. When one sceptical reader asked, 'What if you merely create a fifteenth sect?', Kasravi retorted confidently that his ideology would win because it was based on present-day realities.[114] History, however, has proved the reader's scepticism justified, and Kasravi's self-confidence unjustified.

No doubt some of Kasravi's works – especially his historical and anti-

clerical writings – greatly influenced contemporaries, but his theory, as a whole, failed to ignite an enthusiastic spark. In fact, his strategy never reached the third stage. The Azadigan Society, even at its height in 1945, attracted no more than a few thousand members, mostly drawn from the ranks of teachers, office workers, and high-school students. And a year later when the fundamentalist Shi'i party – the *Fida'iyyan-i Islam* – murdered Kasravi, the Society, instead of being in the midst of the community leading a national crusade, was isolated from most segments of the population and was the target of a rising religious crusade. Preachers were ascending their pulpits to denounce its publications as 'heretical' and its leader as 'the most notorious enemy of Islam'. Opponents were spreading the rumour that its book-burning sessions included the holy Koran. Violent mobs were attacking its members and club-houses. And the group had become the victim of a political alliance between the government elite and the religious elite, at a time when the former was seeking the support of the latter: the royalist Speaker of the Majlis, Sayyid Muhammad Sadiq Tabatabai, had publicly accused Kasravi of advocating 'anti-Islamic views'; the conservative Premier Sadr, who had presided over the executions of liberals in the constitutional revolution, had brought formal charges against him for propagating 'heretical ideas'; the Tehran police had released a fanatic who made an unsuccessful attempt on his life in late 1945; and a High Military Tribunal a few months later acquitted the two members of the *Fida'iyyan-i Islam* who eventually succeeded in assassinating him. Symbolically, his body remained unburied for a number of days because no religious authority would perform the funeral rites. In the years after the assassination, the Azadigan Society – at times divided, frequently persecuted, and invariably isolated – continued to linger on as a small discussion group, its size a pitiful memorial to Kasravi's failure. He had hoped to lead a national crusade to eliminate sub-national factions, in the end he had only created a new faction.

Kasravi's ultimate failure was partly due to his refusal to compromise with expediency – he had a strategy without any political tactics – and partly due to the persistent survival of traditional sentiments, thus, paradoxically, illustrating the truth of his original proposition that the population was fragmented by sub-national factions. Unintegrated communities, with their social affiliations, survived his ideology of national integration; religious and tribal bonds, with their ingrained roots, failed to melt away when confronted by his arguments for uniformity; and class consciousness, with its interest groups, persisted in spite of his schemes of social solidarism. Trumpet blasts against all sectarianism were unable to bring down the ancient religious walls, but, simultaneously, the same blasts alienated him both from his inherited community and from the minorities who hoped to weaken the Shi'i majority. Militant anti-clericalism naturally antagonized the faithful, but, at the same time, he provoked raised eye-brows among fellow-secularists with his preaching manner, dogmatic intolerance, claims of founding a new *din*, and the worship of his disciples for him as a modern *Payghambar* (prophet). At one point he found it necessary publicly to deny that he was a *mulla* in civilian clothing.[115] His policy of integration through eradication offended those non-Persian intellectuals who were conscious of their cultural identity. But, the proposal to purge Persian of mystic poetry and foreign words – a proposal that would have destroyed classical literature – also

antagonized the Persian intellectuals. Even members of the communist intelligentsia found the book-burning sessions of Hafiz as too much to stomach.[116] Periodic denunciations of the elite as 'corrupt' and of Riza Shah as 'tyrannical' made him appear in the eyes of the upper class as a dangerous hothead. His insistence, often in the same breath, that the masses were also 'corrupt', that Riza Shah had initiated some beneficial reforms, and that the theory of the class struggle in history was a 'divisive myth', gained him the notoriety in radical circles of being an apologist for the ruling class. Even his policy of revolution through education lost him potential friends: impatient reformers felt that politics could not wait for the 'awakening' of the masses: and more patient reformers soon realized that if they were to attract large segments of the population they would have to compromise some of their modern and secular ideas with the traditional and religious sentiments of the masses.[117] Consequently, few contemporary radicals found their way into his Azadigan Society. And in more recent years, even fewer radicals have been attracted by Kasravi's ideology of unity through uniformity, mainly because they have gradually reached the conclusion that unity is more likely to be achieved through economic integration than through forced acculturation.[118]

NOTES

1. For a general discussion of the subject of national integration and political modernization see: M. Weiner, 'Political Integration and Political Development,' *Annals of the American Academy of Political & Social Science*, No. 358 (March 1965), pp. 52–64; D. Rustow, *A World of Nations* (Washington, DC, 1967); and A. Organski, *Stages of Political Development* (New York, 1967).

