



a function-  
closest associates during the revolutionary period all returned to Iran  
ing system of communication; local facilities in the form of  
mosques  
from foreign universities: Ibrahim Yazdi from Texas, Abo! Hassan  
and related buildings ... close daily contact with the  
masses and the  
Bani Sadr from Paris, and Sadeq Ghotbzadeh from Georgetown  
possibility of including political themes in the Friday  
sermons. With  
University in Washington, D.C. Even college graduates--or drop-  
all this, the high-ranking clergy enjoyed a certain degree  
of immunity  
outs, as in the case of Ghotbzadeh--could retain the intense faith of  
from the shah's grip." 1'  
the Shi'ites. \*

While the shah challenged the mullahs indirectly-by  
enactment  
of the legislation that made up the White Revolution-he had no  
Concentration of strength in the hands of the religious leaders:  
stomach for the kind of unholy war that would have been necessary  
While Khomeini had been exiled in the early 1960s (first to Turkey,  
to bring the Shi'ites to heel. His father had been far more  
forceful,  
then to the city of Najaf in Iraq), the shah never took decisive action  
and there were many around him who urged Mohammed Reza to  
against the mullahs, who bitterly resented his programs. Like Reza  
emulate Reza Shah. Yet paradoxically, the greater the shah's  
author-  
Shah, Mohammed Reza provided for civil judges (thus depriving the  
ity (and authoritarianism) in secular matters, the less he  
seemed  
mullahs of financial and political opportunities) and greatly en-  
inclined to challenge the mullahs.  
hanced civil rights for the populace at large, particularly for women  
and minorities. These measures flew in the teeth of the Shi'ite leaders'  
The hostility of the bazaaris: The bazaar merchants, who  
made up  
convictions that women should be unseen and unheard outside the  
a traditional merchant class of considerable power, had long  
resented  
home, and that the governance of the country should remain in  
the shah's modernization program. His introduction of the  
Western  
purely Shi'ite hands. Perhaps the most provocative of the shah's  
banking system threatened the bazaaris' income from  
moneylending

actions was to appoint several Baha'is (followers of a nineteenth-century religious movement considered heretical by Islamic leaders) plans for the creation of cooperatives also menaced their traditional to cabinet-level positions.

activities. Worse yet, the shah proposed the construction of a new

Beginning in 1976, there were large-scale demonstrations demanding commercial and shopping area precisely on the site of the traditional

ing greater adherence to fundamentalist Islamic practices. Rather than meeting the Shi'ite challenge head on, the shah alternated between bazaar, thus threatening the bazaaris with physical removal from

than meeting the Shi'ite challenge head on, the shah alternated between their business places. Along with these hated steps, he periodically

tween harsh measures and attempts at appeasement (as, for example, called for crackdowns on price-gouging. It was thus not surprising

his return to the use of the Arab calendar in the autumn of 1978).

that many bazaaris supported the revolution, both for their own

This was only understandable, for the struggle with the Shi'ites self-interest (often of a highly avaricious sort) and to a certain extent

would have been enormously difficult even under the most favorable out of religious conviction. Lastly, there was an unpleasant "ethnic"

circumstances, and in the second half of the 1970s the shah found component to the bazaaris' anti-shah activities: they hoped to re-

himself on the defensive in many areas. As one of the best analysts move their Jewish and Armenian competitors by supporting Khomeini-hopes that were to be fully realized after the revolution.

•Shi'ism has its roots in the disputes that erupted after the death of the Prophet Mohammed

as to who should wear his mantle as leader of the religious community (Umma).

