

LETTER FROM IRAN

DEC. 11

A STORY from the Kennedy years which has the rare quality of being true is that once, when the President was otherwise engaged, Dave Powers, his original guide to the poor Irish of Boston and later a combined companion and jester at the White House, was delegated to kill a few minutes with the Shah of Iran. Subsequently, he was asked how he liked His Imperial Majesty. "Well," Powers said, "he's our kind of Shah."

I was reminded of that story when I saw the Shah a few weeks ago here in Teheran. At that point, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi wasn't anybody's kind of Shah. He received me, as he had on several of my previous visits, in a ballroom on the second floor of the Niavaran Palace, on the northern outskirts of Teheran. He looked pale, spoke in subdued tones, and seemed dwarfed by the vast expanse of the room, with its huge, ornate chandeliers and heavy Empire furniture. He wore a double-breasted suit whose blackness suggested mourning. He started with an apology. He was sorry to have kept me waiting. The American and British Ambassadors had been in to see him. "They tried to cheer me up," he said. "As if there were anything to be cheerful about."

I expressed surprise at—and, indeed, felt some suspicion about—this show of gloom. There had been demonstrations in many parts of the country, and strikes, but Teheran, apart from the university, seemed calm, and the Army was in thorough control. Moreover, the opposition was headed by the Moslem clergy, and they were clearly divided. Surely, I said, the factions could be played off against each other.

"Possibly," the Shah said, shrugging his shoulders in an elaborate show of disbelief.

I pointed out that the leader of the lay opposition, Karim Sanjabi, was due to go to Paris to see the most intransigent of the religious leaders, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The gossip in Teheran was that a compromise deal was in the works. Sanjabi would win Khomeini's blessing for a coalition government. The coalition would make reforms but maintain the monarchy.

The Shah expressed doubt that Khomeini would agree to that. "Certainly not with Sanjabi," he said.

I further noted that, while there was obvious unrest in the country, the Shah himself had lifted the lid by easing up on security and initiating reforms. May-

be all that was required was a slower pace and more publicity for the changes he had made. I mentioned that one of the problems was corruption in the royal family. He had decreed a new code of conduct for royal behavior, but it had not been published. Could I get a copy? The Shah agreed—with a weary air.

If worst came to worst, I went on, there was always the Army. The military was strong, and its leaders were loyal. The Shah said that force had its limitations. "You can't crack down on one block and make the people on the next block behave," he said.

I asked him if the Army leaders realized that. "I hope so," he said. He went on to mention his son and heir, Crown Prince Reza, who, at eighteen, is now an air cadet in Lubbock, Texas. The Shah said that he might not be able to pass all his powers on to his son, but he could at least pass on the throne.

I remarked that I had never seen him so sombre, and asked when the black mood had begun.

"Sometime in summer," he said.

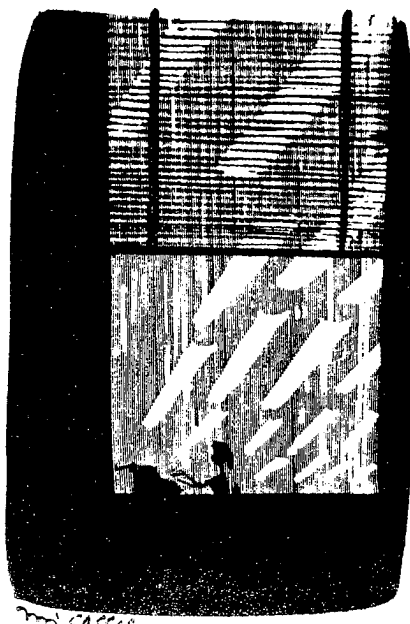
"Any special reason?"

"Events," he said.

I intimated that maybe he was overdoing the blues to elicit sympathy and perhaps support from the United States. "What could America do?" he asked.

I said that that depended upon what happened, and asked him what he thought that might be. "I don't know," he said.

I asked him what his advisers thought was going to happen. "Many things," he said, with a bitter laugh,



and he rose, indicating that that was all he had to say.

THE day after seeing the Shah, I drove, with an Iranian friend who had agreed to serve as an interpreter, to Qum, a religious center with a population of roughly two hundred and fifty thousand, about seventy-five miles south of Teheran. Qum is the country's foremost training center for priests—or mullahs, as they are known in common parlance—of Shiite Islam, the creed of ninety per cent of Iran's thirty-six million people. Shiism made the state religion at the beginning of the sixteenth century by a new dynasty, the Safavids, who needed to dig in against the Ottoman Turks. The Shiites form the minority—and large Persian—branch of the Moslem religion. As distinct from the majority branch—the Sunnites (who for centuries vested the line of authority from Mohammed in a caliphate that followed the tides of history from Damascus to Baghdad and thence, with the Turks, to Constantinople)—the Shiites traced the line of descent through the Prophet's son-in-law, Ali, according to Shiite law, was the first of twelve Imams, or holy leaders. The twelfth Imam withdrew from the world and is due to return some time as a Mahdi, or Messiah. Ali was buried in An Najaf, and his son, Hossein, in Karbala, and those cities, now in Iraq, are, after Mohammed's tomb in Mecca, the principal shrines of Shiite Islam. The eighth Imam, Reza, died in Meshed, which is a town some five hundred miles east of Teheran, and the most holy shrine in Iran. Reza's sister, Fatima, died in Qum, so the city includes Iran's second holiest shrine as well as many *madressahs*, or seminaries.

The most renowned students of Islamic law in Qum, Meshed, and other major cities are referred to by the title Ayatollah, which means, literally, "Sign of God." For roughly the past fifty years, the Ayatollahs of Qum have been the dominant religious leaders in Iran. Ayatollah Khomeini, though born in eastern Iran, was educated in An Najaf, and then in Qum, and subsequently taught in Qum. He achieved national stature between 1961 and 1963 as the leader of the opposition to various features—including censorship and, many say, land reform—of what the Shah called his "white revolution." In 1963, Khomeini was expelled, and moved to the shrine of An Najaf. The radical regime in Iraq, which in 1975, after years of bickering, reached an accommodation

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with the Shah, forced Khomeini out last September, when troubles became intense in Iran, and he moved to Paris. He had been succeeded as the dominant figure in Qum by Ayatollah Shariatmadari. For most of the past dozen years, the *madrasah* students have made Qum a center of opposition to the regime. Professor Michael Fischer, of Harvard, who spent much of 1975 in that city, described the atmosphere at the time, in a monograph he called "The Qum Report," as "one of siege and courageous passive hostility to a state perceived to be the stronger, but morally corrupt, opponent." The present wave of troubles was set in motion early this year by violent demonstrations against the Shah in Qum.



"Everybody's having spritzers."

I had telephoned ahead for an appointment with Shariatmadari, and had been connected with a Pakistani aide of his named Seyyed Rivzi, who spoke English. Rivzi told me to be in Qum by eight in the morning, because His Holiness, as he called Shariatmadari, went to the mosque at nine and spent the rest of the day in prayer and meditation. My translator friend and I arrived before eight and, with the help of directions from the local police, found our way to Shariatmadari's quarters. He lives in a narrow back street, paved with white brick and lined with yellowish walls. There are doors in the walls every ten yards or so, and, behind the doors, courtyards leading to buildings that are used as offices and houses. We were first shown into an office, where we were received by Rivzi, a fat, middle-aged man wearing spectacles and a black turban; he kept pushing the turban back from his forehead in order to scratch his scalp. Rivzi said that I was in luck, for His Holiness was feeling ill that day. Because he was not well enough to pray, there would be ample time for the interview. Rivzi asked me to disclose my questions in advance. He would write them off to His Holiness—that way, there would be no mistakes. I began read-

ing from a list of questions I had prepared. He repeated them in English, then set them down in Farsi, and read them back to my Iranian friend for his approval of the translation. A couple of times, the English version of my question differed significantly from the original, and at length I pointed out one of the discrepancies. Rivzi said, "I was not trained as a reporter, but in the past few months I've been the interpreter for sixty-eight different interviews. I've become quite good at framing questions. I hope you don't mind a little editing."

After the questions had been given, edited, and translated, we moved across the street to see Shariatmadari. He is a man of seventy-six, with a white beard, a frail frame, and a thinish voice. He, too, wore a black turban and glasses—in his case, thick glasses over weak but distinctly friendly eyes. He received us in a bare, whitewashed room lit by a single electric bulb, which dangled from the ceiling. There were some uninteresting rugs on the floor, and a curtain hung across the window on a string. Shariatmadari was lying down on an opened crimson bedroll, with his head and shoulders raised on a purple pillow. Rivzi and another aide, whose function I never discovered, sat, legs crossed, facing His Holiness. I sat

parallel to him, also cross-legged, but with my back against a wall. In the course of our talk, which lasted several hours, various people came in to see Shariatmadari, kissing his hand, pressing petitions on him, often with money between the pages, and then hurrying away. A telephone by the bedroll rang frequently, but it was answered only rarely, by the non-Pakistani aide, who usually managed to pick it up after the caller had stopped trying to get through.

Shariatmadari began by asking about my trip down to Qum. I said that it had been easy but that we had noticed a lot of troops in the town and, on the wall of his house, a scrawled sign saying "Death to the Butcher Shah."

His Holiness said, "I don't know what is happening in Iran. I never saw a nation in such a spirit of revolt. It is erupting like a volcano, and, like a volcano, after building up pressure for years and years it is impossible to stop."

My first question had to do with the revival of religion in Iran as a political force. Shariatmadari said, "Religion used to be considered marginal—apart from the mainstream of events. Now it has become much stronger than before. The reason is that religion provides answers to problems of conscience. It provides a vantage point for fighting in-

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justice. In our Shiite religion, spiritual leaders are ready at all times to assert the truth and the right."