2. C. Geertz, 'The Integrative Revolution', *Old Societies and New Nations* (Edited by Geertz) (New York, 1963), pp. 105–57.

3. L. Binder, 'Egypt: The Integrative Revolution', *Political Culture and Political Development* (Edited by L. Pye and S. Verba) (Princeton, 1969), pp. 396–449; 'National Integration and Political Development', *American Political Science Review*, Vol. LVIII, No. 3 (September 1964), pp. 622–31.

4. There are, of course, no accurate statistics for the population in the nineteenth century. Sir John Malcolm, writing in the first half of the century, estimated it at about six million. *The History of Persian* (London, 1829), Vol. II, p. 372. Lord Curzon, at the end of the century, 'hazarded' a guess of nine million. *Persia and the Persian Question* (London, 1892), Vol. II, p. 492. R. Watson, in mid-century, placed it anywhere between five and ten millions. *A History of Persia* (London, 1866), p. 2.

5. The well-known writer Muhammad Jamalzadeh is a good case in point. In a short work entitled 'Persian is Sugar' in his collection of essays *Yiki Bud, Yiki Nabud* (Once Upon a Time), he paints a vivid and frustrating picture of how Westernized intellectuals, because they have absorbed so many foreign words, are unable to communicate with the common people. The message of the short story is that the intelligentsia, in order to reform society, must write in simple Persian. But nowhere does the author indicate that even if they accepted his advice, they would still be confronted with a public large sections of which spoke languages other than Persian.

6. For various assessments of Kasravi, see: W. Staley, 'The Intellectual Development of Ahmad Kasravi', (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton, 1966); J. Elder, 'The Spiritual and Moral Situation in Iran', *Muslim World*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 3, (November 1948), pp. 100–07; P. Shahriyari and M. Ni'matullahi, *Ahmad Kasravi* (Tehran, 1947); M. Azadah, *Chahra Kasravi-ra Kushtand?* (Why Did They Kill Kasravi?) (Tehran, 1946); J. Siyar, 'The World Outlook of Kasravi', *Dunya*, Vol. II (Autumn, 1964), pp. 85–91; F. Kazemzadeh, 'Iranian Historiography', in *Historians of the Middle East* (Edited by B. Lewis and P. Holt) (London, 1962), pp. 430–34; and Society of Azadigan, *Sukhranrani-ha-yi Haftagi* (Weekly Talks) (Tehran, n.d.).

7. A. Kasravi, *Zindigani-yi Man* (My Life) (Second Edition, Tehran, 1946). This edition also contains the two sequels to his memoirs: *Dah Sal dar 'Adliyah* (Ten Years

in the Ministry of Justice) and *Chara az 'Adliyah birun Amadam* (Why I Left the Ministry of Justice).

8. In Azarbayjan families claiming descent from the Prophet use the title *mir* while in most other parts of Iran they use another Arabic term, *sayyid*.

9. Kasravi, *Zindigani-yi Man*, p. 12.

10. Ibid., p. 11.

11. Ibid., p. 13. The quotes from Kasravi are all free rather than literal translations.

12. Ibid., p. 23.

13. Ibid., pp. 14–15. Kasravi did not explain this intriguing sentence in his memoirs, but in his history of the constitutional revolution he wrote that Hajji Muhammad hated his family because one of his cousins had accosted a Shayki lady soon after the incident in the bazaar. *Tarikh-i Mashrutah-i Iran* (History of the Iranian Constitution) (Fifth Edition, Tehran, 1961), pp. 759–62.

14. Kasravi commented that one of the first memories he had was this 'painful experience': 'The barbarous fashion of shaving the head was unknown in early Islam. It was started by the Sufis, who, in order to show that they were unconcerned with worldly matters, sheared their hair, but soon the fashion spread among the common people, and consequently, the Sufis decided not to shave their heads. In the days when the people had long hair, the Sufis wanted to have no hair. And in the days when the people had no hair, the Sufis wanted to have long hair. In my own time in Azarbayjan, the mullas, *sayyids*, merchants, bazaaris, and some farmers had shaven heads. If anyone from these groups disregarded the custom, he was reproached by the others, denounced as a libertine, and his testimony was even refused in court. Meanwhile, soldiers, *lutis*, courtiers, and some peasants had long locks at the back of their heads. Since my father was from a long line of *sayyids*, I was forced to go through the painful and repetitive ritual of having my scalp shredded.' Ibid., pp. 6–7.

