

INSTITUTE OF POLICY STUDIES
ISLAMABAD



IRANIAN REVOLUTION

A Profile

WAHEED-UZ-ZAMAN

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**For
QASIM, RABIA,
FAKIHA AND HAMID**

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PREFACE

It was during my stay in Tehran as the Executive Director of the RCD Cultural Institute, between June 1979 and June 1982, that I developed a deep interest in the Iranian Revolution and planned this book. Indeed, a substantial portion of the first draft was written during this period. This draft was later improved with the help of numerous important sources that were not accessible to me in Iran. The study has been nearly ready for some time, but preoccupations with other responsibilities did not allow me enough time for its finalization.

This modest work is by no means a detailed history of the Iranian Revolution; it is only a profile of one of the most remarkable events of contemporary history. It may none the less provide answers to some of the vital questions often raised in the context of the Revolution.

The Iranian Revolution is a highly controversial subject, and does not lend itself to an easy, simple interpretation. It is, therefore, quite obvious that there will be some disagreement with my findings and analyses. I myself do not claim any finality about the views that I have expressed; for, as is commonly recognized, the final word in history will always remain to be written. I can only say that I have tried to study the Revolution and subsequent developments honestly and without any bias.

The book is divided into eight chapters. The first chapter is a quick survey of salient developments during Pahlavi rule up to the end of 1977. The second deals with the open confrontation between the ruling elite and revolutionary elements until the overthrow of the monarchy and the return of Ayatollah Khomeini, followed by the emergence of the provisional government under Mehdi Bazargan in February 1979.

The third chapter is a study of the factors and forces that facilitated the success of the revolutionary upheaval. Dr. Ali Shariati's role in accelerating this process has been especially highlighted. The fourth chapter is an attempt to assess the tenure of Mehdi Bazargan as the first provisional Prime Minister, with special attention given to the difficulties and problems he faced in trying to arrest the chaos arising in the wake of the overthrow of the monarchy.

The democratic process which ensued soon after the inauguration of the revolutionary regime – the referendum on whether the people wanted an Islamic Republic or not, the election to the Constituent Assembly and the framing of the Constitution, followed by the election of the first President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and members of the unicameral legislature – form the subject matter of the fifth chapter.

One of the most remarkable and alarming episodes, which aroused world-wide concern, was the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran. This dramatic development and its aftermath have been dealt with at some length in an independent chapter.

The last two chapters are devoted to the power struggle that had started soon after the success of the Revolution, but then attained dangerous dimensions in

the months that followed. These two chapters bring the narrative down to the election of Ali Khamenei as President and the appointment of Hossein Musavi as Prime Minister in October 1981.

I wish to take this opportunity of thanking numerous friends in Iran and elsewhere for enlightening me on a number of issues dealt with in the book. It is neither possible nor even prudent to mention their names. My special thanks are due to Mr. Rafe-uz-Zaman and Dr. Ijaz Shafi Gilani for having read the manuscript and making many useful suggestions. Of course, the responsibility for all the views expressed in this book is entirely mine. I am also obliged to Mr. Mohammad Tufail for typing the manuscript.

CHAPTER I
KING OF KINGS

King of Kings

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the last 'heir to some five hundred kings belonging to forty dynasties who had reigned and governed during 2500 years',¹ died of cancer in a Cairo hospital on July 27, 1980 practically unwept and unsung. His burial ceremony was a pitifully simple affair. It was attended by only a few of his distinguished friends, such as President Anwar Sadaat of Egypt, former American President Nixon and Constantine XII, a former King of Greece, the last two representing no one but their own selves. This was in marked contrast to the funeral processions of the Yugoslavian President and the Japanese Prime Minister, who had died some months earlier. President Tito's funeral in May 1980 was attended by representatives of 123 countries, among whom there were four kings, 32 presidents and 22 prime ministers. The American President, Jimmy Carter, was represented by his aged mother, Lillian Carter, and Vice-President Mondale.² The funeral of Japan's Prime Minister, Ohira, who died in June 1980, was attended by as many as 243 world dignitaries, including the American President and the Chinese Prime Minister.³

The Shah, until less than two years ago, was one of the most sought after men in the world. He had enjoyed the support of Western allies, notably the United States of America, whose seven successive Presidents,

from Truman to Carter, had repeatedly held out definite assurances of their warmest friendship and unconditional assistance. As recently as on October 26, 1978, President Carter paid the Shah a flattering compliment on the occasion of his birthday: 'You can reflect with pride and satisfaction on what you have done to move your country forward'. He had assured the Shah that 'the United States values our strong and enduring ties with Iran' and that 'we place high importance on our close relationship'.⁴

The entire political scenario changed substantially after the Shah went into exile on January 16, 1979, and took on a new look when American diplomats in Tehran were taken hostage on November 4, 1979. The altered situation was aptly reflected in the statement issued by the United States' Government on the death of the Shah. 'History will record', it said, with understandable caution, 'that he [the Shah] led the country at a time when profound changes were taking place. His death marks the end of an era in Iran, which all hope will be followed by peace and tranquility'.⁵ In Iran, where he had enjoyed unrestrained authority for nearly four decades, with complete indifference to the wishes of an overwhelming majority of the people, the news of his death was received with relief and joy. 'Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, the blood-sucker of the country', announced the State-run radio Tehran, 'has died at last'. The *Ettelaat*, a Persian daily, brought out a special issue headlined, 'The Shah is dead', and distributed it free. Some adopted a quizzical attitude: 'May be he is dead, but', said Oil Minister Ali Akbar Moinefar, 'if that is the case, he was killed by America'.⁶ In order to understand both the apparent indifference of the world's public leaders and the unconcealed delight of his own people on the demise of one of the most powerful rulers of the region, we must examine the main currents and cross-currents

of Pahlavi rule.

II

The Pahlavi dynasty was founded by Reza Khan, a ruthless and formidable man who had risen from the ranks in the Iranian army, and who had not learnt reading and writing until he was an adult. After a successful coup against the reigning monarch Ahmad Shah, the last Qajar ruler, he became a minister of war under Prime Minister Sayyid Ziaeddin Tabatabai in 1921. Two years later, in 1923, he assumed the office of the Prime Minister sending Tabatabai and many other opponents into exile. In October 1925, the spineless Majlis, at the behest of Reza Khan, voted for the deposition of Ahmad Shah, thus bringing the 131-year rule of the Qajar dynasty to an end.

A freshly elected 'constituent assembly' voted in favour of the continuation of the institution of monarchy, and requested Reza Khan to assume the title of Shahanshah. This decision, as his son later recorded, was taken because 'most of the constitutionalists all over the country had always been firm supporters of the monarchical principle'.⁷ Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini, a sworn foe of both the father and the son, however, was convinced that he was brought to the throne by the machinations of the British Government to destroy the power of the ulama because 'the British interests in Iran were challenged by the clergy'.⁸

Reza Khan soon undertook the task of bringing about far-reaching changes in the country. In view of later developments, two of these should be emphasized. First, in place of the traditional ecclesiastical courts, he patterned the penal and civil codes on European models. Secondly, in an endeavour to modernize Iran, he de-

creed an end to the traditional veil for women. Both moves were vehemently resisted by the ulama, but he remained indifferent to their protest. Indeed, he virtually slapped them in the face by taking his wife, Taj-ul-Malook to a public function without a veil. The ulama, as was to be expected, bristled at this insult and became even more bitter in their criticism of the royal order. On hearing of the public denunciation of his decree, Reza Shah rushed to the holy city of Qum and personally thrashed one of the protestors, a prominent Mujtahid with an iron rod 'so hard . . . that the metal was bent'.⁹ Defending his father's action, Mohammad Reza Shah said that 'he knew that the old religious people were the root of our backwardness. He had to crush it and I had to do the same'.¹⁰

The confrontation between lay ruler and ulama was by no means a new phenomenon in Iran. It had a long history of repression and resistance. Reza Khan's attempt to eliminate the power of the religious leaders and pave the way for the modernization of the country unhindered, only brought the struggle out into the open. It was soon to develop into a permanent feature of the religio-political life of Iran, finally leading to the end of the Pahlavi dynasty and the inauguration of the Islamic Revolution half a century later. Reza Shah's dictatorial rule came to an end in 1941 during the Second World War. Suspecting his pro-German leanings, the Allies invaded Iran in September 1941, and forced him to abdicate in favour of the crown prince, Mohammad Reza.

Mohammad Reza was born on October 26, 1919. Reared in an atmosphere of authoritarian discipline, the timid and sickly prince received his early education in a school specially set up in the palace for him by his

father. He was later sent to Le Rosey Boarding School in Switzerland. His four years' stay there was, according to him, 'a tremendously important period in my life. The democratic Western environment moulded my character to an extent that was second only to my father's influence'.¹¹ He was quite convinced that he had a divine mission to fulfil, and was 'chosen by God' to save his country.

On his return to Iran in 1936, he entered the Military Academy, from where he graduated two years later. By then, he had received some of the grooming required to assume the responsibilities of a monarch, which he did on the abdication of his father on September 16, 1941. However, the domineering influence of his father, early separation from his family and frail health, all combined to subject him to 'self-doubt and fears of his own weakness'.¹²

His first test of will and determination occurred a decade later, when he was nearly dispossessed of his throne by the popular leader, Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq. The crisis was precipitated by the all-important oil issue. At the turn of the century, in 1901, the Iranian Government granted William D'Arcy, a British subject, exclusive rights for oil exploration in the country for a period of 60 years. In 1909, the Anglo-Persian (later Anglo-Iranian) Oil Company was established. Three years later, in 1912, the British Government decided to finance the company, and acquired a majority share-holding in it. When Reza Shah came to power, he sought a revision of the oil concession to provide higher royalties to help finance the industrialization of the country. As a result, in 1933, a new, somewhat more favourable, agreement was reached.

However, by the late forties, Iranian politicians had come to feel strongly that while the Anglo-Iranian Oil

Company was earning huge profits, the country itself was getting a mere pittance of this profit. Subsequently, Mossadeq and his National Front, an amalgam of some political factions of the Majlis deputies, led the movement for nationalization of the oil industry. That the company was really making enormous profits with little benefit to Iran is evident from the fact that by 1950 just the income tax it paid to the British Government amounted to 112 million dollars whereas the total amount of royalties received by Iran for all these years was no more than 45 million dollars.¹³ Mossadeq soon acquired immense popularity, and his demand for the nationalization of oil speedily gained momentum and became a popular demand.

In June 1950, the Shah, who was not prepared to move as fast as nationalist elements demanded, appointed General Razmara as the Prime Minister, who, it was widely believed, had both American and British support.¹⁴ Reluctant to forego such backing, he was not prepared to nationalize oil. On March 3, 1951, he issued a government report stating that nationalization of oil was neither feasible nor in the interest of the country. Four days later, on March 7, 1951, Razmara was assassinated by Khalil Tahmasbi, a member of the Fidayeen-e-Islam. 'If I have rendered a humble service', said Tahmasbi a year later, by which time he had become something of a national hero, 'it was for the Almighty in order to deliver the deprived Muslim people of Iran from foreign serfdom. My only desire is to follow the doctrine of the Quran'.¹⁵

There is little doubt that religious leaders fully supported the movement for the nationalization of oil. Indeed, 'it was not until the movement was interpreted by the religious classes in terms of Islam that it received wide support'.¹⁶ The most prominent religious leaders who lent his full support to the nationalization of oil

was Sayyid Abol Qasem Kashani, who had been banished by Reza Shah and had returned to Iran after his abdication. It was also he who, it is generally believed, had instigated the assassination of Razmara.

Razmara was succeeded by Hossein Ala. The new Prime Minister tried to steer a moderate course by accepting the principle of nationalization, but denying the popular demand for dismissing the foreign technicians without whom, it was said, the oil industry could not continue to function. Several Majlis deputies interpreted this as a dilatory tactic indicating an unwillingness to nationalize the industry. Then, following various acts of violence in the oil fields, Hossein Ala was forced to resign on April 27, 1951.

It was at this stage that Mossadeq, who had by then emerged as a national hero, was appointed Prime Minister on April 29, 1951. He had come to be regarded as 'a messianic protagonist of the forces of good engaged in a self-sacrificing struggle with the forces of evil',¹⁷ who truly symbolized the national aspirations of an overwhelming majority of Iranians. The Shah himself has confessed that his popularity was so great and widespread that 'no one could stand against him'.¹⁸

Mohammad Mossadeq was born in 1879, and entered government service at the young age of 18. He proceeded for higher studies in economics to France in 1907, and two years later moved to Switzerland, where he received a doctorate in law. He served as a member of the Majlis from 1915 to 1928, with an interval of two years, from 1918 to 1920, which he spent in Europe. He stayed away from politics from 1928 to 1940. In March 1944, he was elected to the Majlis, and soon emerged as the leader of the National Front. His popularity was largely the result of 'his refusal to

compromise with Reza Shah's dictatorship, his long standing campaign against inherited privilege, and his resolute determination to rid Persia of corrupting foreign influence'.¹⁹ In December 1944, he piloted a bill in the Majlis, which prohibited any official from entering into any agreement on oil with foreign powers.

Two days after his appointment as Prime Minister, the oil nationalization bill was voted by Parliament, obliging the Shah to give his assent. This naturally brought Mossadeq into direct conflict with Britain and her principal ally, the United States of America. The British Government took the dispute to the International Court of Justice at the Hague, but Mossadeq refused to accept the jurisdiction of the Court. The British Government promptly appealed to the Security Council, seeking its intervention.

After the opening of the new session of Parliament on July 13, 1952, Mossadeq asked for extraordinary powers to deal with the situation, and demanded the portfolio of the War Minister, which, in the Shah's words, 'would enable him to undermine my power, provided in our Constitution, as Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces'.²⁰ The Shah refused this demand, and Mossadeq resigned on July 17, 1952. The Shah appointed Ahmad Qavam as the new Prime Minister, who was too old to cope with the highly complex situation, and 'often fell asleep during policy meetings'.²¹ Since Parliament was packed with royal supporters, Mossadeq found himself in a minority in the legislature despite an open popular backing that had not been enjoyed by any political leader in Iran's recent past. With this solid support, he walked out of Parliament on July 21, 1952, and made the historic announcement that 'Parliament is where the people are'.²² This was followed by street clashes between law enforcing agencies and supporters

of Mossadeq, who demanded Ahmad Qavam's resignation. These clashes resulted in the death of some 800 residents of Tehran. The next day, the Shah, sensing 'the threat of civil war',²³ agreed to Mossadeq's conditions, and he was once again named the Prime Minister. It was on the same day that the International Court of Justice ruled that it was not within its jurisdiction to give a decision on Iran's oil dispute with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. This further raised the prestige and popularity of Mossadeq.

Mossadeq's rising tide of popularity inside as well as outside the Majlis seriously disturbed the Shah. 'It had become plain to me soon after his appointment as prime minister', said the Shah, 'that he wanted to destroy my dynasty . . . and to advance slowly, a millimetre a day, towards exterminating it.'²⁴ In February 1953, the threat became unmistakably clear when Mossadeq advised the Shah to leave the country. This advice, in the Shahanshah's view, had been tendered to him under the influence of Communist elements who had infiltrated the ranks of Mossadeq followers.²⁵ The situation deteriorated during the next few months; and on August 13, 1953, the Shah dismissed Mossadeq and appointed General Fazlollah Zahedi as his successor. Mossadeq not only refused to accept his ouster, but also ordered the arrest of Colonel Nematollah Nassiri, the emissary carrying the dismissal order. This development did not take the Shah by surprise, for he had made contingency plans to leave the country if Mossadeq rose up in defiance against him. As a result, soon after the news of Mossadeq's action reached him, the Shah departed for Baghdad from where, following a day's stay, he left for Rome.

After a few days' sojourn abroad, the Shah returned to Tehran, 'to the heart warming, tumultuous welcome'

by which 'I was greatly moved and touched' because 'this expression of affection, a spontaneous ovation [was] in such contrast to the regimented demonstration in which Mossadeq and the Tudeh Party had excelled'.²⁶ This account suggests that the uprising against the Shah and in favour of Mossadeq's policies was the work of a few misled people and that the triumphant return of the Shah showed his immense personal popularity.

Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, in his *Mission for my Country*, published eight years after Mossadeq's fall, has painted him in the ugliest of colours. He has been described a 'born showman' who 'knew his lines well and spoke them shrilly, but he did not know what they meant'. He would be remembered 'with pity as somebody who lacked integrity as well as manliness and statesmanship. His three main characteristics were his negativism, his hypocrisy and egotism'. If Mossadeq was a nationalist, he concludes, 'then obviously a new term for real nationalism must be invented'.²⁷ In a later account published after his exile, in January 1979, the Shah has observed:

'Mossadeq, the orator, is difficult to judge as a politician because of the perpetual contradictions between his words and his acts, and because of his sudden changes of mood from elation to depression before one's very eyes. His absolute certainty, violently expressed in hysterical speeches, would turn to tears and sobbing. He had frequent "diplomatic" illnesses and he played out macabre comedies in which he would exclaim: "I am a-dying . . ." and so forth. He has been compared to Robespierre, to Rienzi and even to characters from the *Commedia dell'Arte*'.²⁸

An editorial comment of the *New York Times* put

forward a similar conclusion. 'We thought of him', it said, 'as a sincere well-meaning patriotic Iranian who had a different point of view. We know now that he is power hungry, personally ambitious, a ruthless demagogue who is trampling upon the liberties of his own people'.²⁹ These strong words, however, do not accord with Mossadeq's image as a popular leader, commanding the support of millions of his countrymen in the early fifties. Many years later, during the struggle which finally culminated in the Revolution, he was remembered not for his 'negativism, hypocrisy and egotism', but as one of the greatest national heroes, and as a symbol of the true aspirations of the Iranian people. His pictures adorned hundreds of street walls, offices and factories throughout the country. No one who has visited Iran after the Revolution could have failed to notice the deep-seated affection for him. The main and the busiest road which runs from one end of Tehran to the other was named after him (earlier it was called Pahlavi).³⁰ Another fashionable street, previously called Aryamehr, was named after Dr. Hossein Fatimi, the Foreign Minister of Mossadeq who was tried for treason and executed by the Shah.