I asked him what injustices he had in mind. He said, "We have never had free elections. The elections in the past were all dominated by local magnates or the consulates of foreign powers. The consequence has been that we now have laws repugnant to Islam and to the public interest. For example, alcoholic beverages are permitted. There is gambling. There is illegitimate sex—by that I mean sexual relations between people under twenty who are not married. The authority to marry is in the hands of civil officials. But it should not be. Marriage is not a deal or a contract. It is something spiritual, and so it should be performed by the religious authorities."

At that point, there were sounds of firing in the distance, and I started. "Don't be afraid," he said. "We're used to that kind of noise."

I asked him to tell me about the troubles in Qum. He said, "From the beginning of the disturbances in Qum, we have asked people to speak their minds, but with calm and dignity, not in a provocative way. But I remember a few months ago a company of soldiers headed by a major general walked into these premises and announced they were on a mission from the government. They started breaking windows and shooting. One person was killed on the spot and another died in the hospital. Later, the government apologized. But I ask, 'How can you apologize for killing people?' Had it been the Prime Minister's house, would it have been enough merely to apologize? Such an action alone is adequate for me to declare a holy war or a revolution. That might have happened if I were not devoted to the cause of moderation."

I asked him how he would rectify the many injustices and wrongs he had cited. He said that he favored a return to the constitution of 1906—a document that a liberal movement with support from the clergy had wrung from the Qajar dynasty, which preceded the family of the present Shah. The 1906 constitution provided for, among other things, a supreme council of five religious leaders who would have a veto right over all laws. "If they found the laws repugnant to Islam or to principles of justice or against the interests of the majority," Shariatmadari said, "they could reject them."

I asked what would happen if the

five religious leaders disagreed among themselves. He said, "That would not be possible, for they represent the highest spiritual authority."

I persisted with the question about a possible disagreement. "In that case," he said, "the issue would be referred to the highest spiritual authority in the land."

I assumed he meant himself, and any doubts on that score were settled by Rivzi. He said, "His Holiness would have the final word."

I remarked that many people in Iran, and in other parts of the world, had different views from His Holiness on such matters as religious liberty, land reform, and the role of women. He cut in before I could develop this theme. "The journalistic community in the world," he said, pointing a bony finger at me, "has constantly made the libellous charge that we religious leaders are anti-progressive and reactionary and anachronistic. That is not the case. We want science, technology, educated men and women—physicists, surgeons, engineers. But we also want clean and honest political leaders. Those who make the charges against us are themselves reactionary, because their goal is to stop us from instituting a government of hope. The government of God is the government of the people by the people."

I said that I would still like to know where he stood on the issue of equal rights for women—coeducation, for example.

Very smoothly, as if there were no break in the line of thought at all, he asked me how many Presidents there had been in American history. I said that it wasn't altogether clear whether the figure was thirty-eight or thirty-nine.

He said, "You come all the way over to Iran to ask about the rights of women here, and you don't even know how many Presidents you have had in your own country."

I explained that the matter was complicated by the fact that Grover Cleveland had been President twice but not consecutively. I said that for the sake of argument we could assume there had been thirty-nine Presidents.

"How many of them have been women?" he asked.

I said that none had but that that seemed to me beside the point. What, for example, did he think about coeducation?

He said, "I'm not opposed to the education of women for all kinds of



s. "But I do not want coeducation. I want to separate the schools of learning from the schools of flirting. We Islam don't look on women as playthings, accepted as long as they are young and beautiful, and then cast away. In Islam, the older the woman, the higher her status. We know that in vocational schools there is a corruption of moral values, which is recorded in the police records. The girls develop certain relations, and some have illegitimate children, and others have abortions. The girl loses her respect and her status in society. Either she suffers a great personal loss or she picks up another way of life—prostitution."

When I asked him his opinion of abortion, he said, "In Islam, abortion is considered murder. Therefore, abortion is not permitted."

When I asked him his views on birth control, he said, "Birth control depends on the circumstances. In small, overpopulated countries that have no land, birth control is acceptable. But in our country, where the population occupies one-fifth of the land, there is a need for birth control. Procreation should be free unless there is a particular problem. In our country, that problem doesn't exist."

When I asked him whether there was any difference in Islam for people of other religions, he said, "In Islam, Christians, Jews, and Zoroastrians are all accepted equally—unless they become a Fifth Column for foreign meddling in this country. Jews are accepted as Jews but not as defenders of Zionist aggression."

When I referred to the Baha'i sect, he began as a reform offshoot of Islam, and has been popular in particular among educated people who have done well in business and professions. He said, "Baha'i is accepted as a religion per se but not as a clique dividing up government posts among themselves and working for the foreign interests."

When I asked him where he stood on the reform that the Shah had decreed in 1963, he said, "Land reform is a part of the past. Even if there were no objections made at the time, there would be no objections to the principle of land reform but only to the means of implementation. The Shah could have done the same thing in accordance with the principles of Islam. That is typical of a reform regime. In order to build roads and streets, he destroys the house of an old woman and does not give her another house."

At that point, Shariatmadari re-

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proached me for picking out one issue at a time instead of dealing with the culture as a whole. "Culture is a mixture of many interwoven things," he said. "You cannot in fairness just pick on individual matters as if they were unrelated. For example, in the West you cannot conceive of a banking system that does not charge interest on loans. But in Islam, for many different reasons, our view is that interest should not be charged."

I said that that was true; no one in the West could understand how a government without the power to raise interest rates could control inflation. I went on to say that his point seemed valid, and so I would shift subjects. I asked him where he stood on the issue of meetings with representatives of the Shah.

He had had some "unofficial meetings," he said, and went on, "But we can't have official meetings. The religious authorities will participate in all offers of a solution to the present problems, but only with a fair and just government and parliament. We can cooperate fully only after free elections have returned a popularly chosen government."

I said, and he acknowledged, that the Shah had tried to institute some reforms directed toward liberalization of the regime. I observed that many Americans felt that President Carter, by his human-rights campaign, had played a role in fostering those reforms.

Shariatmadari said, "Carter's human-rights policy has not been a very important propelling force, though it has not been totally without effect in pushing liberalization. But in Islam we have some skepticism about the sincerity of Carter's human-rights approach, because he doesn't apply it to the United Nations. In the U.N., five countries have the veto. That means we are not equal. But the Americans don't say anything about that."

A COUPLE of days later, I flew to Isfahan, with my Iranian friend again accompanying me as an interpreter. Isfahan, as the 1966 *Hachette Guide* proclaims with unwonted effusion, is "one of the most marvellous places in the world." The city lies on a plateau watered by a large oasis and a lovely stream. Shah Abbas I—the greatest Persian emperor, not excepting Xerxes and the three Dariuses—made it his capital at the end of the sixteenth century; at that time, it had a population of about half a million, and was among the largest cities in the world. I remembered from a previous visit, a decade ago, broad, tree-lined avenues;

a magnificent central square, the Maydan-e-Shah; the extraordinary Bridge of Thirty-three Arches; and a general air of refined elegance. But even from the air, I could see burgeoning suburbs and smoke from factories—signs that change had come to Isfahan.

A local official, who asked not to be mentioned by name, rapidly brought me up to date on developments in Isfahan. He said, "Five years ago, there were five hundred and sixty thousand people in Isfahan, and this was one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Then the Shah decided that there was too much administrative and economic concentration in Teheran, and that he needed to decentralize. So he put a steel mill here. And an airbase, with a helicopter training center. Naturally, foreign companies followed suit. Bell Helicopter came in with the training base. Du Pont put a plant here. Now we have more than a million people. The doubling in five years of a population that had been stable for three hundred years has changed everything. This used to be an educational center, with a university, many religious schools, and lots of music. Now it is an industrial town. Over three hundred thousand workers have come in from the countryside, most of them without their families. They live five or six to a room in the poorer quarter of town. They make good wages—a dollar seventy-five an hour—but they don't have their families, and they're miserable. Everybody else has been affected, too. The bazaar merchants used to be very important. Now the banks manage credit, and the engineers are the big shots in town.

"Students have grown up under the Shah, and they don't know what things were like before development started. All they know is that the Shah promised that Iran was going to be like France or Germany. That isn't happening. The huge surge in population means that services are spread too thin and are constantly breaking down. There aren't enough telephones. It's impossible to buy a car. The schools are jammed. Housing is scarce. During the past three years, there has been a recession, especially in building, and many laborers are out of work. So the students are in a mood to reject everything that has happened. They are turning back to the old days, and pursuing an idealized version of what things were like then. They are pushing the mullahs to go back and re-create the wonderful past. The mullahs see a chance to regain their prestige and power. The students provide them

with a power base for putting pressure on the government to give them the consideration and importance they have been seeking for years. So the mullahs go along. That's the dynamic of trouble in Isfahan."

I asked about the circumstances relating to the declaration of martial law in Isfahan back in August, a month before it was declared in the other major cities of the country.

