IRAN

From Religious Dispute to Revolution

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To the warm, courageous, and complex people of Iran, and to my parents and our intellectual and religious traditions

groups have their own spokesmen, both secular and religious: Mehdi Bazargan, the late Ali Shariati, and a large group of younger men, as well as the secular National Front. It was largely in this ideological space of the new and old middle classes that the revolution of 1977-1979 would be fought.

6

The Revolutionary Movement of 1977-1979

Revolutions are not made. They come. A revolution is as natural a growth as an oak. It comes out of the past. Its foundations are laid back in history.

– Wendell Phillips, American abolitionist

ON JANUARY 16, 1979, the shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, was forced from throne and country for the second time. He left behind a government headed by an opponent, Dr. Shapur Bakhtiar, much as in 1953 he had fled the country leaving Dr. Mohammad Mosaddegh in charge. On February 1, Ayatullah Sayyid Ruhollah Musavi Khomeyni triumphantly returned to Iran after sixteen years of exile, vowing to institute an Islamic republic. An Islamic republic would be modeled on the just government of the third Imam, 'Ali, not on the inappropriately named and self-styled "Islamic" governments of contemporary Libya, Pakistan, or Saudi Arabia. The Islamic model of government in the absence of a divine Imam involved consultation to establish what is just, not a military or monarchical dictatorship. On February 11, the government of Dr. Bakhtiar collapsed. Ayatullah Khomeyni's premier-designate, Engineer Mehdi Bazargan, moved into the official chambers of government and appointed a seven-man cabinet. On February 16, the former commander of the secret police, SAVAK, General Nematollah Naseri, was executed by a revolutionary court under Ayatullah Khomeyni, together with three other top generals who had served the shah. Recognition of the new government came from Pakistan and the Soviet Union, then from others, including the United States and Morocco.[1]

The social drama of 1977-1979 had been rehearsed many times, and it resonated with many associations of the past. It was a completion of the 1906-1911 Constitutional Revolution; throughout the year, the revolutionaries had invoked the constitution, which had been set aside in all but name by the Pahlavi regime. It was a fulfillment of the Mosaddegh inter-

1979 revolutionary poster done in classical Persian miniature style, portraying Ayatullah Sayyid Ruhullah Musavi Khomeyni in the role of a Moses victorious over the evil pharaoh, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (with broken crown and sword, hanging on to the coattails of imperialism: an Uncle Sam with American, British, and Israeli insignia). The verses say (upper right): "We said: Fear not! Lo, thou art the higher" (Qur'an 20:68); "Go thou unto Pharaoh! Lo, he hath transgressed" (Qur'an 20:24); "He [God] said: Cast it down, O Moses! So he cast it down, and, lo, it was a serpent, gliding" (Qur'an 20:19-20). The single line below reads: "There is a Moses for every Pharaoh" (not a Qur'anic line). To the left the verses read: "In that day their excuses will not profit those who did injustice" (Qur'an 30:57); "Theirs is the curse and theirs the ill abode" (Qur'an 13:25). A hell of tortures is portrayed in the upper left.

regnum of 1952-53, which had nationalized oil in an attempt to establish an Iranian sense of independence and self-direction. Both Dr. Bakhtiar and Engineer Bazargan had served with Mosaddegh; the leadership of the National Front, which had backed Mosaddegh, was incorporated in the Bazargan cabinet.[2] It was also a vindication of the 1963 popular insurrection against the shah's White Revolution, a fifteenth of Khordad writ large; Khomeyni had become a major symbol of opposition to the shah in 1963, and his vindication became the rallying point of the revolution. Finally, it was the ultimate passion play of the Karbala paradigm, shifting from a passive witnessing of weeping for Husayn and waiting for the twelfth Imam to an active witnessing of fighting and working for the overthrow of tyranny. For years in rawdas the shah had been identified with the archtyrant Yazid, whereas Khomeyni was seen to uphold the ideals of Husayn. In 1978, during Muharram, the religious leadership called for marches instead of the traditional mourning processions. As the passion of the year increased, more and more people called Khomeyni "Imam Khomeyni"; and the religious dates of the year became staging times for major demonstrations.

The crucial fourteen months of 1977-1979 can be described as a social drama[3] or as a successful passion play. But these fourteen months were also a transformative event. Shi'ite preaching had been honed into a highly effective technique for maintaining a high level of consciousness about the injustice of the Pahlavi regime and for coordinating demonstrations. The Karbala paradigm helped unite disparate interest groups into a mass movement against an entrenched tyranny. But once the tyranny was removed, a new rhetorical discourse was required. For that, as Bazargan and Khomeyni both pointed out, one had to shift to the earlier portions of the paradigm of the family of the Prophet and to the principles of social justice associated with the name 'Ali. This new discourse had been pioneered fifteen years earlier by Mehdi Bazargan, the other contributors to *Bahth-i darbara-i Marja'iyyat wa Ruhaniyyat* (Study of Religious Leadership and the Clergy) (Tabatabai et al. 1341 Sh./1962), the late Dr. Ali Shariati (d. 1977), and the others associated with the Husayniyya Irshad. It was particularly Shariati who managed to instill an enthusiasm among the youth of Iran for an Islamic ideological revolution and liberation. The *Bahth-i darbara-i Marja'iyyat wa Ruhaniyyat* effort had been largely a call for reforming the clergy, for throwing off the scholasticism and stagnation of the past, and for modern interpretations of Islam that would be directly relevant to the political and social problems of society.

