

Organisation: Part one

Introduction:

The third shared component of all cults is the organisation. For small cults the organisation can be as simple as the relationship between the members and the leader of the cult. Robin Dumber suggests that *'When the group acquires around 150 members. At this size, orders can be implemented and unruly behaviour controlled on the basis of personal loyalties and direct man to man contacts. With larger groups, this becomes impossible.'*ⁱ *'At This point a formal management hierarchy must be put in place, or the group will split into competing subgroups, losing overall cohesion.'*ⁱⁱ

As cults grow and change into more totalistic, absolute and destructive cults, before they reach the crucial 150members, and perhaps even at the beginning of recruitment, their form of organisation will change. Initially a circle with the leader at the centre, it will change into a pyramid-like structure, with the leader at the top and a quantitative distance and sharp boundaries between different layers. This separation of members within cults is always explained in ideological terms, while the truth of the matter is that 'rank' and separating members into different organisational circles is not a sign of anything but the degree of loyalty and obedience of each member towards the cult leader, plus how effective and beneficial he or she is in the daily running of the cult. Therefore the combination of loyalty, obedience and usefulness of a person, determines in which organisational layer a person should belong within this pyramid structure.

Although the distances between different level are quantitative, which means through hard work and a show of loyalty towards the leader, members can move toward the upper layer, they must also show some sort of qualitative change in themselves to be worthy of this move. Still the distance between the layer closest to the leader and the leader themselves is purely qualitative and cannot be crossed by any member of a lower layer unless through nomination by the leader (for example to be appointed as co-leader or successor of the leader) or through some sort of coup in the absence of the leader.

This structure is also totalistic which can be defined as: *'a socio-cultural system that places high valuation on total control over all aspects of the outer and inner lives of participants for the purpose of achieving the goals of an ideology defined as all important.'*ⁱⁱⁱ The totalistic nature of destructive cults implies that there cannot be any kind of democracy or liberty within them, as it has been pointed out by Margaret Singer in 'Cults in our Midst': *'Without the citizenry being aware of the power and control certain cults are wielding, democracy and freedom can be curbed one step at a time. Cults by their very structure and nature are not democratic, do not promote freedom of speech and freedom of expression, and are the antithesis of structures in which full human growth can develop.'*^{iv}

The rise and fall of each member from one layer to another, is decided by their superior and usually by the leader himself. Therefore members in a lower layer have no say in the rise of a person in a higher level than themselves. Members of each layer are only answerable to their superior in a higher level and although sometimes (due to decision and encouragement of the leader for the special purpose such as breaking specialties and affection between members and especially between members belonging to different layers) they might be able to criticise their superior, usually criticism is limited to members of their rank and lower ones. Therefore there is no check and balance for the leader within cults.

Characteristics of a cult's organisation:

Totalistic organisations within destructive cults have all the common characteristics mentioned below. They force members to change their habits, their relationships with the outside world, and eventually their relationships with their immediate family and friends and even with themselves. These common factors are:

- 1- The totalistic nature of the pyramid structure of the group and absolutism of the leader.
- 2- Independence from the wider society; change of the group into an independent country or even a small world within the wider society.
- 3- Secrecy, surveillance, phobia and paranoia toward the outside world.
- 4- No personal relationships within the organisation (no private circle or gathering or even personal and private meetings within the organisation).
- 5- Closed exit doors. Membership for life. Defectors are traitors worthy of death.

Before explaining the above characteristics in detail, I have to describe MeK's form of organisation, as I am using MeK as an example to show these characteristics in action. I feel that MEK is more complex than any other cults that I have read about, and also their form of organisation is important as many Marxist cults claim that they have the same form of organisation, namely Democratic Centralism. Also I would like to show that this form of organisation eventually paves the way for any group (even if they are not a cult at the beginning) to be a dictatorship and cultic form of organisation.

When it formed, MEK claimed that its form of organisation was based on 'scientific experience of Marxist revolutionary groups', namely 'Democratic Centralism'. Since the absolute leadership of Rajavi no element of democracy has been left within their organisation, however one can still describe their organisation as based on their definition of Democratic Centralism, described below.

Democratic Centralism:

Democratic Centralism is the kind of organisation mostly associated with Marxist-Leninist ideologies, including many Trotskyist organisations, as it has been explained by Dr. Dennis Tourish in his article, 'Ideological intransigence, democratic centralism and cultism: a case study from the political left'. This type of organisation, which has at its heart an axiom of 'Vanguard' as later can be seen, has all the components needed for a change of a semi-democratic organisation into a totalist or dictatorial one and in many cases altering it into a destructive cult. Tourish notes:

