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Many of the Afghan publishing houses that originally printed the material examined in Wali Ahmadi's 'Endangered Nation: The Literature of Soviet-Occupied Afghanistan' have vanished during the last thirty years of upheaval. Although different attitudes to 'copyright' exist in Afghanistan, the contributor and editor express their appreciation for having such publications from which to quote in this volume.

1. Kurihara, 'Let Us Be Midwives!', in Kurihara, *When We Say 'Hiroshima': Selected Poems*, trans. Richard H. Minear (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies/University of Michigan, 1999), p. 5, lines 12, 16.
2. Due to Kurihara's capable and knowledgeable translator Richard H. Minear, she may have achieved greater fame in the English speaking world than in Japan. Wayne Lammers has also produced an accomplished translation of Kurihara's poem with the title 'We Shall Bring Forth New Life' in Kurihara Sadao, *The Songs of Hiroshima* (Hiroshima: Anthology Publishing Association, 1980), p. 3.
3. Kurihara, 'City Ravaged by Flames', in Kurihara, *When We Say 'Hiroshima'*, p. 7, lines 1-5.
4. Minear, 'Translator's Introduction', in Kurihara, *Black Eggs*, p. 27.
5. Kurihara, 'The Day the Shōwa Era Ends', in Kurihara, *When We Say 'Hiroshima'*, p. 51, lines 11-18, 21-3.
6. Kurihara, 'The Flag I', in Kurihara, *When We Say 'Hiroshima'*, p. 38, lines 1-5.
7. Kurihara, 'Nippon: Piroshima', in Kurihara, *When We Say 'Hiroshima'*, p. 44, lines 2-15.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 42, line 3.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 43, line 33.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 42, lines 15, 21-4.
11. Kurihara, 'Japan's Winter of 1961', in Kurihara, *When We Say 'Hiroshima'*, p. 39, lines 1-8, 12-15.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 39, lines 16-18.
13. Kurihara, 'When We Say "Hiroshima"', in Kurihara, *When We Say 'Hiroshima'*, pp. 20-1, lines 1-10, 27-32.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 20, lines 25-6.

6 Reflections of the Cold War in Modern Persian Literature, 1945-1979

Nasrin Rahimieh

The history and culture of modern Iran is deeply enmeshed in the development of the Cold War. Iranian representations of the international conflict demonstrate how the Persian literary institution, to say nothing of the fate of specific writers, was shaped by the rivalry between superpowers, which initially fuelled the nation's desire for social and political reform but subsequently produced a sense of national powerlessness. The intellectuals and literati who continued to search for a means of achieving a degree of political self-rule were caught up in a contradictory impulse, believing Iran to be, simultaneously, at the mercy of foreign powers and capable of overcoming its subservience by drawing on 'authentic' sources of spiritual power. The movement from genuine national autonomy after the Second World War to long periods of subjection to the whim of superpowers profoundly influenced the literary and cultural scenes, exemplifying M. R. Ghanooni-parvar's point that '[s]ocial and political factors [are] of vital importance to virtually all modern Persian writers and have had substantial effects both on their work and the reception of their art'.¹ To lay bare the contours of this influence, I will trace the turn of events that rendered the nation a pawn in the Cold War before turning to the analysis of predominantly left-leaning writers and their works.

Long before the advent of the world wars Iran had been subject to foreign contestations for control of its resources. In the early twentieth century, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 had divided the country 'into zones of political and economic influence: a northern zone, which was Russia's sphere; a southern zone, which was Britain's sphere; and a central zone which was neutral'.² Although Great Britain and Russia had agreed to respect Iran's independence, the very fact of partition made the presumption of national autonomy untenable. Iran's own internal political turmoil, particularly the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-1911, weakened its ability to face the great powers with a united front. Against this backdrop, Iran declared neutrality during the Second World War, although demonstrated leanings toward Germany, which ultimately led to occupation by the Allies in 1941. The reigning monarch of the time, Reza Shah Pahlavi, had welcomed German assistance in building the country's infrastructure

and had opted for close trading relationships between Iran and Germany. The notable presence of Germans in Iran during the war concerned the Allies who feared an encroachment of the Soviet Union through Iranian soil. As Kristen Blake relates,