Shariati's call had little to do with the clergy. It was a call for Muslims to think for themselves, to rediscover true Islam. The idiom was one of rejecting thirteen centuries of corrupted Islam and returning to the original purity of an Islam of social justice. An important part of the ef-

fort was taking key theological and traditional terms, and giving them modern, ethical, and socially progressive interpretations. There was an intense rejection of referring to anything that had happened in the past as being representative or illustrative of Islam (except for the social justice of 'Ali and the universalism of Muhammad). A sectarian fervor accompanied the new discourse, making its partisans divide people into friends and opponents. It was, in sum, a call for a new discourse in the sense that Foucault has nicely formulated: "We must conceive discourse as a violence that we do to things, or, at all events, as a practice we impose upon them" (1972: 229).

With the revolution of 1979, this call for a new discourse suddenly achieved a credibility and coherence it could not achieve previously: that is, a compellingness derived from power. The revolutionaries furthermore claimed that the revolution itself was a purifying event for the participants. There are several senses in which this might be true. According to the old Soviet and Israeli theory, the praxis of revolution creates the new man. According to the Fanon theory, colonized peoples can throw off their mentality of inferiority only through a violent self-liberating act. But whatever truth either of those theories might contain, a third, and indubitable, truth is that political victory requires a spelling out in political and institutional terms of what previously could be left in vague philosophical and moral language.

What the new discourse of the Islamic republic will look like remains to be worked out. All that can be said at the beginning of the process is that Ayatullah Khomeyni, a conservative, midwifed what is, one hopes, the bourgeois revolution begun in 1905 and attempted again in 1952; and that Dr. Ali Shariati midwifed a new revolutionary discourse, which, like Moses, he was not allowed to live to experience.

The Social Drama: Political Liberation

Prologue

For a century, religiously phrased protest has been a regular feature of the relation between the Iranian state and its citizenry. The political articulateness of these protests has varied. Among the more articulate have been movements such as the Constitutional Revolution and the National Front activity of the 1940s in which Islamic protest was allied with secular reform movements that included members of the religious minorities. Among the less articulate protests have been riots against the minorities seen as symbols of foreign exploitation and attacks on Islam, such as the riots around the turn of the century and the 1955-56 riots against Bahais. The movement of 1977 to 1979 was one of the articulate examples, but one that, because of the political repression of the 1970s,

was fought entirely in the Islamic idiom. What produced the Islamic form of the revolution was not Islamic revivalism so much as repression of other modes of political discourse.

This assertion can perhaps be substantiated to some extent by reviewing in summary fashion the Islamic phrasing in protest movements over the past century.[4] At the turn of the century protests against financial indebtedness to the British and Russians and against economic concessions to foreigners often took the form of riots against religious minorities who were seen as clients and agents of the European powers.[5] Often staged during Ramadan (a month of rededication to Islam) and Muharram (a month of contemplating the vulnerability of Islam and the need to aid Husayn as the Kufans had not), these riots were frequently directed by the ulama as a way of demonstrating their power against the state. Such demonstrations were conceded to stem from frustration.

When their letters and telegrams to the shah itemizing their discontents—spread of Bahaism, increasing numbers of Europeans in the administration, contracting of foreign loans, flight of gold from Iran—got through and received some response, the ulama were capable of counseling patience. Thus, a message to the ulama and Muslims of Iran from four of the leading mujtahids of the day counseled that foreigners were to be protected, that suppression of liquor and of Bahaism were to be left to the government. But when their letters were ignored, they were quite capable of inciting riots, making threats—"We will remove the present dog [shah] and put another dog in his place," said Mujtahid Sharabiani in 1903[6]—and using fatwas of impurity and excommunication. In 1891-92 tobacco was declared unclean, forcing a cancelation of the tobacco concession to a British firm. In 1903 tariffs were declared unclean because they included a duty on wine and spirits instead of outlawing them, and a writ of excommunication was prepared against the prime minister. Committees of ulama condemned Bahais to death for heresy against Islam, and in the case of the great massacre of Bahais in Yazd in 1903, there was a public ritual of performing executions in the several major public spaces of the city. In the 1920s, Muslims recruited by the British to help suppress rebellion in Iraq were declared to be kuffars, to be unclean, and not to be accorded Muslim burial.