'A central tenet of Trotskyist politics is its insistence that a 'vanguard party' is required to guide the working class to power^v. This is conceived as an organization of professional revolutionaries, steeped in Marxist ideology, tightly organised and determined to win the leadership of the working class. The idea was most forcefully advanced by Lenin at the turn of the century^{vi}, and justified by reference to the particular needs of a revolutionary movement operating under an autocratic regime^{vii}. As Milliband^{viii} has pointed out, this was a departure (Leninists would describe it as an extension) from the original ideas of Marx, who was much more inclined to argue that the task of liberating the working class was the task of the working class itself. Ironically, Trotsky himself initially resisted Lenin's views^x. He argued that a vanguard party would inevitably seek to substitute its own activity and insights for the activity of the working class. Within the party, meanwhile: "...the party organization (the caucus) at first substitutes itself for the party as a whole; then the Central Committee substitutes itself for the organization; and finally a single 'dictator' substitutes himself for the Central Committee." However, during 1917 he finally accepted the Bolshevik model of organization, and defended it with increasing insistence until his assassination in 1940^x. In the last year of his life he wrote that "...in order to realise the revolutionary goal a firmly welded centralised party is indispensable^{ixi}. From the perspective of this discussion a number of important consequences

follow. Firstly, the notion of a vanguard party inherently predisposes its adherents to view themselves as the pivot on which world history is destined to turn. Revolution is seen as the only route by which humanity can avoid annihilation, but revolution is only possible if a mass party is built around a group of 'cadres': that is, devotees of the party with a particularly deep insight into its ideology. Thus, Trotskyists are possessed of a tremendous sense of urgency and a powerful conviction of their group's unique role in bringing about the transformation of the world: what could be described as delusions of historical grandeur^{xii}.

MeK example of Democratic Centralism;

Although MEK's ideology was a mixture of Islam and Marxism, they still considered themselves among left organisations and were even claiming that they were 'left' of all Marxist organisations. As they accepted part of Marxist-Leninist ideology as scientific, they accepted the democratic centralism as the 'scientific' shape of the organisation for their ideology. In a little book titled 'Barressi Amkan Enheraf Markaziat democratic va tafavoot shake elmii va gheer elmii dar amr a taskilat' (Examination of possibilities of deviation of democratic centralism or the difference between scientific doubt and unscientific doubt within the organisation) MeK drew the shape of their organisation and claimed that shape was the way the organisation was run until at least 1985 when they completed their transformation into a cult and forgot all about their 'scientific' shape of the organisation.

Although in 1985 officially and openly, MeK announced the Rajavis as 'ideological leaders of the organisation, not answerable to anybody but God'^{xiii} (as it was described by Abrishamchii in his speech entitled 'Ideological Revolution') their form of organisation, apart from the 'democracy' part, was still closest to anything but their original form described in the above mentioned book.

In this part I would like to show how and why democratic centralism and a belief in vanguard can facilitate the transformation of any organisation into a cult. In other words I want to argue that this system of the organisation is not stable and that in the heart of it is a kind of contradiction between 'democracy' and 'centralism' which eventually will end with 'democracy' vanishing, leaving just its name in the title and the organisation changing into some sort of dictatorship. In the above mentioned little book of MeK, which was a very important one, MeK outlined 7 axioms or principles of their organisation based on democratic centralism, as below. I have to remind you, although many cults have perhaps not theorised their kind of organisation as MeK has done, if you look at them closely you can see the majority of these so called axioms observed in their organisations in one shape or another.

1- Oneness or unity between a person and his responsibility:

This is the first principle of MEK's organisation. It means that there must be a correct relationship between the merit, qualification and competence of a person and his responsibility^{xiv}. The book then explains that within MEK's ideology a 'responsibility' is not a military rank, or a degree to be proud of, *'but precisely according to our definition of a human being* (I.e. Man is defined as a responsible creature), *it is a symbol and part of being a human.*'{Page 20} Whoever reads these lines would think that what they mean by merit and competence or in Persian 'Salahiat', is the expertise of a person in a certain field of job. However in ideological systems what is more important than anything else is ideological merit rather than expertise, but in reality what works is the opposite, that is the expertise works not the ideological merit. This contradiction within 'totalist' and 'ideological' organisations will eventually be solved to the benefit of the Ideology rather than expertise.

MeK leaders were always insisting that what they meant by merit was an ideological one and not expertise. And when they completed their transformation into a cult, the yardstick for measuring the ideological merit of a person, changed into 'oneness with the leader' or loyalty, love, obedience and self-surrounding of a person to the leader. Therefore suddenly ranks of all members and their responsibilities changed in a matter of days accordingly. Abrishamchii in 'Importance of Ideology' explains: *'A rebel is a person who is rebelling against existing order without knowing what he wants instead; while a revolutionary is a person who knows what he wants and knows the direction that the revolution should take. ... A revolution without ideology never will succeed; without ideology there is no {united} will that we can lean on to succeed.'*^{xv} In 'Importance of Ideology' Rajavi also explains: *'without a revolutionary ideology, we cannot have a revolutionary movement. I have to repeat; without a revolutionary ideology, we cannot have a revolutionary movement; without a revolutionary ideology, we cannot have a revolutionary organisation; and without revolutionary ideology we cannot make a revolutionary person.'*^{xvi} In 1983 Rajavi was talking with MSS (Muslim student societies; supporters of MeK) representatives and told them that the only measure for membership of MeK and ranks within the organisation is the ideological merit of a person^{xvii}. Later Abrishamchii and Maryam Rajavi both made it clear what ideology means and that whatever Rajavi does and says is the ideology of MeK^{xviii}. Therefore rank and responsibility within MeK means how far a person has surrendered themselves to Rajavi's words and actions. (This is the same yardstick used in all destructive cuts. Closeness of one to the leader determines their place within the organisation.)

