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Streets of Revolution, a text of a photo-book on the Iranian Revolution by Akbar Nazemi, Unsent Dispatches From the Iranian Revolution

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AKBAR NAZEMI

UNSENT DISPATCHES

from the Iranian Revolution, 1978 – 1979

Cover
Students and Communist Party Members
Autumn, 1978

This spread
Injured Demonstrators
Autumn, 1978

Injured Demonstrators 2
Autumn, 1978

Students Inside the University of Tehran
Autumn, 1978

Demonstrators Attacking Vehicles
Autumn, 1978

Tehran's Streets
Autumn, 1978

Documents of Revolution 7
Bill Jeffries

For All Souls that are Not Counted 15
Akbar Nazemi

Women and Revolution in Iran: 1978 to 1981 19
Pantea Haghighi

Streets of Revolution 29
Asef Bayat

The Revolution 41
Nikki R. Keddie

درود و
خمینی

Documents and Monuments in the Iranian Revolution

Bill Jeffries

Akbar Nazemi's photographs of the Iranian Revolution were made at substantial personal risk. One of his siblings told me that it was quite surprising that Nazemi wasn't wounded or killed during the revolutionary period. He was an active participant in those events, making images during the day and processing film or distributing communications by night. Moreover, Nazemi was not only shooting 35mm photographs. He also carried a wind-up 16mm Bolex with him every day, switching from still cameras to motion pictures for particularly significant events. It is owing to this alternating use of film and still images that we now see gaps in his photographic record of the revolution, gaps that cannot be filled in by making prints from his 16mm film because all of that material was destroyed when the building in which it was hidden was bulldozed in the early 1990s.

Photography, including Nazemi's, can have an enormous impact on our perceptions of both revolution and war. During the struggle, and as soon as victory is declared, effort is directed at controlling the story to be told. Throughout history, war and revolution have been presented after the fact in over-simplified myths: glorious acts of heroism, accounts of enemies routed and emblematic horror stories of innocent victims who 'lost everything'. Contradictory evidence is usually eliminated and often denied.

The invention of photography made this reductive process of simplification and denial far more difficult to sustain. Photography has the capacity to bring myth back to reality, or it did so prior to the digital age. Of course, photographs have also been used to support mythologies, through selective subject matter or manipulated imagery. But the unaltered photograph is perhaps our most potent transmitter of the complex realities that de-romanticize the political violence of wars and revolutions. Such photographs enable us to look back

Detail
One of the Shah's Statues
Winter, 1979

and see the stories that were not told, the suppressed evidence of chaos, cruelty and waste. The power of photography to alter perceptions, beliefs and opinions was a lesson taught in the Vietnam War, known in Vietnam as the American War, and recent examples would certainly include Abu Ghraib and the images of Saddam Hussein emerging from his underground hideout. How many Iraqis would have believed in his capture without a photograph to 'prove' it?

The era of 'truth in photographs' began in the mid-nineteenth century, the medium's power increasing as photographers learned their craft and cameras became more portable and film more speedy. Roger Fenton's photographs of the Crimean War, taken with the equipment available in 1854, could not compete with the vivid representations of battle made by illustrators who freely altered poses, settings and distances. Yet the Fenton portfolio commanded the then high price of sixty pounds, and the government was urged to send photographers to war to "obtain undeniably accurate representations" that would improve on "the dimly allusive" work of painters. The hunger for accuracy was partly fueled by the requirements of military intelligence, but among the public it was felt as a burning need to know what war was actually like, to know what their soldiers were facing, who was dying, and how and why.

Valuable eyewitness accounts of war and revolution come to us in various forms: letters, diaries, journalists' reports and photographs. Yet it can be convincingly argued that the photograph provides the most efficient and powerful tool for gathering evidence, especially during a battle or a riot. Of necessity, letters and diaries are composed after the fact, and most participants will have had a narrow view of the action. The journalist can scribble quickly, but not nearly as quickly as the photographer can snap pictures. Moreover, the journalist who is writing will be forced to compress his notes, whereas the camera will capture much that looks like background at the time but later turns out to be significant. Possibly more important than any of these differences is the authenticity that people have attached to photographs – to their "undeniably accurate representations". The eye is our dominant sense. When truth is contested, photographs are believed in preference to memory, which changes with time, and to written evidence, which, rightly or wrongly, is seen as less objective. With photography, post-Photoshop, we can certainly now expect a new level of scrutiny, perhaps with images being analyzed just as evidentiary audiotapes are now minutely examined for evidence of falsification.

Even those of us who have never directly experienced the chaos of revolution can feel that revolution is a street phenomenon, part of the urban dynamic in which humanity flows through the space of the city, shaped by its streets and architecture, not unlike electricity or the water supply. It is those rhythms that are at the core of the link between the revolution in the streets and non-revolutionary street photography, which has long had the graininess of its emulsion act as a signifier of the grittiness of street life itself. Graininess has had a

long historical association with photographs that are 'tough' to make, as if the grain itself was an indicator of difficulty. The closer to 'the street' the photographer is, the more acceptable it is that the resulting images are grainy, gritty and, in the case of Akbar Nazemi's images, virtually decomposing after being stored in a wide variety of imperfect storage sites. It is not only grain and grit that are shared. The randomness of urban life – the varied patterns of building facades and human motion – show up in both the daily urban routine and in the non-quotidian revolutionary moment. Photography, freezing the moment, can reveal what no eventual winner of a revolution will acknowledge – the random quality of the events leading up to the outcome.

In Akbar Nazemi's case much of this tell-tale grain results from the difficulty of obtaining goods and services during a revolution. Where does one purchase film when the shops are all closed? Where do you process film shot during the day if you want to exhibit the prints the next day as part of the 'news' that was postered at the university? How do you do this when the soldiers are watching, processing in the day is not possible and there is a curfew at night? Nazemi shot on out-of-date film, with 35mm motion picture film stock, on films made by many different manufacturers and processed his film in conditions and chemistry that were far from ideal.

What Nazemi's images bring to us are the contrasting emotions and tensions that permeate the public sphere when it takes the form of mass civil disobedience and unrest. Isolated individuals are sometimes seen to be carrying out an action that they deem important in one picture, but in the next, a million people are marching through Tehran in a line that stretches beyond the horizon. People from a broad range of social strata are seen working toward a common goal, and because of that commonality, events that were not truly organized seem to be models of organizational structure. The banners, placards and texts representing a plethora of points of view jostle with each other in the street or hang in unison from a given political party's building.

Religious Supporters Destroying Liquor Stores
Winter, 1979

After the Victory, Transferring Arms to Ayatollah Khomeini's First Residence at Refah School
February 12, 1979

City Walls used as Newspaper Kiosks
Autumn, 1978

The moment when the soldiers in the Shah's army 'go over to the people' is caught – they are in uniform, but are, all of a sudden, with the populace rather than against it. Small moments of creativity emerge, such as the pasting of Ayatollah Khomeini's image over the Shah's on paper money. A vehicle designed to hold six people holds twenty-six, as if the revolutionaries were American college students stuffing themselves into a phone booth. There is also much that Nazemi photographed that is not emphasized in the selection of images for the exhibition and this book; the bodies on the streets, the wounded being transported, the rooms full of corpses, whether at the morgue or out in the world, and the scenes at the cemeteries on the fringes of Tehran, all of them filling up with the dead whose lives were the price of the attempt to effect political change.

In the Iranian Revolution we can see examples of all that is glorious and all that is horrible in the revolutionary moment. As has been the case almost everywhere, once the hated rulers have been deposed, the symbols associated with their rule must be attacked. Statues were and continue to be obvious targets. In Iran the attacks extended to the purveyors of alcohol, a substance closely associated with the decadence of the West, and seemingly truly symbolic, given that alcohol is still commonly consumed in Iran even though those in power are, in theory, opposed to its consumption.

The idea of revolution has been codified by many people over the years, with the basic goals summed up a hundred years ago by Sun Yat-Sen in the following principles: nationalism, democracy, and equalization. The preservation of the nation, perhaps even the recovery of its historical essence, while simultaneously providing greater participation and the sharing of wealth, have historically been goals that would appeal to the widest cross-section of the populace. These goals offer the hope of both dignity and prosperity. These principles were key elements in the rhetoric of the Iranian Revolution, but Sen's 'three stages' were perhaps not followed strictly: His first stage was destruction, his second transition, and the third constitutional government. In Iran it was claimed that the Shah, through Westernisation, had undermined Iranian nationalism, that the good life did not extend to a large enough portion of the population, and too great a percentage of Iran's GDP was spent on its military. Each of these was a rallying point for resistance at the time when discontent exploded into revolutionary action. Yet the question remained, who could take on the task of running the Iranian state, and would there be democracy and a sharing of wealth?