The Shah has attributed his triumphant return to Iran to the love of his people and their regard for the institution of monarchy. But facts which have come to light in recent years leave little room for doubt that the overthrow of Mossadeq was masterminded by the CIA with the collaboration of the British Government.

Kermit Roosevelt, a grandson of President Theodore Roosevelt, in his *Counter Coup*, published some three months after the Shah was finally forced to leave the country in January 1979, has given a gripping and detailed account of one of the most dramatic feats of American secret service agencies. The Shah reportedly

acknowledged his deep debt of gratitude to Roosevelt at the end of this classic episode in the following words: 'I owe my throne to God, my people, my army — and to you'. The word 'you', says Roosevelt, was meant for 'me and the two countries — Great Britain and the United States—I was representing. We were all heroes'.³¹ The fateful decision to come to the rescue of the Iranian monarch, who had been badly mauled by the movement spearheaded by Mossadeq, was taken on June 25, 1953, after the plan had been tentatively agreed upon between the British and American authorities at the highest levels. The draft of the plan originally prepared by the British Government was taken to the American Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles to straighten out and finalize details.

The code-name of the operation was 'Ajax', and it was originally planned by the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. Its main purpose was to undo the Iranian decision to nationalize the oil industry. The objective of the revised plan was to get rid of 'the wily old man', Mossadeq, in order to rescue Iran 'from the Russians', whose agents, in the shape of the Tudeh Party, were strengthening their hold on him. This plan was a 'co-operative venture', and its authors included the Shah of Iran, the British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, and his Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden, the American President, Eisenhower, and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, and the personnel of the CIA. The crucial meeting on June 25, 1953, in the office of the American Secretary of State, was attended by: General Walter Bedell Smith, the Under-Secretary of State and a former Director of the CIA; Robert Richardson Bowie, Director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, later appointed by President Carter as a Deputy Director of the CIA; Henry Byroade, Assistant Secretary of State, in charge of the Near East, Africa and South Asia, a man

who was later to have the unique distinction of having been appointed United States Ambassador to more countries 'than any other man in American diplomatic history'; Robert D. Murphy, the Deputy Under-Secretary for Political Affairs, who, during World War II, 'had been in charge of clandestine preparations for the Allied landing in North Africa, which had largely contributed to the first really big allied victory of the war'; Charles Wilson, the Secretary of Defence; Loy Henderson, the United States Ambassador to Iran, who had specially come from Tehran for the meeting, and Allen Welsh Dulles, the younger brother of John Foster Dulles. Most of those who attended the meeting were 'strongly pro-Israel'. The Secretary of State, Foster Dulles, presided over this meeting, with his brother, Allen Dulles, on his right and Kermit Roosevelt on his left. With Kermit's 22 paged paper in front of him, he glanced at the group and remarked 'so this is how we get rid of the mad man Mossadeq'.

Before eliciting the views of his audience, the Secretary of State dwelt on the history, geography and strategic position of Iran and the ambitions of Russia to control the Persian Gulf by controlling Iran. He was followed by Kermit Roosevelt who said that he had been to Iran several times to personally assess the situation and was convinced that the Soviet threat to Iran was 'genuine, dangerous and imminent'. Mossadeq was 'an unwitting ally' of Russia; and in the proposed showdown, the Iranian Army and the Iranian people would support the Shah 'against Mossadeq and, most specially, against the Russians'. He then informed Secretary of State Dulles that British approval for the plan had already been obtained and contact with the Shah of Iran would be established after 'the final U.S. go-ahead'. Explaining some of the details of the plan, he said that the first objective was 'to organize the military support' be-

cause General Riahi, the Iranian Chief of Staff, was a strong supporter of Mossadeq. It was, therefore, essential that the army leaders should be 'carefully selected'. General Fazlollah Zahedi, who was then in hiding because Mossadeq had issued orders for his arrest, was suggested as Mossadeq's replacement, who would be contacted through his son Ardeshir Zahedi, 'well-known to some of our Embassy personnel' in Tehran who have 'complete confidence in him'. After Dr. Mossadeq had been dismissed and General Zahedi appointed as his successor, 'we must organize the necessary military and popular backing' in order to 'make any resistance from Mossadeq and his ally, General Riahi, absolutely hopeless'.

The British authorities had placed a few highly experienced and reliable individuals in Iran at the disposal of the United States, who were instrumental in establishing 'communication for us with their principal Iranian friends'. A certain Mr. Henry Montague was to be 'stationed in Cyprus to provide the radio contact between those of us who will be in Tehran and those of you remaining in the outer world'. It was also arranged to have some reliable Iranian contacts who would 'turn out the bazaar in support of HIM [His Imperial Majesty], and that will be all the signal needed by the people and the army'.

After listening to Kermit Roosevelt, the Secretary of State asked for comments from others. While most of them simply nodded their approval, Loy Henderson, the United States Ambassador to Iran, said that being 'confronted by a desperate, a dangerous situation, and a mad man' there was no alternative 'but to proceed with this undertaking'. Speaking at the end again, Kermit Roosevelt pleaded with the Secretary of State that 'this simply has to be done' and assured him that 'we can do it'. The

requisite approval was announced by Dulles. 'If that's that, then, let's get going'. He then waved his guests away and walked towards one of his telephones. 'Perhaps he was calling the White House'.³²

The decision was promptly conveyed to the Shah through the most reliable person available – his twin sister Princess Ashraf Pahlavi. She had been living in France after her expulsion from Iran by Mossadeq. Revealing the details of her secret mission, she has recorded the following story in her memoirs. In summer 1953, when she was residing in Paris, she was approached by a reliable fellow compatriot, who informed her that, since both the United States and Britain were deeply concerned about the situation in Iran, they had prepared a plan which could be of immense help to the Shah. Since she could be of great assistance in carrying out this plan, the Iranian intermediary, whose identity she has not revealed, requested her to meet two gentlemen, one an American and the other a British national. She agreed. In a subsequent secret meeting, the American disclosed to her that 'he was a personal representative of John Foster Dulles, and that the Englishman was speaking for Winston Churchill, whose conservative party had recently come into power'.

The secret agents requested Princess Ashraf to convey a highly sensitive communication to the Shah. She was willing to undertake this assignment, but told them that she did not see how she could enter Iran, since she had been exiled and her passport had been cancelled. 'Just leave the details to us'. they said. They only wanted her consent to travel to Iran, which she readily gave. Two days later, dressed in simple clothes and carrying a tiny suitcase, she reached the Orly Airport in Paris at the appointed time. She was promptly approached by a porter who took her luggage. It was not

long before she realized that she was surrounded by a ring of security men. The porter led her through a long passage to a place where a vehicle was waiting for her. She got into a car and went straight to the airplane. There she was given a boarding card and an envelope to be delivered to her brother. Immediately after she had settled in her seat, she spotted two persons 'who were obviously there to protect me – or rather the envelope I was carrying'.

Reaching Mehrabad Airport, Tehran, on schedule, she was received by one of her friends, whom she had informed of her arrival. In a dark corner of the runway, a taxi already parked there took her out of the airport without passing through the normal custom channels. She was taken to the Saadabad Palace, where her step-brother resided in one of the houses in palace compound. Neither the brother nor his wife asked any question. They had apparently been informed of her visit in advance. In half an hour's time, the Martial Law Governor of Tehran came to tell the Princess that the Prime Minister was aware of her secret visit, and had ordered an Air France plane to take her out of the country. She was nevertheless able to stay in Tehran for 10 days, on one pretext or another, but still was not able to see her brother. It was only through her sister-in-law, Queen Soraya, that she delivered the 'fateful letter', the contents of which she says 'I still cannot reveal'.³³

Some details of the CIA coup, and the role of the British Government in it, have been corroborated by the British Foreign Secretary, Anthony Eden. In his *Memoirs*, he says that the Americans were persuaded to accept his point of view that 'we should be better occupied looking for alternatives to Mussadeq rather than trying to buy him off'.³⁴ Although both Churchill and Eden took a personal interest in the project, the latter was

more enthusiastic, and he 'read the final draft very carefully, making marginal notations in his own handwriting'.³⁵ Finally, following meticulous preparations, Kermit Roosevelt was able to enter Iran. With a number of local agents, a few of his own CIA men and a million dollars worth of local currency, he succeeded in toppling Mossadeq and paving the way for a successful return of the Shah. When the news of Mossadeq's fall reached Anthony Eden, he, as he himself puts it, 'slept happily that night'.³⁶ After the completion of his mission, Kermit flew to London to report his accomplishment to the British Government. He was received by Government representatives at the airport and driven to 10 Downing Street for a meeting with Churchill. The aging British statesman congratulated Kermit Roosevelt, and told him: 'Young man, if I had been a few years younger, I would have loved nothing better than to have served under your command in this great adventure'.³⁷

Whereas the United States and Britain had collaborated in getting rid of Mossadeq because they felt that with him at the helm of affairs in Iran, Soviet influence was likely to grow; some post-revolutionary Iranian leaders believed that the move was indirectly assisted by the Russians as well. The Iranian President, Abolhassan Banisadr, speaking at a massive gathering marking the thirteenth death anniversary of Mohammad Mossadeq on March 4, 1980 said that the Soviet Union had lent its helping hand to bring down the regime of Mossadeq, because it feared the upsurge of an Islamic Iranian outlook and its potential of spreading to suppressed Muslim minorities in the Soviet Union. 'The coup and the installation of the new regime', he said, 'was not just the work of America alone'. He also noted a parallel between Mossadeq's attempts to free his country from foreign influence and the movement of Khomeini launched several years later. The former was marked by a 'spirit

of freedom', and the latter by a 'spirit of religion'. The two, in course of time, were fused together and resulted in the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty.³⁸

Despite the publication of the personal accounts of Kermit Roosevelt and Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, the Shah-an Shah's version, published after his overthrow, presents a different picture:

'It was only on reaching the edge of the abyss that the Iranian people awoke to the immensity of the danger which threatened them, but first there were three days of rioting in Tehran. The first two days were organized by the partisans of Mossadeq and the Toudeh. It was not until the morning of the third day, August 19, 1953, that with extraordinary courage, workers and artisans, students and professional men, soldiers and policemen, even women and children, confronted the guns, machine guns and even tanks of the raving dictator, and reversed the situation. I returned to Tehran where I was greeted with popular enthusiasm. Throughout Iran the voice of the people called irresistibly. Before, I had been no more than an hereditary sovereign, but now I had the right to claim that I had really been elected by the people'.³⁹

But this view that Mossadeq was toppled because the opposition to him was 'genuine and widespread . . . not only in the court and in the army, but also in the village and in the bazaar' and that 'there is no doubt that the complicated events of the August days represented in themselves an indigenous national upsurge which needed no foreign exhortations to come into being'⁴⁰ is not corroborated by the evidence now available.

With Mossadeq eliminated and General Fazlollah Zahedi safely installed in office, the Shah secured a new lease of life and power. According to one estimate, no fewer than 5,000 people lost their lives in the British-American operation to crush Mossadeq and the following vengeance of the Imperial regime.⁴¹ Yet, a new era of friendship between Iran and America commenced, which provided certain mutual benefits for a quarter of a century, whose hollowness for Iran became steadily more apparent as time passed – not only for the people of Iran, but the Shah, too!

III

The years that followed the removal of Mossadeq witnessed many developments of far-reaching significance. The most notable of these was the inauguration of the Shahanshah's personal rule. This is not to suggest that before the Mossadeq episode he was a strictly constitutional ruler or that he was encouraging democratic trends. He was doing neither. The only difference between the eras before and after Mossadeq was that, in the latter, he took certain steps to exercise more direct and personal control over affairs of state. Existing political parties were banned, and two new organizations, called the *Mellioun* (Nationalist) Party and the *Mardom* (people's) Party, headed by Dr. Manuchehr Eqbal and Asadollah Alam, respectively, were created.

Eqbal, the leader of the major party in the Majlis, became the Prime Minister, and Alam took over the functions of the leader of His Majesty's opposition. The Prime Minister made no pretensions of being a representative of the people, and, without any hesitation, told the Majlis that he was no more than 'the servant of the Shah'.⁴² New press laws were imposed, and censorship was further tightened.

Perhaps the most notorious of the various steps taken at this time was the creation of SAVAK, from initial of the Persian *Sazman-e-Amniyat-va-Ettelaat-e-Kishwar* (literally, Agency of Security and Information of the State). The agency was manned by a large police force and many of the recruits to SAVAK were trained in America and Israel.⁴³ Initially, according to article II of its Constitution, its functions included: 'the gathering of information necessary to protect national security; to prevent the activity of groups whose ideology is contrary to the national Constitution; and to prevent plots against national security.'⁴⁴ The Shah himself stated that SAVAK had been established 'to combat Communist subversion after the disastrous Mossadeq episode', and to keep the Government informed on the activities of 'traitors, spies, agitators and professional saboteurs'.⁴⁵

General Teymur Bakhtiar, a trusted confidant of the Shah, was appointed its first chief in 1957. He was replaced by General Hasan Pakravan in 1962, but he, in turn, was relieved four years later, because the Shah thought he was 'too soft'.⁴⁶ His place was taken by Nematollah Nassiri, another close associate of the Shah and Chief of Police from 1963 to 1965. It was during Nassiri's tenure that this agency attracted the attention of the world with horrendous accounts of its activities. The number of SAVAK employees has been variously estimated. In the words of a competent authority on contemporary Iran, 'In the past the regularly employed members of SAVAK had been guessed at between 30,000 and 60,000. However, SAVAK relied extensively on part-time informers and personnel already employed by other Government agencies.'⁴⁷ According to another source, SAVAK had 20,000 employees and 180,000 informers.⁴⁸ The Shah, himself, put the figure of employees at 3,200 at the beginning of 1978, and not more than 4,000 at the end of that year.⁴⁹

In later years of the Pahlavi regime, SAVAK was directly associated with gruesome tortures and acts of inhuman punishment aimed at suppressing all opposition and dissent. No offence, no matter how small – the possession of a picture of an opposition leader, so-called subversive literature, or even friendly or family connections with dissidents – was allowed to go unpunished. ‘Thousands of Iranians died at SAVAK hand. Thousands more endured unspeakable torture for crimes no greater than an indiscreet word, a defiant gesture’.⁵⁰ The SAVAK network was so extensive and its reign of terror so widespread that, in the words of Khomeini, ‘a brother was afraid of his own brother, a father was afraid of his son, and the son was afraid of his father, and the two of them were afraid of each other’ lest they utter a word which might be construed as offensive.⁵¹

After the Revolution, in a conducted tour of prisons, some foreign journalists were given a detailed account of the techniques SAVAK personnel used in these prisons: first came the ‘softening’ stage, which included beating and flogging; then came the ‘Apollo chair’ ‘with its agonizing wrist and ankle clamps and a helmet designed to magnify the victim’s screams’; then came the ‘toast rack’ stage, in which the suspect was laid on a heated iron bed and his body was burnt with cigarette butts and lighters; and, finally, the suspect was hung by the wrists or feet, the finger nails pulled out and heated needles inserted into the body. The correspondents were able to talk to the relatives of some of the victims as well as to some of the torturers. Ahmed Sadeq, one such relative, who was present on the occasion of the visit of the newsmen, informed them that his eldest son, an honours graduate in engineering, was executed after seven months of torture. His second son was jailed and tortured for three years, and his daughter for nearly two years.⁵²

Hassan Sana, the Economic and Security Adviser to the Deputy Head of SAVAK, then a prisoner under trial, disclosed the nature of the intimate liaison between SAVAK and British intelligence. The latter passed on information about the activities of rebellious Iranian students in Britain to Iranian authorities, which enabled them to take action against them on their return home. The SAVAK official also revealed some details of the connection between the American CIA and its Iranian counterpart. SAVAK agents were trained in the United States, but were never allowed to discover the locations of the institutions which trained them 'in interrogation techniques'. They were flown from New York to 'a secret American military base, a mysterious journey that took four hours flying inside an aircraft with sealed and darkened windows'.⁵³

Another device used by SAVAK to obtain confessions was to force parents to watch the torture of their children. Philip Jacobson of the *Sunday Times*, who spent more than two years interviewing and collecting first-hand information from torture victims and their relatives, has narrated the typical case of a father whose son was tortured in his presence. 'I found it so unbearable', he said, 'that I wished I had a knife, so that I could kill my son myself, rather than see him suffer like that'.⁵⁴

Two cases of SAVAK atrocities were widely publicized in the Iranian press after the Revolution. One of these pertained to a five year-old-boy, Abulfazl Safaee. Both his arms were chopped off from the shoulders in order to draw out incriminating confessions from his imprisoned father, who had been found guilty of no more than possessing a recorded tape of one of Khomeini's speeches. The picture of this alleged terrorist was printed by several newspapers in Iran and abroad,

and he was introduced to Kurt Waldheim, the United Nations' Secretary General, when he visited Iran, in January 1980, to resolve the issue of the American hostages.