The local official said, "That's a perfect example. All through the spring and summer, after riots in Qum in January, and in Tabriz in late February, this town was seething with unrest. The workers were demanding better housing conditions, and more money to meet inflation. The bazaar merchants were bitching about the loss of their old status, about price controls, and competition from the big banks and supermarkets. The intellectuals were complaining about the lack of freedom. The students were telling the mullahs to do their stuff, and the mullahs were saying 'right on.' About the first of August, a mixed group of workers and students occupied the home of the most prominent local religious leader, Ayatollah Khademi. The governor-general and the local Army commander went to Khademi and told him to get them off the premises. He tried, but he couldn't. On the contrary, the crowds got bigger and bigger. At one point, maybe twenty thousand people were camping there. When Khademi tried to cool them down, the students turned ugly. They took down the posters of the Shah and put up posters of Ayatollah Khomeini. On August 11th, the military decided to clear the place. Troops moved in, threw tear gas, and pushed the crowd out at bayonet point. The crowd then went on a rampage. It burned down a bank and a hotel and fifteen other buildings. It threw a bomb into a bus for Bell Helicopter employees. That's when martial law was declared. The bazaaris—the bazaar merchants—immediately went on strike and closed down their shops in protest. The *madressah* students stayed in their schools, but they demonstrated every day, always making more radical demands. On the night of August 21st, two high-school teachers, who had built up a large following of anti-government young people, were arrested and sent to Teheran. Next day, the kids hit the streets, and there has been trouble of one kind or another ever since."

I asked for and was given the names of the teachers—who had been released after a month in custody. They



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had no telephones, so my Iranian friend and I picked one—Hassan Zehtab—and drove out to see him. He lives on the outskirts of town, in a neighborhood of narrow, twisting unpaved streets. The car could barely squeeze between the walls, and the puddles and mud in the road reminded me anew of the origins of the custom of removing one's shoes before entering a mosque. Once we were in the neighborhood, we had no trouble finding the house; everybody we asked knew Hassan Zehtab, and where he lived.

Mr. Zehtab turned out to be a partly bald, moonfaced middle-aged man with a complexion slightly darker in tone than that of most Iranians. He was carefully dressed, in a suit, white shirt, tie, and sweater. I saw only two rooms of his home, and they were modest in size and bare of ornament. When we arrived, Zehtab was meeting in one of the rooms with about forty disciples. He agreed to see me, and we moved into the other room, with ten of his disciples coming along. I asked Zehtab to tell me a little about who he was and what he believed.

He said, "I'm forty years old, and I have been a schoolteacher here in Isfahan ever since I graduated from the University of Teheran, fifteen years ago. In all this time, I haven't seen one truly free election, or one instance of concern on the part of those in authority for the happiness of the people. I think the only way to bring about the happiness of the people is through an Islamic culture. We're given to understand that the ruling clique is talking about religion now, and putting on a turban and the white garments of holiness. But that is a mere pretense. Even a child can see through that. It is like the ceramic facing on the wall of a building. Everybody knows that beneath the facing there is a real wall, of a different material."

I asked him if it was not true that under the Shah the country had taken large strides toward economic development over the past fifteen years.

He replied, "I have to say with great sorrow that our economic growth is based on a windfall called oil. If we consider where we are, and then where the progressive states like Japan are, we realize how little we have accomplished. When I think of Japan, I think of a verse:

Leila and I were fellow-travellers on
the road of life;
She reached her home, and I am still
a vagabond."

I said that even if some countries had done better than Iran, Iran had done quite well.

He said, "What we see here is inflation—prices for food have gone way up. What we see is the depletion of our oil reserves. At the present rate, we have only twenty years to go. What we see is an agriculture worth zero. We buy vegetables from Israel, wheat from the United States, onions from Turkey, meat from Australia, oranges from six different countries. Our industry is just an assembly line for products made in other countries. We would be poor fools indeed if we were satisfied with that."

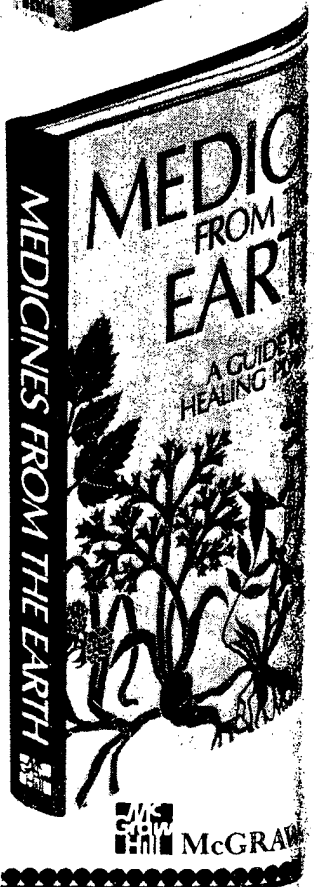
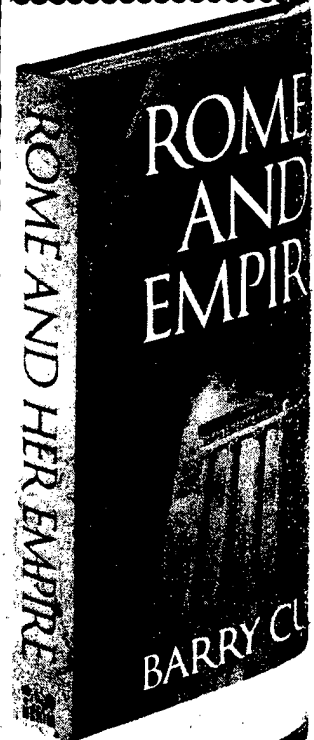
I asked him what would satisfy him. He said, "My ideal future is within the framework of Islamic law. That is the guarantee of happiness and a good future for society. On particular religious questions, I don't find it in my area of competence to make answers. I leave that to the highest religious authorities."

All during the interview, Zehtab, his disciples, my Iranian friend, and I were sitting cross-legged on the floor. I was extremely uncomfortable, and it must have been evident, for one of the disciples asked if I would like a piece of fruit. I said yes, and he took an apple out of a bowl in the middle of the floor. He began to peel it for me, but at the first stroke of the knife the blade separated from its handle. He held out the broken knife. "There you see it all," he said in disgust. "Our country owns twenty-five per cent of Krupp in Germany, but in Iran we can't even produce a knife that cuts an apple."

Everybody laughed, and I began questioning the disciples. All of them were students or professional men between the ages of twenty and thirty, and had participated actively in many demonstrations against the Shah. They all supported Zehtab in his quest for an Islamic society. I expressed surprise that young men with professional training should be so drawn to a religion that seemed—to a Westerner, at least—not exactly with it. I went around the room, asking the disciples, one by one, a single question: "What drew you toward Islam?"

The first to answer was a mullah, in robes and turban, who had a degree in psychology from the University of Teheran. He said, "My love for Islam has grown because I have studied it and compared it with other religions." The others—four students, two employees of the National Iranian Oil Company, an accountant, an engineer, and a physicist—all gave nearly the same answer. Two of them said that they had compared Islam with the teachings of a nineteenth-century European social philosopher—that is, Marx, whose

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has been taboo in Iran—and it preferable. Another offered generalization “Islam offers a solution to the complications of our life.” As we drove away, I remarked to an Iranian friend that the similarity of answers was disappointing. “You don’t understand,” he told me. “They followed the lead of the mullah. It isn’t make for interesting answers, it makes them happy.”

SPENT the night in Isfahan at the Shah Abbas Hotel. The clientele was largely foreign—a sprinkling of Japanese, Indians, Americans, and Europeans. Apart from the sight of a section of the hotel which had been damaged during the riots of August, and an armed guard in the gardens, there was no sign of trouble.

Before dinner, I visited Wanda Hake, an American psychologist employed by the United States companies working in the Isfahan region. Mrs. Hake reported that most of the Americans in the area lived in a compound, completely removed from contact with the Iranians. They had the problems usual in such communities. There was a great boredom—especially among the children. Alcoholism was common among the women, and many of the children had drug problems. There was a good deal of contempt for the Iranians. “Because of their turbans, the Americans call them rag heads,” Mrs. Hake said. “That’s the nicest name they call them.”

Mrs. Hake had some guests, and one of them was a bazaar merchant from an old Isfahan family. “I could cry to tell you what has happened here,” he said to me. “It used to be a paradise of walled gardens and beautiful buildings. Now the town is full of strangers. There are people from the villages. They live in shantytowns. There are ten thousand Americans. They drive up the price of everything—especially houses. A house that rented for a thousand rials per month five years ago now costs forty thousand rials per month. Many people are unhappy. One of my interests is a building project. The workers were Afghans—three hundred of them. The other day, the government sent the Afghans home. I don’t know why: There was a crime wave, and they did a lot of the stealing. But I don’t give me any warning. Now what do I do?”

Lots of the young men come to see me about their problems. They don’t know how to deal with the young men sitting next to them in their

classes. In the past, they had never seen any women, even mothers and sisters, who were not wearing a veil. Now they see miniskirts and bare arms and bare legs. They say to me, “What do they want, these women? What are they trying to do to me?”

“When I go to Teheran, I feel as though I were in Hell. Somebody could die right in front of you and nobody would do anything. Deep sadness comes over me when I see the uses to which we have put our oil wealth. So it is not surprising that there has been a political eruption. Five years ago, Khomeini was nothing. Now he is held up as the equivalent of the Shah.”

At breakfast the next day, I met a professor of religion at the university who had been educated at Harvard and Oxford. His family are members of the Baha’i sect, and he is going back to Oxford, at least partly because of religious persecution. He said he would like to talk about the state of religion in Iran, but only on condition that I not mention his name. I agreed.

He said, “As a student of religion, I read with great interest Toynbee’s ‘A Study of History.’ I always wondered why he felt that the next stage of regeneration in the world would be religious. I felt that religion had been on the run all over the world for centuries. In some places, there have been adjustments, but they have been made only slowly and painfully. Christianity accommodated itself to Darwin, but it was hard even in a tolerant country like Britain. Islam has experienced a number of shocks and adjustments. There have been several efforts to update the religion. But they have all failed. By and large, the clergy remains narrow, fanatical, and ignorant.”