Great Britain and the Soviet Union sent a letter to Reza Shah in July and again in August 1941 to expel the Germans. Reza Shah's refusal to comply led to the Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran on August 25, 1941. The Soviets occupied the northern part of the country while the British occupied the south. The central part, which included Tehran, was declared neutral and left under the Iranian government's control.¹

The occupation, pivotal to the conduct of the war and transportation of supplies to the Soviet Union, destabilised Reza Shah's reign and led him to abdicate in favour of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah. The arrival of the Allies opened a new chapter in foreign intervention and was one of the factors that initiated the Cold War.

The crisis began when the Soviet forces not only failed to honour their agreement to leave Iran after the end of the war, but also supported local Kurdish and Azeri separatist movements. This led the Iranian government to file a complaint against the Soviet Union at the United Nations in 1946 and to seek US backing at the UN Security Council. While Iran attained its objective, the Soviet departure did not bring an end to the regional rivalries between the Soviet Union, the United States and the British, who controlled the country's oil through the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Tensions came to a head in 1951 when the democratically elected Prime Minister, Mohammad Mosadeq, who opposed British control of local oil reserves, took the step of nationalising Anglo-Iranian Oil. With Washington fearful that nationalisation was the first step to communism, the CIA masterminded in 1953 a coup that toppled Mosadeq and propped up the weak young monarch, Mohammad Reza Shah, who cracked down on communist sympathisers and effectively made the country a US client state until the revolution of 1979. As Steve Marsh argues,

The US achieved short-term objectives but the methods by which it stabilized Iran [...] carried a terrible 'blow-back' legacy. It substituted for the yoke of British imperialism association with a brutal and repressive regime that leached large and sometimes unaccountable amounts of economic and military aid. [...] More significant still, the US became the focus of popular Iranian hatred for sponsoring the coup against Mosadeq and supporting the Shah's dictatorship.²

The far-reaching consequences of these confrontations are evident even today, but what is sometimes neglected is the brief moment of respite Iranians experienced between 1945 and 1953 before the Cold War foreclosed

the possibility of the nation becoming a viable player on the international geopolitical scene. There is no better embodiment of this brief chapter in modern Iranian history than Bozorg Alavi, a writer who had first-hand experience of the abrupt changes that swept the nation.

Alavi had received part of his education in Germany and in the 1930s had emerged as one of the promising writers of a literary generation that included Sadeq Chubak, Ali Mohammad Afghani and Mohammad Ferezdadeh, known by his nom de plume, Behazin. Along with many of his contemporaries, Alavi focused on fictional representations of the prevailing social and political conditions of the nation, addressing the fate of downtrodden and disadvantaged groups and exploring fiction for its potential to address the masses. Deploying naturalist and socialist-realist techniques, Alavi's generation emerged not only as literary artists but also as social critics and politically committed intellectuals dedicated to raising awareness among their compatriots and to inciting resistance against foreign and native forms of domination. Alavi's major novels and short stories, *Chamadan* (Suitease, 1934), *Varaq pariab-ye zendan* (The Scrap Papers from Prison, 1941) and *Cheshmahayesh* (Her Eyes, 1952), were inflected with an overriding concern for the suffering of the lower classes and for laying bare the economic and political subjugation of ordinary men and women. In a manner that reveals the atmosphere of the times, he was arrested in 1937 along with fifty-two others on charges of being a Marxist, an event immortalised in his account of prison experience, *Panjab-o se nafar* (The Fifty-Three, 1942). Alavi denied that he was a Marxist and, decades later, described the individuals who had met, read Marx together and subsequently underwent arrest as 'wantej[ing] to become familiar with Marxist ideas' rather than as being committed communists or Marxists.³ Alavi spent four years in jail until he was released in 1941 after Reza Shah's abdication and subsequently became one of the founding members of the left-wing Tudeh Party. Literally meaning 'the masses', the Tudeh were rooted in a long history of social democratic movements and focused their platform on the defence of Iran's national sovereignty, on resistance to foreign intervention and on political and social reforms that would improve and guarantee the rights of individuals.