Writing about the horrifying plight of the child and the agony of his parents, an American correspondent said he was unable to pay any attention to 'abstractions like oil flow, balance of power and the future of SALT', because he could not take his mind off 'the picture of that armless boy, and that worse picture of what it had been like when SAVAK did the deed'. He vividly imagined 'the sterile, neon-lit operating room and the stricken faces of the parents as they were held fast by SAVAK agents and made to watch the amputations . . . I saw, through their eyes, the frightened face of the youngster they could not help, saw the gouting of real blood, heard, through their ears, the wet rasp of saw blade on bone'.⁵⁵

The other was less gruesome, and yet more tragic, for it involved an entire family. Rezaees lost their three sons, Mehdi, Ahmad and Reza, and a daughter, Siddiqa, at the hands of SAVAK. Narrating her terrible plight to a group of Americans who were visiting Iran to ascertain Iranian attitudes to the hostage question, Mrs. Rezaee said that her 19-year-old son, Mehdi, died in prison after he had been whipped with cables for 18 days. Thereafter, her elder son, Ahmad, aged 27, was killed in a confrontation with SAVAK. Her 25-year-old third son Reza was killed when SAVAK agents raided his hiding-place. Still, there was more to come. The police marched into her house and took away all the inmates, including two daughters, a son-in-law, two guests and two grand-sons, one nine years' and the other three years' old. One of her daughters was pregnant when she was arrested and gave birth to her child in prison. Mrs.

Rezaee, who was then 45, was incarcerated in solitary confinement for three months. During her imprisonment, she was frequently whipped. This, she said, was 'only a small portion of what my children had to endure'. Her 18-year-old daughter had been so badly wounded by her captors that she succumbed to her injuries. She attributed her miseries, and the plight of 'thousands of Iranian mothers who have lost their children', to America. She had no doubt that 'whatever sufferings and tortures we have endured in these long years has been at the orders of the American Government'⁵⁶ As a tribute to the service and sacrifice of the Rezaee family, one of the best equipped hospitals in Tehran and a busy down-town street have both been named Rezaee, after the family name.

Not only students, party workers and other little known individuals were brutally treated by the Shah's secret police; a number of popular political opponents, widely respected religious leaders, and men of eminence were similarly tortured. Hojjatulislam Hashemi Rafsanjani, first Interior Minister and later Speaker of the Majlis, describing the treatment he received at the hands of SAVAK in 1964, informed a *Time* reporter how the soles of his feet were lashed with cables. The flesh he said 'was torn apart and the bones juttet out. There were multiple fractures'. As if this were not enough, a knife was held close to his throat for hours to keep him wondering 'when the blade might go all the way down and sever my head'.⁵⁷ In a Friday sermon at Tehran University, on July 31, 1981, recalling his experiences of SAVAK, he said that he had to undergo 'unspeakable tortures' in 1962 for having 'translated a book for the Palestinians'.⁵⁸ Mohammad Ali Rajaie, who, after the Revolution, became the Prime Minister and later the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, suffered several terms of imprisonment in the Pahlavi reign. His des-

cription of the conditions in one of the jails and his own experiences there were frightful: 'The atmosphere of the prison was filled with groans, wails and cries. The prisoners were neither dead nor alive. They were tortured savagely. . . . They used such disgusting forms of torture that I am ashamed to mention them. . . I was tortured day and night. . . They gave blankets to everybody except me; so I spent the whole winter on the cold ground in the infamous cell no. 11, which was beside the lavatory. I remember that it was so cold that I could not sleep, so I used to huddle in a corner to warm myself using the heat of my body, but, as soon as I dropped off to sleep, my hands' would fall aside 'and I would wake up again. . .'⁵⁹

During the seventies, SAVAK tortures were being investigated by the London-based Amnesty International and other agencies. 'No country in the world', said the Amnesty Secretary General Martin Sumels, in May 1974, 'has a worse record in human rights than Iran'.⁶⁰ In 1976, it reported that there were 25,000 to 100,000 political prisoners in Iran. One of their representatives was shown various SAVAK files and pictures of its victims. Many of these victims were women, and 'in each case, the breasts were mutilated'.⁶¹ In the same year, the Geneva-based International Commission of Jurist reported that 'there is abundant evidence showing the systematic use of impermissible methods of psychological and physical torture of political suspects during interrogation'.⁶² In 1977, a Red Cross representative, after a tour of 18 prisons and interviews of 3,087 prisoners, reported that more than 90 per cent of these had been beaten, 80 per cent hit with rods or cables, more than 50 per cent burnt with cigarettes, and about 40 per cent terrorized with hot irons.⁶³ In passing, it may be noted that the Iranians saw a sordid connection between these activities of SAVAK and the tenure of Richard Helms, a

former CIA Director, as the United States Ambassador to Iran between 1973 and 1976.⁶⁴

The question of whether the Shah was personally aware of what was going on in the country and the extent of the criminal activities undertaken by SAVAK agents to keep him on the throne was answered by him on more than one occasion. In an interview given to the *Sunday Times*, he evaded the question on torture; but, with a show of 'anger and emotion', he denied the charge of murdering his political opponents. 'Tell me', he said, 'the name of one man who under my rule was murdered for political offences. Terrorists are different – they must be dealt with firmly'.⁶⁵ The SAVAK activities, he said in his *Memoirs*, were exaggerated out of all proportion by persons 'whose interests were contrary to order and progress of the country'. He, however, conceded that some persons may have been 'roughly handled'. He ridiculed the claims of his opponents that 100,000 people were arrested in 1978 on political grounds. 'By November 1978', he asserted, 'there were only three hundred, all of whom had criminal records'.⁶⁶

In a television interview in January 1980, he was asked if the revolutionary leadership's charge that his regime had killed 100,000 people was correct? He scornfully rejected the allegation: 'They do not know how to count'. The number, he said, was 'certainly below 1,000'. Although he admitted that SAVAK had tortured prisoners, he maintained that he had ordered this stopped when he learnt of it in 1976. He was not told of the tortures earlier, because he was informed only about 'important things, not just petty details like that'.⁶⁷ Some six months before his ouster from the country, the Shah told *Newsweek* that the police may have used excessive methods to deal with the demons-

trators, resulting in many killings, but that was 'not my reaction or the government's. It's the police'.⁶⁸

Irrespective of his methods of dealing with his political adversaries, he was confident that the verdict of history would be in his favour. In an interview published in the *Daily Mail*, early in January 1980, he said 'I would be content, happy to be judged by what I believe was achieved during my years of rein'.⁶⁹ He was convinced that the country could not be put on the road to progress without the adoption of harsh methods. 'Believe me', he told the Italian journalist, Oriana Fallaci, some years earlier, 'when three quarters of a nation does not know how to read or write, you can provide for reforms only by the strictest authoritarianism — otherwise you get nowhere'.⁷⁰ He had calculated the years, and even the months, to make Iran what he believed would be an 'ideal state'. In 1975, he informed Margaret Laing, who was then working on his biography, that 'I am giving myself twelve and a half years' time, or thirteen years at the most, to achieve what I would consider such a solid foundation that nothing could rock it'.⁷¹

This defence, however, hardly fits the image left behind by the Shah. In post-revolutionary Iran, he is remembered as a blood-thirsty tyrant and a cold-blooded murderer by an overwhelming majority of Iranians. In the words of Khomeini, 'he roasted our young people in boiling pots, charred them on fire, cut their limbs'⁷² — a feeling shared by the ordinary people of Iran. It was, of course, not the only cause of the Revolution, but there is little doubt that the excesses of SAVAK significantly stimulated the spirit of resistance that eventually led the people to victory over the formidable forces of the Shah.

IV

In January 1963, the Shah inaugurated his programme for a 'White Revolution'. On January 9, he announced a six-point plan, outlining the basic principles of the 'revolution'. This programme called for land reforms, nationalization of forests; sale of state-owned enterprises to the public; workers' profit sharing in 20 per cent of net corporate earnings; voting and political rights for women, and foundation of the literacy corps.⁷³ Towards the end of the month, on January 26, 1963, a referendum approved the programme of the revolution by more than 99 per cent of the votes cast. The *New York Times* hailed this as a great achievement and evidence of the Shah's personal popularity. In an editorial comment, it said: 'The great mass of the Iranian people are doubtless behind the Shah in his bold new reform efforts. The national plebiscite he called early this year gave emphatic evidence of this'.⁷⁴ The six points were later, in 1964-65, increased to nine, in 1967, to 12, and finally in 1975, to 15.⁷⁵

Claiming a distinctive role for his revolution, the Shahanshah maintained that it would lead to the enjoyment of basic rights by all of Iran's people, instead of, as in the past, the rights remaining 'in the hands of only a few'. He launched this programme of revolutionizing Iranian society with the conviction that 'God had ordained me to do certain things that perhaps could not be done by anyone else'. It was marked by two 'sacred principles', namely 'emphasis on spirit and religion and preservation of individual and social freedom'. This revolution, he asserted, was 'essentially an Iranian revolution' and not 'an imported item', for it was not the Iranian habit 'to wear anything borrowed'.⁷⁶ Notwithstanding the extensive publicity of the White Revolution as serving the interests of the poor masses, it was firmly

opposed by the National Front as well as by the Ulama, and both boycotted the referendum. It was later held by opposition leaders that the entire programme of the White Revolution was inspired by America to advance her own interests. Its real purpose, they maintained, had been to open Iranian markets to American capital penetration and to ensure Iran's economic dependence on oil revenues through the destruction of its national economic structure,⁷⁷ including the disruption of Iranian agriculture to accommodate agricultural imports from America.⁷⁸ The opposition maintained that the White Revolution was neither white, because it led to large-scale massacres, nor a revolution, because it hardly affected, much less improved, the lot of the poor peasantry. 'The only white thing about it was that it was conceived in the White House'.⁷⁹

The Shah insisted that the royal programme of agrarian reform, as embodied in the White Revolution, was opposed by the religious leaders because it challenged their vested interests in private land-holdings, which, beyond stated limits, the new law subjected to redistribution among the landless. He believed that the opposition was made up of an 'unholy alliance of the two forces of black reaction and red destruction. They were financed by a group of land-owners who were affected by the land reform law'.⁸⁰ Recounting his achievements in this field, the Shah later asserted that, prior to 1963, only 0.2 per cent of the population owned 33.8 per cent of the cultivable land, whereas, during the 15 years of the White Revolution, 2 million landless peasants became land-owners and 20 billion rials were loaned to peasant farmers through 2,871 co-operatives.⁸¹

Opponents of the Shah have, however, argued that the programme of land reform was no more than a hoax, which, in fact, only benefitted the absentee land-

lords who were the Shah's henchmen. They maintain that in reality there was little concentration of land ownership, and most of the land was owned by small land-holders. Land was redistributed among no more than 2.5 million tenant farmers, out of whom over 2 million farmers received an average of less than 3 hectares, which was evidently too small a piece of land to provide an adequate source of income for them. Similarly, the average amount of credit facilities provided was not sufficient to meet even a fraction of normal farm expenses. In 1977, for instance, the entire money loaned to 1.32 million farmers amounted to 30.1 billion rials, which meant an average of 22,800 rials, or about \$300, per farmer.⁸²

With hardly any prospects of making good money at home, many a village youth migrated to the cities which, apart from their charm and glamour, offered easy job opportunities owing to large-scale construction activities in urban areas. As a consequence, despite the land reform, agricultural output declined so much that the country had to resort to large-scale imports of agricultural commodities. The country which, until two years before the White Revolution, was agriculturally self-sufficient except in sugar and vegetable oil, was, by 1977, importing 500,000 tons of barley and corn, about an equal quantity of rice (40 per cent of the country's total consumption), 130,000 tons of meat, 50,000 tons of cheese and butter, and 17,000 tons of eggs every year. The average import of wheat had reached a level of 1.2 million tons a year in the early seventies.⁸³

Another important plank of the White Revolution concerned the emancipation of women in society. The clergy were again blamed for the opposition to this aspect of the reform, with the contention that they wished to keep women tied to their homes so as to keep

them subjugated to male domination, on the pretext of avoiding immoral mixing of the sexes. The ulama denied this charge, and, in Khomeini's words, forcefully asserted that 'Islam has never opposed [women's] liberty. It is the Shah who is dragging women towards corruption and wishes to bring them up as mere dolls'.⁸⁴

V

Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini spearheaded the movement against the White Revolution. Born on September 24, 1902 in a deeply religious family in Khomein, a small town in central Iran, he lost his father when he was some five months old. He received his early education in his home town and at the age of 19 moved to Arak for higher religious studies under the guidance of Ayatollah Haieri who was one of the most outstanding religious scholars of his time. A year later Khomeini accompanied Haieri to Qum where, after completing his education with distinction, he took to teaching. Haieri died in 1937 and was succeeded by Ayatollah Burujirdi as the head of the religious teaching institution, with hardly any interest in politics. With the death of Burujirdi in 1962 the mantle of leadership fell on Khomeini. In sharp contrast to his predecessor, Khomeini combined religious erudition, deep interest in political affairs and extraordinary courage to confront the Pahlavi regime.⁸⁵

Khomeini bitterly criticized both the Shah's White revolutionary programme and the motives underlying it. As a consequence, tension had begun to mount. Less than two months after the referendum on March 22, 1963, there was a serious clash between a religious gathering and the police, which resulted in many casualties among students of the Madrased Faiziyeh, a famous institution for religious education in Qum. Khomeini

raised his voice in strong protest. In a telegram to the Prime Minister, Asadollah Alam, he compared the attack of the security forces to the barbarity of the Mangols. 'It seems', he said, 'as if loyalty to the Shah means destruction, sacrilege to Islam and violation of the rights of Muslims. Loyalty to the Shah means delivering a blow to the Quran and burning down the traces of Islam. Silence is no longer justified, and declaration of truth is incumbent'.⁸⁶ This protest aroused widespread support throughout the country, leading to what is now generally known as the 15 khordad massacre.

Some two and a half months later, on the 10th day of Muharram, corresponding to June 3, 1963, Khomeini addressed a large gathering at the Madrased Faiziyeh. In a challenging speech, he criticized the intentions of the regime, which, he said, was out to destroy all that was Islamic at the behest of Israel and America. 'As they see', he declared, 'that the Quran is a wall in their way, they want to shatter this wall; since the Madrased Faiziyeh is a hinderance in their way, it must be demolished and ruined.' Addressing the Shah directly, he said: 'I advise you – the Faith and the Quran make it my duty and the law gives me the right to advise you – stay away from these acts. . . I do not like you to end up like your father. . . Do not oppose the religious scholars. . . I hope your intention is not the religious scholars when you say, "the black reactionaries are like dirty beasts; one must keep away from them"; otherwise our job will become difficult, and yours will become much more so. We will not allow you to live in this country; the nation will not allow you to live. Don't do it. Listen to my advice'. Khomeini then referred to the three terms offered by the Government for resolving the conflict and reaching an agreement with the religious leaders. These were that the ulama should not criticize the Shah, say nothing about the state of Israel,⁸⁷ and refrain from

making any statement to the effect that the faith was in danger under the Pahlavi regime. 'If we put these three issues aside', said Khomeini, 'then what is there left to talk about'.⁸⁸

Demonstrations against the Government continued on the second day, and Ayatollah Mehmud Taleqani, the leader of Nehzet-e-Azadi-e-Iran (Movement for the liberation of Iran), was arrested. Khomeini, too, was arrested during the night, at Qum, and promptly shifted to Tehran. These arrests led to more processions and demonstrations in Tehran, Mashhad, Qum, Isfahan, Shiraz and several other cities. They protested against the arrest of Khomeini and other leaders, such as Ayatollah Qummi in Mashhad and Ayatollah Mahallati in Shiraz. According to one estimate, some 15,000 people were killed in three days of demonstrations and rioting.⁸⁹

The ruthless suppression of all opposition to the Government was ordered by the Shah himself. When Margaret Laing asked Asadollah Alam, in October 1975, whether the demonstrations had been really so serious as to justify the measures taken by the army, he replied: 'Indeed. . . it was a very serious business, it had to be. . . There was a very severe coalition against the Government. . . from the clergy who were losing their profits and the landlords, who were losing their land and the communists who were losing their fertile ground for propaganda'. Therefore, when he asked the Shah "Do you allow me to shoot? To order shooting?", he said, "Yes, not only I allow, I back you". When a few persons, including a former Minister, requested him to take a more lenient view, the Shah 'not only refused, but he threw them out of the room. He not only did that but he immediately summoned me and ordered me to detain all of them and put them in gaol.'⁹⁰

Although the Shah held the ulama and the communists — ‘the unholy alliance of the two forces of black reaction and red destruction’ — directly responsible for the trouble, he, nevertheless, singled out Khomeini, ‘who claimed to be religious even though his origin was obscure’ and alleged that ‘it was certain, however, that he had secret dealings with foreign agents’.⁹¹

The apprehension that the Government might try to execute Khomeini alarmed his followers as well as the religious leadership. In search of a way out, Ayatollah Shariatmadari, one of the highest ranking religious leaders, secretly moved to the Shrine of Shah Abdul Azim at Shahr-e-Rey, near Tehran, and was later joined by other distinguished ulama, including Ayatollah Milani from Mashhad, Ayatollah Behbehani from Khuzistan, Ayatollah Rafeei from Qazvin, and Ayatollah Akhund Hamadani from Hamadan, to work out a strategy to secure the release of Ayatollah Khomeini or, at least, to stop the Government from awarding the death penalty.