Under Reza Shah in the 1930s, the old Qajar economy was reorganized into a self-reliant and nationalistic system; thus the direct connection between foreign domination and local minorities was lost, and the form of protests no longer used the minorities as hostages. There was a determination not to contract foreign loans, mercantile capital was no longer allowed to freely go abroad, merchants were forced to invest in state monopolies, and taxes were experimented with to generate income for the state. Consequently both the problems of the country and the form

of popular protest were different from those in the preceding period. Taxes became increasingly regressive, and the printing press was increasingly resorted to.[7]

Part of Reza Shah's modernizing nationalism was a secularist attack on traditional dress and on the ulama, symbols of Islamic backwardness. In 1935-36 a campaign was launched to have people adopt European dress. These issues and problems—the tax burden, the tightening of the dictatorship, the dress code, and the attacks on Islam—elicited the protests culminating in the Mashhad riot of 1935. In this case the rawda was used at the direction of Ayatullah Qummi to provoke people to express protest and to provoke the government into an inappropriate and outrageous response. The police were seen as invading a religious meeting; the order to shoot inside the sacred shrine was seen as an extraordinary violation and exposure of an irreligious regime. The Karbala roles of the victimized Muslims and the tyrannical king were confirmed, and the people chanted, "Husayn, save us from this shah."

The legacy of these two sets of riots carry on into the present. The issue of the dress code has been reduced to a minor but symbolically potent theme in the struggle over the place of women in Iranian society. In 1977, women who attempted to register for class at the University of Tehran wearing a chador were refused; the issue of the right of hijab (modesty) became rekindled, with many women who otherwise would not wear chadors, turning up in them. The right to choose was at issue, so during 1978 the chador at universities became a symbol of protest against dictatorship in general. Women at the University of Isfahan were even reported to put the chador on to demonstrate at the University but to take it off when going out onto the streets to champion women's liberation.

More insidious is the legacy of attacking minorities, which carried on into the 1970s as a kind of daily petty terror. As late as 1970 in the town of Yazd public water fountains were reserved for Muslims only, barbers refused to serve non-Muslims, public baths had separate facilities for non-Muslims, glasses in which tea was served to non-Muslims had to be washed with special thoroughness, and many Muslims would refuse to accept tea from non-Muslims. Petty desecrations of graveyards and shrines of non-Muslims were also normal adolescent behavior. Such terrorism makes it hard for non-Muslims to be enthusiastic about political protest in Islamic idiom, however much the political protest may be justified. This is particularly the case when the *Risalas* (explanatory texts on problems of religion) of the Shi'ite mujtahids insist that the touch of a non-Muslim is najis (an impurity). Theologically, all this restriction means is that a Muslim must wash before praying. But at times of irritation and conflict, it is turned into a rule of social exclusion. Of all the minorities, Bahais are the most vulnerable, partly because they are still considered by Muslims to be heretical schismatics rather than followers

of a separate religion and partly because the idiom of Bahaism is so close to that of Islam that it denies the normal construction of significance that Muslims place on their idiom. It was this fact that allowed Bahaism in its earlier more aggressive form, Babism, to appeal to so many Muslims, spread so rapidly, and hence become such a perceived threat.

In 1955 and 1956 the inarticulate antiminority form of riot broke out against Bahais. The context was the economic difficulties in the aftermath of the collapse of the Mosaddegh government, the roundup of Mosaddegh supporters, especially on the left, and the effort to buy off right-wing Islamic opposition represented by Ayatullah Kashani and the Fida'iyyan-e Islam, a political assassination group. The preacher Shaykh Mohammad Taghi Falsafi was allowed to use the radio during Ramadan to whip up hysteria about a Bahai threat to take over the country. The military governor of Tehran, Teimur Bakhtiar, participated with Falsafi in destroying the tilework on the Bahai temple in Tehran; and Prime Minister Alam told parliament that Bahai activities would be outlawed in Iran. Mrs. Teimurtash told the United Nations on behalf of the Iranian delegation that there were no Bahais in Iran. Ayatullah Borujerdi gave his blessings, meanwhile, to Falsafi's activities. Eventually, when the government reestablished control, it protected rights of all citizens equally while maintaining the fiction that Bahais did not exist.[8] A Muslim organization shadowed people to Bahai meetings and kept lists of suspected Bahais; whether or not religious leaders such as Ayatullah Mahallati approved of such activities, they knew about them and did nothing to discourage them. It is therefore not surprising that a number of anti-Bahai incidents occurred in 1978 and 1979.

