In 1941 Reza Shah was forced to abdicate and his son Mohammad Reza Shah ascended the throne. This change led to considerable relaxation of political activity as well as freedom of the press. The 'ulama' resumed to express their grievances against the regime after a prolonged quietist attitude after the constitutional movement especially after Reza Shah came to power.

The clergy had developed strong anti-Pahlavi feeling during the reign of Reza Shah (1924-1941) just like their enmity against the Qajar's. They were angry not because the Shah gave them adverse treatment but also because they disliked a number of reforms introduced by the Shah. They were particularly annoyed by his policy towards religious institutions, education and religious endowments (awqāf). Through out the 1930s the 'ulama' followed quietist and nonconfrontationist attitude while Ayatollah Abdol 1 Homa Katouzian, The Political Economy of Modern Iran 1926-79, (London, 1981), p.141.


2 By 1941 Reza Shah had introduced a series of laws which restricted the control and administration of clergy over awqaf properties, religious education and charity institutions. For details, see Sharough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period (New York, 1980), pp. 32-59.
Karim Ha'iri and Ayatollah Sayyed Abol Hasan Esfahani (d. 1945) dominated the scene, but they had collected enough anger against the regime.

Soon after the new Shah came to power, the clergy began to reassert themselves and began their agitation on the pattern of the Constitutionalist movement. However, they did not work as a cohesive force. They not only differed in the degree of activism and involvement in politics and public matters, but also held divergent views on a number of issues. Sharough Akhavi who has made a good study of the different attitudes of the clergy during this period, says that it is very difficult to categorise the clergy in certain groups as the views of a particular group will not be identical on all the issues. However, the clergy's attitude can broadly be divided into two general categories: one the conservative quietism and the other traditional opposition to these two there may be added a small group of radical attitude on the part of a few clergy such as Ayatollah Borqai and Ayatollah Lankarani who supported not only parliamentarism, nationalization


4 See Akhavi, op. cit., Chapter 3-4, pp. 60-116.

5 Ibid., p. 63, 'Any attempt to locate the ulama leadership on a spectrum of orientations to public policies would have to be constructed on the basis of individual issues'.

of Anglo-Iranian Oil company etc., but also women enfranchise. The first group that followed the conservative quietist line was led by the sole marja'-e-taqli of the time Ayatollah Sayyed Aqa Mohammad Boroujerdi. The other group of clergy manifested itself in the attitude of Ayatollah Abol-Hasim Kashani. The following were the main issues of contention for the clergy during this period: (1) The attitude of the state towards the clergy and vice-versa (2) Relationship with the monarch and his government (3) involvement into the public matters and politics (4) Activities of the militant organization both rightist and leftist (5) Nationalization of Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (6) Women enfranchise (7) Baha'ism (8) Land reform.

But before we discuss the attitudes of 'ulama' on these issues we must have a look at the anti-clergy and the so-called "anti-religion" views of modernists such as Ahmad Kasravi Tabrizi and his followers during the early 1940s. In 1941 the ban on freedom of the press was relaxed. As a result of this there took place a spurt of polemical literature both from Ahmed Kasravi and his followers on the one hand, and from the clergy on the other hand. Ahmad Kasravi appeared as one of the most hated persons in the eyes of the Iranian clergy. He charged the 'ulama' for

promoting a distorted version of Shi'ism which he termed as Shi'i-qari. The clergy on the other hand attacked Kasravi's movement as Kasravi-qari, condemned not only Kasravi but all those who followed him as anti-religion and anti-'ulama'.

Ahmed Kasravi Tabrizi the historian, literary critic and Islamist was born in A.D. 1890 in the rural town of Hukmavar in the suburbs of Tabriz. His father was an unorthodox Iranian who denounced mullas for their dependence upon charity for their livelihood. He even discouraged people from going to pilgrimage if their relatives and neighbours were needy. The Azeri speaking family of Kasravi belonged to Mutashari sect. The rivalries between the Mutashari, Shaykis and Karimkhani communities which were always a source of disturbance in Tabriz at that time seem to have left profound impression on the mind of Kasravi. Kasravi's father was not only against this sectarianism, but he also condemned differences between the Shi'is and Sunnis. However, Kasravi gained religious education at a local madrasa. His father

7 Ahmed Kasravi Tabrizi, Zendagani-ye Man, p.5.
8 Ibid., p.12.
wanted him to become a religious scholar though not a "mulla". But, according to his own account, Kasravi did not want to continue religious education which would eventually result in making him a cleric.

Later, he joined a college in Tabriz and came under the influence of a few enlightened persons. Here, also, he inculcated reformist tendencies. He, then served at various colleges as teacher of Arabic. By then he had earned the bad reputation of being an irreligious and unconventional person. The disturbances during the 1910s in Azerbaijan forced him to come to Tehran and join the Ministry of Justice. However, he had to resign from his post as he came to a direct confrontation with the army officers of the Reza Khan who tried to prevail over the Ministry of Justice.

Although Kasravi gained a reputation of uprightness, toughness, hardwork, courage and incorruptibility, his ideas made him one of the most controversial figures of his time. He was neither liked by the political establishment nor by the religious

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11 Ibid., p. 21.
13 Cf. Ibid., p. 29 ff.
14 See Kasravi, Chera az Adliya Bayrun Amadam (Why I left the Justice Department) (Tehran, n.d.).
establishment. In fact he came under strong condemnation from the latter. He engaged himself in long polemics with the religious authorities, who regarded him as an unbeliever, a Babi, an agent of western powers, a communist so on and so forth. As a prolific writer, Kasravi wrote a number of books and even a greater number of articles especially in his newspaper Parcham and journal Payām. He covered a variety of subjects, including history, literary criticism, Iranian nationalism and religion; the last is more important, for our point of view. He wrote a number of treatises on Islam and Shi'ism in order to give a progressive interpretation of religion. He uses the term din for religion by which he sought to draw a radical view of religion. He says:

I use it [din] to describe an ideology that teaches 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


16 For a list of his works see ibid., p. 279.

17 The following are his books which directly discuss with Islam: Dar Piramun-e Islam (About Islam), Din va Jahan (Religion and World), Imroz che Layad Kard (What Should be Done Today), Farhang Chist (What is Culture), Shī'i-gari (Distorted view of Shi'ism).
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 role of struggling against the nature. 18