Having an ideology, a doctrine or a religion cannot by itself change an organisation into a dictatorial one, but when a person or a group of people take a monopoly of that idea and claim they know more than anybody else, and that they are right and others are wrong, then it becomes dangerous. It stops others from interpreting it differently, and criticising, questioning or challenging the leader's interpretation, and this is the beginning of an organisation changing into a dictatorial one or an extreme, destructive cult.

After the MEK's 'ideological revolution' Abrishamchii first lieutenant of Rajavi explains: *'yes there is only one God; and this is the first and most important principle of our ideology, but in the daily life of each person, what is important is to know what is the effect of believing in one God. Let me be brief; when a person recognises the leader of the revolution and places him in his position, and when he realizes that there is no need he or she involves himself or herself in the contradictions that should be resolved by the leadership, then his or her entrance into discussing ideological matters will stabilise and he involves himself in the matters matched by his or her merit and not more. Such a person never puts himself or herself in understanding the ideology above the leader. Instead in understanding the ideology, he or she will get assistance from the leader. Why? Because if a person thinks he or she can examine and judge the ideological view point of the leader; then perhaps he or she has seen himself or herself in the position of the leader and perhaps we have to follow him instead. Therefore a person's mind should get help and follow the leader on the issues of ideology and as a result, he or she has more time and opportunity to face his or her responsibility according to his or her merit.'*^{xix} One can understand the significance of these words when they understand the significance of 'ideology' within organisations or cults that claim to be vanguard of some kind of ideology. As almost all of them eventually claim that whatever they do and decide, is according to their ideology or in other words their actions, words or orders are 'ideological decisions' and therefore the leader should have final and in most cases 'the only' say on all matters. Again Abrishamchii in the same speech about Ideological revolution within MeK explains: *'Ideological issue is issue of existence of a*

revolutionary organisation. It is the issue of to be or not to be. If for those who believe in God, issue of God is everything and it is issue of existence; for a revolutionary organisation issue of ideology is everything and is issue of existence.^{xxx}

When one cannot question a leader or as MeK calls them, an 'ideological leader', the immediate result is that there is no 'Check and Balance' for the leadership. He or she is not conditioned or answerable to those below, and above them there is not a physical body but 'spiritual entities' such as 'God', 'Country,' or 'Humanity'; ... Again Abrishamchii explains: *'As it was mentioned in the political bureau communiqué, all those below the ideological leader are conditioned to their immediate masoul (superior or person in charge). But Masoud Rajavi, at the top of the organisation, is conditioned to whom or answerable to whom? Nobody; only to 'Revolution'; Ideologically he has no superior but God. Everybody in the organisation has a superior and is conditioned to their superior but at the top of the organisation, this is not the case. Maryam as co-leader has no superior but God, as well as Masoud Rajavi. As people in charge, these two have to sort out their problems, leaning on their thought and ideology.*^{xxxi} As one can see with this principle in place, the leader can play God; whoever asks a question or shows doubt, is challenging not only the leader but the ideology and eventually the 'revolution', 'God', 'people' and whoever else that the leader talks on behalf of. Think, talk and act according to your merit and ability; when the merit and ability of a person is measured and determined by the leadership, who claims he or she is the most ideological person within the organisation or even the world, it means that everybody else has to be silent and obey without any question. Not following this principle, means you are traitor to the 'revolution', 'people', 'country', 'humanity', and 'God' and perhaps worthy of 'death'.

- 2- Democratic Centralism;** in this axiom or principle they outlined the difference between this system of organisation and a totalitarian one. And the difference with a liberal organisation.

In the book it has been explained: 'decision making within a revolutionary organisation is opposite to reactionary systems; which usually the leader decides on his own and orders and there is no relationship between his merit and his position. In a revolutionary organisation, most able {according to their ideological merit} members are in the sensitive position of the leadership. Existence of the term of 'democracy' within this system is the sign of the role and part that ordinary members play in the totality of the direction which the organisation takes. It implies that from one hand members have an organic relationship (through organisational relationships) with the leadership and central committee, therefore eventually will be shared in the important decision making of the organisation, (which in first place passes through members with enough merit and eventually everybody who can have a view on that decision); and on the other hand they inform the leadership from what is going on in the society.' (P: 23)

There is an obvious contradiction even in the name of this type of the organisation; the contradiction between centralism and democracy. Centralism has a habit of making and dictating decisions but democracy is the sign of all members sharing in decision making, including choosing the leader of the group. This contradiction, as we saw above, was rightly predicted by Trotsky. He predicted that eventually centralism would succeed and the organisation would change into a totalist or a dictatorial one. The key to this transformation is that the element of democracy is conditioned to the element of centralism and not vice versa. It means (according to the first principle), that the merit of a person is more important than their vote as an ordinary member, therefore positioning people in different ranks is by

nomination from top to bottom and not vice versa. Secondly deciding who and how much one should share in decision making or even who can express their opinion and knowledge, is up to the leaders, and not decided through democratic procedures. Therefore democracy within this type of the organisation eventually will lose all its meaning and will change into a show of hands simply for propaganda purposes. And if the leadership doesn't change into a 'one-man show', eventually it will change into some sort of oligarchy or 'gentlemen's club' of old members who perhaps came first or through different means could take power as it happened in Soviet Union and many Marxist organisations^{xxii}.

