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**Dictatorship and Rise of Popular Movement:
The Case of Iran**

by

MOHSSEN NODJOMI

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in Sociology in partial fulfill-
ments of the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
University of New York.

1986

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Sociology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

Dictatorship and Rise of Popular Movement: The Case of Iran

by

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This dissertation is primarily concerned with the Iranian revolution of 1979, a revolution unique in all of its aspects. It was a revolution that was not supposed to have occurred when it did; and it appeared in religious, spontaneous and mass form when it did occur, thereby combining the principles of rationality of a democratic anti-dictatorial movement with those of irrationality generally associated with mass uprisings. From the very outset, its paradoxical character was manifest in its patterns of development, organization, mobilization, as well as in its aspiration, ideology and leadership. Prevailing theories of revolution, in particular Marxism in its reductionist and dogmatic form did not shed any light on the social and historical conditions which gave rise to the revolution or on the specificities of its spontaneous and mass character.

Historically specific to Iranian situations has been the subordination of socio-economic development to the requirements of a dictatorship supported by foreign powers, and incessant patterns of mass

resistance to it. Social conflict in Iran has tended to express itself in the struggle of society as a whole against state power, a struggle specific to pre-capitalist formation where class struggle, according to Marx, does not appear in its "pure form" transforming every struggle against state power into a struggle against capital. The revolution itself took place despite capitalist modernization and its form responded to the fact that modernization was initiated from above by the dictatorship.

This dissertation presents a general concept of modernizing dictatorship and applies it to the concrete case of Iran in order to explain how the relationship between capitalist development and underdevelopment in that country and that between class and class struggle are and were mediated by the imperatives of dictatorship. Those imperatives are the need to consolidate and expand dictatorial power and the need constantly to renew its hegemony. The contradiction immanent in the dictatorial structure of power manifests itself in the processes of legitimation and delegitimation, disclosing the superimposed and alien character of the dictatorship, and ultimately leading to the disintegration of its repressive centralized apparatus from above and the rise of popular movement from below.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As the Iranian revolution of 1979 was being unfolded, the writing of this dissertation began under the supervision of Professor Michael Brown. He bore with me during the times I was jubilant about the rebirth of my nation through that revolution, the time that I felt at best ambivalent about it, as well as the time of grief and sorrow over a revolution that was dying in its infancy. He clearly saw the form and the content of this dissertation tied to the destiny of the revolution, a revolution that was and is still far from being complete. A complete presentation of the incompleteness of the revolution was what Professor Brown hoped I would achieve. Failure to do so is mine. To be sure, it was the depth of his insight and his vigorous technical assistance that enriched the theoretical aspect of this work and immensely improved its writing. Without him this dissertation at its present form would have been impossible.

Professor George Fischer offered his help and encouragement in writing this dissertation. More importantly, he strengthened my belief in an unorthodox analysis of dictatorship as an authentic subject-matter of sociology. Professor Joseph Bensman exchanged views with me and broadened my horizon with his frank criticism. I am grateful to Professor Bill Kornblum for his support, sympathy, and enthusiasm, which both helped me to maintain my student status and sustain my belief in the importance of my work. I would also like to thank Professor Bogden Denitch, who helped me to pursue my intellectual interests at the Graduate Center.

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Nor could I have gotten through those difficult years of being an alien in this country without a companion such as Diane Brickley, with whom I grew up in the United States and learned to live and love.

The writing of this dissertation picked up momentum when Soheila Asayesh typed the whole manuscript into the word processor and shared with me the burden of giving the dissertation its final form.

I would also like to thank Anne Colantuoni who proofread the entire last draft of the manuscript and the following friends and colleagues, Jaffar Broujerdi, Javad Tavakolli, Leslie Galman, John Pittman, John Gunn, Ted Yanow and Stephenie Lawson who helped me to clarify my thinking and from whose support I benefited greatly.

Table of Contents

Chapter I	page
A Theory of Dictatorship: A Reinterpretation of the Iranian Revolution of 1979	1-17
Chapter II	
Reform From Above: Political Economy of Modernizing Dictatorship	18-43
Chapter III	
Modernizing Dictatorship and the Bourgeois Classes	44-63
Chapter IV	
Modernizing Dictatorship and the Principle of Centralization	64-102
Chapter V	
From Renewal of Dictatorial Hegemony to Mass Protest: 1977-1978	103-144
Chapter VI	
Dictatorship and Spontaneous Mass Movement	145-176
Chapter VII	
Conclusion: The Dialectic of Dictatorship and Revolution	177-188
Bibliography	189-193

Chapter I

Theory of Dictatorship: A Reinterpretation Of The Iranian Revolution Of 1979

Introduction

This dissertation is an attempt to reinterpret the Iranian revolution of 1979. The need for this reinterpretation arose from the inadequacy of the analyses that have followed the method of historical materialism and various versions of functionalism. The former explains the revolution in terms of the materialist development of society and the latter employs causal factors to understand history that do not take account of the role of agency in social change. In one, the categories lend themselves to quantitative analyses without regard to structure and processes. In the other, indices are arbitrary thereby confusing psychological and sociological levels of explanations. The major objection to these is not that they are empirically inapplicable to the Iranian situation, but that they cannot provide adequate sociological insight into the phenomenon they purport to explain. At best they explain the Iranian revolution as if it had no history.

Functionalist theories regard revolution as an event beyond the threshold of societal tolerance, stressing the accumulation of potentially revolutionary elements, system strain, and the emergence of a prevailing psychological and moral state of discontent. Each of

these hypotheses, seems to specify a mechanism of change and threshold condition of transformation. Despite the fact that each approach provides a way of specifying causes and seems applicable to a range of situations and historical occurrences, none of them sheds light on the Iranian revolution of 1979 beyond the most accessible facts of its occurrence. Each approach is applicable only after the facts are in. Moreover, the mechanisms and conditions identified in these approaches do not seem to reflect the dominant features of the particular society. One can postulate with a high degree of confidence that they exist in every society without precipitating a revolution. Indeed, as I shall attempt to show, they are not part of the caused picture but are effects of underlying socio-economic antagonisms contained within the social structure.

The problem with the historical materialist approach is not as is typically claimed--that it failed to anticipate the role of religion in bringing about the revolution. This is, to be sure, a shortcoming, but rather than being a result of neglecting facts it depends on a decisive assumption: that religion is an epiphenomenon to a larger reality, the spontaneous mass character of the revolution based on class-based antagonism.

Thus, the failure of the historical materialist approach lies in its reduction of the historical movement of a society that has not yet reached the stage of development achieved by Western capitalist countries, to a mere expression of level of capitalist development in the context of imperialism and the global political economy. The laws of that political economy are said to determine the character of class contradictions in Iran and the development of material interests in opposing directions as class conflict is intensified in the context of imperialist crises.

What is objectionable to this supposition, is the economic determinism used to explain what must nonetheless be admitted as fact. So reductionist an explanation produces its own validation by a narrow and self-fulfilling selection of facts. By eliminating at the outset the complexity of Iranian society, it precludes an understanding of

revolution as a multiplied determined as a product of society as such. In fact, society is equalled with an economy taken in abstraction apart from its political and cultural structures. This is not to say that this method rejects the mutuality and interdependence of the superstructure and the basic economic structure. However, it fails to extend that model to the possibility of concrete historical conditions under which society can be dominated by an element of superstructure as in the case of Iran by its polity. An authentically historical materialism would provide for that possibility, and a dynamic theory of base and superstructure might account for a different path of development whose motive force both reflects class struggle and the alien quality of domination by a polity that supercedes that struggle in the frame of dictatorship.

At this point, one only needs to mention the criticism that Georg Lukacs leveled against vulgar Marxism in his essay on the "Changing Function of Historical Materialism", where he shows "how cautious and critical Marx and Engels were in their judgements upon the specific structures and the specific laws governing the evolution of past non-capitalist societies."² The fact is that the social structures of less developed societies have too frequently been analysed exclusively in terms of their function in the process of the accumulation of capital and the requirements of imperialist domination without adequate regard to what Lukacs considers as "the hegemony of completely different systems of categories and as the completely different functions of particular sectors within the framework of society as a whole."³

Specifically, at least in the case of national societies such as Iran the role and function of the power structure and the way in which it establishes its dictatorial hegemony cannot be ignored without doing violence to the idea of the development of society as the unity of base and superstructure. Developing a concept of dictatorship and specifying its historical and functional characteristics as an organic unity relatively independent and alienated from the society is the task of historical materialism applied dialectically

rather than mechanically. In order to understand the historical development and structure of less developed societies dominated by imperialism, a distinct concept of power structure is necessary. Such a concept is ultimately concerned with the quality of historical development and the totality of social relations mediated through the ideologically coercive rather than institutional hegemony of dictatorship.

Under such circumstances, the structure of power not only conditions the development of objective material conditions and subordinates it to the internal dynamism of that structure, but determines the character of the population and its capacity to achieve liberation from exploitation and oppression. It achieves this not merely by repression but by combining repression with the political function of transforming structures beyond what would occur through class struggle. By subordinating its population, dictatorship reinforces the subjection of society as a whole to the laws of the global economy dominated by hegemonic capital.

It follows, therefore that crises in less developed societies can be understood as essentially political and only secondarily as economic. The theory of imperialist crisis does not adequately address the socio-political nature of crises under dictatorship or the character of the resistance that develops under dictatorial conditions. Crises are seen as little more than the unmediated reflection of contradictions within capitalism. As Samir Amin points out, "The current crisis reminds us forcefully of the chief characteristics of the capitalist system in its imperialist phase- the transfer of the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production from its dominant imperialist centers to its dominant periphery."⁴ It is not, therefore, the structural problems inherent in dictatorship that lead to the crisis and eventual emergence of a popular resistance movement, but rather the fundamental contradiction between social mode of production and private form of appropriation inherent in capitalism.

Similarly, the forces involved in revolutionary movement under

dictatorship do not reflect the class character of society as such nor the internal class antagonism based on material interests. It takes, rather, a mass form, spontaneously developing through protest and expressing an interest in self-determination in its most general sense (cf. France, 1968). Thus, the road to socialism is not bridged alone by a transitional stage of economic development. Rather, it requires a transitional political, as well as cultural, stage of development mediated by mass mobilization that function as necessary conditions for the development of an authentic class consciousness and class struggle. In order for that to occur, the machinery of dictatorship must be destroyed and its social institutions eliminated.

Modernizing Dictatorship

The concept of "modernizing dictatorship" is based essentially on the Iranian model. For in many respects it can substitute for an ideal type: its mediation of society was virtually total. That is to say, its centralization and concentration of political power was supplemented by economic power based on monopoly control of national petroleum resources.

I will argue (1) that dictatorship is an entity that can only function in its own interest; (2) because this relative autonomy from the society on which it nevertheless depends, arises in the first instance through process of seizing and consolidating power; (3) that conditions under which such power can be consolidated also require that power be expanded through self-escalating repression that aims totally to mediate socio-historical development by restructuring society and integrating it through modernization into the world system dominated by the hegemonic capital that is dictatorship's support.

I will attempt to show, in connection with this, that the processes of seizing and consolidating power disclose the essential nature of dictatorship, that is, its illegitimate and alien character. That in turn reflects an inherent contradiction between the archaic structure of dictatorial polity and historical conditions

of its, and its society's material development. The immediately ensuing crisis is therefore a political one in which the dictatorship is forced to adopt structural reforms in the context of repression which lead to its disintegration from within and its destruction in the form of spontaneous mass revolutionary movement from below.

The development of a modernizing dictatorship typically occurs when a low level of economic development, in the context of foreign influence, is the dominant feature of society. It begins with a seizure of power that is not based on a particular class interest even though it may be accompanied by the support of certain classes. Its initial legitimacy depends on its ability to claim that it represents the whole and aims to restore peace and order and to resolve the national, economic and political crises under which it arose. Thus, its immediate move to suspend conflict among classes and groups by establishing its exclusive control over the means of coercion is part of that legitimacy. It then presides over pre-existing exploitative social relations and serves the function of maintaining the social order of those relations. To eliminate all obstacles that could undermine its legitimacy, it develops an extensive and self-expanding apparatus of control and coercion. Its self-perpetuation takes precedence over its function as the representative of a particular class and, paradoxically, the hegemonic capitalist powers whose support made its initial seizure of power possible.

Every victory that it obtains in this direction seems on the one hand to bring a societal unity subordinate to the dictatorship as its exclusive representative within reach. However, its methods inevitably alienate it from society. Ultimately, it can only become an entity-for-itself, unable to tolerate any process that might hold its policies up to public scrutiny and judgement. At that point, its externality to the society it depends upon is complete. Nevertheless, it remains united with society in so far as the latter's social structural development is concerned, and separated from it by virtue of its function as guardian of an existing social order based on exploitation and oppression. In other words, modernizing dictator-

ship is a unity of contradictions.

Put somewhat differently, the expansion of power is a dynamic built into the structure of dictatorship. This implies that the process by which dictatorship achieves autonomy is inevitably accompanied by a greater unity of repression and a greater division of society into ruled and ruler. The development of the machinery of repression, the rationalization of its structure toward accountability and efficiency is the primary self-fulfilling objective of the dictatorship. It is through the machinery of repression that the dictatorship so far as possible, dominates society as a whole. Its attempts at eliminating resistance and subordinating thought and reason to its own requirements develops a culture of dependency, submissiveness and superstition that, in turn, reinforces the traditional value system and the religious beliefs upon which, as with Iran, provides the foundation for such a culture. That is why most, if not all, societies under domination by a dictatorship are traditional. Nevertheless, because the dictatorship appears as society's agent of "modernization", it appears to dominate society objectively as well as subjectively. This is an intrinsic contradiction of dictatorial structures of power that can only eventuate in their destruction from within.

It is, however, clear that no power structure can be maintained only on the basis of repression. By means of socio-economic reforms that can only be initiated from above in the form of a modernization that appears to represent the needs of the whole modernizing dictatorship responds, as it must, to the imperatives of more general social changes. It appears to respond to the needs of the most oppressed and exploited section of society, the peasants, who constitute the majority of the population, by agrarian reforms; supplemented by an industrialization necessarily financed by both internal and external resources, developing as dependent classes a "bourgeois" class and an industrial working class. On the other hand, by virtue of its function as a primary agent of social change, the modernizing dictatorship appears to carry out the historical task

of the bourgeoisie. But, the application of restructuring reforms that change the economy is, in reality, a part of the consolidation of dictatorship rather than a part of the development of a bourgeois order aimed at private accumulation of capitalist wealth. That is to say, modernizing reforms by a dictatorship serve primarily political objectives, and appearance of classes and class-like functions is only an illusion of modernizing economy.

According to Marx, the Western bourgeois societies developed through a series of revolutions, in the method of production. But, "each step in the development of the bourgeoisie," Marx states, "was⁵ accompanied by a corresponding political advance of that class." Such a development, however, cannot occur when a dictatorial structure of power dominates society as a whole. A bourgeois class can only develop in that situation as a result of economic reformation from above. Therefore, it is subordinate to dictatorial authority rather than to an independent economic as well as a political force in a dynamic and contradictory relation with an authentic proletariat.

In Europe, bourgeois political ideas developed simultaneously with the transformation of the basic economic structure of society. It suffices to point to the ideology of the Enlightenment and its conception of progress and natural order. The process of bourgeois development took place as an organic unity, not as the result of an external intervention from above. Under a modernizing dictatorship, the bourgeois class does not develop according to its own ideals through a process of class struggle against perishing feudals and a rising working class, but according to the requirements of the dictatorship. Therefore, unlike European bourgeoisie, this class under a dictatorship merely contributes to the self-expansion of dictatorial domination and reinforces foreign influence.

To put it more theoretically, a bourgeois class exists objectively in relation to the means of production. But when it is subordinated to a dictatorial political structure it has no autonomous subjectivity and does not serve its classical historical function as an agency of social change. That is why, under a dictatorial order, the

ruling ideas are not the ideas of the economically dominant class. Therefore, society is not directly subject to bourgeois rule but to an order that is imposed and maintained from above.

This has frequently been referred to as the underdevelopment of the political superstructure relative to the economic base. In particular, the Iranian revolution has been explained in terms of a political structure which lagged behind economic modernization.⁶ This is an erroneous and mechanistic conception of the relation of base to superstructure. Under dictatorial conditions, the question is not whether the superstructure lags behind the economic base, but in which direction-- from economy to polity or the reverse-- a lag can be identified. The modernization program of the dictatorial order is a systematic economic intervention intended both to regulate development and to reduce the threat of revolution from below. This sort of modernization, including industrialization and agrarian reform, appears to be consistent with the classical bourgeois transformation of society. But, on the contrary, it institutes the basic economy as a reflection of the power structure. This can be further clarified by a more thorough differentiation of the classical bourgeois order from the dependent bourgeois under a dictatorship.

To begin with, the representation of bourgeois interest under the dictatorship cannot be identified with the classical use of the state power "to regulate", as Marx points out, wages, to force them within the limits suitable for accumulation of surplus value, "to lengthen the working day and to keep the labourer himself in the normal degree of dependence."⁷ The rising bourgeois class normally subordinates the state to its interests under the concrete historical conditions of what Marx calls "primitive accumulation." According to Marx, "The organization of the capitalist process of production once fully developed, breaks down all resistance."⁸ It is different under a dictatorship. There, all independence is broken in response to the need for consolidating the dictatorial structure of power. There is no capitalist transformation as such of the mode of production even though the elements of modernization appear to be the same as what

would occur under a classical capitalist transformation. It is certainly true that the adoption of bourgeois measures by a dictatorial authority intensifies the polarization of society into accumulated wealth and a working class and "new middle" classes who have nothing to sell but their labor power. But under a dictatorship, the intensification of resistance cannot be overcome by the organization of a process of capitalist production which has not yet acquired autonomy. In fact, the low level of development that is inevitable under this circumstance deprives the mode of production of its capacity to function as an independent mechanism of control based on a developed division of labor and scientific and technological progress. It is not the organization of capitalist production that creates a repressive apparatus but dictatorship itself that establishes its own hegemony by taking exclusive control of productive forces.

The difference is obviously culturally as well as socially significant. Marx emphasizes that "the advance of capitalist production develops a working-class, which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of Nature"⁸. But, when education, tradition, and habit are reflections of the power structure and are determined by it, the mode of production is looked upon by the whole of society as self-evident laws of the social order of the dictatorship. Applying historical materialism to precapitalist societies, Lukacs points out that "in such societies economic life did not yet possess that independence, that cohesion and immanence, nor did it have the sense of setting its own goals and being its own master that we associate with capitalist society."⁹

If the economic order seems to be independently self-evident under the classical bourgeoisie, it is because the capital-labor relation is presented as a mystification that takes an ideological form which, as Lukacs puts it, "reifies the mind." The bourgeois social order establishes itself as a natural order based on the belief in the freedom and equality of individuals as owners of commodities entering into exchange relations. The dictatorial order, by contrast, does not take

an ideological form that legitimizes existing social relations. It needs no ideological mystification. It makes itself self-evident by monopolizing the power of defining reality by the application of force. The ideology of dictatorship, if there exists such a thing is force: both the language with which it speaks and the medium by which it communicates exemplifies the principle of coercion. Its wishes are orders that must be carried out and accepted as self-evident, as if they are the embodiment of truth.

Modernization under dictatorship primarily takes the form of a militarization of society and bureaucratization of its function that requires external support. To satisfy its most essential needs, such as food, shelter, clothing and health, the nation becomes dependent on the advanced industrial countries through its dependency on the dictatorship. Its key modern industries are owned by the state and operate based on borrowed technology, science, and services. By virtue of its monopoly control of all socio-economic resources, the dictatorship provides employment for the vast majority of the population with diverse class origins, and wide range of technical abilities virtually eliminating the distinction between the state and society. Nevertheless, it produces on one hand, a ruling apparatus composed of a new bureaucratic bourgeoisie defined primarily by organizational status and only secondarily by its relation to the means of production; and on the other, a vast civil and military functionaries who have neither power nor sufficient income. The bureaucratic and military machinery by which the dictatorship alone can manage and administer its affairs operate based on the principles of centralization developed to an unprecedented level. Despite its universalistic and rational character, the dictatorial bureaucratic apparatus is dominated by personal relationships, and diffusion of tasks and functions, which results from subordination and submission to the central authority. It follows that the distinctive features of the dictatorial bureaucratic apparatus are corruption and inefficiency as well as the implementation of coercive and the reinforcement of dictatorial values. In this process the dictatorship reproduces itself, reflecting the irrational-

lity inherent in its nature, mediating backwardness, and at the same time, functioning as the medium for integrating society into the world system dominated by hegemonic capitalism. Without such a power structure in place, imperialist domination would be difficult if not impossible to sustain.

Thus, the economy of modernization under a dictatorship must be understood fundamentally as a political system in which dictatorship seeks to perpetuate the division of society, in all of its aspects, into ruled and ruler. This is dictatorship's ultimate goal, the logic of its existence and the contradiction inherent in its structure. It is part of, yet separate from society, a source of societal integration, yet the source of society's total dependence.

By becoming the sole modernizing agency, the dictatorial order expands its authority, strengthens its control, restricts the sphere of everyday life, and suppresses all attempts at self-determination. All legal and institutional mechanisms are transformed into instruments of the dictatorship, thereby providing its authority with greater sanction. This totalizing order establishes silence by encouraging self-censorship and promoting loyalty, obedience, and submissiveness to unjust authority. Of all the traditional and cultural institutions, religion is more than likely to survive and coexist with the dictatorship. This is so, because its institutions essentially serve to enhance social conformity and its values contribute to the mystification of the sources of oppression. Hence, religious institutions, unlike any other progressive ideological forms, rather than being weakened under a dictatorship tend to be strengthened and accommodated.

Under modernizing dictatorship supra-economic crises are bound to recur apart from the strictly economic crises manifested in increased social inequality, or inadequate distribution of goods and services, and inflated prices. Such problems are not however sufficient to precipitate the threat of revolution from below. They are, in the first instance, the expression of a greater contradiction within the power structure itself, a contradiction that is bound to intensify,

expressing itself as a democratic movement of increasing resistance to the established dictatorial order. In such a movement, all particular interests, including class interests are dominated by the democratic interest of the masses, the only interest capable of articulation in the whole of the dictatorial repression. Any attempt to explain crises under a dictatorship, in terms of economic crises caused by its integration into the capitalist world economy or by economically casual factors is at best misleading and at worst a complete misconception of what is unique about dictatorship.

Under such circumstances, dictatorship must increase the level and intensity of its repression. But this can only reinforce the contradiction of centralized rule and legitimacy to which it responded in the first place. The alternative is to modify essential structural features of the dictatorship itself. The latter course is, however, as likely as the first to lead to the negation of the reforming authority itself. A general, structural reformation is capable of legitimation only if it redefines the sphere of freedom, or self-determination in regard to the problem of repression that created an interest in freedom. But dictatorial reforms are constrained not merely by the need to remedy crises but by the still more general problem of constantly consolidating itself. Therefore, the attempt at political self-reformation runs the risk of transforming the dictatorship from the historical agency that controls and mediates the social, economic and cultural relations of society to an agency defined and controlled by those very forces. The mass movement draws its capacity for mobilization from this renewal. From that point, from that inevitable moment of reform on, the dictatorship is on the defensive. Its antagonist is now society itself.

With the disintegration of the machinery of the dictatorship mass protest simultaneously begins to organize itself as a recollectivization of society based on mass consensus around the generalized project of resisting established authority (cf. France, 1968). The fate of the revolution depends then, on the degree to which this consensus can support an organization of revolutionary activities consistent with

the consensus and therefore capable of increasing the extent and rationality of its mobilization of society. These developments depends as well on the continual ideological, organizational, and material decline of the repressive capability of the dictatorship. Because of the suppression of any other form of fundamental solidarity, the traditional culture, the source of mechanical solidarity, and in particular religion is more likely to fill the organizational need of the mass movement. To that extent, it can only embody the spirit of popular resistance.

In sum, the singular characteristic of a resistance movement that emerges and develops under the conditions of dictatorship is its spontaneity and its vulnerability to the most generally available ideologies and cultural traditions, in this case religion. In this type of revolution, class interests are inevitably overshadowed by the interest of the whole, for it is the whole that is dominated and therefore is the possible negation of, the dictatorial rule. This is not to say that class antagonism is absent within the mass, but only that the very processes of mobilization and revolution momentarily suppress it.

The Outline of the Dissertation

Thus an attempt is made to show that modernizing dictatorship has its own laws of development that subordinate capitalist development to its own requirements, derived from its need to expand and consolidate power. This will be dealt with in the second chapter concretely in the case of Iran. I argue that the continuing backwardness and increased dependency of Iranian society was mediated prior to the revolution through dictatorial domination supported by the hegemonic imperialist powers. The actions of the dictatorship will be accounted for by reference to the contradictions inherent in its structure and manifested in opposing tendencies of unity with and separation from society.

The third chapter explores the relation of modernizing dictatorship to economically dominant classes and argues that, in the case of Iran, the state is dominated by and expresses the interest of the

centralized dictatorial authority rather than capitalist class. Thus the dictatorial state determines the development of classes and uses of them as a vehicle to change society according to its own needs for the continuing expansion and consolidation of power. This expresses itself in increased relative independence of the dictatorial state and, correspondingly, in the further alienation and separation of the modernizing dictatorship from society as a whole.

Rather than focusing on the absolutist character of the Shah's dictatorship, the fourth chapter analyzes its centralized repressive character and the contradictions inherent in its structure. A number of inferences are drawn from this analysis: 1) at the political level, the modernizing dictatorship contains within itself simultaneously modern, rational, and efficient tendencies, and tendencies that are archaic, irrational and inefficient; 2) this contradiction is not inherent in the history of society in general, but a feature of "underdeveloped" societies in the context of global imperialist interests; 3) in order to account for social change under these circumstances, it is necessary to understand it by reference to the struggle of society as a whole against the state power.

Chapter five deals with the prerevolutionary situation in Iran. First, it distinguishes between the economic crisis associated with the capitalist system and the specific crisis of the modernizing dictatorship under the Shah. Second, it argues that the Shah's response to the crisis of his regime appeared in the guise of political reforms but constituted in fact the means by which his dictatorship sought to renew its hegemony and reconsolidate its power. This explains the emergence of counter-hegemony in the form of mass protest inspired by the religious opposition.

Chapter six focuses on the spontaneous and mass character of the Iranian revolution of 1979. It argues that the distinctive feature of the revolutionary movement was the nation-wide strike waged and organized spontaneously primarily by the working class and "new middle-classes" which rapidly weakened the economic and administrative capabilities of the regime. The development of a rationally cooperative

movement was based on an authentic culture of the masses that, while influenced by religion was essentially secular-political in its aim: to establish legitimate institutions of authority capable of guaranteeing democratic freedom. This desire could not have been articulated under the dictatorship because of its policy of repression. Consequently, the success of the revolution came to be measured solely in terms of its immediate objective, that is, the overthrow of the dictator and not the dictatorship itself.

The final chapter recapitulates the discussion of the dialectic of dictatorship and the rise of popular movement. It treats the immediate origin of the Iranian revolution and the causes of its ultimate failure as results of the same underlying conditions. I propose that the Iranian revolution should be studied in the context of what it suggests rather than what it has achieved. The role of classes cannot be understood solely in terms of their material interests and their positions in the system of production, but must be reconsidered under the conditions of dictatorial domination supported by imperialism. This will be shown to imply that socialism is not an attainable alternative, if that involves a reconstitution of the machinery of the state in the name of the proletariat. Instead, a stage of legitimate authority is necessary, directly administered from within and representing the interest of a self-governing society based on local political and economic autonomy.

Notes on Chapter 1:

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7. Karl Marx, Capital Vol.I, International Publishers, New York, 1970,
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Chapter II

Reform From Above: Political Economy of Modernizing Dictatorship

Dictatorship and The Nature of Modernization

The program of modernization that was launched in the 1960's by the Shah, was to take Iran to the frontier of "great civilization", presumably like Germany and Japan. Within twenty years, however, the modernization program led to the Shah's downfall and an end to 2500 years of monarchy in Iran. The way in which this occurred make this transformation one of the historically significant events of the last quarter of the 20th century.

Apart from its political and economic ramifications at the international level, the Iranian revolution of 1979 has become of particular interest to social scientists of various schools of thought. One way or another, the Shah's downfall has been analysed as a consequence of his modernization program, that is, in terms of the changes it caused and the changes it failed to accomplish. The focuses of analysis have been economic and political development and/or the uneven development of both.

My study is concerned with the same phenomena. But rather than analyzing the revolution in terms of changes brought about by modernization, I examine it in terms of the nature of the dictatorship that

set for itself the task of modernizing Iranian society. I am not interested specifically in looking at "traditional," "precapitalist," "underdeveloped," and "dependent" aspects so much as the agency that attempted to reorganize Iranian society and intervene in its history to overcome what might be described as "backward" in it.

My objective is to show what kind of economic development is possible under a dictatorial structure of power, particularly when it is centralized. If the modernizing agency is a dictatorship, which is the common characteristic of most of the countries described as third world, then Iran may be regarded as a representative case of third world development. That Iran was a dictatorship is unanimously agreed upon by most social scientists. But the role and the structure of the dictatorship has not often been acknowledged or seriously studied in regard to the process of social transformation of any third world society, including Iran.

What I want to show in the course of the following discussion is that the dictatorial structure of power conditions the economic structure, rather than the reverse. That is to say that the economic structure is conditioned by an external authority placing itself above society rather than by its own internal dynamics. As such, economic restructuration by means of a modernization program instituted from above, is in the first instant a political reformation designed to perpetuate the existing structure of power. Under a dictatorship, modernization more often than not functions as a means to an end rather than an end in itself. In historical terms, a dictatorship's response to the imperatives of social development tends to take the form of a program of modernization. Reform measures adopted by a modernizing dictatorship are, in turn, indeed aimed at reducing tensions among antagonistic social forces and strengthening dictatorial control over them. Ideologically, a dictatorship appears to embody the will of the whole society, and to be the only agency capable of carrying out the task of modernizing society.

This relationship between dictatorial polity and economy implies that the old social relations of production cannot be maintained under

a repressive system of rule. This is the decisive problem faced by modernizing dictatorship--to take control of the old relations and change them to meet the requirements of the dictatorship before they are transformed through collective revolutionary action from below.

Therefore, this type of modernization cannot be viewed as a typical process of capitalist development, despite the features it shares with such a process. This is because first, the agency of modernization is not the rising capitalist class but a repressive dictatorial system subordinating the dominant classes to its own interests. Second, the economic structure develops not according to its own internal dynamism but to the external dynamism of the dictatorship supported by the world capitalist system. Hence that structure cannot regenerate or reproduce itself. Its elements do not develop in organic relation to one another as is typically the case in capitalist development. Third, such an economic development is not accompanied by a bourgeois political order, but leads instead to the consolidation and expansion of dictatorial power and institutions as polity, culture, and principle of societal organization.

This suggests a more generalized hypothesis, namely that precapitalist social conditions and underdevelopment could not have sustained themselves in so many parts of the world if the power structure of those nations had not been externally reinforced and guided to an increasing consolidation of dictatorial power. Thus, where dictatorship has been historically dominant, it mediates the economic conditions of underdevelopment, dependency and backwardness but only through the more inclusive mediation of foreign hegemonic powers.

Modernization and Historical Development of Dictatorship in Iran

The modern history of Iran has been marked by serious attempts at different junctures in time to create a truly modern and independent society. The first such attempt resulted in the Constitutional Revolutionary Movement of 1906 against a fading system of absolute monarchy whose last Shahs sold national resources and compromised national sovereignty to foreigners to finance their courtly pleasures.² The Constitutional Revolution abolished the absolute monarchy and attem-

pted formally to guarantee individual civil liberties and democracy. However, the incompatibility of the constitutional reform with the interests of the great powers of the East and West, particularly Russia and Great Britain soon became clear. Although an alliance of these great powers aimed at restoring the absolute monarchy failed, the conflict weakened the parliamentary process in favor of a coordinated and competent central administration.³

By 1922, a revolutionary situation that challenged British interests had developed. Local uprisings inspired by left and nationalist leaders, the success of the Russian revolution and consequent hostilities with the West, and the failure of the central administration to reach an accommodation with local authorities over the period of parliamentary rule, were the chief features of this situation. The British responded by sponsoring a coup that placed Reza Khan Mirpanj in power. He was born in a poor family in Mazandaran, North of Iran, and was trained and served as a soldier in a Cossack Brigade controlled by Tzarist Russia. As Minister of War and subsequently Prime Minister he established the political foundation for the concentration of power in his own hands. He later became Shah, instituting the Pahlavi dynasty by deposing the last true monarch of Qajar's dynasty who had served as constitutional monarch through the parliamentary period.⁴

Reza Shah's seizure of power marked the end of constitutional rule and restoration of the modern dictatorship. He consolidated his power through the establishment of a highly centralized government supported by coercion and repression. He subordinated the local feudal authorities to his rule, and accumulated enormous wealth by confiscating their property and appropriating a considerable part of state revenue.⁵ Opposition forces were all but eliminated as his dictatorial rule thoroughly undermined the possibility of maintaining an effective parliament. Its modernizing character manifested itself in adopting of certain reforms, including rationalization of the bureaucratic system, the modernization and expansion of the armed forces, the secularization of the educational system, the construction

of Tehran University, the imposition of Western style of dress upon the people (including the forced unveiling of women), the construction of roads, and the promotion of small national industries.⁶ However, despite these reforms, Iranian society remained economically as backward as ever in terms of the transformation of old social relations, politically oppressed, nationally dependent, and dominated by foreign influence.

Reza Shah's regime continued in force until the World War II, when the British forced him to abdicate due to his support of Hitler and the German cause. Under occupation by Allied Forces, a period of liberalization followed. Constitutional institutions were revived. Political prisoners were freed. Submerged political forces resumed their activities and new political forces came into being. The Tudah (Communist) Party broadened its base which included intellectuals, elements of the urban middle classes, and elements of the working class.⁷ Similarly, the liberal nationalist parties were loosely organized and formed the National Front under the leadership of Dr. Mossadegh supported by the merchants of Bazaar, factions of national bourgeoisie, religious forces and parts of the urban middle classes and intellectuals. The left and the National Front were the two main forces competing for effective authority and power. During this time the press enjoyed relative freedom and independence. Hundreds of magazines, papers and books were published and widely distributed. National debate and increased political participation by the masses were the distinctive characteristics of this period. Culturally, if not economically, it was a great leap forward.

The major issues of this period were economic development and national independence. These questions became the subjects of parliamentary debate. As a deputy in Parliament, Mossadegh linked the issue of the construction of a modern independent economic system to that of national sovereignty and the nationalization of the British-owned oil industry. Mossadegh brought to public attention the unequal and unjust distribution of oil revenues between the British oil company whose "net profit during that one year{1951} exceeded the sum total

received by the Iranian government as its share the preceding fifty years (a total of 114 million pounds)."⁸ Mossadegh maintained that Iran was the sole legitimate owner of its oil resources and that the oil industry must be controlled by the Iranian State. This was also regarded as politically significant, for the British through their control of oil exercised considerable political power in contradiction with Iran's national sovereignty.⁹ Thus, the nationalization of oil resources was the key to Iran's economic development and national independence. As Mossadegh stated when he was elected Prime Minister, "with the oil revenues, we can meet our entire budget and combat poverty, diseases and backwardness among our people. Another consideration is that by the elimination of the power of the British company, we would also eliminate corruption and intrigue, by which the internal affairs of our country have been influenced. Once this tutelage has ceased, Iran will have achieved its economic and political independence."¹⁰

The public supported Mossadegh's nationalization policy by actively participating in demonstrations. He mobilized the masses by taking the issue directly to them.¹¹ The increasing mass mobilization became the source of his power and elevated his authority above that of the monarch who had become little more than a ceremonial figure, as had been envisioned in the Constitution. Mossadegh survived the world oil boycott enforced by the British who had deployed war ships in the Persian Gulf. He also won his dispute with the Shah over the control of the armed forces and the appointment of the Ministry of War. Subsequently, the Shah fled the country in 1953.