When Akbar Nazemi arrived back in Tehran from Düsseldorf in July 1978 it seemed that no one, including Nazemi, had any idea that the revolt would be successful, or if it was, that it would result in the overthrow of the Shah in such short order. The deconstruction of the apparatus of state that unfolded over the ensuing year left a power vacuum, one in which the many competing interests undoubtedly expected a fair and

orderly process through which Iranians would sort out their future. Perhaps one measure of dissatisfaction with the process and its actual outcome is the number of Iranians living in Greater Vancouver. In 1978 the number was very low. In the post-revolutionary period the number of Iranians grew rapidly, to the point that today there are 40,000 living on Vancouver's 'North Shore' alone, in the suburb where Presentation House Gallery is located.

This brings us to the question, asked by many and answered by Henry Munson Jr. in his books and essays, of why it is that an Islamic revolution occurred only in Iran and not in other countries with equally large 'fundamentalist' constituencies. The other essays in this book address this question, each of them referring to the fact that the Iranian Revolution was very broad-based and was neither 'Islamic', nor led by fundamentalists. It may have resulted in an Islamic state after the fact, but that particular outcome was not predetermined; it was the product of the fundamentalist victory in the power struggle that followed the collapse of the Shah's government. Although the Revolution relied on many who were fervently religious, it seems to me that if any one group deserves credit for the Revolution, it should be the students at Tehran's university. As Homa Hoodfar has reminded us, the initial meeting that led to the revolt was a meeting of a group of poets and people interested in poetry. Militant Islam, however, was better positioned to seize the levers of state power, having an organizational structure, both social and religious, already in place. There were many competing interests that catalyzed the revolution and the transition period that followed; fundamentalist Islam may not have even been the largest of those groups, but it was the most focussed. The results of the Revolution were thus not what many of the original participants had in mind. They might have taken note of Lenin's observation, made after the Russian Revolution, to the effect that making a revolution is easy compared to figuring out how to organize the conditions of life and labor after the seizure of power.

This exhibition is comprised of approximately one hundred forty of Akbar Nazemi's photographs selected from the 3,600 that survived their precarious journeys and storage over the last twenty-five years. Nazemi was in the Iranian Army in 1971 & 1972 and subsequently left Iran to travel in Austria and Germany, eventually settling in Düsseldorf to study photography. Once in Düsseldorf, he realized that he was looking not only for a photographic education, but also for freedom, for an escape from the constraints that young people everywhere feel in relation to the society around them. He says that at the time he was not really 'against' the government, but rather saw himself as part of the opposition. One day in late spring 1978, a friend approached Nazemi to ask if he had heard what was happening in Iran. "No, what's happening?" "Demonstrations." Nazemi says he couldn't believe it, simply because the strength of the Shah's army was such that it seemed impossible to him that the people would be allowed to protest. On this news he started packing almost immediately and was back in Tehran in July

1978. He not only described it as "a very happy time," but he also thought "now is the time."

The sociological context and tone of the revolutionary moment were set by the control that the state apparatus exercised over the Iranian population. As Nazemi says, "the way things were before was that SAVAK had spread such fear that there was hardly any talking in public places, people didn't even say 'Shah', they said "Excellency". Given those conditions it is not surprising that at the start of the revolution everyone was happy. Nazemi says it was the best of times for him, a time of hope, a time when people didn't need or ask for money or appreciation, they just did things and worked together. "Film was not easy to get – we got roll ends from the film studios for free and used some 35mm motion picture film in the SLRs as a way of working for free. In that whole period I never paid for any 16mm film, there was always a way to get it."

As the revolution gathered strength, many of Nazemi's photographs were publicly exhibited, by hanging them outdoors in guerilla exhibitions on the walls at the university. The 'exhibition' would last for four or five hours and then SAVAK would take everything down. Nazemi says that at the time he thought the Revolution would take ten or fifteen years. He speaks fondly of the goodness of the people during this period. They would, for instance, donate blood time and again to the point where they couldn't stand up. Nazemi had a motorbike

Carpooling To or From a Protest
Autumn, 1978

Carpooling To or From a Protest 2
Autumn, 1978

Display of Martyrs' Bloody Clothing
Winter, 1978

Detail
Ayatollah Khomeini's First Public Address
February 1, 1979

that he used to transport the injured. Food was donated to the demonstrators by the people. Recalling those times, he says, "the demos were sometimes very bloody, as the army chased people, however, the demonstrators could run faster and people would open their doors to them to let them into their houses. Even people involved in car accidents would get out and hug each other! That rare emotional solidarity made it a glorious time..."

The destruction of Nazemi's seventy hours of 16mm motion picture film is a great loss. At key moments, when he switched from his 35mm SLR to the Bolex, he was shooting film that would have been of unimaginable value to the Iranian nation, if not today, then someday, when the nation was ready to subject its own history to public examination. Nazemi sealed all his motion picture film in cans and buried the cans in a basement, but it was all lost in the demolition of the building under which they were buried. His SLR film was stored by joining the strips end to end to form one giant roll which was left with a friend. These photographs provide a unique and extended portrait of unfolding events in a country with both a great history and also a place on centre stage in current events. The important decision Nazemi made was to start immediately, right from the first day he was back in Iran, to make pictures every day.

After the Revolution the University was closed for three years, all the buildings housing the other political parties were destroyed, including their archives, printing presses and libraries. Nazemi calls this period a 'dark time'. One example he cites is the special military units in every neighbourhood that managed every detail of everyone's life, to the point that people started burning their own books so as to not be caught with them.

Nazemi has many stories about the 1978 – 1979 period, but the one that sticks in my mind is the clandestine delivery of printed material, including printed texts and messages from Ayatollah Khomeini himself. During the curfew, when the streets were full of patrolling soldiers, the runners would traverse the city by going over the rooftops, literally never touching the street, with the soldiers unaware that a mass of activity was taking place over their heads. Akbar Nazemi says that what he took away from it all was "that there is hope for every nation, and that there is a basic goodness in every person." That hope is a core sentiment shared by everyone wanting a better life for themselves as well as for others; the images in this book are a reminder of an extraordinarily hopeful time in Iran's history, a time that resonates from the past, through Akbar Nazemi's photographs, into the 21st century. The essays that follow provide a range of points of view on these images and the remarkable context out of which the Iranian Revolution began ■

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For All Souls that are Not Counted

Akbar Nazemi

My heart sank when Katrina informed me that the negatives were fading. It seems as if the images are gradually vanishing. I was speechless; these were not just images but a record of the history of my homeland. It was August 2004 and I was at the lab developing some of the first prints for this exhibition.

In my gloomy state I gazed at the negatives. For years they were hidden underground in a metal container in Tehran. Occasionally I dug them out and printed some of them. Then, for twenty-five years I had dragged them with me everywhere I went. They were, at the same time, giving me a headache and making me proud that I was preserving some of my country's history.

I was studying in Düsseldorf when the Iranian Revolution began to gather momentum. It was in July of 1978 that I returned to Iran. I tossed myself into this turbulent situation which at that time had no end in sight. With masses of people out in the streets I knew something was bound to happen, but I had no idea it would happen so soon. I could not believe it! The Shah's rule, with the backing of such a huge army and his dreaded SAVAK, disintegrated so quickly, crumbling like a sand castle. And then came February 10th, 1979 (Bahman 22nd), a year of exaltation, a year full of hope and of promises of equal distribution of wealth.

During the time of the Revolution pictures had to be concealed in every possible way. Carrying a camera was a criminal act; taking pictures was considered an enemy activity. And after the Revolution it was the same story. Anyone with a camera was considered to be spying for

Mehrabad Airport Tarmac. Journalists Awaiting Ayatollah Khomeini's Arrival
February 1, 1979

Martyr's Cemetary
Winter, 1979

Martyr's Gravestones
Winter, 1979

either the USA or Iraq. Looking back on those times, it is ironic that satellites and governments could spy, but it was the photographer's head that might end up in the guillotine. This was the justice of a third world country. The year 1978 passed and the year of repression and coercion arrived. In 1979, a few months after the revolution had been victorious, hundreds of newspapers, magazines and 'underground' books were burnt to ashes or buried in yards by their terrified owners.

Now the negatives fade, as do the memories, mine as well as everyone else's. The Revolution is now old news. One of my memories from the days of the Revolution that will not fade is my time in the morgue in a Tehran hospital taking pictures of bodies of people who had been gunned down by soldiers. Suddenly police poured into the hospital. There was a curfew and to conceal me from the police the hospital supervisor shut the door of the morgue. I was sitting in the pitch black cooler with I don't know how many dead bodies, not just for ten minutes, but what felt more like ten hours. When he opened the door my clothing was soaked in cold sweat and my shoes had pieces of human brain that I had stepped on. I think only my youth saved me from fainting. I could write a book about my daily adventures during that period, with cameras in hand, walking the streets and then protecting the negatives.