The Shi'ites The physical presence of a foreign community: If any Iranian

are those who remained loyal to Ali in the line of succession. Widely distributed throughout needed a physical symbol of the changes the shah had wrought upon

Iraq and Iran, as well as the Persian Gulf and Pakistan, the Shi'ites proclaimed the legitimacy

of the Caliphate within the family of Ali. In time, however, various schools of

interpretation

the country, it was readily at hand in the large foreign ghettos in evolved, reducing the homogeneity of the Shi'ite religious community. The various schools Tehran, and to some extent other cities as well. The most obvious include the Qarmats, the Ismai'ilians, the Nusayris, and so on.

of these groups was the American community, composed of business

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## DEBACLE

(they had in fact urged that publication be postponed, or that it be printed in an unobtrusive corner of the paper), and they had to deal with the rage of the ayatollahs and mullahs. Even the most moderate

' The Crisis, I

which had religious significance or stood for secular influence or a

Western life-style in the eyes of the demonstrators. Others were chosen because they were seen as symbols of capitalism and social inequality, of the ayatollahs, Kazem Shariatmadari, condemned the article for or of the power of the regime. Many targets fell into more than one "besmirching the faith," and suggested that the publication of the of these categories. Recurrent attacks were made on cinemas and attack had "shocked all Muslims in Iran." Under the circumstances, theatres, liquor stores, television sale rooms, shops for luxury goods, expensive cars, banks, the headquarters of women's organizations, no one could defend the article in Ettela 'at, and the alliance of police stations, and the offices of the Rastakhiz party. A different convenience between religious and more secular religious leaders religious element came to the fore in the attacks on businesses owned opposed to the shah became even stronger.

or headed by members of the Bahai sect. ... Yet another indication The publication came at a time when violence was once again was that riots usually started at centers of religious life .... Sermons erupting in the streets. New demonstrations took place in the holy and religious lectures were the principal means for spreading opposi- city of Qum on January 7 and 9. Religious leaders claimed that the tion propaganda. . . .1

actions were in response to the Ettela 'at article, while the govern- ment maintained that they were timed to coincide with two of the

In addition to all these targets, the demonstrations increasingly most important dates in the history of the westernization of Iran: centered upon the person of the shah himself, and upon his deviation January 7, when women had been formally emancipated in 1935; and from Islamic standards of behavior and belief. In particular, there January 9, when the shah's agrarian program had been formally was a growing demand that the shah abandon the Imperial calendar launched in 1962. Whatever the actual explanation, the demonstra- (dated from the accession of Cyrus the Great) and reinstate the

tions were serious, with the second leading to violent clashes with Islamic one (starting with the hejira of Mohammed in 622).  
police. At least six people were killed in the fighting.

In the face of this heightened violence against him, the shah re-versed his tactics by attempting to appease his religious enemies. The deaths in Qum marked the beginning of six months of periodic violence throughout the country. Once the mandatory sixty days of Military commanders were instructed to show maximum restraint in mourning had passed, demonstrations were launched anew, producing new clashes with government troops, fresh martyrs, and the dealing with religious-led demonstrations, and it was not until an outburst of unusually destructive violence swept Isfahan in early beginning of another cycle of forty days. This relentless rhythm August, shortly after the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan, continued until June, when the pattern was broken and violence that martial law was temporarily declared in that city. The shah had become almost nonstop.

once again gotten the worst of both worlds: having provoked the The violence was not limited to religious centers, although it al-wrath of the mullahs, he then backed away from their challenge. The most always had some religious ingredient. For the first time since impression in the eyes of his enemies was of a man who was losing 1963, there was an antigovernment protest in the Tehran bazaar, his grip on power, unsure of his strategy, and vulnerable to attack where the shopkeepers staged a strike in the face of official threats -an impression that had been heightened in June when the shah to revoke the licenses of all participants. And as always, there were announced that the dreaded chief of SA VAK, General Nematollah periodic explosions on university campuses.