Invoking a constitutional provision that guaranteed legal immunity to a *mujtahid* (an authority on divine law), the ulama who had gathered at the Shrine of Shah Abdul Azim publicly testified that Ayatollah Khomeini was a *mujtahid* and a *marja* (‘a scholar of proven learning and piety whose authoritative rulings one follows in matters of religious practice’).⁹² This was followed up by a similar testimony given by Ayatollah Najafi Marashi. It was largely because of the efforts of these leading ulama, whose religious eminence was well-established and popularly recognized, that the Government refrained from proceeding against Khomeini.⁹³

In October 1964, the Iranian Majlis passed two bills of far-reaching importance. One of these granted diplomatic immunity to American military personnel and

their families, residing in Iran, and put them beyond the reach of Iranian courts. The other approved using an American loan of \$200 million for the purchase of military hardware from the United States. Reacting promptly with a hard-hitting speech, Khomeini criticized the bills: 'They have reduced the Iranian people to a level lower than that of an American dog. If someone runs over a dog belonging to an American, he would be prosecuted. But if an American cook runs over the Shah, the head of State, no one will have the right to interfere with him. Why? Because they wanted a loan and America demanded this in return. . . Are we to be trampled under foot by the boots of America simply because we are a weak nation and have no dollars? America is worse than Britain; Britain is worse than America. The Soviet Union is worse than both of them. They are all worse and more unclean than each other! But today, it is America that we are concerned with. . . We do not regard as law what they claim to have passed. We do not regard this Majlis as a Majlis. We do not regard this government as a government. They are traitors, guilty of high treason'.⁹⁴

A few days later, on November 4, 1964 Khomeini was deported to Turkey. The Government appears to have chosen this response to his outbursts for lack of a better practical alternative. In the words of the Shah, 'He was neither condemned, nor even judged; he was simply requested to go and exercise his incendiary eloquence elsewhere'.⁹⁵

In the meantime, the Shah, in order to exercise greater governmental control on political parties, formed a new pro-government party called *Iran Novin*, or New Iran, by reorganizing an older party, the *Mellioun*. It was set up in December 1963 at a meeting presided over by Hasan Ali Mansur, who openly declared that, in

future, 'all key-posts in the Government will obviously go to party members', with the result that 150 Majlis Deputies joined the new party within two months.⁹⁶ In March 1964, Mansur was appointed Prime Minister, and given the task of accelerating the pace of the White Revolution. He had been in office for about 10 months when, on January 21, 1965, Mohammad Bokhari, a student of theology, shot him as he arrived at the Majlis to secure approval for his agreement with five international oil companies.

VI

The Shah had been on the throne for about 26 years, but no coronation ceremony had been held. There was no joy, he once said, in wearing the crown when his people did not enjoy the fruits of their labour and the benefits of their country's wealth. However, on October 26, 1967, he put the crown, weighing 10,400 carats, on his head with a Napoleonic flair. 'I long ago promised myself', he said at the coronation ceremony in Golestan Palace, 'that I would never be a king over a people who were beggars or oppressed. But now that everyone is happy, I allow my coronation to take place.'⁹⁷

In October 1971, the Shah celebrated the 2,500th anniversary of the establishment of monarchy in Iran to legitimize the Pahlavi rule. The ceremony held at Persipolis, costing \$100 million, was attended by hundreds of world dignitaries and was one of the grandest festivals in contemporary history. No less than '165 chefs were flown in from Maxim's in Paris, and 50 members of the court were decked out in Lanvin-designed uniforms that required one mile of gold thread — each.'⁹⁸

By mid-seventies, the Shah had finally abandoned his earlier half-hearted attempts at introducing a demo-

cratic pattern in the country. He had apparently come to the comfortable conclusion that democracy, with its paraphernalia of political parties and fanfare of periodical elections, would not suit Iran. This, he seems to have believed, would hinder rather than help the rapid development of the country. As a consequence, in a royal decree issued on March 2, 1975, he dissolved the existing political parties and announced the creation of the *Rastakhiz* (National Resurrection) Party, and asked all those 'who believed in the royal regime, in the Constitution and the White Revolution' to enrol themselves as members of the new party. Those who did not subscribe to the one-party system were advised to leave the country. In fact, there was nothing very new in this apparently startling declaration, as it was no more than 'a belated operation designed to legitimize a de-facto situation which had existed for some time'.⁹⁹ The political activity was henceforth to revolve around 'the Shah, his small circle of advisers, and a supporting elite of some 300 to 400 individuals'.¹⁰⁰

It was in the decade of the seventies that the Iranian monarch's relations with the United States, which had been progressively developing since he came to the throne, became so close that 'the Shah's status was transformed from that of a protected client to that of a regional partner of the United States'.¹⁰¹ Since the withdrawal of the British military forces from the Persian Gulf in 1971, he, from the point of view of the West, and especially the United States, was regarded as a convenient choice for filling the vacuum and assuming the role of the region's policeman.

In May 1972, President Nixon and his Secretary of State, Kissinger, visited the Shah in Tehran. Both sides emphasized the desirability of greater collaboration between the two countries for stability in the region. The

Shah, in the words of Kissinger, 'tried to earn our support not only by taking seriously the defence of his country – which was after all, of crucial strategic importance – but also by displaying his friendship to us at times when he might well have stood aside'.¹⁰² Partly as a gesture of hospitality and partly as a show of his power, the Shah ordered the shopping centres of Tehran to remain open throughout the night to enable the President's party to make purchases.¹⁰³

Soon after Nixon's return home, the promise made to the Shah was fulfilled. The President not only set aside objections to the sale of arms, but also decided that 'in the future, Iranian requests should not be second-guessed'.¹⁰⁴ In view of the newly assumed regional defence responsibilities, the full support of the American President, and the phenomenal rise in oil prices, it is not surprising that the arms purchases from America, which stood at \$100 million in 1970, rose to \$524 million in 1973 and \$3.91 billion in 1974.¹⁰⁵ In the six years from 1973 to 1979, the Shah's arms orders amounted to \$18.4 billion, whereas, in the previous six years, the total purchases amounted to less than 1 billion. The arsenal of the Shah included the latest military equipment. The aircrafts purchased by him, for instance, were such sophisticated machines and their technology was so advanced that 'even the U.S. military has had difficulties' with them.¹⁰⁶ Kissinger's argument justifying American support for the Shah is based on regional geopolitical considerations. A passage from his *White House Years* states:

'We could either provide a balancing force ourselves or enable a regional power to do so. There was no possibility of assigning any American military forces to the Indian Ocean in the midst of the Vietnam War and its attendant trauma. Congress would have

tolerated no such commitment; the public would not have supported it. Fortunately, Iran was willing to play this role. The vacuum left by British withdrawal, now menaced by Soviet intrusion and radical momentum, would be filled by a local power friendly to us. Iraq would be discouraged from adventures against the Emirates in the lower Gulf, and against Jordan and Saudi Arabia. A strong Iran could help damp India's temptation to conclude its conquest of Pakistan. And all this was achievable without any American resources, since the Shah was willing to pay for the equipment out of his oil revenues. To have failed to match the influx of Soviet arms into the neighbouring countries would have accelerated the demoralization of moderate forces in the Middle East and speeded up the radicalization of the area, including Iran's. I dare say that it [such a failure] might have prevented or made far more difficult Sadaat's later turn toward the West'.¹⁰⁷

The Shah's own reasoning for piling up arms was dictated, beyond geopolitical considerations, also by the fear that the United States might desert him at some critical moment. In an interview with *Newsweek*, in November 1974, he concealed neither his fears nor his ambitions: 'It is not', he said, 'only U.S. unreliability as we witnessed in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and during the India-Pakistan wars. It's also U.N. incompetency. We have settled our differences with Iraq, but their military build-up continues. . . Iraq has more planes, tanks and guns than we do. . . Nor are we just another gulf state. Look at our borders. What would happen if what remains of Pakistan were to disintegrate? If we don't assume the security of this region, who will do it?'.¹⁰⁸ The Shah's answer to a question on Iran's military build-up from the Egyptian journalist, Mohamed Heikal, was perhaps more revealing: 'The military power is for

use against any threat, wherever, it comes from. If we are threatened by someone of inferior strength, we can deal with it. We can face a threat from an equal. But a threat from a stronger power is another matter. In that case I would regard our forces as simply a lock in the door, which we could hold long enough to give our friends time to come to our aid.¹⁰⁹

Within the framework of the Shah's imperial designs, this logic made some sense. However, it is doubtful whether the huge expenditure incurred on defence projects, to the neglect of some of the basic needs of his people, was a prudent step. He was, no doubt, earning a great deal from the sale of his oil to America, but 'for every dollar the United States spent on Iranian oil, the Iranians turned around and spent two in the United States on military material and other goods'.¹¹⁰ Some of the American policy-makers themselves realized such implications of the American arms build-up in Iran, but the realization came too late to prevent the damage of extravagant spending on armaments. Testifying before the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee, the Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, said: 'Unquestionably, the very, very heavy emphasis on military procurement was one of the factors that brought difficulty for that [the Iranian] Government and our own reputation as well. . . the tremendous arms purchases prevented them from doing other things to help the people'.¹¹¹

Jimmy Carter assumed the office of the U.S. President in January 1977. Contrary to expectations, his emphasis on human rights marked only a superficial and transitory effect on the Iranian political scene. Trials of political prisoners were opened to foreign observers and newsmen in April 1977, and some 2000 prisoners were released, but the terms of many of these 'had already expired up to two years before the time of this re-

lease'.¹¹² Little else was done.

In November 1977, when the Shah visited the United States, about 1,000 Iranian opponents living in the United States assembled outside the lawns of the White House. They were carrying placards reading, 'Shah: Facist murderer', 'Shah is a U.S. puppet' and many similarly uncomplimentary slogans. They were wearing face masks to disguise their identity to prevent their being spotted and photographed by SAVAK agents. They were confronted by Iranian supporters of the Shah, many of whom had been paid the air fare from wherever they came, hotel accommodation and \$100 each to welcome their sovereign. In the clash that ensued, 92 demonstrators and 27 American policemen, who were trying to keep the two groups apart, were injured.¹¹³ When the tear-gas shells watered the eyes of both the President and the Shah, Carter half-humourously remarked that it was a 'wonderful opportunity for us to share experience'.¹¹⁴

A few months later, President Carter spent the 1978 New Year's Eve in Tehran. In the splendid party held at the royal Niavaran Palace, Carter joyously danced with Queen Farah and the Shah's twin sister, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi. Paying rich tributes to his host, the American President said, 'Iran under the great leadership of the Shah, is an Island of stability in one of the most troubled areas of the world. This is a great tribute to you, your Majesty, to your leadership and to the respect, admiration and love which your people give to you'.¹¹⁵ However, it is also to be remembered that, on Carter's way to the Niavaran Palace, there were more security men lined along the entire route than supporters of the Shah, and that there had been no less than five anti-American demonstrations only a few hours earlier.¹¹⁶

CHAPTER II
THE GREAT COLLISION

The Great Collision

Barely eight days after President Carter's visit to Iran, the Government planted a slanderous and highly provocative article, entitled 'Iran and Colonialism of the Red and Black', in the *Ettelaat*, a leading daily of Tehran, against Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini. He was therein portrayed as of Indian origin, a foreign stooge, in the pay of foreign masters, and a man of depraved morals.¹ This article had been forced on the newspaper by the Information Minister, Dariush Homayoun, a son-in-law of General Fazalollah Zahedi.² Instead of creating a favourable response in support of the Government, this single event proved to be a forerunner of the revolutionary movement which eventually led to the collapse of the imperial regime. It had an electrifying effect in gathering all the anti-Shah elements on one platform, determined to accept nothing less than the abdication of the monarch. The discontent which had been simmering beneath the surface for years came out in the open.

Although Khomeini, the direct target of the Government's ill-planned scheme to defame him, had been living in exile for the past 14 years, his supporters and students interpreted the scheme as a challenge to the respect and prestige which religious leaders had traditionally enjoyed in the country. This was not the first

direct affront to the religious leadership. In 1976, the Islamic calendar based on a lunar system, starting from the time of Prophet Muhammad's migration from Makkah to Madinah in July, 622, was substituted by the royal calendar starting from the time the Iranian empire was founded by Emperor Cyrus 2,535 years ago. It was an unmistakable move towards legitimizing the Pahlavi rule as a successor of a long line of great kings, as well as 'a bold rejection of Islamic legacy as the central spiritual fact in Iran's history'. This was followed, in 1977-78, by a drastic reduction in the annual subsidy to mosques and religious establishments from \$80 million to \$30 million.³

Although both these steps had been deeply resented by the clerical rank and file, no visible reaction had appeared on the surface. The attack on Ayatollah Khomeini in the press, however, sparked immediate and violent reaction in several cities. Students of theological schools in Qum came into direct conflict with the police on January 8, 1978, the day following the publication of the article against Khomeini. Qum, situated 90 kilometres south of Tehran, was not only the theological capital of the country, but also the city in which Khomeini had studied and taught and attained eminence. It was from here, some 15 years earlier, that he had launched a frontal attack on the imperial regime.

Whereas official estimates of casualties in these clashes were limited to only five persons killed, the opposition maintained that 100 were killed, 500 injured and some 4,000 arrested.⁴ The local police chief of Qum, Colonel Razmi, was promoted soon after to the rank of general and sent to far-away Abadan as the Police Commander. It was from this point onwards that *chehlum* gatherings (traditionally observed on the fortieth day after death to commemorate the demise of

friends and relations) began to be held in large numbers with special fervour. These recurring ceremonies led to fresh demonstrations and more casualties. What had initially started as stray events soon developed into a widespread, organized and well-knit movement against the Shah. The tragic occurrences in Qum were repeated in several other cities.

Three days before the *chehlum* of those who had been killed in Qum, the highest religious leaders, including the three grand Ayatollahs, namely Shariatmadari, Najafi Marashi and Golpayegani, called for country-wide mourning. In Tabriz, the capital city of East Azerbaijan in the north-west of the country, and the home province of Ayatollah Shariatmadari, where he commanded the support of millions of Azari Turks, his call brought forth a zealous response. Large crowds started moving towards the Talaiee Masjid (Golden Mosque), the proposed venue of the meeting. The doors of the mosque had been ordered closed by Police Commissioner Haghshenas, who, adding to the fury of the public, contemptuously tore up the Ayatollah's notice for the meeting. When one of the protestors in the crowd, Tadjali, asked why the Commissioner had shown disrespect to their leader, he was answered by a bullet which killed him on the spot. A frenzied mob then carried his dead body through the main streets of the city, arousing violent clashes in which more than a hundred buildings were set on fire.

The reaction of the administration was quick and strong. A curfew and martial law were imposed. Machine guns and tanks, and even helicopters, were used to quell demonstrators. The Governor of Azerbaijan was replaced by the Shah's trusted Adjutant General, Jaafar Shafaqhat. The local SAVAK Chief was demoted by one rank, and six police officers were dismissed for neg-

ligence of duty. A foreign observer estimated the number of persons killed in Tabriz at more than 100 and those wounded at between 600 and 700,⁵ while the opposition quoted much higher figures. It was in connection with the events in Tabriz that, for the first time in 20 years, a Majlis Deputy protested and a censure motion against the Government was proposed.⁶ The cycle of demonstrations, deaths and ceremonial mournings continued in big as well as small towns. The marches in remembrance of those who had died in Tabriz led to trouble in various cities, including Tehran and Isfahan. The Shah did not seem to be perturbed by these disturbances and a rising tide of opposition. In April 1978, in a meeting with Fereydoun Hoveyda, the Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations and brother of the former Prime Minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda, he said:

'It's nothing. Tabriz? Esfahan? It is the price to be paid for democratization. Nothing dangerous! And then who can oppose me? Khomeini? He doesn't count for much! Sanjabi and the rest? They are incompetents, and often traitors. . . All these people are afraid of my policy of liberalization, just as they feared my policy of reforms in 1962. It cuts the ground from under their feet. The don't frighten me. I shall continue to go forward. The people, the true people, are with me.'⁷

The mosques, which were appropriately described by the ulama as living symbols of Iranian national identity, had become focal points and nerve centres of the revolutionary movement. In meetings held again and again in thousands of mosques, influential religious leaders moved their audiences with tales of cruelty, and exhorted them to continue their struggle, which, they were told repeatedly, could end only with the Shah's removal from the political scene. The security forces,

on the other hand, were equally determined to crush all opposition. On May 10, 1978, two ulama were pursued into the residential quarters of Ayatollah ul-Uzma Kazem Shairatmadari, one of the most widely respected and powerful religious leaders, and were killed in his presence. Shariatmadari himself was hospitalized for treatment of injuries. The fates of two other Grand Ayatollahs, Golpayegani and Najafi Marashi, were no different; the latter even had to be taken out of the country for treatment of the injuries he had sustained in police excesses.⁸ A day of national mourning was observed on May 11, 1978, and the bazars were closed as a mark of protest against the excesses of the Government. On that day, action taken made it appear that there was a 'siege with troops keeping order in front of rows of shuttered shops'.⁹

The official explanation of the strong opposition, which was gaining momentum with every day that passed, was that it was a conspiracy of the extreme left and the extreme right, who had joined forces. It was, Prime Minister Amouzgar reportedly told the Shah after the Tabriz troubles, only 'a group of thugs supported from abroad. . . causing the trouble'.¹⁰ The Shahanshah's own assessment of the situation was no different. It was, he asserted in his *Memoirs*, 'the most hideous, the hateful and harmful alliance, the alliance of the Red and the Black. . . united for the purpose of the Great Destruction'.¹¹

This charge was correct only to the extent that the Tudeh Party, which drew its inspiration from Moscow, was definitely opposed to the Shah and his heavily pro-Western policies. They were undoubtedly prepared, even eager, to enter into an alliance with anyone — including the religious fundamentalists whose ideology was at complete variance with theirs — as long as it

served their objective of dislodging the Shah. Khomeini's stand, however, was quite different. In an interview with a French correspondent, at Najaf in May 1978, he made it unmistakably clear that 'there has never been any alliance between the Muslim people opposed to the Shah and Communist elements'. He was not prepared to co-operate with the Communists under any circumstances, 'not even to topple the Shah', because 'we are opposed to their ideas, and we know they are stabbing us in the back. If they won power, they would set up a dictatorial regime contrary to the spirit of Islam.'¹²

Despite ferocious repression demonstrations against the regime continued unabated. The taped messages of Imam Khomeini smuggled from Iraq and clandestinely circulated throughout the country kept the tempo of the anti-Shah movement at fever pitch. In the midst of the widening mass movement, the regime removed General Nematollah Nassiri from his post of SAVAK Chief, appointing him Ambassador to Pakistan, and replaced him by General Nassir Moghaddam, at the time Chief of Military Intelligence. Since Nassiri's advocacy for strong measures to deal with the opposition was well-known, his removal from the scene was interpreted as a 'sop to the dissidents. . . and an attempt to prevent the internal situation from deteriorating further'.¹³ If this was the intention, it did not produce the desired result, and instead, was viewed as a sign of weakness on the part of the Shah, demonstrating his inability to control the direction of events. The policy of 'liberalization' may have been acceptable to those who wanted a 'reformed Shah' and feared complete anarchy without the institution of monarchy; but to theorists like Abolhassan Banisadr, it was no more than a calculated strategy. 'If the regime believed the first step could lead to the second', he said, 'it would not itself propose this solution'.¹⁴

II

After nearly eight months of demonstrations, rioting and bloodshed, the Shah, on August 5, 1978, announced that 'in the months ahead, the regime would begin to become comparable to a Western democracy'.¹⁵ It was promised that free elections would be held in the following spring. That no one took this announcement seriously was a foregone conclusion in the existing climate of deep mutual distrust. Indeed, it encouraged the revolutionary elements to strike even harder at the regime, in the belief that it was showing signs of collapse. As a result, serious rioting took place in a number of cities, and the situation in Isfahan became so acute that martial law had to be imposed there.