Alavi attributes his own politicisation and membership of the Tudeh Party to his imprisonment: 'Whether I liked it or not, I had been thrown in prison. I had been thrown into political life. Those things I was writing ... well, they had to reflect what was there in society. And in my opinion, I have never since veered from this course—even to this day'.⁴ When speaking of a steadfast adherence to his political principles years after these events, he clung to a distinction between being a member of the Tudeh and serving Soviet masters:

Some people will say that these Tudeh members are nothing but communists; they are the lackeys of Russia and do whatever Russians tell

them; their leaders are those who are doing this knowingly, and their followers are those who are doing this unknowingly: in any case, they have no minds of their own: they are traitors, turncoats, and so on. But if you ask these people themselves, they will say, no, it's not that way at all: we support the nation's welfare: we support the good of the people.⁷

The defensive tone of Alavi's response betrays the writer's struggle to carve out a space in which Iranians could choose between different models of social and political reform without having to take sides in the Cold War. Alavi is not simply engaged in revisionist historiography in the answers he provides, but insists on remembering the short-lived potential and hope in the early post-1945 period that he witnessed first-hand after his release from prison.

A report he wrote about the First Iranian Writers Congress, held in Tehran in 1946, gives us a glimpse of the distinctiveness of the pursuit and ambitions of the Iranian intellectuals and writers of the time. The Congress was attended by prominent writers, critics, poets and scholars like Sadeq Hedayat, Mohammad Taqi Bahar, Behazin, Ali Akbar Dehkhoda and Parviz Naei Khanlari. As Alavi reports, it 'was formed on the initiative of the Iranian Cultural Association and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics with the assistance of the Literary Commission Association and [...] the representative of the Vaks House [the Soviet Cultural Institute in Tehran] which had taken the necessary actions to invite the Soviet writers to Iran'.⁸ Alavi's rhetoric places Iran and the Soviet Union on equal footing and represents the Congress as a meeting of minds, with no indications of political tensions between Iran and its northern neighbour. In fact, in the presence of the Prime Minister and countless other notables, the Iranian host, Mostasharodolleh Sadeq, spoke of the need to set aside the politics of the moment:

Between two friendly and neighboring nations, the first condition in continuing any friendship is the strengthening of relations. Undoubtedly, a part of relations are cultural relations [...]. It is cultural relations which [have] a profound influence from the depths of hearts to the heights of respect. So, in order to attain this valuable purpose, [we look] towards the masters of grace and ideas and the servants of learning and literature.⁹

If the asymmetry in power relations between Iran and the Soviet Union was set aside, a certain asymmetry soon emerged in the discussions of the state of Persian letters. Many of the Iranian speakers addressed the perceived shortcomings of the Persian literary arts in engaging a wide audience with ideas of social and political change. For instance, the Minister of Culture and Poet Laureate, Mohammad Taqi Bahar, maintained that literature,

read only by an elite, could and ought to play a prominent role in the development of a new national consciousness:

Literature must attempt to free itself from the courts and governments. Its beautiful product must be handed over to the general public and [practised] in the marketplace of the people. This will only be realized when words are used in the service of the public for the people's purposes according to the general public and in the language of the general public. Today, we are standing at the crossroad of history itself. One way leads to the ancient past and stagnation [while] the other direction leads the people towards innovation and dynamic change.¹⁰