Over the years I printed some of the photographs, stuffed them in wooden boxes and transported them from one land to another. The boxes were like a casket full of memories. Among the pictures were those of innocent people whose bodies were pierced by bullets, their only sin being their struggle for freedom and their aspirations for a better future. These people were my companions in my travels, their aspirations having died with them.

Twenty-five years have passed and I found myself thinking about the possibility of putting them into a book. A number of publishers in Iran were willing to publish my images, but only if they could censor them. People say a picture is worth a thousand words, and it must be true if these publishers were so worried about my pictures of the Revolution. They were blind to the facts, unable to accept that women with un-Islamic dress, communists, and intellectuals were an integral part of the Revolution. They couldn't understand that if the Revolution was noble, its nobility was the result of the participation of all parts of the tapestry that is Iran. This unity of movement, within a multiplicity of beliefs, was the most obvious feature of the 1978-1979 Revolution.

After many years of hanging onto the negatives, Bill Jeffries came along to say that Presentation House Gallery was interested in showing my photographs of the Revolution. It was time to revisit my wooden caskets and dust them off ■ *For All Souls that are Not Counted.*

Women and Revolution in Iran: 1978 to 1981

Pantea Haghighi

Iran experienced great political turmoil and profound social transformation during the revolutionary period from June 1977 to March 1979. The revolution that toppled the Pahlavi dynasty was popular and broad-based and was followed by an overwhelming majority of Iranians voting for the establishment of a new democratic state. This shift, from a secular monarchy under the Shah, through an eighteen-month interregnum in which all options were open, to an Islamic oligarchy dominated by religious leaders, captured the attention of the world. Iran was the only Muslim country to that point to have experienced an internal uprising on this scale, and its future, previously thought to be predictable, was suddenly at the centre of international debate. The post-revolutionary government, however, did not fulfil every one of its many promises, with some of the very freedoms of expression that the Iranian people had hoped to obtain being again withheld. In particular, the implementation of Islamic law, called Sharia, curtailed the freedom of Iranian women, many of whom had actively participated in the Revolution.

Photographs are one of the best tools we can employ to reflect on the role that women played during the Revolution and in the ensuing transitional period. The women depicted in Nazemi's images appear to us as powerful revolutionaries whose active participation in the revolt is a reminder of a historical moment very different from today's orthodoxy in Iran. Nazemi, however, did not focus his camera on the role that women played; rather, the women of Iran were caught up in his images just as they were caught up in the Revolution itself. We can consider the female revolutionaries in Akbar Nazemi's images in many ways, from measuring the extent of their participation in the Revolution, to their freedom of expression as a manifestation of the

Woman with Flyers
Autumn, 1978

breakdown of control by the army. What we see is not only women in leadership roles, but also their ability to work alongside men in the serious task of transforming the state.

The events of 1977 to 1979 reanimated Iranians' involvement with their collective history, immediate issues and future prospects, while providing numerous reasons to assess the new, post-revolutionary present in terms of the deeper history of Islam. The political and cultural vicissitudes of the spread of Islam had shaped the history of the entire region, including that of the Iranian people. The triumph over the Shah was seen by some as confirmation that the revolutionaries were recovering past glories in preparation for codifying them as part of the new state. As Phil Marshall has pointed out, as early as 1979 it was widely reported that the Mullahs' promise of a free and equitable society was intended to be combined with a return to the ancient model of the umma (community) of seventh-century Arabia, in which the Prophet Mohammed and his followers had lived a simple, fulfilling life governed by Sharia laws. So, for some, it made some sense that the women in the Revolution, even though they looked like revolutionaries from other modern conflicts around the world, could also be seen as representing the ideal of a key female Muslim figure from the early decades of Islam. Thinking of the idealized Umma, the Islamists later proposed that Fatemeh, the daughter of Prophet Mohammed, should be taken as the new ideal of militant, selfless, Iranian womanhood.

Although the Revolution itself was broad-based and aimed for cultural as well as personal and political independence, the Post-Revolutionary rhetoric emphasized the consolidation of Iranian identity through the establishment of an authentic Islamic model that had room for modernity and progress. The revolution rejected the kind of foreign domination that was associated with the Shah's pro-Western regime and its secular agenda of modernization. The post-revolution redefinition of Iran's relationship with Western powers also entailed a redefinition of gender relations, in which gender re-emerged as part of the revolutionary discourse. During the revolutionary period, women's role in Iranian society, especially in terms of political and cultural intervention, was redefined according to the dictates of Sharia law, with additional interpretations from the rising clerical class. The new definitions of womanhood were intended to sever all alliances with Western definitions of gender, which had been introduced and cultivated during the reign of the Shah. This discourse became a chorus in the early 1980s, with contradictory secular and Islamic concepts and analyses competing, mostly focussed on a critique of the Shah's regime and its Western supporters. The proposed solution was to unify women's roles under Shiate ideology.

The regime's emphasis on cultural independence and the power of Islamic models of independence and progress determined the ways in which the revolutionary discourse of gender was developed. The new, 'authentic Muslim', militant Iranian woman was con-

structed out of many forces and activities, including the participation of women in government, the revolutionary demands on gender identity (chador, etc), the gendered symbols of the Revolution, such as active participation in demonstrations, and the gender-oriented addresses of women revolutionaries. Once in power, the governing body of the Islamic Republic implemented radical reforms based on the arguments that women and men are created differently and are suitable for different roles in their social and private lives. By c.1981, the ruling government could justify many newly-implemented reforms that led to gender inequality, while conversely offering women roles that were not available to them under the Shah.

The new Islamic way of life initially attracted a great number of women because it promised to make their lives more meaningful, by giving them a new direction. During the transition period from late 1979 through 1980, religious characterizations of femininity became heroic models of strength and virtue for a population of women hovering uneasily between tradition and modernity. If the model of the perfect woman was none other than Fatemeh, daughter of the Prophet, who, surrounded by other important female figures of the formative period of Islam such as Zeynab who had fought alongside her brother Imam Hossein at the most defining battle in the history of Shiism in the city of Karbala in seventh century, then the 'new woman' was nothing if not a fighter. Fatemeh, and her daughter Zeynab, both examples of courage and sacrifice, were proposed as the heroic models through whom Iranian women in the 1980s would attempt to solve the tensions and ambiguities that had pervaded their lives during the reign of the Shah. The opponents of the Shah within the clergy were cognizant of the fact that their ideology could not take root without the active participation of women. Hence, in many instances they concentrated their rhetoric on various contentious social issues, which had, in the pre-revolutionary era, been areas for social intervention by women. With Akbar Nazemi's photographs we are introduced to images of militant Iranian women fighting for the revolution in the early days of the uprising. In images such as "Woman with Bloody Hands" Nazemi provides for the viewer a startling and vivid depiction of the social atmosphere of Tehran during this intense period. The woman at the focal point of this image, with her fierce expression, represents the agonized revolt of a people who had lost faith in the dominant power structures of the state, a society feverishly searching for coherence and identity. "Woman with Radio" and "Woman with Flyers" show the participation of women in the highly crucial task of communicating early pro-revolutionary messages. Moments such as the ones captured in these images were instrumental in the production of a discourse of social dissent, where people learned, perhaps for the first time, to speak and mobilize against their government.

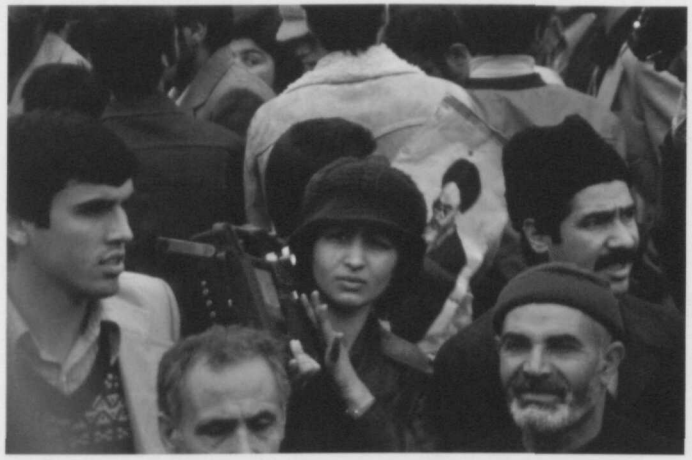
Images such as "Revolutionary Women" illustrate the opening of opportunities in pre-revolutionary uprisings for women to take centre stage in the debates and

سیاسی - نظامی با امپریالیسم

early struggles that led to the toppling of the Shah's regime. As resentment against the Shah grew stronger, Iranian society became ready for the emergence of a new leader. During the course of the revolution, Iranian women participated in the establishment of a religious leadership, because, as Homa Hoodfar has explained in her book, their religious identity provided them with powerful roles of social intervention as political actors, Islamic warriors, and as agents of the construction of Islamic society. Their large-scale participation in the revolution was a fight for freedom and images such as Nazemi's "Women Getting Ready for a Demonstration" *(see p. 48)* and "Supporters of the Revolution" sum up the critical record of women's participation in a collective body. Unlike the stereotype of the submissive Islamic woman, often portrayed by Western media today, by wearing the veil and turning to the personal ethics of Islam, Iranian women gained a type of power in the course of the revolution, similar to the collective empowerment that was channeled through anti-imperialist slogans. By wearing the veil, women, religious and non-religious were actually sympathizing with social change and asserting a regained nationalist, religious identity. Moreover, as Hoodfar reminds us, during the later periods of the revolution, new patterns of dress and public presentation forged a sense of much-needed unity. The projection of a heroic Muslim female figure, as a unifying symbol, mobilized great numbers of women from a wide range of economic, political and religious beliefs.