Dr. Dennis Tourish, in the above mentioned paper, has explained the transformation of CWI (a Trotskyist organisation) into a cult. The same thing happened for DWP and is explained by Siegel et al. in: 'Leninism as cult: the Democratic Workers Party, *Socialist Review*'^{xxiii}. Alexandra Stein in her book titled 'Inside Out'^{xxiv} tells us almost the same story, of a Marxist organisation that changed into a cult. Carol Giambalvo an ex-member of WDU as we saw in pervious articles has given us her story about WDU, another 'Marxist organisation' that changed into a cult.

Even Democratic Centralism, as it was defined within Marxist organisations, with all its shortcomings never took shape within MeK. Professor Abrahamian explains: *'The Mujahidin stressed the importance of obedience, discipline, and hierarchy; not of free expression, open discussion, and internal elections. Although the Mujahidin liked to use the term 'democratic centralism', it did not seem to realize that Lenin, who coined the term, had tried to design a party structure that would have internal democracy as well as central authority. For Lenin and Bolsheviks, democratic centralism had meant not only discipline and commitment, but also regular confessions, open debates, and genuine elections. But for the Mujahidin, the same term meant simply obedience to the central leader who in some mysterious way would embody the members general will. Of course, the catch-22 of this formula was that to be a proper member you had first to accept the undisputed authority of the leader. In short, the Mujahidin had metamorphosed from a mass movement into an inward looking sect in many ways similar to religious cults found the world over.'*^{xxv}

Within MeK though, from the beginning they claimed to have some sort of democratic structures, however as long as Hanif Nejad was alive he had the final say in all crucial matters and after 1975, when the organisation came out of Marxist split (or as MeK calls it the 'Opportunistic coup'), Masoud Rajavi became sole leader, brain and will of the organisation.

Between 1975 and 1985, although many of the old members claim 'Masoud Rajavi' was the mind, soul and mastermind of the organisation, for recruitment and propaganda purposes they still used to claim that the organisation was run by a group of people, members of 'political bureau,' who were elected by the 'Central committee'.

As a supporter then I was of the impression that people like Mussa Khiabani or Ali Zarkesh and Abrishamchii ... were on an almost equal level to Rajavi and that they, along with other members of the 'political bureau,' which was an elected entity, made crucial decisions of the organisation. Then, after 1981, gradually through the words of people like Khiabani, Abrishamchii and many other old members of the 'political bureau,' we supporters and perhaps lower ranking members faced the reality that for all these years the organisation has been one man show. Abrishamchii in the same speech points out that even simple communiqués of the organisation for distributions had to be approved and even written by Rajavi himself. He says: '{Between 1979 and 1981, when the organisation was a popular and

open one} *every day's morning Militias* {Young activists of the organisation, mostly school students, who used to sell and distribute MEK's communiqué and publications.} *had to distribute {organisation's} publications and communiqués . Word by words of these publications had to be precise, and in most cases, Masoud had to teach us and do everything himself. Sometimes I could cry to see him in that situation, as he recently was freed from the prison and was not well, he had to sit on a chair and say a sentence every five minutes.*^{xxxvi}

In 1979 to prepare 'supporters' to accept Rajavi as absolute or 'ideological' leader they named him as the spokesperson of the organisation, then in 1981, they introduced him as the 'Masoud aval' or first person in charge. And eventually in 1985 they named him as the 'ideological leader' and they left all their shy away calling him equal to 'sun', 'Iran', 'people', ... Abrishamchii in the same speech points out: *'Yes we don't have matchstick equality. When we claim Masoud and Maryam are having the highest ideological merits, it doesn't mean that Ali Zarkesh (Then the second in command) is less a person. It doesn't reduce the value of political bureau. On the contrary, it gives them more weight. I will ask those who give rubbish slogans about democratic relations, why shouldn't I know who has highest Ideological merit within the organisation?'*^{xxxvii} Then he explains who Masoud is: *'Who Masoud is? He is the one who wrote the ideological road map of the organisation. His thought brightened our direction. His thought is demonstration or illustration of our ideology. ... from the next day of martyrdom of Hanif-Nejad, ideological flag of the organisation has been in the hand of Masoud.'*^{xxxviii} As no one can question or challenge the leader, the organisation cannot have 'opposition', 'defectors', or 'factions' but only 'traitors'. Abrishamchii explains this: *'With solving the problem of Ideological leader we have put a stop on all influences of foreign forces and agents. Therefore no one can faction the organisation and capitalize on factions within the organisation.'*^{xxxix}

Conditions for democracy:

Apart from the already mentioned problem, 'revolutionary organisations', 'Marxist-Leninist groups' and 'cults' have a fundamental problem in establishing any kind of democracy within their organisations. Democracy within any society or group can be born, remain, grow and flourish within fertile ground, otherwise even if it has been given to that society or group through some sort of magic or forced by an external force, it cannot survive and flourish, and sooner or later will die out and will change into some sort of oligarchy of elites and eventually into a more complex form of dictatorship. Fertile ground for the survival, growth and flourishing of a democracy needs the majority of people or in the case of groups, the majority of members to have at least four qualities:

- They should have a certain **level of education, understanding and knowledge**; in the case of a society the majority of people must be literate, and in the case of groups people's political and ideological understanding must be sufficient enough to minimise the distance between the knowledge of the elite of the organisation and ordinary members. In the most totalitarian systems, tyrants try very hard to control the flow of information to keep the level of knowledge of the majority of people to a bare minimum. When illiteracy is at its highest and the existence and availability of information is at its lowest, a dictatorship can take control easily. Within cults, revolutionary and Marxist organisations, usually the flow of information from outside is limited and sooner or later the understanding of the doctrine of the cult becomes monopolised by the elite of the organisation.