For him Islam in its original form was a genuine ideology. It united the various communities opposed to each other into one and created a cohesive and unified society. 20 But only after a few years of its success it got divided, first into Shi'ism and Sunnism and then into a number of sects. 21 there are two kinds of Islam: one is the Islam which was established by the pious Arab, the Prophet Muhammad, a thousand and three hundred and fifty years ago and which flourished for centuries. The other is the Islam of today consists of Sunnis, Shi'is, Isma'ilis, Ali Allahis, Shaykhis, Karmikhani's so on and so forth. 21 At present there is no Islamic ideology (din-e Islam) as such. Instead there are a large number of sects (kish). 22 Within Iran itself, Kasravi pointed out, there is a large number of sects. He

19 Kasravi, Din va Jahan, p. 28.
20 Ibid., p. 32.
21 Kasravi, Dar Piramun-e Islam, p. 2.
22 Kasravi, Din va Jahan, p. 35.
divided these factions into four broad categories: the religious sects, the linguistic groups, the tribal bifurcations and the class divisions. He counted as many as fourteen major religious sects in Iran. According to him, these conflicting views (mandisha-ye zid eham) are the greatest cause of national disintegration and backwardness. As a reformist he was greatly moved by the country's backwardness. The way to national progress can only be paved by removing the conflicting thoughts. Although he criticised all kinds of factionalism, his criticism of religious sectarianism was more vehement. He says that the fourteen religious communities in Iran mean fourteen states within one state:

Fourteen religious sects mean 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.

23 According to him they are: Sunnis, Sufis, Shaykhis Mutasharis, Karimkhani, Baha'is, Azalis, Ali-Allahis, Jews, Armenians, Assyrians, Zoroastrians, dialectic materialists and the followers of Greek Philosophy.

24 Kasravi, The Bayad Kard Imroz, Passim.

25 Ibid., Ma Che Mikhvahim, p.11.

26 Kasravi, The Bayad Kard Imroz, p.11.
Kasravi attacks Shi'ism and the clerical institutions most vehemently. Shi'ism he believed, was as not a genuine ideology (din) which was divided into numerous sub-sects (Kish).\textsuperscript{27} According to him the prevalent Shi'ism is a distorted and perverted form of Shi'ism. This distortion of Shi'ism took place during the Safavid period.\textsuperscript{28} He thus calls Shi'ism as Safavid Shi'ism. He further says that this distortion was done mainly due to political reasons.\textsuperscript{29}

Kasravi regarded Shi'ism as a retrograde religion which is not only 'incompatible with reason, which alone makes it objectionable, it is also a hinderance to a progressive life'.\textsuperscript{30} He says that Shi'ism created conflicts in the society by differentiating between the people (mellat) and government (dawlat), and further that it discouraged the people in shaping their own destiny and thereby making contribution to social production and progress by teaching them that 'their own effort could not improve the society'.\textsuperscript{31} He strongly criticized the Shi'ite concept of denying

\textsuperscript{27} Kasravi, \textit{Din va Jahan}, pp. 29-30.
\textsuperscript{29} Abrahamian, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 283.
\textsuperscript{30} Cited in Farhad Kazemi, \textit{op. cit.}, p.160.
\textsuperscript{31} Abrahamian, \textit{loc. cit.}. 
legitimacy to all temporal authority and thus denying any political order in the society. He also criticized the oppositional role of ulama towards the state. He also strongly criticised the view professed by the Shi'i 'ulama' that people had no right to make laws for themselves and that God alone had the right to do so. He thus reaches the conclusion that shi'ism and democracy are two opposit poles:

Shi'ism and democracy are two contradictory forces. According to the former, the authority to rule resides in the Imam and his 'ulama'. 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 'ulama'. 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 a 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 depotism.

Kasravi thus concludes that Shi'ism has led its followers astray: backwardness, ignorance, disintegration and darkness, or in short, into 'irreligiousness'. He criticized a number of religious concepts and practices such as taqiyya.

34 Cited in Abrahamian, op. cit., p. 283.
the imams' power of intercession, belief in ever living hidden imam, taqlid (blind imitation), pilgrimage, visitation of shrines of imams, passion plays and mourning processions (ta'ziyeh).

In this connection he wrote:

Prayers, crying, vows, and so on, have no efficiency .... People think God watches this country in particular and as soon as someone commits a sin. He sends a famine or flood or epidemic or a Chengiz Khan. They think that God is emotional and that in response to sheep sacrifice he will forgive. People learn all this from the preachers (pishvayan) .... the beliefs in miracles is blasphemies against God .... If God does not answer prayers, what kind of God is He .... Du'a-nivis (prayer writers), sayyeds, and mullas who tell you to make vows in order to be cured do not know God. 35

These ideas of Kasravi antagonized the clergy who considered him a serious threat to their religion. They wrote a number of treatises to refute the modernist ideas of Kasravi and his followers. 36 Ayatollah Rohollah Khomeini wrote a book Kashf-e Asrar (Revealing of the Secrets) to refute one of Kasravi's followers Ali Akbar Hakamizadeh's book "Asrar-e Hezar Sal" (Secret of the Thousand Years). 37 The book was widely acclaimed


36 See Mehdi Seraj Ansari, Nabard ba bidini: Darbara-ye Kasravi va Kasravigiri (Tehran, n.d.).

37 For more about the book see Chapter.
by the clergy as it represented the clergy's views in a most systematic form. In the very beginning of the book Ayatollah Khomeini termed the general perception of the clergy of the modernist as the "greatest danger", and their attempts to "weaken the faith of people in religion and its rituals and the clerical institution" as the "greatest crime". He condemns these modernist reformers as Wahhabis:

These intellectuals want progress; they want to be released from taqlid (imitation). In fact they are the imitators of camel-herding savages of Najd (i.e., Wahabis). Such arguments had always been put forward since the inception of Islam. They, the modernist intellectuals, think that if we abandon our religion we will progress and will stand equal to the progress of Europe. But they do not realize that what Europe has to offer is not civilization but savagery. Even many Europeans themselves are religious. Nor these writers realize that no progress has been made in the deserts of Najd and Hejaz. How should we seek advice from them for our development.

He warns those who want to eliminate the prestige of ruhaniyat clergy from the people are committing the greatest treason to the nation. The reduction in the influence of clergy over the masses would amount to such defects in the country which hundreds of judiciais and officials of police cannot repair.