During the period leading up to the unrest that started in mid-1978, the ideas of "Westoxication" or "Weststruckness" seemed to explain all the problems of the nation. It could be argued that the nexus of this discourse was the social role of women and, more specifically, on the female body. It was widely contended, at the time, and explained by Afsaneh Najabadi, that once the women of the country went through a type of detoxification, the nation as a whole could embark on the right path. Interestingly, the various conceptions of such paths that were, circulating in public debates at that time were not all strictly based on religion. As Deniz Kandiyoti writes, the domain of Islam was vast and the boundaries between modernity and modesty were difficult to define.

The continuum of Islamic politics, ranging from fundamentalist positions all the way to modernist reformism, added much complexity to a nation ready to revolt and fight for its identity. There were many partisan groups who claimed their brand of Islam to be the true Islam. "With such diverse definitions of 'essential Islam', how does one arrive at the dominance of one on the basis



Previous Spread

Supporters of the Revolution

Autumn, 1978

Opposite Page

Revolutionary Woman

Autumn, 1978

Woman with Radio

Autumn, 1978

Woman with Bloody Hands

February, 1979

of its doctrinal position?" As further described by Kandiyoti, the clear emergence of one fundamentalist ideology above others in post-revolutionary Iran was made possible by the widely-held belief that imperial domination was achieved through the undermining of religion and the religious way of life. The fundamentalist position characteristic of those who eventually formed the leadership of the Islamic Republic presented itself as the most uncompromising stance against Iran's enemies and therefore the most thoroughly committed to the values and hopes which had fueled the revolution. This fundamentalist position promoted the role of women in the society as mothers and wives bearing an important responsibility for the moral health, and therefore, the political fate of the country. The exemplary model of Fatemeh and her place in the Iranian conception of a national identity were perfectly adapted to the rhetoric of the fundamentalist clergy, for whom the narratives surrounding the lives of the central figures of Shia Islam were historical mainstays.

Farideh Farhi has pointed out that redefinitions of gender are frequently central to political and cultural change and the Islamic state in Iran took this very seriously. During the period leading up to the revolution in Iran, veiling came to symbolize an element of power and autonomy, which has been described by Middle Eastern scholars such as El Guidie as a vehicle for resistance. The idea that women had lost honor during the Shah's era was a common one. The unveiled, educated and employed woman came to symbolize Westernization as well as being identified as the medium through which imperialism could affect Iranian culture. As a result, women showed resistance against the Shah by wearing the hijab on the street. This became a powerful symbol of opposition to Western decadence. Nikki Keddie has described how some students who wore the new costume or the chador were genuinely religious and others wished to simply stress their protest against the regime. The creation of a model of Islamic womanhood as a political project of Islamitization has been attempted in various parts of the world. As in Iran, in Algeria the hijab was used as a tool of resistance during the Algerian revolution. Val Moghadam explains that in Algeria, as well as in Iran, the Islamists felt that their genuine cultural identity had been distorted by Westernization.

However, the mandatory veiling that came with the establishment of the Islamic Republic was an unexpected and very substantial loss of rights for women. When the law was challenged by women in Iran, the Islamic regime argued, according to Afsaneh Najmabadi, that purifying the social atmosphere of the old corrupt practices had, for the first time, made it possible for the majority of Iranian women to find meaningful social involvement without demeaning themselves by becoming exposed to non-Muslim practices. This new definition of women's social place, which created a new identity for women under the Islamic regime, was at first confronted by intense protest. The dismay after the revolution led to a five-day demonstration

in March 1979. Women demanded a greater voice in the government, equal wages for equal work, the right to choose what to wear, and the preservation of the Family Protection Laws. On March 10th 1979, the *New York Times* reported that fifteen thousand unveiled and some veiled women walked off their jobs to take part in these demonstrations. Elize Sansarian writes that in only a few instances were they supported by a small sympathetic group of men. These demonstrations were not covered by Iranian national radio and television. In fact, the director of national radio and television, in support of the Islamic Republic and its political agenda, organized a counter-demonstration of 100,000 people. In December 1979 at the Conference of the Unity of Women, activists voiced their concerns for the second time as a collective unit. But after a protracted struggle they were left with little hope for improvement. Now, women were assigned second-class citizenship through the Islamic criminal code. Many important laws were changed for the worse but the most significant of the changes was the 1979 abrogation of the Family Protection Law, which had only been legislated in 1967 and improved in 1974. The law was rendered null and void, which effectively denied women the right to divorce while re-establishing men's unlimited right of divorce.

The post-revolutionary period was a time of intense debate over the newly implemented gender laws. During the Revolution, the main boundary in relation to gender was drawn between the Iranian nation and the imperialist culture, and the revolutionary discourse reaffirmed a cultural identity in relation to gender contrasting with a Western one. After the Revolution, the struggle for defining gender relations was replaced by a new fight, a fight not against an Imperialist power but for an Islamic society that restores and guarantees women's' rights. This has given rise to a visible and unique feminist movement in Iran, the origins of which are captured in Akbar Nazemi's photographs of the revolution ■

Some of the ideas in this essay rely on writing by some of the many people who have researched gender struggles in modern Iran. Works cited in this essay are:

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Streets of Revolution

Asef Bayat

The Revolution On 11 February 1979, Tehran radio announced the victory of the Iranian revolution with feverish jubilation, thus heralding the end of a 2500-year-old monarchy.[1] A tremendous mood of ecstasy overtook the populace who poured into the streets *en mass*. Young people danced, and women milled through the crowd handing out candies and sweet drinks, *sharbat*. Vehicles sounded their horns in unison, beaming their lights as they drove up and down the main streets, which only days before had witnessed bloody battles between the revolutionaries and the imperial army.

It was in these same streets that Akbar Nazemi's perceptive lens captured some of the most arresting images of the revolution in Iran. In interesting ways, his keen camera helps us 'read' some aspects of this tremendous political turning point. Indeed the common thematic images of great political turning points are well represented in Nazemi's brilliant snap shots – the sea of people rallying in public squares, the burning streets, comrades carrying wounded revolutionaries, the sober yet nervous expression of soldiers, and of course falling statues and the breaking of prison gates. They all represent the 'street politics' of exceptional junctures, common features of many great revolutions. But what about the specifics? What distinguishes one revolution from another? In what way, then, was the Iranian revolution a distinct happening? And how can we decipher its particularities? We can do so only by reading it in its temporal or historical dimensions.

In Iran, the victory day was the culmination of over eighteen months of mass demonstrations, violent

Demonstration: Two Million Participants
Winter, 1979

confrontations, massive industrial actions, a general strike, and many political maneuverings. Yet the genesis of the revolution went far back, indeed it was rooted in the structural changes that had been underway since the 1930s, when the country began undergoing a process of modernization. It was accelerated after the CIA-engineered coup in 1953 that had toppled nationalist prime minister, Mohammad Mosaddeq, and reinstated the Shah. These structural changes engendered many conflicts, the chief among them being the tension between socio-economic development and political autocracy.[2] In this midst, state inefficiency, corruption and a sense of injustice among many sectors of the Iranian society accelerated political conflict in the country.

The modernization policy and economic change, initiated by the state under both Reza Shah (1925-1946) and his son, the late Shah Muhamad Reza Pahlavi, gave rise to the growth of new social forces, to the dismay of the traditional social groups. By the late 1970s, a large and well-to-do modern middle class, a modern youth, public women, an industrial working class, in addition to a new poor consisting of slum and squat dwellers, dominated the social scene. With the exception of the latter, these represented the beneficiaries of the economic development, enjoying relatively high status and comparable economic rewards. However, the persistence of the Shah's old-age autocracy prevented these thriving social layers from participating in the political process. This angered them. At the very same time, the old social groups – a segment of the traditional bazaaries, the old urban middle strata, the clergy and other adherents to Islamic institutions – were also frustrated by the modernization strategy as it undermined their economic interests and social status.