Change in this context becomes synonymous with improved social and political conditions for the majority of Iranians. The concept of literature as a vehicle for social change, espoused by Bahar and other writers at the Congress, is not necessarily identical with the objectives of socialist realism and does not imply that they were politically aligned with the Soviet Union or believed that Iran's problems could be resolved by drawing on Soviet literary models. Nevertheless, the utilitarian and didactic aims espoused by the writers were seen as shared goals of the Iranian and the Iranian literati. The dominant area of concern for the Iranian participants was how to circumvent the perceived elitism of Persian literary forms and widen the readership beyond the royal court. Already in the 1920s and Mohammad Ali Jamalzadeh, known as the father of modern Persian prose literature, had advocated the simplification of writers' language 'to give the common people the benefit of learning and knowledge' and to pave the way to 'literary democracy'.¹¹

As Alavi's own trajectory was to reveal, the possibility of open discussion between the Iranians and their neighbours to the north was short-lived, as was the appearance of neutrality in superpower considerations of Iran's future, literary or otherwise. In the coup of 1953, the shifting terrain of power had replaced the USSR with their American counterparts, who were determined to root out any trace of communism from Iran's political scene. Unlike the heady days after Reza Shah's abdication, the post-coup era was marked by a profound sense of loss. Alavi was among countless other writers and intellectuals who found resonances between his ideals and those of Mosadeq, and, based in Germany at the time of the coup, his response to news of arrests of the supporters of Mosadeq and members of the Tudeh Party was to move to East Berlin, where he remained to the end of his life in 1997. Alavi was not the only writer to feel the pangs of exile. Even his contemporaries who stayed in Iran lived a form of inner exile that barred them from writing against the country's apparent enslavement to the United States. Those who dared to speak out had their work banned and, as a result, retreated into an imaginative realm where they could construct alternatives to their lived experiences of the Cold War.

This was the fate of the writer and political activist Jalal Al-e Ahmad after he composed the famous essay *Gharbzagadi* (West-Strickenness, 1962). Taking its title from a coinage made by the Iranian philosopher Ahmad Fardid (translated as 'westitis', 'west-strickenness' or 'plagued by the west'), this was originally a report submitted to the Council on the Educational Goals of Iran and was deemed inappropriate for publication due to its critical assessment of the country's conditions. Al-e Ahmad, who was for a period a member of the Tudeh Party, was deeply influenced by intellectuals such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Frantz Fanon, as well as by the decolonisation movements of the time. In addition to essays, he wrote novels and short stories, among them *Modir-e madreseb* (The School Principal, 1958) and *Num val ghalam* (By the Pen, 1961), many of which lean toward the mobilisation of his compatriots against imperialism. This is seen in the opening sentence of *Gharbzagadi* where Al-e Ahmad describes an illness he ascribes to the whole of the nation:

I speak of being afflicted with 'westitis' the way I would speak of being afflicted with cholera. If this is not palatable let us say it is akin to being stricken by heat or by cold. But it is not that either. It is something more on the order of being attacked by tongue worm [. . .]. We are dealing with a sickness, a disease imported from abroad, and developed in an environment receptive to it.¹²

Using terms that pit the developed and the underdeveloped worlds against one another, he expands the definition of the 'West' to 'almost all of Europe and Soviet Russia and all of North America', or all 'industrialized countries which, with the aid of machines, are capable of converting raw materials into something more complex and marketing it in the form of manufactured goods'.¹³ By lumping together all major global powers, Al-e Ahmad communicates the sense of powerlessness experienced on the level of the nation. This is particularly so when he extends the metaphor of the disease beyond raw materials to include 'myths, principles of belief, music, and transcendental realities',¹⁴ which, when imported into Iran, are emptied of meaning and express only a desire to mimic those who control the means of production without acquiring the necessary expertise to shed the yoke of dependency. He levels his harshest criticism at Iran's educational system, singling out the university faculties and departments devoted to the study of literature. These are marked not only by 'the flight of scholars to old, worn-out literary texts and figures and the dead glories of classical literature' but also by a 'reliance on the views of western orientalist'.¹⁵ As Al-e Ahmad concludes, '[w]e educate pseudo-westerners [. . .], a people alienated from themselves'.¹⁶ The period between Alavi's report on the First Congress of Iranian Writers and Al-e Ahmad's treatise has been so saturated by the Cold War that Al-e Ahmad sees Iran's very culture at risk. Gone are the hopefulness and naïve belief in the possibility of Iran being an equal interlocutor and participant in a global