He went on, “The merchants of the bazaars worked hand and glove with the mullahs. They were the two most conservative elements in the cities. The bazaaris usually rented land from the religious foundations, and made the foundations big gifts. But both the bazaaris and the foundations have been outmoded by recent developments. When I left Iran to go abroad to school, in 1960, this was still a backward country. Only a few cities in the country had running water. There were only about ten thousand people who had been or were at universities. Most industry was handicrafts, and about eighty per cent of the people still lived in rural villages. In 1970, when I came back, it was a different country. All the young people—and

that is over fifty per cent of the population—were going to school. There are a hundred thousand university graduates now and almost two hundred thousand people in universities. On a normal weekend, between one and two million people drive out of Teheran in their own cars.

“The mullahs have been losing steadily through these developments. Their base was education. Now they have to contend against state schools and universities. They’ve lost the large landholdings they once had. Most of their endowments have been nationalized, and are controlled by the state. No one ever paid much attention to them until the present wave of troubles. The bazaaris have also lost great power. The banks and big companies have taken away their control over loans and credit. There are shops out in the streets—across from your hotel, for example—so people don’t go to the bazaar as much. And for a while there was price inspection as part of a campaign against inflation. That hit the bazaaris very hard.”

After a pause, he continued, “People now don’t remember what it was like in the old days. As late as 1955, I remember going with my father to a village in the countryside. The local khan—the head man—did justice the religious way. He cut off hands for thievery, splitting people’s tongues for talebearing. There was a peasant in the village with a beautiful wife. The khan took her, and the peasant complained to my father. The khan went out riding with my father, and they encountered the peasant. The khan took his riding crop and beat the peasant senseless.

“The oil boom ended all that and put it out of mind. But it also brought lots of trouble. Mainly inflation. There are buses now, and vegetables, but most people can’t afford them. Moreover, a lot of the money has been spent—I almost said wasted—on big projects and arms purchases that don’t do ordinary people any immediate good. And it has to be said that on the cultural side the Western world has not done well in Iran. Students coming back from Europe and the United States present the cities there as Meccas for drunks, whores, and illegitimate children. They depict a total breakdown of morale. So to the difficulties of local adjustment there is added a tarnishing of the classic model. The West is seen xenophobically, as something frightening, and the search for old values is intensified.

“It also has to be admitted that the Shah, in his enthusiasm to build the country, ignored the people in it. The

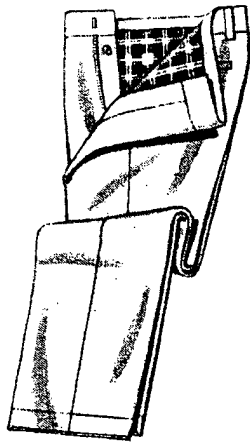




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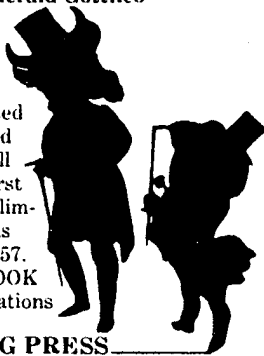
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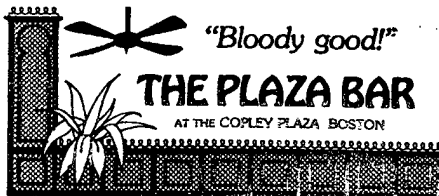
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masses were left out of his development program. The bazaaris were left out. The mullahs were left out. He thought he could bring them along through economic progress without any accompanying change in ways of thought. The heart of the difficulty, though, is the new group of university students. From fifty to seventy-five per cent of them come from poor homes. They are very disturbed when they sit next to a girl in class. They feel a sense of guilt, a fear of being polluted—of secularization. All this takes the form of opposition to the regime as the bearer of Western values. The sexual drive pushes the students in the direction of religion, and the mullahs latch on to them to maintain their position of importance."

BACK in Teheran, I found mounting turbulence and confusion. A wave of strikes that had started in September with employees of the central bank had spread to other banks, to the telecommunications industry, and to the oil workers. One day, there was a rumor that the gas-station workers would go on strike. I saw hundreds of cars lined up at several gas stations. Angry motorists jockeyed for position, and in one place troops had to fire into the air to maintain order. The university had been scheduled to reopen at the end of September, and then at the end of October. Each time, registration had been stopped by student strikes and demonstrations. After the second effort, the authorities gave up, and turned the campus, in downtown Teheran, over to the demonstrators. There were daily protests, and one morning I went to watch, with a visiting American professor who spoke Farsi. Armed soldiers in tanks and armored personnel carriers patrolled the gates, but we were allowed in without any demand to show our credentials. There were two groups of demonstrators, marching back and forth. One group—of about seventy-five students, almost all men—was clearly Marxist in its political sentiments. The students carried placards denouncing international imperialism, and chanted slogans calling for the unity of the workers. The other group, obviously Islamic in orientation, bore pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini and carried signs calling for an Islamic republic. There were several hundred students in the Islamic group, including many women. All the women were veiled. Some wore the *chador*, a garment that envelops the body from head to foot, while others wore blue jeans, blouses, and scarves that veiled their heads and faces. A few

times, word went through the crowd that soldiers were coming. The ranks broke and everybody rushed for cover. But that day, at least, no soldiers came.

The professors, having no classes, were available and talkative. By far the most interesting was Karim Pakravan, an economist trained at the University of Chicago, whose father, a former Iranian general, had at one time been head of the security-police apparatus, known as SAVAK, and was now working at the Imperial Palace in a high administrative position. He came to visit me at my hotel room, and talked freely of his own situation and that of his colleagues.

"Young professional people want to escape the establishment," he said. "The establishment is everybody who has real power. In one way or another, either morally or financially, it is corrupt. We are not brave enough to join the opposition, but by being at the university we maintain a passive opposition. Our case against the government is lack of freedom. All creativity has been crushed. I teach a course in economics. I'm not allowed to say that there's malnutrition or poverty, or that we're underdeveloped. A doctor friend of mine went to the countryside to look at health problems. He found all the diseases typical of underdeveloped countries—trachoma, dysentery, that kind of thing. He didn't find cancer and hypertension—the diseases that go with modern society. So he was never allowed to make a report.

"A whole generation of Iranians has been raised, educated, and given no freedom. Young engineers, for instance, have only a minor chance to take part in technological development. The Shah didn't develop a technology—he bought a blueprint of technology from the West. So there were very few major jobs for Iranians. At least ninety per cent of our people have been left out of development. I have a small consulting firm. I take only private clients. Unless we were huge and foreign, we couldn't get government contracts anyway. I might be able to do a project for the government at a charge of, say, ten thousand dollars for a couple of months' work. But people in the government would rather hire foreigners at a thousand dollars a day. That way, they get a kickback."

He continued, "Khomeini is merely a symbol of opposition. He is respected as a Moslem, but he has no power. Ten years ago, no prayers were said in the universities. Religious students were mocked. Now there is a genuine student problem. Many of the students

come from poor families in the provinces. They have to rent rooms, and the financial burden is unbearable. There has never been a systematic study made, so we don't know how badly off they are. But they don't have enough money. They have to cluster six or seven in a room. In the last few years, there has been an undoubted effort to reform things. There's real talk in the parliament. Those in SAVAK who were corrupt and who tortured people have been ousted. There's an effort to bring roads to villages, and water. If there should be elections soon, I'd probably vote. But I wouldn't join the government. Next year is going to be bad. Already, because of the strikes and the big wage settlements, it is clear that the gross national product will be down by ten per cent. There'll be an incredible inflation. One good thing I can say: At last, after twenty-five years, Iranian politics are becoming interesting."

Pakravan put me in touch with another economist trained in the United States, who divided his time between teaching and working for Iran's Plan and Budget Organization. Because of his government job, he asked me not to mention his name. He said that economists at the Plan and Budget Organization had repeatedly done studies showing that, while the national wealth was increasing, many people, particularly in the countryside, were relatively worse off. He showed me a report that indicated that the income share of the top twenty per cent of urban Iranians had risen from 57.5 per cent in 1972 to 63.5 per cent in 1975. The share of the middle forty per cent dropped from 31 per cent to 25.5 per cent. The share of the bottom forty per cent dropped from 11.5 per cent to 11 per cent. While urban consumption per head was about two times that of the rural areas in 1959, it had by 1972 grown to three times that of the rural areas. But these studies, while circulated abroad, were, he said, not published in Iran.

The economist went on to talk about the religious revival. "I was very active in politics during my high-school years," he said. "At that time—the early nineteen-fifties—there were only two important groups: the Communist, or Tudeh, Party, and the National Front—which included the Pan-Iranians, who wanted to take over parts of Iraq, Turkey, and Pakistan. The young had absolutely no interest in religion. After that, the political situation calmed down. There was a brief revival of politics in 1961 and 1962, when Ali Amini

came to office as Prime Minister. He started the land reform that the Shah later claimed as his own. The Tudeh Party was dead then, but the National Front was strong. The religious people didn't count. Khomeini became important only after he was driven into exile by the Shah. The Shah's father, Reza Shah, had been very successful in fighting the mullahs. He made a direct assault on the clergy—forcing women to take off veils, riding into the shrines and beating the mullahs. He had public sympathy, because then the clergy were corrupt and wealthy. They were hated by everybody. Now they have lost their lands and the religious foundations. The mullahs have been purified. They have the power of poverty."