The Shah's departure was regarded as a major threat to the interest of the world capitalist system by the United State government. The United States, by this time a major power in the region, moved decisively and put the Shah back to power through a coup engineered by the Central Intelligence Agency. With the overthrow of Mossadegh, the independent economic, political and cultural development of the nation was brought to an end. Mossadegh's program of social and national development was aborted and the reign of dictatorship was once again

imposed upon the Iranian people.

This cursory review of modern Iranian history makes a prima facie case for a new approach to the "modernization" of the structure of backwardness: one that links economic development to the development of dictatorship, and the emergence of a revolutionary movement to the development of contradictions inherent in the dictatorial power structure.

Dictatorship and the Seizure of Power

The Shah's seizure of power was immediately followed by suspending of all conflicts through the violent suppression of oppositional forces, the elimination of democratic freedoms, the withering away of constitutional rule and institutional processes, and the dismantling of Mossadegh's program for social development and national independence. A new oil contract was negotiated, which despite recognizing Iran as de facto owner, was even less favorable to the nation than the one that had existed prior to nationalization. Above all, it clearly increased the United States' political control and economic interests in Iran.¹²

With continued financial and military assistance from the United States government, the Shah consolidated his power by reorganizing and expanding his armed forces and creating a secret police organization. Once the new machinery of dictatorship was in place, the Shah could preside over the old productive social relations. Feudal domination in the countryside was strengthened and the exploitation of the peasantry by feudal landowners increased under conditions of serfdom. Poverty, misery and backwardness continued to be major features of the social structure while, under apparant political stability, foreign influence and economic control increased. A new bourgeoisie with its international connections and to the state developed at the expense of the indigenous bourgeoisie.

By the 1960's, the worsening economic crisis, due to the use of deficit spending to finance the growth of the military, the increasing cost of borrowing money from abroad, and mounting corruption within the bureaucratic apparatus of the dictatorship, led to the defeat of

the first and second development plans.¹³ A failure to improve socio-economic conditions resulted in public discontent and social unrest in urban as well as rural areas. This created the conditions for the re-emergence of liberal and nationalist oppositional forces. But, their attempt to unify and reorganize their constituencies floundered due to internal divisions and the dictatorial repression itself.¹⁴

Modernization and the Expansion of Power

Ali Amini, who had negotiated the oil contract and served as Ambassador to Washington, was appointed Prime Minister to carry out certain reform measures supported by the Kennedy administration. He dissolved the parliament in order to introduce the land reform program, waged an anti-corruption campaign, and banned the importation of luxury goods as demanded by the IMF and the United State governments as conditions for financial assistance. This, however, required a certain level of independent power and authority which was essentially incompatible with the nature of the dictatorial structure of power. Hence, the Shah took over the reform program himself in 1963, and proceeded to institute his Six Point Program in what he variously called the "White Revolution" and "Shah's and People's Revolution." He thus became a modernizing leader in the interests of the further development and reconsolidation of the dictatorship and the implementation of the goals of a globally hegemonic capitalist power.

The Shah's modernization program involved land reform, the nationalization of forests, the sale of state owned factories to finance the land reform, the improvement of the election law, profit-sharing in industry and the creation of an educational stratum to combat illiteracy in the countryside.¹⁵ The Six Point Program eventually reached nineteen as more points were added during following years. The implementation of the land reform program was supplemented by rapid industrialization as part of the development plans financed by increasing oil revenue. This is assumed to have constituted a "turning point" in the modern socio-economic transformation of Iran.¹⁶ Thus, an examination of the land reform program, the role of oil income in economic transformation and industrialization will be the focus of the

following analysis.

Land Reform Program

The land reform program was implemented in three stages. In the first stage, the state bought holdings of large land owners in excess of one village, evaluated based on the agricultural tax payable within ten years, with six percent interest. The large land owners were, however, allowed to keep one shish dong(six parts) village or one dong of six villages in addition to all mechanized land, fruit, nuts, and tea plantations. The purchased lands were then sold to the peasant sharecroppers with ten percent interest payable within fifteen years.¹⁷

Despite its defects, most experts agree that the first stage was the most radical stage of land reform. It was based on the premise of returning land to the tillers. It was intended to create as many independent farmers as possible and to divide the land more equally among the peasants receiving it. Thus, it had an egalitarian aim. This was the original phase of land reform initiated by Ali Amini, when he was appointed Prime Minister in 1960. His Agriculture Minister, Hassan Arsanjani, described as a "radical liberal", by Fred Halliday is thought to have been responsible for popularizing the reform and mobilizing the peasantry to take advantage of it.¹⁸ The departure of Arsanjani in 1963, and the subsequent takeover of the reform by the Shah, is regarded as having been due to conflicts within the ruling class which resulted in the victory of its conservative section.¹⁹

It is argued by the experts that the defects of this first stage, were due to the legal loopholes it left to the advantage of the old land owners. They could use their influence and wealth to transfer their property legally to their relatives and turn some of their land into plantations and mechanized land exempted from the land reform law. The span of time between the declaration of land reform in 1960, and its actual implementation, provided an opportunity for the large land owners to avoid a significant cut in their property-holdings.²⁰

The second stage involved the redistribution of the landed property of small feudal landowners holding one village. These feudal

landowners were given several options: to rent the land based on a thirty years lease whose terms were subject to change every five years, to sell it, to divide it based on an evaluation of its income, or to form joint stock corporations with peasants. The mechanized land and plantations were exempted.²¹

This stage is characterized as being relatively moderate compared to the first. It basically retained the old land ownership with a new tenancy. It replaced labor rent and rent in kind with money rent, itself a capitalist development and hence an advance. The defects of this stage, according to Halliday, were that far fewer peasants received land, and those who did, received portions too small even for subsistence farming. Thus, this stage seems to have been responsible for a rapid increase in peasant migration to urban areas, again manifesting a classical feature of capitalist development.²²

The third phase attempted to remedy problems created during the former two phases, specially the problems of tenancy and the increasing peasant resistance to it, and declining agricultural production due to inefficient parcelization of land which had created more landlessness among peasants who were, as a result thrown into the pool of free labor. The land reform program has been evaluated in the context of "capitalist development." For example, Halliday maintains that land reform in the context of capitalist development constitutes a progressive bourgeois measure because it promotes capitalist development in agriculture by eliminating nonmonetary rent, encouraging commodity production, establishing private ownership of land and creating a rural bourgeoisie and a rural proletariat. "In general", Halliday argues

"one can say that that Iranian countryside is now a capitalist one. Precapitalist features must certainly survive: old cultivation methods, old attitudes, and old unreformed ownership patterns do not disappear at once. But the predominant relations are commodity ones and the social structure of the village is now becoming capitalist. This is the first main achievement of the reform."²³

Ervand Abrahamian holds a similar point of view. He regards the first two phases of the land reform as having radically transformed the rural class structure, eliminating traditional tenancy in favor of private ownership of land and commercialized farming. "By the early 1970's," he maintains, "there were three distinct classes in the countryside:" 1) absentee farmers with large holdings from 100 hectares to more than 300, including the Royal family, religious foundations, agrobusinesses multinational corporations, and feudal-type landlords; 2) independent farmers, including the old and new landed peasantry of whom the majority owned less than five hectares; 3) rural wage earners.²⁴

Although Nikkie Keddle views the land reform as contributing to capitalist development, she maintains that it was an inadequate and irrational policy that caused a decline of agricultural production and an increased dependence of Iran on foreign food supplies especially from the United States. Keddle argues that government subsidies favored the large agricultural units over the small and medium-sized holdings despite the significant potential of the latter for development and their relatively higher productivity. The modern agribusinesses operated with greater expense and less efficiently. They used the most fertile land but contributed little to the general level of agricultural production and the nation's agricultural independence. Keddle argues that the cities were also favored over the countryside, as the prices of food was lowered and modern meat, poultry and dairy farms were supported over nomadic cattle raising. The nomad population was forced to settle in farm communities and to accept status as a rural proletariat. Finally, Keddle concludes that "land reform may never have had primarily economic goals; a major aim was to cut landlord power and bring peasants and nomads under direct government control, and this was accomplished."²⁵

Of these theorists, Keddle comes closest to understanding the political nature of modernization program under the dictatorship. But she does not draw the radical conclusions of her insights, stopping precisely at the point at which she needs to begin. Not only does she

not go far enough in investigating the sources of irrationality in dictatorial policies, but she fails to demonstrate how those very same policies could have promoted various types of inequality, impoverished the rural people, and increased the nation's dependence on foreign powers, and at the same time have accomplished the political aims of dictatorial control. Nor is it clear why one irrational policy was followed by another and why no mechanism existed to reverse policies that continually produced disastrous results.

Capitalist Development and Reform From Above

While the political objective of land reform is confirmed by Keddie, Halliday and Abrahamian both overlook that objective and treat the reform as having been aimed at transforming the precapitalist structure into a capitalist one. The parcelization of land, which caused changes in the pattern of ownership and increased peasant migration into the cities by instituting money rent in place of labor rent and rent in kind, is believed to have constituted the main features of capitalist development accomplished by the land reform. In regard to the former, Marx maintains that the "propriatorship of land parcels by its very nature excludes the development of the social productive forces of labor, social forms of labor, social concentration of capital, large scale cattle raising, and progressive application of science." He further emphasizes that "an infinite fragmentation of means of production, and isolation of producers themselves, monstrous waste of human energy. Progressive deterioration of conditions of production and increased prices of means of production- an inevitable law of proprietorship of parcel land."²⁶

This, rather than commodity production, has become the major characteristic of the countryside following the land reform. The majority of the peasantry are still involved in subsistence farming and are hardly able to produce for the market beyond their needs. The peasant exodus to the urban areas was not caused by rapid industrialization of agricultural production, nor were the cities experiencing an industrial revolution and a shortage of labor that encouraged peasant migration. To supplement meager incomes, the small peasants joined

the ranks of unskilled workers in the booming construction industry that resulted from rising oil income. Furthermore, the development of capital as the leading independent force, as Marx pointed out, "does not take place all at once and generally, but gradually and in particular lines of production. It encompasses at first, not in agriculture proper, but such branches of production as cattle-breeding, especially sheep raising, whose principal product, wool, offers at the early stages a constant excess of market-price over price of production during the rise of industry, and this does not level out until later."²⁷

By the same token, the money relation adopted under the land reform can only be considered as capitalist in the sense of its having been introduced into an essentially feudal system of exploitation that had outlived its historical necessity by tens of years, if not centuries. For Marx, money-rent is a "merely changed form of rent in kind just as the latter in turn is but a modification of labor rent." "The direct producer here," Marx points out, "turns over instead of product, its price to the land lord (who may be either state or private individual). An excess of products in their natural form no longer suffices; it must be converted from its natural form into money form."²⁸ The institution of money-rent did not enable the peasant to produce commodities in order to realize a profit. They rather continued to realize rent plus means of subsistence.

More importantly, this suggests that capitalist transformation is more than mere changes in the economic structure. Marx examines capitalist economic structure as a social system, not a specific relationship undergoing certain changes or certain types of development. He views the capitalist social system as the totality of social relations and studies its gradual development since the 14th century. In this process, it is not only the material relations between the people and the objective conditions that have undergone changes, but with this, people also changed. Not only did their attitudes, beliefs and values change, but also their logic and rationality developed in organic unity with the changing objective material condi-

tions. The logic of capital prevailed: not only did it involve a maximization of the rate of surplus value at the expense of the worker, but also it appeared to be a natural order operating in terms of its own laws. The equality of people is self-evident regardless of the nature of ownership. The capitalist is considered as much an owner of commodities as the laborer who sells himself or herself as a commodity. That is where, Marx maintains, all distinctions are extinguished. Both appear as free individuals in the market, disposing of their commodities based on freedom and liberty.

But, when and wherever the bourgeoisie mobilizes the machinery of violence and repression to maintain its social order, and enforces the logic of capital by means of coercion and control, the social order becomes a bourgeois dictatorial order. Under such circumstances, the capitalist order as "natural" is no longer a legitimate social order and hence requires force to maintain itself. In this, the separation of the bourgeois dictatorial apparatus from society is self-evident. This is the major characteristic of all dictatorships regardless of types. But, it is different with the domination of dictatorship over societies that have not yet reached the capitalist stage of social development in the context of global capitalism.

The transition from one stage of economic development to another in these societies is possible either through revolution or reform corresponding to two different paths of development: noncapitalist development and modernization. The former is an ideologically oriented self-conscious development possessing a socialist perspective. The latter is applied from above and is aimed at removing the causes of change from below and eliminating the potential threat of a revolutionary overthrow of the dictatorial political structure. Under such circumstances, dictatorship takes on a modernizing character as it responds to the imperatives of social development by adopting certain reform measures, while subordinating social development to its own requirements.

Social Development and Reform From Above

A modernization program seems to promote a general societal

transition from a lower stage of economic development to a higher stage. When the modernizing features are introduced from above, however, society remains essentially backward and dependent upon external forces that support the dictatorship. The modernizing reform instituted in this way does not take the form of an authentic social development but remains part of external development that cannot, by its own nature, permit the autonomous development of the society it uses for its own purposes. The modernizing dictatorship administers existing social relations but attempts to prevent their imminent dialectical self-development.

For example, land reform in Iran, as was shown above, introduced some features of modern capitalism into the countryside and depersonalized the old feudal-peasant relationship to a certain degree by modifying the basis of land ownership. In so far as the transformation of agricultural production is concerned, the impact of these changes were, however, limited by the relatively low rate of the development of urban industrial sectors, the increasing centralization of the state bureaucracy, and the persistence of old habits, traditions and attitudes in the market place. Although the land reform enabled the large feudal landowners to produce on a scale large enough to ensure profit by investing in modern machinery imported from abroad, it did not require a capitalist attitude. They became bourgeois by dictatorial legislation rather than through the historical maturational process of capitalist development through competition and class conflict over surplus value. That bourgeoisie, the overnight product of a dictatorship operating in the interest of foreign capital, possessed characteristics quite different from those of the bourgeoisie that emerged historically as a product of material conditions. This manifests itself in its relation to the technical forces of production. The typical European bourgeoisie became the master of the means of production according to the logic of capital accumulation, creating and recreating them according to its requirements. It became mature, as Marx pointed out, through a "series of revolutions in the methods of production."²⁹ Under dictatorship, the bourgeoisie is born prema-

turely under quite different conditions. It becomes the consumer of means of production rather than its producer. Thus, their application of means of production is limited by the lack of incentive and capacity to expand and constantly rationalize the means of production according to its concrete needs in the context of class conflict. Such a bourgeoisie is subordinated to the very means of production that is only a resource by which they can dominate society in the interest of accumulating wealth.

Under the land reform, the old feudal landowner modernizes his farm as one modernizes his kitchen. In so far as the feudal landlord commercializes his farm to produce profit, he is a capitalist. But, as far as the ability to produce on a "progressive scale," he is at best a primitive capitalist born prematurely whose survival is thereby dependent on external rather than internal historical factors.³⁰

This is why the former peasant, despite his title of ownership, must remain a primitive peasant, at the mercy of nature, suffering from the smallness of his land, lacking an adequate water supply, unable to procure the modern technology he needs, and above all unable to accumulate necessary capital for reinvestment. It is true that this peasant no longer has any obligation to serve the feudal lord. But he has instead to plead with the various agencies of the dictatorship for whatever technical and financial assistance he requires and can only succeed by borrowing at interest rates that he cannot meet, thereby becoming dependent on village money-lenders. His water supply dries up due to the industrial well dug nearby by the landlord who then uses his own money and influence, employing the police to punish, silence, and settle accounts with the peasant. The landlord's rights and properties become sacred territories, protected by the repressive agencies of the dictatorship. The peasant is legally less protected than before. Independence, the alleged gift of land reform, leads to increasing isolation, powerlessness, and dependency on all manner of social and natural conditions. This peasant immiseration both morally and technically becomes part of a self-perpetuating cycle. The only way out is for the peasant to find an additional source of income in

the urban areas, while he holds desperately to his small piece of land, becoming in turn a part time farmer at best.³¹

It is under such conditions that agricultural production progressively declined after the land reform.³² Had it not been for the availability of oil money to supply the urban groceries and supermarkets with American Masola Oil, rice, etc, the food crisis would have become a major economic disaster in Iran.

This is the limit of economic development under a modernizing dictatorship. Anything beyond this would contradict the imperatives of the dictatorial system of rule. For dictatorship requires an isolated subject--dependent and ignorant, not an awakened peasant or worker or even a self-conscious bourgeois attempting independently to master his conditions. Any measure that does not lead to the development of self-determination cannot be considered an advance. But this is only possible when man and his objective conditions are changed in an organic and unified process. To achieve this, dictatorship itself must be overcome.

Consolidation and Legitimation of Dictatorship

Thus, the land reform instituted within the framework of the "White Revolution" was intended to achieve a political rather than an economic objective. It was, in the first instance, aimed at providing legitimacy for the consolidation and expansion of the dictatorship and securing the obedience of the ruled to the ruler. Its economic results were of secondary importance. The old social relations of production over which the dictatorship presided had become a major threat to the structure of the dictatorship itself. According to Paul Baran, reforms of this sort

"are calculated to appease a restive peasantry, and are usually combined with lavish compensations of feudal lords. They frequently serve not to break the feudal grip on the state but rather to strengthen it. They tend therefore to accentuate all the negative repercussions of agrarian reforms without leading the way to industrial development and to reorganization and rationalization of

agricultural economy resulting therefrom."³³

In the 1960's, however, land reform in Iran had become all the more necessary in light of the role of the peasantry in the Chinese, Cuban, Algerian, and Vietnamese revolutions.

Economistic Marxist scholars, as well as Marxist revolutionaries, maintain that the land reform was adopted by the state in the interest of the dominant class of big bourgeoisie supported by imperialism.³⁴ This theory is one-sided at best for it overlooks the role of politics as the overriding interest of imperialism, functioning as a bridge to economic domination. That is, political domination is the necessary condition for imperialist exploitation of cheap labor, national resources, and availability of markets. These exploitative relationships can be maintained by the application of force and repression which requires a modern machinery of dictatorship, a political structure based on an extensive bureaucratic system supported by a large, equipped, modern army and a sophisticated urban and rural police force organizationally connected to the secret police who in turn function as a means of terror as well as surveillance. As national democratic political structures inspired by bourgeois ideas and functioning on the basis of institutional rule, are either destabilized or overthrown a weak dictatorial political apparatus receives reinforcement from the world capitalist powers. Mossadegh's government is one example among many others.

That is also why Fred Halliday is wrong to consider the Shah's land reform as the cause of a bourgeois dictatorship that promoted capitalism. Instead it was adopted, in the first instance to legitimize the consolidation and expansion of dictatorial structure of power, and to remedy the threat of a radical transformation of the basic economic structure by overthrowing the feudal system of exploitation and the political structure that supported it. As an economic measure, despite the changes it brought about, it virtually deformed the development of the national economy. It was not a product of a capitalist attitude, a struggle for national independence, or an attempt to narrow the gap between the ruled and ruler.

Oil and Industrial Development Under Dictatorship

Most experts agree that Iran, during the regime of the Shah, was in a position to become an advanced industrial country. Its oil revenue rose steadily and provided the necessary capital for expanded investment. While generating capital had been and continues to be the major problem of all societies that have not reached the stage of economic development achieved by the Western European societies and the United States, oil solved this problem, at least in principle, for Iran.

Generating a surplus sufficient for industrial development has been dealt with in Russia and China, under Stalin and Mao, by concentrating on the transformation of the agricultural sector in order to increase the scale of production, productivity and efficiency. Stalin's industrial "Big Push" and Mao's "Walking on Two Legs" were aimed at developing an autonomous self-generating economy. The political machinery in both cases had to overcome enormous problems arising from the resistance of the rural population to the collectivization of agriculture and the initial hardship that it entailed. Most countries, variously called "underdeveloped," "developing," or "third world," have relied on foreign countries, multinational corporations, and international monetary agencies to develop and finance their industries. This, in contrast with Russia and China, results in various forms of economic and political dependency on advanced capitalist countries and an obligation to serve as the source of supply of raw materials, cheap labor, and expanded market for dominant nations.

The oil revenue provided a decisive advantage in developmental potential to Iran over the countries that lacked sufficient investment capital. Yet, the way in which this capital was used as an agency for potential development of the dictatorship further intensified the separation of dictatorship from society and ultimately led to its revolutionary overthrow from below.

Specialists advance different arguments to explain why this happened despite Iran's favorable conditions. For example, Abrahamian argues that economic development did take place, at least as measured

by such indicators as rising share of industrial output in GNP, the expansion of the home market for consumer goods, the development of human resources in the areas of health and education, the improvement of means of communication, the increase in size of the industrial working class, and degree of urbanization. It took place despite the persistence of a traditional economy alongside an advanced and modern economy. The unequal distribution of the benefits of modernization did not so much make the poor poorer as the rich richer. It is wrong, Abrahamian maintains, to assume that the revolution was caused by the low level of economic development; rather, this rapid economic development was accompanied by a political underdevelopment reflected in the rigidity of the political structure and its consequent inability to allow for the expression of opposition and the negotiation of grievances.³⁵

In spite of this general conclusion, Abrahamian specifically refers to "the last three years of the regime" in which "political tensions were heightened" as the result of what can be characterized by the defeat of the White Revolution as an economic program. It had created a high level of expectation without the capacity to deliver what was expected. Those who benefitted from the booming economy, which had one of the highest rates of growth in the world, were only a few, whereas the living conditions for the majority of the population worsened. As he puts it, "for these millions, most of whom had been forced out of the villages into the new shanty towns, the oil boom did not end poverty; it merely modernized it."³⁶

Abrahamian, however, has no explanation as to why the reality of economic modernization should express itself in the modernization of poverty meaning more poverty for more people. Verifying this theory by reviewing industrial achievements under the Shah's regime in terms of quantitative indices does not provide an answer to the question of why the Shah's program of modernization took the form of a disguised development, given the conditions favorable to the elimination of poverty and the creation of a truly independent and prosperous nation.

Similarly, Halliday argues that industrial development did occur

but only due to the emergence of a strong state committed to industrialization. He admits that despite its favorable position, Iran's industrial development suffered serious setbacks due to a lack of managerial personnel and skilled labor, relatively unequal income distribution that interfered with the expansion of markets, and obstructive links between developing sectors and inefficient enterprises protected by the state.³⁷

Halliday distinguishes three agents of industrialization: 1) the state, which controlled an enormous amount of capital due to the sale of national resources; the state, however, acting like a capitalist enterprise, invested the income received from the sale of oil in various large capital intensive industrial projects, while it provided the bourgeoisie and foreign companies with credit, various kinds of tax exemption, and protection against foreign imports to encourage domestic production; 2) the Iranian bourgeoisie, traditionally weak and composed of various elements, including landowners, former merchants, and bureaucrats, whose driving motive was safe investment and quick and maximum profit, rather than the industrialization of Iran; 3) and foreign capital which was invested under the most favorable conditions for production of profit.³⁸

Halliday, like Keddie, maintains that the major failure of Iran's industrial development stemmed from misspending oil revenue, import substitution industries that favored big enterprises, and an inability to produce for the external market as a substitute for oil revenue. The industrial development that was financed by oil income resulted in the development of various economic bottlenecks such as an inadequate infrastructure, the shortage of managers, technicians and skilled workers, increasing food imports, rising inflation imported from abroad, and the lowering state revenue derived from taxation.³⁹

According to Halliday, "the cause of misspending lies in its political character - the expansion of arms purchases and services, in the incapacity to implement early enough the unpopular economic measures needed to curb imports, consumption and capital flight."⁴⁰

Irrationality and Reproduction of Dictatorship

As can be seen, the problem of modernization or capitalist development under a dictatorship is, from the point of view of those writers, one of policy options, mismanagement, misallocation and misutilization of resources, irrational priorities, imaginary fantasy-like targets, and false promises. They commonly expect rational results from a polity whose essence is its social irrationality. It is the formal aspects of development, not the irrationality inherent in the system of dictatorship that are central to their analyses of Iran's social development and the breakdown of its structure.

The fact that the state exhausted the resources belonging to a disadvantaged, poor, and backward nation, in the interest of agencies whose motives were self-enrichment at the expense and detriment of that nation, was interpreted as signifying the class character of the state and its capitalist nature. Dictatorship is regarded as a state that only mispends the resources and is incapable of making decisions that are economically sound but politically unpopular. The dictatorship's action is explained in terms of its capitalistic motives, rather than in terms of the context of dictatorship itself as a system imposed from above, separated from society, and alienated from it. Under a dictatorship, economic structure is a reflection of the structure of power and the mirror of the irrationality inherent in it. This is the only way in which the dictatorship reproduces itself in every sector of society including the economic one. Modernization that is administered from above, aimed at preserving the structure of the modernizing authority, can only lead to an intensification of the internal contradictions of such an authority.

When a dictatorship establishes its control over the resources of a nation, while isolated from its society and arbitrarily misusing them, the results are bound to appear as modernization, or capitalist development. The missing element, social development, can only occur as a result of collective efforts accompanied by a sense of self-sacrifice or in a context of an at least implicit public consensus as to the direction in which society is moving.

Collectivity and public consensus are incompatible with dictator-

ship since it can only function if it is the exclusive representative of either or both. Abrahamian erroneously interprets the separation of the political structure from the economic as a case of unequal development, as though the dictatorship could have become what it is not. This interpretation implies that had the dictatorship allowed discontentment and various grievances to be expressed, the coherence and harmony of society would have been ensured. Abrahamian overlooks the fact that the dictatorship represents the whole of society based on force and repression. It undertakes reforms and administers them from above in the interest of those sections of society which are politically and economically most oppressed and exploited, and which are socially and culturally depressed and isolated and as Marx puts it, incapable of "entering into manifold relationships," that is, the peasantry. But, the peasants suffer more rather than less. The state invests resources in the form of capital over which it has established control as though the reinvestment can reproduce them on a larger scale, returning the product to the whole of society. Less food, however, becomes available to more people and an increased number of people become dependent, for their own food production on the food produced in foreign countries. In other words, a nation under a modernizing dictatorship becomes a nation incapable of producing enough to satisfy even its own most basic need, that is, food.

This is because the requirements of dictatorial power take precedence over the adopted capitalist requirements. Hence, it reproduces its economy in a distorted manner. Under authentic capitalism, the profit motive leads to a constant revolutionization of the means of production and the expansion and reproduction of the socially productive forces. Under adopted and controlled capitalism, the result is the "modernization of poverty," as Abrahamian puts it, or "Western-style industries," in Keddle's words, or as "capitalist development" under the "rentire state" as Halliday characterizes.⁴¹

What is critical is not economic development per se, but an ability to compete against societies which have left the less developed ones behind in terms of social development. This is the challenge

that cannot be met by the dictatorship, given its repressive and alien character and the inevitability of irrationality in its reform. That is why economic modernization is accompanied by a concentration of power and a progressive centralization of authority. The arbitrary rule of the dictatorship cannot be checked nor can its initiatives and policies disputed without disputing the order that it constitutes.

Furthermore, the changes that occur under modernization administered from above are not the result of the conflicting interests of emerging social forces, or contradictions inherent in a society divided by class that are controlled and suppressed under the dictatorship. For example, the land reform program, rather than transforming agricultural production, functioned instead to convert class antagonism in the countryside to a struggle against the dictatorial agencies controlling the productive units.

From this perspective, the phenomena of backwardness, dependency and underdevelopment, that characterize third world countries, have their roots in dictatorship. They are mediated through dictatorship and are reinforced rather than eliminated by it. The dictatorship establishes itself in harmony with and not against them. In order for a dictatorship to overcome backwardness, it must first put an end to itself. That is to say, to reverse the conditions of backwardness, dependency, and underdevelopment, not only must the machinery of the dictatorship as a political structure be smashed but also its social institution. This is possible when society as a whole adopts a collective attitude and mobilizes human and material resources not only to overcome economic backwardness but also to gain independence and liberate itself from external exploitation and domination. This can be achieved by a power structure that reflects popular sovereignty and autonomous development. Social development is in the first instance a political struggle where hegemonic capitalism dominates. Thus, it initially is accompanied by a nationalist attitude, not in its narrow and limited sense but in conceiving of national liberation as a necessary condition for the liberation of the people from economic misery and social backwardness.

Notes on Chapter 2:

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2. Nekkie Keddie has properly called this period "Concession hunting in Iran." She states "In general, concession-hunting in Iran was a game of speculators and adventurers, out for quick profits, whose wits were matched against those of wily countries, and the Shah wanted as little trouble as possible;" Religion and Rebellion in Iran, Cambridge University Press, London, 1966, p.7; Also see Mirdi Bahar, Miros Khor-i-Istimar, (The Heir of Colonialism), Tehran, 1344/1965, p.513-14; M.S. Ivanoff, Tarikh-i Nowin-i Iran, (The New History of Iran), Tehran, 1978, p.7; Kasravi, Tarikh-i Mashrotiat-i Iran, (The History of Constitutional Revolution of Iran), Amir Kabir, Tehran, 1971, p.460.
3. Younes P. Benab, "The Origin and Development of Imperialist Contention in Iran; 1884-1921," in The Review of Iranian Political Economy and History, Vol.1, No.2, June, 1977.
4. Gozashtah Cheragh-i Rah-i Ayandah, (Past the Light of Future), Jomi, Tehran, 1978, P.38-74. (no author's name).
5. Ibid, p.88-104, containing documents concerning the feudal properties and the public properties that Reza Shah appropriated by force.
6. Joseph Upton, The History of Modern Iran: An Interpretation, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1965; also Amin Banani, The Modernization of Iran, 1921-1941, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1961.
7. Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolution, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1982, p.326.
8. Bahman Nirumand, Iran: The New Imperialism in Action New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1969, p.44.
9. ibid, p.49.
10. Ibid, p.49.
11. Abrahamian, 1982, p.267.
12. Gozashtah Cheragh-i Rah-i Ayandah, 1978, P.647-59; also M. Sowdagar, Koshd-i Sarayandari dar Iran (1304-1340), (Development of Capitalist Relations in Iran), Pozand, Tehran, p.210-28.
13. Itialat, May 26, 1962.
14. Bejan Jazani, Tarikh-i See Salah-i Iran (The Thirty Years History of Iran) Vol.2, Tehran, 1979, p.62-78.
15. Doniel Craig, "The impact of Land Reform in Iran," in The Middle East Journal 2, Spring 1978.
16. Halliday, 1979, p.33.

17. Khosrow Khosravi, Jomah Shenasi-i Rostai-i Iran (The Sociology of Rural Iran), Tehran University Press, p.150.
18. Halliday, p.109-7 & p.124-25.
19. Nikki R. Keddie, Roots of Revolution, Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 1981, p.162; Halliday, 1979, p.33; Abrahamian, 1982, p.424.
20. Ibid, P.162; p.110-11; p.429
21. Khosravi, p.152.
22. Halliday, 1979, p.114-15.
23. Ibid, p.118.
24. Abrahamian, 1982, p.429-30.
25. Ibid, p.168.
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29. Ibid, p.796-97.
30. Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels, Manifesto of the Communist party, Foreign Language Press, Peking, 1977, p.34.
31. Karl Marx, Capital Valume.I, p.579
32. Doniel Craig, 1978.
33. M.G. Weinbaum. "Agricultural Policy and Development Poltics in Iran." in The Middle East Journal 31, 1977; for the declining share of agricultural sector to GNP see also Iran's 3d Development plan, December 1970; and Iran's 5th Development plan, 1973-78; also see Thierry Burn and Rene Dumont. "Iran: Imperial Pretensions and Agricultural Dependence." MERIP 71, October 1978, P.15; for declining investment in agricultural sector see Kayhan International, January 10, 1971.
34. Paul Baran, 1968, p.169.
35. Bogher Moemeni, Seemy-i Rostay-i Iran (Rural Prespective of Iran), Payvand.
36. Abrahamian, 1982, p.448.
37. Ibid, p.448
38. Halliday, 1979, p.147-48;
39. Ibid, p.149-54.
40. Ibid, p.157-66; Keddie, 1981, p.169-80; also Robert Graham, Iran: Illusion of Power, St Martin's Press, New York, 1979, p.77-125.

Chapter III

Modernizing Dictatorship and Bourgeois Class

Modernizing Dictatorship and Class Dynamism

No doubt, any discussion of the relationship between dictatorship and classes involves a certain assumption about their concepts. Although there is a sizable literature about the sociological concept of class, its political significance, and therefore its relevance to the study of dictatorship originates in the new meaning that Marx gave to it.¹ Nevertheless, the application of the Marx's concept to the specific conditions of dictatorship needs, still, to be worked out.

The complexity of the problem is evident from the very outset.. It does not involve establishing a properly descriptive use of "class" to identify strata within a society.² Nor can it be said that the dictatorial state is inevitably independent of the class relation. The concept of dictatorship implies that such independence is likely, and then only with qualifications. That is, it achieves its autonomy and independence through processes of domination and the expansion of power that tend to separate the dictatorial authority from the society it rules. It is, however, the question of representation that is paramount.

That its autonomy is only relative does not imply that the dicta-

torship stands in a representative relationship to society nor that the need of the dominant class to have a state makes dictatorship a historical necessity. On the other hand, dictatorship establishes itself, in the first instance by subordinating all classes to a social order that it defines and enforces from above through a degree of coercion and repression sufficient to supercede the normal dynamic of class relation. Therefore, it immediately presides over historically given social forces of production following its seizure of power. It thereby suppresses the manifestations of class struggle in the political sphere. In this way, dictatorship becomes the fundamental social agency for carrying out the task of maintaining existing exploitative social relations and it does so by breaking the normal connection of the classes of production in favor of a connection that it controls in its own interest. It is in this sense that the dictatorship comes to represent the whole of society by becoming an entity for itself.

Where capitalist development has not yet become dominant, society is limited by its own backwardness and the influence of foreign powers. This provides the opportunity for the dictatorship to intervene and eventually supercede the internal class dynamism of economic development, an intervention that is simultaneously economic and political. It can only sustain this intervention by progressively increasing its own general social impact. Modernization is the instrumentality for this impact and it works by recomposing classes and conditioning their development. This, in turn, imports an essentially foreign modernization to the society and progressively integrates society into the world system dominated by hegemonic capital. Indeed, imperialism itself requires this intervention and can therefore succeed only if it promotes dictatorships in its neo-colonies. Nevertheless, the dictatorship itself aims only to maintain its national hegemony, a purpose that ultimately contradicts the purposes of imperialism and the relation of representation on which dictatorial hegemony presumably rests.

The bourgeois class that grows and develops under such conditions is qualitatively different from the bourgeoisie in its classical form, defined by Marx as an historically revolutionary class that

subordinates society as a whole to its own laws of development: the production and accumulation of surplus value and the domination of labor by capital. Thus, the typical capitalist power structure serves to maintain and enforce bourgeois laws under conditions that require a degree of autonomy from the bourgeoisie itself. This autonomy falls or rises according to the class struggle and the degree to which bourgeois development has become hegemonic.