meeting of minds, as well as the notion of literary studies as a vehicle for social transformation. The banning of Al-e Ahmad's treatise bears out his denunciation of the country's neglect of the present and of the possibility of challenging the status quo.

There is an interesting link between *Gharbzagadi* and the novels of Al-e Ahmad's wife, the accomplished writer Simin Daneshvar. Adhering to the social and political ideals she shared with her husband, Daneshvar's style of writing shows clear convergences with realism, albeit laden with pointed social criticism and class analysis. In the simplicity of her prose she follows in the footsteps of an earlier generation of writers responsible for simplifying Persian literary texts and for advocating the use of the spoken idiom in short stories and novels. More pointedly, her best-selling novel *Sarushun* (Mourning for Siavash, 1969) is set during the Allied occupation of Iran and uses wartime history to explore the country's contemporary lack of political autonomy. The opening scene, detailing the wedding of the daughter of a Governor, cannot disguise the suffering of the nation at the hands of the British occupiers. The ostentatious celebrations, at a time of extreme food shortages, juxtapose the Iranians and the British army officers and underline the central tension of the novel. Seen through the eyes of the female protagonist, Zari, the narrative also lays bare the local collusion with the British occupiers, echoing Al-e Ahmad's view that Iranians during the Cold War have resigned themselves to their powerlessness and participate in their own enslavement to the US. To do this, the narrative strips both the Iranian sell-outs and the occupying powers of their disguises. One of the British characters singled out for his chameleon-like ability to don an identity befitting the circumstances is Sergeant Zinger, whom Zari remembers in a prior incarnation as Mr. Zinger, a Singer sewing machine salesman who used to give lessons on the use of the machines to the young girls in Shiraz to whom he sold them. But when the war began, 'Mr. Zinger had overnight donned the braids and stars of an officer's uniform'.¹⁷ Shedding a cover, he reveals himself as the undercover British military officer he has been all along: 'What self-control he must have had to live with these lies for seventeen years', Zari thinks: 'A fake profession, fake clothes, all lies from head to toe. And how skillful an impostor he was'.¹⁸ Zinger's presence at the wedding is complemented by other reminders of the Governor's capitulation:

The five-tiered wedding cake, flown in by an airplane, was a gift from the Head Command of the Foreign Troops. The cake was placed on a table on the veranda. A bride and a groom were standing hand in hand on its top layer. Behind them was a British flag.¹⁹

The cake, competing with the loaf of bread that adorns the traditional Iranian wedding spread, reminds Zari of her husband Yusof's opposition to the terms under which the opulent wedding takes place, particularly at a time when this single loaf could make a whole family's evening meal.²⁰

The lines of allegiance, so sharply drawn in the opening chapter, harden through the novel, leaving Zari, Yusof and those who are concerned for the well-being of the nation in opposition to the occupying forces and their native sympathizers who see the occupation as an opportunity to reinforce their own might and wealth. As if to underline the appeal of collusion, Yusof's own brother has begun to serve the British. As he says to Yusof about the wheat grown on the family's land,

'Brother. You're being stubborn for no reason. After all they are our guests. They won't be here forever. Even if we don't give it to them willingly, they'll take it by force. They're not deterred by the locks and seals on your warehouses. And besides, they don't want it for free. They'll pay cash for it. I've sold everything in the warehouse in one shot.'²¹