- They should have a certain level of wealth in the case of a society, and some sort of **self sufficiency or financial security and independence** in the case of membership of a group. The overall majority of people must be well above the bread line, be able to think, to learn, to recognize their rights and to want more and struggle for more, and in the case of groups, they should not be dependent on leaders for their essentials and they should have enough free time to be able to think and have a view about the running of the group. In third world countries like Africa and many Asian countries, poverty is the main enemy of democracy, as the majority of people have to spend all their time ensuring they are able to feed themselves and their family, therefore there is no more time to educate themselves and to think. In oil rich countries, or countries where the economy is based on a single or limited number of commodities, they face a different problem. Although most people might be well above the breadline, and in many smaller countries the majority can even be called 'rich', people are still dependent on oil money (or that single commodity) and that money is in the hands of the rulers who distribute it among people as they want; therefore governments can dictate their wishes accordingly. In those countries, the army and even the parliament if it exists, are not dependent on people and their votes, but the money which is in the hand of the government; therefore sooner or later they will change into tools of government rather than tools of democracy.

Within organisations and cults, leaders will first strip members of any kind of financial self-sufficiency, they will force them to surrender their wealth to the group and leave any kind of job that they might have. Secondly they will produce enough work for all ordinary members so they have no time for anything else except the minimum time for the essentials of survival. Within MeK there was a saying that a Mojahed should work so hard that when he closes his eyes he will go immediately into a death-like sleep. Later we will see that hard work in all totalitarian organisations is an essential ingredient to stop the gaining of knowledge and information by members, except what is given to them by the leader; it also stops the rise of any question, criticism or challenge from below.

- They should have **certain levels of Individuality, self-confidence and self- esteem,** to realise their rights and fight for the materialization of those rights. Lack of or weakness of individuality is one of the obstacles in front of democracy. One of the reasons why we rarely witness any democratic revolution within Eastern cultures is a lack of or weakness of individuality. As a matter of fact in many eastern languages there is no word for positive individuality; the words that exist within these cultures meaning 'individuality,' most often have a negative suffix or prefix meaning, such as: egoism, selfishness, or arrogance. In cults; members are invited to seek freedom and liberty in 'not wanting' and 'not desiring'. Respect for collective self, instead of individuality is educated through literature, poems and popular idioms. Within revolutionary and Marxist organisations and cults the first lesson is sacrifice of self for the progress of aims and objectives of the group and materialization of the doctrine. Therefore any kind of individuality and demand for self rights, under the banner of 'selfishness', is vehemently suppressed. With loss of individuality or its weakness, people/members cannot realise their right for electing and monitoring actions of the government or leaders.
- There should be a real choice and alternative fundamentally different from the ruling party or group in power. In the society, either the governing elite don't let any alternative take shape, or if it does, they try to create their own alternative and

through laws, media, and financial means, they stop the message of real alternatives reaching the ordinary people. In most Western democracies this is the way that the elite of society stop the democracy working as it should. They either stop the real alternative taking shape or through monopolization of the media or use of other means, they stop people from recognising the real alternative and force them to choose between parties that are almost the same, (protector of the elite of the society) or at most to choose between 'bad and worse'. As a result as we can see in almost all Western democracies, the majority of people, as they don't see any real difference between existing alternatives, are passive in elections and at most forty per cent of them bother to vote. In organisations, and cults, as we saw above, leaders have a monopoly of ideological merit and will not let any alternative or faction take shape. In certain situations the leadership becomes weaker than being able to stop any alternative taking shape; usually the existence of any alternative will result in splits of the group into two and more.

- 3- Criticism and self-criticism;** in the book it has been explained: *'as any revolutionary organisation is part of a wider society, in active daily relation with the society and different classes of the people, therefore social differences and contradictions that exist in the society will show themselves within the organisation. As long as class and exploitation systems exist in the society, existence of contradiction and duality within the organization is unavoidable. ... Therefore the ideological struggle within the organisation, parallel to our social struggle is necessary and unavoidable. This struggle will take shape through a principle of 'Criticism and self-Criticism'. Criticisms are either organisational or personal (PP: 27,28).'* Then we read about conditions for criticism, which make it almost impossible for lower ranks to freely criticise the higher ones; on page 30 it is written: *'It is obvious that first condition for criticism and self criticism is to have the Ideological merit {necessary for judging or criticising} and enough awareness towards the issues of criticism. Therefore to avoid formalistic and mechanical kind of criticism (which are not productive and are forced upon people and could not last), critics need to have appropriate qualities. ... Qualities that can be obtained through ideological work within the organisation.'* As one can see again criticism is conditioned to the ideological merit of a person who wants to criticise. And who has these merits or is the judge of existence of such ideological merits? Of course the leadership, who are there because of their ideological merits, and if someone else think they have such merits, they should be the leader or in the leadership council, but they are not!