Nassiri, had been relieved of his responsibilities. There are many In June, the crisis took on a new dimension. Both the number of versions of the reasons for Nassiri's removal, and it is impossible to demonstrations and their clear religious content pointed to a guiding select any one of them with confidence. Some experts, including at hand with single-minded resolve:

least one high-ranking official of the U.S. State Department, believed that the shah was responding to direct American suggestions that The dominant role of the religious leader in the events of 1978 was Nassiri should be removed. The general was the symbol of human emphasized by the nature of the targets attacked by rioters, many of rights violations to many in the American foreign policy establish-

Tripoli, providing logistical help, funds, and sanctuary for Iranian of his own son if he steals, and would flog and stone his near relative exiles and their friends; and a far-flung network of acolytes and if he fornicates." Prior to the revolution, Khomeini's many apolo-

supporters throughout the Arab world and the West, organizing gists in the West suggested that one should not take such words similar movements for purposes of propaganda and exerting pressure literally, but the course of events has shown that a literal interpretation was closer to the truth. The same volume contains a preview of movement acquired such tremendous gravity that it attracted the actions of some of the leaders of the Khomeini period:

the weaker secular political groups that had long been considered the only true alternative to the Pahlavi dynasty by most observers; it also If a just mullah is placed in charge of the enforcement of canonical received support from the Soviet Union, although the full extent of punishments ... would he enforce them otherwise than how they were enforced in the days of the Prophet? ... Would the Prophet have this assistance can only be guessed at.

The world view of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini is contained imposed more than a hundred lashes on the fornicator not previously chaste? Can the mullah reduce the amount of this punishment, thereby in two volumes: Islamic Government, a collection of his lectures in creating a divergence between his practice and that of the Prophet? Najaf published in Arabic in 1970; and Khomeini and His Movement, Certainly not! The ruler ... is no more than the executor of God's a collection of his speeches and harangues published in Farsi in 1975á command and decree.'

The central theme is the same in both volumes-the shah must fall, for he is an enemy of Islam. In the 1975 book, Khomeini put it in Furthermore, Khomeini attacked the shah for his close working unmistakable terms: "The rationale of [the shah's] government and relationship with two foreign powers: the United States and Israel. some of its members is the abolition of the laws of Islam." What The latter is singled out for intense hatred, and the former is linked precisely were the shah's sins? First and foremost was the effort to to Israeli schemes for the destruction of Islam. Israel, "through its westernize Iran, thus depriving the country of its moral base and the evil agents ... has dealt a blow to us. It strikes at you, the nation; mullahs of their rightful place in society. Khomeini condemns the it wishes to seize your economy; it wishes to carry off your commerce hiring of women in boys' high schools, and of men in girls' high and agriculture; it wishes to make itself the owner of wealth ... the schools, "the moral wrongness of which is clear to all." Moreover, Koran bars its way-it must be removed .... The Iranian govern- it is wrong to have women in high places, which the shah had ment [of the shah] in pursuance to the purposes and schemes of Israel permitted.

has humiliated us and continues to do so." Those not familiar with But some of the harshest language is reserved for the practice of the relationship between Israel and Iran might well wonder at the

appointing lay persons to high positions in the national courts: "In intensity of Khomeini's rage in 1975 It is not widely known that order to accomplish its own designs and to abolish manliness and every Israeli prime minister from David Ben-Gurion to Menachem Begin visited Tehran during this period, as did other leading Israeli of Justice has shown its opposition to the established law of Islam. personages. Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin, for example, went From this point on, Jews, Christians, and enemies of Islam and of secretly to Iran to discuss matters of joint interest with their Iranian counterparts. And there was considerable cooperation between the "enemies of Islam" are a code-phrase for the Baha'is, who were two countries. Iran was Israel's most reliable oil supplier; Israel targeted by the Khomeini movement as early as the demonstrations responded by assisting Iran on military preparedness, a certain de- in 1977-78, and later singled out for violent treatment once the gree of intelligence sharing, and even technical assistance. There was revolution succeeded. no Israeli embassy in Tehran, but the head of the Israeli mission The shah was criticized not only for his attempts at moderniza- during the last days, Uri Lubrani, was as much an ambassador as any tion, but also for his leniency toward sinners: "We want," said diplomat bearing the official title. It is doubtful that Khomeini knew Khomeini in the earlier volume, "a ruler who would cut off the hand the full extent of bilateral relations, but he was not imagining the

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