Once Mohammad Reza Shah secured his rule in the 1950s the form of protest remained relatively stable, consisting of university student demonstrations, occasional strikes, and preachers using the rawda form. The 1963 demonstrations against the imposition of the White Revolution during the suspension of parliament came after three years of economic depression with high levels of unemployment and low levels of investment, and after election rigging had become so blatant that even the shah had to acknowledge it and annul the elections of 1960. In 1961 students and the National Front demanded annulment of the 1961 elections on the same grounds as in 1960, teachers struck for higher pay, Ayatullahs Behbahani and Borujerdi opposed land reform, and a National Front demonstration to commemorate Mosaddegh's accession to power in 1952 was met with tanks and troops. In 1962 there were student demonstrations and the army invaded the University of Tehran, causing the chancellor, Dr. Ahmad Farhad, to issue a celebrated letter of resignation citing the unheard of "cruelty, sadism, atrocity, and vandalism" visited by the troops upon the students. A roundup of opposition figures followed. In November 1962 the ulama launched a concerted set of protests against the Local Council Election Bill because of its enfranchisement of

women and failure to mention the Qur'an. There were demonstrations on the eve of the referendum of the White Revolution and again on Nawruz (March 21) in Tabriz, Qum, Tehran, Shiraz, and Mashhad; hundreds died in Tabriz and Qum, and the Qum theological schools were invaded by the army. In April came further demonstrations. Fighting broke out against the tribes in Fars. Arsanjani, the author of the land reform program, resigned because not enough money was forthcoming to provide support for farmers through cooperatives.

The morning after 'Ashura, on June 5, Khomeyni was arrested in Qum. By mid-morning massive demonstrations were in progress in Qum, Tehran, Varamin, Shiraz, and Mashhad. They went on for three days. Thousands were massacred by the army, an event symbolized in popular memory with the image of thousands of black-shirted marchers enroute from Qum to Tehran being strafed by air force planes. Afterward, opposition leaders were rounded up, two hundred and fifty in the last four months of 1963, and the arrests continued for the next two years, especially in 1965 after the assassination of Prime Minister Mansur and the attempt on the shah's life (Zonis 1971a: 75).

Throughout the late sixties and the seventies protests continued sporadically. They were primarily directed against the tightening political system, with economic complaints being more scattered until the mid-seventies. From 1974 to 1977 there were some twenty-five major factory strikes, but they were quickly resolved by arresting the leaders and forcing the owners to meet the economic demands. Less controllable was the smoldering hostility to government meddling in all areas of organized life, and especially the intimidation by SAVAK. Reports of torture began to appear in the international press with consistency from 1965 on.

In March 1970, university students protested bus fare increases as a hardship on the poor; they attacked a hundred buses; five students were killed, five hundred injured, and a thousand arrested, of whom thirty to eighty were jailed for an extended period. In May there was a protest against the selling of Iran to foreigners on the occasion of a conference of thirty-five American executives in Tehran and a United States Commerce Department industrial exposition. Speakers S. Mohammad Reza Saidi and Tehran Polytechnic student, Nikdaudi, were arrested and tortured to death (Algar 1972: 250-252). Demonstrations were held in Qum. The government banned memorial services, but they were held nonetheless in the mosque where Saidi had been imam. S. Mahmud Taleghani and Dr. Abbas Sheybani were arrested for attending. In June, Mohsen Hakim, the marja'-i taqlid in Iraq, died. The shah pointedly sent letters of condolence to Ayatullahs Shariatmadari and Khonsari, but not to Khomeyni. Shariatmadari acknowledged the letter, and was rewarded by demonstrations at his house. Forty-eight ulama of Qum sent a letter of condolence to Khomeyni, for which many were exiled from Qum by the government. In December university students demonstrated with the slogan, "Long Live Khomeyni."

During the month of the hajj (January-February) 1971, Khomeyni sent a message to Iranian pilgrims to stay away from the shah's planned celebrations of 2,500 years of continuous monarchy: "Anyone who organizes or participates in these festivals is a traitor to Islam and the Iranian nation" (Algar 1972: 253). Guerrilla activities followed: bank raids, attacks on police posts, explosions, and attempts to kidnap first Prince Shahram, a nephew of the shah, and then the American ambassador, Douglas MacArthur.[9] Before the 2,500-year celebrations, some six hundred to a thousand people were taken into protective custody; travel permits were required of anyone going near the celebration area.

In 1972 and 1973 three United States colonels, an Iranian brigadier-general, an Iranian gendarmerie sergeant, and an Iranian translator for the United States Embassy were assassinated. In 1975, a preacher, Ghaffari, was tortured to death in prison, and the largest anniversary commemorations of 1963 in the entire twelve years were held in Qum, protesting the introduction of a one-party state, the Rastakhiz party. In 1976 an Isfahan mujtahid, S. Abul Hasan Shamsabadi, was assassinated and death threats were made against three other ulama (S. Mohammad Reza Shafti, Faghih-Emami, and S. Hoseyn Ghaderi); the motives and identification of the perpetrators remain unclear, some blaming SAVAK, the government blaming followers of Khomeyni (Mujahidin guerrillas?) in an attempt to radicalize protest. In August 1977 Tehran slum dwellers protested in large numbers against eviction notices and the leveling of their accommodations; a number of people were killed. A series of arson incidents swept Tehran factories in the late summer. In September there was an attempt on the life of Princess Ashraf.