To add to the smouldering discontent, fuel was added by a tragic episode: on August 19, a cinema house in the oil-rich southern city of Abadan was set on fire during a movie show and more than 400 people were roasted alive — with doors securely locked from the outside. The Government held 'the extremist Muslim reactionaries' responsible for this ghastly tragedy. But it was, indeed, curious that the fire brigade of the city, in which the world's largest oil refinery was located, reached the site of the arson, the Rex Cinema, two hours late without water, that the hydrants close by, too, were dry, and that, although a police station was no more than 300 yards away from the Rex Cinema, no one arrived at the scene for an hour.¹⁶ The Abadan Police Department was at the time headed by General Razmi, who had been transferred from Qum, in January, after quelling the disturbances which followed the slanderous article against Khomeini.

One of the survivors, Gholam Hossein Neymayandeh, who had come out to buy a drink when the fire started,

blamed the police for its negligence: 'I rushed to the police station and told them a fire had begun, but they paid no attention. So I ran in the streets and begged passersby to help.'¹⁷ Jafaar Sazesh, a man who had lost five children in the fire, was chosen as the representative of families who had lost relatives in the holocaust to request the Government to investigate the incident. After two months of unsuccessful efforts to persuade the Government to speed up its investigations, he, in a letter to the Complaints Committee of the Majlis, said that he had accepted the death of his children, 'but not the Government's negligence' in investigating 'the crime'. He wanted the authorities to explain why the firemen reached the burning cinema so late. 'And why', he asked, 'did the police stop the public from trying to help the trapped victims?'¹⁸

Ayatollah Khomeini, two days after the fire, characterized the tragedy as a clear 'proof of the satanic plan of the Shah and his gang'. It could have been done, he said, by no one 'except those who have accustomed themselves to committing similar acts and whose savagery and barbarity have placed them beyond the pale of humanity.'¹⁹ The Shah's critics point to the statement he made only four days before the fire as evidence of his regime's complicity in the cold-blooded murder of innocent citizens: 'I promise you the great civilization. All that your enemies are capable of offering you is the great terror, *vahshat-e-kabir*'.²⁰

Within a few days of the fire, the SAVAK Chief, General Moghaddam, brought a message from 'an important religious figure' to the Shah to do 'something spectacular' in order to break the increasing resistance. It was a result of this advice, which the Shah later considered a 'great mistake',²¹ that, on August 27, 1978, he dismissed Prime Minister Jamshid Amouzegar, who was

believed to have been responsible for the Abadan arson. His successor, Jaafar Sharif Emami, intending to placate the religious leaders, immediately announced a number of conciliatory steps, such as closing down casinos and gambling houses, retiring four Bahaii generals, and restoring the Hegira calendar, which had been replaced by the Shahanshahi calendar in March 1976. It is, however, significant that, in a national radio interview on August 30, Sharif Emami emphasized the need for reaching a compromise only with the religious leaders 'inside' the country.²² It is obvious that his Government was not prepared to enter into any dialogue with the exiled religious leader, Ayatollah Khomeini.

The opposition interpreted the conciliatory steps as cosmetic measures constituting a crafty attempt to gain time and strength, as well as a ploy to divide the religious leadership. Khomeini lost no time in denouncing them, and declared that the people could not be deceived by such tactics, because their only aim was to replace the hateful regime and establish a truly Islamic State.²³ The usually moderate Ayatollah Shariatmadari, too, was not prepared to negotiate with the Government, 'because there is nothing to negotiate'.²⁴ The National Front Leader, Dariush Forouhar, likewise saw through the imperial game and refused to be roped in by negotiations. 'The very same people', he said, 'who have violated the most elementary rights of Iranians are now advocating the restoration of the constitution.'²⁵

The ugly episode of the Rex Cinema was re-enacted on a much larger scale on Friday, September 8, 1978, corresponding to 17 Shahrivar of the Iranian calendar. Since this occurrence is considered to be one of the most important landmarks of the Revolution, and the day is observed as a day of national mourning in post-revolutionary Iran, it needs to be dwelt on at some length.

The first day of September 1978 was a Friday. The congregational prayers were to be led by Ayatollah Nouri at Jaleh Square in the south-east of Tehran. As a precautionary measure, the Government ordered that congregational mass prayers were not to be held, and the doors of the mosque were closed. A huge crowd, none the less, assembled for prayers and insisted on the opening of the mosque. The security forces posted there refused to oblige. In the ensuing confrontation, the police opened fire, causing a number of casualties.

Three days later, on September 4, people once again started assembling at various mosques for the Eid-ul-Fitr prayers, marking the end of the sacred month of Ramadan. One of the biggest congregational groups offered prayers at Gaytarieh, in the north of Tehran, and later moved towards the downtown area to be joined by a similarly large group from the Jaleh Square. Together, they formed a procession of about half a million people spread over 20 kilometres, of whom around one-third were women. The procession marched through major avenues, but remained peaceful and dispersed in the evening. Despite the orderly calmness of the procession, its sheer size left no one in doubt about the strength and mood of the surging multitude. It is also a proof positive of the role the mosque and the pulpit played in building up the agitation leading to the Revolution and convincing the people of their religious obligation to throw off the yoke of tyranny. Numerous Ayatollahs and other religious preachers were quietly but effectively spreading the message from thousands of platforms, which were practically out of reach even for the long-extended arm of the Government. Similar marches were held in other cities; and the day passed off without serious trouble, except in Qum, where a few persons were reportedly killed.

It was, however, on Friday, September 8, that a horrifying confrontation took place. It was, in the words of *Le Monde*, 'one of the bloodiest days seen in Iran since the tragic events of June 1963',²⁶ which has also been appropriately described as 'the Bastille day of the Iranian revolution'.²⁷ The scene of the carnage was the Jaleh Square, where large crowds had started assembling since early morning to register their determined protest against the regime, which they were convinced was corrupt, cruel and intolerable. On the preceding evening, the Government had decided on the imposition of martial law in Tehran and 12 other cities for six months, besides Isfahan which was already under martial law.²⁸ The wording of the martial law order announced on the radio revealed the Government's conviction that the resistance movement was a conspiracy of reactionary forces, and that it was backed by moral and financial support from outside the country. 'Considering as it does', it said, 'that the ramifications of the plot planned and financed from outside forces, are spreading and endangering the individual rights, liberty and independence of the Nation, and that they are directed towards putting an end to Iran's march forward, the government, which is responsible for the proper application of the constitution, decrees martial law. . .'.²⁹

The announcement of the martial law broadcast late at night was not listened to by most people. Even those who had heard it paid scant attention to it, and believed that it was an empty threat to dissuade the people from responding to the call for the march already announced by the religious leaders. This belief persisted despite the widely floating rumour that a plane-load of Israeli commandos had arrived a day or two earlier to stay in the wings and help the authorities restore order, in case Iranian soldiers refused to do the 'dirty work'. In the absence of conclusive evidence, it is

impossible to corroborate this view. There is, however, no denying the fact that Iran was the only Muslim country selling oil to Israel, supplying over 70 per cent of its petroleum requirement. 'Our co-operation with Israel', the Shah had confessed to an Arab journalist a few years earlier, 'is not confined to intelligence. It is much wider than that. I have sent demands from every branch of the army and civil administration for training in Israel.'³⁰ Details on the nature of the Shah's relations with Israel may not have been known to many, but the fact that the Shah was on excellent terms with Israel was by no means a secret. It was this popular perception of the relationship which lent credibility to the news of the arrival of the soldiers from Israel.

Le Figaro's correspondent has given a minute to minute eyewitness account of what actually happened at the Jaleh Square on the morning of September 8:

8 a.m. — Jaleh Square. . . the army is there, visibly in position, armoured, lining all access to the Square, which itself is occupied by several cordons of soldiers, faceless, gas masks extending from their helmets, rifles aimed, bayonets glistening in the morning sun. Where are they, the demonstrators? . . . There they are in the alleys. . . Their expressions are visibly hard, steady, decisive, conscious of what they risk. But with no other arms but their own hands, their voices, and the Muslim banners that they wave.

. . .

8.15 a.m. — From the military camp came a harsh voice, amplified by a loudspeaker: 'This is martial law; you are ordered to disperse; do not force us to shoot'. The crowd replied, 'we want an Islamic government! The Shah is a murderer'.

8.30 a.m. — The tension is building. The crowd grows denser. Cries of joy greet the arrival of Ayatollah Nouri. Courageous, arms raised, he goes in front of the military, speaks for a second with an officer, returns, a fragile silhouette in this formidable no man's land, and, with a firm gesture, asks the demonstrators to sit down, which they all do, without a murmur. . .

9.15 a.m. — From the other end of the Square, a cannonade of gunfire: I leap to the ground, barely have time to reach the right-hand sidewalk, where the soldiers in the front ranks open fire on us point-blank without stopping. . .

This lasts for 30 seconds, seeming as many minutes. Against the crowd with no weapons, with no defences, it is easy game. . . This is not a fight; this is a massacre. A firing squad at its work. . . The street, one minute beforehand darkened with people, is strewn with bodies, shoes, trampled banners, the wounded crawling towards each other, struggling to reach each other. I count 30 to 40 dismembered bodies. . . On the sidewalks, voices, deeper than before; the pain breaks out, explodes; 'Allah! Allah! See what they have done!'.³¹

It is difficult to estimate the number of casualties. General Gholam Ali Oveisi, Tehran's Martial Law Administrator, said that 58 persons had been killed and 205 were wounded. These casualties, according to the martial law authorities, had occurred when subversive elements 'financed by foreigners' had attacked the security forces.³² John Stempel, the then Deputy Chief of the Political Section of the American Embassy in Tehran, says that the shooting by army units from the ground, as well as from helicopter gunships, killed

'around 100 people in the initial fusillade'.³³ William Sullivan, the American Ambassador to Tehran from June 1977 to April 1979, suggests that 'over two hundred demonstrators were killed'.³⁴ These figures are ridiculed by opposition sources, who assert that the number of dead was well over 4,000, a figure confirmed by the number of certificates issued for burial in the Behisht-e-Zehra Cemetery.³⁵ According to another source, the female casualties alone numbered 700.³⁶

Recalling events following the holocaust, Ayatollah Yahya Nouri, who was to lead the Friday prayers in the mosque close to the Jaleh Square on that fateful day, in an exclusive interview, two years later, with a local English daily of Tehran, said: "Following the incident, the agents of SAVAK and its affiliated offshoots raided my office, severely beat up and tortured my aids, turned the library files upside down, and, calling me 'the main figure' behind the gathering, arrested and took me away. They repeatedly told me that I was going to be taken to Jaleh Square and executed".³⁷

Ayatollah Nouri was arrested on September 12, 1978, charged for instigating people 'to set fire to banks, stores, cinemas and public places'. His personal assets were alleged to be in excess of 100 million rials. The official statement concluded by saying that 'it was up to the media to analyse this information and ask people what this man's profession was that he could accumulate such vast sums of money'.³⁸

On the day following the tragedy of September 8, which has since been referred to and remembered as the 'Black Friday', Khomeini issued a statement from Najaf in Iraq, where he was residing. Addressing the 'noble and valliant people of Iran', he pledged his full support

to all those who were fighting' a criminal who has squandered the wealth of the nation and who has for thirty-seven years controlled their destinies, and whose crimes, treasons and opposition to constitutional law have been self-evident'. Wishing that he were 'among you and alongside you, and could give up his life in the defence of the Great God', Khomeini exhorted members of the Armed Forces to rise in revolt. Do not, he said, 'allow your country to be destroyed and your brothers and sisters killed. Register your name in history, which is continuing its course in favour of the Iranian nation, and uproot treason and repression immediately.'³⁹ Speaking three years later, on the anniversary of the 'Black Friday' on September 8, 1981, he emphasized the importance of the day. If events like those of 15 Khordad (June 5, 1963) and 17 Shahrivar (September 8, 1978), he said, had not happened, the 'Islamic Revolution' would never have become a reality.⁴⁰

What rubbed salt in the wounds the Iranian people had suffered in the terrible massacre was that the Shah continued to receive the open support of President Carter, who, soon after the 'Black Friday' took time off from Camp David parleys to telephone and reassure the Iranian monarch.⁴¹ However, while the Shah has acknowledged that President Sadaat of Egypt called him on September 9 and 'offered his encouragement and his help', he has seen fit to deny a similar phone call from the American President. 'President Carter', he says, 'has never called me — except once at Lackland Air Force Base in December 1979', which was several months after he had left Iran.⁴² William Sullivan, the American Ambassador to Tehran, on the other hand, has confirmed that the call was made. He goes further to add that a group of American businessmen who had an audience with the Shah on that day later informed him that their meeting with the Shah was delayed owing to the phone

calls he received, one from Sadaat and the other from Carter. The businessmen also told Sullivan that the Shah 'had seemed considerably buoyed up by the event'.⁴³

President Carter, it may be said in his defence, was partly misled by the reports he was receiving from his intelligence sources. The CIA, in a top secret study in August 1978, assessed that 'Iran is not in a revolutionary or even pre-revolutionary situation'.⁴⁴ A month later, this view was confirmed by the Defence Intelligence Agency with its conclusion that the Shah was likely to 'remain actively in power over the next 10 years'.⁴⁵ But there is good reason to believe that, even if these reports had not been made, the United States would still have supported the Shah. After all, the Shah of Iran had been a firm ally, and there was hardly any other ruler who could have excelled the Shah in his loyalty and assistance to the United States during the previous few years. Military intervention in Oman on behalf of the United States, placing aircraft at the disposal of the United States for use in Vietnam, supplying weapons to Somalia for use against Ethiopia on the direction of the United States, persuading South Africa to stop supplying oil to Rhodesia in order to strengthen the United States supported embargo against her, making peace with Iraq on the suggestion of the United States, providing the United States bases on the Iran-Soviet border and a regular supply of oil to Israel, all were facts of too recent a history to be easily forgotten.⁴⁶

III

Emboldened by the American support, the Shah formally asked the Government of Iraq to expel Khomeini who, he rightly believed, was the principal figure behind the protests, agitation and violence in Iran. His

presence across the border, from where his taped messages were regularly smuggled into Iran and then heard throughout the country, was a source of continued irritation to the regime. If Khomeini could be moved farther away from Iraq, it would weaken the links between the exiled leader and his followers. Iraq promptly complied with the request for good reasons. When Khomeini had been permitted to come to Iraq some 15 years ago, her relations with neighbouring Iran had been far from friendly, almost bordering on unconcealed hostility. The continued outbursts of a determined foe of the Shah had therefore been welcomed by the Bathist regime of Iraq. But the situation had changed substantially when the two countries had decided to compose their differences and had signed the Algiers Agreement in 1975.⁴⁷

In order not to annoy its powerful neighbour, the Iraqi authorities placed two restrictions on Khomeini: first, to abandon all political activity, meaning complete silence, and second, to move away from Najaf, the headquarters of Khomeini, to a place of the Iraqi Government's own choice. Neither of these was acceptable to Khomeini; and he left for Kuwait. But before he reached there, the Government of Kuwait refused to admit him even as a transit passenger. He was forced to return to Iraq, from where he then went to Paris and made Neuville-le-Chateau, a Parisian suburb his headquarters.⁴⁸ Somehow not realizing that even a far-away suburb of Paris would be easily accessible to the world press to report and publicize Khomeini's words and activities, the Shah raised no objection to his stay in France. Indeed, he felt so relieved at Khomeini's departure from Iraq that he sent a congratulatory message to his Foreign Minister, attending the UN session in New York, for having successfully negotiated the Ayatollah's expulsion from Iran's immediate neighbourhood.⁴⁹

Khomeini arrived in France on October 6, 1978 and at once became a centre of attraction for the world media, which continuously reported every single word that the Ayatollah spoke, much to the annoyance of the helpless Shah.