38 Ayatollah Rohollah Khomeini; Kashf-e Asrar, p.2.

39 Ibid., pp. 7-8; Elsewhere in the book he accuses them as followers of Ibn Taymiyya, and Babis. See ibid., p.56.

40 Ibid., p. 203.
The clergy's reaction to Kasravi and his followers was very bitter and violent. He was therefore, assassinated in 1946 by the member of a terrorist organization Feda'iyan-e Islam. The act was widely acclaimed by the clergy. Some of the leading mujtahids including Ayatollah Mohammad Hossein Tabataba'i-Qommi and Ayatollah Kashani openly supported the assassination. They openly pleaded the acquittal of the assassins. It is said that the weapon with which Kasravi was assassinated was funded by a leading mujtahid of Tehran, Ayatollah Shaykh Mohammad Hasan Taleqani.\(^{41}\) Even fatwas were issued in support of the assassination. Ayatollah Aqa Hossein Qommi have been reported to have said that the murder of Kasravi was an obligatory act similar to prayer and required no fatwa. Anyone who insults the Prophet and his family must be liquidated and his blood shed'.\(^{42}\) Such a bitter and strong reaction of the clergy was only to be seen in their campaign against the Baha'is during mid 1950s.

Among those who represented the traditional oppositional behaviour against the state during the early 1940s were Ayatollah Aqa Hossein Tabataba'i-Qommi (d. 1940), Ayatollah Taqi Pafqi (d. 1946) and Ayatollah Abol Qasim Kashani (d. 1962). They first

\(^{41}\) Farhad Kazemi, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

\(^{42}\) *Ibid.*,
demanded lifting of restriction on the wearing of veil and clerical garb. Both Bafqi and Qommi emphasized strict observance of shari'a. They also emphasized wearing of veil by women. Ayatollah Bafqi who had a reputation of objecting the presence of a royal lady in unveiled condition in a religious shrine in 1935, strongly criticized opening of a liquor shop in Qom. The shop was burnt down by his followers. He confronted the government in another incident when he opposed the unjust distribution of a river water between Qom and Mahallat. These 'ulama' also attacked on the imitation of the cultural pattern of the westerners and demanded a ban on the introduction of cinema. They also demanded to repeal the ban on passion plays and mournings; strict observance of sanctity of the holy month of Ramadan and to do away with the proscription of the pilgrimage to Mecca.

However, the traditional opposition of the 'ulama' towards the state during this period is manifested in the activities of Kashani. Although a learned marja'-e-taklid, Kashani attracted

43 M.J. Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
44 Ibid.
45 Arjomand, *loc cit*.
46 M.J. Fischer, *op. cit.*, p. 113; see also notes on p. 276.
mainly the second echelon of the clergy in support of his cause.\textsuperscript{47} He had a mixed history of failure and success in politics. A brief political biography of Ayatollah Kashani would help understand the man and his thoughts as well as his political behaviour. Ayatollah Kashani was born in a traditional clerical family in Tehran in AD 1882. His father Ayatollah Sayyed Mostafa Kashani was himself a leading mujtahid of the city. Towards the end of the 19th century Kashani came to live at Najaf along with his father.\textsuperscript{48} In Najaf Kashani ... joined the classes of Ayatollah Molla Mohammad Kezem Khorasani and Ayatollah Mirza Hossein Khalili Tehraní both active clerics of the constitutional movement. He took active part in the Constitutional movement. Although Kashani acquired excellence in religious sciences as he was declared a mujtahid at a very young age, his keenness to join the politics and lead an active life is reflected in his choice to turn down an invitation from the madrasa of Najaf which had offered him the top post. He thus chose to join the struggle against the Britishers.\textsuperscript{49} He was one of the close associates of

\textsuperscript{47} Akhavi, op. cit., p. 57


Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Shirazi (d. 1920) who led the anti-British struggle of 'ulama' in Iraq. On account of his anti-British activities he was condemned to death by a British court in absentia. He fled to Iran in A.D. 1921.

When Kashani reached Tehran the struggle of power between the Reza Shah and Qajar ruler Ahmad Shah was on. He chose the former made an alliance with him. It has been suggested that Kashani's choice of Reza Khan was due to the latter's soft and supportive attitude towards the 'ulama' at that time. Although Kashani sat in the majlis, he very soon expressed his dissatisfaction with the new monarch and his policies of modernization especially when it came to confront his religious dogma. He also opposed the increasing influence of the foreign powers in the domestic affairs and the lack of proper attitude of the monarch towards the 'ulama'. He openly showed his concern against the corrupt and opportunist members of the majlis. He advocated participation of 'ulama' into the politics in a big way. However, he was not

50 Aqiqi Bakhshayeshi, op. cit., p. 131.


52 He was a member of the assembly which officially declared the last of the Qajar monarch overthrown.


54 Ibid., p. 187.
seen much during the late 1920s and 1930s when the Shah had started eliminating opposition including 'ulama'.

It was the conviction of Kashani that religion and politics were not different from each other; they were one and inseparable from each other. During his stay at Najaf he had established a college, Madarsa-ye 'Alavi, where not only religious subjects were imparted but military training was also given to the students. Addressing the religious students he said 'As nothing in the world occurred without material causes, do not limit yourself to praying, but unite, devote yourselves to social problems and self-sacrifice in order not to leave the field free to traitors who by their passions, their brigandage and their ambitions will let all the values of this nation be annihilated'.

Another important characteristic of Kashani was his strong anti-imperialist, especially anti-British sentiments. The following extracts from his writings reflect his feelings on the problem of imperialism:

As long as blood flows in the veins of the nation, the foreigners cannot install in this country their

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55 In a interview he quoted the Quranic verse la rahbaniyya fi'l-Islam (there is no monasticism in Islam) 'Participating in the social affairs of Muslim fellow countrymen is among the duties of the religious scholars'. Interview with Ayatollah Kashani', in Echo of Islam, special vol. The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution, p. 186.

56 Yann Richard, op. cit., p.105.

57 Ibid., p. 118.

58 'I have always regarded British policy as harmful for the Islamic countries especially since I have witnessed the hardships and agony which the Muslim Iranian brothers and sisters have undergone as a result of British policy. I was never prepared to talk with British or even meet them ... Interview with Ayatollah Kashani, op. cit., p.188.
brigand display case ..., they cannot turn me from the continuation of the tireless combat that I have undertaken against their injustice. I have always risked my worthless life, and I will risk it until my last breath for the glory and independence of my nation.... let us defend the legitimate rights of the nation, even if we must sacrifice our lives for them.  

The boldest step on the part of the traditional 'ulama' including of Kashani came in the form of a fatwa issued in favour of nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Besides, these 'ulama' played an important role in bringing the nationalist government of Dr. Mossaddeq into power. Kashani led the 'ulama' in the majlis; he was chosen speaker of the Majlis.  