The August deaths of the slum dwellers is counted by some as the start of what grew in 1977 into an almost classic form of revolution, albeit in a structurally neocolonial society. The revolution, in its early stages at least, followed the classic pattern, outlined by Crane Brinton (1952), of the English, French, American, and Russian revolutions: a society with a rising prosperity was hit by recession (in this case engineered to counter inflation), and a government in trouble tried to make exactions not only on the lower classes but on the leading sectors of society, so that even those persons who should have supported the government turned against it, giving added weight to the moral ideological force which denied the government legitimacy and succeeded in demoralizing it. The case against the government was intensified by nationalist and anticolonialist strains. Not only was the government unresponsive to its citizenry, made possible by its financial independence of its citizenry through the oil revenues. But anger at its unresponsiveness was exacerbated by a military and police build-up intended to maintain the stability of oil production

for the industrial world. As the various sectors of society increasingly felt their interests to take second priority to those of the industrial world, pressure against the government grew. As the government came to rely increasingly on foreigners both for labor and for technical advice, one group after another in society was alienated and embittered. The voice of the opposition became that of Islam; the demand, the removal of the shah and the reordering of national priorities.

THE BREACH: MUHARRAM 1977

Cheerleader:	Naft ki burd?	Who took our oil?
Crowd:	Amrika!	America.
Cheerleader:	Gaz ki burd?	Who took our gas?
Crowd:	Shuravi!	Russia.
Cheerleader:	Pul ki burd?	Who took our money?
Crowd:	Pahlavi!	Pahlavi.
Refrain:		
	Marg bar in silsila-yi Pahlavi!	Death to this Pahlavi dynasty!
	Marg bar in silsila-yi Pahlavi!	Death to this Pahlavi dynasty!
Chant:	Tup, tank, musalsal,	Cannon, tank, machine gun,
	Digar asar nadare.	They have no more effect.
Chant:	Shah khar shoda,	The shah is an ass.
	Bayad be zanjir keshida!	He must be chained.

('Ashura march, led by Ayatullah Mahallati, Shiraz, 1978).

The causes of the revolution, and its timing, were economic and political; the form of the revolution, and its pacing, owed much to the tradition of religious protest.[10]

The economic causes stem from the oil price increases in 1973: many of the older structural problems in the economy were exacerbated and new ones were created.[11] The increased revenues led to reckless spending, the tripling and quadrupling of urban wages, especially in construction, which drew rural migrants, and a very high rate of inflation. Had the spending been more careful, many of the negative results could have been avoided: the squeeze on the salaried classes from inflation; the market disincentives to farmers; the high labor costs that made building a factory in Iran as expensive as in Japan, without any of the benefits of a disciplined, quality-conscious workmanship; the importation rather than local training of semiskilled and skilled labor, leading to native resentment; and the expansion of bribery at the top of society to gain licenses for protected economic ventures. Three of these problems may serve to illustrate the deep sources of discontent.

(1) Agricultural policy. Agriculture, long a problem sector of the economy, was further dislocated in the 1970s. Instead of raising producer prices and supplying credit to stimulate production, food was imported on a massive scale and sold at subsidized prices. Money was channeled away from small producers and toward large new mechanized

projects dependent on large irrigation dams, with many peasants being literally squeezed off the land to make way for the agrobusinesses and state farm corporations.[12]

(2) Labor recruitment. Three hundred thousand foreigners were imported in semiskilled, skilled, and even unskilled capacities. Afghan laborers took jobs Iranians no longer wanted. But instead of hiring, training, and providing credit to Iranian truckers, for instance, Korean truck drivers were imported to handle government business from the port of Khorramshahr, a sizable commission on the deal accruing to the labor recruiter and the royal patron. Among the professional classes, more important than resentment against foreigners taking jobs was the widespread resentment at the misuse of their talents: being shunted into meaningless bureaucratic jobs, being forced to accept the existence of corruption, being denied a sense of contributing to policy formulation.

(3) Financing. Commitments for major projects quickly outpaced incoming oil revenues. Within two years of the 1973 oil price rise Iran began borrowing on the international market. By 1977, oil revenues had leveled off and the only way to keep employment levels up while trying to counter inflation would have been to siphon money away from the enormous military expenditures, a strategy that was not attempted. The anti-inflation policies of the Amuzegar government during 1977-78, introduced to relieve the salaried classes, led to widespread unemployment, especially in the construction industry.

At the same time as the economic picture was worsening, the political organization of the state between 1972 and 1977 had first been tightened and then in 1977 somewhat loosened. SAVAK activities seemed to intensify after 1972, and in 1975 there was the abortive and widely resented attempt to create a one-party totalitarian state through the Rastakhiz party.[13] The political organization of the economy also became an issue in two important areas, causing intensification of anti-shah feeling. First, the bazaar was singled out as a scapegoat for the inflation and a major price-regulation campaign was directed against it (see chapter 4). Second, the climate for private entrepreneurs was made more uncertain with the promulgation of laws adjusting the share of capital that foreigners could hold and the profits they could take out, and requiring major companies to sell public shares to workers or to a state holding company if there should not be enough private investors.[14] As a result, many businessmen began to strip their companies of assets and transfer money abroad. Although the share divestment program was billed as a profit-sharing initiative on behalf of the workers, there was continued refusal to allow labor to organize and negotiate on its own behalf: paternalism but not participation.