In yet another bid to buy time and diffuse the situation, the Shah promised amnesty to 1,126 prisoners on his birthday, on October 26, 1978.⁵⁰ This was once again, and not incorrectly so, interpreted as a weakness, which spurred on the chain of demonstrations against the Shah with renewed vigour. By the end of October, the Shah had practically lost control; and his ouster from the country had become a unanimous demand of the people in demonstrations throughout Iran.

Still, as if he were unaware of what was happening in the country, the Prime Minister, Sharif Emami, in his congratulatory speech on Mohammad Reza Shah's birthday, said that the splendour of this year's celebration had a special significance because 'firstly, the people fully enjoyed the freedom of speech, thought and writing, and secondly, the principles of the Constitution were effectively put into effect'.⁵¹ The Shahanshah's assessment of the situation, however, was more realistic. In reply to laudatory congratulations of the Majlis speaker on the occasion, he did not hesitate to admit that, 'undoubtedly, mistakes have been made. Undoubtedly, some have deviated from the path of honesty. Also, there have been irregularities. But these can be rectified and corrected'.⁵²

While the Shah's birthday was celebrated with great pomp all over the country, and the world leaders cabled their congratulatory messages to the 'King of Kings' and 'the light of the Aryans', the Iranian people, by and large, responded to the call of Ayatollah Khomeini to

celebrate the day as a day of mourning. He appealed to 'the honourable and oppressed nation of Iran and the parties and groups attached to Islam and the country' to continue their struggle and get rid of the 'oppressive and tyrannical rule as early as possible'. He assured them that there was nothing to fear from the Shah and the powers that were supporting him: 'History bears witness to the fact that no power, however great, is able to extinguish the fire that rises from the hearts of an oppressed nation struggling for its freedom and independence'.⁵³

In order to bring peace and calm to the strife-torn country, the Shah dispatched Ardeshir Zahedi, his former son-in-law and the Ambassador to the United States, to Paris, to talk to Khomeini and request him to return to Iran and lend his helping hand in overcoming the critical situation. Zahedi's mission failed completely, for Khomeini refused even to meet him. He was not prepared for any dialogue, let alone a compromise.

His stand remained as firm as ever: not only had the people no faith in the Government of Jaafar Sharif Emami, the Shah himself was solely responsible for selling 'oil to America, natural gas to the Soviet Union, land, forests and some oil to England', and he must go, too. The movement had the support 'of the entire Iranian nation. It is an honest struggle with an Islamic motivation. It obeys God and His laws. It is the Shah who, though his paid agents, deliberately tries to tell the world that our struggle is leftist. . . I am not the Shah's enemy. Our struggle is to convince him that his authority is finished. Already, the pressure is cutting into his throat.'⁵⁴ It was at about the same time that Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari threatened that if the Government remained indifferent to the demands of the clergy, 'we shall take to arms in the future'. He expressed his

complete solidarity with Khomeini in the latter's demand for 'a democratic government based on Islamic law'.⁵⁵

Sickened with the adamant stand of the opposition and his self-created contradiction between liberalization and appeasement, on the one hand, and martial law, on the other, the Shah played his last card, and brought General Gholam Reza Azhari, his 69-year-old Chief of Staff, onto the scene as the new Prime Minister, in place of Sharif Emami, on November 6, 1978. He had good reason to rely on the unconditional support of the army, whose generals had been hand-picked by him and no officer of which above the rank of a major could be promoted without his approval.⁵⁶ They were bound by an oath of loyalty in the following order: Shah, Country and God. The military Government General Azhari set up stood in the midst of mounting tension, mass demonstrations and general strikes in colleges, universities, Government departments, banks, airline services and, above all, in the oil industry, which had been virtually shut down since the end of October. Demands of the workers included the lifting of martial law, the release of political prisoners, and the trial of the former SAVAK Chief, General Nassiri. Some 30,000 members of the National Iranian Oil Company and about 4,000 Iran Air employees were on strike, and hundreds of people were marching in Tehran in clear defiance of martial law.⁵⁸ Demonstrations held all over the country often led to violent confrontations between security forces and demonstrators, resulting in heavy casualties.⁵⁹

On November 4, 1978, there was a massive march of students from Tehran University to commemorate the death of students killed on this day in 1953. An inevitable collision followed, leading to several deaths. As a sequel to the incident, large-scale violence erupted on

the following day, and demonstrators set fire to a number of banks, cinema houses, and liquor stores. Contrary to previous practice, the security forces did not react, lending weight to rumours that the arson teams were made up of SAVAK agents, who were determined to provide an excuse for handing over the reins of power to the military commanders.

On the evening of November of 5 the Shah made a helicopter tour of the capital and saw the extent of the widespread damage. Hundreds of buildings, including the British Embassy, which had been attacked in the morning, had been burnt. On returning to the Palace, he called in the American and the British Ambassadors for an urgent meeting. Since Sullivan reached earlier than the British Ambassador, Parsons, who had been held up owing to the assault on his Embassy, the Shah asked the American envoy if he would quickly checkup to see whether his Government would be ready to support the installation of a military Government. The American envoy, anticipating such a move, had already asked for and received his Government's assurance of the required support. The British Ambassador when he arrived somewhat later, pleaded his inability to ascertain the views of his Government immediately because of the destruction of the communications equipment in the Chancery. However, for the Shah, the assurance of the United States was enough, and this, in his own words, 'enormously relieved' him. Soon after, he phoned General Azhari to come immediately to the palace, which he reached before the two Ambassadors had left.⁶⁰

Apart from the ostensible reason of the quickly deteriorating situation that prompted the monarch to install a military government, there were other reasons as well. The senior army generals were getting restive, and had practically forced the decision on the Shah. General

Manuchehr Khosrowdad, the Commander of Iran's Air Force, wanted a clean sweep of the opposition through mass arrests and, if necessary, even large-scale bloodshed. Another senior army general, Hossein Rabii, also argued in favour of stronger action. 'His Majesty is simply not being himself', he told an American Embassy official in Tehran. 'He has got to assert himself, or we'll make him assert himself.'⁶¹

Similar advice was given to the Shah by Ardeshir Zahedi, who came to Tehran from Washington with a message of President Carter's National Security Advisor, Brzezinski, to the effect that the American administration would fully support an armed crackdown on the opposition. Meeting with Ambassador Sullivan soon after his arrival in the city, Zahedi told him about the importance the United States attached to his mission. He said that when, under the circumstances, he expressed his inability to leave his Embassy in Washington, Brzezinski took him to President Carter, 'who told him that he, President Carter, would be the Iranian ambassador in Washington and that Zahedi should feel it was his primary duty to return to Tehran and stiffen Shah's spine as he confronted these sharp political challenges'.⁶²

This portrayal of the state of affairs, however, is not entirely representative of the American point of view, for there was a clear division between Sullivan, on the one hand, and Brzezinski and his aides, on the other. The former now held the view that the Shah was incapable of meeting the challenge posed by the opposition, and that a stronger military action was fraught with serious risks that could result in unnecessary bloodshed and complete chaos. The Shah, he believed, had to cultivate the moderate section of his opponents, pass on substantial authority to the Parliament, pave the way for a representative government, and leave the country, at least

for some time, to enable the suggested arrangement to take root. This view was endorsed by the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, and his advisors in the State Department. In a meeting of Iranian experts at the State Department, on October 27, 1978, in which more than 30 people participated, only four believed that the Shah could survive the crisis. Brzezinski, it appears, though not converted to an acceptance of this grim picture of the Iranian situation, nevertheless agreed to the dispatch of a cable, on October 31, 1978, to Sullivan that asked him to persuade the Shah 'to relinquish some of his domestic authority and leave on vacation'.⁶³

That President Carter endorsed Brzezinski's assessment, rather than that of the officials fed by Ambassador Sullivan, is evident from his public statement on the very day that the cable was sent to Ambassador Sullivan. The President personally received Crown Prince Cyrus Reza, then studying at the United States Air Force Academy in Texas, on his 18th birthday, on October 31, 1978, along with Ambassador Zahedi who had by then returned to Washington. He assured the Prince of his Government's continued backing for his father: 'Our friendship and our alliance with Iran is one of our important bases on which our entire foreign policy depends.' Praising the Shah and 'his move towards democracy', the President said, 'we know it is opposed by some who don't like democratic principles, but his progressive administration is very valuable, I think, to the entire Western world'.⁶⁴

This statement was to the entire liking of Ambassador Zahedi; but he wished to make sure that President Carter did not veer towards the advice he was receiving from Ambassador Sullivan in Tehran and other like-minded members of the State Department hierarchy. In this, he was not alone; for he had the full support not

only of Brzezinski, but also of such influential persons as David Rockefeller, Henry Kissinger and John McCloy, the 83-year-old former President of the World Bank, who were all working, making phone calls and writing letters to enlist the maximum support at the highest level in favour of the Shah.

Ardeshir Zahedi, the son of General Fazlollah Zahedi, who had been brought to power by the CIA after the Shah was restored to the throne in 1953, with his personal charm, lavish funds and a wide network of contacts, laid a virtual trap for President Carter, whom Henry Kissinger once described as a man who not only 'did not understand foreign affairs', but also 'did not understand that he did not understand'.⁶⁵ Carter walked into the trap. He arranged with Barbara Walters, of the ABC News, at what price is not known, to portray the Shah as a helpless man and to show that, if America did not give him the desperately needed support, Iran and its oil and its American arms would irretrievably pass into the hands of the Communists. On the evening of November 2, 1978, Walters faithfully reported that, 'without the belief that Jimmy Carter will support him, the Shah sits and waits'.

The target was neatly hit. A denial was promptly issued by the White House, stating that the insinuation was incorrect and that the President fully stood by the Shah. If Carter still entertained any doubt about the extent of the support America should give the Shah, when Iran was practically aflame, Brzezinski convinced him that a revolution could be averted only if the Shah was given a categorical assurance that the American support to him would be total, complete and unconditional. He fortified his advice with the argument, which he borrowed from the historian, Crane Brinton, that the success of a revolution is determined not by the will of the

people, but by the imprudence of the government in power. As long as the government has the strength and the firm resolve to use force effectively, it has nothing to fear.

Brzezinski's thesis was fully endorsed by the Secretary of Defence, Harold Brown. He, too, advised Carter to assure the Shah that the United States would stand by him in all eventualities. Carter fell in line with the advice tendered to him by these two of his top advisors, and told Brzezinski to inform the Shah that support from the United States would not be found wanting. This was an hour of personal triumph for Brzezinski, who had indeed worked hard to be able to tell the Shah confidently that the United States would not desert him in his hour of trial. A phone call was promptly made on the same evening (November 2) to assure the indecisive and brooding monarch that he could take whatever steps he deemed necessary and ignore human rights considerations. Ambassador Sullivan, whose prescription for diffusing the situation was entirely different, and Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who had in vain argued for restraint and caution, were both left high and dry.⁶⁶

IV

The new Prime Minister, General Azhari, made it clear that he was determined to restore law and order, put an end to rampant corruption, and move against even some of the high-ups to give the country an orderly and peaceful administration. That he meant business became obvious from the arrest, two days after he took over, of a number of important public figures, including a former Prime Minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda, who for nearly 15 years had loyally served the Shah, and a former SAVAK Chief, Nematollah Nassiri. The Government of Azhari was, nevertheless, promptly denounced

by Khomeini as 'illegitimate and illegal'. In a message from his parisian retreat, he instructed his followers 'not to obey it, and try to paralyse it by whatever means. . . This is an Islamic duty and binding on all.'⁶⁷

Strikes in various industries, as well as in Government offices, beyond challenging the Shah's regime, had almost paralysed the economy. The strike of workers in the oil industry was particularly damaging. In order to keep up the tempo of the movement, Khomeini congratulated the striking workers and issued a grim warning to both the United States and the Iranian Armed Forces. 'Every hour of your strike', he said in a message to the striking workers on November 15, 1978, 'is a service to the Great God and the country of Islam'. Those who were trying to force workers to call off the strike, he said, were 'servants of foreigners and guilty of treason to the nation and the country'. He counselled the Government of the United States to refrain from supporting the military Government of Iran, because it was against 'the eventual interests of the American people'. Members of the Armed Forces who were killing people at the orders of the Shah, too, were cautioned that 'the victory of the people is imminent and its wrath fierce. The Shah's words and promises are hollow and the revolutionary violence of the people tremendous.' He concluded this appeal by expressing his gratitude to the students, teachers, traders, telecommunication and transport personnel, oil industry workers, journalists, and all others who by their strikes were serving the cause of Islam and the Muslim people, and requested the religious leaders to give financial assistance to all those who had suffered in this struggle.⁶⁸

The Shah, on the other hand, though understandably unnerved by the galloping unrest, was unable to understand why Khomeini and other religious leaders

opposed him and what they really wanted from him. He insisted that he was not against religion: 'They accuse me of not being religious, but as anyone who knows me can testify, this is entirely wrong. I am even something of a mystic.'⁶⁹ In his *Memoirs*, he gives his reasons for not using force to crush the opposition, although, according to him, it would have cost the country much less than what his people had to pay in 'the bloody anarchy' that followed after him: 'A sovereign may not save his throne by shedding his compatriots' blood. A dictator can, because he acts in the name of an ideology which he believes must triumph whatever the price. But a sovereign is not a dictator. There is an alliance between him and his people, an alliance which he cannot break. A dictator has nothing to hand over. Power lies in him, and in him alone. A sovereign receives a crown and it is his duty to pass it on. . . I could imagine some political circumstances in which I would, during my lifetime, allow my son to come to the throne'.⁷⁰

V

Azhari's military rule was less than one month old at the commencement of the sacred month of Muharram, on December 1, 1978. This month is traditionally associated throughout the Islamic world, but particularly among members of the Shia sect, with uncompromising struggle against the oppression and tyranny of ungodly rulers. It was believed by many contemporary observers that, if the Shah survived the month of Muharram, he would have a good chance to diffuse the volcanic situation. The administration had therefore made adequate arrangements to meet any ugly situation. Army personnel on leave were recalled, public gatherings were banned, and the people were informed that any attempt to violate the martial law orders would be crushed mercilessly.

These preparations of the regime and its threats were forcefully matched by a communication from Khomeini. Dwelling on the significance of the month of Muharram, which has 'taught generations of people throughout history how to defeat oppression', he harangued his followers 'to crush the tanks and guns of the oppressors'. Since the Government of the Shah was illegal and unIslamic, the people should not pay any taxes. The oil workers should make all possible efforts to stop the flow of oil to foreign countries, because the money earned from the sale of oil was being used to buy weapons 'to kill our men, women and children'. He particularly singled out the State of Israel, which was a major beneficiary of Iranian oil, as 'the enemy of Islam'. He asked the people leading the movement in Iran to compile a list of ministers, army officers and other traitors who were ordering the slaughter of innocent people, so that they could be dealt with 'when the time comes'. The ulama should spread out among the people and tell them that an 'Islamic government does not support the capitalists and big landowners, as the Shah and his accomplices would like you to believe. Islam is for the oppressed and the peasants and the poor.' He called on all sections of the Islamic community to join hands in overthrowing the oppressive monarchy and replacing it with an Islamic Republic. He advised them to come out on the streets and confront the police; for 'these are the most critical times for Islam and our beloved Muslims in Iran. You, the noble Iranian people, can achieve an everlasting victory or be forever held in contempt.'

This advice was accompanied by a veiled threat to all those who did not side with the revolution. 'Today', he warned all concerned, 'nobody has any excuse to be passive, and silence or withdrawal is suicidal, aiding the oppressor. Whoever deviates from the path of Islam and the people is a traitor and an enemy.' He had no doubt

that the revolutionary fervour of the Iranian people had already 'awakened the zealous Muslim youth around the world', and hoped that 'the honourable flag of Islam will be upheld throughout the world.'⁷¹ Two days later, on November 24, 1978, Khomeini again exhorted his followers not to obey or co-operate with the Shah's regime. It was their religious duty to oppose him, for he was 'determined to destroy all that is sacred in Islam. . . to obey this system is to obey the devil.'⁷²

The people responded enthusiastically to the message of Ayatollah Khomeini, and defied the curfew imposed by the martial law authorities on the eve of Muharram. They appeared in the streets fearlessly, wearing white shrouds, indicating their resolve to embrace martyrdom. It is not possible to give an accurate figure for the number of casualties in the clashes that ensued. The estimates vary from 700 killed and 1,000 injured⁷³ to more deaths in the first few days of the month than on any other occasion except that of the Black Friday massacre.⁷⁴ But the Shah and his military administrators were evidently unable to check the demonstrations, which spread all over the country, with no signs of any return to peace. The marchers, demonstrating day in and day out, exhibited a firm resolve to go down, if they had to go down, fighting and dying, but not submitting.