THE economist at the planning agency introduced me to Magid Tehranian, an intellectual in his middle thirties who had been trained at Harvard and then co-opted into the Shah's system as the head of an institute for the study of communications. I went to see him at the institute, where he looked every bit the European or American intellectual in his cozy oyster shell; he had a comfortable office with a couple of secretaries, and wore a neat blue suit, a silk tie, and shoes of soft Italian leather. He talked briefly about Iranian intellectuals. He said, "The great problem facing the university graduates once they are out of school is a lack of freedom. We have lots of intellectuals and technocrats who have views, but they are never allowed to express them. Everything is dictated from the top, and some of it is silly. For instance, the government tried to build up the television network—with which I was involved. It was extended to the point where it reached seventy per cent of the people in Iran. Then the palace intervened. They insisted that we show pictures of urban guerrillas confessing their terrorist deeds. They made us put Parviz Sabeti, the head of SAVAK's anti-terrorist campaign, on the screen, giving his view of history. We have an intelligentsia, but they have no chance to participate. They're just supposed to support the regime. But they don't like slavishly supporting the Shah, so they turn against him. Yet, with all this, we have been surprised by the breadth of the movement against the Shah. It reaches from plush Teheran to the remotest villages."

Tehranian was said to have been a Marxist before he joined the government, and I had gone to see him primarily because I needed some help in

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ascertaining the part that the Marxists had played in what had been happening. Clearly, the Marxists counted for something in the movement against the Shah, but I had been given the most diverse estimates of their role, from the most surprising sources. The view around the palace was that the religious movement had been totally taken over by the Marxists. That view was shared by the economist who taught at the university as a form of "passive resistance" to "the establishment." "The resistance is run by the Communists," he had told me. "If you want to buy weapons, there is a number you can call and you get what you ask for. I don't know exactly who supplies the weapons—the Russians, the Cubans, or the Palestinians. But they're the ones who have made the country erupt." An American official, on the other hand, put absolutely no stock in the theory of Communist manipulation. He remarked to me that "the Army and the police and SAVAK have been combing the country all year looking for the Communists behind the demonstrations. So far, they haven't found a single one. Why? Because there aren't any. The mullahs and the bazaaris between them have informal networks that they've used for years to organize processions and festivals. That's all it takes now. That's all there is."

I told Tehranian of the confused picture I was getting, and asked if he could put me in touch with any of his former Marxist colleagues. He said that it would be easy, and set up an appointment for me with a friend holding a high post in the Ministry of Information. The friend would organize an interview with three officials in the Ministry. I was not to talk about Marx. Instead, I should use the euphemism—"a European social philosopher of the nineteenth century."

At the last minute, I had to change the appointment from the morning to the afternoon, but that was no problem. I went to see the official, and after a few moments he took me into a room behind his office. Three men, all about thirty, were sitting at a table with a woman—a graduate student at the University of Michigan, who acted as translator. I asked them if they were believers in the philosophy of a certain well-known European social philosopher of the nineteenth century, and all three smiled and nodded. I asked them about their education and their jobs. They were university graduates—one from the Sorbonne, the two others from the University of Teheran. The man from the Sorbonne helped put to-

gether public-opinion polls for the Ministry, and the two others had jobs as engineers.

I asked what they found useful in the works of the nineteenth-century social philosopher. One said, "He exposes the imperialists and their rape of all the countries of the Third World, including Iran."

I asked how, specifically, the philosopher's theories were relevant to Iran, and was told about the depletion of Iran's oil reserves and the purchase of American weapons for open "use against the people." I asked about Iran's practice of selling natural gas to the Soviet Union, and they responded that there was no shortage of natural gas.

I asked if they felt that the Russians had designs on Iran. All of them thought that compared to the United States influence, which was "all-pervasive," the Russian influence was "so small it doesn't count." I asked what recent works by followers of the well-known nineteenth-century social philosopher they had read. After some hesitation, the man from the Sorbonne said, "Jean-Paul Sartre." No other names were forthcoming.

I asked how they felt about the religious movement against the Shah. All said that they agreed with its objectives. I asked if there wasn't a contradiction somewhere. Wasn't religion supposed to be "the opium of the people"?

"Sometimes that is true," I was told. "But in developing countries it is different. At times, religious feelings and social movements go hand in hand. That is the way it is now in Iran. We are all of us united against the Shah."

I asked how they thought the government of the Soviet Union felt about the Shah. They said they felt that they had the backing of Moscow.

I asked whether they and their leaders were working from within the religious movement. There was a silence. Then one of them said, "We are in an Islamic country, and all social movements inevitably have a religious coloring. We do not believe there will ever be Communism here as there is Communism in Russia or China. We will have our own brand of socialism."

Later, the official who had arranged the interview told me that I should have asked him the same questions. "I believe that the Communists are manipulating the religious movement," he said. Still later, an American official showed me a translation of an article in *Navid*, a new, underground publication of the Tudeh Party. The article,

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entitled "The Tudeh Party and the Moslem Movement," said, "We are ready to put at the disposal of our friends from other political groups all our political propaganda and technical resources for the campaign against the Shah." I was also shown an interview with Iraj Eskandary, the secretary-general of the Tudeh Party, now living in exile in Moscow. Among other things, Eskandary said, "As far as the religious aspect of the present movement is concerned, it should be emphasized that the Shiite clergy cannot be viewed as a force demanding a return to the past, to the Middle Ages. The position of the clergy reflects, to a significant extent, popular feelings. And the fact that the religious movement is now playing an important role in the mobilization of democratic and nationalist forces against the dictatorial, anti-nationalist, and pro-imperialist regime of the Shah can only be welcomed. . . . We are in favor of a union with all democratic forces, including the religious ones."

IF the role played by the Marxists in the fomenting of trouble remains obscure, the role of the liberalization sponsored by the Shah and his ministers looms larger and larger. The Shah acknowledged when I saw him that he had begun to loosen things up "about two years ago." I was in Iran in the spring of 1977, and I remember well the widespread talk of relaxation. Jimmy Carter's emphasis on human rights was one of the reasons, but only one, and not the most important. Iranian students in the United States and Europe had focussed attention on the repressive features of the regime—particularly the practice of torture by SAVAK. The international press, led by *Le Monde*, of Paris, had picked up the theme. Both the Red Cross and Amnesty International, the private human-rights group based in London, were asking questions and proposing visits. But by far the most important reason for the relaxation was that the rapid development that followed the great oil-price increase of 1973 proved too complicated for direct control from above. Dislocations and shortages were universal. I recall visiting a new aluminum plant in an industrial area outside Teheran. The plant was supposed to accommodate several hundred workers, but they had no housing and no transport, and there were no telephones in the offices. All over the country, power failures were frequent, and the pursuit of scarce goods and services drove inflation above the twenty-five-per-cent-

per-year level. An effort to hold down inflation by fixing prices was failing in a spectacular manner. It was clear that the economy could be made to work only if there was some freeing up, some devolution of authority.

Signs of reform were abundant that spring. Batches of prisoners were released, and were allowed to talk to the press. The Shah declared that torture would cease—an admission that it had been going on. Corruption, which had never been far below the surface—as witness the Persian origin of the word "baksheesh"—became public in the wake of a scandal that involved payoffs to high officials of the Iranian Navy. The National Front, the chief opposition party, was allowed to circulate letters highly critical of the regime. Student demonstrations went forward with only token harassment. Even the television appearances of Parviz Sabeti, the director of SAVAK's political section, were part of an effort to prove that the organization had a human face.

The direction of policy, to be sure, remained ambiguous. Low-level agents of SAVAK continued to stage raids on opposition meetings. Investigation of corruption at the highest levels was systematically blocked—reputedly by the Shah's entourage. But a key figure in the entourage, Amir Assadollah Alam, the Minister of the Imperial Court, fell ill in 1977, and died in New York early this year. His departure from the Court Ministry opened the way for a political change that signalled an undoubted commitment to reform. In August, 1977, the Shah appointed a new Court Minister, Amir Abbas Hoveida, and a new Prime Minister, Jamsheed Amouzegar. I saw both men at their homes in Teheran in late October of this year, along with the Information Minister in the Amouzegar government, Dariush Homayun. They all talked freely, but not for individual attribution. What follows is my interpretation of their accounts of what happened during the twelve months beginning in August, 1977—a period of sweeping reforms that boomeranged to injure them, and the Shah as well.

HOVEIDA, an affable and highly intelligent man, with degrees in history, economics, and political science from the Universities of Paris and Brussels, came to the Court Ministry after nearly thirteen years as Prime Minister—the longest term in modern times. He had a major hand in the rapid development that changed the face

of Iran and soured so many of its people. Though he was said to have been tolerant of corruption in the past, he was reputed never to have been on the take himself, and he certainly did not live on the grand scale. He had realized as early as 1975 that the pace of development had to be slowed down. "We're in orbit," he had told me at the time, "and we have to come down to earth." He brought to the Court Ministry a determination to achieve economic slowdown and political reform. As he saw it, the key to both was ending corruption at the highest levels. From the beginning, he worked with the Shah on a code of conduct for the royal family. That project brought him into conflict with many members of the family who had been active in private business affairs. In July, 1978, after a long and bitter battle, Hoveida finally won the Shah's approval for the code of conduct.