Lenin has explained this principle as: *'The principle of democratic centralism and autonomy for local party organizations implies universal and full freedom to criticise, so long as this does not disturb the unity of a defined action; it rules out all criticism which disrupts or makes difficult unity of action decided upon by the party'*^{xxx}. Again Dr. Dennis Tourish in his paper^{xxx} argues: *'Given what is now known of social influence this approach is almost certainly destined to prevent genuine internal discussion. Firstly, it is not at all clear when 'full freedom to criticise' can actually be said to disturb the unity of a defined action. The norms of democratic centralism confer all power between conferences onto a central committee, allowing it to become the arbiter of when a dissident viewpoint is in danger of creating such a disturbance, normally presumed to be lethal. The evidence suggests that they are strongly minded to view any dissent as precisely such a disruption, and respond by demanding that the dissident ceases their action on pain of expulsion from the party.'* Apart from condition of merit mentioned in MEK's book and what was mentioned above by Dr. Tourish by claiming that they have a strong enemy waiting to crush them, the leadership of such groups can enforce the policy of absolute secrecy within the group. Therefore they can

monopolise the information (or at least essential information), and they can stop ordinary members from criticising, questioning or suggesting any new ideas, under the banner that they don't have all essential information to say what they want to say.

As we saw the main reason for existence of this principle within MeK was because of the existence of contradictions that exist within society based on class and exploitation. Abrishamchii explains: *'obviously, whoever becomes a supporter or member of the organisation, his or her self-confidences based on his or her class-individuality will be criticised. Because he or she has been a successful manager of a factory, a brilliant student of a school or a university, a successful athlete or an artist, none of these are a reason for him or her to have self-confidence within MeK. He or she cannot rely on these merits or achievements, however positive and beneficial they might be. Because all of them are based on individual abilities. When he or she joins {the organisation}, collective self must replace his or her individuality and he or she must find new self-confidence through collective work. Up to that day {joining the organisation} we could appreciate ourselves, we could look at a mirror and enjoy seeing ourselves, thinking how important we are. But now {after joining} the mirror will change into criticism's meetings. We are as good as according to the ideological measures. In these meetings they will appreciate or criticise members according to these measures and how much readiness one shows in changing himself or herself.'*^{xxxii}

In the same speech, to show why ordinary members cannot criticise the leader Abrishamchii explains: *'Now when someone accepts to be judged {by the organisation}, he will ask himself or herself, "what have I done for the people and the revolution?" "Why should I question Masoud {Rajavi}?" ... After all, the one who wants to judge Masoud {Rajavi}, don't dare to compromise with himself. He or she will start asking questions of himself, "who am I to criticise Masoud?", "what have I done for the revolution?" "What have I sacrificed for the people?"... Through this self criticism, one will see all his or her short comings. Have you heard the story of Jesus? They say when people wanted to stone a criminal, he told people, let us think, whoever thinks he is not criminal of this fault, should throw the first stone. All threw their stones away and left the scene. ... When we start struggling with ourselves, though we have been ready to sacrifice everything, we were prepared to become martyr, and suffer torture; still we cannot Judge Masoud and Maryam {Rajavi}; Why? Because we know whatever we have done or have been prepared to do, they have done more than that and in a higher level, and they have sacrificed great things difficult for us to understand or imagine.'*^{xxxiii} As one can see not only conditions such as 'ideological merit', 'knowledge and information' which are monopolised by higher ranking members or the leader himself will put a stop to criticism of above by below. Abrishamchii introduces a new condition as well; 'sacrifice.' Who in MeK or any cult dares to claim that he or she has sacrificed more than the leader or even more than his or her superior? With this kind of argument not only is it the case that one doesn't dare to question, doubt or criticise the leader of the organisation, but with the same kind of argument, one cannot question or criticise their superior. Unless it is the desire of the leader to get rid of a rival, as, for example we once had a session in which we were encouraged to criticise and even humiliate a high ranking lieutenant because Rajavi wanted it so. Similarly there were many lower ranking members who were critical of high official members of China's communist party during the 'cultural revolution' of Mao, when Mao wanted to get rid of rivalry or punish some high officials.

- 4- **Ironic Discipline:** this principle has been explained as: *'Ironic Discipline is the sign of the highest knowledge and 'Hal-shoodagi' (melting of a member in the organisational principles) of a member. If one accepts Ideology and strategy and ... principles of an organisation, then*

he or she should accept the shape of that organisation as well. Undisciplined action by a person is a sign of giving a priority to personal interest over the organisational interest. While Ironic discipline is a sign of deep melting of a person's personality within the organisation and it is sign of his total understanding of the organisation's ideology. ^{xxxiv}

I think the magic of these words is in just one word; in Persian 'Hal-shoodagi' melting.. It can be defined as understanding, coordinating, accepting, or believing, but the real meaning is what melting means. Melting as when salt and sugar lose their identity, their white colour, their solidness, and their independence and when they cannot be separated from water easily. In an organisation it means total loyalty and obedience from deep inside your mind and heart. Although political groups organised within a democratic centralism system still have to go some distance to change into a cult, one can see that when all elements of mind control are in place, what is needed is a charismatic leader to use all these elements and complete the transformation of the group into a cult^{xxxv}. Equalling Ironic discipline or more bluntly 'total obedience' with total understanding of ideological and organisational principles, means that whoever who doesn't obey an order can be accused of having less ideological merit and understanding. They would not be considered worthy of their rank and therefore the leaders would have the best excuse for getting rid of noisy and questioning members. As a result those who ask less and obey more, have a weak personality, who accept anything without question and doubt, who easily surrender themselves and their personality, who flatter more, and eventually those who worship the leader can claim they have the highest degree of ideological virtue and are worthy of the highest rank and position within the organisation.