A 17-point manifesto was issued at the conclusion of the historic march in Tehran on December 11, 1978, in which, according to a BBC report, some 2 million people participated. It reaffirmed full faith in the leadership of Imam Khomeini, and reiterated its resolve to overthrow the Shah's regime and transfer power to the people. It asked for the establishment of a truly Islamic Republic, with complete independence from 'Eastern and Western imperialism, and dominant powers in any

form.' It demanded political and social rights and a guarantee of the 'dignity of women given by Islam.' It called for the assurance of social justice for peasants and workers, the abolition of all kinds of discrimination and exploitation of man by man, and an end to the 'accumulation of wealth, on the one hand, and deprivation and poverty, on the other'. It offered full support to the striking workers in public and private sectors. It condemned the use of the Armed Forces to kill people, and reminded the Army that 'its Islamic, humanistic and national duty' was to take a stand against the 'enemies of the people and not against the people themselves'. It refuted the regime's baseless propaganda that international Communism had penetrated into the ranks of the Islamic revolutionaries. This propaganda, it was asserted, 'will not be able to weaken the struggle of the conscious people, whose motivation is derived from the Koran, Islam and love for their country.' The manifesto concluded with the declaration that 'the struggle of our people will continue until victory.'⁷⁵

In the midst of bloody riots and crippling strikes in practically every sector of public life, which had become a way of life in Iran, and with hardly any light at the end of the tunnel, Gholam Reza Azhari suffered a heart attack in the third week of December. The Shah, who, in his own words, 'was determined not to resort to force and hoped that the crisis through which we were passing would be solved constitutionally in a climate of conciliation',⁷⁶ came up with the idea of establishing a civil government that would include members of the opposition. Towards this end, he approached Dr. Gholam Sadighi, one of the National Front leaders, who at first, agreed to head such a government unconditionally; but, a week later, he conditioned his acceptance with the demand that the Shah set up a Regency Council and himself stay away from active politics. This was unaccept-

able to the Shah; for it was 'tantamount to recognizing that I was incompetent to carry out the duties of Sovereign.'⁷⁷ He next tried to make a deal with Dr. Karim Sanjabi, another National Front veteran, who was then serving a term in prison, from where he was released for negotiations. Sanjabi offered to form a coalition government on the condition that the Shah would straight away proceed 'on holiday'. This condition was again not acceptable to the Shah and the negotiations broke down.

VI

Towards the end of December, the Shah, making yet another effort, asked Dr. Shahpour Bakhtiar, an ambitious and, in some respects, a courageous man, to head a civil government. Bakhtiar readily accepted the offer; and, on January 6, 1979, he introduced his Cabinet to the monarch. The Sorbonne-educated Bakhtiar was an experienced politician. He had served under Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq, as a Deputy Labour Minister, and had later been imprisoned by the Shah for being an outspoken critic of his regime. He was, however, immediately expelled from the National Front, with which he had been associated for a long time, for having accepted the Shah's offer. The only concession Bakhtiar gained in his bargain with the Shah was that a Regency Council would be set up, although the Shah would retain control of the 700,000 strong Armed Forces. On January 13, 1979, a Regency Council of nine members was formed, including the Prime Minister, the Royal Court Minister, the Chief of the Army Staff, and the Heads of the Majlis and the Senate, with Sayyid Jalaleddin Tehrani, an 81-year-old former Senator, the Chairman of the Council.

Endeavouring to win over moderate elements in the

ranks of the opposition, Bakhtiar immediately made a passionate plea for peace, and promised to lift martial law, release political prisoners, dissolve the political division of SAVAK, restore complete freedom of the press, reinstate political activities, and 'try to lead Iran toward social democracy.'⁷⁸ He also held out an olive branch towards Khomeini, and dispatched Jalal Tehrani, Head of the Regency Council, as his emissary to Paris to meet the religious leader and persuade him to come to terms with the new Government. This meeting was doomed to failure from the start, since Khomeini had often enough made it abundantly clear that was no room for any dialogue. All that came of it was that, in deference to Khomeini's wishes, Tehrani, on his return to Iran, resigned from the Regency Council, after informing Bakhtiar that Khomeini was not prepared to accept any compromise.

With the failure of this move, Bakhtiar's attitude towards Khomeini began to harden. 'I would not', he said in a French television interview, 'give up my position for an ayatollah, just as the ayatollah would not do the same for me. A cardinal does not replace a prime minister.'⁷⁹ Theoretically speaking, Bakhtiar was not wrong. He was the Prime Minister appointed by the Shahanshah, and had won a vote of confidence from the Majlis. The fact of the matter, however, was that the Shah and his Majlis no longer wielded any real power or authority. On January 30, 1979, 32 members of the Majlis resigned to follow in the footsteps of eight Deputies who had earlier refused to attend any further sessions of the Majlis.⁸⁰ Although some may have resigned out of a crisis of conscience, the *en masse* resignations were evidently also the result of the strong statement Khomeini had issued a few days before: 'I warn those so-called representatives of the people that, if they enter the Parliament building, they will face the consequences of their

action.⁸¹

Meanwhile, the law and order situation had definitely taken a turn for the worse. The last week of December 1978 witnessed massive demonstrations, including an attack on the American Embassy, mainly by students, a sit-in by university teachers, in which one of them was killed, and then a huge student procession, which led to fighting in which scores of people were killed and a much larger number injured. Strikes of workers in airlines, telephone and telex departments, banks, Government offices, and in practically every industry continued to paralyse the economy; and the disturbances were now spreading to small towns and even remote villages. Popular expressions of unity and fellow-felling for the strikers and material as well as moral support for their families substantially strengthened the determination of the strikers to carry on their struggle relentlessly. In one case, when the local mosque informed the people in a village near Isfahan that the families of strikers in Tehran were facing difficulties owing to a shortage of bread, the villagers baked bread throughout the night, and sent three vans loaded with bread to the needy families in Tehran.⁸²

The question arises why, if the Army found itself failing in its effort to keep the Shah in power, it did not try the option of ousting him and ruling the country directly. True, the generals were traditionally loyal to the person of the Shah, largely because of the facilities of lavish salaries, grand houses, many servants, frequent trips abroad, pensions equal to salaries in service and, in many cases, lucrative jobs after retirement; but was not the prospect of wielding power personally and directly enough of a temptation to make them forget such material comforts, as well as their oaths of loyalty and allegiance to the Shah and the Constitution? Enough

examples of military leaders in Asia and Africa were there to encourage the belief that, if they wished, they, too, could hold on indefinitely.

The answer to this question has two aspects. First, the generals were the *de facto*, if not the *de jure* rulers of the country since the imposition of martial law in September 1978. They had resorted to the open use of force to check what they called 'reactionary forces', and, in return, had earned the wrath of the people, who began to look upon them as a symbol of terror. It therefore seemed likely that the masses, who had by then been charged with religious fervour, would resist direct army rule even more vehemently. Further credence is lent to this impression by a statement the CIA Chief stationed in Tehran made a few days before the Shah left the country. In response to a question from an emissary of the Empress Farah about 'how the revolution could be stopped', he replied that the Army would have to kill about 2 million people to restore order.⁸³ Second, while the officer cadre, by and large, could perhaps have been expected to lend its support to making a clean sweep of the 'mullah-led movement', irrespective of the cost in human life, the ranks of the Army, who were by no means special beneficiaries of the Shah's lavish favours, and were exposed to and deeply influenced by the religious fervour of Khomeini's men, were quite another matter. The generals could hardly be sure that the highly religious common soldier, whose real sympathies lay with the religious leaders, would follow orders to shoot down people who spoke in the name of God, held their meetings in mosques and shrines and rushed out to face gun-fire and embrace martyrdom.

There were other reasons, too. The top generals of the imperial regime were sharply divided on the advisability of a coup. While some favoured a firm, ruthless

and final crackdown, others preferred a position of neutrality between Bakhtiar's Government and the revolutionary leadership. A third group of senior officers believed that, in order to keep itself intact, the Army should transfer its loyalties to the opposition. The factor that must have alarmed all concerned was the increasing rate of desertion, which had risen to about 20 per cent by the end of January 1979.⁸⁴

The Shah, however, has put all the blame for his imminent debacle on American manoeuvring behind the scenes. He has based this conclusion largely on the unscheduled and unannounced visit of General Dutch Huyser, the Deputy Commander of the United States Forces in Europe, to Tehran, on January 3, 1979, for consultation with military leaders. This was not the first time that he had visited Iran, but it was the first time that he had not informed the Shah of his visit. It was only a few days after his arrival that Huyser, accompanied by Ambassador Sullivan, appeared for an interview with the Shah. The only thing agitating the minds of both of them, the Shah thought, was to know 'the day and the hour of my departure.'⁸⁵ In his own account of the visit, Sullivan indicates that Huyser had come to the Iranian capital 'to help stabilize the Iranian armed forces. . . to help the military make the transition in loyalty from the Shah, in a situation in which they would presumably be responsible to the government of Prime Minister Designate Shahpour Bakhtiar.'⁸⁶

Disheartened by the lack of support he was expecting from the United States, the Shah decided to leave the country. With tearful eyes he parted company with the group of servants and courtiers who had assembled at the Mehrabad Airport to see him off, and left for Aswan in Egypt on the morning of January 16, 1979. Whether it was to be a temporary stay abroad, similar to

the one in August 1953, the end of his personal rule or the complete downfall of the Pahlavi dynasty was not yet quite clear. Nevertheless, there was an evident basic difference between the situation in August 1953 and in January 1979, and between the respective series of events that led up to these two different situations. In 1953, it was a nationalist movement launched by a secular leader, Mohammad Mossadeq, whereas in 1979, it was a revolutionary movement led by an Ayatollah, speaking in the name of Islam, determined not only to overthrow the monarch, but also to bring about an Islamic order with all its religious, political, social and economic implications. The former was essentially political and economic, the latter substantially religious and emotional. History was, therefore, not likely to repeat itself, and it did not. The news of Shah's departure, announced on the State run radio, was received with ecstatic pleasure: motorists flashing headlights and honking their horns, groups of people snake-dancing on the roadside, distributing sweets to equally elated passers-by. When this news was conveyed to the 78-year-old Khomeini, at Neauphle-le-Chateau, he received it with astonishing calmness. 'Allah-o-Akbar', he exclaimed softly, and said that this was only the first phase of victory against the 50-year-old dictatorship; real victory would come with the eradication of the Pahlavi dynasty and, even more important than this, the end of foreign domination.⁸⁷

VII

In response to a call from Khomeini, the people staged a massive demonstration three days later. According to an eye witness account, 'a seemingly endless mass of business-suited professionals, leather-jacketed workmen, women in long black chadors, mullahs in white turbans, grizzled ancients, university students and child-

ren converged on Shah Reza Avenue under leaden winter skies. At least a quarter of Tehran's 4 million people marched along battle-scarred avenues.⁸⁸

A few days after the Shah's flight from the country, Khomeini announced that he would return to Iran on Friday, January 26, 1979. The Government, however, was determined to stop the arrival of the man who, it believed, was the cause of all the troubles. It was announced, only 48 hours before Khomeini's departure from Paris, that Tehran Airport was being closed owing to 'technical faults'. A large number of people had come to the Airport to make sure that the Iran Air 707 Boeing supposed to fetch their leader from Paris would actually leave. When told that the Government had decided to close the Airport, they reacted vigorously. 'If Khomeini does not arrive, the machine guns will come out',⁸⁹ they threatened. Soon after, they blocked several roads leading to the north of Tehran, the area where the affluent loyalists mostly resided, saying that the roads were closed owing to 'technical faults'.⁹⁰ A few days later, the Government yielded to this public pressure and reopened the Airport. It was soon announced that Khomeini would return to Iran on February 1, 1979. In the prevailing circumstances, Shahpour Bakh-tiar, by then nicknamed *Beyikhtiar* (powerless), was hardly in a position to continue to govern. He, none the less, insisted that 'mine is the only government'. In a message to the nation, on the eve of Khomeini's return on January 31, he warned against a 'black dictatorship', and, declaring his resolve not to accept any unconstitutional authority appealed to the people for their help.⁹¹

Khomeini and his men boarded a specially chartered Air France plane at Paris. In view of the risk that the plane might be shot down, women and children were forbidden to travel with him. His entourage included his

male relatives, his aides and a large number of journalists. 'Shortly after the take-off', reported an American journalist who travelled with Khomeini, 'the Ayatollah climbed the circular stairs to the first-class lounge, knelt on a plaid blanket provided by the airline, said his prayers and slept.'⁹² After circling the Tehran Airport for 25 minutes, the plane landed amidst the cheers of about 3 million Iranian men, women and children who had come to greet the person whom they regarded as their deliverer from the yoke and tyranny of Pahlavi rule.

In a brief address at the Airport, Khomeini pointed out that though the expulsion of the Shah from Iran was a great victory, the greater task of eliminating foreign influence from Iran still remained. It was with great difficulty that he was able to leave the Airport. The unprecedentedly large crowd, wishing to catch a glimpse of the Ayatollah, would not let the vehicles of his entourage move on. Finally, he was shifted from his vehicle to a helicopter, which took him to Behisht-e-Zehra, the cemetery in the south of Tehran where the martyrs of the Revolution and the victims of SAVAK are buried. Standing at plot No. 17, the final resting place of many of those who had laid down their lives on the 'Black Friday' in September 1978, he said: 'Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, the wicked traitor, has gone, has fled, after wrecking all we had. He wrecked the country and developed the cemeteries.'⁹³ Although the Shah had left and his sworn foe Khomeini had arrived, Shapour Bakhtiar was still in office vainly trying to exercise a power and authority that in fact he had never held. Iran had turned a corner, the most crucial in her recent history, and had entered a new phase in which Khomeini, without any office or formal authority, alone was to rule. But Bakhtiar had not learnt his lesson, not yet.

VIII

In his first press conference after his arrival in Tehran, held on February 3, 1979, Khomeini announced that he would 'very soon' set up a provisional government, and demanded the resignation of Shahpour Bakhtiar and his government, which he characterized as illegal, because it had been appointed by the Shah. In a tone loaded with a threat the Ayatollah said: 'We will try to solve the problem through non-violent means, but if the illegal government of Bakhtiar, with the support of the Americans and the British, continues to defy the will of the people and brings in forces from Israel, then we will take other measures to bring it down. . . if the moment comes, we will get arms from the proper places.'⁹⁴

Bakhtiar was equally sharp in his rejoinder. In no case, would he allow the Ayatollah to set up a parallel government, 'If he passes from words to action', he said, there will be 'trouble. . . We will open fire if they parade around with arms and petrol bombs; and Khomeini will have to take responsibility for this. I will order the arrest, and the execution if necessary, of those who call for civil war and the taking up of arms. . . ; if he wants to create it (a provisional government) in the holy city of Qum, I will permit it. It will be charming. We will have our own little vatican. But seriously, I am not ready to let him create a real government, and he knows it. . . No one knows what his Islamic Republic is; and if one refers to past texts, it makes one shudder.'⁹⁵

The people had never accepted Bakhtiar, and their resistance to his rule had continued unabated; but it was, in effect, the defiance of most soldiers and many junior officers against senior officers of the army, and their complete solidarity with the populace, that finally

wrecked whatever administrative power Bakhtiar had managed to retain. Responding to the call of the religious leader, a group of junior officers and soldiers under their command revolted openly; and, on February 8, a million marchers in Tehran, including a large number of military men, asked for Bakhtiar's resignation. Although defections from the ranks of the Armed Forces had been mounting for quite some time, the Farahabad Air Base, in Tehran, witnessed its first serious conflict on February 9 in which technicians (homafar) and junior officers were pitted against senior officers. The Javidan Brigade, the 'Immortals' of the Shah's Imperial Guards, immediately reached the Farahabad Base to deal with those who had declared their loyalty to Khomeini. However, since the rebellious inmates of the Base were supported by Islamic militants, who had reached there well in time, the Javidan Brigade had to retreat with heavy casualties.

A few hours later, during the night, a similar incident took place at the Doshen Tappeh Base. The argument here developed into a clash when cadets asserted their right to watch a television programme on Ayatollah Khomeini's return to Iran. The Javidan Brigade again came into action; and in the resulting bloody confrontation, many senior officers were killed.

The fighting continued on the following day. A curfew was declared on the afternoon of February 10 but it was ignored in response to a call from Khomeini, and an army of people charged with enthusiasm attacked and captured the National Radio and Television Stations. As a result of assaults on scores of police stations and garrisons, hundreds and thousands of arms fell into the hands of anyone who wished to pick them up. The easiest thing available in Tehran then, it was said, was a German-designed G-9 rifle. On the following day, February

11, the army leadership announced the switch over of their loyalty from the monarchy to the Revolution. In a communique issued by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, all army units were ordered 'to return to the barracks in order to avoid further bloodshed.'⁹⁶ Shahpour Bakhtiar immediately went into hiding; and surfaced in Europe a few months later.

Within six days of Bakhtiar's exit, the oil workers, who had been on strike for the last 69 days, resumed work on February 17; and oil again began to flow out of Iran on March 5. The ulama had won their war against the Shah, who less than eight months ago, on June 26, 1978, had thundered: 'Nobody can overthrow me. I have the support of 700,000 troops, all the workers and most of the people.'⁹⁷

CHAPTER III

REVOLUTION IN THE NAME OF G

Revolution In The Name Of God

A revolution is generally viewed as the destruction of the entire existing political, economic, cultural and social structure of a society and its replacement by a new system of ideas and values governed by a philosophy of life which is at complete variance with the supplanted one. This societal transformation does not usually come about suddenly. It is the result of a long drawn out historical process slowly, and often latently, building up towards a final climax. The symptoms of tensions which invariably precede a revolution are either completely ignored by the ruling authorities or are dismissed as the work of a few disgruntled political dissidents.

Economic disparity, political suppression, invidious distinctions and lack of opportunities for various classes of people no doubt constitute the raw material for political commotion. The presence of these factors, however, does not necessarily lead to confrontation. People may continue to languish in misery and suffer for generations and yet not rise to fight for what they themselves believe is their due. If, on the other hand, these factors are backed by an ideology and selfless leadership, or what people are convinced is selfless, the discontent begins to take shape, and in course of time may erupt volcanically. The immediate cause of a revolution is

usually trivial, serving only as a catalyst activating potential forces.