15. Ibid., p. 21.

16. Ibid., p. 26.

17. Ibid., p. 31.

18. Ibid., p. 33. There was probably another reason why he did not participate. The reformers in Hakmavar were led by Hajji Muhammad, the head of the Shaykhi community and now the staunch enemy of the Kasravi family.

19. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah-'i Iran*, pp. 393–99, 492–94.

20. Ibid., pp. 192–93.

21. Kasravi, *Zindigani-yi Man*, p. 40.

22. Ibid., p. 43.

23. Ibid., p. 46.

24. Ibid., p. 78.

25. Ibid., p. 132.

26. Ibid., p. 193.

27. Ibid., pp. 227–28.

28. Ibid., p. 301.

29. Ibid., p. 320.

30. In private life Kasravi continued to clash with the power structure. He caused a minor scandal in the College when he failed a student he had caught cheating. The student happened to be the son of an influential dignitary: 'To have passed him would have been unfair to the others, especially to the poorer students from the provinces who had made personal sacrifices to come to college.' Kasravi's Defence, *Parcham*, September 10, 1942. And he unwittingly caused a political scandal when a Soviet Iranologist translated a book on linguistics Kasravi had published years earlier. Although this book had no political content, the police arrested and investigated him to discover why a Russian would reprint his work. Staley, op. cit., p. 20.

31. Kasravi, 'Again Concerning Azarbayjan,' *Parcham*, December 6, 1942.

32. Kasravi, 'A Message to European and American Intellectuals,' *Parcham*, September 28–October 16, 1942.

33. Kasravi, *Din va Jahan* (The World and Ideology) (Third Edition, Tehran, 1957), pp. 10–13.

34. Kasravi, 'Concerning How to Understand the World,' *Payman*, Vol. VII, No. 2 (July 1941), pp. 120–27.

35. Kasravi, *Din va Jahan*, pp. 10–13; 'A Message to European and American Intellectuals', op. cit.; and *Aiyin* (The Creed) First Edition, Tehran, 1932), p. 65.