- 5- **Collective leadership:** This principle has been explained as: *'complexity of the society and deep contradiction that exists in the society, especially qualitative difference between revolutionary organisation and the society (due to its complex problems and contradictions) force a revolutionary organisation to have 'Collective leadership'. This is more necessary when we realise that the organisation wants to change deeply the foundations of the society, therefore due to this situation, one person is never able to face all these problems'* (P: 32) So far so good, but as we saw in the case of MeK and before MeK in many other Marxist organisation and countries such as Soviet Union or China, a charismatic and strong person with a little bit of 'more ideological' knowledge or 'scientific' or 'revolutionary' background, and in a vacuum of rivalry, can easily change the collective leadership using titles such as political bureau or central committee in a sham and superficial council and gradually (or as we saw in the case of MeK suddenly) change it into a one man show. This is mainly because apart from this principle, all other principles of democratic centralism are aiming the organisation toward having an absolute and even tyrannical leader.
- 6- **Brotherly Trust;** *'Organisational relations are based on trust between members. Without brotherly trust, no revolution can be victorious. ... Trust within a revolutionary organisation is the fruit and result of the shared ideology and organisation. And exactly because of this reason, it is a rational and knowledgeable trust. It is opposite to naïve and blind trust that exists in un-revolutionary relations. ... This kind of trust is more important, decisive and necessary for a clandestine revolutionary organisation in the armed struggle where they cannot organise congress and election and in other words where democratic procedures are limited.'* (PP: 34,35)

It can be recognised immediately that 'revolutionary organisations' that are obviously either in an armed struggle or have the excuse of having an enemy who wants to destroy them, can change into a clandestine organisation and enforce certain principles of secrecy. They can

then benefit fully from those principles; they can postpone any kind of democratic procedures and ask members to trust them, be loyal and obedient with 'brotherly trust'. Interestingly this trust in many organisations is one-sided and it is from ordinary members toward leaders. Leaders always have the excuse of impurity of ideology in lower ranks that makes them not fully or at all trustworthy and even makes it necessary to lie to them and deceive them. After all they can claim that ordinary members are from the society and have brought with them impurity that exists in the society and therefore it is difficult and unwise to trust them. Later in mind control we will see how this one-sided trust works in silencing ordinary members and paving the way for total control of their life and mind.

- 7- Necessity of existence of professional revolutionaries:** *'A revolutionary movement necessities the existence of professionalism of at least main members of the organisation. Also we have to notice, what is important in a revolutionary organisation is the ideological quality and purity of its member and not their number. Within recent history of revolutions, and more than all, Lenin has emphasised the necessity of existence of a revolutionary organisation. This emphasis by Lenin more than anything else shows how close his understanding is to the monotheistic worldview which persists on role of knowledgeable leadership in the change or move of the history. He realises the victory of a revolution without a revolutionary organisation is impossible. ... Centralism because of centralism and democracy because of democracy or this way of thinking that an organisational position is because of prestige of that position are all signs of some sort of formalism which should be avoided vehemently by the revolutionary organisation. As if not the ideology of the organisation that everything has to be at its service is going to be the first victim of this way of behaviour. This is why when a person has not understood well the ideology and has not matched himself with that ideology, they should not ask for any vote or democratic rights or expression of his view toward things related to the principles of that ideology.'* (pp:36,37)
- Well this principle says it all. Firstly it is somehow a first come first served kind of organisation as those who come first and become professional, can always claim they understand the ideology better and according to this principle have certain rights that ordinary members, especially those who still have family and private jobs and live with their family, should not have as they are not professional. Furthermore they can claim 'unprofessional members' understand the ideology less than they do and therefore should not ask for any say in this respect. When they claim in a revolutionary organisation that the ideology is everything, they can easily deny any rights of the ordinary members with the excuse that everything they do and decide has an ideological reason. Apart from all these, as later we will see, this principle helped MeK greatly in changing into a destructive cult. As becoming a professional revolutionary for new members meant leaving their job, study, financial independence and their normal and ordinary life, becoming totally dependent on the organisation, and being forced into isolation from wider society. All were necessary for further stages of Mind control.