Under a dictatorship, in contrast, the growth and the development of the bourgeois class depends upon control exercised by the dictatorship regardless of the class struggle and level of development. Bourgeois development is suppressed or promoted according to conditions whose control is beyond the bourgeoisie's power as a class. By intervening in the economic process, the modernizing dictatorship creates and develops a new breed of bourgeoisie out of landowning class and indigenous commercial and industrial bourgeoisie who have considerable wealth but neither modern means of production nor a capitalist attitude. The wealth of this composite class becomes productive capital only by obtaining the technical means, science and specialized services, produced by the global bourgeoisie that has already established hegemony over the world capitalist system. Under a dictatorship, the bourgeoisie accumulates capital without engaging in competition in a free market and reproduces itself on an expanded scale. To be sure, it exploits cheap labor but maximizes its profits without socializing labor and revolutionizing production. Its monopoly over the market is mediated and eventually expropriated by the dictatorial authority.

Functioning under a dictatorial order does not provide the bourgeois class neither with sufficient and lasting security nor the incentive to develop an independent self-sustaining economic system. Its subordinate position vis a vis the dictatorship and the instability inherent in a dictatorial order make the bourgeoisie conservative in its entrepreneurship and reactionary in its historical role. Not only does it not fulfill its function as a revolutionary class but it becomes one vehicle for implementing the modernizing programs of the dictatorship and therefore for the consolidation of dictatorial con-

trol.

This type of bourgeoisie--conservative, reactionary, and dependent-- has been frequently referred to as the bourgeois comprador. But that is only appropriate only if the structure of dictatorship is ignored. Paul Baran's classical discussion of backwardness, underdevelopment, and dependency, refers to dictatorship as "comprador government" that safeguards the interests of comprador and imperialism. He makes no distinction between the dictatorship and the comprador as a class. Nor does his analysis include the origins of the bourgeois comprador and the way in which it developed in the context of a dictatorship determining social structure. He fails to go beyond narrow economic considerations and quantifiable aspects of bourgeois comprador and its government. In other words, he has no distinct concept of dictatorship.³ This applies as well to virtually the entire debate that followed the publication of Baran's analysis.

To administer and enforce its rule, a modernizing dictatorship develops another breed of bourgeoisie, through the expansion of bureaucratic apparatus, the modernization of the military and the construction of a repressive secret police. This class becomes capitalist by accumulating enormous wealth through its ownership of property and its position in the upper echelons of the power structure. It obtains the largest part of its wealth by means of extortion and bribery, the use of influence and the sale of offices and through the elaboration of the state bureaucracy. In other words, it institutionalizes corruption as the necessary source of its wealth and the instrument of its participation in the system of rule and domination. It functions within the structure of dictatorship as what one might call middle management: it is primarily involved in securing contracts with foreign governments and multinational corporations. Although its economic and political interests lie in strengthening dictatorial control over the ever-expanding military and civil bureaucratic machineries, the position of this bureaucratic bourgeoisie in the power structure is itself vulnerable to the shifts in dictatorial polity.

This section of bourgeois class does not play a commanding role.

It lacks autonomy as well as class consciousness. It is bourgeois because it accumulates capitalist wealth; but it is bureaucratic in that it does not accumulate that wealth on its own behalf, as a class. It invests but accumulates as an agent. It is an instrument of rule organized as an investment administration whose members advance less by their private fortune than by their movement within the stratification of positions and the control over the wealth that this movement provides. The members of this bureaucratic bourgeoisie are recruited from diverse origins into the hierarchical order of the power structure. The only class unity possible for such a class derives from the only kind of consensus available in the administrative sector of bureaucratic apparatus of dictatorship--contention for position as a value and as a norm. It is therefore more accurate to call this class "bureaucratic comprador" as distinguished from "bourgeois comprador."

Dictatorship and the Bourgeois Class in Iran

The abundance of natural resources such as petroleum, serving potentially as capital distinguishes Iranian society from most other less developed countries. The enormous income derived from oil revenue has been used to explain the course of modernization under the regime of the Shah, and its dictatorial form and class character. But this exceptional fails to recognize the more general significance of dictatorship in all less developed societies under the thrall of capitalist imperialism. Thus, by treating dictatorship as a mere superstructure, this account fails to identify its specificity and therefore its actual relationship to the economy of less developed nations.

Oil revenue has also been considered as so decisive an advantage that the expansion of that revenue has been taken as the measure of success or failure by the governments of oil-rich nations. This, however, disregards the role of the oil revenue as a mechanism that serves to reinforce the dictatorship as a political structure against its own society. This is certainly the case with Iran.

The initial development of a bourgeois comprador class occurred in the early 20th century when Iran was under British colonial domina-

tion and the dictatorial regime of Reza Shah. Responsibility for this lay in modernization programs initiated from above which emphasized modernization of the military establishment, the bureaucratic machinery of the dictatorship, and to a lesser extent, the economic system. The slow but gradual development of comprador bourgeoisie changed following the restoration of dictatorship with the Shah's seizure of power in the 1953 CIA engineered coups. Although the financial support and the military aid by the U.S to sustain the Shah's regime, integrated the Iranian economy to a larger degree into the economy of Western capitalism.⁴ Nevertheless, by the 1960's, the Shah's dictatorship had not only failed to remove the causes of socio-economic backwardness but had enhanced them to a degree that seriously threatened the survival of the dictatorship itself. To deal with the threat of revolution that accompanied this, serious measures were adopted. The land reform program and anti-corruption campaign supported by the U.S administration and advanced by Ali Amini during his tenure as Prime Minister in 1960, proved to be inadequate to reconsolidate the dictatorial structure of power. As a result the Shah undertook a more expanded agrarian reform in the framework of his "Six Point" program, later called "White Revolution" and the "Revolution of Shah and People."⁵

The implementation of the land reforms of the 1960's changed the character of the relationship between the dictatorship and the various sections of the classes which were economically dominant in Iran. Prior to the reform, the dictatorship appeared to function as the guardian of the existing social order and relied primarily on instruments which reinforced obedience to the ruler. After the reform the modernization program itself served as a vehicle for the reconsolidation of dictatorial rule. This expansion of dictatorial authority and its imposition onto a larger terrain of social and economic life established a new relationship with the Iranian bourgeoisie. In the pre-reform period the dominant classes were able to conduct their economic activities with a relative degree of freedom as long as their loyalty to the institution of the monarchy was not suspect. After the

reform, they functioned as agencies of the Shah's modernization program. Their resources came to be channelled into areas of the economy which could further the objectives of that program and therefore the goal of enhancing the dictatorship. This, however, resulted from the nature of dictatorial rule itself rather than as a result of a conscious and rational decision. Modernization was no longer a process of rationalizing bourgeois domination in the context of class antagonism but a process of developing the hegemony of the polity above the interaction of classes and the social development. This, in turn, was possible because the large and powerful land owning classes that had existed prior to the period of reform had no choice but to accept the premises of land reform since it was essential to the reconsolidation and the stabilization of the dictatorial order on which their own security had come to depend. Those land-owners were the vestiges of an earlier feudal class which in the changed circumstances, owed its survival to the establishment and consolidation of a dictatorial order. Thus, they were forced into an alliance with a polity that seemed to represent the peasantry as well as the dominant classes but could in fact only represent itself to the detriment of both.⁶

Meanwhile, the compensation offered to the large land owners for the land distributed among the peasantry was attractive, providing them with new opportunities to engage in business ventures in urban areas.⁷ Incentives thus provided by the state encouraged them to invest their wealth in the most rapidly expanding enterprises of the agricultural, industrial, financial and service sectors. Some engaged in land speculation which produced high profits with a minimum of risk. In this way, the land reforms released a certain amount of capital that was then appropriated to the needs of the modernization program and through those to the further development of dictatorship. Thus, the land reforms orchestrated from above transformed the old wealthy feudal aristocrats into comprador bourgeoisie.

In turn, the dictatorship's objective was to carry out the task of modernizing society based on what was called the "great strategy of growth." In practice, this expressed itself in centrally-controlled

spending of the vast income derived from the oil revenue, which in turn reinforced control by the dictatorship over the entire wealth and resources of the nation. In other words, the particular function of oil revenue is determined by the needs of the dictatorship and serves to reinforce its special characteristics. From the point of view of economic theory, however, the editors of Monthly Review (in the Review of the Month of February 1979) have correctly pointed out the significant role that oil revenue has played in greatly accelerating the development of what they call a "new stratum:"

"Oil money paid for a rising tide of imports of all kinds, including food and at the same time created new stratum of wealthy merchants, many of whom had or soon established connections with the court, dispenser of social privileges in the form of licences, state contracts, etc. From importing finished goods many of these merchants moved on to assembling imported components, and from there in some cases to more or less complete manufacturing operation, using bribery or influential connection to obtain legal protection against foreign and/or domestic competition. A logical next step was for foreign multinational corporations to start investing in new ventures inside the country, often with collaboration with successful local capitalists, in this way circumventing tariff or other import barriers. Interacting with this type of foreign investment, both as cause and effect, was an influx of foreign banking, capital which was one of the earliest, and has remained one of the most important forms of foreign investment in Iran."⁸

It is this class as a whole that Fred Hallidays considers, on the one hand, to have been the agent of industrialization, and on the other, a class whose objective betrayed its function and the purpose it was to serve. As he explains "the state policies is a thoroughly capitalist one- to promote the growth of an Iranain industrial bour-

goisie. But the latter's policy is rather to use the protection and privileges offered by the state to maximize profits and to keep to those areas of economic activity that are safest." "This bourgeoisie," he concludes, "is therefore in many respects dependent on the state and has no intention, or interest, in becoming independent of it."⁹ Here, the dictatorship's policies appear to have been determined by capitalist rationality. The major characteristics of bourgeoisie, driven by greed and disinterested in capitalist development as such seems to have developed independently of dictatorial conditions rather than as a reflection of them. Halliday fails to recognize that the development of the bourgeois class in Iran is the manifestation of an irrationalism inherent in the structure of the dictatorship and part of the way in which dictatorship reproduces itself as a structure of power.

Thus, without violating the basic propositions of Marxism, it is more appropriate to say that socio-economic position of the Iranian bourgeoisie was determined on the one hand by the project of the dictatorship and on the other by foreign influence. This is supported by Robert Graham's account of the Iranian bourgeoisie. Even those "who could be called self-made men in the Western business sense" and who had "achieved success through their own initiative were then drawn into the royal ambit and were used directly by the Shah to initiate specific ventures."¹⁰ One of these "self-made men," that Graham refers to was Ahmad Khayami "who founded Irannational," the largest car manufacturer in Iran. He had started with a car wash business and ended up making cars "by the order of the Shah." Later he diversified and branched out into chain outlets, establishing "the Kouroush Stores, the first attempt in Iran to introduce large scale retailing. Again this move was made at the request of the Shah."¹¹

Similarly, in 1973 the prominent French news paper Le Monde interviewed Ali Rezai, owner of one of the largest industrial groups in Iran, Shahriar. Rezai told Le Monde's reporter "if it were not for his Majesty's help and protection I would never have reached the position I am holding now." The article added that 70 per cent of the

initial capital of Ali Rizai and his partners was supplied by low interest government loans. His concerns were exempt from taxes for five years in Tehran and 12 years outside of Tehran. Cheap electric power and customs protection, according to Ali Rizai, allowed some of his concerns to produce 50 to 80 per cent net profit annually.¹²

In this way, a few giant firms, such as the Pahlevi Foundation, the Industrial Groups of Behshar, Shahriar, Irannational, Sobet, Pars, Arya, Kavah, and Tolidarow, monopolized and controlled most of the important commercial and industrial activities of the nation.¹³ In turn, the enormous wealth generated by these concerns was owned by a tiny minority of the population consisting of no more than a few hundred families: "In 1972, 56 families owned shares in 177 of the 364 largest industrial firms and controlled 39 percent of them....In addition, 72 other families were represented in 88 other firms on the list of the largest. All told, 128 families and the Bank for Industrial and Mining Development {a private bank with foreign participation} had shares in 73 percent of the firms referred to."¹⁴ According to Tehran's paper, Ayandehgan, the members of the royal family alone owned the majority of shares in 92 industrial corporations, 41 food and agricultural firms, 29 others providing various services and 18 banks.¹⁵

Because the dictatorship itself controlled social change and the dominant economic class was subordinate to it, the Iranian bourgeoisie was unable to achieve the degree of autonomy that would have been necessary for it to have assumed its classical historical role. The fragmentation of its interest caused by dictatorial control left no room for an independent class organization and state based on class ideology. It was the accumulation of wealth within the reproductive project of the dictatorship that became the sole concern of the Iranian bourgeoisie.

The Development of Bureaucratic Comprador

The growth and development of the bureaucratic comprador class begins with the restoration of the modern dictatorship of Reza Shah. The bureaucratic state was instituted in Iran only after the establishment of a central government under his reign. After an initial feud with the aristocracy through which enormous feudal wealth was expropriated as the personal property of the Riza Shah, he joined the rank of big landowners. He then began to recruit the landowners into the state and military apparatuses of his administration. This trend continued throughout the Shah's rule and later through that of his son.¹⁶

The most rapid development of the bureaucratic comprador, however, took place with the seizure of power in 1953, followed by the program of reconsolidation, which included militarization and bureaucratization on an unprecedented scale. Because the prospect for imposing central authority on society depended on the regime's capacity to control social life, the scale of this newly constituted state structure was national as well as functional and structural. The mere fact that all revenues increased suddenly in the 1970's ensured as well, that an administrative revolution would be necessary if expenditures and the realization of value were to be made rational.

Abrahamian has described the Iranian polity under the Shah as based on "the three Pahlavi pillars: the armed forces, the court patronage network and the vast state bureaucracy"¹⁷ He points out that the size of the armed forces increased from 200,000 men in 1963 to 410,000 in 1970; and the size of the state bureaucracy within a fourteen year period "grew from 12 ministries with some 150,000 civil servants to 19 ministries with over 304,000 civil servants."¹⁸ Abrahamian's factual presentation of the extensiveness of military and bureaucratic expansion under the Shah illustrates convincingly what he calls "political underdevelopment." He is not, however, concerned with the implications of this characterization for class dynamics and therefore fails to show how the dictatorship's domination of the economy led to the emergence of the new type of bourgeoisie peculiar

to it, in particular the bureaucratic faction. Not only did the expansion of the military and the bureaucratic apparatuses of the dictatorship significantly modify the class composition of society at large and create what James Bill calls the "new middle class",¹⁹ but it also led to development of a new class that served administrative and managerial, as well as executive, functions within the machinery of the dictatorship and in regard to the maintenance of its structure.

Marvin Zinos also characterizes the entire reign of the Shah as "a quarter century in which the civil and military bureaucracies have continually expanded their control over the activities of the population at large while the Shah has more relentlessly expanded his power over the bureaucracies."²⁰ What Zinos fails to recognize, however, is the mechanism through which a centralized dictatorship exercises its control. Those who occupied the upper echelons of the military and bureaucratic apparatuses not only served the function of intensifying control over society as a whole, but also managed its economic affairs and administered its major institutions while at the same time functioning as capitalists. That is to say, as far as the dictatorship was concerned, they occupied subordinate and subservient positions as technocrats or bureaucrats by virtue of their positions in the hierarchy of power determined by the central authority. But, so far as the ownership of property was concerned, they functioned as owners of a kind of feudal capital based on family background and/or position in the power structure. It was their combined position and ownership that gave them the character of a bureaucratic comprador class faction. What distinguishes this faction from the comprador bourgeoisie was its position in the power structure. In addition to possession of capital, it also wielded bureaucratic-institutionalized political power.

Abrahamian distinguishes "some 200 elder politicians, senior civil servants and high ranking military officers" among one thousand individuals forming what he calls the Iranian "upper class," "who prospered by sitting on managerial boards and facilitating lucrative government contracts."²¹ The concept of "upper class," it is clear,

does not enable Abrahamian to distinguish between the key factions according to the relationships of bureaucratic position and ownership. Nor does Bijhan Jazani, a revolutionary theoretician and historian differentiate between the two. Even though, he uses the two terms interchangeably he believes that "as long as a bureaucrat, a technocrat or an army general keeps his position and his income dependent on preserving that position then he ought to be regarded a bureaucratic bourgeoisie."²² Jazani in fact confuses the revenues derived from the position occupied in the bureaucratic machinery of the dictatorship with those derived from property ownership. It is the latter that determines the character of a bureaucrat or a technocrat as capitalist.

Thus, some of the bureaucratic compradors were individual members of the old aristocratic families who transferred wealth derived from feudal properties before and after the land reform of 1960 to commerce and industry, thereby turning into capitalists while retaining their positions in the power structure; others were high ranking generals and senior officers, professional bureaucrats, and technocrats who amassed enormous wealth solely through their position--through bribery, usurpation of public and private properties, sale of offices and circumventing foreign capital investment. The wealth acquired by virtue of bureaucratic power was invested in profitable joint business ventures with the bourgeois comprador and/or foreign capital, but this remained a combination of overlapping interest rather than a single class interest.

The bureaucratic comprador class served as an instrument of dictatorial rule and therefore as an agency through which foreign powers exercised political and economic influence in Iran. Through its practices the United States was able to secure its geopolitical, economic, and military positions in Iran and in the Persian Gulf region. At the same time foreign multinational corporations were able to obtain economic and military treaties and to sell Iran billions of dollars in advanced technology and military hardware.

For example, in 1975 an agreement was signed by the Iranian

Minister of Economy and Finance and U.S Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, to increase non-oil trade by 20 percent, or \$15 billion. The package included the purchase of eight nuclear powered reactors for electricity and for water desalinisation.²³ France had already signed a contract with Iran in February of 1974, worth \$5 billion which included the construction of five nuclear plants valued at \$1.2 billion.²⁴ The Germans had also signed a \$5.5 billion pact under which they agreed to build two atomic plants.²⁵ Oil money was also used to invest in a number of foreign corporations by buying some percentage of their assets and/or extending loans and credits to them. Kayhan International reported, in November 1974, that the Iranian government extended \$400 million in loans to Britain's National Water Council. This was part of a total \$1.2 billion loan package granted to Britain.²⁶ Kayhan also reported that Iran agreed to buy a 25.4 percent share of²⁷ the giant German steel corporation Krupp with payment in dollars. \$300 million in credit was provided to PAN American Air Ways which had reported losses of \$81.18 million in 1974 and \$59 million in the first quarter of 1975;²⁸ and the Grumman corporation received \$200 million, of which \$75 million was granted by the Bank Mellie of Iran.²⁹ In all these transactions, excluding military contracts worth billions of dollars, as Jazani pointed out "a certain percentage is illegally appropriated by the higher echelons of the bureaucracy for personal gain."³⁰

Despite the fact that bureaucratic comparador wielded enormous political and economic power, they had neither independence nor a unifying ideology, and were dispensable despite their positions within the power structure. Their corruption made them even more vulnerable to scapegoating in crisis situations. For example, in 1960, when economic crisis and social unrest threatened the stability of the dictatorial order, Ali Amini began his term in office as Prime Minister with a campaign against corruption. Among the first arrested were five generals who had occupied different cabinet positions at various times. They were charged with corruption, usurpation of public and private properties, embezzlement and the abuse of power. Within days,

another group of seven state officials were arrested and the same charges were brought against them.³¹ Amini's campaign may have contributed to his own downfall a year later, not because of his having offended members of the government but because it indicated a possible degree of autonomy unacceptable to the dictatorial authority.

The increase of oil revenue in 1973 led to still greater corruption in the upper levels of the military and the civil bureaucracies. Again under public pressure and due to the slow pace of the bureaucracy in executing the objectives of his modernization programs, the Shah himself declared "war on corruption" and ordered the Imperial Inspectorate to investigate his charges.³² Investigation led to the arrest of a Commander of the Iranian Navy, ten other high-ranking generals and senior navy officers, and two civilians. All were charged with embezzling government funds.³³ Two other cases involved the corruption of high ranking state officials. In one, a civilian tribunal convicted 10 officials and charged five others with embezzlement at the sugar plant at Isfahan.³⁴ In another, two Under-Secretaries in the Ministry of Commerce were dismissed for an arrangement they made with Tate and Lyle International of Britain concerning a sugar purchase which had resulted in a loss of total \$23.4 million by the Iranian government.³⁵

This happened despite the Shah's declaration of a "war against corruption" in 1973, in which he banned officials from engaging in commercial and business activities, or holding interests in private firms while retaining positions in state bureaucracies. According to Kayhan International the level of officials who were to be barred from ownership were identified by the Imperial Edict. These officials, Kayhan indicated, were "Cabinet ministers, their deputies, directors-generals, managing directors of state-owned organizations and board members of such organizations."³⁶ In another editorial, Kayhan International pointed out that the Imperial directives "are designed to prevent government officials from misusing office and power for personal enrichment or for advancing the interests of friends, relatives and proteges."³⁷ It took the Shah, however, several more years

to bar the members of his own family from such practices. In 1978, Dr. Ardalan, a new Court Minister declared that "the entire Royal Family has been warned not to engage in any sort of influence or intervention in the administrative affairs of the government, dealing with and sharing in the domestic or foreign corporations and those which are in partnership with the government."³⁸

This campaign demonstrates how deeply imbedded corruption was in the machinery of the dictatorship. The "war" against corruption was only a tactical response to social unrest. The members of bureaucratic comprador, due to their inherent corruption and subordinate character were used as scapegoats to shift the responsibility of the dictatorship to individuals. The last such action against high ranking state officials was taken in November 1978 by the military government, when the revolutionary movement had already gained momentum. The New York Times reported the arrest of 14 prominent officials, including General Nematollah Nassiri, former head of Internal Security Agency (SAVAK), and 6 former Cabinet members.³⁹ This was followed by the Shah's order to arrest his former Prime Minister of thirteen years, Amir Abbas Hoveida.

It is clear that although bureaucratic compradors wielded considerable power, their positions were precarious. The fear of falling out of favor or becoming the target of scapegoating led both sections of the Iranian bourgeoisie to transfer their large portion of their wealth to bank accounts in foreign countries in anticipation of a time when they would be forced to leave Iran.

With the revolutionary situation of 1978, the striking members of the Central Bank of Iran issued a document in which the names of 177 individuals were listed who had deposited during September and October of 1978, more than one billion pounds of sterling in foreign banks. The list included members of the Royal family, high ranking generals and senior officers of the armed forces, former ministers, and other high-ranking officials.⁴⁰ The New York Times commented on the transfer of currency out of Iran that "Iranians who have seen the list wonder how the state officials acquired such huge sums in the first

place."⁴¹

It is clear that the machinery of dictatorship did not function to maintain and implement a capitalist order, whatever the degree of development of capitalist relations it fostered. Rather, capitalist development was promoted according to the interests and requirements of the dictatorship. Class interest and class representation were given only so much leeway as was required by the power structure. Halliday's characterization of the dictatorship seems to imply it served a subservient and subordinate function, so far as the "ruling class" was concerned. He defines the Iranian state prior to the revolution as a "bourgeois dictatorship" independent of its bourgeoisie, that took the specific form of a monarchy through which the ruling class ruled.⁴² In point of fact, however, the Shah introduced the features of modern capitalism within a well established framework of an older social structure precisely to eliminate the threat of revolution from below and to legitimize and consolidate his rule above the bourgeoisie itself. The Shah promoted the development of a new type of bourgeoisie and employed it as a vehicle for his modernization program rather than the reverse. This is in sharp contrast to both Japan and Germany where landed upper classes motivated capitalist modernization.

Moreover, capitalist modernization, under the dictatorship could not have been accompanied by a rationalization of the political order. The dictatorial structure was organized as an expression of the Shah and reflected his personality. He had accumulated so much power that the functioning of the bureaucratic machinery of the state came solely to depend upon his personal administration. The more centralized and repressive the dictatorial rule became the more independent the Shah became and the less he was bound to represent and take into account particular interests.

Many theorists of the Iranian revolution maintain that increasing oil revenues provided the Shah with an opportunity to free himself from particular class interests. The fact is, however, that he was put upon the Peacock Throne by allied forces in 1941, and then encour-

raged and supported by them to restore the centralized form of authority established by his father. But, his continual intrigues and conspiracies against constitutional institutions were defeated. When his conspiratorial plans were exposed and he was no longer able to function as monarch in 1953, he was returned to power by a CIA-engineered coup in the same year. The process of expansion and consolidation of the Shah's power began at that time with the violent suppression of all oppositional forces following the seizure of power. The enormous oil revenue undoubtedly enhanced the process, but it by no means caused it. Historically the system of tyranny required no independent source of income in order to perpetuate itself in Iran, though the new resources provided it with an opportunity to situate itself above the class aspect of development. There is no reason to believe that the Shah was an exception to this historical trend. The use of oil income for modernization took place within and was not the cause of the dictatorship and its separation from the classes and the society as a whole.

Notes on Chapter 3:

1. For the historical debate concerning the concept of class, the following may be considered: Karl Marx, Capital vol.III, 1894, p. 885; also "The Class Struggle in France, 1848 to 1850," and "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in Lewis Feuer, 1959, p. 281-348; T. B. Bottomore, "Karl Marx Theory of Elites," in Sociological Reading in Conflict Perspective, William J. Chambliss, 1973, p. 252; T. B. Bottomore, Class in Modern Society, 1966, p. 13; Max Weber, "Class, Status, Party," in From Max Weber, Gerth and Mills, 1946, p. 180; Antony Giddens, The Class Structure of Advanced Societies, 1973; Stuart Hall, "The political and economic in Marx's Theory of Classes," in Class and Class Structure, Alen Hunt, 1977, p. 15; Gaetano Mosca, "The Ruling Class," in Chambliss, 1973, p. 232; James A. Bill "Class Analysis and The Challenge of Change," in Comparative Political Studies 2, October 1969: 389-400; Ralf Darendorf, Class and Class Conflict in Industrial society, Stanford: Stanford University, 1959; Gerhard Lenski, "Power, Force, and Morality," in Chambliss, 1973, 254; Barrington Moore, Social Origin of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern world, Boston: Beacon Press, 1966.
2. See for example, James Bill, "Class Analysis and the Dialectics of Modernization in the Middle East," in International Journal of Middle East Studies, 3 (1972), 417-434; where he examines the controversies concerning the concept of class since Marx and points out inadequacies and inapplicability of Marx's concept of class in the system of stratification in Middle Eastern societies.
3. Paul A. Baran, The Political Economy of Growth, 1968, p. 202-219.
4. According to Bahman Nirumand, American financial support immediately following the coup of 1953 totalled \$127.3 million; see Iran: The New Imperialism in Action, 1969, p. 93.
5. See chapter 2 for details of the Shah's Six Point Program.
6. It is no accident that imperialist powers have traditionally recognized the significance of socio-economic reforms in less developed countries so long as the reforms are instituted from above, constituting of each country a single capital capable of negotiating with the multiplicity of capitals in the global sphere. Reform is therefore seen as functionally necessary to the world hegemony of capitalism and to the elimination of the threat of revolution as radical response to both internal and external oppression and exploitation. In accomplishing these tasks, the United States has led the capitalist world in supporting and reinforcing the regulation of socio-economic reforms by dictatorship in a number of Latin American and Asian countries, including Iran in the 1960's under the Shah.
7. See chapter 2 for detail discussion of land reform program.
8. Editors, Review of The Month, Iran: The New Crisis of American Hegemony, in Monthly Review, February 1979, p. 7.
9. Fred Halliday, Iran: Dictatorship and Development, 1979, p. 47.
10. Robert Graham, Iran: The Illusion of Power, 1979, p. 47.
11. Ibid, p. 48.
12. Safari, Vaze-a Kononi-a Eghtesad-a Iran (The present conditions of Iran's Economy), p. 119.
13. Ibid, p. 134.
14. Monthly Review, February 1979, p. 8.

15. Ayandhgan, March 1, 1979.
16. Leonard Binder, Iran: Political Development in a Changing society, 1962, p. 67-68.
17. Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Tow Revolutions, 1982, p. 438.
18. Ibid, p. 434.
19. James Bill, 1972.
20. Marvin Zonis, Political Elite of Iran, 1971, p. 18.
21. Abrahamian, 1982, p. 432
22. B. Jazani, Iran: The Socio-Economic Analysis of a Dependent Capitalist state, 1973, p. 36.
23. Kayhan International, March 15, 1975.
24. Ibid, February 16, 1974.
25. Ibid, July 10, 1974.
26. Ibid, November 2, 1974.
27. Ibid, September 21, 1974.
28. Ibid, September 21, 1974.
29. Ibid, October 12, 1974.
30. Jazani, 1973, P. 33.
31. Ittialat, May 1962.
32. Kayhan International, November 3, 1973.
33. Ibid, February 28, 1976.
34. Ibid, March 6, 1976.
35. Ibid, February 14, 1976.
36. Ibid, November 17, 1973.
37. Ibid, November 3, 1973.
38. Kayhan Airmail, October 4, 1978.
39. The New York Times, November 8, 1978.
40. Iranshahr, December 1, 1978.
41. The New York Times, November 28, 1978.
42. Haliday, 1979, p. 33.

Chapter IV

Modernizing Dictatorship and the Principle of Centralization

The present chapter deals with the centralization of authority in the state and the concentration of power in the military organization as distinctive features of the modernizing dictatorship. This analysis is primarily aimed at locating the contradictions immanent in the structure of the dictatorship and to show the vulnerability at its foundation despite its absolutist character. The causes of dictatorial domination and the defeat of parliamentary government in Iran will be dealt with in the last segment of this chapter.

The Shah's regime had all the necessary elements to be called a "Constitutional Monarchy." A written constitution existed-- the product of the bloody revolution of 1906. It had a legislature and a judiciary, each, according to the constitution, relatively independent and equal in power under the monarchy. Government was based on the Western parliamentary model, but the constitutional institutions were little more than ornamental. In fact, they were adornments of a deeper and still effective dictatorial order. That is, the constitution gave the illusion of rational universalistic authority, or what Max Weber called "legal domination,"¹ to the dictatorship.

But, a modernizing dictatorship makes a mockery of law, usurps the authority of all legal institutions, and concentrates it in the hands of an individual and/or bureaucratic and military elite. It

systematically violates the most essential principles of institutional rule and denies the most basic democratic rights of the people. Under the Shah's rule, institutional authority became increasingly diffused to the extent that a line could not be drawn distinguishing the separate constitutional powers from one another. They were dominated by the executive which was itself subject to control by the centralized authority. Their functions were interdependent and interconnected, and were determined as such by dictatorship's policies.

The Cabinet

The state bureaucratic apparatus was comprised of ministries and administered by the appointed ministers organized in the Cabinet ostensibly under the leadership of the Prime minister. The Shah appointed the Prime Minister, supervised the selection of cabinet members, and ultimately had the power to approve of or dismiss them.

In Iran historically the relationship between the cabinet and the dictatorship to a large measure, depended on the latter's relationship to the parliament. When parliamentary rule was exercised effectively and kept the power of the dictatorship in check, the Prime Minister was recognized to be responsible for leading the country, and the parliament acted to hold him and his cabinet responsible. The Prime Minister and his cabinet members normally found themselves in conflict with both the legislature and centralized authority, competing to control the executive. Under such circumstances, the Prime minister and cabinet maintained to a certain degree their constitutional autonomy.²

Upon the seizure of power by the Shah in 1953, and its subsequent consolidation in 1960's, the conflict between the legislature and central authority had been all but eliminated, and responsibility of the Prime Minister and his cabinet to the legislature became only a matter of form. As a result, both the executive and the legislature became powerless as independent constitutional authorities, and subordinate to the authority of the Shah and his modernization program.

The era of servitude and the manifest submission of the premier-ship and the cabinet began with Hovida's tenure in 1964. Hovida's

outstanding qualities were loyalty and submissiveness. According to Robert Graham, "his principal asset was his acceptance of this subservient role, an astute interpretation of what the Shah wanted and a canny feel for the political mood of the country."³

Under the Shah's regime the Prime Minister and his cabinet exercised only limited power. Every important decision had to be checked with the Shah in advance. Leonard Binder points out that, "generally speaking, the more closely the Shah has been associated with the business of government the less has been the authority of the Prime Minister and more restricted has been the administrative sphere of cabinet."⁴

The Prime Minister's and the cabinet's primary functions were to serve as a public relation agent for the Shah. They lacked enforceable authority to make any important decision regarding social, political, economic and military problems. Obviously, such a centralized bureaucratic system would have, in addition to its problem of legitimation, serious difficulties in its operation and in specifying tasks according to criteria of efficiency and effectiveness. As Barrington Moore points out, "in contrast to rational bureaucracy, totalitarian rule seeks a full commitment of subordinate's personality to the dictator's objective."⁵

Because officials were obliged to pursue the objectives of central authority above legal responsibility and the specific task rationally attached to their positions, their main concerns were to protect and advance their own interests and security. Marvin Zonis, who has studied the "political elite" of Iran, characterizes their attitude as mistrust, manifest insecurity and interpersonal exploitation. In the course of his studies, the author surprisingly finds that "the more powerful manifested the highest level of cynicism. The younger elite, then, are more cynical; the active are more insecure; and the powerful, the least committed."⁶

Although this may be considered an accurate description of those who occupied the upper echelon of the administrative system of Iran, the author fails to explain why such a complex of attitudes arises.

Rather, he treats them as inherent features of a "traditional" society such as Iran. He does not take into account the relationship between the character of political elites and repressive centralization of authority. Such personalities are direct products of particular power relationships existing within society. They usually grow and develop in any power structure that is highly centralized, dominated by the personal power of an individual, and coercive. In Iran the dictatorial authority wielded all power, and possessed every repressive capability of enforcing the submission and subordination of the elites to its own objectives. No doubt, individual opportunism played an important role in glorifying dictatorial achievements, but even this was encouraged, and demanded, by the dictatorship.

The Legislature

Following the coup of 1953 and the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Dr. Mossadegh, the legislative body was absorbed into and dominated by the executive. All political parties were suppressed and in their place a two party system was established on the ground that the absence of responsible political parties, as Andrew Westwood points out, was regarded as "a central impediment to representative government in Iran." It goes without saying that the two party system was constructed after the American model of democracy where the bourgeoisie had already established its hegemonic domination. Although the two parties were headed by two very close associates and friends of the Shah and were loyal to him, elections were controlled to insure the uniformity of the legislature in its subordination to the central authority. According to Westwood, in the 1956 election "the Shah, it is said, hand-picked the candidates in this election and all won."⁸ Yet, the parliament was dissolved and electoral processes were suspended in 1961 by the Shah on the ground that they were dominated by conservative and aristocratic forces opposed to the land reform program. It was not until 1965 that an electoral process was reinstituted, serving to provide the dictatorship with a semblance of constitutionality.

Still, the secret police and Interior Ministry controlled and

organized the electoral process. They scrutinized the candidates to insure their compatibility with the subservient role they would have to play in the national assembly. The majority of assembly members were, in any case, selected by more mysterious processes. Some were "elected" to the parliament who had never participated in the election nor claimed to be candidates. As Marvin Zonis states, "one who is sitting at his home and listening to radio hears that he has been elected as representative of the people to the parliament."⁹

Thus, it is not surprising for the apologist Iranian scholar, Hassan Mohammadi-Najed to admit that "few Iranians take any politician, candidate, or public figure, except the Shah, seriously."¹⁰ In describing the reasons for this and to justify popular indifference toward political processes and politicians, Najed, in fact, defends the principle of a centralized repressive authority and the Shah's personal domination of the whole of Iran's social and political life.