The code was not published, for fear that the spelling out of what was henceforth prohibited would be regarded as a confession of past guilt. But the fact that it was adopted was made known, and caused virtually every member of the royal family to leave Iran. Here—published for the first time, I think—is the code that the Shah approved last summer:

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR THE IMPERIAL FAMILY

In order to maintain the high status of the Imperial family, which is respected by all Iranians, the following principles are instituted as the Code of Conduct of the Imperial family:

- 1) Refraining from conduct considered distasteful by social custom.
- 2) Refraining from any acts or actions not in keeping with the high status of the Imperial family.
- 3) Refraining from direct contact with public officials for the purpose of handling personal business. These matters will be handled through the Ministry of Court or His Imperial Majesty's Special Office.
- 4) Refraining from contacts with foreign companies or organizations which are parties to contracts and deals with Iranian public organizations.
- 5) Refraining from receiving commissions for any reason whatsoever, from companies and organizations, foreign or Iranian, which are parties to contracts or deals with the Iranian government.
- 6) Refraining from receiving valuable gifts from persons, companies, or organizations.
- 7) Refraining from deals of any kind with public organizations, be it the government, organizations associated with the government, municipalities, or public organizations.
- 8) Refraining from direct or indirect (through third person or persons) partnership or holding shares in companies or organizations that are parties to deals

with the government or public organizations.

9) Refraining from founding or holding shares in organizations or companies whose activities are not compatible with the high status of the members of the Imperial family, such as restaurants, cabarets, casinos, and the like.

10) Refraining from the use of facilities and properties belonging to government and public organizations for private use.

11) Refraining from the use—for private or commercial purposes—of the services of the employees of the government and associated organizations who also have responsibilities and duties in foundations associated with the Imperial family, or related organizations.

12) Refraining from asking for special favors or making recommendations to public officials in the interest of members of the Imperial family or others.

13) Refraining from the use of legal exemptions for persons outside of the Imperial family.

14) Refraining from the use of nationalized lands belonging to the government or public organizations for the purpose of profiting, for example, through construction projects or establishing commercial, service, or industrial organizations.

15) Refraining from receiving anything from persons (natural or legal) in lieu of influencing public officials in order to legalize acts which would not otherwise be eligible for profit-making (such as partnership in ownership of large pieces of land in return for registering such lands for the purpose of making profit).

16) Refraining from the use of nationalized lands for agriculture and dairy projects.

17) Refraining from accepting positions on the boards of insurance, banking, and other companies.

18) Voluntary compliance with security regulations and whatever relates to public order.

19) Protecting the prestige and respect of national values and beliefs outside of the country.

20) Refraining from contacts with foreign embassies in Iran unless through the Ministry of Court.

Amouzegar came to the office of Prime Minister with a reputation as a brilliant public servant. He was educated at the University of Teheran, at Cornell, and at the University of Washington, and has a Ph.D. in civil engineering. Before becoming Prime Minister, at the age of fifty-four, he had successively headed four Ministries—Labor, Agriculture, Finance, and Interior—and had also served as Iran's chief negotiator in the price-fixing sessions of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries. Though less supple than Hoveida in political matters, Amouzegar was thought to be equally free of corruption and far more competent in economics. As Prime Minister, he set his sights on curtailing inflation and rooting out corruption at the ministerial

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level. By squeezing hard on the money supply, he cut inflation from thirty-five per cent in August, 1977, to ten per cent in August, 1978. In the process, he earned the enmity of many of those dependent on credit, including most of the bazaar merchants and the high rollers in the construction field. As for corruption, he pushed General Nematollah Nasseri out as the head of SAVAK and off into a corner as Ambassador to Pakistan. He forced Hushang Ansari, the Minister of Finance, to step out of the Cabinet and become head of the National Iranian Oil Company. He obliged Mayor Gholam Reza Nikpay, of Teheran, to quit. Those actions put him at odds with both the Shah and Hoveida, who had close ties to several of those who had been shunted aside. In the recesses of the Imperial Court, an intrigue was concocted which came to engulf everybody.

The starting point was the death, late in October of 1977, of Seyyed Mustafa Khomeini, the son of the exiled Ayatollah. The son, a mullah, was forty-nine at the time, and he died, according to supporters of the Shah, of a heart attack. His father suspected foul play, and, during the Shiite days of mourning for the dead, which fell in late December last year, circulated a number of letters throwing blame on the Shah. Early in January this year, there was sent from the office of the Court Minister, Hoveida, to the office of the Information Minister, Homayun, the text of an article. Homayun, as was the custom, passed the article on for publication to the editors of a leading Teheran daily, *Eta'alaat*. The editors at the paper were sufficiently disturbed by the text to check with Homayun. He told them that it came from the Court and they should go ahead and publish it. The editors then apprised Amouzegar of what was in the works. Amouzegar called Homayun, who repeated the explanation that the article came from the Court and was supposed to be published. Exactly who wrote the article is not known to me, but the unwillingness of those involved to name the author suggests that it was either the Shah himself or somebody acting on his orders. My impression is that part of the motive was to embroil the Amouzegar government with the religious opposition.

The article appeared on January 7th. It bore the title "Iran and the Red and Black Imperialism," and contained a harsh personal attack on Ayatollah Khomeini. It started obliquely, with references to the recent days of mourning in which Ayatollah Kho-

meini had circulated his grievances against the Shah. It moved on to a discussion of forces designated as Red and Black Imperialism, meaning the Communists and the clergy. It said that cooperation between the two had been "rare" but that an exception was "the close, sincere, and honest cooperation of both vis-à-vis the Iranian revolution, especially the progressive land reform in Iran." The article went on to recall the opposition to land reform back in 1963, including the "riots of June 5th and 6th," which had precipitated the expulsion of Ayatollah Khomeini. It said that the opposition to the reform had come from the Communists grouped in the Tudeh Party and from "the landowners who had been robbing the peasants for many years." These groups, the article continued, had turned for "succor to the clergy... since the clergy enjoy great respect among Iranians." Most of the clergy, the article said, proved "far too intelligent to act against the Shah's-people's revolution," so at that point the opponents had decided to "recruit someone from the clergy who would be adventurous." That "someone" had turned out to be Ayatollah Khomeini. According to the article, he had "an unknown past," but apparently had lived for many years in India, where he had developed "contacts with centers of British imperialism." The article concluded by denouncing Ayatollah Khomeini as "someone who had taken the initiative in carrying out the plans of Red and Black Imperialism... who fought land reform, the women's vote, the nationalization of the forests... who would sincerely serve conspirators and Fifth Columnists."

On January 9th, two days after the article appeared, the religious students in Qum went into the streets to protest the attack on Khomeini. A



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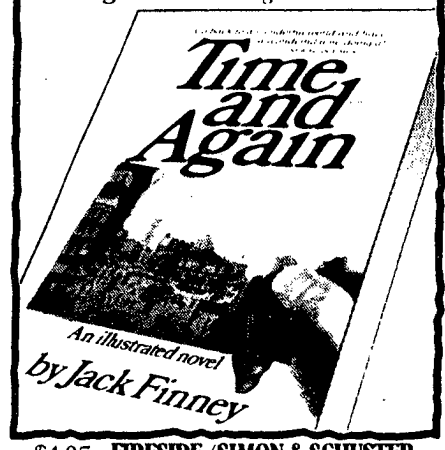
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clash with police ensued. Nine people were killed and many were injured. Forty days later, in Tabriz, a memorial service was held for those killed in Qum. Again, there was a clash with police. This time, thirteen people were killed. After that, trouble came in Teheran and Isfahan and Meshed, and then in Qum once more. August 5th marked Iran's Constitution Day, and the eve of Ramadan, the Moslem month of abstention. The Shah delivered a nationwide television broadcast, pledging that he would go ahead with the liberalization program. But all through that month, in city after city, there were assaults on the symbols of Western modernity associated with the Shah's rule—banks, casinos, and cinemas. The campaign reached a horrible climax in Abadan, the site of the country's largest oil refinery: On August 20th, the Rex Cinema was destroyed by arson, and some four hundred and thirty people lost their lives in the blaze.

After that, Amouzegar had had enough. He resigned as Prime Minister and was replaced by Jaafar Sharif-Emami, a political veteran from a religious family who had worked closely with the Shah as, among other things, head of the Pahlavi Foundation, a multimillion-dollar semi-family enterprise, which is the owner of most of Iran's foreign holdings. Sharif-Emami moved swiftly and across the board to make concessions to the troublemakers. He lifted press censorship and arranged for live radio broadcasts from the previously dozing Majles, the lower house of the parliament. With the wraps off, resentment found tongue. In the parliament and in the press, there was a surge of complaints about corruption and discrimination against the middle and working classes. The new government met the strikes with generous concessions on wages and pensions. In response to charges of corruption, investigations were opened into the cases of General Nasseri (who was recalled from Pakistan) and former Mayor Nikpay. Thirty-four leading officials of SAVAK, including Parviz Sabeti, were dismissed in one day. At every opportunity, Sharif-Emami sought to placate the mullahs. He closed down casinos, and cinemas showing foreign films. Provincial and university officials who had taken a strong stand against religion were replaced by milder men. Most important of all, Sharif-Emami entered into consultations with religious leaders, including Ayatollah Shariatmadari, and with the lay opposition, including Karim Sanjabi, the head of the

National Front, for a broad understanding about new elections.

I WENT to visit Sharif-Emami in his office, just before the end of October. I found a large, bluff, partly bald man in his sixties who exuded confidence. He said that there were many "dissatisfied and unhappy people in Iran who turned to the mullahs to voice their grievances." His strategy was "to establish a good relation with the clergy." As he saw it, the clergy was divided into two groups. "One group, which follows Ayatollah Khomeini, is radical but very small," he said. "The other, which follows Shariatmadari, is moderate and very large. A split between them exists in every city and every village." He was negotiating with Shariatmadari for some kind of convocation where the majority could prevail. "They must do it," he said of his plan for forcing a decision. "Somebody must be the head of our clergy, a Pope."