However, neither Kashani nor his supporters inspite of their hostility towards the Shah and his government, ever declared monarchy or the constitution as unIslamic. It is to be noted that although they envisaged and demanded more and more share in politics for clergy, they never went ideologically beyond the idea of constitutional monarchy. They limited their demands to the true implementation of those clauses of the constitution which

59 Cited in Yann Richard, op. cit., p. 119.
60 For Kashani's role in the Nationalist Movement See R.W. Cottom, op. cit., Yann Richard, op. cit.,
gave a supervisory role to the 'ulama' in legislation. Neither Kashani nor his followers advanced theoretical speculations in this regard. In fact, Kashani has written nothing on the issue. Kashani's intense politicization of religion and his agitational attitude brought him closer to an extremist Islamic organization known as Feda'iyan-e Islam with whom Kashani was associated both ideologically and politically.

Feda'iyan-e Islam (Devotees of Islam) was founded by one Sayyed Mujtaba Navvab Safavi during the early 1940s. He was born in 1923 in Tehran in a religious family. He studied in Tehran and Najaf. He did not joined higher classes of theology at Najaf, instead he returned to Iran. Navvab Safavi's immediate cause of early return to Iran seems to be his great dislike for anti-Shi'ism and anti-clergy writings of Ahmed Kasravi Tabrizi. He came to Tehran with one avowed objective of


63 For his life; see Anon. Mujahid Shahid Navvab Safavi: Usva-ye Jehad va Shahadat (Tehran, 1406 A.H.)

64 Farhad, op. cit., pp. 160-61.
opposing Kasravi. He thus came close to the "Society to Combat Irreligion" which was mainly responsible for the anti-Kasravi propaganda in Iran. Later, Safavi himself established an organization known as Feda'iyan-e Islam. In 1945 he unsuccessfully attempted on the life of Kasravi in broad day light. Kasravi was, however, assassinated in 1946 by the two agents of Feda'iyan - Ali Imam and Hossein Imami. The plan was prepared by Safavi himself. After the completion of the task Safavi fled to Najaf while the Imami brothers were arrested and tried. They were however, acquitted thanks to the pressure put up by the clergy who gave the fatwa that this act of murder was legal and obligatory.65

During these years the Feda'iyan came very close to Kashani. Kashani openly supported the assassination of Kasravi.66 In turn the Feda'iyan demonstrated against the arrest of Kashani in 1946. An alliance was thus formed between Kashani and the Feda'iyan since 1946 who were mainly responsible for the public demonstration and extremist activities in late 1940s and early 1950s.67

65 Ibid., p. 161.
67 For this alliance see Yam Richard, op. cit., R.W. Cottom, op. cit., p. 89, Akhavi, op. cit., pp. 66-69;
The Feda'iyan-e Islam was a well-organized group of youth who came mainly from middle class backgrounds and were religious zealots. Although the exact number of their members is not known, they had considerable following in urban areas, particularly major towns of the country. Its members were in the age group of 20 to 35, nonetheless there were a few zealots who were in their teens. It published a number of journals and newspapers including Manshur-e Beradiari (The Brotherhood Circular). It also brought out a manifesto "Rahnama-ye Haqayeq" in which the ideological bases of the organization were laid down.

The most fundamental belief of the Feda'iyan was the age-old Shi'i belief that only Imam's government was just; all other governments in whatsoever form were unjust and illegal. They believed that the monarchy or the secular government had usurped the authority of the imams. They sought to establish a theocratic state which they termed as "Islamic government". As a sworn enemy of the contemporary regime they declared it as "unconstitutional" and "illegal" and composed of traitors and usurpers and

68 See Ervand Abrahamian, _op. cit._, p. 136; Farhad Kazemi, _op. cit._, p. 168-65.

69 Most of the members of the Feda'yan had religious background; many of them were sons of clergy; see Arjomand, "Traditionalism in Twentieth century Iran in S.A. Arjomand (ed.) _From Nationalism to Revolution_, pp. 208-209.

70 See Amir H. Ferdows, _op. cit._

71 See _op. cit._, p. 247.
"enemies of Islam." However, they seem not to denounce the institution of monarchy as such. They seemed to accept a constitutional monarchy if the Shah obeyed and followed the dictats of religion and 'ulama'. Rahnuma-ye Modarres, while dealing with the duties of the ruler, says that he must be guided by the rules and principles of Shi'i Islam and must choose the first Shi'i Imam 'Ali as a model. He was also required to fulfill specific religious duties such as paying proper respect to the holy shrines, participation in congregational prayers and supervision of religious endowments. 73

The basic objective of the Feda'iyan was strict enforcement of shari'a in order to create an Islamic society in Iran which should be free from public dancing, gambling, prostitution, high divorce rates and poverty. They advocated a government ruled by an Imam by which they implicitly meant government by 'ulama' on account of their knowledge of Islamic law. 74 Great disparity of income is seen as opinion to the individual and the state, leading to destability and social tension. According to them the equality of anyone before the law, regardless of social standing, will

72 Farhad Kazemi, op.cit., pp. 170-71.
73 Ibid.,
74 Fardows, op.cit., p. 242.
encourage proper behaviour and civility and discourage violence. No longer society be divided between the rich and poor. They enthusiastically supported the movement of nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company led by Dr. Mossaddeq and staged rallies and demonstrations. They also believed that "God alone has right to make laws" therefore, the majlis has no right of legislation:

Laws and rules which are based on the meagre and feeble minds of humans and which are contrary to the spirit and the wisdom of the Islamic laws and principles are unlawful and unacceptable. Iran is officially a Muslim land, and all of the rules and regulations of the society must be based strictly upon the principles of Ja'fari Islam.

The Feda'iyan combined religious fanaticism with the element of Iranian nationalism. They advocated purification of Persian language from foreign influences and the unification of Iranian land so that a single Iranian national territory may come into being. Like Kashani, they also advocated military training and allied technical expertise to be taught along with the traditional sciences in religious institutions. Regarding

75 Ibid., p. 242.
76 Cited in Farhad Kezemi, op. cit., p. 171.
78 For their educational ideas; see Amir H. Ferdows, op. cit., pp. 251-52.
religious and social affairs they proposed strict punishments so that corruption and irreligiousness could be eradicated. They even advocated cutting of hand, whipping in public and so on for various crimes. On a number of social problems they held conservative views. For example they believed that the proper and best place for women is "to be the manager of the house and a mother and wife". They ridiculed the western concept of women's emancipation. They also advocated muta' (temporary marriage), which they claimed would eradicate prostitution.