By the end of the novel, Yusof has learned the futility of his position and finally loses his life in his attempt to resist the forces of occupation ('forced to shout louder and louder until he got himself killed').²² The complete hold on power achieved by the British is driven home when a mourning procession for Yusof is not permitted. In death as in life, such figures of opposition cannot be tolerated. The police force's attempt to break up the procession leads to a riot, preventing the mourners from attending the ceremony and leaving '[t]he coffin covered with flowers [...] at the side of the road next to a wall'.²³ The absence of prayers and the requisite funeral rituals shows how resistance is foreclosed in the public sphere and leaves Zari pondering whether she should bother to mark Yusof's name on his gravestone, suggesting that his loss and sacrifice might well be effaced from collective memory.

What saves Zari from utter despondency is a message of condolence sent by an Irish war correspondent, MacMahon, who has a penchant for poetry and tales of his own making, and who identifies Iran and Ireland as sharing a fate of oppression at the hands of the British. His message is imbued with a romantic idealism which hints at a distant and as yet unrealisable future:

'Don't weep, sister. In your home, a tree shall grow, and others in your city, and many more throughout your country. And the wind shall carry the message from tree to tree and the trees shall ask the wind, "Did you see the dawn on your way?"'²⁴

Ironically, the novel ends with this declaration from a foreigner, highlighting the internalisation of the seemingly inextricable ties between the nation's future and the words and deeds of non-native actors. The novel's sharp division between the oppressor and the oppressed and its sense of the impossibility of escaping the structures of domination suggest that the alternative to Yusof's form of resistance is a retreat from the public and political arena. For Zari, this retreat takes the form of returning to the

inner sanctum of her family home; for others it so often involves a retreat into madness. In fact, the narrative is punctuated by visits to an insane asylum and a hospital, underscoring the extent of the nation's ill-health and echoing Al-e Ahmad's words. What is missing from Daneshvar's fictional representation is the possibility of occupying a viable position of agency, revealing the extent to which, by the end of the 1960s, the Iranian national imagination had succumbed to the effects of the Cold War. The disaffected, the martyred and the mad men and women of Daneshvar's novel create a profound sense of loss, which is also invoked in the title of the novel, 'savushun' being a local mourning ritual with deep pre-Islamic and Islamic Iranian cultural resonances.

The impossibility of voicing any criticism of the way in which Iran became a pawn in the Cold War struggle between the US and the USSR incited other writers and intellectuals to search for a 'native' and 'authentic' form of cultural resistance capable of withstanding the seemingly invincible superpowers. They found this refuge in Islam, and more specifically in Shi'ism. Al-e Ahmad ends his treatise by citing a passage from the Koran, while others, like his contemporary Ali Shariati, took up the challenge and offered a new movement to reverse the effects of 'westitis'. Shariati based this movement on the concept of a return to a presumably lost self, a process that, he argued, was 'the only hope which can enable the wandering generation to stand tall against the intimidating monster of the West'.²⁵ The self that became the object of the return journey was revolutionary Islam: 'Islam is what we must return to, not only because it is the religion of our society, the shaper of our history, the spirit of our culture, the powerful conscience and the strong binder of our people, and the foundation of our morality and spirituality, but also because it is the human "self" of our people'.²⁶ While concurring with Al-e Ahmad about the apparent impossibility of reversing Western domination in terms of the modes of production, Shariati located the power of religious belief as an effective cultural counterforce, one that could create a site of national autonomy. Despite an insistence on disengaging Iran from all external sources of influence, he drew on concepts of resistance and social equality he found appealing in the anti-colonial movements, as well as on aspects of Marxism. The years Shariati spent in France continuing his studies shaped much of his thought. For instance, he speaks about his personal familiarity with Fanon and claims to have 'convinced him that in some societies where religion plays an important role in culture, religion can, through its resources and psychological effects, help the enlightened person to lead his society toward the same destination toward which Fanon was taking his own through non-religious means'.²⁷ In a similar vein, he wove his own concept of revolutionary Shi'ism with elements of Marxism, although his idiosyncratic interpretation of Marxism drew heavy criticism from the Iranian left, a criticism matched by challenges he received from the Shi'ite clergy, equally concerned about his interpretations of Islam.²⁸