According to Najed popular apathy stems from three sources: the tradition of the monarchy which has deep historical and cultural roots in Iran; the charismatic personality of M.R. Shah; and the Shahanshah's impressive accomplishments in all phases of social, economic and political life. He concludes that "such unusually strong, farsighted and popular leadership has, among other factors, reduced the significance of election and policy making through parliamentary channels in Iran."¹¹

It is true that the Shah had personally dominated the whole society. But his domination had been established based on the suppression of all democratic freedoms by the centralized dictatorial authority. Historically, an individual monarch initially enjoyed a certain degree of legitimacy only because he had overthrown his predecessor's oppressive and corrupt rule. Subsequently, as he enthroned himself, he either became blinded by the loss of power and broke the back of the people by heavy taxes to finance policies of expansionism and conquest, or he was so intoxicated by decadent courtly pleasures that he was led to decisions that increased impoverishment and the rapidity of the decline of the nation. Not yet recovered from the shock and

destructive impact of one monarch, the people were soon faced with the oppressive and exploitative rule of another. As will be shown later, the modern history of Iran has been marked by the struggle of society as a whole against state power. Everytime people appeared to have reached the threshold of victory, a third, external, superior power intervened in favor of the absolute dictatorial rule of monarch and helped to reimpose it on society.

Furthermore, the place of monarchy in Iranian culture is established in a history of literature created by many poets, depicting the Shah as the source of all goodness who represented the "shadow of god" on earth. They did so to enrich themselves and to secure favored positions in the royal courts.¹² Those who refused to praise and glorify the character of the Shah, such as Ferdosi and Naser Khsrow, never became the court's favorites. Under the Shah's dictatorial order, the authentic and popular national heroes were denigrated as models only to make the Shah appear as the leader of the nation and the godlike protector of the fatherland. In other words, the place of the monarchy in the authentic culture of the Iranian people is at best ambiguous and at worse lacking in legitimacy.

Certainly, the Shah might have been charismatic. But that was by virtue of the ruthlessness of his character and the cruelty of his heart rather than tradition or personal accomplishments that never stood the test of public wisdom. The atrocities committed by the Shah's secret police have acquired such international recognition that there is no need for further description. Suffice it to say, that SAVAK's reputation aroused such fear that most ordinary men, even in their family circles were cautious and restrained feeling concerning political matters. This is illustrated by a common saying that "a house has a mouse and the mouse has ears." The popular resignation and apathy may best be explained as a result of the internalization of repressive dictatorial order, alienating man from his fellowmen and from his society. Public indifference toward politics was rooted in the social fragmentation that had been imposed by the dictatorship upon society from above.

Though the public was more aware than Mohammadi-Najed would admit, the responsibilities of individuals selected to occupy the seats of the national assembly were limited by the dictatorship and not by public opinion or interest. Members of the assembly also understood the limits of their role and function. Deviation, such as raising critical questions or speaking unfavorably on legislation supported by the Shah, came to have serious consequences, including visits by SAVAK and reprisals.

In 1978, under the rapid prerevolutionary decline of dictatorial authority, deputies and senators began to break the silence and to speak about what had been effectively suppressed until then. They began to speak critically about the dictatorship and the way in which it dominated the legislature. One senator, speaking in the parliament, claimed that prevailing methods of governing the country were "silencing the legislative organ and forcing it to surrender itself to the executive power of the government."¹³ "Nevertheless", he continued, "there are senators who do not fear to tell the truth and to challenge the executive. But those speaking still have to prepare themselves to bear the consequences; and every time the houses of parliament are convened the places of the few who had spoken critically remain empty. You are well aware of the fact that what has silenced most deputies and senators has not been their fear of elections...., but the fear of "criticism" and "constructive warning" being interpreted by his Majesty as having been intended to obstruct the country's modernizing programs... This was the main fear that stopped the tongues from telling and the pens from writing the truth, that led to leaving the situation to opportunists, liars and flatterers."¹⁴ The senator failed to point out that a few months earlier even he was not able to make such speeches in parliament.

Another deputy, while attempting to justify the incompetence and passivity of the members of the national assembly, illustrated the powerlessness of the legislature and its limited function under the dictatorship: "we always advised officials of the executives not to oppress the people, to respect the principle of the separation of

powers, and to respect the rights of the legislature; but nobody paid any attention or carried out his responsibilities and duties." ¹⁵

The executives of the government, no doubt, were too strong to care, for they functioned as the executive arm of the centralized authority assigned the task of applying the monarch's policies and programs. The dictatorial authority did not need what that senator called "constructive warning and criticism." The maintenance of its rule required a legislature dominated by "opportunists, liars and flatterers." The place of socially conscious and responsible individuals committed to the cause of advancing society had been reserved in prisons equipped by the most modern and sophisticated instruments of torture.

In 1975, before the dictatorship began its precipitous decline, the electoral process had become too cumbersome and meaningless to the dictatorial order itself as well as to the public. The power structure appeared so secure in that it no longer required even a semblance of constitutionality. The Shah declared the formation of a one party system organized and led by himself. In order to clarify this reformation of his rule, he asserted that there are two kinds of citizens: those who believe in the "Shah's and People's Revolution," and those who do not believe in those principles. The latter, he announced, should leave the country or go to prison, or participate constructively within his framework. ¹⁶

Indeed, one of the distinctive characteristics of centralized dictatorial authority is that its relationship with society inevitably becomes simple and transparent. Ultimately, there remains no social connection between the ruler and the ruled. Under the regime of the Shah, one was either loyal or disloyal. There was no third category. The success or failure of such a regime provides no opportunity for societal reflection, for it lacks an internal dynamism to make itself able to respond to society. The Shah usurped all constitutional authority and, in the process, replaced the will of society by his own will. This can be understood in terms of the internal organization and external connections of that authority.

The Judiciary

Under the Shah's regime, the legal authority of the judiciary system was effectively undermined by private and special courts. Some were either directly connected to the centralized authority, such as the Royal Special Bureau, the Royal Inspectorate Organization, and the Royal Commission.¹⁷ Others were established within the executive, such as military tribunals and civil tribunals called Divan-a-Ali-a-Keshvar. The constitutional judiciary subordinated to the executive lacked independent authority to take appeals from military tribunals or to investigate charges of corruption, bribery, embezzlement and other crimes by state officials or members of the royal family. In effect, state officials and high state authorities were immune as if by divine right, to the law which was supposed to be governing the entire nation.

The jurisdictions of the special courts became more and more comprehensive, eventually covering minor violations in areas involving the armed forces, secret police and civil service. In particular, political offences, which were loosely defined and included a wide range of activities from possession of books containing critical ideas to the possession of small arms, were outside of the jurisdiction of the law courts. All were referred to military tribunals without distinction.

Arrests were usually arbitrary and victims were held in indefinite confinement. The military judiciary, one of the most feared institutions loyal to the monarch, acted as the legal arm of SAVAK. Military courts convened behind closed doors, and their processes excluded hearings before juries. Victims were denied access to evidence and the right to choose their own defense attorneys. People were summarily tried and executed or sentenced to long prison terms. The military tribunals operated on the assumption that any dissent was a crime against the monarch and the institution of monarchy.¹⁸

The weekly paper Jonbesh, which resumed publishing during and after the revolution of 1979, reported, in its November 1979 issue, that judges under the dictatorial regime of the Shah lacked the kind

of security necessary to afford them independence from the repressive power of the executive branch of the government: "it has frequently been seen that an innocent judge has been sent to internal exile or been prosecuted simply because he carried out his legal responsibilities and resisted the pressures and illegal demands of influential individuals." In these cases, the report continued, "the judges had no means to defend or protect themselves and inevitably had to give in or accept undue punishment for carrying out their duties."¹⁹

In 1978, the daily paper Kayhan reported that a judge had been sentenced to internal exile by the Minister of Justice because he had freed a group of students charged with disorderly conduct.²⁰ The report also indicated that critical evaluation of the internal operation of the justice system was regarded as a provocation against the government and hence was subject to punishment.²¹

It is thus self-evident that the existence of an independent justice system is incompatible with a system of centralized repressive authority, although judicial autonomy does not necessarily mean that its social system is just or that justice can be carried out where the mode of social distribution and production is already unjust. Yet, dictatorial authority cannot even tolerate a semblance of justice even though relative judicial independence may be more effective in maintaining the status quo. But, the dictatorial mobilization of all social institutions and the elimination of mechanisms for even legal resistance to unjust authority are essential requirements of a dictatorship. Thus, under the rule of the Shah, the function of the judicial system was to serve the interest of the dictatorial authority, promoting submission and loyalty and suppressing dissent and resistance as effectively as possible.

The Armed Forces and the Dictatorship

A dictatorial rule with a small army is a structural contradiction. That is, the expansion of the army is a necessary condition of its existence as an alienated apparatus of power external to society. It is generally believed that the army is the necessary basis of and chief means for exercising authority. But under a dictatorial order,

the army is a form of power. That is, it is not a neutral force capable of being used rationally in the pursuit of impersonal, societal purposes. The unity of the army and a personality is, a characteristic feature of dictatorial power. The expansion of the army and its modernization is therefore an internal demand inherent in the structure of the dictatorial order. A large and modern army is a structural aspect of the dictatorial penetration into the social life. The deeper this penetration, the more alien and independent the army becomes from its social basis, reflecting even further its unity with the person of the dictator.

Such a force, external to society, functions to maintain a rule which has no social basis and serves to confront and suppress whatever threatens the security and continuity of this rule. In the case of Iran, this was reinforced by the action of the United States in the interest of its own geo-politics and economic hegemony. The expansion and the modernization of the dictatorial army is thus externally determined by an identity of interests between the dictatorial order and foreign hegemonic power.

Throughout his rule, as a modernizing dictator, the Shah vigorously followed his father in attempting to expand and modernize the armed forces. However, at the moment at which the ambitions of glory and power for both Shahs appeared to have been satisfied, the modern army that they nurtured and labored to construct failed to sustain the illusion. When Reza Shah's armed forces were faced with the occupation of Iran by Allied Forces in 1941, they yielded to the enemy virtually without resistance and submissively watched as their father-figure departed in humiliation and disgrace. His son, who built the strongest and most powerful modern army in the whole region of the Persian Gulf, apparently capable of perpetuating the monarchy a beyond foreseeable limit, was doomed to meet the same destiny. The difference was that while Reza Shah managed to secure the peacock throne for his son, the Shah's armed forces disintegrated from within and surrendered the system of monarchy altogether to the people in February, 1979.

It is thus imperative to examine the process by which the Shah's

modernization of the army took place and analyze its structure locate the internal contradictions of that formation.

The dictatorship's consolidation of power included a continual military expansion as a dynamic process that responded to its need constantly to renew and defend its domination. This consolidation was the major incentive for channelling a significant part of the human and material resources of the country into the expansion of the military machinery and the modernization of its structure. The Tehran daily paper Ayandehgan reported in January 1979, that military hardware comprised 35 percent of Iran's total 1978 imports, while the government allocated over 30 percent of its total budget for military expenditures.²² This was a twelve-fold increase, from \$67 millions in 1953 to \$844 millions in 1970,²³ and a rise by the same proportion to \$9,400 million in 1977.²⁴ Military manpower increased from 200,000 men in 1963 to 410,000 in 1977.

The United States was the main supplier of modern, sophisticated arms, technical assistance, and military advisement to Iran. "Between fiscal years 1950 and 1977, the United States supplied Iran with over \$20 billion worth of arms, ammunition, training and technical assistance under the Military Assistance Program and Foreign Military Sales Program."²⁵ The defence expenditure in 1978 amounted to \$2.6 billion, or 19.1 percent of the \$13.5 billion in total foreign sales by the U.S. military. "In terms of actual undelivered orders now pending from U.S. companies, the total worldwide is \$44.1 billion. Iran's portion of that is 12.1 billion, or 27.4 percent."²⁶

The Shah's military procurement ranged from ammunition to the most advanced jet fighters, the F14, F16, and AWACS surveillance planes worth billions of dollars. "The supply of arms," according to Alexander Cockburn and James Ridgeway, "is only one part of the story." The point out that,

"With every shipment of the hardware went the all-important U.S. technicians and personnel to train the Shah's forces. This was no easy job. Inexperienced Iranian pilots have been crashing Phantom jets at the rate of two a month since

the few qualified aviators moved on to the more sophisticated F-14s. Planned obsolescence without war. As long ago as 1975, it was costing Iran \$9000 per man per month training for the 20,000 technicians involved in installation and training of defense hardware: a bill of \$2.16 billion over all."²⁷

The Shah himself acknowledged to an Associated Press reporter that the salary paid to a technician was over \$12,000 per month and sometimes this salary exceeded \$150,000 a year.²⁸

The Shah's need to secure his rule is not a sufficient means to justify such enormous expenditures on the modernization and expansion of the military at the expense of the nation, whose large majority still suffered from malnutrition, a lack of health and welfare programs and education, housing shortages, unemployment and underemployment. This program was, rather, aimed at enlarging the sphere of domination of the dictatorship as a regional power linked to the global imperialist hegemony. Economically, the Shah's throne might have been more secure had he relied on a smaller army. But, his failure to do so was a result of the dynamism of expanding power built into the structure of any dictatorship supported by imperialist powers.

Thus, the construction of a modern army under the Shah's regime was consistent with both the needs of his own dictatorial order and those of the hegemonic foreign power; but, at the same time, it was in sharp contradiction with the economic development of the country, its aspirations for national independence, and its integrity as a society.

The Structure of Armed Forces

The Shah's military machinery was comprised of a 200,000 man Ground Force, 100,000 Air Force personnel, a 25,000 Navy, and 30,000 Imperial Guard and elite commando units.²⁹ The latter were the special personal forces of the Shah; whose members were carefully selected, equipped, and trained to be loyal only to the monarch. In addition 74,000 served in the rural police and approximately an equal number in the urban police forces.³⁰ This excludes SAVAK, whose size

has been estimated from 5,000 to 60,000 regular members with tens of thousands of informants.

The upper echelon of the Iranian armed forces was occupied by high ranking generals and senior officers primarily from the wealthy families of the aristocracy and bureaucratic bourgeoisie. They comprised the most powerful and privileged strata of the military and of society as a whole. They commanded high salaries, including the latest model foreign cars, personal guards, chauffeurs and conscripts who served as domestic servants. Their political influence, particularly that of the generals, was even higher than that of the Prime Minister since they derived their power directly through their connections to the Shah. Thus, the social benefits they derived by virtue of their power and influence were incomparably greater than the direct material benefits solely attached to the positions they occupied in the military hierarchy.

Generals and senior officers were promoted personally by the Shah and could be dismissed only by him. As Robert Graham points out, "not content with being the mere titular commander in chief, he is in active control, usually direct personal control, even down to monitoring the appointment of middle ranking officers. They are his soldiers as much as Iran's."³¹

The generals had no independent constitutional responsibility. Though their loyalty had been proven to the Shah through years of manifest obedience and submissive service, to make sure that they did not form cliques of personal followers among lower ranking officers, they were constantly rotated to different posts throughout the country. This rotation system intended to diminish their ability to gain independence from the Shah, and thus eliminate the possibility of military coups. Independent decision making and individual initiative were suspect and discouraged. The Shah was considered a lord more than a leader and the generals acted as though they were his special subjects. To demonstrate their loyalty and obedience, the generals were willing to bow, and fall to their knees, and kiss the Shah's hands and feet if necessary. They were subservient and submissive in

character, adorning themselves with the colorful Imperial medals hung from their chests with pride. In turn, the generals demanded the same kind of treatment from the ranks below them. Such an arrangement could only discourage the kind of character necessary for the management of a modern army.

Although the army was organized according to a rational division of labor, dependence on personality characterized its career structure. Because this was a consistent and systematic attribute of the military hierarchy, the entire army ultimately became dependent on the Shah, both as its functioning and its predominant morality and values, of which more will be said later. It is clear under such circumstances that the Shah's personal crisis was bound to become a crisis of the army as a whole.

The junior officers formed the professional stratum of the armed forces. They were graduates of military colleges where three years of training and indoctrination provided them with skills and dedication. They were materially affluent. The officers of several sections of the military, in particular the Air Force and Imperial Guard, were especially favored. They enjoyed the special attention of the Shah, received higher salaries and fringe benefits and other privileges.³²

According to a New York Times report of December 1978, the officers, of whom 80 percent were regulars, lived a life quite different from those occupying the lower ranks. "They are pampered and privileged, with higher salaries, personal servants, free medical care and special low price stores. Most have been military students and professionals since their early teens."³³

The majority of the officers were from cities generally from lower middle class families that either lacked the financial resources to send their sons for four years to the universities, or failed to pass the college entry exams. Thus, the army presented the only opportunity available to these men to live an independent life and lighten the financial burden of their families. Although the authority of the military uniform enjoyed much esteem, it played only an insignificant role in attracting the young high school graduates.

The road to upward mobility was open to these middle level officers. Within their rank they could be promoted up to full major. If they demonstrated exceptional dedication to the military service and loyalty to the monarch, they might be considered by the Shah for a future post of general. They were, of course, subordinate to the senior officers and high ranking generals and had to carry out their orders. Nevertheless their relationship with their senior officers was not highly antagonistic. For the existing career mobility provided a prospect, however unlikely, that they would someday fill senior officer positions, including the position of general. Nevertheless, the officers of the junior ranks formed a potentially politically sensitive section of the armed forces. Those who formed the military organization of the Tudeh party which threatened the stability of the military during 1950's had risen predominantly from among the junior officers.

The rank of corporals formed the second largest stratum of the military. A wide gap existed between corporals and officers. The corporals were regulars serving under the officers and were absolutely subject to their authority. The majority originated from the poorer sections of society, the working class, peasantry, and/or the lower or petty bourgeoisie. Due to insufficient financial resources, the corporals typically had a limited education, and usually from six to nine years of schooling. Many were high school drop outs without skills or training. Military service was the only life-time employment available to them. The corporals' salaries were hardly sufficient to support a family at a subsistence level. Their fringe benefits included only access to the stores of the military cooperatives and free medical treatment. These economic conditions forced a majority to compensate for their low monthly salaries by taking advantage of their positions over the lower ranks and conscript soldiers. That is, additional income was acquired by giving favors to conscripts in exchange for small bribes or defrauding soldiers of their budget allowances.

When this author served in the army in 1966, the corporals were

referred to by the generals and senior officers as "beggars." They were considered to be culturally inferior by the higher ranks and were looked upon with contempt. Their chance for upward mobility was limited to the rank of sergeant, a rank from which they could retire after thirty years service. Only a few could move into the officer ranks and then only after being accepted in the military academy. Tension always existed between corporals and their immediate superiors.

The military organization was built upon conscription. It was compulsory for every man to serve in the army for two years. Those who had a high school education occupied the ranks of corporal after four to six months training or became a member of the corps of teachers in the countryside. This criterion of educational attainment was one of six points of the Reform of 1963. Those with a college education occupied the lower officer ranks after a brief period of military training.

The conscripts were located at the very bottom of the military hierarchy. They constituted the manpower of the armed forces and formed their base. A large majority came from rural areas and had peasant backgrounds. They were the most oppressed sections of the military, subject to the oppressions of rank, meaningless military education, and the most arbitrary and brutal forms of physical punishment.

The conscripts' salaries, less than 50 cents a month for decades, were raised up to \$10 in 1974. Living in barricades at a subsistence level for two years was compulsory. This confinement was far from their homes and was not interrupted on weekends or for religious and national holidays. Communication between the conscript and his family was denied for long periods of time. The majority of conscripts had been productive members of their families and their absence represented a great financial loss. Some were the only wage earners on whose income the family was totally dependent.

Under these oppressive conditions, the conscripts lived in psychological distress and experienced constant homesickness. Not all

of them were able to accept their conditions as inevitable, waiting out the days and months by marking on walls. Some reacted with passive resistance; some succeeded in committing suicide; still others rebelled and fired weapons at superiors; many deserted the service and lived a clandestine life.

The lack of a certificate of two years military service deprived the deserter of the right to a marriage license or public employment. Serving in the army for two years did not, however, provide the conscripts with an adequate education or relevant skill for future employment. They went into the army illiterate and remained so to the end of their term. The conscripts were like peasants under the total domination of their landlord, and they often reacted as a peasant reacted to his landlord.

The Iranian armed forces, as has been observed, was organized on the basis of social groups and classes with essentially conflicting interests. Its structure manifested the profound inequality and contradictions of the society as a whole, all of which threatened its stability. Further complications arose from the fact that such an extensive bureaucratic military machinery with inherent contradictions and antagonistic interests depended on the central commander in whom all decision making power was concentrated, and had to function ultimately as the expression of the single and personal authority of the monarch, rather than as an agency of society. This centralization was achieved by stripping the generals and officers of all independent decision-making power. According to a New York Times report of November, 1978, "all three services, army, navy, and air force (to these the gendarmerie and police force and secret police should be added) have no intermediate level of command between them and headquarters in Tehran. They maintain liaison through the Shah's command staff, headed by the Prime Minister. Not only can no important decision be made without clearance from him, but the mere movement of a company from one location to another must be cleared in advance."³⁴

This not only discouraged independent thinking, individual initiative or assuming taking of responsibility within every level of the

military, but it also reduced administrative and managerial ability in all levels of the command structure.

Moreover, it seriously impaired communication among and within the various levels of command and prevented the development of channels from the lower to higher ranks. Since communication was subject to strict control by the intelligence services, attempts to convey the existence of internal problems had far-reaching consequences. This was bound to produce feelings of distrust and mutual suspicion, and prevented the development of a sense of a common objective and any sort of solidarity. The central command was the only source of unity constituting a distinctive feature of the dictatorial army as well as one source of its weakness.

The predominant values of the armed forces under the Shah were those of the dictatorship. Their strict enforcement in military education determined the quality of morals developed under the repressive environment. Absolute loyalty to the monarch was even more important than loyalty to the nation and the country. "He (the Shah) was the Commander-in-Chief of the army and blind loyalty to the king has been implanted in soldiers and officers from time immemorial. Moreover, within the army, which is really supposed to defend the country against foreign attack, protection of the king ranks higher than defense of the fatherland."³⁵

Indeed, as pointed out earlier, any individual achievement within the military depended upon the demonstration of loyalty to the monarch. In 1978, when the revolutionary movement was gaining strength and revolutionary violence was mounting every day, the Shah installed a military government in the hope that it could restore peace and order. A high ranking general Gholam Reza Azhari, was appointed Prime Minister. He was described in a New York Times report as "a thorough-going loyalist and that quality had helped him to advance. Indeed, he was chosen to head the General Staff because the Shah was certain that, unlike his predecessor, he would not use the job to challenge the authority of the individual service command."³⁶

The vast network of military intelligence and the Shah's secret

police operated within the army to enforce the rules by monitoring the behavior and loyalty of individuals. A network of spies and informants also served to ensure "blind obedience" and "submission to hierarchical military authority." These rules applied at every level of the army and formed the basis of military training and discipline. Oppression was thus built into the structure of military organization.³⁷

No complaint could be sent to a commander unless through the complaining soldier's immediate superior. It would then be passed by him to his own immediate superior and finally, after all necessary steps were taken, the complaint would reach the responsible authority who, it was assumed, would take proper action. This procedure had been established to neutralize discontent and to reinforce individual submissiveness. It became obvious that those who were subjected to excessive oppression and coercion by higher ranking officers, could not pursue legitimate grievances or improve the conditions of their military service. Often, some individuals were driven to desperate measure. While serving in the army in 1345(1965), the author witnessed the assassination of General Saidi, the commander of the Sixth Division, by a junior officer who had been demoted due to his refusal to conduct a military operation in the field without proper equipment. It is evident that so over-bureaucratized an army is bound to defeat itself from within. The integrity of the structure of the military apparatus was more apparent than real.

The army nevertheless demonstrated its loyalty to the Shah on several critical occasions. In 1953, a military coup, aided and engineered by the CIA, put the Shah back in power. In 1963, the army responded to the Shah's call and within three days violently suppressed a religious uprising that left several thousands dead.

A similar call was issued to the army in September, 1978, to save the throne once and for all by putting down the rapidly growing popular resistance movement. On "Black Friday," the army opened fire on peaceful demonstrators from the air and on the ground and reportedly massacred many more people. But the situation in 1978 was quite

different from earlier years. The monarch had unexpectedly weakened and became increasingly unable to find a political solution to the nation wide crisis.

The damage was profound, for the weakness of the monarch was translated into a weakness of the army itself. His failure was the army's failure, and vice versa, for they were a unified expression rule. The more ground the Shah lost to the revolutionary forces, the greater the number of desertions from the army. The more the Shah conceded to the demonstrators and acknowledged past mistakes, the greater the number of disillusioned military personnel, for the members of the armed forces had been told that the monarch was invincible and immune to mistakes. The absolute leader of the armed forces, they were told, would stand firm and strong in the face of a crisis. But the reality in the revolutionary situation was quite different: the Shah proved to be a weak and corrupt monarch waiting in his palace for instructions from foreign sources to deal with the crisis of his regime.

The military government installed by the Shah to restore peace and order soon fell, due in part to the incompetence of the Shah's generals. Nevertheless, martial law continued, and armed military personnel were kept in the streets to enforce martial law and combat street demonstrators. The number of desertions increased and rumors spread that the army was about to disintegrate. According to many eyewitness accounts given to the author, soldiers who refused to fire at the people were often shot to death by their superiors. In other instances, the author was told, soldiers not only did not carry out the order of their commanders, but shot and killed them on the spot and in turn were shot to death.

In January 17, 1978 the Kayhan Weekly reported that one officer, two corporals, and four armed soldiers attacked a club for senior officers of the Imperial Guard at Lavisan's barracks, north of Tehran, killing 72 officers and corporals. All of the attackers, the report indicated, were killed except one officer who was arrested.³⁸ The same paper a week later reported that "2,800 air force cadets have

been waging a hunger strike for four days in Shahrokhi military base in Hamadan, 300 miles west of Tehran." The report also added that the Vahdati military base in Dezfol of the Khosestan province had gone on a hunger strike in solidarity with the people.³⁹

Thus, as the Shah grew weaker, the armed forces that had formed the foundation of his dictatorial rule gradually disintegrated. The Shah was no longer able to hold the structure of the army together by enforcing the repressive requirements of dictatorship. Nor could the army maintain the dictatorial order, for the dictatorial authority had reached its own limits. Eventually, the Shah was forced to leave the country. With his departure the whole army and security forces, along with the rest of the dictatorial institutions crumbled.

The act of a violent overthrow of the dictatorial regime of the Shah began, in fact, from within the army. It was the Imperial Guard, loyal to the Shah, that attacked the barracks of the Air Force cadets east of Tehran, and who supported Khomeini in February of 1979. As soon as the news of the army infighting spread, people rushed to help the cadets, and then the attacks by unarmed people on military bases began. Most of the members of the military did not resist and left before the crowd reached their bases. In less than 24 hours the high military commanders declared their neutrality and withdrew. The fall of the army brought an end to the dictatorial rule of the Pahlavi dynasty and 2500 years of monarchy in Iran.

The Internal contradictions of State of Modernizing Dictatorship

The military and civil bureaucratic apparatuses are regarded by the overwhelming majority of scholars to have been the two pillars of the Shah's dictatorship. The state bureaucratic apparatus has been said, by virtue of its size and power to have had great impact on society as a whole with practically nothing remaining outside of its influence: its functions went far beyond the administration of society and every socio-economic activity was subject to its control. It managed the large and complex industrial organizations vital to the material advance of the nation, and penetrated the countryside and even made the lives of small and self-sufficient peasant families

dependent on it for resources. It reorganized cultural and educational institutions and determined their very content and character. The apparatus dominated the occupational structure and played a decisive role in the distribution of opportunities. Hundreds of thousands served in the military and civil bureaucracy and tens of thousands more were employed indirectly by the state. As Ervand Abrahamian points out "in the towns, the state expanded to the point that it hired as many as one out of every two full-time employees."⁴⁰

One can go even further to indicate the subjective or cultural dimension of the impact of the Shah's dictatorship on socio-economic institutions. Generally speaking, there were only two kinds of occupations: "governmental" and "free" occupations. That is to say that the bureaucratic and military apparatuses objectively provided a numerically significant section of society with the prospect of employment, life-time economic security, and social benefits. What is more, the government established technical qualifications for every kind of specialization including such jobs as street sweeper and high level scientific and technical operations. This contributed to a bureaucratic ethos and a culture of dependency.

Despite their apparant universalism, coherence, and rationality, the bureaucratic and military apparatuses were essentially rigid and inefficient, and conflict between the upper echelons and the vast majority in the middle and lower strata threatened their structure from within. Nor did they operate as rationally as appeared to be the case. There existed no separation of rule from officials, insufficient detachment in enforcement, and arbitrariness, inconsistent with the character of effective bureaucracy.⁴¹ Under the modernizing dictatorship all legal institutions became extensions of the executive and functioned according to the personal rule of the dictator. The dictatorship's vast and highly centralized bureaucratic apparatus seemed to have been put into motion by an individual who was ultimately responsible for its operation, and its success and failure. Every decision in this complex bureaucratic organization branched out to all localities, in reference to the center. The distance from the center

was covered with dark and extremely intricate tunnels leading to one another whose right combination could only lead to the center. This is not simply to describe the existence of bureaucratic red tape, but to characterize the rigid and irrational of too highly centralized apparatus.

The system worked well only when an extra-organizational incentives, such as bribes were injected into its veins. This, in turn became its crucial dynamism. Favoritism, nepotism, and the use of influence were the major institutionalized characteristics of the bureaucratic and military apparatuses under the modernizing dictatorship of the Shah. The culture they conveyed was one of corruption.

It goes without saying that neither the distribution of offices nor upward mobility within the bureaucratic structure were based on personal merit or manifest ability to perform the responsibilities attached to office. More often than not, those who occupied the upper echelons of bureaucratic and military apparatus were initially from the big bourgeoisie aristocratic families. As the dictatorship modernized its structure, it generated opportunities for the educated and trained a breed of bureaucrats able to submit to and serve the interest of the central authority as they rationalized the bureaucratic apparatus. They gained both power and wealth but always remained subservient and obedient to the higher authority. While the upper echelons of the bureaucratic and military apparatuses enjoyed enormous power and wealth, the middle section composed of university graduates and intellectuals, and the vast majority of the lower sections who depended on government employment, suffered from powerlessness and low levels of income.

Although the vast bureaucratic apparatus provided a large section of the population with the means of their livelihood, it never succeeded in transforming their indifference and passivity let alone their opposition into active support. Those salaried middle and lower sections, far from being the basis of support for the modernizing dictatorship, were potential sources of threat and discontent and eventually played a decisive role in the revolution, as will be shown

in chapter 6. The socio-economic role of the government was ultimately irrelevant to the legitimacy of the dictatorial order. The expansion of the dictatorship's power was inevitably accompanied by higher levels of repression causing its alien and superimposed character to be accepted as an objective reality of everyday life. That is to say, the acceptance of dictatorial authority was finally a result of the keen sense of self-preservation rather than the internalization of, and identification with its values and norms. It is true that the military and civil bureaucracies were the two pillars of the Shah's regime; but they were pillars in whose structure tension, conflict, and instability were constant attributes.

Dictatorship and Defeat of Parliamentary Rule 1906-1953

Here, the crucial question is that what kind of socio-political conditions could have led to so concentrated a domination of administration by central authority? To put it somewhat differently, why did representative government fail in Iran? It is tempting, but mechanistic, to answer this question by reference to a weak bourgeoisie, as measured by the internal development of the capitalist mode of production, coupled with the position of Iran in a global economy dominated by hegemonic capital. But the dialectical relationship between base and political super-structure and the extent to which the former's development is conditioned by the latter's suggest that the weakness of the bourgeoisie should be regarded as much the result as the cause of the defeat of the parliamentary system in Iran.

NonMarxian theorists tend to underestimate the role of the dictatorship and imperialist rivalries on the possibility of representative government. They generally focus exclusively on economic factors strictly defined, and on "symptoms": social and cultural deficiencies expressed in the existence of a large, illiterate, inarticulate population, a small middle-class unable to provide the mass support necessary for liberal democracy, and an inadequate understanding of the ideas of democracy by intellectuals.

The purpose of the following discussion is to show that, since the early nineteenth century, conflict in Iran has been connected with

the opposition to a state power supported by external imperialist forces. The establishment of parliamentary rule has been and must remain incompatible with imperialist objectives. It is true that a parliamentary system may become ineffective within capitalist economy as struggle for majority rule is intensified thus creating conditions favoring the emergence of dictatorship and the domination by the executive power over the legislature. Marx showed this to have been the case in France in 1848.⁴³ It is equally true that the emergence of a dictatorship in Iran following the establishment of a constitutional government, took place in a country riven with class contradictions, regional and ethnic differences, and a weak central government. Yet, it is not clear to what extent that conditions would have led to dictatorship had it not been for foreign intervention. This may be stated in the form of a hypothesis that a parliamentary system would have become a viable ruling institution had it developed in relation to an internal societal dynamism associated with material social relations. In turn, it can be hypothesized that a parliamentary system would have greatly simplified the social structure at economic, political and, ideological levels according to the dynamism of class antagonism, had not foreign powers intervened in favor of a state dominated by the absolutist rule of dictatorship.

Iranian Society in the Late Nineteenth Century

In the late nineteenth century Iran was rapidly declining as a great and ancient civilization. Severe political oppression, economic misery, the loss of national territory, and whole-sale divestment of national resources over a century characterized Qajar rule. Economic differentiation was at its lowest stage of development and class boundaries were socially and politically, as well as ideologically indistinct. The social structure had remained complex due to the persistence of small-scale enterprise, a self-sufficient peasant economy, and small scale industrial production. The working class was essentially rural in character and formed a small portion of the population. Another portion was composed of civil servants, later employed in the nation-wide state bureaucratic and military appara-

tuses. The backbone of the occupational structure consisted of workers in various guilds, artisans, handicraftsmen, tradesmen, shopkeepers, and merchants concentrated for the most part in the bazaar areas. The peasantry still formed the demographically significant part of the total national population. The country was also divided by regional and ethnic differences, and tribal rivalries. A viable class rule had not yet emerged. The economically-dominant classes were heterogeneous composed of royalists, aristocrats, tribal chiefs, recently emerged bourgeoisie, merchants, and the upper echelon of clerics of the religious hierarchy. These groups had decisively conflicting interests.

Anglo-Russian Domination and Rivalries Since early 20th Century

In the meantime, the Anglo-Russian rivalry, masking imperialist domination and formal colonization, had nevertheless put a lasting mark on the socio-economic and political life of the country. The great powers of the East and West not only divided the country geographically subject to the sphere of influence by formal and informal treaties imposed on the corrupt Qajar Shahs and maintained by their own security forces, but they also subjected the national and political culture to their influence. State officials, influential aristocratic families, tribal chiefs, and high ranking clergy all were known to have supported one or the other power based on political and material self-interest or ideology. The conflicting class interests, the ethnic and regional differences, and tribal rivalries, were manipulated by the great powers who, played one group off against the other, thereby reinforcing the social fragmentation and the mutual hostilities of the competing parties and/or the central government. They allied at various times with local forces to undermine central authority and broke these alliances when it was seen to be expedient. The ethnic and religious values that had divided the country were emphasized in pursuit of a policy of divide and conquer. They not only played the Kurds against the Turks, Arabs against Fars, and south against north, but also Moslems against Armenians, and Shiites against Sunnies.