With all the conventional institutional channels closed to the expression of discontent as a result of repression, the populace was increasingly alienated from the state. In the meantime, corruption, inefficiency, a sense of injustice, and a feeling of moral outrage characterized the social psychology of many Iranians. So, during the tense years of the 1970s, at the height of the Shah's authoritarian rule and remarkable economic development, many people (except perhaps the upper class and landed peasantry) seemed dissatisfied, albeit for different reasons. But all were united in blaming the Shah and his western allies for that state of affairs. It is not surprising, then, that the language of dissent and protests was largely anti-monarchy, anti-imperialist, Third Worldist, and even nationalist, turning in the end to religious discourse.

The opportunity for popular mobilization arrived with what we used to call the "Carterite breeze" (*Nasseem-e Carteri*). President Carter's human rights policy in the late 1970s forced the Shah to offer a political space for a limited degree of expression. This expression, in the process, was cumulatively built up and, in the course of less than two years, swept aside the monarchy. It all

began with a limited relaxation on censorship, allowing some literary/intellectual activities (in the Goethe Institute and in Universities in Tehran) and public gatherings by political Islamists (in Oquba Mosque). It continued with the distribution by the intellectuals and liberal politicians of critical open letters to high-level officials. In this midst, an insulting article in a daily paper, *Ettilaat*, against Ayatollah Khomeini triggered a demonstration in the shrine city of Qum, in which some demonstrators were killed. To commemorate these deaths, a large-scale demonstration took place in the Azeri city of Tabriz in the north. This marked the beginning of a chain of events which formed a nationwide, revolutionary, protest movement in which diverse segments of the population, modern and traditional, religious and secular, men and women, massively participated, and in which the ulama came to exert its leadership. But why did the clergy in particular lead the revolution?

For over twenty-five years of autocratic rule, since the 1953 coup, all the effective secular political parties and non-governmental organizations had been removed or destroyed. The US-led coup crushed both the nationalist and communist movements; trade unions were infiltrated by the secret police, SAVAK; publications went through strict censorship and there remained hardly any effective NGOs.[3] The main organized political dissent came from the underground guerrilla organizations, Marxist Fedaian and radical Islamic Mujahedin, whose activities were limited to isolated armed operations.[4] Student activism also remained restricted either to campus politics inside the country or to those carried out by Iranian students abroad. In short, the secular groupings, while extremely dissatisfied, were organizationally decapitated.

Unlike the secular forces, however, the clergy had the comparative advantage of possessing invaluable institutional capacity, including its own hierarchical order, with over 10,000 mosques, Husseiniehs, Huwzehs (informal and ad hoc religious gatherings), and associations which acted as vital means of communication among the revolutionary contenders. Young Islamists, both girls and boys, along with young clerics, linked the institution of the ulama to the people. A hierarchical order facilitated unified decision-making, and a systematic flow of both order and information ensured discipline; higher-level decisions in the mosques were disseminated to both the activists and the general public. In short, beyond the lack of a credible alternative, this *institutional capacity* and a remarkable generality and thus *ambiguity* in the message of the clergy guaranteed the ulama's leadership. What maintained that leadership was the relatively rapid conclusion of revolutionary events – there was little time for debate and dissent, for a social movement to emerge, or for a possible alternative leadership to develop. Thus, the nascent Islamic movement of the 1970s rapidly transformed into a parallel state. 'Islamization', then, unfolded largely *after* the victory of the revolution, and was enforced primarily from above by the new Islamic

state. It was manifested in the establishment of clerical rule, the Islamic legal system, new cultural practices and institutions, and in the moral surveillance of the public space.

A Street Named "Revolution" Clearly revolutions are not merely the exceptional junctures of insurrections and regime change, of "moments of madness", as they have been termed. Nor are revolutionaries just the visible street actors. Millions work on the backstage of these highly complex dramas: workers in factories, landless peasants in farms, students in schools, employees in offices and leaders often behind the doors. Yet it is ultimately in the 'streets', public spaces par excellence, that collective challenge against invincible power-holders is galvanized, where the destiny of political movements is often decided. In other words, beyond the temporal component, revolutions also possess an inescapable spatial dimension. Thus, in addition to thinking about why revolutions take place, who participates in them, or how the events unfold, we should also be thinking of *where* they actually take place. More specifically, why do certain spaces/places, more than others, become the sites of acts and expressions of public discontent?

The Iranian revolution was primarily an urban movement. Massive demonstrations, protests and clashes took place overwhelmingly in the large cities, particularly in Tehran.[5] It is true that many rural inhabitants, farmers and landless peasants were also mobilized, yet they would go to the *cities* to communicate their collective discontent. The idea of cities as centers of discontent is perhaps as old as the cities themselves. As the seat of concentrated wealth, power, people and needs, cities are also sites of amassed contradictions and social conflicts.[6] Thus, by the eve of the 1979 revolution, the Iranian capital, Tehran, featured just such a contradictory site. With a population of some five million, Tehran exhibited a remarkable and perhaps unique class (economic, social and cultural) hierarchy. Located on a north-to-south sloping landscape, the geographical pyramid of the city reflected its social and economic hierarchy. To the far north, the highest district was the site of the most affluent part of the population and the most opulent neighborhoods, crowned by the royal palace standing at the very summit of the city. The middle areas, from east to west, housed the relatively large middle classes, the state employees, professionals and small business families. And the poor (new rural migrants and other strata of working people) were pushed away to seek shelters in lowest lands of the city, in slums and squatter settlements with few urban amenities and services[7] *(see Map, opposite)*. Indeed, the inequality of the capital embodied the prevailing social, economic and political order of the nation as a whole. Yet, beyond its profound socio-economic disparity, the spatial dimension of Tehran, its strategic streets, squares and institutions, offered an additional element for the expression of contentious politics.

Revolution Street
Enghelab Street and Enghelab Square

Shayad Tower

Ferdowsi Square

Khiaban – Kargar

Mehrabad Airport

Map of Greater Tehran

Shahyad Tower
(Renamed Liberty Tower)
Autumn, 1978

An Early Demonstration
in Southwest Tehran
March, 1978

University of Tehran Main
Campus Public Entrance
November, 1978

Among the 'revolutionary thoroughfares' such as Takht-e Jamshid Avenue, Khiaban Kargar, Maidan Zhaleh, a long east-west street which, appropriately, was renamed 'revolution street' (Khiaban-e Enghelab), stood as the most contentious space in the nation. It was largely here that Nazemi's camera recorded some of the most remarkable images of the revolutionary struggles. I can recall how as young radicals, my friends and I would rush to that particular street to collect news, demonstrate, attend rallies, obtain literature, participate in discussions, or meet with comrades. It was there that most clashes also occurred both during and after the revolution, so much so that it was virtually imagined as the spatial core of the revolution. Why did this particular street attract so many contenders? What made it a distinct space of contention? Again, by their very nature, streets in general represent the modern urban theater of contention *par excellence*. We need only to remember the role the "street" has played in such monumental political turning points as the French Revolution, nineteenth-century labor movements, anti-colonial struggles, the anti-Vietnam war movement in the US, the velvet revolutions in Eastern Europe, and perhaps, the current global anti-war movement. The street is the chief locus of politics for ordinary people, those who are structurally absent from the centers of institutional power. Simultaneously social and spatial, constant and current, streets are a place of both the familiar and the strange, the visible and the vocal, representing a complex entity wherein sentiments and outlooks are formed, spread and expressed in a remarkably unique fashion. The street is the physical place where collective dissent may be both expressed and produced. The spatial element in street politics distinguishes it from strikes or sit-ins, because streets are not only where people protest, but also where they *extend* their protest beyond their immediate circle. For this reason, in the street, one finds not only marginalised elements – the poor and unemployed – but also actors with some institutional power, such as students, workers, women, state employees and shopkeepers whose march in streets is intended to extend their contention. For a street march not only brings together the 'invitees', but also involves the 'strangers' who might espouse similar, real or imagined, grievances. It is this epidemic potential, and not simply the disruption or uncertainty caused by riots, that threatens the authorities, who exert a pervasive power over public spaces – with police patrols, traffic regulation, spatial division – as a result. The police tactic of encircling demonstrators in a corner is devised to subvert the potential of *extension* of sentiments to the passers-by.

Beyond these general features, 'Revolution Street' in Tehran in particular possessed its own unique sociology. The magnificent presence of the Tehran University campus (established in 1934) on the stretch of several blocks housing over 20,000 students surely contributed to the militancy of the area. Across the university compound on the opposite side of the street there

کارگران
انبارهای عمومی ایران

BIJAN

were hundreds of bookshops and publishing houses which had uniquely turned these few blocks into the intellectual epicenter of the nation. This exclusive book-bazaar, the hang-out place of Iran's intellectual window shoppers, offered not only academic materials, but also underground revolutionary literature. Like the densely packed old bazaars, this book market assumed its own distinct identity and had a solid internal network – a place where news was spread and rumors were verified. During the revolution, many of these bookshops in Revolution Street sheltered the fugitive street protestors running away from the police. The secular, leftist, aura of the place and its goods stood in stark contrast to the more religious but far less spectacular districts around southern Tehran's traditional grand Bazaar, which served as the political hub of earlier, 1950s and 1960s, political activity. Surely Tehran University did contribute to the politicization of the area. But perhaps more important factors were involved.