All of these issues provided the clergy with a receptive audience and fertile moral platforms. Their own material interests—the systematic removal from their control of education, administration of justice,

notary responsibility, administration of religious endowments – were less important than their role as spokesmen for the interests of more important sectors of society, and than their articulation of the general protest against the secret police tyranny and the massive corruption.

In 1977, perhaps at the urging of President Carter and the American Congress's statements in support of human rights, the regime slightly loosened political controls. The intent and sincerity of the Iranian and American governments were ambiguous, but the opposition in Iran made the most of the opportunity. Open letters critical of the regime were addressed to the shah, Minister of Court Hoveyda, and other officials. In May, 53 lawyers sent a telegram protesting the decision to degrade the Supreme Court to the status of an ordinary court and asking that the legal profession be consulted before making major constitutional changes. In July, 64 lawyers signed a manifesto reaffirming the earlier telegram and adding demands for the independence of the judiciary, free elections, and freedom of speech. This was followed by a letter signed by 141 lawyers announcing the formation of an Association of Jurists to monitor the law.

There was some indirect response to these internal pressures and to the international initiatives: in April a military trial was held in public, and it was announced that future military trials would be conducted according to a new code. In June it was announced that civilian dissidents would henceforth be tried by civil courts rather than military courts, as before. But in September, when a letter signed by 54 judges and supported by 110 retired judges reaffirmed the previous missives of the lawyers, SAVAK intervened, forcing Judge Khan Seresht of Zanjan to resign and threatening others with dismissal if they did not sign a recantation. No more open military trials were held; the regulations for how they were to be conducted were never published.

An initiative similar to that of the lawyers was undertaken by first the Iranian Writers Association, then the bazaar guilds, and finally the remnants of political parties that had been forced underground. In June, 40 writers asked that their association be officially recognized, that they be allowed to publish a journal, and that they be allowed to hold meetings; they also objected to censorship. There was no response, so the demands were repeated in a letter in July with 98 members signing. In July, the bazaar guilds issued a complaint that the Rastakhiz party was strangling them. In August, a Writers Committee for the Defense of Prisoners was formed. During the summer, dissident political groups emerged in public: the National Front, the Tudeh party, and the two guerrilla groups, the Islamic Mujahidin and the marxist Fida'iyyan. In October the Writers' Association held ten days of poetry reading commemorating the death of the writer Jalal Al-i Ahmad, who died under mysterious circumstances and whose works had been periodically banned.

In November 1977, the shadow boxing began to turn into a real duel. On November 3, Khomeyni's son died mysteriously; funeral ceremonies were held all over Iran; police clashed with mourners in the Tehran bazaar. On November 13, the shah left for his twelfth visit to the United States. Students in the United States mobilized for a major demonstration. The Iranian government countered by mounting a pro-shah demonstration in Washington. Troops being trained in the United States were flown to Washington to demonstrate in civilian clothing. Armenian and Assyrian civic associations were recruited to fly members to Washington from Chicago and Los Angeles, each participant being given a hundred-dollar bill. Some four thousand anti-shah and fifteen hundred pro-shah demonstrators gathered around the White House on November 15. A twenty-one gun salute greeted the shah, touching off a clash between pro- and anti-shah demonstrators. Tear gas wafted across the White House lawn, causing shah and president to wipe away tears during their speeches. More demonstrations followed, the next day. Meanwhile, in Tehran the Writers' Association sponsored a second poetry reading with the poet Said Sultanpour on November 15 and 16, and a third poetry reading on November 25. On both occasions police arrested participants for chanting anti-shah slogans, leading to protest marches on the following days, in which there were further clashes between students and police, and a number of deaths. Abiding by the June law allowing civilian trials for civilian dissidents, the students were able to obtain lawyers from the Association of Jurists; all were released or given light sentences.

Harassment of dissidents continued, however. SAVAK began to put pressure on the members of the Writers Association to drop their demands. The names of lawyers who had signed the open letters of the last months were black-listed in a government circular. Dissidents were described in the press as "hooligans" and "supporters of international terrorism." The Rastakhiz party newspaper warned that government patience with dissent was running out. Dissident meetings were broken up. Various individuals were harrassed over the next few months: In December, Dariush Foruhar, a lawyer, leader of the Iran Nationalist Party and a leader of the National Front, was beaten. In January, Homa Pakdaman, a professor, was arrested for signing a petition for free speech, released, and then beaten up. In April, bombs were exploded at the homes of Rahmatollah Moghaddam (majlis representative from Maragheh), Mehdi Bazargan (leader of the Iran Liberation Movement), and Hajj Mahmud Manian (an activist bazaar merchant). In June, Abdul Lahiji (lawyer, leading figure in the Committee for the Defense of Freedom and Human Rights) was beaten and a bomb exploded outside his office.

The month of Muharram fell in December 1977 and January 1978.