Put simply, as a Moslem country, Iran had been invaded by Europeans from the East and the West. They considered Iranians a culturally backward people, prejudiced and ignorant, lacking the values of freedom and equality. How could it have been otherwise? Iranians had endured and accepted centuries of humiliating subjection at the hands of Shahs. Europe, on the other hand, had, according to Marx, achieved a scientific and technological civilization unknown to the history of mankind by the 19th century.⁴⁴ Iranians were still unable to administer their own finance and custom ministries. Belgians were needed to manage them. Nor had they developed a banking system. The British printed money for them. No uniform educational system or a single university existed. The press, as little developed as it was, had been monopolized by the state, and the suppression of its freedom forced intellectuals to publish their papers in exile. There was no indigenous knowledge of the natural resources of Iran and on what precious treasure it rested. The British obtained the rights of oil exploration and its exploitation for the next seventy years. The Russians, too, had the right to sail and fish in the Iranian rivers, to cultivate and exploit olive trees, and to cut timber in the north in exchange for an insignificant annual sum of money.⁴⁵ This seemed to imply that Iranian society had yet to develop its own capacity to expand and satisfy its needs through the exploitation of its own nature. The Europeans claimed to feel burdened by the task of civilizing so backward a nation. Their involvement was said to be a favor that deserved full appreciation by the Iranians. But the original motive that had brought them to Iran in the first place was capitalist greed and a desire to plunder in order to accumulate capital and fight the battle of competition both at national and international levels in the economic field as well as the political. Thus, they employed every means to realize their interests in the most efficient way. To achieve this task, they built a little and destroyed a lot, a strategy hardly consistent with their claims.

Parliamentary Rule and Imperialist domination Since the 1906 Revolution

It was under these circumstances that Iranians came into contact

with and were inspired by the popular revolutionary struggles in Europe for freedom, equality, social justice, and the rule of law, and the fate of Louis 16th.⁴⁶ The Constitutional Movement brought together the oppressed and isolated individuals of every class, region, and ethnic background, just as in the French Revolution nearly two centuries ago. Exception were the royal court and its retainers, clergy supported by the Russians, and military. The British hypocritically supported the Constitutional Movement, and carefully shifted its support from one group to another whenever the balance of power between the East and West was in danger. Both attempted to strengthen absolutist rule at the expense of majority rule. It was in the midst of the struggle of the majority against the state that the two powers settled their rivalries in the 1907 Agreement which divided Iran into two spheres of influence. What is more, the authority of the Constitutional government from its inception was not recognized by Russian despotism. It was the Russians who were determined to overthrow the representative government. Thus, Mohammad Ali Shah, the young despot trained and tutored by a Russian teacher, was encouraged by the Russians to overthrow the representative government. According to Russian secret reports the first attempted coup was a fiasco due to indecision by the Shah who feared greater bloodshed.⁴⁷ The second Russian engineered coup succeeded in overthrowing the Constitutional government in 1908, and put Tehran under seige. But Tabriz, the second major city, did not submit to the restoration of despotism in Iran. In order to crush the resistance movement in Tabriz, the Cossack brigade, the best trained military force in Iran organized by the Russians in 1879, and led by Russian officers,⁴⁸ resorted⁴⁹ to the strategy of starving people to death by encircling the city.

Although the Resistance Movement was defeated after eleven months of struggle and ended with Russian occupation, Tehran was occupied by Constitutionalist forces from the northern and central sections of Iran and the Shah was sent into exile in 1909. With the overthrow of absolutist rule, the Constitutional Movement appeared to have succeeded, creating what Alexis de Tocqueville called a "synthesis bet-

ween the virtues of monarchy and democratic movement".⁵⁰ Even though the two powers continued to exercise a veto over parliamentary decisions, the representative government, still in its infancy, functioned effectively for over two years. This proved to be short lived.

Once again Iran was occupied by Anglo-Russian forces in World War I as a response to growing influence of German imperialism among Iranian nationalists, and was then virtually transformed into a colony.⁵¹ But, the October Revolution of 1917 rendered the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1916, to create a joint military force and financial administration, obsolete. All treaties made with countries by Tzarist Russia were suspended by the revolutionary government. This relieved Iran momentarily from imperialist rivalries, though the British interest in dominating Iran became even more vital. The British sought to strengthen their position by the treaty of 1919, which would have made Iran exclusively a British colony.⁵² The defeat of this imperialist scheme by the Iranian parliament was supported by popular resistance and led to an intensification of parliamentary struggle to establish the rule of majority. It led the British to adopt a new policy aimed at creating a strong central government through planning and by engineering the coup of 1921, which overthrew a weak but, representative government. Thus, there followed twenty years of Riza Shah's dictatorship supported by terror and repression.⁵³ Under the Riza Shah's rule the Iranian parliament became a rubber stamp and functioned as an extension of executive power.

The parliamentary rule was strengthened once again when Reza Shah due to his support for Hitler in World War II was forced to abdicate by the Allied forces in 1941. His son assumed the reins of power, but, because he was young and inexperienced, he was unable to control the diverse social and political forces that had remained submerged during the rule of his father. Thus, the decline of the dictatorship's power brought about the rapid development of political differentiation represented by an increasing number of political parties. Class interests became more distinct. The banner of Iranian nationalism was raised again. An anti-imperialist struggle was waged in

parliament under the leadership of Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, then the deputy from Tehran. Mossadegh's program of oil nationalization effectively challenged the British domination in Iran, although his position was strengthened by majority support that was still outside parliament. Nevertheless, it became weakened as the result of East-West rivalries promoted by the pro-Soviet Tudeh party and the royal court under the leadership of Mohammad Reza Shah.

Thus, the institutionalization of parliamentary rule once again became contingent upon the successful application of "synthesis between the virtues of the aristocracy or of monarchy and the democratic movement." Mossadegh simultaneously had to wage a struggle on two fronts: internally, against the Shah who potentially represented the power of dictatorship and the Tudeh party that represented interest consistent with those of the Soviet Union, and externally against the British who represented world capitalist power. Both the British and the royal court were united and represented the same threat to the legitimacy of democratic institutions. On the first front, Mossadegh had to accomplish the task of subjecting the Shah to constitutional law. On the second front, he had to accomplish the task of nationalizing British oil industry, hence eliminating its destructive economic and political impact. In this he had only the majority with him. Mossadegh's defeat in 1953, by a C.I.A engineered coup, indicated the emergence of the U.S as the new hegemonic imperialist power interested in Iran. This ended another period of parliamentary struggle and initiated a period of apparent stability under the Shah's dictatorship.

Imperialist Intervention and Internal Struggle

The modern history of Iran is not only marked by the failure of representative government due to imperialist interference in favor of state power, but also by successive defeats of dictators as a result of an authentic popular resistance against state power. Richard Cottam in his book, Nationalism in Iran(1979), links the rise of nationalism in the early nineteenth century to Anglo-Russian domination. He maintains that nationalists greatly misunderstood imperialist motives in dominating Iran. Rather than colonizing Iran, Cottam

argues, the great powers of the East and West were interested in Iran's internal stability as a feature of the balance of power in a strategically significant region. Both powers preferred a certain degree of autonomous institutional rule to the oppressive absolutist rule of the corrupt Qajar Shahs who were perceived to have been the main source of instability.⁵⁴

Richard Cottom maintains that the decline of the Iranian parliament in 1909-1911 was due to the Russian veto of the appointment by the parliament of Shuster, an American administrator sympathetic to the nationalists, in an attempt to reorganize state administration. Cottom asserts that the departure of the American Shuster indicated the defeat of a third card policy and a nationalist inability to resolve socio-economic problems and disillusioned many Iranians with respect to the effectiveness of representative government.⁵⁵ Cottom also uses the same line of argument to explain the defeat of the democratic government of Dr. Mohammad Mossadegh, in 1953.

The social basis of liberal nationalism, Cottom argues, was greatly improved as the result of Reza Shah's socio-economic reforms. Nevertheless, representative government was weakened primarily because of its inability to resolve Iran's immense problem of backwardness. Thus, in every parliamentary period, the public's lack of confidence in the ability of constitutional government to provide internal security was an important factor in the defeat of representative government in Iran, one condition for the restoration of the dictatorship. What exacerbated the difficulties of constitutional government was the mistake, committed again and again by the nationalists in dealing with the great powers of the East and West, of pursuing a policy of playing one power against the other in a futile attempt to secure national independence.⁵⁶

Imperialist Interest and the Nature of Parliamentary Rule

Although Cottom adopts a critical attitude in his book in regard both to the role of imperialist domination and the rise of nationalism in Iran, he seems to remain oblivious to the paradoxical character of parliamentary rule as essentially a bourgeois institution which can

express the rule of the majority only under its own, bourgeois domination. Historically, the establishment of bourgeois hegemony in Europe has been marked by unrest, anarchy, and disorder, characteristic features of class struggle. Before conquering state power it fought a feudal enemy. Following victory, the bourgeoisie faced new enemies in the working class and significant sections of the peasantry. The nineteenth century was the age of revolutions and the height of struggle between the bourgeoisie and working class that represented the socialist alternative.⁵⁷ Only after overcoming this threat did the bourgeoisie completely organize itself and make its own will the will of society. Thus, as long as every struggle remains a struggle against state power, and class struggle has not yet been settled in favor of a hegemonic class, parliamentary rule is a major source of instability that can only diminish as the bourgeoisie gains strength and establishes its class rule. It is clear that representative government does not end the class struggle, but rather enhances and intensifies it by giving identity and political expression to class interest.

The establishment of parliamentary rule in Iran, following the victory of the Constitutional Revolution in 1906, cannot be considered a victory for the bourgeois class. It was primarily a struggle against state power. The institution of parliamentary rule did not come into being in Iran to abolish class contradictions, regional and ethnic differences, or to eliminate local authorities. On the contrary, it paved the way for the appearance of those antagonisms. This is why instability, unrest and anarchy marked parliamentary rule in various periods. New parties emerged as old parties disintegrated. Alliances were broken as new ones were being made. Loyalties swung from one extreme to another. Local powers were strengthened and insecurity prevailed. The battle for majority rule continued as electoral procedures were manipulated and elections were rigged and a call was voiced for new elections. This conflict was necessary for the bourgeoisie to become politically mature. It was a process through which class rule could emerge. No doubt Iranian nationalists failed to remedy the causes of unrest, anarchy, social conflicts and

backwardness through parliamentary rule. So did the dictatorship. But, the dictatorship succeeded in bringing about the momentary stability so desired by the imperialist powers. It did this, however, only by suppressing social antagonisms and thereby sustaining them. In this way, their organizational development and thus the likelihood of settlement in favor of the indigenous bourgeoisie was impeded altogether. The stability created under conditions of dictatorship did not only provide long-term remedy for the ills of Iranian society, but it intensified them by securing the domination of the imperialists in Iran. That is to say, dictatorship was not purely the outcome of the failure of parliamentary rule in Iran. The Iranian parliament only functioned the way it could have.

The question is what could have been the result had the U.S Central Intelligence Agency not intervened in the parliamentary struggle in favor of dictatorship, in 1953, already rejected by the majority of the Iranian people? In 1848, according to Marx, dictatorship became a real alternative as the result of the intensification of class struggle that eventuated in a stalemate between the bourgeoisie and proletariat.⁵⁸ But the class struggle ultimately led to the hegemony of the bourgeois class. In Iran, dictatorship became a real alternative only when it was reinforced by foreign power. One may as well ask what would have happened had not Russian imperialism assisted the Mirza Ali Shah in his attempt to topple the constitutional government in Tehran in 1908; or if both East and West had not attempted to colonize Iran in their own interests between 1911 and 1919; or for that matter if British Imperialism had not supported Reza Shah in his attempt to establish his absolute dictatorial order in 1921. At three distinct historical conjunctures, parliamentary rule ended in favor of a dictatorship as a result of the maneuvers of imperialist powers, and each time led to the collapse of the dictatorial state. Marx remarks, in the Eighteenth Brumaire of Bonaparte, that "if in every stirring of life in society it saw "tranquility" imperiled, how could it want to maintain at the head of society a regime of unrest, its own regime, the parliamentary regime, this regime that, according to the expres-

sion of one of its spokesmen, lives in struggle and by struggle?"⁶⁰
In Iran, the dominating force was the one that could shift the balance of struggle among competing parties in favor of one or the other. The determining power belonged only to the bourgeoisie that had already achieved world domination. Imperialist bourgeois power prefers stability to instability, tranquility to unrest, order to disorder, and silence to struggle. To put it simply, the imperialist interest was incompatible with a representative form of government in Iran and still is in the less developed parts of world.

Cultural deficiencies and mass political inarticulation do not provide sufficient explanations for why the parliamentary system failed in Iran. For the ideas of popular sovereignty, self-determination, equality, and liberty are ideas compatible with common sense. For example, Mossadegh only appealed to common sense when he challenged the British domination, accusing it of robbing the nation of its resources essential to the improvement of objective material conditions. Moreover it is extremely unlikely that a total nation would be characterized by a lack of good sense. As Marx pointed out "the parliamentary regime leaves everything to the decision of majorities; how shall the great majorities not want to decide?"⁶¹

Nor can inadequacies of Constitutional law in clearly defining the responsibility of the cabinet in respect to parliament, as suggested by Leonard Binder, provide a satisfactory answer.⁶² A legal code is only as good as its interpretation, and any imperfection in a legal code system can only be cured by an interpretation supported by power.

The prevailing situation in Iran at the present time (1986), the restoration of a dictatorship in a new form following the Revolution of 1979, appear to invalidate the argument that the imperialist powers played a determining role in the defeat of parliamentary rule in Iran. Such an assertion is based on a limited conception of modernizing dictatorship as a form of political power that ignores its hegemonic project aimed at determining not only objective material conditions, but also the subjective, cultural, development of society. It was the latter, a result of the underdevelopment of class struggle under the

dictatorship, that determined the nature of the revolutionary movement of 1979 in Iran. The obliteration of nationalism and the struggle for popular sovereignty and democracy, the attempt to identify them exclusively with monarchism in Iranian history, and the effective depolitization of society as a whole, strengthened the role of religious beliefs and religious institutions in the struggle against the state power. As Marx pointed out,

"The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just as they seemed engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle cries, and customs in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguised and this borrowed language.⁶³

How this occurred, and the way in which the modernizing dictatorship disintegrated from within in the context of the development of revolutionary movement of 1979, will be discussed in the following two chapters.

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Chapter V

From Renewal of Dictatorial Hegemony To Mass Protest Movement 1977-1978

Introduction

The primary objective of this chapter is to show that the Iranian mass revolutionary movement emerged and developed as the result of the dictatorship's attempt to undertake a political reform aimed at defending its domination. The reform, it will be argued, was not simply in response to the ensuing crisis that appeared to have been rooted in the economic structure. It was rather a response to the imperatives of the dictatorship and its need to renew its hegemony that brought economic problems into focus. This is to say that the economic crisis was rooted in the structure of dictatorship, functioning as the modernizing agency of a backward economy.

To relate the Iranian revolution of 1979 primarily to the economic crisis that followed the sharp increase in oil revenue in 1973-74 assumes the hegemony of the economy over the social structure as a whole, and overlooks the decisive role of the power structure. Nor does it allow a distinction to be made between economic crisis under conditions dominated by capitalist commodity production and that of a society whose essential features are backwardness and foreign influence. In order to appreciate the significance of the political struc-

ture to the revolution, it is imperative to examine more closely the nature of the economic crisis that occurred in early 1977 in regard to the social and the political conditions under which the Shah introduced his "liberalization" initiatives.

The Nature of Economic Crisis

In late 1976 and early 1977 three distinct economic problems became acute in Iran: electric power failures, housing shortages and inflation. The first appears to have been a result of the state's monopoly ownership and bureaucratic management of the public utility. It would be incorrect, as this chapter intends to show, that the privileges of the capitalist class were enhanced by these conditions, e.g., from the unequal distribution of electric power.

Reports in Kayhan 1977 indicate that after an intense debate on the origin of the problem of the electric power failure, the Shah ordered the prosecution of the Ministry of Energy and its top executives on November 23, 1977. This order was based on the report of the Imperial Investigating Commission. The report identified the origins of the problem as follows: 1) the Ministry of Energy failed to establish a planning unit with a specialized staff familiar with the technical and economic problems; 2) construction that had been planned never took place; 3) there were excessive delays in meeting the plan's targets; 4) there was failure to develop an organization to expand the electric power facility; 5) a conservation policy was never formulated so that measures could be taken to prevent the excessive consumption of electric power; 6) the self-sufficiency of industrial centers prior to the establishment of a nation-wide network of power generators was not taken into account in planning; 7) there was a failure to change consulting engineers where needed and to develop a coordinating unit; 8) there was an inability to deal with the existence of economic bottlenecks, such as shortages of cements, crowded ports, inadequate roads and bridges, inflated prices of imported machinery and the over-pumping of dams.

The Imperial Investigating Commission formed and legalized by the dictatorship to manage its crises correctly identified the bureaucra-

tic nature of the problem in its report. In one case, it pointed to the inadequacy of the infrastructure which was itself rooted in the nature of modernization: the programs that were financed by the vast oil revenue were controlled by the dictatorship, which was only capable of arbitrary policies in regard to utilization and rationalization. Connected with this crisis of rationalization were problems of housing shortage and inflation, itself also the result of undeveloped forces of production and reliance on imports of consumer and productive goods from foreign countries. This suggests that the crisis ultimately stemmed from underproduction rather than overproduction that is usually associated with capitalist production under conditions of competition. It was not the result of a fundamental contradiction between the progressive socialization of production and the private form of appropriation inherent in capitalist social structure. Nor was it necessarily the result of an intensification of the contradiction between "the price of production and value of commodities"² expressing "suceptibility of capitalism to crises of overproduction,"³ to which capitalism normally adjusts lowering or increasing the scale of production and by competition in the market.

In Iran, the economic crisis that appeared symptomatically consisted of electric power failures, housing shortages and inflation and stemmed from a modernization program that took a political form involving the militarization and bureaucratization of society in the interest of the dictatorship. Such a program could hardly be considered consistent with the actual needs of society or conducive to the development of a self-sufficient and self-generating economic system. Rapid urbanization, including agrarian reform from above and the industrialization that accompanied it had occurred according to the dictatorship's requirements and its need to consolidate its power. Urbanization, thus, did not develop on the basis of an industrial revolution that concentrated the means of production and subordinated the development of cities and towns to industrial requirements. The housing shortage simply meant that there were more people than cities and towns could hold. This is not a capitalist crisis as such, stem-

ming from sharp discrepancies between supply and demand. Rather it was a manifestation of a capitalist system developed politically from above, a system that therefore lacked the capacity to provide economic resources sufficient for minimum socially necessary means of subsistence for the productive forces. It was politically induced underproduction.

The existence of a demand for goods normally indicates a prospect of high levels of profit and hence normally attracts capital investment. However, Iranian industry could not, for political reasons, adequately produce even when demand was present. Inadequate production of construction materials, for example, was not due to low productivity of the work force, or even by the absence of capital, but to an inability to produce the conditions under which industry could function as whole. The housing shortages could not be resolved by importing the equipment for yet another cement factory, since political obstructions would prevent its adequate utilization. The continued importation of construction materials and machinery further exacerbated the problem by increasing the congestion in the ports and/or transportation facilities. This, in turn, increased the bureaucratic dysfunction leading to a black market and hence increased inflation. The insufficient supply of construction materials helped in part to intensify land speculation, causing the price of land to increase up to 1,000% and rent from between 100% to 200% within less than a one month period from 1971 to 1974.⁴

Thus, the housing shortage and inflation were symptoms of the deeper crisis of underproduction that derived from the integration of the national economy to the world economy and the consolidation of the dictatorship as the political and economic agency of social change. For in Iran, the political sector was dominant over the economic as the dictatorship asserted, on an increasing scale, its hegemony over the social structure and subordinated the development of society exclusively to the political requirements of the dictatorship.

The immediate response to the symptoms of the economic crisis took the form of an Imperial decree, which included "stabilization of

the price of land and the control of properties of state authorities." By doing so the Shah increased the principles of the "Revolution of Shah and Mardom{people} to nineteen on August 24, 1977,⁵ the principles that incorporated land reform and five other social reforms in 1963 to which six more were added by 1965,⁶ and reached seventeen by 1977. This implied that once a social problem was incorporated into the Shah's revolutionary principles by the Imperial decree, nothing less than its complete remedy could have been expected. Only later, on November 2, 1977 a bill, stabilizing the increase of the price of land according to 25% fixed rate of inflation, was presented to the parliament.⁷ This was intended to legalize the Imperial decree through constitutional procedures.

Thus, the economic crisis that followed the oil boom of 1973-74 was not due to underlying class antagonisms, stemming from an unequal distribution of oil revenues, as has been suggested by Marxist scholars, but to the sharpening a contradiction between the dictatorship and the society it claimed to represent through the historical process of seizure and consolidation of power. If the deterioration of economic conditions was responsible for the increase in social unrest, it is not clear why the working class, the poor and salaried middle classes did not rally behind the Shah's anti-inflation campaign which brought to trial 11,660 shopkeepers and wealthy businessmen (of whom 7,705 were found guilty),⁸ his anti-corruption campaign which led to the arrest of corrupt officials linked to multinational corporations, and his attempt to establish limited profit-sharing.⁹ Nor, in that case, is it clear why the class interests did not influence the revolution in a decisive way. These are explainable only if we understand how and why the Shah's response to the economic crisis was political rather than in the form of economic restructuring.

The fact is that the economic crisis as such neither seriously threatened the Shah's rule nor occasioned his overthrow. Moreover, at the time of the crisis, Iran occupied a favorable financial position in the global economy. It had over ten billion dollars in reserve in foreign banks and the oil revenue enabled the regime to counter the

inflation momentarily with financial policies. The Governor of Central Bank pointed out on December 21, 1977, that the rate of inflation had declined between June and December from 30.8% to 23.9%; and the price of housing by 41.1%. He also announced that mortgage loans would be increased and a significant part of the interest subsidized by the government.¹⁰ In any case people adjusted to the shortages of electric power, housing, and goods. The oil money had eliminated, at least, the threat of starvation that they had experienced during two World Wars.

Dictatorship and Popular Resistance

Every process of consolidation of a dictatorship's power is at the same time a process of resistance. An economic crisis only manifests immediate and objective symptoms of this dialectic. The patterns of resistance that developed in Iran against the dictatorship historically corresponds to the process of seizure and consolidation of power. History shows that resistance has marked the reestablishment of dictatorial order in Iran ever since the coup d'état of 1953 and the overthrow of the democratic government of Dr. Mossadegh.

Specifically, the dictatorial seizure of power in 1953, ended an era in which social and political consciousness had developed to a high degree. Quantitatively, the number of political parties and organizations were reduced to four distinct forces 1) the left led by the Todeh party, represented "toiling people" which included the working class, peasants, urban salaried middle classes, artists, poets, writers and the educated. Most of these, with the exception of the peasantry, had been organized in the form of party.

2) The National Front had loosely organized a number of liberal and nationalist parties and was led by Mossadegh. It represented an insignificant faction of the groups represented by the Tudeh party, and had as its base the national bourgeoisie and bazaaries--merchants, guilds members, artisans, handicraftsmen, and shopkeepers; 3) although the religious forces led by Ayatollah Kashani were politically distinct, their constituency overlapped that of the National Front; 4) finally, the monarchists included wealthy aristocrats and big

bourgeoisie. Qualitatively, substantive political issues such as nationalism and liberation, imperialism and communism, democracy and socialism were debated publically through a relatively free and independent press. The clash of political positions and ideas at that time represented an underlying antagonism of class interests existing within society as a whole.

In contrast, the Shah established control over the means of coercion and maintained his regime by suppressing all debate and eliminating all political opposition. But, resistance to an apparatus of rule which imposed itself from above continued. Though it became limited and passive as the repressive apparatus of surveillance, control and coercion became increasingly systematic, modernized and sophisticated. By 1960, the two party system that had been established following the overthrow of Mossadegh's government in 1953, proved to be incompatible with the dictatorial form of rule. Although they were loyal parties headed by the two close associates of the Shah, Alam and Aghbal, their mere existence was conducive to the emergence of a third party. In fact a faction of the National Front and liberal parties that had survived the repressive conditions following the coup of 1953, reorganized in an independent party and appeared to win the election of 1960. Andrew F. Westwood points out that "once the independents were in the field, the government necessarily had to abandon plans to permit a "free" choice, lest the voters chose the independents. It had to manipulate the election machinery in favor of one candidate or another."¹¹ Thus, the two party system was dismantled, the Majlis was dissolved, and the Shah began to rule by decree from 1961 to 1963. It was only then that the Shah waged his reform program from above which included agrarian reform, profit-sharing in industry, and universal suffrage for women to consolidate his dictatorial power.

Religious Opposition

As secular opposition was effectively suppressed, resistance to the expansion of the dictatorship's power appeared in an uprising in 1963 inspired by clerical opposition led by Ayatollah Khomeini who competed at that time for a leading position in the Shiite organiza-

tion following the death of Ayatollah Brujirdi.¹³ The religious leadership assumed the role of opposition by challenging the constitutionality of the Shah's rule, the dissolution of the Majlis, and denouncing the Shah's Six Point Program especially women suffrage, as an attack on Islam and national independence.¹² The suggestion that clerical opposition was purely motivated by material interests and a mere response to the distribution of Vaqf's land whose revenue supported the religious institutions, ignores religion's need to renew its institutional hegemony. Thus, Khomeini's opposition to the 1960's reform from above, in the name of religious universalism represented a serious challenge to the dictatorship's claim. For the claim to represent the whole is the legitimating foundation of a dictatorship and the basis for its consolidation. Indeed, the suppression of organized opposition meant that only a religious institution could collectivize what would otherwise have been unconnected individuals (with or without common interests). This case exemplifies the role religion would play in the development of opposition throughout the Shah's rule. By crushing such opposition in 1963 and sending Ayatollah Khomeini to exile, the dictatorship, in fact, seemed to have succeeded in putting an end to the resistance taking the religious form and to have established its singulare hegemony.

Religious resistance was led by the Ayatollah Khomeini from exile in Iraq. His denunciation of the Shah's regime involved revitalizing the political discourse contained within the Shi'at branch of the Islamic religion. His critical pronouncements began to have an impact on Iranians in the second half of the 1970's. As a religious and spiritual leader he had followers within all social groups and strata, but his main supporters were from among the younger generation of clergy in the seminary of Qum and the merchants of the bazaar. His pronouncements were aimed at arousing those followers as well as all believers who opposed the Shah.

Guerilla Movement and Armed Struggle

Under increasing dictatorial repression and the extension of dictatorial authority to the socio-economic sphere, resistance took

the additional form of armed struggle by groups of intellectuals inspired by theories of guerilla warfare based on experiences in other parts of the world, particularly Cuba and Latin America. This became the dominant form of resistance during the late 1960's and early 1970's. Many small groups came into being, but they were ultimately defeated by the forces of the dictatorship, their members killed or imprisoned for long sentences.

Two major left groups, one Marxist and the other with an Islamic orientation, Faidin-Khalgh and Mojhidin-Khalgh, finally survived as organizations. The majority of their members were from the petit bourgeoisie and were intellectuals with university educations. Their sympathisers also came from among the ranks of intellectuals and university students. They commonly believed that armed struggle by a revolutionary elite can eventually awaken people to the necessity for struggle against a regime supported by the imperialist powers. Objectively, conditions were thought to be ripe for the revolution. The increasing repression was thought to have created apathy, indifference, and resignation. The armed struggle, therefore, represented a resistance of which the people would eventually become aware and with which they would eventually join. Armed struggle would, in this view, become a final instrument of national liberation and "proletarian dictatorship." In the meantime it would serve as a vehicle of propaganda, generating the appropriate subjective conditions for the revolution. This theory assumed that the knowledge of the existence of resistance would lead to an escalated resistance itself.¹⁴

Despite revolutionary heroism and sacrifice by the leading members of these organizations, they remained isolated from the masses and did not generate mass enthusiasm for their cause. They became leaders without followers. Yet, they remained firm in their conviction that the overthrow of the Shah was possible only through an armed struggle. The machinery of dictatorship supported by the imperialist powers seemed to have made any other form of political activity impossible.

Student Movement

Escalated resistance to the established dictatorial order for the most part took the form of student protests. University students were traditionally opponents of the Shah's regime. Economically, they did not represent any particular interests. Politically, the majority sympathized with the guerilla organizations. In the 1970's, the number of students whose opposition was based on Islamic teaching influenced by Ali Shariati an established religious scholar educated in France, also grew. The student movement preserved the tradition of struggle against the dictatorship and represented the most progressive force in the society; though it had no organization or ideological unity. By and large the militant students remained a small minority. Their activities and entire university campuses, including classrooms, were subject to surveillance and control. The majority of political prisoners were university students. The machinery of the dictatorship effectively contained and isolated the student movement just as it had done with the guerilla movement.

The student movement remained the major source of mobilization for the public opposition to the the Shah. Radical political organizations continued to function clandestinely and recruited many of their members from the student movement. Although they were divided ideologically, representing pro-Moscow, pro-Chinese and radical nationalist factions, they and their comrades in the other countries commonly supported the armed struggle inside Iran and sought to expand it by sending their cadres to prepare to widen the scope of the armed struggle. Such activities were almost immediately contained in the early stages by the repressive agencies of the dictatorship.

Intellectual Opposition

Literature and art forms which reflected resistance to the existing social order were suppressed by the repressive apparatus of inquisition and censorship. Kayhan reported on September 7, 1978 that the institution of censorship seriously limited the use of names, terms, composition of sentences, and in short thoughts. The impact of such a limitation was so great that the number of books published between 1970 and 1977 was reduced from 3,760, to 1,750.¹⁵ Thus, self-

censorship, more often than not, became the established dictatorial norm instituted to preserve one's self. This was bound to effect not only the critical content of art forms, but also impeded the cultural development of society as whole. According to Kayhan's article, a significant number of famous writers and poets such as Ali Asgher Haj Said Javadi, Feridon Tonkoboni, and Ahmad Shamlo, were denied rights of publication, and many books remained in the censorship bureau of SAVAK, never obtaining permission for publication.¹⁶ As the dictatorship successfully isolated its secular opposition and separated them from the masses by forcing them to take arms in order to break the silence, it forced the artists to remain outside of everyday life and popular trend, to adopt abstract styles and reflect absurdity of life and irrationality of the masses rather than create real characters representing socio-historical types, and hence to play an insignificant role in the political awareness of people. Nonetheless, most progressive writers, poets, and artists were not only not rewarded for their creative abilities, but rather were constantly in and out of prison because of them.

Liberalization and Renewal of Dictatorial Hegemony

By 1977, the Shah's throne seemed to have been secured by the successful suppression of particular interests and by the creation of a one party system purporting to represent the whole nation, and by an economic prosperity for which his regime appeared to be responsible. He repeatedly claimed that he had achieved a social, political, and economic formation unlike any other social system on earth, that he had built a society on the foundation of the unity of the Shah and the people, that the Shah was the representative and embodiment of the character, culture and history of the Iranian people, that Iran survived in history as a nation because of and in relation to the Shah. This "mutual organic relation" was believed to have reached its maturity by the end of the 1970's.

Nevertheless, the increasing concentration and centralization of power in dictatorship, the increased differentiation of social forces as a result of modernization, and the virtual bureaucratization of

society required an urgent response to the imperatives of self-determination illustrating Raymond Williams's suggestion that hegemony ... "has continually to be renewed, repeated, defended, and modified."¹⁷ Hoshang Ansari, chief party ideologue and the Minister of Economy and Finance, speaking on December 7, 1977 about the necessity of "liberalization", pointed out that: "the society that has undergone a great economic transformation, must inevitably balance the realities of material life with political and the cultural imperatives. The inspiring source of this "creative idea" is but the "thought" of Shahanshah."¹⁸ This clearly indicates the awareness of the state officials, at highest levels, of the problem of adaptation of the political superstructure to its modernizing base, the lag that was therefore to be remedied through "liberalization" policy. Thus my discussion does not intend to show what seems to have been shown by Ervand Abrahamian to explain the Iranian revolution--that the superstructure lagged behind the economic base as a result of the Shah's modernization, but rather to show its root causes and why it could not be remedied by the dictatorship.

This policy of "liberalization" did not take the form of an official program, but a specific policy to deflect criticism of political repression. The regime had already proceeded to release political prisoners, or what it called "anti-state" convicts. The regime freed 91 prisoners in 1977; 66 on March 30; 343 on February 9; 131 on August 24; 131 on October 26; and 21 on December 14 of the same year.¹⁹ The regime's new policy was also reported in the Western press. For example, The New York Times reported that torture in prisons was believed to have been halted and that the International Commission of the Red Cross had been permitted to inspect the conditions of the prisons.²⁰ The international community also expected the Iranian parliament to approve an amendment to the prosecution law²¹ guaranteeing the rights of political dissidents.

The regime's intention in regard to the enlargement of the sphere of freedom was expressed signs and indications, not by the articulation of a general program of reform. For example, on May 11, 1977,

the Shah visited the holy shrine of Eith Imam, in Mashad, East of Iran. There, he addressed a group of clergy and indicated that "there is no obstacle to the existence of dissent."²² The appointment on August 1977, of a new Prime Minister, Jamshid Amozegar was itself an indication of regime's intention to allow a greater degree of freedom than had existed. Kayhan of August 17, 1977, referred to two new slogans heard from "high authorities" in its editorial entitled "What People Want From the Prime Minister." The new slogans were: "nothing must be hidden from the people" and "all problems must explicitly be brought to public attention."²³

The regime, in fact, had adopted a cautious attitude toward liberalization, indicating its great uncertainty about the possible political ramifications. It appeared that this shift of policy had already been seized upon by well known writers, former politicians, and lawyers to voice their criticisms of the regime, and to urge a return to constitutional rule.²⁴

The liberalization initiative was confirmed by the Shah's message to the nation in celebration of the seventy second year of the Constitutional Revolution. In that message he laid down the framework within which the liberalization should be applied, and attempted to define its boundaries. He declared that "democracy" in Iran "has entered a new era." However, he quickly and carefully qualified his statement, indicating that "it need not be mentioned that only democracy with its meaning in Iran now, can truly be constructive and fruitful for our country and nation." "Only this democracy," he emphasized, "is capable of responding to the material and mental needs of Iranian society consistent with its culture, civil values, and principles." He continued to shed more light on the concept of democracy in its "Iranian" form: "for us democracy cannot be an imported good, because only our nation with its ancient history, its culture and civilization, can distinguish what would lead it to peace, progress and happiness. From our point of view, democracy is not identical with anarchy, disorder, and the disintegration of values and principles of society. That could not be acceptable to us. Nor could such

democracy, in our opinion, bear desirable fruits for any other society."²⁵

According to the Shah, what made the "Iranian democracy," superior to other kinds was that "not only does it have a political aspect, preserving individual and social freedoms, but it encourages economic democracy and social justice. Therefore, every Iranian citizen regardless of his position or status in society, benefits from the maximum advantages of living in one of the more advanced societies in the world." Politically, the Shah indicated that, "the mechanisms of participation and expression of opinion have been provided and have been secured based on the Revolution of Shah and Mardom, for the whole nation, from the lowest levels in the countryside to the highest levels. This was accomplished without permitting the forces of destruction to interfere with this constructive freedom."²⁶

The Shah went on to define the task of the Rastakhiz Party in the period of what he called the "new era of democracy" in Iran. He declared that "the Rastakhiz party of the Iranian nation is the manifestation of this democracy which for the first time in the history of the Constitution has united the men and women of this country in the construction and creation of an advanced and developed society; and it has provided opportunities for the expression of "constructive" opinions and criticisms. Every Iranian can through the extensive party network learn about the material and mental problems of his country and participate in its affairs, carrying out his responsibility in the interests of society."²⁷

Although, it is ironical for a dictatorship to claim to have produced its own brand of "democracy," the significance of the Shah's message lies in the objective it was intended to accomplish and in its application in practice. In defence of democracy the Shah reduced Iranian history to an account of his own domination and distorted traditional concepts of democracy and freedom by subjecting them to his own will. He buried the Constitution together with its institutions and replaced it with the Rastakhiz party as its only legal manifestation. This effectively undermined the autonomy of religion

and politics guaranteed by the Constitution. The Shah had no intention to disguise his aim: the unity of the Shah and the people could only be secured through his monopoly control over and use of the means of coercion. What the Shah was suggesting was that freedom could only exist based on and within the framework of consensus that is represented by the Shah and the Rastakhiz party. The appeal to freedom was a necessary condition for the dictatorship to establish what Williams calls "true hegemony" or "effective self-identification with the hegemonic forms."²⁸ It will be seen later that the Shah's "liberalization" initiatives led to the emergence of "counter-hegemonies," indicating that, as Williams puts it, "hegemony can never be singular... It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own."²⁹

Ansari, the party theoretician and the Shah's spokesman, indicated in an interview on August 3, 1977, that "our social system has formed under specific conditions, that is, the Monarchy, the Constitution, and the "Revolution of the Shah and Mardom. This responds to our needs today and it will in the future." "The social unrest and crisis in Western democracy," he emphasized, "are the result of conflicts of interest; any system that is based on the interests of pressure groups, ultimately threaten those interests and thereby destabilize society, resulting in dangerous socio-economic crises."³⁰ In this view the necessity for freedom of expression lay in the fact that "the conflict of thoughts and experiences is required to pave our way to achieve the objectives of "Revolution."³¹ Thus, according to Ansari, it is clear that under the "new era of Iranian democracy," the plurality of interests, dissent, and criticism, are subordinate to the Shah's "revolution," if they exist at all. The "Monarchy system and the unity of the Shah and the nation," he stressed, "is the basis on which the Iranian people can, without any fear, exercise their political freedom."³²

Liberalization and the Internal Contradictions of Dictatorship

The regime's liberalization initiatives and its significant historical role in bringing about the prerevolutionary situation has

either not been sufficiently attended to by scholars of the Iranian revolution; or it has simply been described as a "shift" in policies and interpreted as a response to the human right initiatives of the Carter administration in the United States. To ignore it is, however, to ignore the structural contradictions of the modernizing dictatorship, to fail to acknowledge its own role as the major source of social unrest, and hence to focus attention exclusively on economic weaknesses and the inequalities that stemmed from it, and/or the role of the traditional religious values. It is also to underestimate Iran's geo-political significance to the hegemonic capitalist superpower. Carter's "human rights policy" was adopted primarily for domestic consumption in his own country. It served as part of his foreign policy as a foundation for criticising primarily those countries hostile to hegemonic capitalism. The point is that Carter's human rights policy had not been designed to destabilize the Shah's position vital to the U.S imperialist interest; nor can external pressure, politically or economically account for why the dictatorship did what it did. It cannot explain why the liberalization occurred, why the apparatus of the dictatorship disintegrated from within, or why the mass revolutionary movement emerged in the form it did. These facts needed to be subordinated to a single theory and explained in terms of the contradictions inherent in the structure of the dictatorship itself. It is these contradictions that account both for "liberalization" and the impossibility of tolerating liberalization. And they account for the ultimate weakening apparatus of dictatorial authority and the resistance that is inherent in that authority even when it is apparently most secure.