36. Ibid.

37. Kasravi, 'Concerning How to Understand the World,' op. cit.

38. Kasravi, 'What Is the True Meaning of Tamadun?' *Payman*, Vol. III, No. 5 (May 1935), pp. 290–96.
39. Kasravi, *Varjavand Bunyad* (Worthy Foundations) (Third Edition, Tehran, 1957), pp. 86–92.
40. Kasravi, 'Farming As a Source of Life,' *Payman*, Vol. IV, No. 2, (June 1937), pp. 73–80; and 'A Message to European and American Intellectuals,' op. cit.
41. Kasravi. 'Concerning How to Understand the World,' op. cit. He, however, strongly took issue with Gandhi over the proposal that man should live without machines. For Kasravi, man needed machines in his struggle against nature. 'A Glance at India,' *Parcham*, August 19, 1942.
42. Kasravi, *Aiyin*, p. 105.
43. Kasravi, *Din va Jahan*, pp. 10–14.
44. Kasravi, *Varjavand-i Bunyad*, p. 35.
45. Kasravi, 'Islam and Iran,' *Payman*, Vol. I, No. 8 (February 1933), pp. 9–14; and 'The State Is Like a Human Body,' *Parcham*, April 20, 1942.
46. Kasravi, *Aiyin*, pp. 8–9.
47. Kasravi, 'A Message to European and American Intellectuals,' op. cit. For his definition of *din*, see 'Ideology and Politics,' *Payman*, Vol. VII, No. 8 (April 1942), pp. 527–49. Here he attacks the western view of secularism – that politics and *din* should be separated: 'The former guides the state. The latter guides the people's way of life. And both should have the same goal of social harmony.'
48. Kasravi, 'The Division of Labour,' *Parcham*, April 2–6, 1942.
49. Kasravi, *Din va Jahan*, pp. 28–37; and 'Payman's Message on How to Save the Nation,' *Payman*, Vol. III, No. 6 (June 1936), pp. 346–50.
50. Kasravi, 'Iran and Islam,' op. cit.; and *Zaban-i Farsi* (The Persian Language) (Third Edition, Tehran, 1955), pp. 3–5.
51. Kasravi, *Dadgah* (The Court of Justice) (Third Edition, Tehran, 1957), pp. 4–6; and 'What Must Be Done Today,' *Payman*, Vol. VII, No. 4 (August 1941), pp. 242–43.
52. Kasravi (published anonymously), *Sar navisht-i Iran Chah Khvad Bud?* (What will Be the Fate of Iran) (First Edition, Tehran, 1945), pp. 17–21.
53. Kasravi, *Zindigani-yi Man*, p. 14. In one place, however, Kasravi contradicts himself and agrees with his father. He argues that the Great Powers will use all means possible to expand their influence, including the manipulation of religious sects. This, he claims, explains why Western scholars are so interested in such sects as Sufism and Western politicians are so concerned in religious freedom for minorities. *Dar Piramvan-i Islam* (Concerning Islam) (Fourth Edition, Tehran, 1963), pp. 5–10.
54. Kasravi, 'It All Has Its Origin in the People,' *Parcham*, February 9, 1942.
55. Kasravi, *Sar navisht-i Iran Chah Khvad Bud?*, pp. 17–21.
56. Kasravi, 'Iran and Islam,' op. cit.; and *Zaban-i Farsi*, pp. 3–5.
57. Kasravi, 'The Division of Labour,' op. cit.
58. Kasravi, 'A Short History,' *Parcham*, February 29–March 3, 1942; and 'What Must Be Done Today,' op. cit.
59. Kasravi, 'The Chief Cause of Backwardness in Iran,' *Parcham*, April 27, 1942.
60. Kasravi, 'Iran and Islam,' op. cit., p. 10..
61. Kasravi, 'Corruption among the Masses,' *Parcham-i Haftegi*, April 15, 1944.
62. Kasravi, *Dar Rah-i Siyasat* (In Politics) (First Edition, Tehran, 1945), p. 32.
63. Ibid., p. 98.
64. Kasravi, 'A Short History,' op. cit.
65. Kasravi, 'What Must Be Done Today,' op. cit.
66. Kasravi, 'The Shi'i Perversion,' *Payman*, Vol. VII, No. 10 (May 1942), pp. 546–60.
67. Kasravi, *Dadgah*, p. 10.
68. Kasravi, *Din va Jahan*, pp. 28–31.
69. Kasravi, 'An Unnecessary Uproar,' *Parcham*, April 1945.
70. Kasravi, 'A Message to the Mullas of Tabriz,' *Parcham*, November 2, 1942; and 'Why We Are Not Politicians,' *Payman*, Vol. VII, No. 9 (May 1942), pp. 579–87.
71. Kasravi, 'An Unnecessary Uproar,' op. cit.
72. Kasravi, 'Fars and the Qashqayis,' *Parcham*, April 2, 1942.
73. Kasravi, *Din va Jahan*, pp. 22–23.
74. Kasravi, 'The Tribes,' *Parcham-i Haftagi*, April 25, 1944.
75. Kasravi, *Dar Rah-i Siyasat*, p. 50.
76. Kasravi, *Tarikh-i Mashrutah-i Iran*, p. 481.
77. Kasravi, *Sar navisht-i Iran Chah Khvad Bud?*, p. 51.
78. Kasravi, 'Concerning Languages,' *Parcham-i Haftagi*, April 22, 1944.

79. Kasravi, 'Concerning Azarbayjan,' *Payman*, Vol. VII, No. 7 (March 1942), pp. 474–88. His opposition to the linguistic minorities led him to distort his autobiography in one place. In describing how he refused to preach in Arabic, he avoided mentioning that he substituted Azari. Staley, op. cit., p. 95.

80. Kasravi, 'How to Obtain Genuine National Independence,' *Parcham*, April 8, 1942.

81. Kasravi, 'The State Is Like the Human Body,' op. cit.

82. Kasravi, 'Let Us Struggle to Eliminate Turkish,' *Payman*, Vol. III, No. 11 (January 1937), pp. 685–88.

83. Kasravi, 'What Is Wealth,' *Parcham*, March 30, 1942.

84. Ibid.

85. Although Kasravi supported women's rights on the question of polygamy, the veil, and entry into such occupations as medicine, dentistry, and teaching, he adamantly opposed the principle of equality between the sexes and their entry into law, politics, and government service. His opposition was based on the following premises: the 'natural' place of woman was in the home, 'cooking', 'sewing', 'raising children,' and 'pleasing their husbands'; such professions would 'corrupt' women because they would bring out harmful competitive instincts; their entry into such fields would take away jobs from men; and their presence in offices would 'distract' men from their work. Modern writers tend to mention Kasravi's progressive views on the question while ignoring his highly conservative attitudes. For Kasravi's writings on the issue, see, 'Our Mothers and Sisters', *Payman*, Vol. IV, No. 2 (February 1935), pp. 318–33; and 'God Created Man to Work', *Parcham*, April 19, 1942.