In Shariati's example we see the extent to which the Iranian intellectual movements of the time were shaped by the very political polarities they aimed to oppose. We also see the elusiveness of literary attempts to carve out an autonomous Iranian self. The spiritual core of the nation, as conceived by Shariati, existed in the realm of ideas, a domain of interiority that seems to reaffirm the imbalance of power underlying the malaise that both Shariati and Aï-e Ahmad located in Cold War Iran. This disjuncture between the real and the imaginary contributed to a highly polarised construct of national identity that vacillated between a belief that the nation was perennially at the mercy of foreign actors and an exaggerated sense of the nation's inner resolve. This manifests itself in Persian literature of the 1960s and 1970s, where we find characters shuttling between the two poles, either barely clinging to reality or else attempting to surmount reality through acts of heroic selflessness. Most famously, the popular novel by Iraj Pezeshkzad entitled *Dai jan napoleon* (My Uncle Napoleon, 1973) portrays a nation poking fun at its paradoxical sense of subjection and exaggerated self-importance. The psychopathology subtly hinted at in Daneshvar's novel moves centre stage in Pezeshkzad's work and becomes the object of pity and amusement. Like Daneshvar, Pezeshkzad refrains from depicting contemporary reality directly, reflecting the period's fears of imprisonment, heavy censorship and the banning of works, and sets *My Uncle Napoleon* during the wartime occupation by the Allies.²⁹ Nevertheless, the novel follows the conventions of realism, drawing on detailed portraits of social types and extended family relations, with the use of humour and lively dialogue veiling social commentary, political critique and oblique references to Iran's lack of political autonomy.

The story revolves around the figure of a family patriarch who in his dotage exaggerates his role as a low-ranking officer of the Iranian Cosack Brigade into that of a national hero who fought the British Empire during the period of Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911). Magnifying his stature to that of Napoleon, his imagined tales of battles against the British—further amplified by his devoted servant Mash Qasem—are privately ridiculed by the members of the family, but are humoured to his face. With the arrival of the British in Iran, Uncle Napoleon convinces himself that they wish to settle old scores with him: “That hypocritical wolf called England hates everyone who loves the soil and water of his own country. What sin had Napoleon committed that they harried him like that? [. . .] Their enmity for me started when they saw that I love my country [. . .]. I am a freedom fighter [. . .], a supporter of the constitution”.³⁰ The family members, fearing the deterioration of his health, have no choice but to play along with his delusions. In one scene, he insists on meeting a representative of the British Army, and the family, to his horror, claim that a meeting has been arranged at their house: “Dear Uncle Napoleon, who appeared to consider himself as being in the same situation as Napoleon at Fontenoy before the representatives of the Allied armies arrived, had

not set foot outside of his room as he awaited the moment of encounter”.³¹ The pathetic figure of the helpless and fearful Iranian patriarch who falls for scenes devised by the family provides comic relief while also capturing the nation's exasperation at being at the mercy of foreign powers, accepting its own powerlessness and making an exaggerated notion of agency into an object of derision.

Uncle Napoleon's imaginings prove to be delusional on many levels. He not only fails to achieve the courageous heroism necessary for standing up to foreign occupiers, but also fails to tell the difference between friends and foe. While he spends his time imagining that the British are spying on him, the British and other foreign powers do take charge of the country (with no concern for any imagined or real anxieties on the part of the native Iranians). Quite apart from the historical realities of the time, the narrative itself proves Uncle Napoleon's assumptions misplaced. The narrator and the narrative give little credence to Uncle Napoleon's suspicion of individuals he believes to be agents of the British, but the dismissal of all suspicion proves to be equally misguided: Out of all those ‘accused of being a lackey and a spy of the English, there was [. . .] one real spy and that was the Indian Brigadier Maharat Khan, who had passed on news of the movements of the English to the Germans, and who was arrested by the English before the end of the war’.³²