He told me he was sure that lifting the lid on censorship and on the Majles debates was the right thing to do. "A free press is much better than pressure," he said. The economic consequences of the strikes and the high wage settlements were, he thought, "not serious." There would be a cost to the state in higher wages and pensions, but that could easily be made up by a cutback on expensive military projects and plans for nuclear power plants. He favored the allocation of more money to the villages, for "by increasing credits for machinery, electricity, and water, rural life can be made more attractive and agriculture more effective." He said he hoped to "draw the men who came to town back to the villages." He acknowledged that inflation might be a problem, but he hoped to keep it down by subsidies on basic commodities—rice, bread, sugar, tea. He did not fear a military coup. "If they come in, there will be killing and shooting," he said. "Nobody wants that." He did sense that a test would be coming within the next six weeks, and he hoped to put together a large political grouping that would help open the way to free elections. Among other people, he mentioned former Prime Ministers Hoveida and Ali Amini. "I'm a patient man," he said. "I do not intend to leave this office until there is calm in Iran."

S HARIF-EMAMI had begun the interview by saying that that day Teheran, at least, was calm. But driving from his office back to my hotel I had

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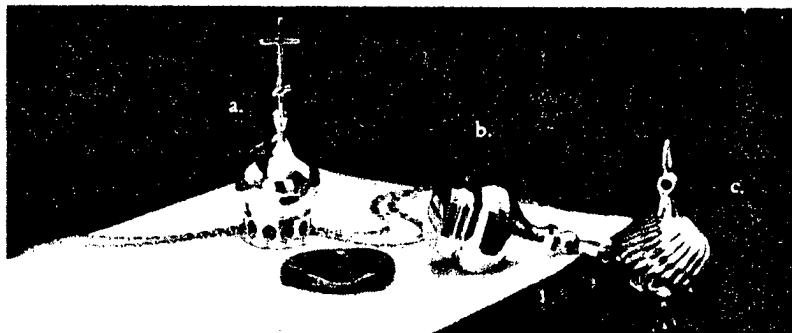
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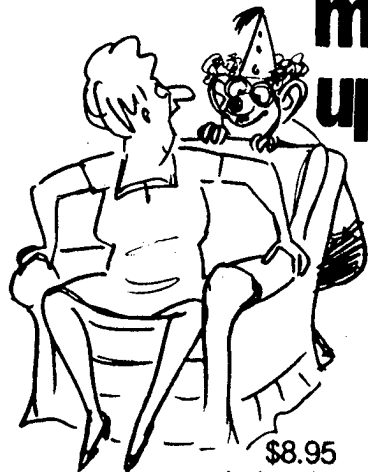

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the Shah. He detains all the liberals and keeps down men of integrity. He likes thieves. He has sexual weaknesses. He is not sincerely for liberalization. He wants to gain time, divide the religious from the lay opposition, and go back to his old system, which is essentially military rule." Of his visit to Paris, Sanjabi said, "I am not worried about my coming encounter with Khomeini. I am an optimist. Ayatollah Khomeini doesn't want chaos. We have to turn to Ayatollah Khomeini."

AS it happened, nobody's plans—not those of the Shah or those of Prime Minister Sharif-Emami or those of former Prime Minister Ali Amini or those of opposition leader Karim Sanjabi—carried the day. On Wednesday, November 1st, the Shah, apparently convinced that Sharif-Emami could not continue, received Ali Amini for the first time in years and began conversations concerning the formation of a coalition regime. According to the local press, Amini told the Shah he needed support from Sanjabi, and the Shah agreed to receive Sanjabi on his return from Paris. On November 3rd, after seeing Sanjabi, Ayatollah Khomeini said in an interview on the Paris-based Radio Luxembourg, "We have told the representatives of the opposition, such as Ali Amini and Karim Sanjabi, that if they agree to negotiate with the regime they will be banned from our movement." Karim Sanjabi came back to Teheran and called a press conference to announce his terms for negotiating with the regime. The press conference never took place. By that time, events had pushed another set of actors, the military, to center stage. Two months before, on September 4th, there had been large demonstrations in Teheran to mark the end of Ramadan. Though the demonstrations were peaceful, thousands marched, and the military feared that matters might get out of hand. On September 6th, the government banned unauthorized gatherings, and the next day there was another large rally against the Shah in Teheran. That afternoon, the military leaders went to the Shah and asked for a proclamation of martial law. The Shah told them to clear it with the Prime Minister and his government. The issue was argued between the soldiers and the Cabinet late into the night of September 7th. Toward midnight, the Cabinet gave its consent, and early the next morning martial law was decreed in Teheran and eleven other cities. But it was too late for a public

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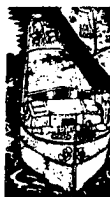
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proclamation to reach most people. Later that morning—Friday, September 8th—a large crowd gathered in Jaleh Square, a central meeting spot in downtown Teheran. After repeated orders to disperse were ignored, the security forces opened fire. More than a hundred people were killed, by the official count, and many hundreds wounded.

The shock of that massacre caused everybody to draw back. Prime Minister Sharif-Emami was able to negotiate a loose understanding whereby martial law was not enforced to the letter. Strikes by civil servants, which had begun in September, were not broken up, though they were illegal. Nor were student demonstrations, though the martial-law proclamation forbade any gathering of more than three persons. "There was martial law without there exactly being martial law," the Prime Minister observed to me.

That fuzzy condition put an obvious strain on the military leaders. Top commanders were unsure of their responsibilities. At one point, in October, the commander of the ground forces, General Gholam Ali Oveisi, sent an officer to warn the staff of the English-language daily *Kayhan* against articles he considered inaccurate and inflammatory. The reporters thereupon threatened to go on strike, and the Prime Minister backed them up. Unit commanders never knew exactly when to intervene. At least some of the rank and file, and perhaps some of the junior officers, sided with demonstrators. On two occasions, provincial police officers were shot by enlisted men in the Army.

Moreover, the military leaders had trouble reaching a consensus on what to do. The Shah, to assure his supremacy and to guard against coups, had set up separate lines of communication with many different security organizations and their leaders. The Shah himself is Supreme Commander of the armed forces. He has a personal chief of staff, General Gholam Reza Azhari, who oversees all the branches of the military, and meets tête-à-tête with the Shah twice a week. There are the chiefs of the three separate services—General Oveisi, commander of the ground forces, with two hundred and eighty thousand men; Admiral Kamaleddin Habibollahi, commander of the naval forces, with thirty-two thousand men; and General Amir Hossein Rabii, commander of the Air Force, with forty-eight thousand men—who also report individually to the Shah. There

is the head of the rural police, or gendarmerie, which is some seventy-five thousand strong and exercises administrative control over all villages with a population of less than four thousand, General Abbas Gharabaghi, who was also Minister of the Interior in the Sharif-Emami government. There is the head of the secret police, General Nasser Moghaddam. There is, finally, the head of procurement, General Hassan Toufanian, who also serves as

Vice-Minister of War to a figurehead Minister of War, General Reza Azimi.

The differences in military specialty are compounded by variations in personality and experience. The commanders of the Air Force and the Navy are relatively young men—both are forty-

six—and do not carry a lot of weight in the system. Air Force General Rabii is known as a typical fly-boy, weak in political and geopolitical understanding. General Oveisi, a former classmate of the Shah at the military college, is particularly close to the ruler. General Azhari, the Shah's chief of staff, is sixty-nine and is noted for his deliberate ways and lack of ambition. "He is underwhelming," an American who worked with him once said. "He always gives the impression that he'd rather climb a mountain or read a book than command an army. He's exactly the right man when tensions run high."

Toward the end of October, I went to the Army headquarters, northeast of Teheran, to visit General Oveisi. I found a solidly built, plainspoken man whose chest was covered with ribbons. He was in a distinctly unhappy mood. He did not like one bit the messy politics associated with the Shah's liberalization campaign, which he felt played directly into the hands of the Communists. He said, "Two years ago, the Shah decided to let people be really free. Iranians who had fled the country—writers and people like that—came back here. The National Front began speaking out. The Communist Party began acting up. The religious people asserted themselves. Basically, there were two types. One group was very religious. They followed Shariatmadari, and they didn't meddle in politics. The other group specialized in politics. They were the followers of Khomeini. They started to organize people against the government and its institutions. The Communists took advantage of the situation. They made strong statements. They burned banks and schools. Some students and



many instructors in high schools and colleges are Communists. The instructors persuaded all the students to go on strike, and so all classes were postponed.

"Most people in the United States and Europe are against our government. You send journalists here who see only leaders of the opposition. Then the journalists produce stories that are broadcast by the radio here and printed in the press. So the people here think they are not free.

"We have a well-disciplined and well-trained Army. The forces are ninety-nine per cent loyal to the Shah. Maybe there's one per cent not loyal—I don't know. I just say that to be careful. So we are not worried. What does worry me is that there is a Communist Party growing stronger. What worries me more is that when the Communists use freedom to write or to speak to undermine the government, the government is silent. When people strike and make difficulties for others, it is not correct. It jeopardizes security."