In the earlier periods, e.g., the early 1950s, political crowds would congregate not around Tehran University, but primarily in the grand Baharestan Plaza which embraced the Parliament located in south Tehran. By the late 1970s, the social and spatial transformation of Tehran had pushed the physical and 'political center' of the city further north, to 'Revolution Street'. Thus, located half way between the north and south, this street carved the city into two distinct geographical and social universes. In a sense, it signified a virtual 'green line' demarcating the 'affluent north' ('bala-ye shahr') and 'poor south' ('pain-e shahr') – a distinction that was unequivocally registered in the popular imaginary and language. Not only the intersection of the rich and poor zones, the street was also the meeting point of the urban-rural. In the far-eastern end of the street, roughly the edge of the city, stood the massive Shahyad Square (Liberation Square, after the revolution) which together with its neighboring Reza Shah Square (later, Revolution Square) gathered the largest revolutionary crowds in pre-(and post) revolution Iran. As a hub of inter-city bus and taxi terminals, these two squares contained the crucial transportation networks linking the capital city to the nearby villages and provincial towns. A traveler to Tehran would disembark, first, in these very grand roundabouts. Here, the plebian visitors would rest on the pavement, eat in the cheap street food stands or tea houses, stroll around, buy gifts from street vendors, get the news of the town, and perhaps see demonstrations before exiting the city. In the absence of a free press and media, it was from places like this that the travelers would spread the news of the revolution. In totality then, Revolution Street represented a unique juncture of the rich and the poor, the elite and the ordinary, the intellectual and layman, the urban and the rural. It was a remarkable political grid, intersecting the social, the spatial, and the intellectual, bringing together not only diverse social groups, but also institutions of mobilization (the University) and the dissemination of knowledge and news (the rows of bookstores).

Thus the first incidents of collective protest during 1977 emerged from 'Revolution Street'. Students' demonstrations for free speech following ten evenings of literary-political rallies at the Goethe Institute in the autumn catalyzed a chain of street mass protests, riots and military confrontations which eventually toppled the Monarchy. The monumental victory day did not mark the end of street action. For after the revolution, new episodes of street politics with more complex configurations unfolded. Yet Revolution Street, which figures so prominently in Akbar Nazemi's photographs, continues to maintain its centrality in Iran's geography of contention even to this day ■

Previous Spread
Demonstrators Displaying Images of Revolutionary Heroes
Winter, 1979

Construction Site Flooded with Protestors
Autumn, 1978

Flower Bearers Greeting Ayatollah Talegani
March, 1978

Demonstration by Communist Party Members
Autumn, 1978

1. These sections draw heavily on my "Revolution without Movement, Movement without Revolution: Comparing Islamic Activism in Iran and Egypt", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 42, no. 1, January 1998.

2. See Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, Princeton University Press, 1983; N. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution*, 1981, Yale University Press; Mohsen Milani, *The Making of the Islamic Revolution in Iran*, Boulder, Westvew Press, 1986; Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, London, Penguin Books, 1979.

3. On the anti-democratic nature of the Shah's regime and its political implications see Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, London: Penguin, 1977 (on SAVAK activities); Habib Lajevardi, *Labor Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, Syracuse University Press, 1985; Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran*, London, Macmillan, 1982.

4. On guerrilla activities in Iran see Fred Halliday, *Iran: Dictatorship and Development*, London: Penguin Books, 1979; Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Tow Revolutions*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982.

5. See Asef Bayat, *Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1997.

6. For an excellent discussion see Manuel Castells, *Cities and Grassroots*, University of California Press, 1983.

7. See Asef Bayat, *Street Politics*, pp. 25-26

گالری لاله

The Revolution

Nikki R. Keddie

Secular and Guerilla Opposition Forces The continuing growth of malaise and discontent among most sections of the Iranian population as despotism and repression increased in the 1970s, promised political and economic decentralization failed to materialize, and economic difficulties grew in 1976 and 1977, despite huge oil income, led to an outbreak of opposition beginning in 1977. The appearance of open opposition to the Shah would likely have occurred soon in any case, but its form and timing were to some degree a consequence of the human-rights policy enunciated by President Carter, inaugurated in January 1977, which implied that countries guilty of basic human-rights violations might be deprived of American arms or aid. The influence of the human-rights policy was not due to any significant American pressures, however, but to the belief by both the Shah and the opposition that the United States might act for human rights. This belief helped give some Iranians the courage to circulate open letters and petitions in the hope that they might be heeded and would surely not be as severely repressed as before. United States diplomats and policy makers, however, refused significantly to pressure the Shah on human rights. The human-rights questions occasionally discussed with the Shah were arrests and torture, not liberalization or civil rights, and no threats of reduced support were made. The sporadic mention by official Americans of human rights helped make the Shah waver in his confidence regarding

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Boy Shouting Slogans During Martial Law
Autumn, 1978

American backing and hence in his response to the opposition, but this was more a sign of his mentality than of any actual threat. The liberal opposition was in part encouraged to activity by Carter's words, even though they were backed by few deeds.

There may have been additional reasons, rarely mentioned, for the Shah to tolerate criticisms in 1977 that he would not have allowed earlier. Among them was that he knew he was ill with cancer, and that the throne might pass to his minor son, with regency going to Queen Farah, according to a provision he had initiated. In the fall of 1977, as on some previous and later occasions, there was a period during which pictures of the Shah's activities were noticeably absent from TV and the newspapers (presumably because of illness; when he did reappear he looked bad). Instead, one saw frequent pictures of the queen engaging in a series of public-minded activities throughout Iran. At the time of the queen's birthday, photos of the queen alone (without the father-son members of the universal trinity) were for the first time plastered all over Iran's cities; and, extraordinarily, they were severe, unglamorous photos, suggesting a woman of determination who could rule. It seems logical to attribute some easing of dictatorship and of ironclad restraints on open opposition in 1977 to the Shah's recognition that his designated successors would not be able to start off their rule with his type of strong hand, but would have to enlist some cooperation from various elements of the population, including an increasingly vocal opposition. As the crisis progressed, some of the Shah's weakness may have been due to his cancer and medication, which either included strong tranquilizers or had the same effect. Also, reforms in the judiciary and in reducing torture may have been as much due to pressures from world opinion, particularly Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists, which began before the Carter administration, as to any United States action.

Interviews and statements do indicate, however, that professionals and intellectuals were determined to utilize the American human-rights policy to wedge an opening by publishing their grievances, hoping to widen the crack in order to change government policies. In the spring and summer of 1977 several petitions and open letters were circulated. The fact that these letters came from non-"extremist" types – neither the militants of the religious opposition nor those on the left – should not be exaggerated, as it sometimes is, to imply that the "moderates" started the revolution and the "extremists" took it over. Radical petitions from either religious or Marxist elements could only circulate in greater secrecy, but this does not mean that these groups were inactive in 1977; and, on the other hand, the moderates were relatively too weak among the masses to keep leadership of the opposition.

Among the major 1977 letters were: a two-page open letter to the Shah in June signed by leaders of the revived National Front—men whose association with

the Front dated back to Mosaddeq: Karim Sanjabi, Shapour Bakhtiar, and Daryush Foruhar. The letter criticized the failure of the Shah's reforms and particularly the disregard for human rights, enshrined in both the Iranian constitution and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It attacked shortages, inflation, and the squandering of oil, and called for fulfillment of the constitution, release of political prisoners, freedom of the press, and free elections. The letter circulated widely, and was especially influential among the new middle classes, whose reformist constitutionalist trends it voiced. Shortly after this letter another was sent to Prime Minister Hoveyda signed by forty well-known writers and professors demanding an end to censorship, free meetings, and recognition for the Writers' Guild, which had been suppressed some years before.

In the same period a group of lawyers began a series of protests; in May they had protested rushed changes in the judicial system, and in July, 64 lawyers demanded an end to special courts and strict observance of law without constant encroachment by the executive upon the judiciary. After a further letter protesting the judicial system in September, 143 lawyers issued a manifesto in October stating their intention of forming a Jurists Association, which was to monitor observance of human rights. Finally, a series of poetry readings with political content at the Irano-German Institute in Tehran in October attracted unprecedented crowds and became virtual antiregime demonstrations.