The comic nature of *My Uncle Napoleon* and its tremendous popularity as a novel and television series tell us how deeply saturated the nation's sense of helplessness vis-à-vis foreign powers had become. Its central figure, an ineffective self-appointed Iranian leader, also resonated with a nation which was to undergo a revolution in a matter of a few years. But while waiting for that moment of release from the clutches of the United States, the nation continued to enjoy a laugh at the expense of the delusional patriarch, equated with the reigning monarch. Years after that monarch was toppled in a revolution, the novel continues to speak to Iran's current realities. The ban placed upon it by the Islamic Republic points out that Pezeshkzad's satirical representations of the country being consumed by conspiracy theories and tales of impending foreign intervention still resonate deeply. But the paranoia has also proven to be at least partially rooted in reality. The occupation of the country by Soviet and British forces in 1941, their refusal to leave and their attempt to control land and resources, left an indelible mark on the national psyche. The legacy of the Cold War is evident in the Islamic Republic's profound lack of trust in the possibility of engaging in dialogue with the United States, a superpower that demonstrated its will to control Iran by orchestrating the 1953 coup and removing a democratically elected prime minister. Contemporary Persian literature has in many ways moved away from the resistance literature of the pre-revolutionary era, but it continues to work through the heritage of the early Cold War writers who shaped a literary idiom marked by that global conflict.

NOTES

1. Ghanoonparvar, *Reading Chubak* (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2005), p. 2.
2. Bruce Robellet Kumholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 131.
3. Blake, *The U.S.–Soviet Confrontation in Iran, 1945–1962: A Case in the Annals of the Cold War* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2009), p. 13.
4. Marsh, *Anglo-American Relations and Cold War Oil: Crisis in Iran* (London: Palgrave, 2003), p. 170.
5. Donné Raffat, *The Prison Papers of Bozorg Alavi: A Literary Odyssey* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), p. 74. The interview is part of a series that Raffat, an Iranian-American author and literary critic, conducted with Alavi and that he published in translation, along with his English translations of Alavi's stories from prison, in the above volume.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 67.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
8. Alavi, "The First Iranian Writers Congress, 1946", in Thomas M. Ricks, ed., *Critical Perspectives on Modern Persian Literature* (Washington, DC: Three Continents Press, 1984), p. 8.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
11. Haideh Daragahi, "The Shaping of Modern Persian Short Story: Jamalzadi's "Preface" to *Yeki Bud, Yeki Nabud*", in Ricks, ed., *Critical Perspectives*, pp. 111, 110.
12. Al-e Ahmad, *Plagued by the West (Gharbzagiedi)*, trans. Paul Sprachman, new edn (1962; Delmar: Caravan, 1982), p. 3.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 91.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
17. Daneshvar, *Savushun: A Novel about Modern Iran*, trans. M. R. Ghanoonparvar, new edn (1969; Washington, DC: Mage, 1990), p. 21.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 20.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 365.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 373.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 378.
25. Shariati, *What Is To Be Done: The Enlightened Thinkers and an Islamic Renaissance*, trans. Farhang Rejaee (North Haledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International, 1986), p. 47. The essays translated and compiled in this volume are based on lectures Shariati delivered which were later printed in his collected works.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 19.
28. For detailed analysis of Shariati's works and the evolution of his thought, see Ali Rahnama's *An Islamic Utopian: A Political Biography of Ab-Shariati* (2000).
29. As mentioned, Alavi, Sadeq Chubak, Ali Shariati and others served time in prison for critiquing the prevailing political climate. Pezeshkzad, a career diplomat, would have had other pressures to consider.

30. Pezeshkzad, *My Uncle Napoleon*, trans. Dick Davis, new edn (1973; New York: Modern Library, 2006), p. 68.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 438.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 496.