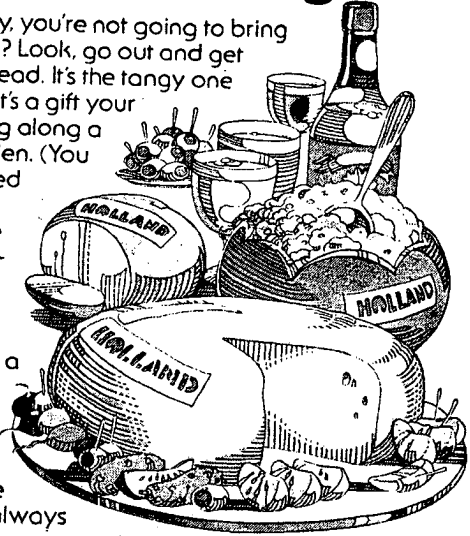
General Moghaddam, the head of SAVAK, who is a tall, pleasant-faced man with receding iron-gray hair, expressed similar ideas when I called on him in late October at his headquarters in Teheran. He said that the demonstrations were "organized one hundred per cent by the Communists, working through students and religious leaders." He said that he himself had talked with Shariatmadari. He was convinced that Shariatmadari "supports the regime but is afraid to speak out"—afraid because the government offered no protection. It was too weak to take action even against the Communists. "Two weeks ago, we identified a writer who was very active in provoking people to demonstrate against the government," he told me. "We asked the government's permission to arrest him. We were told no. We did arrest several press people for instigating rebellion with false stories. We were obliged to release them all. The military and the police now have things under control. But there are dangers. It is difficult for our security forces to attack young people. If the students keep pouring into the streets, they will paralyze our security forces. If we had a powerful government that met difficulties in a powerful way, we could deal with the troubles. But we now believe the government is not strong enough. We in the security forces—in the Army, the police, and SAVAK—feel handcuffed."

The security forces' sense of being handcuffed by a weak government in-

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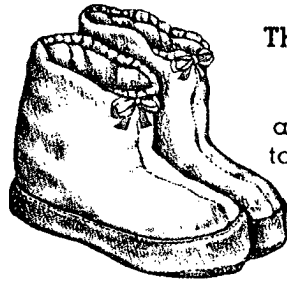


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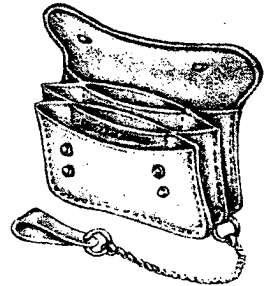
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evitably intensified in late October and early November. Demonstrations grew ever larger in scope, and strikes spread, reaching the oil industry and threatening to cripple it. Negotiations for a wider coalition picked up steam. In the first week of November, the two series of events moved in counterpoint to a showdown. In Paris, on November 3rd, Ayatollah Khomeini refused to play at coalition-making and ordered his followers not to stop demonstrating until they had forced the Shah from power. In Teheran, on November 4th, the university students, sallying forth from the campus, toppled a statue of the Shah at the entrance. The troops there forced them back onto the campus. But the next day, November 5th, there was another demonstration. This time, the troops fired first into the air and then into the crowd, killing several students. The students went on the rampage, burning banks, theatres, and the British Embassy. The day after that, Prime Minister Sharif-Emami submitted his resignation, apparently in protest against the breach of the understanding about limited use of martial law. The military, with General Oveisi in the van, seized the opportunity. They insisted that the resignation be accepted and that a military regime be appointed. The Shah consented.

ON Monday, November 6th, at noon Teheran time, the Shah went on national television and radio with an extraordinary statement. He announced the appointment of a military government, but at the same time he recognized the legitimacy of the opposition, and promised to deal with grievances and to move toward free elections. He spoke with contrition, and referred to himself as the Padeshah of Iran—a term meaning simply "King," and far less exalted than Shahanshah, or King of Kings. He said:

Dear People of Iran:

In the open political atmosphere, gradually developed these two recent years, you, the Iranian nation, have risen against cruelty and corruption. This revolution cannot but be supported by me, the Padeshah of Iran.

However, insecurity has reached a stage where the independence of the country is at stake. Daily life is endangered and what is most critical, the lifeline of the country, the flow of oil, has been interrupted.

I tried to form a coalition government, but this has not been possible. Therefore, a temporary government has been formed to restore order and pave the way for a national government to carry out free elections very soon.

I am aware of the alliance that has existed between political and economic corruption. I renew my oath to be pro-

pector of the constitution and undertake that past mistakes not be repeated and [be] compensated. I hereby give assurance that government will do away with repression and corruption and that social justice will be restored, after the sacrifices you have made. . . .

At the present juncture, the Imperial Army will fill its duties in accordance with its oaths. Calm has to be restored with your cooperation.

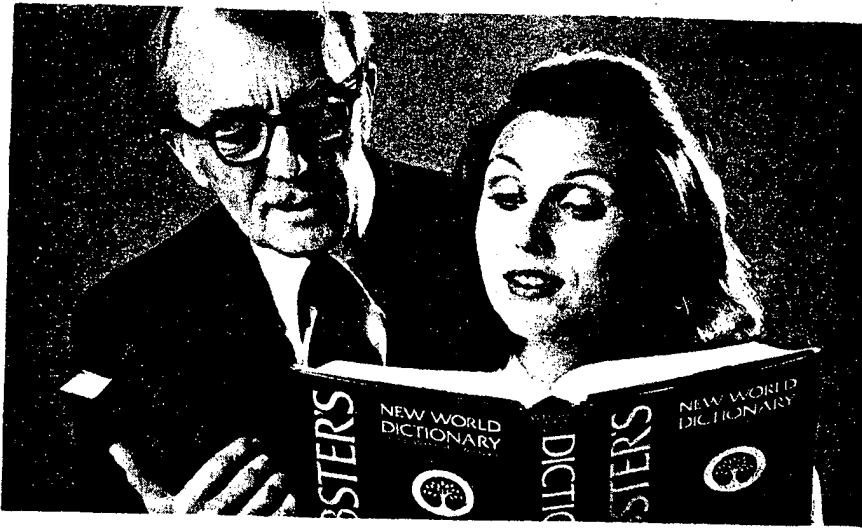
I invite the religious leaders to help restore calm to the only Shiite country in the world.

I want political leaders to help save our Fatherland. The same goes for workers and peasants.

Let us think of Iran on the road against imperialism, cruelty, and corruption, where I shall accompany you.

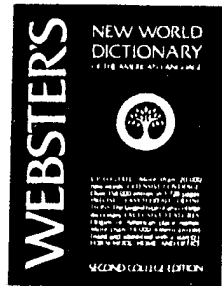
By validating the revolution and pledging early free elections, the Shah presumably hoped to put a straitjacket on the soldiers even as he handed over power to them. He named as Prime Minister of the new government the mildest of the military chiefs, General Azhari. But the military, once in office, acted with brisk confidence. Soldiers were moved into the refineries, and the striking workers, threatened with the loss of their jobs, gradually went back to work. Demonstrations were repressed with heavy force. Several leading officials—including former Prime Minister Hoveida; General Nasser, the former SAVAK head; and former Mayor Nikpay—were placed under arrest. When Sanjabi, the National Front leader, after his return from his meetings with Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris, tried to hold a press conference, he, too, was arrested. Investigations were opened into two highly sensitive matters—corruption in the royal family, and corruption in the Pahlavi Foundation. Either investigation could be conducted in a way that might implicate the Shah himself.

The opposition reacted very strongly. Both Ayatollah Khomeini in Paris and Ayatollah Shariatmadari in Qum denounced the military government. Khomeini exhorted Iranians to "broaden their opposition to the Shah, and force him to abdicate." In a series of fiery statements, he called for a campaign of mounting demonstrations during Moharram—the Shiite month of mourning, which began this year on December 2nd. He singled out as a special target the holidays of Tasua and Ashura, which this year fell on December 10th and 11th, and which commemorate the deaths of Hossein, the third Imam and the grandson of Mohammed, and his followers, at the Battle of Karbala, thirteen hundred years ago. Normally on Ashura, religious Iranians dress themselves in black, gather at the principal bazaar, and

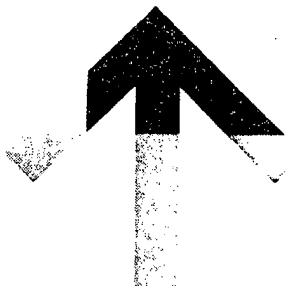


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march to the main mosque. As they march, some cut their heads with swords and whip their bodies with chains in an ecstasy of atonement. The processions, with blood drenching the garments of frenzied believers, are a revolutionary's dream.

Sensing peril, the military government on November 28th banned "processions of any kind" during Moharram. Nevertheless, crowds demonstrated in Teheran during the first two days of the holy month, and there were violations of the curfew on a large scale. Oil production dropped from 5.8 million to below 2 million barrels a day. An exodus of Americans got under way. But even as high noon approached, the major protagonists drew back. The Shah ordered that a hundred and twenty political prisoners be freed on Sunday, December 10th. On December 6th, Karim Sanjabi, the National Front leader, was released from custody. On December 8th, Aya-tollah Shariatmadari, at a press conference in Qum, urged his followers to avoid violence. That same day, the military government announced it would permit the religious processions, and the next day pledged to keep troops only in the northern sections of Teheran, out of the line of march.

On Sunday and Monday, December 10th and 11th, crowds of several hundred thousand paraded through the downtown streets. They shouted Islamic religious slogans, and showed hostility toward the Shah, the military government, and the United States. But there was no serious violence, and those who tried to make trouble were constrained by more responsible elements in the procession. The troops drawn up in the northern section of town, in the vicinity of the Niavaran Palace, were not even tested.

Obviously, there had been put into effect at the last moment a typically Persian compromise. The palace and the military government—working through former Prime Minister Ali Amini—had struck a deal with Shariatmadari to avoid a violent showdown. But, though the testing time has passed, all the contending forces are still in place. The moment seems ripe for steps toward a regime that limits the role of the Shah, in keeping with the 1906 constitution. But the moment is not going to last very long. Just before the peaceful processions began, Shariatmadari indicated that he was prepared to renew pressure if concessions were not forthcoming. He was asked when the screw would be turned again. He said, "It will be soon."

—JOSEPH KRAFT