One influence of the Carter human-rights program was probably in encouraging intellectuals to send and circulate (although they could not publish) their protests, which in the past would probably have involved jail sentences. Now they brought no immediate punishment, and although such direct criticisms were not published in the press or elsewhere, they did circulate from hand to hand and abroad. At the same time as these intellectuals' protests circulated, pressure from foreign human-rights groups like Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists, and from Iranian guerilla, religious, and other opposition groups kept up, while economic and social problems became increasingly acute. The Shah thus made some gestures toward public opinion; in April 1977 for the first time a trial on antiregime charges was open to the public, the International Red Cross was permitted to inspect twenty prisons, torture was significantly reduced, and new laws, which were only partially improvements, were promulgated regarding military tribunals (before which political prisoners were tried). The writings of Ali Shariati, newly freed from censorship, now achieved vast sale.

In the face of growing public discontent and economic problems the Shah removed Prime Minister Hoveyda in July 1977, but made him minister of court. The new prime minister, Jamshid Amuzegar, was a technocrat with high governmental experience as minister of interior; in economics and oil; and as leader of the official Rastakhiz party; his appointment indicated no

basic change in political policy but at best a hope that a man with a better economic background could help solve Iran's growing economic problems. In fact, his attempts to cool off inflation and the overheated economy without reducing the huge sacrosanct military budget resulted in mass unemployment and other problems. Construction jobs in particular, which began falling in 1976, tumbled further and discontent increased.

In November 1977, the Shah visited Washington, where he faced large hostile demonstrations; these were shown on Iranian television and made a great impression. Carter returned the visit, along with high praise of the Shah, in December. It seems likely that, as the Iranian opposition believed, in return for Iran's moderating its stand on oil prices, the United States guaranteed continued arms supplies, diplomatic support, and a downplaying of the human rights issue. In December Iran backed Saudi Arabia's oil-price-freeze policy, while American officials from then on played down human rights in Iran more than before. From the end of 1977 on, also, there were numerous incidents of "mysterious" beatings and bombings of opposition leaders and protesters, generally attributed to the regime via SAVAK.

Once the door was opened to protest, however, it was not to be shut. There had already been far more protest in the years since the 1963–64 crackdown than a reading of the world press would lead one to suppose. Workers' strikes were quite frequent, even though opposed by officially supervised trade unions and confronted by threats of force. Much of the regime's policy of favoring workers in large factories and industries with higher wages and bonuses was based on fear of a labor movement, even though a nationwide movement did not materialize, owing to strict SAVAK surveillance.

At least as great a political threat were students, both at home and abroad. Most students were too young and idealistic to have been co-opted by the regime, and they had many grievances. Within their lecture halls they could sense the strain between those technical or politically harmless new ideas they were permitted access to and the many others their teachers could not voice nor their booksellers sell. (Books in Persian by Marxists and Iranian oppositionists were forbidden sale, even in the few cases when they were published, and there remained from Reza Shah's days a law against any advocacy of "collectivism" or "socialism.") Some teachers were dismissed and others were warned or suspended. This aroused opposition from students. With rapidly expanding universities and a large influx of poorly educated secondary students, many from rural areas, academic and economic frustrations also grew. Also, the great majority of university applicants failed to get in, and those who did were often dissatisfied with academic, housing, and educational conditions, as well as political ones. Hence there were frequent major student protests and strikes over the years, particularly in the main cities, and many campuses remained

closed for months at a time. Although for years student protests tended to be concentrated in campus areas, once the national protest movement broadened in 1977–78, students had the habits, inclination, and experience that helped make them important participants in the revolutionary movement. A variety of political persuasions were represented on campuses, most notably Marxist groups and religious leftists. There was a trend among some women students in the 1970s to return to the chador or to adopt a new costume, with a large headscarf covering hair and forehead, a knee-length smock, and loose trousers, all in plain neutral colors, a costume that has become a kind of uniform for the women of the Mojahedin-e Khalq. Some students who wore the new costume or the chador were genuinely religious; others wished to stress their protest against the regime.

In the 1970s probably over one hundred thousand Iranian students were abroad at a time, and many of them opposed the Iranian government. The strongest oppositional group was the Confederation of Iranian Students, which grew out of earlier varied Iranian student groups abroad but coalesced in 1960 with considerable leftist and Tudeh party influence. Tudeh popularity among students dropped with the growing rapprochement between the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and Iran in the later 1960s (the Soviets built Iran's first steel mill and provided small arms, and in the same period economic relations with Eastern Europe developed). As Soviet policy toward Iran became conciliatory, the pro-Soviet Tudeh party lost much of its appeal to Iranian leftist oppositionists, including students. Some turned to a pro-Chinese group that split off from the main Tudeh party, although this group lost much of its credibility as the Chinese too, in the 1970s after the Shah recognized the People's Republic, drew up trade and diplomatic agreements with Iran. As time went on the Confederation of Iranian Students became increasingly radicalized and included numerous admirers of the small guerilla groups operating in Iran, the most important of which were the Marxist Feda'iyan-e Khalq and the Islamic leftist Mojahedin-e Khalq.

In the 1970s Muslim students' associations, sometimes entirely Iranian and sometimes from different Muslim countries, also became as important abroad as they were in Iran. Some, as in France, had ties with groups using the name of the National Front and venerated both Mosaddeq and Khomeini. Islamically oriented lay leaders of the 1978–79 Revolution were often involved in, or leaders of, such movements, including notably Abolhasan Bani Sadr, Ibrahim Yazdi, and Sadeq Ghotbzadeh. Through their propaganda, Iranian student groups abroad were among the first to awaken some in the West to the activities of the Shah and SAVAK and to help enlist Western support and pressure against human rights violations. Although some ex-student oppositionists at home and abroad were bought off by official offers of good jobs, and others were scared off from returning by penalties for belonging to the

Previous spread
National Security Vehicle on Fire
Autumn, 1978

Women Getting Ready for a Demonstration
Winter, 1979

After the Victory. Transferring Arms to Ayatollah Khomeini's First Residence at Refah School
February 12, 1979

Confederation and other activities abroad, still others continued their oppositional work before and during the Revolution both in Iran and abroad.

More important than their small numbers and few pre-1978 successes would indicate were the guerilla groups in Iran, recently studied by E. Abrahamian. According to him, guerilla tactics were an outgrowth of the regime's bloody suppression of the 1963 riots, which made many think that open protests were sure to be violently suppressed. Militant students formed small secret groups, which translated and studied works by Mao, Guevara, and Fanon and discussed guerilla tactics. Three of these groups merged in 1970–71 under a name usually shortened as the Feda'iyan-e Khalq, whose best known theorist Bizhan Jazani was killed in prison in 1975; Hamid Ashraf, the leader who longest eluded the police, was killed in Tehran in 1976. Critical of Maoists and especially the pro-Soviet Tudeh, they hoped to create nuclei of armed struggle on the then popular model of Che Guevara and Regis Debray. They planned to spend a year in the mountains and forests of the Caspian province of Gilan, well situated for guerilla warfare and having a post–World War I history of such struggle. Two of their sympathizers were arrested, however, and the rest feared their plans might be revealed under torture. Hence they hastened Iran's first major guerilla operation in February 1971, attacking a gendarmerie post in Siahkal village and killing three gendarmes. Failing to find their two colleagues, they escaped into the Gilan mountains.

The Shah reacted strongly, sending his brother to head a large well equipped force which, after a manhunt that left several soldiers and thirty guerillas dead, captured eleven Feda'iyan. Ten were shot and the other died of torture. Despite the military failure, the Feda'iyan and other oppositionists looked to this day, which showed it was possible to shake the regime, as the beginning of a successful antiShah movement. In the following weeks the government confirmed the importance of the Siahkal incident by arresting oppositionists, spreading anti-left propaganda, and outlawing the Confederation of Iranian Students abroad. Armed robberies, assassinations, and bombings followed, but by late 1976 some Feda'iyan thought that losses from such tactics outweighed gains, given the heavy toll in lives and the lack of mass struggles triggered by their acts, and this minority turned toward the Tudeh party. Both factions kept their weapons, and were able to use these, along with their training and experience, during the Revolution.