86. For Kasravi's balance sheet of Riza Shah's successes and failures, see 'They Originated from the Masses,' *Parcham*, February 9, 1942; 'The Source of Instability Must Be Eliminated,' *Parcham*, February 23, 1942; and 'Concerning Riza Shah and His Activities,' *Parcham*, June 25, 1942.

87. Kasravi, *Dar Rah-i Siyasat*, p. 84.

87. Kasravi, 'What Are We Saying,' *Payman*, Vol. II, No. 1 (January 1935), pp. 3–10.

89. Ibid.

90. Kasravi, 'The Division of Labour,' op. cit.

91. Kasravi, *Din va Jahan*, p. 20; and 'A Message to European and American Intellectuals,' op. cit.

92. Kasravi, *Afsaran-i Ma* (Our Officers) (First Edition, Tehran, 1945), pp. 25–26.

93. Kasravi, *Dadgah*, p. 44.

94. Kasravi, *Inqilab Chist?* (What Is Revolution) (First Edition, Tehran, 1945), pp. 11.

95. Kasravi, *Din va Jahan*, p. 61.

96. Kasravi, 'Why We Are Not Politicians,' op. cit., p. 581.

97. Kasravi, *Dar Rah-i Siyasat*, p. 45.

98. Kasravi, 'A People Must Have Both a Road and a Guide,' *Payman*, Vol. VI, No. 7 (September, 1940), p. 420.

99. Kasravi, *Sar navisht-i Iran Chah Khvad Bud?*, p. 62.

100. Kasravi, 'Education,' *Parcham*, September 11–15, 1942.

101. Ibid.

102. Ibid.

103. Kasravi, 'The Division of Labour,' op. cit.

104. Kasravi, 'What Must Be Done Today,' op. cit.

105. Kasravi, 'Unity Is Dependent on Unity of Thought,' *Parcham*, March 9, 1942.

106. Kasravi, 'The Harmful Effects of Poetry,' *Parcham*, April 21–22, 1942; and 'One of the False Theories', *Parcham*, May 17, 1942.

107. Kasravi, 'A People Must Have Both a Road and a Guide', op. cit.; 'How to Become Good', *Parcham*, January 30, 1942; and 'We Must Understand the Meaning of Constitutionalism', *Parcham*, February 1, 1942.

108. Kasravi, 'False Titles', *Payman*, Vol. I, No. 1 (November 1933), pp. 17–20.

109. Kasravi, *Zaban-i Farsi*, pp. 30–40.

110. Kasravi, 'New Mistakes', *Payman*, Vol. I, No. 3 (March 1934), pp. 3–5.

111. Kasravi, 'I have taken Nothing from Others,' *Parcham*, April 10, 1942. The only direct tie between Kasravi and Gökalp seems to be the periodical title *Payman*. Early in the century, Gökalp had edited and published some of his important articles in a journal with that name. And Kasravi used the same name when he began publishing his own monthly journal in 1933.

112. Kasravi, 'A People Must Have Both a Road and a Guide,' op. cit.

113. Kasravi, 'What is Wealth?', op. cit.

114. Cited in *Parcham-i Haftegi*, April 22, 1944.

115. Kasravi, *Dadgah*, p. 27.

116. E. Tabari, 'Concerning Persian Literature,' and A. Qasimi, 'Concerning Hafiz,' *Mardum*, Vol. III, No. 1 (September 1948), pp. 3–16, 57–68.

117. Kasravi often denounced the Tudah Party for not waging a more militant campaign against Islam, and, at times, criticized it for allying with segments of the anti-government '*uluma*'. *Dar Rah-i Siyasat* and *Sar navisht-i Iran Chah Khvad Bud?*

118. This is best seen in the changing attitudes of Iranian Marxists towards linguistic minorities: in 1924, Arani had argued for the Persianization of the provinces, especially of his native Azarbayjan ['Azarbayjan: A Vital Issue for Iran,' *Farangistan*, Vol. I, No. 5 (September 1924), pp. 247–53]; now, in 1972, the four main Marxist groups – the Tudah, the Revolutionary Tudah, the Azarbayjani Democratic, and the Marxist-Leninist parties – are supporting the cultural rights of the linguistic minorities in Iran.