The Feda'iyan claimed themselves as the followers of Shaykh Fazlollah Nuri. Their views regarding 'ulama's role in the politics as well as their jurisdiction as being sole authorities to interpret and legislate laws were identical to that of Nuri. They reiterated the ideas of Nuri in these words:

The parliamentary representatives must understand that parliament is not a place to make laws, but rather a consultation ground .... In performing their duties, they must be put under the supervision of an assembly of pious religious leaders in order to bring the activities of the majlis deputies in line with the Islamic provisions ... Yes, elections must be free and representatives must be devout muslims. Un-Islamic laws must be abolished. They must not make laws, but carry out laws put down by God. They must not speak against the muslim Iranian nation and must be continuously supervised by the assembly of the leading religious leaders.

79 Arjomand, op. cit., p. 209.

80 On their ideas about women see Amir H. Ferdows, op. cit., pp. 253-54.

As fundamentalists they strongly objected to the separation of religion and politics and claimed that Islam was a political religion. They also showed strong opposition to westernization and cultural import from the West. They condemned even music as sexually stimulating and injurious to mind and body. In short their ideas are very much similar to the Islamic resurgent movements of the Sunni world, especially of the Ikhwan al-Muslimun who were at the same time operating with the same objectives in their mind in Egypt. It is said that the Feda'iyan were greatly influenced by the Ikhwan of Egypt. A comparative study of ideology and programme of both the societies (i.e. Feda'iyan and Ikhwan) shows remarkable similarity. Further their attitude towards regimes seems to be considerably identical. In pursuance to realize their dream of establishing an Islamic order, Feda'iyan resorted to terror and extremism. They advocated militant method of

82 Ibid., p. 209.
83 For a study of ideas, organization and activities; see Richard Mitchel, The Society of Muslim Brotherhood.
84 Navvab Safavi must have had personal relations with the Ikhwan al-Muslimun. He was in Cairo during the early 1940s (Anon., Multahid Shahid Navvab Safavi; Usve-ye Jehad va Shahadat, R. 36). He also fled to Cairo when the Feda'iyan's members were rounded up after the assassination of Prime Minister Razmara. He is reported to have been in a demonstration held by the Ikhwan al-Muslimun during 1954; see Richard Mitchel, The Society of Muslim Brotherhood, p. 126n.
assassination and terrorist tactics. During the late 1940s they weilded considerable power and influence. They assassinated Prime Minister Hazir in 1949, which was in fact the culmination of a series of demonstrations and terrorist activities on their part throughout the country. This situation is said to be one of the causes of Boroujerdi's call for convening the Qom Conference (see below). In 1951 they assassinated another Prime Minister Razmara to help pave the ascension of Mosaddeq to the Prime ministership. Within this period they also killed one education Minister and attempted on the life of the Shah. Feda'iyan also collaborated with Kashani in order to gain popularity and legitimacy among the masses particularly in view of the strong opposition from the top ranking clergy. Kashani, on the other hand, sought to exploit and utilize their opposition to the regime for his own political ambition. He supported their activities sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly. He even supported the assassination of Prime Minister Razmara and help release the assassin. He openly expressed happiness over the assassination.

86 On these assassinations, see R. Sanghavi, *Kalya*; The Shah of Iran: A Political Biography, pp. 255-57.


88 Asked by a reporter about what he thinks about the killer of the Prime Minister Razmara and what should be done with the assassin he said: 'The killer of Razmara should be set free for this action was taken for the Iranian nation .... As a matter of fact the execution verdict on Razmara had been issued by the Iranian people ...Khalil Tahmashbi (the assassin) was the executor of the will of people'. Interview with Ayatollah Kashani, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

89 'This action was to the benefit of Iranian nation and was the best and most efficient blow inflicted upon colonialism and enemies of Iranian nation'. *Ibid*. He is reported to have embraced the killer and hailed him as his son, R. Sanghavi, *op. cit.*, p. 256.
It was due to Feda'iyan pressure that Kashani was called back to Iran from his exile in Lebanon in 1949 and was offered parliamentary post.

The relationship between Feda'iyan, Kashani and Mosaddeq deteriorated when the former demanded more executive share in the government of Mosaddeq. Kashani sided with Mosaddeq in his differences with the Feda'iyan and, therefore, Feda'iyan resorted to oppose the Mosaddeq government. They are said to be one major factor in the fall of Mosaddeq's government among many other factors. Feda'iyan had to go underground immediately after the fall of Mosaddeq's government and reinstation of the Shah in 1953, when five top ranking leaders of the society were captured, tortured and executed. During the revolution of 1973-79 they closely cooperated with Khomeini and after the success of the revolution many of them joined the voluntary organization of "Pasdaran-e Ingiliz." They claimed Ayatollah Sadiq Khalkhali to be their leader who acquired fame for the indiscriminate killing of those whom he termed as the enemies of the revolution.

90 R.W. Cotton, op. cit., p 136

91 Amir H. Ferdows, op. cit., p. 239.

92 In a statement Ayatollah Sadiq Khalkhali has himself admitted that he had been a member of the Feda'ayan in his student days. He further says that they "no longer need to engage in underground activities" as they have revolutionary court that can "summon the guilty." See Farhad Kazemi, op. cit., p. 167.
The top ranking clergy, led by Ayatollah Boroujerdi, remained largely traditional in their approach and attitude towards politics and state. They emphasised the position of the constitutional period, i.e., the 'ulama' should have an advisory role to the state, that the constitution must guarantee that it would not go against the religious law, and that there should be a body of 'ulama' to supervise the legislation of the parliament as provided in the Fundamental Law of 1906. They remained largely pre-occupied with the jurisprudential problems. They avoided to speak on political matters until and unless something directly connected with religion was at stake. Ayatollah Boroujerdi assumed the leadership of Shi'i clergy as the sole marja'-e taglid in 1943. He can be regarded as the last of the sole marja'-e taglid. He wielded considerable power and authority in his position but his life is characterized by the bookishness and traditional scholasticism. He contributed several works on fiqh.

Ayatollah Boroujerdi assumed the leadership at a time when Kashani and his followers were openly speaking on political matters and criticizing the Shah and government. Boroujerdi, although did

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94 For his contribution on this field see Ayatollah Mortaza Motahheri, "Mazaya va Khidmat-e Marhum Ayatollah Boroujerdi" in Allama Tabatabab'i and others (eds.), Bahsi Darbara-ye Marja'iyyat va Ruhaniyat (Tehran, 1962).
not criticized this act of Kashani and others but he stuck to the traditional quietism. He kept contacts with the Shah and his government. Both exchanged visits; the latter being most frequent. He kept himself aloof from the happenings of early and mid 1940s.