The other guerilla group, whose name is shortened to Mojahedin-e Khalq, also originated in the 1960s, but while the Feda'iyan came mostly from the Tudeh party and from Marxists in the National Front, the Mojahedin came mostly from the religious wing of that Front, particularly the Freedom Movement led since 1961 by Mehdi Bazargan and Ayatollah Mahmud Taleqani. The Freedom Movement was intended as a link between Shi'ism and modern ideas, but the government's brutality in 1963 caused some of its younger and more militant activists to leave the Movement and form a secret discussion

group. The leaders of this group changed the Freedom Movement leaders' liberal interpretations of Shi'ism, deciding that true Shi'ism opposed not only despotism but also capitalism, imperialism, and conservative clericalism. As summarized by Abrahamian, one Mojahedin ideologist, Reza'i, argued that the realm of unity (or monotheistic order—*Nezame-e Tauhid*) the Prophet sought was a commonwealth fully united by virtue of being "classless" and striving for the common good as well as by the fact that it worships only one God:

> *Reza'i further argued that the banner of revolt raised by the Shi'i Imams, especially 'Ali, Hassan, and Hussein, was aimed against feudal landlords and exploiting merchant capitalists as well as against usurping Caliphs who betrayed the Nezam-i Towhid. For Reza'i and the Mujahidin it was the duty of all Muslims to continue this struggle to create a 'classless society' and destroy all forms of capitalism, despotism, and imperialism.*
>
> *The Mujahidin summed up their attitude towards religion in these words: "After years of extensive study into Islamic history and Shi'i ideology, our organization has reached the firm conclusion that Islam, especially Shi'ism, will play a major role in inspiring the masses to join the revolution. It will do so because Shi'ism, particularly Hussein's historic act of resistance, has both a revolutionary message and a special place in our popular culture."*

Given these ideas, it was natural for the Mojahedin to be on good terms with Ali Shariati; although many of their theories preceded Shariati's public lectures and writings, it seems likely that each helped inspire the other. A series of individual acts of violence from 1971 on resulted in heavy Mojahedin losses via arrests and executions; as with the Feda'iyan, the Mojahedin did not see such individual acts as their ultimate goal but as the only means toward revolution in a period of extreme repression. Most Mojahedin were children of bazaaris or ulama, and came mainly from the physical sciences. The Feda'iyan, largely from modern middle-class backgrounds, included more women than the Mojahedin, drew from the arts and social-science faculties, and included a number of industrial workers.

Some Mojahedin began to study Marxism, and in 1975 a majority of leaders still free in Tehran voted to declare the organization Marxist-Leninist. The transformation is suggested in a letter by Mojtaba Taleqani, son of Ayatollah Taleqani, to his father: "to organize the working class, we must reject Islam, for religion refuses to accept the main dynamic force of history—that of the class struggle. Of course, Islam can play a progressive role, especially in mobilizing the intelligentsia against imperialism. But it is only Marxism that provides a scientific analysis of society and looks toward the exploited classes for liberation." This change caused a major split; most provincial members refused to change ideology, accusing their rivals of murdering one of their leaders and betraying two to the police. The

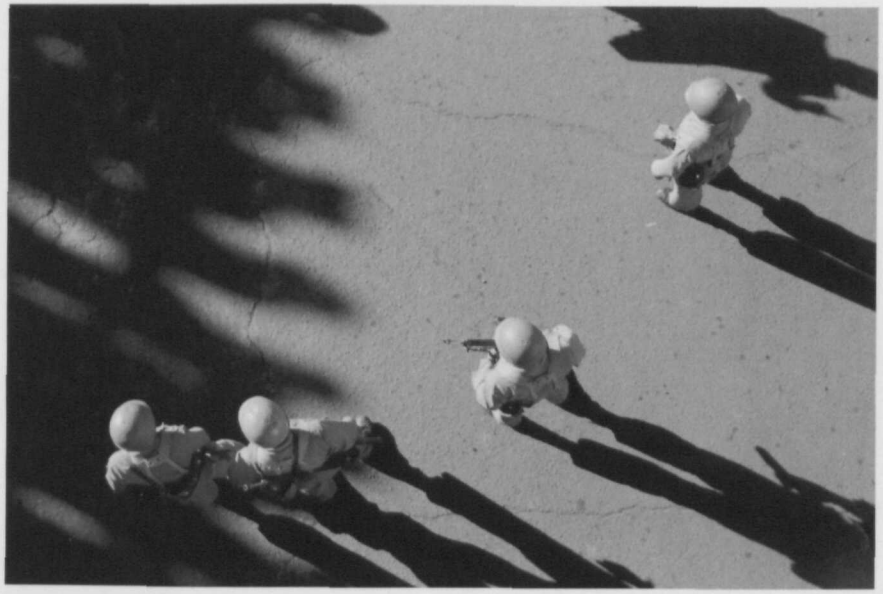
Mojahedin split into two groups, and both continued violent action, but by early 1976, like the Feda'iyan, they had such heavy losses that they switched more to propaganda; the Muslim Mojahedin mainly among students and the Marxist ones among workers. Thus, when revolutionary activities began in late 1977 there were two Mojahedin – Marxist and Muslim; and two Feda'iyan – pro-Tudeh and activist. All had organizations, weapons, underground publications, and revolutionary ideologies, equipping them for important roles in a revolutionary movement. Some had ties to the Palestinian resistance, particularly its left constituents, and this facilitated the entry of weapons from abroad after mid-1978. Although several guerilla actions aroused horror among many – particularly assassinations of Iranian and American military and intelligence figures – there were peaceable Iranian oppositionists who argued that, given the atmosphere of repression, only such acts could indicate the vulnerability of the regime and keep alive hope for its eventual overthrow. It seems likely that the increase in jailings, torture, repression, and censorship in the 1970s was tied to the guerillas' activities, although repression was already strong previously ■

The First Days following the Change of Regime
February 12, 1979

Shayad Tower (Renamed Liberty Tower)
Autumn, 1978

Ayatollah Khomeini's First Public Address
February 1, 1979

BLACK FRIDAY
BLACK FRIDAY
BLACK FRIDAY
BLACK FRIDAY
BLACK FRIDAY
BLACK FRIDAY
هرچه مستدکتر باد بیوند
استادان ودانشجویان



Previous Spread
City Walls used as Newspaper Kiosks
Autumn, 1978

Pro-Shah Demonstration During Bakhtiar's Reign
Autumn, 1978

Martial Law
Autumn, 1978

Federal Banks Being Vandalized
Autumn, 1978

Religious Supporters Destroy Liquor Stores
Winter, 1979

Protestors Attacking a Government Building at 'College Intersection'
Autumn, 1978

Protestors Occupying Buildings Under Construction
Autumn, 1978

Protestors in Tehran
December, 1978

Public Disturbance
November, 1978

Secret Savak Documents Strewn on Street
Autumn, 1978

Gathering. Post-Revolution
Winter, 1979

Transferring Arms to Ayatollah Khomeini's First Residence
February, 1979

Newspaper Seller Displaying Headline, "Shah Left"
January 16, 1979

Following Spread
Victory Days
February, 1979

کیهان
شاه رفت

Biographical Notes

Asef Bayat is a political sociologist who is currently the Academic Director of the International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), and ISIM Chair at the University of Leiden, The Netherlands. He is the author of *Workers And Revolution In Iran* (London, 1987); *Work, Politics And Power* (London and New York, 1991); *Street Politics* (New York, 1998); and *Post-Islamism: Social Movements, Islam And The Challenge Of Democracy* (University of California Press, forthcoming).

Pantea Haghighi is a curator and art historian living in Vancouver. She graduated from the University of British Columbia with a B.A. in Art History and subsequently worked at the Monte Clark Gallery in Vancouver. She is currently pursuing an interdisciplinary M.A. One focus of her research is the role of women in contemporary art practice. This is her first curatorial project for a public art gallery.

Bill Jeffries is Director/Curator at Presentation House Gallery. He was Director/Curator at the Contemporary Art Gallery in Vancouver from 1988 to 1991, and prior to that operated the Coburg Gallery, a commercial photography gallery in Vancouver's Gastown area, from 1983 to 1987.

Nikki R. Keddie is Professor Emerita of History, University of California, Los Angeles. Among her many authored and edited books are "Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892" (London, 1966); "An Islamic Response to Imperialism: Political and Religious Writings of Sayyid Jamal ad-Din "al-Afghani" (Berkeley, 1968); co-edited, "Women in the Muslim World" (Cambridge, MA, 1978); co-edited, "Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender" (New Haven, 1992); "Iran and the Middle East: Resistance and Revolution" (London, 1995), and "Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution" (New Haven, 2003). She received the 2004 Balzan Prize which included a substantial monetary award, half of which was allocated to support research by younger scholars in modern gender studies of the Muslim world.

Akbar Nazemi is a photographer and documentary filmmaker who was born in Tehran in August 1950. He studied in Austria and Germany from 1974 to 1978, at both the Vienna School of Art and the Düsseldorf Academy of Art in Germany. When the Revolution began in July 1978 he returned to Iran. During the Iran-Iraq War he was on the front line of the battlefield, filming and photographing the action. His photographs were published in many newspapers and one became a postage stamp in Iran. He is also a past recipent of the Educational Photography Award in Iran. He came to Vancouver in 1988 with his family. His photographs have been exhibited in over twenty-five exhibitions around the world. Akbar Nazemi has always chosen to work as a freelance artist. He has produced and directed more than sixty television programs and six documentary films.

Please note that the authors' Farsi spelling and place names have been retained within each text and have not been modified for consistancy throughout the book.

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