The international, internal political, and religious threads began to interweave. The government banned any commemoration of the fortieth-day memorial of the death of Ayatullah Khomeyni's son. Khomeyni made no pronouncement on his son's death but renewed his call for the overthrow of the shah and the reinstitution of the 1905 constitution. President Carter paid the shah a visit at New Year's and praised him effusively. The Iranian government then responded to Khomeyni with an extraordinary bit of miscalculation and overconfidence: a newspaper article was printed ridiculing him as a medieval reactionary.

The scene was set. The end of Muharram coincided with civil holidays introduced by the Pahlavis to supplement, if not supersede, the religious cycle of holidays and to celebrate their own accomplishments. The twenty-seventh of Muharram (Islamic calendar) fell on 17 Dey (civil calendar), the date commemorating Reza Shah's liberation of women (7 January); celebrations were planned by the government's Women's Organization. Counterdemonstrations were held in Qum and Mashhad. On January 8, the Rastakhiz party organized larger demonstrations, especially in Tabriz, with women carrying slogans saying, "We do not wish to return to medieval times." The next day, the twenty-ninth of Muharram (January 9) coincided with 19 Dey, the anniversary of the shah's land reform. In Qum there was a sit-in to protest the government propaganda against Khomeyni and a reading of twelve demands: implementation of the constitution; separation of executive, legislative, and judicial powers; abolition of the bureau of censorship; freedom of speech; freedom for political prisoners; freedom for citizens to form religious associations; dissolution of the Rastakhiz party; reopening of Tehran University, closed because of the poetry readings; an end to police violence against students; state assistance to farmers; reopening of the Faydiyya madrasa, closed since 1975; and return of Ayatullah Khomeyni (Abrahamian 1978). This was followed by a march of four thousand students; police opened fire killing ten to seventy, and injuring many more.[15] Incensed, the leading marja'-i taqlid of Qum, Ayatullah Shariatmadari, declared the shah's government non-Islamic, called for a moratorium on communal prayers, and threatened a funeral march to carry the corpses to the Niavaran Palace.

The revolution was on. By mid-summer, all sectors of society had joined in: the students, intellectuals, and bazaaris who began things; the construction workers hurt by the economic slowdown; the factory workers incensed by embezzlement of pension funds and demanding higher wages (and later the right to unionize); the civil service, which had suffered a three-year wage freeze under soaring inflation; the urban slum dwellers, many of whom had been squeezed off the land; the bazaaris who had been the object of the punitive price campaigns; and finally the

oil workers. Shariatmadari's statement was electrifying because he had finally broken the tacit agreement of maraji'-i taqlid within Iran to avoid public political pronouncements. In 1975, much to the chagrin of the students of Qum, he had remained silent when troops invaded the theological schools, cracking heads and arresting four hundred for shouting blessings upon Khomeyni and curses upon the shah.

There was a brief calm while the actors considered what had happened. Then the measured pace of the revolution began. On January 10, United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim arrived in Tehran. The Writers' Association and the newly formed Iranian Committee for the Defense of Liberty and Human Rights sought meetings with him and sent him open letters citing violations of human rights. On January 13, 120 ulama backed up Shariatmadari's pronouncement by signing a protest of the Qum events and declaring a moratorium on public prayer in the mosques. Traditional death memorials are held on the third, seventh, and fortieth days. February 18 was the fortieth of the Qum martyrs, and the ulama called for a day of mourning, of peaceful strikes, and worship. There was, instead, violence and death. Twice more following this fortieth there were violent fortieths.

The main violence on February 18 was in Tabriz, sparked by the shooting of a young worker by the police and the locking of the public out of the congregational mosque. For 36 hours demonstrators took over the city, selectively attacking 73 banks, liquor stores, sexually explicit billboards on movie houses, any businesses that had not observed the strike call, offices of the Rastakhiz party, and anything displaying the blue-and-emerald emblem of the 2,500-year anniversary of continuous monarchy. The government responded with tanks and infantry: at least 9 (perhaps 100) were killed, 125 to 300 wounded, 700 arrested. The shah responded by dismissing the governor-general, publicly reprimanding and shaking up the Tabriz SAVAK, and sending a general to meet with a delegation of ten religious leaders in Tehran. Infantry troops remained on the streets of Tabriz until March 3; the damage done by the riot was repaired with amazing rapidity.

The next major event was the fortieth of Tabriz: March 30. But all was not quiet during the interim. Some two hundred political prisoners in Tehran's Qasr prison began a month-long hunger strike, protesting the conditions in the prison and demanding civilian retrials under the June law. The government at first denied that a hunger strike was occurring or that it involved so many people. However, the Iranian Committee for the Defense of Freedom and Human Rights publicized it and sent telegrams to the government in support of the strikers. The police responded by entering the prison and beating the fasters (March 15).

A day of mourning was called for March 30. There was violence this

time in some fifty-five cities, including Tehran, Babol, Isfahan, Kashan, Qum, Yazd, and Jahrom. The government attributed it to "foreign-inspired" mobs. In Yazd a militant rawda by Rashed Yazdi demanding justice for Tabriz provoked a police attack in which 2 to 120 died. The tape of the speech circulated widely.