In 1950, Boroujerdi invited a conference of 'ulama' at Qomm in order to discuss the sensitive issue of 'ulama's involvement in politics. About two thousand 'ulama' attended this conference at madarsa Faizia. 'They adopted a firm non-interventionist position which prohibited all members of clergy from joining political parties and interfering in politics. It maintained that opposition to this resolution by clergy men would result in a withdrawal of recognition of the offender's status as a professional in the religious institutions - a kind of Shi'i ex-communication that presumably Boroujerdi and the Qomm establishment would implement'. It should be mentioned here that

95 'There seems to be a good deal of evidence that certain leading 'ulama' of this group are regularly consulted on matters of their special interest .... The more usual procedure, however, is for regular contact to be made through the visit by officials to 'ulama', or through the transmission of messages to officials by the 'ulama' ....' Leonard Binder, op. cit., p.251.

96 Akhavi, op. cit., pp. 63-64.
the immediate reason to call such a conference and passing such resolution by these clergy was the active involvement of Kashani's group of theologians in politics as well as the extremist activities of the Feda'iyan which had reached at its height during this time. The firm conviction of the top ranking clergy regarding the apoliticalization of religious leadership and their non-interventionist attitude towards the state exemplified in their strong opposition to the Feda'iyan although the latter itself supported clerical domination.

During the nationalist movement these 'ulama' sometimes directly and sometimes indirectly supported the Shah and his government. The conference of Qomm (1950) contributed considerably in consolidating the position of the government. While the activist 'ulama' issued fatwas in favour of nationalization violating the verdict of 1950's conference, they remained in touch with the Shah and his government. This is evidently clear when the Shah himself admitted the help and support he received from Boroujerdi as he was in frequent contact with Broujerdi to whom 'he had returned to counsel during the years of Mossaddeg, when the

97 Ibid., p. 66.

monarchy itself was feeling winds of change'. Boroujerdi tacitly supported the Shah against the nationalists.

Regarding issuing a fatwa in favour of the nationalization of Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, orthodox clergy split into many groups. Boroujerdi thought that such a matter did not come under the purview of juridical speculations therefore declined to issue one. Another group issued fatwa against the nationalization as it violated the Islamic principle of private property. The group led by another marja'taqilid Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Moussavi Khuvansari opined that such a matter came under the juridical formulation, as it came under the affairs of Muslims and that nothing concerning the affairs of the Muslims is beyond the jurisdiction of fiqh. He, therefore, declared that 'the faithful had no choice but to unite and adhere to the position advanced by Kashani as to nationalization of the AIOC'.


102 Sarosh Irfani; loc. cit.

103 Akhavi, op. cit., p.6.
The brief tenure of Mossaddeq as Prime Minister did not have favourable responses from Boroujerdi as they thought that Qomm did not receive due attention from the government despite being a centre of Shi'i faith. The Boroujerdi faction also criticized Mossaddeq's inclination towards left and increasing influence of leftist forces in the government. They raised the bogey of Islam being in danger and people should "rise to save Islam" and save the country from "going into the hands of the communist".

When Shah returned to power in 1953 with the help of the U.S.A, he improved his relation with Boroujerdi. The latter in a way welcomed the return of the Shah. Although the cautious nature of Boroujerdi restricted him to come out with open support, he was ready to mediate between the Shah and the opposition in order to settle the issue of future role of monarchy in the country. Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammad Behbehani, the close associate and

104 Ibid.,

105 Suroush Irfani, op. cit., p.72. He mentions Ayatollah Sayyed Mahmoud Taleqani as recalling that during the critical days of the Nationalization crisis, a number of pro-Shah clerics gathered at the house of Ayatollah Behbehani and spent the whole night writing forged letters on behalf of the Tudeh party to thousand of clergy men in the country. The general content of these letters ... read "very soon we shall hang you by your turbans on street poles".

106 Ayatollah Sayyed Mohammad Behbehani was the son of Shaykh Abdollah Behbehani who was one of the leading theologian of the Constitutionalist Movement.
spokesman of Boroujerdi was frequently quoted in official press and his visits to holy shrines were several times officially arranged. The cooperation between the Shah and Boroujerdi-Behbehani faction reached its climax during the anti-Baha'i campaign of 1955. The high-handedness adopted by the Shah against the Baha'is was due only to the Shah's policy to win the clergy at the critical juncture, otherwise his personal sympathy towards Baha'is was no secret. When the army demolished the Baha'i centre in Tehran, Behbehani praised the army as 'the army of Islam' (armish-e Islam). Boroujerdi was not lagging behind in congratulating the Shah and the army. Significantly, he termed the anti-Baha'i campaign as the struggle for national independence and the preservation of the position of monarchy.  

107 See Akhavi, op. cit., p. 76 ff.

108 Sharough Akhavi has described the clergy-state relation at this particular time in the following words: Behbehani's allusion to the Iranian military as the army of Islam and Burujirdi's remark about the monarchy and Islam as the basis of Iranian nationalism were hardly fortuitous in the context of clergy-state relations. Burjirdi served notice that he meant to equate the weakening of Islam with the enfeeblement of the country's independence and the power of monarchy. The Shah's reply to Behbehani affirmed the close bonds that the clergy had suggested existed between Shi'ism and Kingship. ibid., p. 78.
During this period a number of 'ulama' were attracted by the growth of the leftist movement in Iran, particularly such organizations which had socialist inclinations. The most prominent among them were Ayatollah Ali Akbar Borqa'i and Shaykh Hossein Lankarani. Borqa'i, among the two, acquired special attention as he was one among the theologians who advocated the causes of women enfranchisement. Lankarani also supported Borqa'i on this issue. Borqa'i's relation with the top ranking hierarchy deteriorated when the followers of the two clashed in Qom during the former's visit to the religious city. He was accused by the top ranking 'ulama' of communism, Baha'ism and 'of harboring an internationalist social ethos'. Another example of 'ulama' having socialist inclination was Osted Mohammad Taqi Shari'ati (d. 1987), the father of Ali Shari'ati who belonged to Hashhad. He was a man of learning and activity as well. He was a graduate from Hawza-ye 'Ilmiyya of Mashhad. He wrote a number of books on Islamic theology, including a commentary on the Qur'an.

109 Ibid., pp. 65-66; Edward Mortmer, *cit.*, p. 313 n mentions that Ayatollah Borqa'i supported the "Soviet Peace Movement".

110 see chapter V.