ⁱ Dunbar, Grooming, 'Gossip and the Evolution of Language', p: 76 cited from: Kathleen Taylor; 'Brainwashing; The science of Thought control'; Oxford university press; 2004; P: 45

ⁱⁱ Kathleen Taylor; 'Brainwashing; The science of Thought control'; Oxford university press; 2004; P: 45

ⁱⁱⁱ Benjamin Zablocki & Thomas Robbins; 'Misunderstanding Cults; Searching for objectivity in a controversial field'; University of Toronto Press; 2001; P: 183

^{iv} Margaret Thaler Singer; 'Cults in our Midst'; Jossey-Bass; A Wiley Imprint; 2003; P: XXVIII

^v MEK has the same terminology claiming that to reach power Mostazafin need a vanguard party or an organisation to lead them toward gaining power; as we saw before they claim this organisation is MEK, who will eventually change into 'Hezbollah' or party of God. Amuzesh va tashrih-e ettela'iyeh ta'yin-e mavaze'-e Sazeman-e Mojahedin-e Khalq-e Iran dar barahbar-e jariyan-e oportunistha-ye chppnama -An explanation of the communiqué defining the position of the People's Mojahedin Organization of Iran on the matter of pseudo-leftist opportunism- 1980; P: 86

^{vi} Deutscher, I., (1963) *The Prophet Outcast, Trotsky 1929-1940*, Oxford University Press: Oxford

^{vii} Volkogonov, D., (1994) *Lenin: Life and Legacy*, Harper Collins: London

^{viii} Milliband, R., (1977) *Marxism and Politics*, Oxford University Press: Oxford

^{ix} Lenin and Trotsky: 'A Question of Organisational Form', In Tickin, H., and Cox, M., (Eds.) *The Ideas of Leon Trotsky*, Porcupine Press: London

^x Deutscher, I., (1954) *The Prophet Armed, Trotsky 1919-1921*, Oxford University Press: Oxford

^{xi} Trotsky, L., (1973) *In Defence of Marxism*, Pathfinder: New York, p.141

^{xii} Dr. Dennis Tourish; 'Ideological intransigence, democratic centralism and cultism': a case study from the political left.

^{xiii} Ideological Revolution; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; PP: 47, 48

^{xiv} MEK's publication; Barressi Amkan Enheraf Markaziat democratic ya tafavoot shake a almii va gheer almii dar amer a taskilat; Examination of possibilities of deviation of democratic centralism or the difference between scientific doubt and unscientific doubt within the organisation; Tehran; 1980; P: 20

^{xv} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; P: 88

^{xvi} Masoud Rajavi's speeches in Tehran, 1979; titled: Tabayan-e jahan (Explaining the world) MEK's publication; Ideological Teachings of the organisation of Mojahedin e' Khalq Iran; December 1979; Number one; P: 23

^{xvii} MEK's publication; Mojahed number 160; 14/7/1983

^{xviii} For example look at Ideological Revolution; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; P: 59

^{xix} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; P: 113

^{xx} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; P: 17

^{xxi} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; PP: 47, 48

^{xxii} Dr. Dennis Tourish in his paper titled 'Ideological intransigence, democratic centralism and cultism: a case study from the political left'. In his conclusion he explains: '...the evidence plainly suggests that a number of traditional Leninist or Trotskyist assumptions endanger internal democracy, political thinking and what must be a central goal of any movement seeking wider influence - the regular updating of ideas to retain relevance. In particular, the Trotskyist conception of the role of the revolutionary party has become transmuted into a rationale for the creation of tyrannical fiefdoms locked into a spiral of irrelevance, fragmentation and ideological petrification. Rigid adherence to 'democratic centralism', a term which appears to be an oxymoron, reflects an excessive veneration for 'October', which in turn precludes an updated historical analysis of the 1917 Revolution and its aftermath. Accordingly, the Trotskyist tradition eschews innovation. Those marooned in its static preoccupations find themselves condemned to an ever greater isolation, in which the search for other footprints in the sand is always in vain. This is combined with a catastrophist political analysis which (despite its frequent falsification by events) acts a spur to such intense activism that the energy, time and confidence required for political reflection is consumed by party building. Such 'party building' is generally signified by the presence of innumerable factions - and the absence of a party.'

^{xxiii} Siegel, P., Strohl, N., Ingram, L., Roche, D., and Taylor, J., (1987) 'Leninism as cult: the Democratic Workers Party', *Socialist Review*, 17, 59-85

^{xxiv} Alexandra Stein ; 'Inside Out; a memoir of Entering and breaking out of a Minneapolis Political Cult'; Published by North Star Press of St. Cloud, Inc. 2002

^{xxv} Ervand Abrahamian; 'The Iranian Mojahedin'; Yale University Press; 1989; PP: 250, 251

^{xxvi} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; P: 34

^{xxvii} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; PP: 60, 61

^{xxviii} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; PP: 62,63

^{xxix} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; P: 65

^{xxx} Lenin, V.I., (1977) *Collected Works*, Vol 5, Progress Publishers: Moscow, p.433

^{xxxi} 'Ideological intransigence, democratic centralism and cultism': a case study from the political left

^{xxxii} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; P: 116

^{xxxiii} 'Ideological Revolution'; speech of Mehdi Abrishamchii; published by MEK; November 1985; PP: 116, 120

^{xxxiv} MEK's publication; Barressi Amkan Enheraf Markaziati democratic ya tafavoot shake a almii va gheer almii dar amer a taskilat; Examination of possibilities of deviation of democratic centralism or the difference between scientific doubt and unscientific doubt within the organisation; Tehran; 1980; P: 31

^{xxxv} As I believe that MEK had the most essential elements of a destructive cult from day one; the only reason why it didn't complete the transformation until later, was perhaps due to the personality of Hanif Nejad who was the first leader of the organisation, and later due to the imprisonment of Rajavi. This meant a limitation on his authority; and then after the revolution, due to the change of the organisation into a popular one, that forced it out of isolation,(isolation, at least psychological isolation is a necessary element for having a cult).