As the Shah indicated to the parliament on October 12, 1977, "the enemies³³ of Iran cannot take advantage of freedom of expression in Iran." It is the judgement of the dictatorship, not that of society, which determines and defines the nature and extent of the right to freedom. To go beyond what has already, however vaguely, been defined and determined from above puts one in jeopardy of being considered an "enemy." It is the individual's responsibility not to deviate from

what is given, not to attempt to represent the interest of the whole against the imposition of "freedom" from above. Although liberalization was initiated as the necessary condition of self-identification with dictatorial hegemony, force rather than loyalty remained the basis for the definition of the limits of freedom. This irrationality is intrinsic to the structure of a dictatorship. To comprehend how the Iranian revolution of 1979 grew and developed, one must understand this intrinsic irrationality of any ruling dictatorship.

Emergence of Counter-Hegemony and Mass Protest Movement

Thus, the liberalization initiatives became a process which disclosed the inner contradictions of the dictatorship. In order to subordinate freedom to its own requirements, the dictatorship resorted to strategies and tactics which led to even higher levels of resistance, far beyond any particular interest, that expressed a consensus within the whole of society to overthrow what claimed to have been society's representative. The initial applications of force were disguised in order to placate this consensus and yet to suppress what appeared to be freedom of expression, dissent, and criticism. The regime's tactics included divide and rule, intrigue, conspiracy, and violence. It finally used force to silence dissent and to quell the tendency toward self-determination manifested in growing popular resistance on the grounds that it was necessary to reestablish peace and order if there was to be further "progress" and greater "civil liberty" under the "Revolution of the Shah and Mardom." This led to the emergence of a still more radical protest movement that rapidly spread throughout the country and undermined the requirements of dictatorship.

For example, Kayhan reported in October 1977 that people gathered at Aryamehr University in Tehran to celebrate the distinguished poets and writers of Iran. The report indicated that "it was met with the unprecedented enthusiasm of the people."³⁴ The report did not, however, point out that the meeting was broken up by groups of club wielders who attacked the participants with chains and knives wounding and injuring them. Following this, a student protest was orga-

nized in Karvansara Sangi, north of Tehran in November which was attacked by the same group of club wielders, again wounding students and dissidents. However, Kayhan identified the attackers in this case as "factory workers" who were returning from their jobs. They got off their buses, the report said, to react to the "provocative and anti-state" slogans heard at the meeting.³⁵

William Sullivan, the U.S. Ambassador to Iran between 1976 and 1979, commented on the "shift" in the regime's policy in a television interview: "by the time I arrived there, he (the Shah) was making considerable effort: torture had been stopped, new procedures were introduced, on the theoretical handling of political prisoners; but, the essential quality was still politically oppressive and repressive." As to what form this repression took, Sullivan responded: "during the time I was there, although people were permitted to have meetings, there were sudden appearances of people who were not in uniform who appeared to be young patriots; but all were armed with clubs and would break up the meetings and people would be beaten. It was clear, that this was SAVAK but nobody could report on them because you could not identify the individuals who scooted in and did this and scooted out again."³⁶

While the student's and the intellectual's activities were limited and the content of their protest suppressed, the clergy resisted the regime's attempts to legitimize the subjection of people and to subordinate freedom to its own requirements. In their sermons, preachers or voaz increased the level of criticism to believers, voluntarily organized and willing to listen.

To counter this potential threat, the dictatorship mobilized its propaganda machinery, as well as its repressive apparatus in a calculated attack on clergy. The campaign was aimed at characterizing the religious opposition as a reactionary and fanatical force, opposed to liberty, progress and modern civilization, and hostile to all of their manifestations. The clergy was represented as ultimately traitorous, serving the enemies of Iran. Historical experience was to be drawn upon to remind the public that it was religious institutions and

clergy that opposed the reform of the 1960's, the progressive measures which were to take Iran down the path toward modern civilization. The fact that they opposed the land reform program to emancipate the peasantry and opposed universal suffrage for women, were to become central themes of the dictatorship's propaganda.

This, according to Shahrough Akhavi, the author of Religion And Politics In Contemporary Iran (State University Press, 1980), had become the regime's "policy commitment" since the early 1970's. A secret document obtained from the files of SAVAK by the revolutionary authorities, following the overthrow of the Shah's regime, was published in Ittila'at in March 1979. The importance of this document lies in its exposure of the deliberateness with which the policy of the dictatorship was adopted and used against its opponents, in particular the clergy. Here it will be quoted at length as translated and discussed by Akhavi:

"In a memorandum sent by the Director of the Endowments Organization to the Prime Minister, Amir Abbas Huvada, dated 6 Mordad 1351 H. sh./1972, a plan of action to destroy the influence of Ayatullah Ruhullah al-Musavi Khumayni was mooted. The individuals who assumed responsibility for this were the Director of the Endowments Organization and the Governors of Tehran and Khurasan Provinces. One objective was to try to link Khumayni with the Ba'thist regime in Iraq, with which the Iranian government at that time was experiencing very tense relations over the questions of frontier, the Kurdish rebellion, and the issue of Iranian Shi'at in southern Iraq. The memorandum stated that the fabrication of documents showing the collaboration between Khumayni and the Iraqi government could be facilitated through resources of several ministries: Foreign Affairs, Information and SAVAK."

It called for contacting the clergy, "especially the marajiyi-taqlid throughout the country and in

particular in the hawzahs of Mashhad, Qumm and Tehran to charge Khomeini with error..." The memorandum, which was signed simply as "The Methods and Policy Committee", noted that the clergy had to be persuaded that Ayatullah Khomeini was not only wrong in his comportment as a member of the clergy stratum because he was besmirching the reputation of the ulama; but it also advocated firmly tying the Ayatullah's efforts to the interests of foreigners who wish harm to the interests of Iran. (This, of course, was an ironic twist to the charges consistently levelled by Khomeini since 1963 that the Shah's policies had no other aim but to serve foreign interests.) The memorandum articulated the need for the regime to present the maraji-yi-taqlid with the urgency of taking a stand against Khomeini's behavior. Their neutrality would not be sufficient:

"The religious institution, which is face to face with all the gifts of this country, its freedoms, stability and national security under the aegis of the Iranian Revolution, must undertake its duties to strengthen the foundations of these great national advances with sincerity and conviction; and they must not give permission to traitors wearing clerical robes to trade againsts the interests of the country."

The memorandum did note, however, that Khomeini had of late sharply attacked the Iraqi government for its treatment of Iranian Shi'ah in the atabat, and that he had become so distressed that he had wanted to leave his place of exile in Iraq for Lebanon but had been prevented from doing so by the Ba'thist regime. The memorandum also noted that the Ayatullah's adherents in Iran, including a number of preachers, had disseminated this information to the masses. There-

fore, the job of linking the Ayatullah to a conspiracy with the Iraqi government against Iranian interests was going to require some preparatory laying of the groundwork by the Iranian propaganda machinery.

Furthermore, the memorandum continued, it would be necessary to get the governors of the provinces of Khurasan and Tehran (where Qumm was located), as well as the governors of all other provinces and all the cities of the country to meet with the maraji-yi taqlid of the hawzahs in their areas. The objective of such meetings would be to importune the maraji to direct criticisms of Ayatullah Khomeini in their classes.

Additionally, it was recommended that the ulama be appraised of how much they had benefitted from the existing state of affairs, from the policies of the monarchy, and from the stability and tranquility that prevailed throughout the land. It should be expected, the document continued, that not all ulama would go along with the proposed plan of action, and some might even react violently against it. Therefore, the government would do well to study what its reactions might be to such opposition. It recommended harsh measures of reprisal in the event and combined it with a policy of suborning the maraji, the preachers and the religious sciences students in the madrasahs. It warned that a great deal of time and patience would be required to implement the plan to bribe the clergy.

Anticipating that the regime might prefer the harsh reprisals path in the face of resistance to its plan of action, the memorandum outlined a three-phase action: (1) a warning stage, in which the maraji would be sternly reminded that no social force, including the clergy, would be permitted to try to alter the policy of the regime; (2) a preliminary stage of

suppression, in which the maraji choosing the resist the plan of action would be told that the benefits of the monarchical regime's policies would be withheld from them until they were to experience a change of heart; (3) a stage of sharp suppression, involving the arrest of resisting maraji, and the regime's treatment of them under the terms of a state of the masses. It would be particularly important to deny the arrested clergymen the opportunity to build up a social base of support among the masses at this point.

The memorandum thereupon pressed for the immediate implementation of measures to realize the Committee's objectives. It directed that all preachers in all mosques would be ordered to attack Ayatullah Khomeini's ideas indirectly and without mentioning his name specifically. All rural and village mullas were to be given prepared statements in an effort to coordinate their criticism of Khomeini's thought and behavior to the villagers of Iran. The press would have to drum up a public debate over the harm to the nation's unity that Khomeini's efforts had already engendered and, if not halted, would gravely damage. In doing so, it would be particularly useful to seize upon the arguments of the Persian language broadcasts of Radio Baghdad, implicating Khomeini in consequence. But the public debate must be guided not only by the press but also through the use of informers and others loyal to the regime. These could, indeed, should use rumormongering tactics to supplement their more "legitimate" anti-Khomeini propaganda. The regime must also, it went on, create obstacles for the resistant maraji-yi taqlid to make it more difficult for them to carry out their functions. This must not be done directly, however, and ought to come by way of popular action.

(Presumably, the masses might be encouraged by the regime to threaten a shift in allegiances to other, more "cooperative", maraji in matters of religious emulation.) Iraq's actions must be attacked by the teachers of classes in the madrasahs. Preachers at funerals and commemorations of that sort must also be instructed to condemn the Ba'thist government of Iraq. Even the Boy Scouts organization of Iran must engage in anti-Khumayni efforts, stated the memo, as must all political parties. In conclusion, it said that the plan of action as outlined would be successful to the extent that coordination and centralization of efforts to communicate and propagandize marked the whole endeavor³⁷ to destroy the credibility of Ayatullah Khumayni.

The anti-clergy campaign was intensified and took on new dimensions under the regime's liberalization policy. The regime seized upon every action that seemed to have been inconsistent with manifestations of modernization, such as the integration of sexes in universities, banks, and movie theaters, hotels, stores selling alcoholic beverages and modern luxury goods, and implicated the religious opposition as a whole. This was intended to give legitimacy to the regime's claim that the religious opposition was fanatical and reactionary, hostile to modernization and only intended to generate anarchy and disorder to the benefit of the enemies of Iran.

For example, in October 1977 Kayhan reported that a bus carrying female students to the university dormitory was put on fire by a group it described as "fanatic moslem students who were against progress and development."³⁸ While no one was arrested and no investigation took place, a motive was nevertheless attributed to the perpetrators tied to the opposition of alleged religious reactionaries to the equality and the integration of sexes in the university dormitories. Kayhan commented on the incident in its editorial to the effect that "Iran, once in the past had witnessed similar omenous reactions," and

alluded to the bloody riots of the 1960's. It asked its readers: "Do you remember what kind of reactionary attempts were made to stop the land reform program which was to emancipate the peasants from the yoke of feudalism and let them live in freedom. What has taken place in the university dormitory is very similar to the reactionary attempts of the fanatics against the land reform program."³⁹

The Shah who had recently increased the number of his visits to parliament, referred to these same incident and said that "these sorrowful incidents that we have observed within the last few days are indicative of the anti-revolutionary trend influenced by treacherous black reaction that not only wants to return the country to the period before the Revolution of the Shah and Mardom, but 1500, 2000 years back."⁴⁰

Given the effective suppression of all forms of self-representation and particular interests within the framework of "Iranian democracy" based on the Shah, the Constitution and the Rastakhiz party, the Shah's regime effectively limited alternative politics to a religious opposition led by Khomeini that the Shah had no choice but to both accept and oppose. In other words, all social forces, working class, peasants, new middle classes, merchants, petty bourgeoisie, intellectuals as well as national bourgeoisie lacked independent agencies to represent their interests. Nor could the consciousness of those interests develop under dictatorship. Thus, the regime was bound to reproduce its own oppositional forms; or as Williams puts it "the dominant culture, so to say, at once produces and limits its own form of counter culture."⁴¹

Under such circumstances, religious institutions appeared to represent the whole, serving the function of defending the interests of the whole based on their claim of divine ordination. Khomeini's denunciation of the Shah and the system of monarchy in early 1978, was based on Islam.⁴² A politicized religious institution often represents the major threat to any dictatorship because its legitimacy is taken for granted and historically produced on a voluntary basis. Even under normal conditions religious institutions have broad bases

of mass supports, and their claims, including nonreligious ones, tend to be accepted voluntarily by the whole. To eliminate this threat, the dictatorial authority in Iran resorted to deliberately divisive and provocative tactics to legitimize itself by attempting to delegitimize the very religious opposition that arose in the context of its own self-defense.

In January of 1978 Ittila'at published an editorial in which slanderous allegations were made against Khomeini, living in exile since 1963, following his opposition to the Shah's reform measures. The editorial openly attacked Khomeini as being a reactionary. It said that Khomeini was not of Iranian origin, charged him with instigating and planning agitation against the interests of the nation, and claimed that he was supported by and working for the foreign enemies of Iran. This was an attack not on Khomeini as a person but rather an attack on what he represented through the sacred institution of Marja-taqlid and Ulama.⁴³

As expected, the entire religious community in Iran was outraged by the publication. Business and commercial activities were halted immediately and Qum seminaries were closed. Meetings were convened the next day in which people from all walks of life, especially the youth participated. Clergy made highly charged speeches, condemned the regime's action and effectively escalated anti-regime sentiments. A major violent confrontation took place between the security forces, which had received reinforcement in anticipation, and a snowballing crowd demonstrating in the streets. In that confrontation government buildings and several banks were destroyed including the branches of Saderat bank which belonged to Hojabr Yazdani, the well known comprador close to the Shah. The casualties were estimated up to two hundred deaths and one hundred fifty wounded. A curfew was declared in Qum the day after, and all arrivals to the city were controlled by the security forces. This was followed by more protest demonstrations in the major cities and the large towns throughout Iran. The clergy blamed the Qum massacre on the regime as they praised the heroism, bravery, and self-sacrifice of the martyrs who put a lasting mark on

the demonstrations with their blood, vowing to keep their memory alive. The Qum massacre was compared with that of Karbla in which Imam Hussain fell in his blood with 72 of his comrades and family members. Shariatmadari, the religious leader, issued a statement condemning the regime. Komeini denounced the Shah and declared one week of mourning. Subsequently, bazaars and universities were closed in most parts of Iran, including Tabriz, Mashad, Shiraz, Karman, and Ahowz; there followed more demonstrations and more violence.

This gave momentum to the protest movement. Manifestations appeared in forty-day cycles in the form of commemorations of the deaths of those killed in the Qum protest. Through a statement issued by Qum semaniry, February 18th was designated as a national day of mourning by the clergy. The movement took on somewhat different dimensions in Tabriz which has traditionally been in the forefront of historical revolutionary movements including the Constitutional Revolution of 1906 and the Democratic movement of the 1940's. The city fell into the hands of the people on February 22, 1978 after two days of rioting, leaving many dead and wounded as the private and the public properties were destroyed.

The Tabriz protest began on February 18, 1978 with a one day general strike. The bazaar and shops were closed despite pressure and intimidation by security forces. Universities and the school system were also closed in preparation for the day of mourning. Unofficial reports indicated that many clergy, expert in speech making, traveled from Qum to Tabriz to conduct memorial services.⁴⁴ It was said that Ayatollah Shariatmadari, himself an Azarbijoni, was expected to participate in the 40th day of martyrs of Qum. People rapidly filled all 70 mosques in Tabriz. Following the services and rousing speeches, people poured into the streets, armed with clubs and hand made fire-bombs prepared to confront security forces. Violence erupted when a young officer shot and killed a young demonstrator. In turn, he himself was torn to pieces at the hands of the crowd. Police stations were attacked and government buildings, banks, movie theaters, and hotels were put on fire and destroyed. Where police still held their

position, the crowd overran it, but not before a great sacrifice of lives. Many security personnel were captured, beaten and executed, as emotion ran high. By mid-day the city fell into the people's hands.

Army reinforcements reached Tabriz by late evening that day equipped with modern weapons, including tanks, armor carriers, and helicopters. In spite of that superior force, people relentlessly attacked the center of the Rastakhiz party. Following its capture, everything in it, including the Shah's pictures, were burned and destroyed. The city seemed to burn all night. The riots continued into the next day. It was only on the second day, late in the evening, that a curfew was declared. Order and calm were restored in the following days and SAVAk agents began to make sweeping arrests.

According to Kayhan only 6 people were killed and 125 injured. The report indicated that violence was instigated by Islamic Marxists, and claimed that 73 banks were attacked by demonstrators who chanted anti-regime and pro-communist slogans. Four banks, two movie theaters, four hotels, and twenty two shops were put on fire or destroyed.⁴⁵ But based on unofficial and eyewitness reports, both the number of casualties and the extent of destruction were much higher than indicated by Kayan.⁴⁶

What was remarkable in the Tabriz riot as well as that of Qum was the energy of the youth. This will be discussed in Chapter 6. What was at least as remarkable was the manifest passivity and low profile of the armed forces. It is not clear if it was due to the lack of preparedness or the internal strife within the rank and file, though both are indicated by rumors and unofficial reports. Nor is it certain that it was the result of a deliberate decision, indicating the regime's desire to create the illusion of disorder and anarchy to lead what it saw as a silent majority in demanding the restoration of peace and order. This hypothesis is based on the assumption that the regime expected a large section of the population who "prospered" under modernization to turn against the small minority of fanatic Moslems opposed to modernity and to support the dictatorship. It is not altogether indefensible to assume this intention on the part of the

regime since similar policy had been undertaken in the past and public opinion is often formed through such duplicity under dictatorships: where self-identification with hegemonic forms cannot be voluntary, it can be inculcated through these more subtle means of repression based on experience.

Even Kayhan, following the Tabriz incident, expressed serious editorial concern about the unprecedented passivity and inactivity of the security forces: "The question that remains like a puzzle is that after looking at films and pictures of the demonstration on television and in the press, and in regard to the scale and extent of the destruction, which provides a lesson for viewers, one asks 'where were the security forces?' What were they doing through the hours that plunderers were savagely plundering the property of the people, setting cars on fire, and doing general damage? Why are the security forces so quick to appear in some places and so late to appear in others?"⁴⁷

The appearance of the Shah at the Congress of Women in March 1978, following the Tabriz incident, was intended to give the Shah an image of "liberator" and his regime the appearance of democracy, struggling against fanatical opponents. But, more importantly, it was an opportunity for the Shah to present to the nation the dilemma of anarchy and disorder or dictatorially-defined freedom. As he had before, the Shah characterized his opponents as reactionary, opposed to women's emancipation, and hostile to their participation in public life; he identified them as the major cause of the recent riots. Alluding to the incident of the previous October 19, in which a bus had been put on fire by students opposing the integration of sexes in the university dormitories, the Shah indicated that "in the last two years more freedom has been given to all the classes of society." But, "should the use of this freedom," he asked the congress, "cause a limited number of individuals in the Iranian universities to say that female students must not use the services provided by universities? Do people not mix in the city, in the restaurants, in the shops? Should such shameful apartheid exist in the university environment? Iran opposes the apartheid policy and has condemned it in

the international arena. The apartheid of this group is even more shameful, because it is against their own gender and race." "Once again," the Shah emphasized, "the increasing freedom that we have given has exposed the unholy alliance of "red and black" reaction at home and abroad. But, we will continue our policy."⁴⁸

The Western press also characterized the Tabriz incident as having been caused by religious conservative groups opposed to the emancipation of women. The New York Times on March 5, 1978, reported that "informal sources say religious cultural conservative Moslems angered over emancipation of women are to blame for recent riots in Tabriz."⁴⁹

Although the precipitating incidents of the emerging protest movement included the provocative editorial published in Ittila'at and the violent suppressions of demonstrators, the regime continually distorted reality by substituting the demand for return to constitutional rule with anti-modernization, fanatical, and reactionary motives implicated upon the religious community as a whole.

Meanwhile, religious authorities were not permitted to respond in the official press or on radio and television networks to charges that were made against them or otherwise to make their views known to the public. The regime had no intention of providing an official channel through which the opposition could be heard. This was against the policy that sought to coopt the entire population politically, and to legitimize only the Shah and his Rastakhiz Party.

Several month later on August 1978, when the press had won limited freedom, Kayhan published the text of an interview by a reporter for a French newspaper with Ayatollah Shariatmadari. The Ayatollah indicated that the continuing mass protest "has very deep roots...But the most important of all things was the wrath of the nation. The government, which has committed so many mistakes and provoked the wrath of the nation, did not realize that such a movement in Qum and other cities would come into existence...One of the mistakes of the regime", the Ayatollah continued, "was that we were not given permission to express our views and respond to the editorial in which the

clergy and Islam had been insulted, to express our protest to the authorities responsible for allowing so slanderous an editorial to be published. The second mistake of the government was that after the violent suppression of the people of Qom, the regime thought if it extended the scope of such practices to the city of Tabriz it would appease and terrorize the people."⁵⁰

That this was a counter charge leveled against the dictatorship by a high ranking clergy considered to be the spiritual leader of almost all the Iranians, needs no further explanation.

After troops occupied Tabriz, making arrests and detaining hundreds of demonstrators, the regime recalled the Governor of the province, fired several other responsible officials, and demoted SAVAK security officers.⁵¹ But, the dictatorial authority remained as arrogant as ever. It denied that real opposition existed, and refused to recognize popular grievances and to seek means for a peaceful settlement with its opponents. Though, this is an oversimplification of the problem that fails to address the limitations of the structure of the dictatorship itself. It is by no means certain that the resistance would have been overcome had dictatorship rationalized its responses to the problems of social unrest. To do this, however, would have required changes in its essential features, particularly dismantling the apparatus of repression which is correctly regarded to be an act of self-negation by dictatorships.

The official press also continued to identify the opposition as a single group of Moslem fanatics or "Islamic Marxists" opposed to the modernization of the country. In April 1978, when the demonstrations had spread throughout Iran, the Kayhan editorial explained their causes as follows: "the analysis of recent destructive actions shows that the actors are against some of the social, political and economic changes in this society. The expansion of cultural and recreation centers, the expansion of networks of banking systems, equal participation and activities of women in different contexts of life, liberation from some illogical prejudices, and, in general, the transformation of society from a semi-closed society of the past are the major

changes that have given rise to their wrath."⁵²

In the meantime, the number of mass demonstrations was increasing every day throughout the country. Banks and shops selling modern consumer goods or alcoholic beverages continued to be attacked by suspicious characters who were never arrested. For example, Kayhan reported that in the City of Kashan, three unidentified persons threw an object containing gas at a movie theater casing the entrance door of the theater to be set on fire. But because of the help of some personnel of the fire department, the fire did not spread to the other parts of the building. In another report it was said that in Tehran, two motorcycle riders threw objects containing explosive material at two shops selling alcoholic beverages. As a result the shops were destroyed by fire.⁵³ In still another report it was said that two motorcycle riders wearing black cloth, in the City of Kerman, attacked⁵⁴ a shop selling alcoholic beverages and destroyed it. At the same time some of the demonstrations continued to be attacked by suspicious individuals often wearing masks. The Kayhan reported that in the City of Shahi, north of Tehran, 200 to 300 masked individuals attacked the demonstrators and killed the 16 year old son of an Ayatollah.⁵⁵

Everyday similar reports occupied pages of the daily papers. The acts of sabotage were assumed to have been carried out by the regime's fanatical opponents. They were always described as one to three individuals, riding motorcycles and wearing black clothing. If these descriptions were not fabricated, they were surely deliberately constructed to suggest the identity of the perpetrators, that is, to indicate the alliance of "black and red," as referred to by the Shah. Despite the existence of an extensive modern, and sophisticated apparatus of surveillance that had dominated major aspects of life for over two decades, there appeared not one report of arrest. This is not to deny that there existed groups of fanatics who had reactionary motives, but to show the way in which the regime conducted its propaganda aimed at legitimizing itself. By monopolizing the power to define reality, the dictatorship in fact eliminated all mechanisms which could enable the public to judge and verify the claim and coun-

ter-claim independently. What made the regime's policy even more ineffective was the way in which it sought to deal with its opponents who could not have been labeled as fanatics and reactionaries. The source of popular disbelief and distrust in the government was the dictatorship itself.

It was during the spring of 1978 that a group calling itself the "Committee of Revenge" came into being. The main objective of this group besides creating a state of terror in the country, was to settle accounts with prominent leaders of the secular opposition, and writers and poets. This group either planted bombs in their places of residence or kidnapped them, or took them to deserted areas of towns and beat them severely.⁵⁶ Although several deputies of the parliament asked the regime to identify the group and publicize its activities, the government did not take any action. The SAVAK organization apparently remained unaware of and in any case unable to uncover the group. The response of another deputy to the demand of his fellow was all the more revealing: "when agitators create disorder in the country and the security forces try to stop them, you protest loudly; and when the people resist the agitators and punish them, you still protest loudly."⁵⁷ Obviously it is less than surprising if such actions are defended as the mechanism of representation in the parliament under dictatorship.

The Ayatollah Shariatmadari, in an attempt to make the demands of the clergy known to the public and to reject the charges made against the religious institutions, told a reporter for Liberation that "what we want is the execution of the laws of Islam, rules of freedom and justice and the complete execution of Constitutional law." He then pointed to the recent sabotage actions carried out by suspicious individuals and said, "but there are a number of individuals who stir violence, with whom the regime is also involved in order to give our struggle bad publicity. Pouring acid on people's faces, then beating up women without veils, planting the bombs in the homes of individuals, and injuring the prominent supporters of freedom are deeds of those whose identities are not known to the Moslem people." The

Ayatollah went on: "the regime is trying to create a state of terror so that the people stop trusting us. When we ask people to participate in mourning those who have been killed in demonstrations, shops are closed and millions of people take part; the government then chooses to be silent about these events. But when the windows of a few banks are broken by a few individuals, these are reported with gross exaggeration throughout the world."⁵⁸

Although in the spring of 1978 the number of people participating actively in demonstrations in the entire country, was mounting, the regime apparently was still in full control. The regime, so it seemed, was on the offense and continued to hold the initiative in dealing with its opposition. No sign of retreat was in sight. In June 1978, the government's spokesmen told the reporters that "the Rostakhiz Party is the only political party in the country which has the support of the Iranian people behind it, and no other political organization is recognized except this party."⁵⁹

The spread of demonstrations followed by violence throughout the country, was said to have been expected in light of the program of liberalization, and not to have shown the incompatibility of liberalization with the established dictatorial order. A spokesman for the regime told the parliament that "under the expansion of political freedom such agitations and instigations of violence were expected and that some of these demonstrations and incidents are the result of the expansion of "freedom"⁶⁰

With the advent of the holy month of Ramazan, the mosques became centers for organized protests. Unprecedented numbers of people became increasingly interested in observing their religious duties. It seemed as though people had rediscovered their faith and their religion in the midst of modernity and the construction of an "advanced industrial society." This apparant "paradox" has either been explained in terms of charismatic religious leadership and/or the social and cultural imbalances stemming from rapid economic modernization. Hence what is ignored here is not only the connection between the "revival" of religion and the dictatorship's need to renew its

hegemony, but also the way, and the specific conditions under which, religion developed as the weapon to counter the dictatorship's attempt to reestablish its hegemony.

Thus, in the holy month of Ramazan virtually every religious ritual and worship was followed by street demonstrations. As political slogans were being chanted, shops, movie theaters and government buildings were attacked routinely. Some of these demonstrations had violent and bloody endings which claimed many lives. In one such demonstration on August 16, 1978 in the central city of Isfahan, the confrontation between the mass demonstrators on several consecutive days was so severe that the regime was forced to declare martial law.⁶¹

While military forces were patrolling the streets and guarding against possible unrest, the regime attempted to justify its violent suppression under the defense of "individual freedom" given to the people from above by the dictatorial authority. The government released a statement in which it denounced the demonstrators; it declared that "such actions would not compromise the government's determination to give even more individual freedom." In closing, the statement said, "The government is determined to declare martial law under similar circumstances in other cities."⁶² The contradictions inherent in the structure of the modernizing dictatorship manifested itself as an increasing discrepancy between what the dictatorship claimed and what it practiced.

No more than a week later, an incident took place in the southern city of Abadan where one of the largest oil refineries was located. On August 23, Kayhan reported that the Rex movie theater in Abadan suddenly burst into flames,⁶³ resulting in an uncontrolled fire that burned 377 people to death.

The burning of the movie theater was one of the most catastrophic incidents in the prerevolutionary situation, one in which many families lost up to several members. Only a few managed to escape. There were those who happened not to have been trapped in the main salon. There were eyewitness reports whose account of the incident left no

doubt that the theater had been set on fire according to a calculated plan. Immediately rumors spread that the SAVAK itself had engineered the incident. The suspicious nature of the incident and eyewitness accounts seemed to confirm the rumor. According to an individual who had escaped being burnt to death, the fire began suddenly and spread all over within a very short period of time. Every exit door was locked so that nobody could escape.⁶⁴ Kayhan reported that it took the fire department over half an hour to get to the burning theater; and when the fire trucks got there, there was no water in the fire hydrants, nor did the trucks themselves contain any water. They had to travel some distance to fill up their tanks with water to put out the fire. In the meantime, the crowd that had reached the place heard the people inside the theater who were screaming for help while the building was on fire. The Kayhan's report also indicated that a group of investigators confirmed the deliberate nature of the incident.⁶⁵

Whether the regime had any involvement in creating a catastrophe of such scale and magnitude was not the question. What was important was that the general population believed that the government must have been involved in putting the theater on fire. Sharif Imami, who replaced Jamshid Amozegar as Prime Minister in late August 1978, pointed out: "unfortunately, distrust in the government has led many people to attribute this catastrophic to the government which is far from the truth. No one can accept that a government commits such an act against its own interests and that of the country."⁶⁶

Clearly, the regime had not only failed to protect its citizens at that time of disaster, but also its "modern" sophisticated organizations had made no attempt to penetrate the fire and show its concern for the people who were burning in the theater. What the people observed and experienced was the total carelessness and irresponsibility of the regime's authorities. What could explain such a lack of concern and responsibility? Who could plan such a crime? Why were all the exit doors closed? Why was the fire department so late in reaching the place and why was there no water in the fire hydrant? Why did the trucks come to put out the fire with empty tanks? Where

was mighty SAVAK ? How was it that such an extensive secret police which was said to have everything under control did not discover the plan earlier?

These were legitimate questions which led people to believe that such a catastrophic incident could only be carried out if not by the direct involvement of the regime, at least with its prior knowledge. A reporter put the question to the Shah as follows: "There are two opinions about the recent incidents," the reporter indicated to the Shah: "one view attributes these incidents to Islamic Marxists and groups of agitators. The other view is that one wing of the Rastakhiz Party is behind the incidents, for it is believed that an incident of such extensive scale could not be carried out by groups of agitators and Islamic Marxist elements."⁶⁷

Dictatorship and Political Self-Reformation

According to Kayhan, Amozegar resigned on August 28, 1978 and the Shah appointed Sharif Imami, the speaker of the Senate, as the new Prime Minister.⁶⁸ This brought to end what the Shah called "a new era of democracy" and indicated its defeat in theory and practice. The resistance movement that had emerged in response to its objectives eventually forced the dictatorship to submit to the pressure from below and respond to the demands of the masses. The dictatorship was no longer able to avoid political self-reformation under the liberalization initiatives. In this new period, it initiated certain changes within its own structure which further contributed to the disclosure of the dictatorship's irreconcilable contradictions with freedom and self-determination.

Sharif Imami shuffled the previous cabinet and called it the government of "National Reconciliation." He dissolved the Rastakhiz party, the manifestation of "democracy" based on the unity of the Shah and people, that had performed the function of managing the political and economic affairs of the dictatorship. He affirmed the freedom of association and political activities, according to the Constitution.⁶⁹ As conciliatory gestures to the religious authorities and institutions, Sharif Imami reinstated the Islamic calendar which had been

replaced a few years earlier by the ancient calendar dated from Cyrus the Great. Freedom of press was reaffirmed and greater autonomy and independence of constitutional institutions were promised⁷⁰ He suspended the operation of cabarets and casinos.⁷¹ Sharif Imami, however, indicated that his first priority was to remove the existing conflicts⁷² among the various classes that had prevented mutual understanding. Sharif Imami intended to appear as mediator in what he believed to have been a "misunderstanding" between social classes, and indeed refused to recognize the reality of struggle of the society as a whole against the state-power.