He adopted progressive approach towards the precepts of Islam and Shi'ism. For an extensive study of Qur'an from a progressive approach he established a Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truth (Kanon-e Nashr-e Haqa'iq-e Islami) in Mashhad. He was also associated with rather a founder member of the secret organization Nehzat-e Khoda Parastan-e Sosialist (Socialist Worshippers of God). He founded this organization along with some other intellectuals like Dr. Yadollah Sahabi and Taher Ahmadvaddeh who campaigned among the students against the regime. The basic objective of the organization was to adopt an Islamic viewpoint in religious matters, while in social and political matters they advocated socialism. Ostad' Taqi shari'ati closely associated himself with Kashani. He stood as a candidate for the parliament in 1952 from Mashhad on the advice of Kashani. He and his organization vigorously campaigned for the nationalist movement of Mosaddeq. Later on,

112 Anon., Zendaginama-ye Sahic Doctor Ali Shari'at, (n.p., n.d.), p.23; An unofficial, but reportedly pro-Khomeini journal, however, says that this organization was founded to counter 'the growing influence of Tudeh Party': see "The Quiet Revolutionary", Afkar-Inquiry (London), vol.IV, No.6 (June,1987), p.25.


114 Ibid.

115 "The Quiet Revolutionary" Inquiry-Afkar (London), vol.4, No.6 (June 1987), p.64.

He joined Ayatollah Motahheri and others in the two reformist organizations during the 1960s. 117

The attitude of top ranking 'ulama' towards such trends was always hostile. Although these societies, organisations and individuals kept a safe distance from communist organizations such as Tudeh Party of Iran ("Peoples Party of Iran"), but the 'ulama' dubbed them as communists. In fact, whosoever presented an anti-clergy inclination was regarded by these 'ulama' as communist. In the words of Akhavi: "there is no simple way of determining what leftism (chapgiri) meant during this period. It could be a code word or a term of opprobrium against anti-clericalism of the Iranian nationalist thinker Ahmed Kasravi. Or alternatively it constituted a convenient ideological term that could be used to tar the socialists, shorn of its ideological connotation. 118

The extreme left was represented by the Tudeh Party. 119

It emerged in early 1940s as a radical leftist organization.

117 He delivered lectures at the Seminary of the "Monthly Religious Society". There are some publications which appeared jointly written by him and other reformist 'ulama'. For example, Hoqeq-e Zan dar Islam (Tehran, n.d.); see also chapter 4.

118 Akhavi, op. cit., pp. 64-65.

Despite of being the real heirs of communist party of Iran, they refrained from calling themselves as communist. Instead they called themselves democrats. They also acquired a nationalist tone, fearing accusation that they are not interested into the nationalist interests of Iran. The Tudeh Party was the most hated by the 'ulama', perhaps as much as the Baha'is. They termed it as "atheist hooliganism". Tudeh Party acquired broad base among the intellectuals after its first national congress he'd in 1944.

However, Ayatollah Sayyed Mahmoud Taleqani (d. 1979) distinguished himself among the theologians having been described as one of the most progressive member of the clergy. Although relatively young, he enjoyed equal respect among all the sections: the intellectuals, the nationalist, the liberals and even among the clerical hierarchy. He had long career of struggle which dated back to the times of Reza Shah. He was born at Karj in Tehran in 1917. He had clerical family background. He received most of his education in Qom under Ayatollah Fa'eri-Yezdi. Tehran

120 Sephr Zabih, The Communist Movement in Iran (Berkeley, 1966), p.73.
121 Kamal H. Karpat., op. cit., p. 385.
122 Akhavi, op. cit., p.65.
123 Sepher Zabih, op. cit., p.30, ff. For a history of the evolution of Tudeh Party; see ibid., chapter 3-4; Ervand Abrahamian Iran Between the Two Revolutions.
124 Suroosh Irfani, op.cit., p.133.
was the centre of his activities both educational and political. He was for the first time arrested in 1939. In the prison he came into contact with some of the ideologists who later formed Tudeh Party in 1941. Taleqani had a long discussion with them, in turn was influenced by their ideas.

Taleqani can be regarded a "radical" shi'i both ideologically and politically. He was one of the first theologians who called for overthrow of monarchy. He collaborated with the nationalist movement of the early 1950s, although he did not sit in the Iranian parliament of 1951. He was among the few clergymen who supported Mossaddeq even when he was bitterly attacked by the entire clergy including Borougerdi and Kashani. To continue his social responsibilities he joined the Nehzat-e Mogavamat-e Milli (National Resistance Movement) and then the National Front. He was arrested a number of times.


127 Suroosh Irfani, op. cit., p. 139.


Ayatollah Taleqani always emphasised the universal appeal of Islam - equality, justice, fraternity, freedom and tolerance in his speeches and declaration. For him the problem of equality of human beings was one of the most important principles of Islam. He said that in Islam the murder of those who do not oppose the faith was as forbidden as the murder of a Muslim. Similarly, freedom was another fundamental principle of Islam for which "man is prepared to give away all he has for it".

Taleqani's ideas are characterized by his strong feelings against threefold tyranny - despotism, imperialism and exploitation. According to him the basic theme of Islam was a struggle against these injustices. He wrote

"What do we want? Is it any thing other than severing the grip of imperialism and effacing exploitation? Are there not the problem with which Islam and the Qur'an deals? Or is it that we do not wish to acknowledge this fact. Either we are not aware of this (that Islam and the Qur'an are against imperialism and exploitation) or we do not want to become aware of this fact. Islam, the Islam we know, the Islam which comments from the Qur'an and the sunna of the Prophets does not restrict freedom. Any group which does not think that despotism, imperialism and exploitation be uprooted has not understood Islam."
He equated unbelief with infidelity and unbelief to the doctrine of Unity of God (tawhid). 134

Taleqani always supported and praised what he termed as "true communism" which was against the three tyrannies of despotism, imperialism and exploitation. It was this attitude of Taleqani that made him acceptable in the leftist and even communist sections of the opposition. 135 However, he strongly criticised "historical materialism" and the communist principle of people's sovereignty. He emphasised the Quranic verse "la'hukm illa' Allah" (No sovereignty except Allah). He made it a slogan that hukumat tanha bary Khuda ast. 136 According to him it was not the problem


135 Once he said: I have witnessed the self-sacrifices of these leftist youths, both inside and outside prison. Their conscience, thought and motive, their inspiration and quest was the same (as that of the Muslims). It was a quest for freedom. Owing to internal and international reason they are drew to left. They have made sacrifice, lost their lives ..., only have not seen any clearly defined and process religion to motivate them and all this superstitious nonsense (about religion) has caused them to be dissatisfied with (finalist) religion.... I respect them from the human angle, not because they belong to a particular ideology, Suroosh Irfani, op. cit., p. 144.

of Islam versus communism, but Islam versus historical materialism. Because, he said:

'The problem of communism is separated from the unscientific problem of materialism in terms of its true and authentic linguistic meaning. Communism, that is communal family life, has been founded by Islam. That's the way it was during the early days of the Islamic society founded by the Prophet. The life of the Prophet and his companions, and the muhajirin (those who migrated from Mecca to Medina) and the ansars (residents of Medina) was like this. However, this does exclude historical materialism and the primacy of matter. We must separate the two (i.e., communal way of living based on brotherhood and equality, from historical materialism)'.