The next fortieth was May 8-9: there were disturbances in some thirty-four towns. On May 10 in Qum, a funeral was followed by a ten-hour demonstration. The demonstration was quelled after sunset by shutting off the town's electricity and firing upon the demonstrators. At least nine people died. The police invaded Ayatullah Shariatmadari's house and killed two ulama there, allegedly when they refused to shout "Javid shah" (long live the shah). The government made a public apology. On May 11, there was a major clash in Tehran: speeches were held in the congregational mosque of the bazaar; the police surrounded the mosque, teargassing the demonstrators when they emerged and then firing upon them. Many were killed, injured, and arrested. Dissidents claimed that through the cycle of the three fortieth days some 250 had died, 600 were injured, and 3,000 arrested. Khomeyni denounced the shah and "his family of looters . . . whose hands are sunk up to the elbows in the blood of innocents." He made a plea for the army to overthrow the tyrannical dynasty. It was not in the power of the students to overthrow the government, he indicated; more powerful forces were required.

Ramadan and Black Friday 1978

So far the demonstrations, though the most serious since 1963, were still mainly in the mold of demonstrations of past years. By March Khomeyni was calling for the assassination of the shah, but his May pronouncements advised caution to his followers: the enemy was strong and the task required the army not simply street demonstrations. Shariatmadari began to counsel that strikes be conducted by staying at home rather than in street demonstrations, which would give the shah's forces the opportunity to kill. On June 17, Shariatmadari called for a peaceful general strike in Qum, and it was peaceful. By July there were indications that the demonstrations were beginning to involve wider and wider sections of society. Accounts of factory strikes began to circulate: 2000 workers in Tabriz demanded better wages, restoration of their New Year's bonuses, which had been withheld, and better housing; 600 sanitation workers in Abadan went on strike for higher wages; 1,500 textile workers in Behshahr struck for free union elections. On July 25, mourners in a funeral for a well-known religious figure chanted anti-shah slogans and were attacked by the police: 40 died.

Ramadan began on August 5. From the ninth to the seventeenth of August there were continual demonstrations, especially in Shiraz and Isfahan. In Shiraz the annual Festival of Arts was opposed and canceled: there had been lewd plays on a main street the previous year as part of

the Festival, and, in general, for years there had been conflict between local sensibilities and the patrons of the avant-garde from Tehran and abroad. Not only the Shiraz Festival of Arts, but the entire series of international festivals scheduled for various cities (Isfahan, Hamadan, Tus) was canceled. In both Isfahan and Shiraz there were deaths, many injuries, and arrests. In Isfahan demonstrators even briefly returned the gunfire of the police. Local religious leaders were arrested in Isfahan on August 17 after eighteen hours of rioting and demonstrating.

On August 19th, timed to coincide with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the restoration of the monarchy in 1953, a stunning tragedy was perpetrated in Abadan: over four hundred people were burned alive in the Rex Movie Theater. The government tried to blame the dissidents: it was the sixth theater to be burned during Ramadan; two modern restaurants catering to the elite and foreigners had been burned in Shiraz and Tehran, the latter causing a death and forty injuries; clearly this was a reaction to modernization. Ten people were arrested, and confessions were extracted from five of them. The people, however, blamed SAVAK: the film had been an Iranian one with some social commentary, not a foreign one nor a sex-oriented one; the theater was in a working-class district, not catering to foreigners; the fire department was noticeably slow to respond and the equipment would not function when it did arrive; meanwhile the police prevented citizen rescue attempts. A third possibility placed in the general speculation was that the fire had been set, and the doors locked, by Palestinian trained guerrillas in an attempt to radicalize the revolution.

Over ten thousand people came to the funeral. Police and municipal officials were forced to leave the cemetery, and threats were made against the police chief's life should he ever set foot again in Abadan. Mourners chanted, "Death to the shah! Burn him! End the fifty years of Pahlavi tyranny! Soldiers, you are guiltless; the shah is the villain." On the seventh-day memorial, mourners streamed out of the Behbehanian Mosque, smashing windows of banks and government buildings, for the third straight night of violence. Ayatullah Kazem Dehdashti called for the shah's removal. There were student demonstrations in Washington, Los Angeles, and the Hague.

August 22 marked the beginning of the most important final ten days of Ramadan: normally one would spend the nights of the nineteenth, twenty-first, twenty-third, and twenty-seventh of Ramadan in the mosque reading the Qur'an through in commemoration of the day of its revelation. The first of these dates coincided with the Abadan funeral, the third with the resignation of the Amuzegar government (August 27), and the fourth (August 31) with the fortieth of the deaths in Mashhad on July 22. The fortieth in Mashhad began with thousands gathering at the house of Ayatullah S. Abdollah Shirazi; the gathering was moved to a more spacious venue, where a speech was delivered by S. Mohammad-