This was a great victory achieved by the active participation of the masses in the protest movement. It reflected the strength of the movement and the structural limitations of the dictatorship. According to Kayhan's report, within a short period of time at least 14 political parties came into being. The opposition's views, especially the demands of religious authorities as well as the reports of ongoing mass struggle, were extensively reflected in the press, and the picture of Ayatollah Khomeini for the first time appeared on its front pages.⁷³ Despite its reformist measures, the regime, however, increased the level of official violence in practice. But, silence had already been broken and the masses could no longer be deterred. The more violent the regime became, the more determined the masses were to risk sacrifice. The casualties of the regime's violence were treated as heroes and martyrs to Islam. The resistance movement gathered even greater momentum and strengthened the leadership of religious institutions. The protest demonstrations continued on a larger scale, followed by more violence, anarchy, and disorder. The conditions seemed ripe for a decisive repressive action to restore peace and order. As will be seen shortly, this led to a major defeat for the dictatorial authority. It shook the foundations of the dictatorship and eventually completed its ruin. This became known as "Black Friday."

The Black Friday incident, in which troops surrounded demonstrators and shot to kill, occurred on September 8, 1978, in Tehran, only a week after the appointment of the new Prime Minister and the execu-

tion of his "conciliatory" policies. It took place following mass demonstrations throughout Iran that had started on Monday September 4, celebrating Eid-i-Fitr (the end of fasting month of Ramadan). In Tehran the festival ritual prayer was performed in Qaitariyah, a foothills north of the city. According to Kayhan, the regime issued a statement on Wednesday, September 6, and declared that police permits would be are required for all demonstrations.⁷⁴ On Thursday, however, people, young and old, men and women, adults and children once again joined at Qaitaryah and began to march. The women, for whose emancipation the Shah had championed against fanatic conservative religious institutions, wore black veils in massive numbers. They occupied the front rows of the demonstrations and were protected and fronted by groups of motorcycle riders. This was a powerful symbolic act releasing a repressed dissent, taking religious form. More importantly, however, it expressed and legitimized the claim of the religious institution to represent the whole and defend its interest. It dealt a devastating blow to the dictatorship's claim of legitimacy.

After collective prayers, they agreed to meet the next morning at 8 o'clock at Jalah Square, east of Tehran. The demonstrators then marched downhill towards the south, chanting "independence, freedom, and Islamic government." Kayhan's report indicated that the security forces were everywhere along the path of demonstration and were offered flowers whenever they were met by people.⁷⁵

At dawn of September 8, the regime declared martial law in Tehran and eleven other major cities for a period of six months.⁷⁶ By early morning, Tehran was under siege by the forces of the dictatorship. The military had already taken over the press and public places and occupied various sections of the city, and were positioned in particular in eastern Tehran at Jalah Square, where the mass demonstration was to take place. As if defying martial law, people peacefully marched to Jalah Square and crowded into surrounding streets. Unofficial reports indicated that violence was triggered as materials poured on streets caught on fire. Soon, panic overwhelmed the crowd and in the course of this panic large department stores, cars, and buses were

attacked and put on fire. The military forces opened fire into the crowd, killing indiscriminately from the ground and air. The frightened members of the crowd were chased into deadend alleys and gunned down. For about two hours the thunder of machine guns on the ground and helicopter gunships from the air felled many people in their blood. The extent of violence and the degree of brutality were unprecedented.

The reports of the number of people killed in this bloody massacre have varied from 100 to 5,000. Whatever the exact number, the massacre of Black Friday put a lasting mark on the history of the dictatorship and enriched the soul of the people who rose to make their own history inspite of the conditions to which they were subjected. The Jalah Square was thus renamed "Martyrs Square."

Black Friday may be regarded as the turning point of the Iranian revolution of 1979. It was the turning point because the regime suffered a major defeat from which it could never recover; yet the consequences were to take several months to appear. It was the turning point not only because Black Friday did not achieve its objectives, that is, to reestablish the hegemony of the dictatorship, but it resulted in the disintegration of the dictatorial structure from within. It further mobilized the mass resistance in a spontaneous manner. The people vigorously continued to defy martial law with every means available to them. The defiance of martial law, the continuation of which insured victory for the revolution, took many different forms, ranging from general strikes, to street fighting and shouting Alah-o-Akbar on roof tops at night throughout the country. Black Friday was the turning point because it led to the spontaneous emergence of mass consensus, despite a diversity of interests and its own internal contradictions. Finally, it served as the transition from the prerevolutionary stage of mass protest to the revolutionary stage of a spontaneous mass revolutionary movement. This will be the subject of the following chapter.

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Chapter VI

Dictatorship and Spontaneous Mass Movement

Introduction

Under conditions of a dictatorship, a resistance movement emerges initially in the form of mass protest, expressing the interests of the whole against an apparatus of rule claiming to represent the whole of society. This is an action collectively taken to express an interest which is broad and general, bringing together extremely contradictory elements of the whole and uniting them in the resistance movement. This is due to the fact that the dictatorial order establishes itself by suppressing the expressions of particular interests, whatever their content. It limits the scope and depth of the particular representation rendering it ineffective as meaningless, uncritical, activities ironically serving the interest of the dictatorial apparatus.

Thus the interest of the whole can only express itself in protest demonstrations against the dictatorial authority, holding it responsible for its actions and policies. The content of this movement expresses itself as a demand for changes in the dictatorial structure of power, and can only be rationalized and made legitimate in light of a pre-existing, though subversive, consensus. And because radical repression eliminated an alternative basis for consensus, and in doing so displaced whatever popularity existed for it to the sphere of culture and in particular religious tradition. In a pre-revolutionary situation, dictatorship suppresses all forms of ideology and therefore evokes pre-

political forms of solidarity as the only way of defining and expressing the interest of the whole. The religious form of protest is the product of social conditions engendered by dictatorship. Established religious institutions tend to assume this political function when the dictatorial authority undermines their limited spheres and attempts to delegitimize their claims. This creates social tensions even beyond the material tensions and conflicts of a decaying because of the background of voluntary acceptance and latent institutionalization of religion. Explicit delegitimation and implicit legitimacy combine in a volatile and ultimately explosive revolutionary culture, with the latter likely to win whenever dictatorial control and hegemonic ideological claims weaken.

As dictatorial policies fail to achieve their objective and the program of self reformation comes to an end, struggle is raised to a higher level: on the one hand it retains its spontaneity and mass appeal; on the other, it becomes increasingly organized. Both of these put an end to the dictatorship's capacity to expand its power and dominate society, specifically its capacity to reinforce its essential requirements, silence, submissiveness and obedience. In this stage, the conditions of dictatorship are undermined from below through organized collective action based on mass consensus, and undermined from above as dictatorship is increasingly forced into a defensive posture.

The primary purpose of the present chapter is to show the spontaneous manner in which the movement grew and developed particularly the way in which the working class and the "new middle" classes organized themselves from within. Although, they had converging interests due to their identical relations with the private ownership of means of production who constituted the major forces of revolution and were primarily responsible for the collapse of the dictatorial order. Nevertheless, they were driven by an emerging mass consensus as it developed and established its hegemony over the revolutionary movement. The youth and their revolutionary activities will particularly be analysed as a future representative of mainly working and "new middle" classes. These will be analysed together with the leadership of the movement and its religious character as well as the authentic culture that developed in the

revolutionary process.

It is, however, important to point out that this undertaking is a study of revolution as it evolved in the context of an apparatus of rule whose hegemony was rapidly withering away while it was being supported by an imperialist hegemonic power. Thus, the interdependence and interconnection of constitutive elements of the revolution as a whole are essential features of this present study.

Strike And Mass Mobilization

The pre-revolutionary stage was transformed into a revolutionary stage in Iran, in September 1978, when dictatorial policies suffered a major defeat. "Black Friday" proved that there were limits to the popular tolerance of repression, that the movement grew under the dictatorship and that society as a whole, and not merely a small group of reactionary religious conservatives opposed the dictatorial order. Official violence on the scale of "Black Friday" would have had to have been repeated an indefinite number of times in order for the dictatorial authority to reestablish the hegemony of its rule. Indeed, the breach in the social order of the dictatorship had already lessened its capacity to sanction silence and acquiescence. Submission and obedience would no longer unequivocally lead to security, reward, or position. "Black Friday" was clearly the edge of something that had already acquired its own momentum in the midst of an increasingly incapacitated state.

Two days after "Black Friday," waves of strikes began to occur in every section of the work force throughout the country. The mass protest demonstrations that had marked the prerevolutionary situation were now absorbed in the context of the ongoing strikes. The increase and organizational development of nation-wide strikes were the distinctive features of the second phase of the Iranian revolution of 1979.

The strikes involved almost every occupational category and sector of the economy, private as well as public and modern as well as traditional sectors. They included clerical, secretarial and managerial sectors, writers, broadcasters, teachers, students, and civil servants of the vast bureaucratic apparatus or what may be referred to as a whole as "new middle" class as well as all sectors of working class from

workers of large industrial complexes to those of small workshops; or what may be called skilled, semi-skilled, non-skilled workers. It also included bazaar comprised of merchants, various guilds, handicraftsman, artisans and small shop keepers. These, including the peasantry, despite its insignificant role in the revolution, are referred to as the mass as far as the revolution as a whole is concerned. Here, however, the analysis will primarily be focused on the strikes involving working class and new middle classes.

By November 1978, when the military government was installed, the overwhelming majority of the Iranian work force was either officially on strike or engaged in some type of work stoppage. In this sense the strike was not an instrument employed to advance the interest of a particular class. Nor were particular material or ideological interests the motivating forces behind the emerging revolutionary movement. The act of striking simply crossed the class boundaries.

Strikes were not normal actions under the dictatorship, but were violently suppressed, if they occurred. Strikers were imprisoned, punished, and black-listed. Under the Shah syndicates and unions existed only nominally and were loosely organized. They were managed in any case by agents and riven with informants. In most cases they served in relation to the work place, the functions of surveillance and control. They were instruments of the dictatorship and served to reinforce its conditions. The strikes that began in September 1978 were, therefore, an absolute break from the past. Not only did they take place in defiance of the dictatorship, but even more importantly, in defiance of martial law. Their significance lies not merely in their bringing a halt to the operation of economic system, but in their creation of appropriate conditions for the emergence of a mass consensus which in turn would become the driving force of the revolutionary movement.

The nation-wide strikes did not begin at once, but grew like a wave which, as it moved forward, rose in level and strength until it hit with a force and an intensity whose destructive power could not even have been anticipated by the strikers themselves. According to

Kayhan's reports, the first strike was launched two days after Black Friday by the employees of the Tehran Oil Refinery, and soon spread¹ throughout the oil producing provinces in the south of Iran. The strike in the oil field was followed by more massive nation-wide strikes of teachers involving numbers estimated by Kayhan's report at approximately 230,000.² By October 5, 1978, strikes had taken place in both public and private sectors of the economy, including large industrial firms and most government ministries.³

The strikes were a continuing pattern which repeated themselves in every occupational category, moving from one locality to another in higher and higher levels of organizational integration. For example, Kayhan reported On October 18 and 25, 1978, that the news reached from various cities and towns in the country, indicated that while strikes were continuing after days and weeks in public and private sectors, every day new groups would launch a strike. It then proceeded to report 31 and 36 different strikes on respective dates, involving tens of thousands of people in every kinds of occupations throughout⁴ Iran.

The demands of strikers appeared to have been generally concerned with higher wages and salaries, health insurance, housing, transportation and elimination of the gross inequalities existing among the different occupational categories. These were all the more significant because of their suppression. The repressiveness of the dictatorship led to the politicization of economic demands themselves, expressing protest against its conditions. The oil workers and the teachers, who were historically forerunners of struggle against dictatorship, explicitly demanded an end to martial law and the freedom of⁵ political prisoners, when they waged a strike following Black Friday.

However, as strikes were gaining momentum, the political issues that most expressed the interest of the population as a whole became central to the strikes. Their character changed rapidly as they spread throughout the country. Attempts by the government of "national reconciliation" to meet some of the economic demands of the strikes were too lax and beside the point. The strikes continued on a

larger scale. Their objective was no longer merely to force the government to comply with their specific demands, but to make it impossible for any government being installed under the dictatorship to govern and survive. As The New York Times correspondent, Youseff M. Ibrahim reported from Ahwaz, south of Iran, on November 16, 1978 "settlements reached with the workers in the morning come unglued in the afternoon, and new demands are made every day. Intimidating policies, such as rounding up the leaders of the revolt, seem to have little effect, and it is clear that regardless of the diversity of their material demands, the various factions in this city of 450,000 people are unanimous in their rejection of the Shah's rule."⁶

The strikes were not externally organized and coordinated according to a specific political program nor had they a unified leadership. That is, no organized political group was involved even at the local level in organizing the strikes as a whole. They were initiated spontaneously based on initiatives of working people in order to raise the demands that had systematically been repressed; but in doing so they effectively undermined the established dictatorial authority. The published reports in late September and October 1978, indicated that almost all strikers were separately engaged in some form of negotiation to reach settlement. As most strikes remained in deadlock, a few, however, produced some successful results, at least for a short while. For example, as the workers of Arya Mehr Steel Company in Isfahan, and employees of the Chambers of Guilds in Tehran agreed to return to work⁷, the employees of Behshahr Industrial Group consisting of 40 different corporations, Caterpillar construction company in Tehran, and that of the Ministry of Labor(Kar)⁸ among many others, failed to reach a settlement.

As will be seen shortly, the nation-wide strikes rather than being the functions of narrowly particularistic material interests or of particular political or religious beliefs, were a function of human interest in the most general sense, that is, an interest in right of self-determination, the interest whose articulation and realization depended on the degree of class consciousness, and organizationally

capacity of a class to lead the mass anti-dictatorial movement . Thus the nation-wide strikes suspended normal bases for conflict and reflected the struggle of the society as a whole. The Iranian national bourgeoisie had at that moment the same interest as the Iranian working class in opposing the dictatorial rule of the Shah. In this they joined as well with the merchants of the bazaar, the modern middle classes and the clergy. They appeared equal in their subjection to dictatorial authority. As George Simmel pointed out "in so far as a number of people are equally subject to one individual, they are themselves equal."⁹ The separation of dictatorial authority from the rest of society manifested a greater unity than the dictatorship itself could claim to represent.

Youth As A Revolutionary Force

The teacher's strike that followed the strike in the oil fields may be considered to have dealt a crushing blow to the existing structure of legitimacy. The economic effect of the teachers' strike was no doubt insignificant in comparison with the oil strike. The latter occurred in an industry that generated a daily income of some 60 million dollars. Its importance, however, lay in the fact that it precipitated a release of tremendous explosive power of students throughout the entire country. They were primarily composed of high school and university students. Their number, excluding rural and urban pupils of elementary school were, according to the 1974 official census, 1,200,000, and 140,000 respectively.¹⁰ They joined striking teachers, refused to attend classes and took to the streets of Tehran and virtually every city and town across the nation. The New York Times reported on November 16, 1978 that:

"Young men, idled by the shutdown of schools since the beginning of the semester, mill around in the squares staring at the heavily armed soldiers who are every where. At the Midan Shah in the commercial part of town, 10 tanks ring the fountain in the middle of the square and soldiers have planted seven large tents where they live. Stationary machine guns are pointed

toward the crowds all around the fountain circle. Other squares in town are occupied by the army."¹¹

Thus urban areas such as university campuses, bazaars, commercial sections, and established mosques, where military and security forces had taken strategic position, were frequently transformed into battle grounds by the youth whose presence violated the norms of martial law.

The youth effectively undermined the established authority by challenging the regime's forces of violence. They attacked the government's properties wherever possible, blocked the movement of armed forces by putting official vehicles on fire, distributed anti-regime leaflets, and filled the walls of buildings with anti-Shah slogans and revolutionary posters over and over again, even where they were washed away by troops the night before. For example, following observation by William Branigin, a Washington correspondent, reporting from Isfahan on December 12, 1978, despite his hostile attitude and the negative characterization of the Iranian youth, vividly illustrates the youth's protracted and relentless struggle. "Mobs of angry youths," the reporter observes, "went on rampage here today, pulling down four statues of the Shah and setting fire to a bank and two movie houses." "At one major square," the reporter indicated that "a crowd of up to 2,000 people gathered and watched as about 100 youths tore down an equestrian statue of the Shah with the help of ropes tied to cars." To further describe the youth's hysteria, the reporter pointed out that "the mob scattered a couple of times when truckloads of troops circled the square, but it regrouped after the soldiers passed without opening fire. The crowd set fire to the statue with gasoline siphoned from cars. Cursing the Shah, youths hammered the statue with sledgehammers and picks whenever the fire went out." "On the 10-foot-high stone pedestal," the report continued, "where the monument had stood, crowds stuck placards bearing a picture of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the exiled Shiite Moslem religious leader around whom the opposition has rallied. As this was happening other youths took to the streets around the square and exhorted passing motorists to turn on their lights and honk their horns and join shouting anti-Shah slogans."¹²

The youth were by no means organized. But, they functioned uniformly like an irregular army of partisans who outnumbered the regular army several times over. They were active everywhere in small groups, applying hit-and-run tactics. In peaceful moments they gathered around the members of the military forces in the streets and put carnations in the barrel of the same guns that had felled so many of their friends. Marks of the bloody hands on walls and red flowers replacing the fallen youths symbolized the sacrifice of martyrs to a new cause. It was such an attitude toward death that helped to revive the ideology of martyrdom and developed it as part of a revolutionary culture. This was a revolutionary ritual appeared in a religious form, but performed regardless of beliefs and ideology and motivated by the mass anti-dictatorial movement.

Nevertheless, the young people continued to try and persuade the soldiers not to shed the blood of their brothers and sisters in vain, not to serve the dictatorial authority; that they shared common interests for freedom and national independence. In this way the youth functioned as a vehicle of propaganda, demoralizing the enemy, while mobilizing people. The reinforcement of martial law from September 1978 until the overthrow of the regime in February 1979, in fact, made the the army personnel in particular the lower ranks, susceptible to youths' self-sacrifice and vulnerable to an intense politicized environment. As their stay in the streets was prolonged, they increasingly identified with the cause of revolution for which many people accepted sacrifice as one's duty to his nation. Under such a situation, the army's loyalty had become difficult, if not impossible. Large numbers of defection and considerable insubordinations which paved the way for the army's gradual disintegration from within, were said to have occurred in this period.¹³ The revolutionary movement became a process through which the separation between the military forces and society was temporarily overcome. It was the armed forces lack of willingness, with the exception of most high ranking generals, some senior officers, and the elite Royal Guard, exemplified by the defection of Air force cadets at Dushan Tapeh Air Force base, north of

Teheran on February 11, 1979¹⁴, to protect the Monarchy's dictatorial institution that finally resulted in victory of the revolution in 1979.

It is not within the capacity of this dissertation to deal with all the aspects of the revolutionary activities of the youth. It suffices to say that their activities were not just limited to street fighting, but that young people were also the reserve forces behind the war front. They collected medicines and white sheets, soup and ice from households for the wounded. By doing so, they added to moral pressure affecting even inactive members of the community to participate in the movement. Young people organized themselves in groups to distribute scarce consumer goods in poor neighborhoods. Almost everyone was prepared to contribute in one way or another, from participating in the mass demonstrations and in general strikes to leaving their houses open to shelter the demonstrators before being gunned down by the troops. The small minority who continued to support the regime was too small to be taken seriously. Nevertheless, few people concerned themselves with the difficult questions about the future, what it could be and how it could be brought about.

The youth were understandably overwhelmed by their enthusiasm in this fight against privilege and repression. They had little or no political education or experience. The little they knew or cared about politics had to be repressed. Even higher education was effectively depoliticized. Only a small minority of students were involved. They, too, did not identify closely with the political experiences and the revolutionary traditions of the older generations. The National Front, due to its bourgeois character, and the Tudah party, due to its subservient nature to Soviet policies, were rejected by the guerrilla leaders such as Frahani, Pouyan, Ahmadzadah and Jazani. What excited them as revolutionary theory was that of guerrilla armed struggle. In general, the history of a revolutionary movement and its success and failure had been obliterated from Iranian social history under the dictatorship. Its knowledge had become nonexistent much less one to be discussed and investigated. The youth were therefore

potentially vulnerable to the most radical tendencies of the right and the left. Later indeed both tendencies would play decisive roles in radicalizing the entire revolutionary movement under the leadership of Khomeini in favor of the dictatorship of the clergy.

Emergence of Leadership

The continuing nation-wide strikes following those of teachers and oil workers, combined with defiance of martial law expressed in everyday confrontations between young activists and the armed forces, brought down the Government of National Reconciliation of Jaffar Sharif Imami, and led to the installation of the military government by the Shah on November 6, 1978.¹⁵ This, however, took place after another bloody incident on November 4, during which troops opened fire onto a crowd of students at Tehran University.

Meanwhile, Ayatollah Khomeini had already resided in France, following his refusal to comply with the demand of the government of Iraq, where he lived in exile since 1963, to halt his political activities against the Shah's regime. The international attention that had been focused on Iran by the rapid development of events began to turn toward Khomeini. His freedom of political activity in France and the fact that exile had placed him in what appeared to be a position beyond partisanship provided grounds for his recognition as the sole leader of the opposition at both the national and international level. These were additional reasons for his ascendent prestige as well. The Shah attempted to legitimize his regime during the crises by delegitimizing Khomeini not as an individual, but as a representative of traditional Islam: Khomeini was portrayed as fanatically opposed to progress and modernization represented by the Shah. Moreover, every form and instance of resistance was said to be part of that reaction. The identification of all resistance as the same, the attribution of responsibility to Khomeini, and his visibility as an exile beyond partisanship were key to Khomeini's move to center stage in the 1979 revolution. Khomeini came, therefore, to represent the entire movement whose resistance was based on a desire for constitutional rule and freedom of dissent and opposition that ironically had been acknow-

ledged in the application of the Shah's "liberalization program" instituted from above. That a religious figure would come to represent such a secular ideal was yet further irony, though this would only appear in the aftermath of the Shah's abdication.

Under the "liberalization" program, the dictatorship characterized Khomeini as the representative of the nation's crisis. Paradoxically, this elevation of Khomeini, succeeded only popularizing him as the center of the only unity of opposition possible under the Shah. He thereby became the embodiment of the will of the people and his words became the expression of righteousness and justice. The nation saw in the prospect of his leadership salvation from its suffering under an oppressive dictatorial order. Khomeini appeared to represent all that the Shah was not: his religious piety and holiness, his simple life style and plain language so understandable to the masses stood in stark contrast to the presence of the Monarch who appeared more and more a creature corrupted by wealth and power, a lavish life style and personal arrogance. Both claimed to represent the whole of society. But only Khomeini's claim was unambiguously tied to the only principle of national unity left after the consolidation, troubled though it was, of the dictatorship.

Emergence of Mass Consensus

Before the strikes and before the mass movement entered a new stage under the newly-appointed military government, Khomeini became a unifying factor not only in the religious community but also among the strikers and for most of the formerly suppressed organized political groups. All leftist and nationalist as well as liberal groups and organizations outside and inside Iran supported Khomeini's position. There was no single statement to point to the existence of dissent among the opponents of the regime. To reinforce this unity further and to strengthen Khomeini's leadership, Karim Sanjabi, the leader of National Front and a secular politician agreed to declare the dissolution of National Front and issued a joint statement with Khomeini in Paris demanding a referendum on monarchy on November 1978.¹⁶

More importantly, traditional rivalries and internecine strife

were suspended in the higher circle of religious institutions. The institutions that were organized based on local authority rooted in the knowledge of Islamic law that of interpretation of the Quran and Sunnah or what prophet Mohammad said and did;¹⁷ and its voluntary acceptance both internally and externally. That is, by rank and file, so to say as well as believers. It appears that Khomeini's views on the relationship between politics and religion as expounded in his book "Islamic Government," presented as a series of lectures at Najaf in 1971¹⁸, while living in exile in Iraq, was treated as academic and theoretical practice in Olama's circle. As Ayatollah Shariatmadary pointed out on September 6, 1978: "we are deeply interested in Islamic government. But our present condition is not ripe for it and perhaps it is a desire to be realized not in near future. Before everything else, we demand the execution of Constitutional law."¹⁹

Nor was Khomeini's scholarly achievements was disputed by high ranking Ayatollahs. This gave him legitimacy and completed his authority, and encouraged even nonreligious elements to view him as an essentially political figure influenced by religion, rather than a religious figure influenced by politics. The immediate objective of the movement was the overthrow of the centralized dictatorial authority. What seemed to have been implicitly agreed upon by high ranking clergy was that specific changes in the form of the government were to be carried out based on people's choice, by the provisional government whose secular character had been taken for granted. It was not accidental that Bzargan, a secular politician, one of the old opponents of the Shah, headed the provisional government, essentially composed of secular cabinet members, following the the Shah's informal abdication in January 1979. The questions of whether the dictatorship should or should not be replaced, and the possibility of clerical rule never arose. The idea of an "Islamic" government at best referred to a secular political entity consistent with basic tenets of the Shiat branch of Islam and was an ambiguous concept at worst. The main issue, even for the left, was overthrow of the Shah. This objective appeared to have gone far beyond the limits of particular interests

and expressed, rather, the general interest of the nation. The variations in the level of understanding of the nature of the movement and its religious leadership made little or no difference in the direction that revolution took. The counter-hegemony emerged not against hegemony itself and all hegemonic forms but to establish a new hegemony in the place of the old one.

The Religious Character of the Movement

The mass revolutionary movement appeared as a religious movement because Khomeini as a spiritual religious authority had emerged as undisputed political leader of the nation and clergy as its sole leading force and mobilizing agency. But the religious character of the movement was further reinforced by traditional religious ritual: mourning the death of the great martyr of Shiat, Hossain, the third Imam, during the emotionally charged month of Moharam.²⁰ On the evening of day ten, Hossain's death occurred, giving new meaning to the concept of self-sacrifice for a holy objective, that is to wrest power from an 'infidel usurper.' For the right to represent the whole, according to Shiat doctrine, is reserved for the prophet's descendants. This essentially constitutes the concept of Imamatus regarded by Shiat, as Alavi puts it, "as a guarantee of salvation through the shining example of the twelve (or seven or eleven in variant forms) descendents of the prophet."²¹ Hossain had, however, consciously chosen martyrdom over compromise with an infidel to save the entire Moslem community from its injustice and oppression. Thus Hossain's tragic death with the members of his clan and his distinguished comrades, symbolized the sacrifice of self for the sake of others, and was as always, the subject of mourning in the month of Moharam. Tears are shed, bodies are beaten and repressed emotions are released at the vivid and elaborate illustration of the Moharam catastrophies. The large and carefully planned processions are conducted in such a way as to provide mourning accompanied by festivities expressed in musical and theatrical forms that dramatize the heinous crimes committed against the prophet's family.

Although the institution of martyrdom inspired the movement from

its inception, it became even more meaningful and all the more appropriate for the month of mourning when the objective reality resembled the tragic myth of Moharam: A holy and spiritual man who represented the Moslem community as a whole, confronted with the forces of oppression represented by the Shah. Moharam was expected to be a decisive period in the revolutionary struggle. The military forces were ready with their modern weapons and vehicles, deployed in urban areas to enforce martial law. The public was preparing for Moharam's mourning and festivities as emotions were running high.

Newspaper reports, resuming publication in January 1979, indicated that the most intense violence between the armed forces and demonstrators took place in the first ten days of Moharam. For ten consecutive nights, during a black-out caused by strikes at power stations, the people of Tehran and several other major cities, including Isfahan, Qom, Kremanshah, Tabriz and Mashad, began a collective protest against the regime by going to the roofs and chanting Alah-o-Akbar (God is great). At the same time, others in Tehran demonstrated in the streets while wearing shrouds that expressed their willingness to become martyrs. Many were killed and many more were wounded as security forces opened fire.²²

The largest mass demonstrations took place on the crucial 9th and 10th days of Moharam. These demonstrations were organized by Tehran's religious leader, Ayatollah Taleghani and the leaders of the National Front. The New York Times reported on December 12, 1978 that millions of people marched through the streets of Tehran to oppose the Shah's rule while, as Shiat Moslem, they celebrated the emotional high point of that solemn month of mourning.²³ In those demonstrations, most people participated with members of their families, men and women, young and old. The processions, which used to be dominated by symbols of grief and sorrow, and by rituals of self-flagellation, were, in a marked departure from the past, now expressions of an enthusiasm and joy of solidarity and unity that had not been experienced before. Hossain's death could no longer be regarded as an opportunity to shed tears over one's own impotence and inability to be properly selfless.

The collective struggle against the dictatorship had transformed all the feelings of fragmentation, isolation, and submission to those appropriate to a new unity.

These two days of demonstrations effectively manifested the mass consensus, despite persistent internal diversity and contradictions. The power of the movement, the resolve and unanimity of the people, forced the regime into retreat. It withdrew its armed forces and positioned them in the northern part of Tehran, where they were less than conspicuous and able to avoid confrontation. The mass demonstrations on the ninth and tenth days of Moharam were gestures of a potentially new legitimate authority. They dealt a devastating blow to the structure of the dictatorship and effectively delegitimized its claims. Despite its attempt to "modernize" Iran, the dictatorial authority found itself separated from the rest of the society, without a base of support.

The mass consensus expressed in religious forms, was predicated upon and was not merely the result of the rejection of modernism. It did not reflect the traditional character of the society or its rapid polarization into accumulated wealth on one end and a mass of wage-labor on the other. Nor was it the result of the "rentier" character of the state and the availability of an enormous unrationalizable income derived from the sale of natural resources. These and similar theories suffer from a major shortcoming: they commonly overlook the way in which the dictatorship functioned as a basis for a social order and fail to consider the general controlling contradictions inherent in the structure of a dictatorship and in its particular modernizing form.

General Strike And Self-Organization

Although the religious character of the movement was further strengthened in the month of Moharam dominating all other ideological forms. Nevertheless, the continuing general strikes retained their spontaneous character, that is, they were organized not based on particularistic interests from without, but that they came together and organized themselves from within based on cooperative attitude to

achieve a common goal.

Thus under military rule instituted on November 1978 to restore peace and order the revolutionary movement appeared to have increasingly taken organized form. Various groups emerged and provided coherence and continuity for the movement. In almost every factory, workshop, and government agency, councils or committees were formed to serve the function of decision making, and to determine the course of action necessary and proper for the task of overthrowing the dictatorial regime. Interviews by the author with various individuals, in the spring of 1979 indicate that "proper" actions were defined in regard to specific conditions. But, more generally they were defined by reference to outcomes that could contribute to the vulnerability of the regime. For example, some strikers terminated their work stoppages in order to provide essential services to the public. A strike could have had reverse effects and might have worked against the interests of the movement. An executive of Dyerah Bazneshastagi-ai-Iran (the equivalent of the U.S. social security administration in the U.S.) told the author that the committee in his section decided to continue work and work harder and faster despite the continuation of strikes in the other branches of the government. This decision was based on the rationale that the termination of work would cause greater suffering and hardship to retired people whose only income was their monthly checks. Continuing work would help people maintain themselves, and would greatly contribute to the government's financial difficulties since the treasury was running out of funds. In other words, the choice of tactics could vary since there existed a common objective shared by the majority of the nation's citizens. This consensus emerged spontaneously as part of the rationality of action in immediate situations. That it did not go beyond immediate objectives was due to the limitations that had been imposed by the dictatorial order on the development of a political consciousness.

An official of the Ministry of Finance of Iran told the author in April 1979 that in his ministry every section was on strike except the section that handled the payment of the cash budget of civil services

for all of Iran. Because that section remained in operation the personnel of the entire civil service received their wages and salaries while remaining on strike or involved in other job actions.

A remarkable example of the way in which the normal functioning of the government came to serve the movement was the decision by the employees of Tehran's Tavaner Corporation (an electric power station) to black out all broadcasting in Tehran each night during regularly scheduled national news programs. Although the black out was intended to last for no more than one hour, it required additional hours for workers, technicians, and engineers to restore service. This action was aimed at preventing the military authorities, who controlled national radio and television from broadcasting propaganda in support of the government. As a result, people turned to foreign stations for nightly news, particularly the BBC of London. Similarly, the daily paper Kayhan reported in January 1979 that the personnel of Iran's customs authority released only goods that were needed by the people, refusing to release equipment and goods sent to the embassies or citizens of the U.S. Israel or Britain²⁴ In these and other ways, popular actions within the state apparatus helped bring the machinery of the dictatorship to a standstill.

The Development of Authentic Culture and Cooperative Movement

Despite this, continuing strikes, low levels of production, and failures of distribution created scarcities of key consumer items such as food and heating oil, the latter a cause of particular hardship during the winter. In fact, the regime's strategy was to increase economic hardship hoping that it would lead to divisiveness in the work force and diminish popular support for the revolution. Thus, for the movement to succeed, strikers had to be supported financially, the poor and disadvantaged had to be provided with necessary levels of subsistence, and the burden of hardship had to be distributed relatively equally among the different sections of the population.

Ayatollah Khomeini exhibited the quality of his leadership by recognizing this need for a fair distribution of essential consumer goods. He issued a plea to the merchants and asked the wholesalers

and retailers "to avoid profiteering" that, he said " could deal a blow to the body of the Islamic movement at its moments of crisis." He further advised not to "forget helping the workers and businesses that have taken a great loss as the result of the strikes."²⁵

The objective revolutionary conditions combined with the Ayatollah's leadership led to the emergence of various organized groups such as neighborhood councils and to the formation of Islamic cooperatives.

These groups were not organized on a particular political ideology, nor were they offsprings of a larger political organization. Individual initiative and collective contributions were their foundation. The wealthy and the merchants of the bazaar functioned as financial resources for the groups, contributing cash or goods while others contributed specialized labor and/or services. According to Ayandehgan's reports in January 1979, the cooperatives were formed in Tehran in various ways. Initially the reports indicated that the cooperatives began as transport services that sent pick up trucks to depressed areas and distributed heating oil and low-priced food products. The reports, however, did not indicate from where this initiative originated, or who made the original contribution,²⁶ though, it is clear that they could only have been financed by the wealthy merchants of the bazaar.

Later large cooperative shops were organized in order to combat the inevitable profiteering that occurred as certain consumer goods were hoarded and their distribution monopolized. In some cases, large cooperatives were created through the conversion of specialized businesses. For example, according to Ayandehgan, Haj Hossain Khosh Savatan converted his bookstore into a food cooperative. The decision to convert the bookstore into a food cooperative, according to a reported interview with Haj Hossain by Ayandehgan, had been made collectively with several other bazaari businessmen. Hence, he received considerable contributions from wealthy bazaaaris that enabled him to sell the goods below their market prices. Letters of credit were also put at his disposal by other merchants in the interest of satisfying the needs of low income people. "For example," said Haj

Hossain, "yesterday a well-known merchant placed hundreds of letters of credit, each for 30 kilos of coal [used for heating and cooking purposes], at the disposal of our cooperative and we have already distributed them among the people."²⁷ Many cooperatives represented the combined efforts of different sorts of people with different skills, and from different backgrounds. For example, Ayandehgan reported on January 15, 1979 that the organized body of another food cooperative was comprised of a machinist worker, two bazaaris, a shoe maker, a driver, an office worker, a fruit seller, and two students. These individuals, the report indicated, formed the cooperative in order to distribute rice, cooking oil, sugar, and eggs at wholesale prices. They all worked without wages and their major objectives were said to be to combat profiteering and to help low income people in order to achieve victory.²⁸ While these reports were unquestionably aimed at increasing popular morals, there seems to be no doubt that cooperative movement played a vital role in rationalizing the economic resources as part of the revolution.