He criticized the Marxist economic theory but supported the principle; "from each according to his abilities to each according to his needs". According to him communism as a revolutionary force emerges where there is political or religious dictatorship. In any country where there exists despotism, exploitation, dictatorship and when a distorted version of religions is supporting the despotism communism would develop by itself.

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137 Suroush Irfani, op. cit., pp. 144-45.
140 Suroush Irfani, op. cit., p. 144.
describes 'ulama' support to despotic regime of the Shah as a natural cause of the emergence of communism, he seems ready to assimilate the positive points of communism or socialism.\textsuperscript{141}

A high point of 'ulama's discomfort was the land reforms introduced by the Shah and his government in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The 'ulama' showed a mixed reaction to these reforms from outright rejection to cautious approval. The strongest opposition came from the conservative clergy of Boroujerdi - Behbehani coalition. This drastically deteriorated the so far good relation existing between them and the Shah.\textsuperscript{142} Boroujerdi criticized the reform on the basis that they violated the religious law of private ownership. He wrote a long letter to Behbehani in which he emphasised the point that the reforms were against Islam.\textsuperscript{143}

\textsuperscript{141} Edward Mortimer, op. cit., p. 333; For more on Taleqanis ideas see chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{142} B.A. Bayne, op. cit., p.48;

\textsuperscript{143} 'I beg to inform your Eminence that when sometime ago rumours were heard concerning the restriction of ownership (of land) by way of advice and discharge of my duty, I verbally pointed out to His Excellency the Prime Minister the incompatibility of this with the laws of the sacred religion of Islam. The answers I received were not convincing, and at this moment I am receiving numerous letters from various persons and bodies in many towns asking this humble person's views. Since it is improper to hide the divine laws, I have no choice but to answer the people's questions. Although everytime I have pointed out something to the authorities it was evident to them that I had been motivated solely by the desire to preserve the religious laws and the interests of the state, I am surprised that in this matter there is every evidence of haste in approving the Bill without deliberation and study and in the absence of His Imperial Majesty. I entreat Your Eminence to inform the two houses of parliament in any manner you consider appropriate to refrain from opposing (the Bill). I pray to God Almighty for the betterment of the affairs of the Muslims. Cited in William M. Floor, "The Revolutionary Character of the Iranian ulama: Wishful Thinking or Reality?", International Journal of Middle East Studies, vol.XII, No.4 (1980), p. 504.
Behbehani echoed the same views that the land reform bill was "opposed to the teachings and basics of the sacred religion" which states that "no owner may be dispossessed of his property except for a legitimate reason". Both Boroujerdi and Behbehani launched a campaign against the bill. They were soon joined by the top ranking mujtahids like Ayatollahs Golpaygani Khvansari, Mohsin Hakim, and Mar'ashi-Najafi. Ayatollah Khvansari in a speech said:

The purpose of this gathering is to respond to cables and letters from Tehran and other parts of the country requesting that the attention of the government be drawn to the protection of the laws and the sacred teachings of Islam. It is therefore, a source of regret that persons who by virtue of religion held office in this land should pass decrees changing the teaching of Islam and undermining it under the guise of land reforms. I hereby declare my views on the dispossession of people. It is a capital sin to dispossess people of their property through forcible seizure of decrees; the dire consequences of such action will not be confined to the individual, but will affect the general public. I further proclaim that no prayers or ablution held on such lands will be acceptable.

As mentioned above the clergy showed a mixed reaction to the land reform law ranging from strong condemnation to the praised approval while the top-ranking marja'yyat led by Boroujerdi and

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Behbehani strongly opposed it as against the laws of shari'at. The supporters came mainly from the lower strata of clergy in rural areas. A sympathetic response was made by the second ranking clergy such as Ayatollah Sayyed Acharafi Kazem shariatmadari who is reported to have approved "the redistribution of waqf lands to the peasants". According to him if the dead lands are reclaimed they can easily be given to the reclaimant according to the shari'a laws. He said that landlords should be allowed to possess only those lands which they are cultivating and developing. He quoted the relevant verses in support of the view that only those who develop the land for their use should be entitled to hold it. He not only criticized the land tenure system of Iran but every system of ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

Taleqani, however, adopted "radical" attitude towards the land reform. He criticized the small minority that held most of the lands. He condemned "politician-landlord" nexus that

146 Akhavi, op. cit., p. 93.
148 Ibid., pp. 93-94.
149 Ibid., pp. 93.
150 For Taleqani's views on ownership see "Nazr-e Islam darbara ye Malekiyat" in Goftar-e Mah, vol. III pp. 46-68.
had "plundered the land of imam". He called for a just distribution of land of God. He criticised those who offered the Tradition "Al-nas musallitun 'ala amwalihim" (people have sovereignty over their own wealth) as a legal shield to defend their large land holdings and maintained that the dead lands (mawat) which consisted a large part of the Iranian land should be taken away from the landlords and re-distributed among the landless. As Sharough Akhavi writes, apart from the consideration of religious sanction to private property acceded by Islam, \(^{15}\)

\(^{15}\)The opposition of the religious classes (to the land reform bill of December 1959), writes Lambton, was probably due not only, or even mainly, to obscurantism and reaction but rather to an instinctive feeling that the whittling away in the field by the temporal government (which during the occultation of the hidden imam is in the eyes of the orthodox unrighteous) of personal rights guaranteed by the time law and the Constitution is likely to weaken the position all along the time. The tendency of the religion class is to acquiesce in the exercise of arbitrary power by the temporal government; very occasionally they were provoked to make a fleeting protest. AKS Lambton, "Persia Today", The World Today, vol. XVII, No.2 (February, 1961), p.82; cited in Akhavi, op. cit., p. 222n.
Clergy's personal belonging of land was the most important factor of their opposition to land reform law. They possessed large tracts of lands. In many cases they belonged to the landlord families. From the Safavid time they were among the largest landowners in Iran. Besides, the personal properties, they held and controlled awqaf properties which they administered as mutavallis. They utilized the income to run mosques, madrasas and other charitable schemes. The land reform law was going to hit the interests of all these people.

152 Cf. Akhavi, op. cit., pp. 96-97, mentioned data published in 1946 in which the landowners of the city of Isfahan is given profession-wise. Out of thirty-three big land owning families fifteen were clergy.

153 E.A. Bayne, op. cit., pp. 48-49.