The cooperatives could not, however, operate efficiently without the cooperation of a broad section of the population that cut across the class lines. According to the same report published in Ayandehgan an enormous number of people were involved in the cooperatives either directly or indirectly sharing work and/or the financial burden of the operation. This is further exemplified by a quotation in Ayandehgan of a merchant reporting that "In Tehran's Maydan [the market where direct producers sell their products to merchants], as soon as farmers realized that their potatoes were being purchased for Islamic cooperatives they sold them at large discounts. The merchants themselves followed the farmers' example and did not charge for their services. The drivers who transported the potatoes to the cooperative shops similarly did so without charge."²⁹

Within a short period of time the cooperatives grew in number and surpassed the limited functions which they had initially assumed. Thus, according to newspaper reports in January 1979, cooperatives came to include kerosene and gasoline distribution, transportation,

clothing distribution, and the distribution of medicine and medical services, among others.³⁰ What began as part of an "underground economy" had by the end of military rule in January of 1979, become a feature of the infrastructure of the revolutionary movement.

Neighborhood Councils and Development of an Authentic Culture

The neighborhood councils was another type of organized group which emerged as military rule weakened and the regime's agents appeared as club wielders, according to Kayahn's report on January 31, 1979, attacking people in cities, small towns, the countryside and on the roads. It appears that councils were initially established to insure the security of neighborhoods and guard the community against the surprise attacks of club wielders. As they came into being they assumed larger functions in regard to the well being of the members of community, especially the poor. Among their most important tasks was to make sure that each and every family had sufficient heating oil for the winter and received a share of the scarce consumer goods. Decision of the neighborhood councils were coordinated and carried out by respected elders and young activists in relatively informal arrangements. For example, in order to prevent members of the community from waiting long hours in the cold winter weather for heating oil, the young people of the neighborhood organized small groups and distributed the kerosene so that no one had to wait on line. This and similar types of action had great impact on maintaining the unity and solidarity of the population at every level. The development of such a cooperative mode of life was not only totally new, but it inspired those who remained on the margin of the events to contribute. It thus helped to create a sense of optimism about the future society which was to function for the first time in centuries with neither the Shah nor a dictatorship.

Describing the new attitude of the people, Ayandehgan reported in January 1979 that "the people who used to confront each other with hostility, whose conversations rarely went beyond the price of eggs and meat, or traffic jams,.... now, because of their common struggle have become kinder to each other and treat each other with generosity-

ty." For example, the report continues, "not many people would have to wait in the street in cold weather for taxis, because private cars are volunteering their services to them; and few fights are being witnessed."³¹

Dr. Nosser Kotozian, a professor of law in Tehran University, noted in an article published in Kayhan that "solidarity is the most important thing that the revolution has created."³² To illustrate his point, Katozian described changes in the conduct of everyday life by different social groups and classes of the people normally dominated by divisiveness, social fragmentation, intolerance, and the generally antagonistic attitudes characteristic of human interaction under a social dictatorship. He continued:

"If, in the past, professors and students confronted each other as two hostile social classes, like producers and consumers of diplomas, they now engage in common struggle and become martyrs. If, in the past, people considered university students as unemployed, lazy, individuals, and regarded the universities as places of pleasure for youth, now they are considered as bastions of freedom. If, in the past, the young people spent their time in cafeterias and Youth Towers [Kakh Javanan built by the regime for youth recreation activities], now they carry heating oil to the homes, collect rubbish, guard the community at nights, and direct traffic in the streets. If the bazaar merchants' main concern was to make more profit without restrictions.... now they form Islamic cooperatives and sell their commodities without profit and sometimes at a loss. If, in the past, medical doctors acted like businessmen, and many speculated in real estate, now they have turned hospitals into a national base for the treatment of the wounded and sick. If, in the past, women were concerned with their looks and attempted to form organizations to compete with men,

now they are shoulder to shoulder with men, engaged in social, political, struggle. If, in the past, people lost their patience over the scarcity of various kinds of fruits, now they stay in cold homes, tolerate scarcities of heating oil, and gasoline, electric blackouts, and do not complain when they wait in long lines."³³

Indeed divisiveness, social fragmentation, and isolation caused by selfishness, distrust, suspicion, and animosity promoted and encouraged by the dictatorial order were replaced by attitudes of cooperation and collective participation in order to achieve a common objective—the defense of society against a common enemy. An authentic culture of personal duty and collective obligation had been created in the course of the movement's development that provided a solid foundation for the revolution on the basis of a mass consensus. The continuation of the revolution was generally expected to reinforce this solidarity and give it the aspect of an authentic social function when the revolution would have been complete. This was an illusion, the result of an excessively, but understandably optimistic view of the outcome of the revolution, a failure to evaluate the potential for a withering away of the mass consensus under what would certainly be essentially different conditions: where mass consensus would be replaced by new and renewed fragmentations of interest, inevitable results of a power struggle which would have to be resolved through some form of agreement among the forces representing various particular interests. Such an agreement is possible only if revolutionary authority can mobilize its resources to establish its ideological hegemony within the context of the culture created by the revolutionary consensus. That is to say, the mass consensus determined and defined the course of action in everyday life, becoming the guiding force of the revolution. Its presence implied the subordination of specific ideologies, including religion, in favor of a general societal-based, and hence, secular ideology.

Crisis of Dictatorship and Imperialist Policy

With the collapse of the military government in late December 1978, the Shah's authority also collapsed. Yet, he continued to play a major role in determining the course of events following his downfall. He remained arrogant, while witnessing the last vestiges of authority and legitimacy slipping from his hands. By having refused to accept the necessity of changes in the form of his power, that is, the return to a constitutional monarchy envisioned by the 1906 Constitution as the precondition of compromise with his moderate opponents, the leaders of National Front, he practically destroyed Iran's historic opportunity to reconstruct a representative form of government and restore legitimacy to the constitutional institutions. When, in late December, 1978, he became certain that he could no longer remain in power as a dictatorial monarch, he desperately attempted to work out a formula that would nevertheless allow him at least nominally to remain the king of Iran. But it was too late, for any form of government approved by the Shah stood no chance to survive. The Shah's dictatorial rule had deprived every governing agency, including the office of Premier, of legitimacy, and he could not hope to restore what he himself so thoroughly undermined.

Yet the Shah's supporters outside of Iran, particularly the U.S. government, still hoped to preserve the status quo in Iran, if not with the Shah, at least without him, perhaps with a combination of remnants of the monarchy and institutions of a civil government. Initially the U.S. administration anticipated that the Shah's "decisive action", that is the application of repression by violent means, would resolve the conflicts. But, the U.S. itself feared greater direct involvement in the Iranian revolution had the Shah required it if he was to save his throne. Thus, the mixed signals that the Shah received from Washington in regard to the extent and the degree of support he could expect from the U.S. reflected the positions of various factions within the Carter administration competing with one another to operationalize what each conceived to be a right course of action.

Critics of the Carter administration argue that Carter's indeci-

siveness and his ineptness in policy and performance made him unable to protect the Shah and contributed greatly to his fall and failure of American policy in Iran.³⁴ It is true that the Carter administration was confused about Iran and had no clear idea of where Iran was headed. But, this was an inevitable result of a long-term imperialist policy that regarded dictatorship in the less developed societies such as Iran, essential to what it considered as its vital interests. Consistent with that view, a succession of U.S. presidents gave the Shah all the military, financial, and moral support he demanded. Carter, like every other president since Eisenhower, continued to see Iran as if it was an expression of the character of the Shah and to perceive the Iranian people as subjects whose character was in harmony with the dictatorship. This has always provided justification for the hegemonic powers to help maintain dictatorships in Iran as well as other third world nations. For it is only through a repressive apparatus of dictatorship that the hegemony of a capitalist system can be insured and imperialist policies advanced despite the resistance of nations. The common interest of dictatorship and imperialism lies in the suppression of popular sovereignty and limitations of democratic freedoms.

In this process what tends to be overlooked is the increasing dependence of both sides on one another. Thus, when the crisis came the Shah waited for the U.S. to discover a magic formula to save him as in 1953, when the U.S. regarded the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Dr. Mossadegh and the restoration of dictatorship under the leadership of the Shah essential to the containment of communism and the advancement of its economic interest in Iran. Having strengthened the repressive dictatorial apparatus in Iran, the U.S., in turn, depended on the Shah to protect its interests in Iran as well as the Gulf region, expected him to use his might and power in a time of crisis, and act decisively to restore order when social unrest occurred. But, the determining factor was neither the Shah nor U.S. policy; rather, it was the ever-expanding mass resistance movement. It seems there was only one decision for Carter to make: to

intervene militarily in Iran or not. Since that decision seemed virtually impossible, every policy making agency was allowed to explore other areas and search for any solution short of military intervention. But, in reality it did not matter any longer if the U.S. administration had a clear policy in Iran, because the revolutionary movement had already made the dictatorial authority its principle target. When the Shah failed in Iran, it was the U.S. world power that had failed.

According to Carter's critics, what the warring factions within the administration finally came to accept was that if the Iranian armed forces remained intact under a united command, any government that would come to power, with or without the Shah would have to accommodate itself to the armed forces. Thus, the U.S government directed its policy at preserving and maintaining the structure of the Iranian armed forces, regarded loyal to the the hegemonic capitalist power and by means of that policy sought to protect its "vital interests" in the future.

This solution failed to take into account the specific character of the Iranian armed forces that Washington itself had helped to create. The modernized military functioned as an apparatus of power subordinate to the machinery of the dictatorship. It had no autonomy or independence. Its generals and high ranking officers were subservient and loyal to the dictatorial authority. Their professional duties consisted of obeying and carrying out its orders. The Shah, aided by the U.S., created a modern army which served the function of integrating Iran into the capitalist world. It served to subordinate the nation's interest to that of a foreign power's. The Shah was separated from his people by being united with the army, representing one and the same thing, subjection and subordination. The army was as lacking in a social base as the Shah himself, and as separate from the rest of the society as the central dictatorial authority itself. It was no more than the embodiment of repression and dictatorship. Thus, to renew its hegemony the U.S government attempted to provide the armed forces with necessary leadership in the absence of the Shah, by

sending Air Force General Robert Huyser to Iran. The problem was not a technical one, but one of function, structure, and morale.

Mass Armed Insurrection and the Fall of the Shah's Regime

Finally, on January 1, 1979, Bakhtiar, one of the leading members of the National Front, defied the mass consensus led by Khomeini, and agreed to form a government if the Shah would leave the country. It was then that Huyser was sent to Iran to unify the armed forces, urge the military leaders to rally behind the new government, and to inform them about a contingency plan for a coup when the occasion would arise. By doing this the U.S. government helped further reinforce the separation of the armed forces from the people and enhanced divisiveness within the armed forces. In the absence of an institutionalized command structure, the leaders of the armed forces seemed confused and disoriented. On the one side, there stood an overwhelming majority of the people expressing their will and determination in regard to the dictatorial rule of the Shah; and on the other was a military, isolated and lacking both leadership and unity. As a result, as will be seen shortly, one section of the armed forces continued to resist the victory of the revolutionary movement and the other moved toward recognition of it. The U.S. administration was not only oblivious to the specific characteristics of the Iranian military, but failed to understand that the people's revolt against the Shah was simultaneously a revolt against that military supported by a foreign power whose fall must necessarily lead to the fall of the other.

Although the National Front, which required a referendum on the monarchy as a minimum condition to cooperate with the Shah immediately expelled Bakhtiar, the U.S. ³⁵ endorsed the Bakhtiar government and promised to cooperate with it.

Bakhtiar had received a preliminary approval from the parliament, but it was as empty endorsement since the parliament was still seen as part of the Shah's regime and therefore without legitimacy under the revolution. It was assumed, on behalf of Bakhtiar, that if formal constitutional procedures were carried out it would mean the return to constitutional rule. But the revolutionary movement had gained a

momentum that made such a solution obsolete. Nevertheless, Bakhtiar presented his program to the lower house of parliament. He granted freedom to press and pledged to disband SAVAK and to lift martial law. He urged Iranians to support Arab neighbors and Palestinians and promised to stop oil shipments to Israel and South Africa.³⁶

Bakhtiar's program was ambitious and designed to win popular support. Yet he failed to realize that he had already divorced himself from the people and the movement by agreeing to form a government under the Shah. He continued to enforce martial law and used troops on several occasions in major cities to put down anti-government demonstrations. When the Shah left the country and Khomeini decided to return to Iran, Bakhtiar ordered the closing of Tehran airport on January 24, 1979. Bakhtiar's efforts to block Khomeini's arrival were resisted by mass demonstrations. These, in turn, were violently suppressed by the armed forces and left many dead and wounded.³⁷ Finally, Bakhtiar retreated, reversed his decision and reopened the airport to facilitate Khomeini's return in January 30, 1979.³⁸

Bakhtiar had no control over the armed forces. Nor as an individual did he have the support of any section of the population. The Chief of Staff, General Abass Gharabaghi, and some of his high ranking officers were already considering swinging the loyalty of the armed forces toward Khomeini. When Khomeini appointed Bazargan as Prime Minister of the Provisional Government on February 13, 1979, Bakhtiar accepted Khomeini's regime as a "shadow government" and vowed to stay in office. Bakhtiar had never believed that the Government's collapse was imminent even before the Shah left the country. Nor did his foreign supporter, the U.S. government, believe that Bakhtiar's government was bound to fail. Hence the U.S. continued to support it until its complete collapse.

The complete destruction of the old regime, however, took place through a violent confrontation between the armed forces of the revolution and the armed forces of reaction. The armed insurrection that forced the military to recognize the reality of revolutionary authority constituted the final episode of the Iranian revolutionary movement.

It came about in a spontaneous manner. On February 11, 1979, the Imperial Guard loyal to the Shah attacked the Iranian air force cadets who had joined the revolution in Farahabad Air Force base. Thousands of people who learned of the incident and rushed to the place of confrontation. Soon a general mobilization was under way, and counter attacks began which led to a disarming of military bases in Tehran and other major cities throughout the country.

The armed confrontation in which tens of thousands of people participated lasted no more than 48 hours. The defeat of one of the most powerfully equipped modern armies in the whole region of the Persian Gulf within so short a period of time has been the subject of great debate. It has been attributed primarily to various conspiratorial imperialist schemes. But this disregards what was contributed by the nature, character, and weaknesses inherent in the structure of an army created and maintained to serve the interest of a dictatorship and capitalist hegemonic power. In the face of mass resistance, such armies tend to become increasingly pacified both due to internal division and external pressure. The Iranian armed forces recognized the revolutionary authority and surrendered to it, because there existed no objective to achieve through the use of violence against the nation. Its separation from society occurred under the dictatorship which had established its hegemony over the society as a whole. As the bureaucratic apparatus of the dictatorship disintegrated from within and ceased functioning, the armed forces also tended toward unity with the society. This may explain why the leaders of the armed forces, who declared the neutrality, expected to resume their function under an emerging revolutionary authority. They did not regard themselves responsible for the decades of dictatorial repression and bloody violence that had been perpetrated against the people. The army's high command wished to be distinguished from the dictatorship and expected its past action to be judged on their subordinate position vis a vis central authority. But this was not sufficient; nor did it serve them well when they faced the judgement of the revolution.

With the fall of the old regime, a new chapter was to open in the history of dictatorship in Iran, one whose form and content could not have been easily predicted in advance, even by its principles.

Notes on Chapter 6:

1. Kayhan, January 9, 1979.
2. Kayhan, October 20, 1979.
3. Kayhan, October 5, 1978.
4. Kayhan(AME), October 18 and 25, 1978.
5. Kayhan, January 6, 1979.
6. Monthly Review, February 1979.
7. Kayhan(AME), October 11, 1978.
8. Kayhan(AME), October 25, 1978.
9. Kurt H. Wolff, The Sociology Of George Simmel., The Free Press, New York, 1964, p.197.
10. The Plan And Budget Organization: The Statistical Center of Iran., 1974(1353), p. 77.
11. The New York Times, November 16, 1978.
12. The Washington Post, December 12, 1978.
13. For examples of mutiny within the army see The New York Times, November 12, 1978; it reported that 12 soldiers were killed and 20 wounded when 3 men dressed in military uniforms opened fire at Levizan Camp.
14. The New York Times, February 11, 1979.
15. The New York Times, November 5, 1978.
16. The New York Times, November 6, 1978.
17. For a discussion of clerical authority based on knowledge of Quran and Sunnah or the Concept of Ijtihad see for example: A Discussion Concerning Marja'at and Rohaniat., 1960 (1341) containing the following articles by high clerical authorities: "Ijtihad and Taqlid in Islam and Shiat" by Seyed Mohammad Tabatabai; "The Responsibilities of Marja-i-Taglid" by Mosavi Zanjani; "Ijtihad in Islam" by Morteza Motahari; For further discussion of aforementioned book see A. K.S. Lambton, "A Reconsideration of the Position of the Marja Al-Taglid and the Religious Institution" in Studia Islamica, Paris, XX, March 26, 1965, p. 116-135; also see Shahrough Akhavi, Religion And Politics In Contemporary Iran, 1980, p. 2; Edward Brown, A Literary History of Persia., Vol.4, 1964, p. 335; on Power of Mojtanid see Josef Upton, The History of Modern Iran: An Interpretation., 1965; also N. K. Keddie, "The Role of Ulama's Power in Modern Iran," in Studia Islamica, XXIX, Paris, 1969, p. 31-53.
18. S. Akhavi, 1980, p. 164.
19. Kayhan(AME), September 6, 1978.
20. For a further description of the tragedy of Hossain's death see E. G. Brown, Vol.1, 1964, p. 226-7, where he argues that Shi'a as a faction which lacked in enthusiasm and self-devotion changed with Hossain's death "a reminder of the blood-stained field of Kerbela, where the grandson of the Apostle of God fell at length, tortured by thirst and surrounded by the bodies of his murdered kinsman, has been at any time since then sufficient to evoke, even in the most lukewarm and heedless, the deepest emotion, the most frantic grief, and an exaltation of

spirit before which pain, danger, and death shrink to unconsidered trifles."

21. S. Akhavi, 1980, p. 3; for extensive discussion of the concept of Immamat see also Hamid Anayat, Modern Islamic Political Thought, Farsi edition, Khorazmi Publication, Tehran, 1362(1983), p. 17-40.
22. Ayandehgan, January 7, 1979, and Kayhan(AME), January 17, 1979.
23. The New York Times, December, 12, 1978.
24. Kayhan, January 21, 1979.
25. Ayandehgan, January 10, 1979.
26. Ibid.
27. Ibid.
28. Ayandehgan, January 15, 1979.
29. Ibid.
30. Kayhan(AME), January 24, 1979: "Islamic cooperatives: A Revolutionary step against Profiteering;" also Ayandehgan, January 15, 1979.
31. Ayandehgan, January 10, 1979.
32. Kayhan, February 6, 1979.
33. Ibid.
34. See for example, Michael Ledeen & William Lewis, Debate: American Failure in Iran, Random House, New York, 1981; also Barry Rubin, Paved With Good Intentions, New York, Oxford University Press, 1980.
35. The New York Times, January 5, 1979.
36. The New York Times, January 12, 1979.
37. The new York Times, January 24, 1979.
38. The New York Times, January 30, 1979.

Chapter VII

Conclusion:

The Dialectic of Dictatorship and Revolution

In this concluding chapter I use the case of Iran to highlight a crucial dialectic, both theoretical and practical, between a modernizing dictatorship and revolution. In this dissertation I have attempted to ground the Iranian revolution of 1979 in an alternative perspective. Throughout, I grounded the revolution in the theory of modernizing dictatorship. This approach provides a basis for rethinking a variety of issues in the study of social change.

Prevailing Marxist interpretations of the revolution have analysed it in the context of a modernization strategy and the rapid economic development financed by the enormous capital derived from the sale of oil resources. In this way the development of "dependent capitalism," the intensification of class antagonisms, class inequalities, and alienation of religious institutions, are assumed to have been the major causes of the revolution. Non-Marxist interpretations have essentially placed it in the context of traditionalism and resistance to modernization. But both interpretations it seem to converge on the basic assumption that different economic and political strate-

gies, different from those adopted by the modernizing dictatorship, could have reduced the likelihood of revolution. That is to say, both Marxist and non-Marxist interpretations are equally nonrevolutionary. The Marxist view in particular fails to analyze the Iranian revolution as a process of the development of opposition within a dissolving dictatorial structure of power. Nor does it account for its contribution to a new strategy for the revolutionary change in countries dominated internally and externally by exploitation and oppression.

What distinguishes the Iranian revolution of 1979 from all previous great revolutions is its spontaneous mass character. From the outset it was a social movement which grew, developed, and organized itself on the basis of an emerging mass consensus. The entire nation mobilized resources at all levels and on all fronts to pursue a single overriding objective. There existed no modern party machinery, no unions, and no revolutionary army. As a liberation movement, the revolution did not take form as an alliance of the working class and the peasantry. Rather, it introduced new alliances, particularly that of working class and the urban "new middle classes" in the context of the mass mobilization, reflecting the specificity of economic development of Iran under a modernizing dictatorship supported by a globally hegemonic capitalist power.

The Iranian revolution grew, developed, and achieved its immediate task in a far shorter period of time than other great revolutions. This was due to the diffuse patterning of mobilization and to the paradoxical unity created by the dictatorship as its elimination of all organizations opposed to the Shah eliminated them as well as sources of disunity within the revolution. In a sense, a dictatorship survives only if it is able to institutionalize its opposition, though even in that case the compromise of its hegemony may prove fatal.

The spontaneous mass character of the revolution suggests in the first instance that resistance was aimed at the dictatorial apparatus of rule rather than the objective material conditions, for the emergence of so general a mass unity based on a resolution of intra-class differences and the total composition of a material class interest is

difficult to imagine. Such a collective mass revolutionary struggle is only likely to occur where a dictatorial apparatus of rule is imposed upon and dominates society as a whole: one which separates itself from society and becomes autonomous through the process of seizing and consolidating power. Such an apparatus establishes its hegemony through repression aimed at bringing the development of class struggle itself under its control, and supervening the class dynamic in its own promotion of social change. In this way, it becomes a fundamental determinant of social structure, mediating economic, political and cultural backwardness, and serving as the medium in which the society is integrated into the world system of capitalist hegemony.

The modernizing dictatorship, through its supervening of the normal mechanism and dynamic of capitalist development, and the relations of classes, attempts to reconcile contradictions. On its part, it is structurally integrated within and integral to society; yet it is separate from society by virtue of its supervening functions. It sets for itself the task of modernizing society from above; but it intensifies the backward and dependent character of that society by subordinating the interests of the whole to the interest of the dictatorship, and through that to those of imperialist domination; its claims to represent the whole society depend on suppression of all representative claims. Hence its way of representing the whole, in the final analysis, is to represent only itself. The immediate objective that is sought through changes initiated from above, is the legitimation of the power structure; but, in fact, those changes serve to establish the dictatorial domination over ever-larger terrains of social life. Thus, they are inevitably accompanied by the further development and modernization of the repressive apparatus since the spread of the dictatorship entails the spread of resistance and constant renewal of the need for legitimation. These contradictions are bound to intensify because the impulse to expand power, and to subordinate the whole of society is built into the structure of dictatorship.

This legitimation through the expansion and consolidation of

power becomes at the same time a process of delegitimation. It ultimately discloses the superimposed and alien character of the dictatorship. It has the effect of equalizing and "leveling," to use George Simmel's expression,¹ the majority of the population. Their subjection and subordination to the hegemonic power of the dictatorship gives rise to the emergence of the mass as a typical form of popular mobilization, and eventually mass politics. It is because of this that the mass interest, rather than material class interests, becomes the motivating force of the revolutionary movement under dictatorship. This dynamic form of the mass, developing where class representations are absent, signifies the objective underdevelopment of classes and, even more important, the nondevelopment of class struggle and the ideological forms that are the necessary media for the expression of consciousness. For it is not the classes, but the struggle within them and across the class lines that becomes the real agency for social change from below. Under such conditions, exploiting classes submit to dictatorial control as the exploited classes do to repression. As Marx says "the struggle seems to be settled in such a way that all classes, equally impotent and equally mute, fall on their knees before the rifle butt."² Thus, when a conflict occurs, it is mass consensus that functions as the medium in which people become conscious of their situation and participate in the political mobilizations.

The modernizing dictatorship is by its nature centralized. That is, administrative and military control extend throughout the country to all the localities, and is linked to the center through an increasingly elaborate bureaucratic machinery. Thus, it tends to develop an economy which is more in harmony and consistent with its structure itself centralized and subject to extreme forms of rationalization. The intensity of economic activity sharply declines from the metropolitan center to the periphery. Seen from this point of view, the forces that potentially threatened the the modernizing dictatorship were from the outset primarily the modern forces of production developed and concentrated in the urban areas: the working class and the

"new middle" classes. Both were vital to the stable and effective operation of the administrative and economic institutions of the dictatorship. In addition to these classes, the mass mobilization included the youth, the bazaar merchants, and to some extent portions of the peasantry.

The foundation of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 was composed of the two modern classes, the urban proletariat and the "new middle" classes. Their unity, that of manual and nonmanual workers, exploited and without property, was evident in continuous, nation-wide strikes and essential to the emergence of an authentic "counter hegemony."³ But, this alliance was limited by the conditions under which it emerged. It was virtually governed by tactical and practical considerations, mobilized spontaneously and organized locally and from within. Thus, it could not have been but volatile since its organizational form could only be diffused. Yet, the clarity with which the dictatorship defined itself gave to the movement corresponding clarity and specificity of focus so that each attack seemed to shatter the structure of the dictatorship and deal devastating blows to its authority. First, the revolutionary force was concentrated in the urban areas; due to its massiveness and the significance of the area it occupied, it could not have been isolated and destroyed. Second, not only did it halt the economic operations of the state and deepen its financial crisis, it made it impossible for the bureaucratic apparatus itself to continue functioning, contributing to its own disintegration.

To this massive force must be added the youth, primarily the offspring of the urban working and "new middle" classes. They played a decisive role in the revolution. Their seemingly boundless energy, their militancy and relentlessness in moments of set-backs as in moments of success, were instrumental in demoralizing the military, ultimately compelling them to bow to the power of the will to self-sacrifice. Youth groups emerged to provide communities with means of survival and security in those difficult times of scarcity and anarchy, guarding against the cold in winter and the attacks of club wielders and thugs, who appeared as defenders of the regime. Though

only a small part of the movement, the contribution of these activities can only be understood in terms of their contribution to the spirit of solidarity and cooperation that was the culture of the revolution.

Active also were the merchants of the bazaar, who contributed money to sustain strikes and helped to expand the movement by frequent shut-downs of the bazaar. Their support in turn, legitimized the role of religious leadership since the contribution of bazaaries were for the most part channelled through the authority of the clergy. The fact that the religious institutions functioned virtually as a political party has been overemphasized, leading to a tendency to disregard the specific historical conditions under which these institutions were able to assume the ultimate leadership of the revolutionary movement. Within these limits, the religious leadership did play a decisive role, a role to which we shall return.

The marginal forces were portions of the peasantry. That they were marginal does not mean they were less interested in the revolution. They had been superfluous under the modernizing dictatorship. The agrarian reform had, to be sure, reduced conflict in the countryside but it shifted it to urban areas as uprooted peasants migrated in the large towns and cities, forming a disenchanting underclass population. That conflict was eventually mobilized against modernizing dictatorship itself. Agricultural production became stagnant following the reform. It left the peasantry relatively helpless, scattered, and poor. Control of the countryside, therefore required little more than small security forces. Had the movement begun in the countryside of Iran it would have more than likely continued to the present time and beyond, and, it would probably not have taken a form consistent with the outcome of the revolution.

The revolution achieved its immediate objective by overthrowing the modernizing dictatorship. Yet, it replaced it with another that added to political oppression: religion. The result was a dictatorship that leaves no room for the free development of a human being, further suppressing the capacity for pleasure and the desire for the

advancement of society. The new dictatorship makes human beings suffer religiously not by free will but under the bayonet. That is to say, conformity to the religious norm and mores is no longer voluntary. Rather, their strict enforcement is to reflect a merciful and compassionate character of the clerical dictatorship that makes religious salvation compulsory and living in heaven an undisputed dilemma for people.

Social scientists typically explain this unexpected result by formulas such as the nonexistence of "democratic traditions," a large and conservative peasant population, and traditions of patriarchy. These theories tend to reinforce ethnocentric ideologies regarding to non-Western and non-industrial nations. Tyranny and the acceptance of oppression are assumed to have been innate in the character of the society and the people; therefore the return to a dictatorship is seen as an inevitable continuation of an historically established way of life.

These ethnocentric Western formulas make little sense in light of the present analysis and of its stress on the crucial dialectic of modernizing dictatorship and revolution. Since the Western bourgeoisie established its hegemony over the world economy, dictatorial regimes have been armed to the teeth, equipped by a modern sophisticated security apparatus, and diverted from the goal of social progress to that of their own incessant elaboration. Nevertheless, when dictatorships are challenged by unarmed and helpless people, the motive of resistance is still explained either as a mechanical result of material class interests, or, at worst, as if it were nothing more than a simplistic reaction to progress and modernization.

Too few have yet discussed the incompatibility of human nature with a type of rule whose ultimate logic is force, one that communicates only in the medium of repression. Nor has there been sufficient study of the connection of economic and cultural backwardness with the development of dictatorship. It is by no means clear to what extent social transformation depends upon the degree of what William calls freedom of "transmission" and "reception."⁴ What is at issue here is

the fundamental question of the possibility of progress and the liberation under oppressive dictatorial order, persistence of superstition, tradition, and dependence. This is the larger question that I have endeavored to concern myself with in the analysis of the Iranian revolution.

If the revolution failed to achieve its objective it was not because the "ghost of the old revolutions walked about," as Marx remarked in the Eighteenth Brumaire of Bonapart.⁵ For the 1848 revolution eventually represented the unity of all classes against the modern proletariat representing the socialist alternative. In the last quarter of the 20th century, not only is socialism itself faced with a crisis of legitimacy, but the development of the proletarian class as a social revolutionary force is limited objectively by continued economic backwardness and subjectively by internal oppression. The proletarian movement is fought and its representatives suppressed throughout the world by imperialist forces operating through the dictatorships that they sustain.

Only religious myths and traditions could have been invoked in 1979 as a basis for the emergence of mass consensus. To renew its hegemony and to legitimize itself, the modernizing dictatorship eventually resorted to a political reform, while it attempted to avoid the self-negating effect of the reform. This expressed itself in the political assimilation of society as a whole into the framework of "Iranian democracy:" that is, the "Revolution of the Shah and People" and the single Rastakhiz Party. Thus, the legitimation of dictatorial authority was only possible in the form of a corresponding delegitimation of religious authority, as well as further encroachments on civil liberties and cultural values. The Shah attempted to keep the country in fear of future anarchy and the oppressiveness of "Black and Red," religious reaction and communism of which only representatives of the former survived as a viable replacement of the old.

It would be misleading to study the Iranian revolution in its apparently religious form and in regard to its consequences. It should instead be studied in the context of the dialectical unity of

theory and practice; that is, for the alternative revolutionary strategies and tactics it suggests, and for the different paths of development it made possible. What the Iranian revolution clearly shows is that true human liberation from internal and external exploitation and oppression can come about, in the first instance, through the transformation of the political structure and the abolition of the division of society into the ruler and the ruled. If the 1848 revolution showed as, Marx claimed that "the overthrow of the parliamentary republic contains the germ of the triumph of the proletarian revolution;"⁶ the Iranian Revolution of 1979 showed that the overthrow of a dictatorship contains within itself the germ of the triumph of institutions of legitimate authority, directly administered and managed from within, representing the interest of a self-governing society based on local political and economic autonomy. The liberation and social development of all nations dominated by dictatorship and imperialism depend ultimately on whether or not such institutions can be established. Marx's statement that "all revolutions perfected" the state machinery "instead of smashing it,"⁷ applies to the Iranian as well as socialist revolutions, to those directed against dictatorship as well as those intended to abolish the division of society into exploited and exploiter. In both cases, despite other options that the revolution made possible, the division of society into ruler and ruled remains as constant as exploitation itself.

This does not mean that there is no value to the socialist alternative, but suggests instead that socialism requires the smashing of the machinery of dictatorship in all respects so that the power structure that secures the obedience of ruled to ruler is no longer a viable option. The state as an apparatus of rule, seems more resistant to "withering away" than had been thought.⁸ The very process of withering seems to depend upon a continuing revolutionary impulse which the destruction of the centralized bureaucratic machinery of dictatorship remains one object of social development itself. Seen from this perspective, the Iranian revolution can be regarded as a process in which the division of society into ruled and ruler was

progressively undermined as the ruled increasingly exerted their authority through local autonomous self-administration. The failure lay not in the practice of the revolution, but in the lack of the development of a theory able to grasp the true significance of its spontaneous mass character. This was neither taken seriously then nor is it now.

It is also important to point out that the modernization strategy for economic development and its socialist alternative seem to converge. Both rely on a combination of agrarian reform and industrialization initiated undemocratically from above. This not only expands and reinforces the centralization of decision-making but centralizes and concentrates economic activities in urban areas, eventually leading to uneven development. To reverse this trend, both agrarian reform and industrialization must be initiated by the principle of self-administration and self-management. The peasantry, more often than not, becomes the victim of its ignorance, that is, the result of the very conditions under which it lives. Its liberation comes from without by an integration into the urban industrialized sector. This implies either depopulation of rural areas by force, as in the socialist experience under Stalin, or without force as in Iran under the Shah. The revolutionary strategy consistent with "smashing the machinery of the state" rather than perfecting it, would proceed with the urbanization of rural areas by the relocation of industry, by an acculturation of the peasantry through the expansion of means of communication to and implementation of the values of urban civilization in the countryside, and by establishing conditions of local autonomy politically as well as economically.

It is in this sense that the Iranian revolution should be studied as a great revolution: that is, not for what it achieved but for what it demonstrated can be done by masses when they are organized from within according to a social division of labor that transcends normal class antagonisms and diversity, and for its implications for revolutionary tactics and strategy. Such revolutions tend to occur when the contradiction inherent in the structure of dictatorship has ripened.

They fail when they limit themselves to immediate objectives, the overthrow of the dictatorial authority, rather than long-range ones that include the overthrow of the social dictatorial order and its social institutions. The failure to achieve the latter must itself be regarded as the result of conditions created by the dictatorship. As Hegel remarks "it is not any individual, but the free individual who wishes freedom." Freedom in its true form can be recognized and willed only by an individual who is free.⁹ It is self-evident that the degree and extent to which the notion of freedom, let alone the free individual, can develop under the social conditions of dictatorship, are limited. This by no means suggests that the bourgeois revolution is historically necessary under hegemonic imperialist powers; rather it suggests that a true socialist revolution is contingent upon a social revolution that aims to abolish the division of society into ruled and ruler, and to make man conscious of himself as a species being capable of resisting all forms of oppression.

Notes on Chapter 7:

1. Kurt H. Wolff, The Sociology of George Simmel, The Free Press, 1964, p. 197.
2. Karl Marx, "Eighteenth Brumair of Louis Bonapart," in Marx & Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy, edited by Lewis S. Feuer, Anchor Books, 1959, p. 336.
3. Raymond Williams, Marxism and Literature, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 108-114.
4. Lesley Johnson, The Cultural Critics: From Matthew Arnold to Raymond Williams, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, p. 132.
5. Karl Marx, Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonapart, p. 332.
6. Ibid, p. 335.
7. Ibid, p. 337.
8. V. I. Lenin, The State and Revolution, Foreign Language Press, Peking 1965, p. 17.
9. Herbert Marcuse, Reason and Revolution, Beacon Press, Boston 1960, p. 189.

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