In the main, there are four concepts or views of a revolution. According to one, it is basically a social phenomenon created by economic factors arising from increasing misery or, on the contrary, from increasing prosperity or from a mixture of the two. According to another, it emanates from the failure of a society to meet the demands put upon it. According to a third, it is an outcome of feelings of frustration and alienation from society among a substantial section of it. According to the fourth, it is a political rather than social phenomenon, which is concerned with a displacement of political power.¹

Of course revolutions vary in magnitude as well as in their impact on later history. Two extreme varieties have been aptly described in the following words: 'There are mere personal putsches, the palace revolts, of which certain South American countries have averaged one a year. They mark political immaturity that cannot witness the transfer of political power without riot. At the other extreme are the great revolutions which in bloody script set down a new philosophy, announce the collapse of an old order and its ruling class — their records are read avidly by later generations for evidence that here an aspiration of mankind was fulfilled.'²

In Iran, the Revolution was neither an armed uprising of a group seeking power nor a movement of peasants and workers aimed at the establishment of a classless society. It was a mass upsurge in which practically every section of society participated in order to overthrow the entire political, cultural, economic and social apparatus which, in one form or another, had persisted

for 2,500 years.

In terms of physical dimensions, it was the biggest agitational movement ever launched; and in terms of sacrifices in human life, it was unprecedented. The general strike, both in private and public sectors, including the vital oil industry, which preceded the overthrow of the monarchy, lasted for nearly six months. This represented a record of solidarity between different revolutionary elements and their compliance with exhortations of the leader of the Revolution.

It differed from the earlier great revolutions – the French in 1789, the Russian in 1917 and the Chinese in 1949 – not only in content, but also in inspiration and aspirations. In the French revolution, the clergy had lent its entire weight and support to the established order. The Russian and the Chinese revolutions were substantially a reaction against their past.³ In both cases, a struggle was waged against a worn out and effete political structure, which had been further enfeebled by the world war preceding each of these two revolutions.⁴ All the three were launched in the name of secular ideologies, and were essentially motivated by economic considerations. Unlike any of these, the Iranian Revolution was led by theologians who looked back to their past, their Islamic past, as a model for their future and fought pitched but unarmed battles against one of the most powerful rulers backed by a large highly trained army. As Khomeini put it, the Iranian people had willingly offered sacrifices not for 'houses and jobs' but for God.⁵

The United States collaborated with the Shah because he was its fully committed ally and because it feared that the contagion of revolution might spread to other areas in the region. 'The danger exists', observed

Time, 'that the Islamic Revolution could become a model for future uprisings throughout the Third World – and not only its Islamic portion. . . the revolution that has turned Iran into an Islamic Republic whose supreme law is the Koran is undermining the stability of the Middle East, a region that supplies more than half of the Western World's imported oil.'⁶ The Soviet Union, on the other hand, was alarmed about the possibility that the Islamic sentiment generated by the revolution in Iran might affect its 50 million Muslim minorities, who were likely to double by the year 2003,⁷ living close to the 1600-mile-long border between the two countries. The Islamic Revolution thus owed nothing except antagonism to the two superpowers.

II

The former Shah was only stating a fact when, in an interview with a correspondent of the *Sunday Times*, in November 1979, he said that he could 'recall nothing in the history of the world – not even the French Revolution – to compare with what happened' in Iran.⁸ He, however, hardly realized that he himself was the most potent instrument of his own destruction. The totalitarian apparatus of the Pahlavi regime, which blocked all avenues of even a semblance of peoples' representation, its huge army and unnecessary arms build-up, to the detriment of the basic needs of the people, lavish expenditure on personal projection, flagrant misuse of public money, and widespread corruption, all made the task of the religious leaders urging the people to rise against the regime so much easier.

It is, indeed, curious that in spite of his frequent statements that a country could not be governed 'by force of the bayonet and secret police',⁹ and that 'a government must enjoy the backing of the people',¹⁰

his entire mode of government, for at least a quarter of a century, was an unconcealed negation of his professed political philosophy. He ruled the country with his own hand-picked political elite. Even at times when he appeared to have shared power with political parties, the power transferred was more shadow than substance.

Mohammad Reza Shah drew his main strength from the Armed Forces, which were ostensibly intended to meet the Soviet threat, but in fact enabled him to play the role of the policeman of the region, with all its implied ambitions of ruling areas far beyond the boundaries of Iran. A no less important use of the Armed Forces was to keep the opposition in check and meet so-called internal subversion. An Iranian Army Chief even told an American dignitary visiting Iran in 1961 that 'the army is not planning to fight the Russians. It's planning to fight the Iranian people.'¹¹ While the Armed Forces were primarily deployed to promote imperial ambitions abroad, his secret police, the SAVAK, were employed to keep close watch on dissident elements inside the country. Its primary function was lucidly described by the head of the organization. 'If you don't break that within man which prompts him to resist, revolution and the revolutionary process cannot be kept in check.'¹²

True to the traditions of all dictators, Reza Shah spent a great deal of money to publicize his own achievements and, like them, believed that this publicity proved his popularity. In the words of a noted American observer, 'pictures and statues of the Shah are everywhere; shrubbery in public parks is clipped in the shape of Persian script spelling out his name; over 75 different sets of Iranian postage stamps show the royal portrait; and millions of coloured lights are strung throughout the country every year as a reminder of the Shah's birth-

day.¹³ He, however, strongly repudiated the suggestion that he was a dictator. The renowned Italian journalist, Oriana Fallaci, who interviewed the Shah in one of his five palaces in October 1973, got a sharp retort when she referred to his dictatorial methods:

'O. F. [Oriana Fallaci]: Here in Tehran people are so afraid of you, they don't even dare pronounce your name.

M. R. P. [Mohammad Reza Pahlavi]: And why should they talk about me to a foreigner? I don't see what you are referring to.

O. F.: I am referring to the fact, Majesty, that many people consider you a dictator.

M. R. P.: That's what they write in *Le Monde*. And what do I care? I work for my people. I don't work for *Le Monde*.¹⁴

The fact of the matter was that there was no one around him who had the courage to tell him how unpopular he had become or what people really thought of him. Lord Curzon, several decades ago, referring to Nasireddin Shah, said: 'In his own surrounding there is no one to tell him the truth or to give his dispassionate counsel.'¹⁵ This was no less true of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.

Articles in the strictly controlled press frequently projected the monarch and members of the royal family. The state-run radio carried his voice and television showed his face to millions of Iranians day in and day out, which he believed provided a link between him and the people. 'My voice is heard everywhere,' he told Margaret Laing in 1975, 'heard through the radio, seen through the T.V. The contact is there.'¹⁶ Besides Iran-

ian journalists enjoying lavish favours, a former head of imperial protocol has indicated, money and expensive gifts were also freely distributed to Western journalists to keep the Shah's image high and intact.¹⁷ This is indirectly borne out by William Dorman, head of the Department of Journalism at California State University, who, despite a year-long study of the American media's reporting on Iran, 'could not find a single use of the term "dictator"' for the Shah. He was usually 'presented as a reasonable man who, at times, had used unreasonable methods.' His opponents, on the other hand, were portrayed as 'anti-women, anti-democratic, anti-modernization.'¹⁸ It was therefore no wonder that 'aside from occasional derogatory and brief references, the US press did not discover Khomeini and his importance to the movement until November 1978, eleven months after the revolution had begun.'¹⁹ One of the richest fruits that the Shah reaped out of his bribery was that the excesses of SAVAK remained practically unknown to the outside world. It was only during the last two or so years of the Pahlavi regime that, owing to the persistent efforts of Amnesty International and some other organizations determined to find the truth, that the horrid evidence of torture in imperial jails was unearthed.

One of the overriding passions of the Shah was to rapidly industrialize the country in order to raise the living standards of the people. He claimed that as a result of his policies, Iran would become 'one of the five industrial powers before the end of the century'. In 1974, his Prime Minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda, told Eric Rouleau of *Le Monde* that Iran would be producing more steel than the Soviet Union by 1983, and would overtake Japan in its living standards in 30 years.²⁰

There is little doubt that the Shah was determined

to impose his dreams as well as his own definitions of the 'Great Civilization' on the people, irrespective of their needs and regardless of their traditional ethics. It was largely as a result of his policies that the country's agricultural self-sufficiency was replaced by massive food imports which has already been referred to in an earlier chapter. At the same time about 8 per cent of the rural youth flowed into the cities every year to seek employment there, for the simple reason that wages in the cities were much higher than in the villages, per capita incomes in urban areas being five times those in rural areas.²¹

The Shah's desire to industrialize the country without allowing social and political institutions to grow and mature substantially contributed to his fall. In a post-mortem analysis of the forces that destroyed the Pahlavi dynasty, Henry Kissinger, who was one of his major unofficial political advisors, comes to the same conclusion. 'I accept the argument', he said in the interview published in the *Economist* of February 10, 1979, 'that all of us paid insufficient attention in Iran to the proposition that political construction should go side by side with economic construction. The failure was less of intelligence agencies than of a conceptual apparatus. . . It would probably have been wiser for the Shah to concentrate explicitly on a political evolution to be more commensurate with Iran's economic evolution. And perhaps we should have urged the Shah to do that. . .'²² The direct results of the economic policies of the regime also included a galloping inflation, an increase in unemployment from 6 to 13 per cent, and a middle class constituting 25 per cent of the population, all of which contributed ammunition for the revolution.²³

The imperial regime and its supporters at home and abroad had grossly exaggerated its achievements in the

field of development. The Shah was portrayed as a progressive ruler who had changed Iran from a medieval to a modern State. A casual visitor to Tehran would no doubt have been deeply impressed by its five-star hotels, neat and clean boulevards, endless streams of cars on the main roads, glittering shop windows, splendidly equipped hospitals, huge luxury apartments, posh villas, and a general air of prosperity that went beyond all these things. But Tehran was not Iran.

Tehran, with about 14 per cent of the total population, had seven theatre halls out of a total of 13 in the entire country.²⁴ Out of 216 newspapers and periodicals, 196 were published from the capital.²⁵ By the mid-seventies, there were 10,000 doctors for a population of 33 million, but about half of them were concentrated in Tehran.²⁶ Over 60 per cent of the country's students were studying in Tehran. The capital accounted for over 76 per cent of all the cars and nearly 68 per cent of all the motor vehicles in the country.²⁷ No less than 70 per cent of all those who went abroad, excepting those who went on pilgrimages, lived in the capital.²⁸

The myth of economic benefits and fruits of development reaching the doorstep of the common man is exploded by the fact that 63,000 of Iran's 66,000 villages did not have piped water facilities,²⁹ that only 3,106, or 4.7 per cent of them had access to electricity, and that about 91 per cent of them had no medical facilities worth the name. Some 50 families controlled more than 85 per cent of the commercial firms with annual sales of \$1.5 million or more. Around 70 per cent of the workers were employed by establishments owned by less than 10 persons.³⁰ It is worth recalling that the south of Tehran itself was immersed in poverty and misery. In many instances six to eight persons lived in one-roomed huts made of tin cans and mud or in

cave-like dwellings dug into the ground, which one could enter and leave only by crawling.³¹

In the field of education and research, it is noteworthy that no less than 41 out of 213 universities and academic institutions 'had absolutely no library facilities.'³² This may well have been intended to keep young students away from books and devoted to sports and scouting, for which 5 per cent of the State's budget for education was allocated.³³

Corruption reigned supreme at practically every level of the Pahlavi administration, and greatly enhanced the grievances of the people. In part, of course, bribery had a historical tradition, but, in part, it was also the result of the fabulous wealth that the Shah amassed from the oil revenues. Iranian officials and members of the Royal family are reported to have received \$28 million for the purchase of \$2 billion worth of F-14s from Grumman Aircraft and \$10 million from Northrop in order to strike a deal for the purchase of F-5E fighter telecommunication equipment.³⁴ The Bell Helicopter Division of Textron Inc., between 1973 and 1975, paid \$3 million to a company which was partly owned by a brother-in-law of the Shah.³⁵

In his personal life-style the Shah out-did his own pleasure-seeking Iranian predecessors, as well as the Mughal emperors and Ottoman Sultans. In her report of her interview with the Iranian monarch, Oriana Fallaci observes that 'almost everything in the palace was gold: the ashtray that you didn't dare dirty, the box inlaid with emeralds, the knickknacks covered with rubies and sapphires, the corners of the tables.'³⁶ He spent lavishly at home and on foreign tours. In his last visit to the United States, in November 1977, he is reported to have transferred 11 million dollars.³⁷

III

By early 1978 the Pahlavi regime had alienated practically every section of society. The university students, the bazar merchants – who had traditionally played a significant role in the making and unmaking of governments in earlier years – and the leftist elements, all had joined forces against the Shah under the leadership of the ulama.

No movement or occurrence of any historic significance, much less the Revolution in Iran, which destroyed one of the strongest regimes in the region, lends itself to a simple explanation. The leftist contention that the Revolution was essentially an outcome of the interaction of political and economic forces in which the working classes played a decisive role represents a view held by many, and therefore merits consideration. Fred Halliday, who may be taken as a characteristic exponent of this view, has argued that the Iranian Revolution was brought about primarily by the university students and working classes and that it was entirely political and economic in nature. It was, he says, 'a violent removal of political power from one section of ruling class to another.' The clerical leaders did motivate the people to stage street demonstrations; but 'what really broke the back of the regime', Halliday finds, was 'above all, the actions of the working class, lacking any national organisation, who crippled the Sharif Emami, Azhari and Bakhtiar governments. And whilst the armed forces might have been able to defeat the demonstrators by brute force, they knew they were incapable of forcing the proletariat back to work. This realization certainly stayed their hand.'³⁸

Yet, though there is no denying the fact that the Revolution was a concatenation of divergent forces ar-

rayed against the Shah, it also appears indisputable that the ulama were largely responsible for the success of the Revolution. They were the people who popularized the Islamic ideology, supplied the hard core of the leadership, and bridged the gulf between discontent and Revolution. The workers, particularly the workers in the vital oil industry, certainly 'broke the back' of three successive governments; but both industrial workers and white-collar employees in offices struck work on the call of the Imam who characterized these strikes as their religious duty. It is not to be forgotten that just a day after the appearance of a highly provocative article against Khomeini in the *Ettelaat* of January 7, 1978, Qum witnessed a massive spontaneous reaction against the disrespect shown to him. That Khomeini had no direct contact with the people while he was in exile for about 14 years made little difference.

Work in the factories and offices was resumed as soon as Khomeini returned to Iran and asked his followers to go back to work. After his return, on his call, members of the working class in cities and villages, both big and small, came out on the streets, at times literally in millions, irrespective of the cause of the call—whether to show their solidarity with the Islamic fundamentalists or to condemn the leftists, to protest against the United States or to participate in funeral processions of assassinated leaders. These numerous demonstrations conveyed the unmistakable message that Khomeini and his men commanded the unquestioned loyalty of the workers and the poor.

The world press has often painted Iranian religious figures as blood-thirsty tyrants; and millions all over the world, including a large number of Iranians, mostly members of the upper classes, were convinced that Khomeini had lost his popularity and that Islamic funda-

mentalists had been deprived of their hold over the people. This belief had been strengthened by the ouster of President Banisadr, who had had a large number of followers and admirers within and outside Iran. On the other hand, despite the sweltering heat of the end of June 1981, more than a million people, of whom a substantial number were workers, joined the funeral procession of Beheshti and other IRP leaders killed in a bomb blast. This could leave no one in any doubt about the extent of the veneration enjoyed by the ulama.

Refuting the notion that the revolutionary movement in Iran had a Marxist base, Khomeini, at the height of the movement, in November 1978, told *Impact*: 'Everyone can see that whatever is going on in Iran is hundred per cent an Islamic movement. The ulama have a leading role in this movement. . . Everyone knows that Islam cannot be combined with Marxism.'³⁹ The Tudeh Party's share in the Revolution was allegorically described by a Government spokesman, Ahmad Tavakoli, at a press conference, some three years after the success of the Revolution, in the following words: 'Some people were making a soup; one brought beans, another rice, another vegetables. The last guy caught a rat and put it into the soup so that he, too, could say he contributed something. This is what the Tudeh said, "I, too, am of the revolution." But they played no role.'⁴⁰

Although Khomeini was not directly leading the movement, as he had been residing abroad, he, nevertheless, was the leading light and the guiding star of the revolutionary spirit. His statements and messages, secretly smuggled and circulated through cassettes by the mosque network, paved the way for the Revolution. It must, however, be emphasized that he was not the first to demand the introduction of an Islamic legal and political system. He was only an inheritor, and albeit a

very distinguished one, of an Iranian Islamic tradition. In order to understand the role of the religious leadership and the extent of their hold on the people we need go no further than the later years of the Qajar dynasty.

IV

In 1890, Nasireddin Shah gave all rights of sale, distribution and export of all tobacco produced in Iran to a British company, the Imperial Tobacco Company, which in turn was to pay a sum of £ 15 million a year to the Iranian Government. This deal immediately encountered the repudiation by the clergy which was first supported by the merchants, and then 'virtually the whole nation was united under their leadership.'⁴¹ This was at once an expression of 'opposition to the State and resistance to foreign encroachment.'⁴² Within a couple of months of the arrival of the agents of the Company, in the spring of 1891, agitations started, first in Tehran and later spreading to Shiraz, Tabriz, Isfahan and Mashhad, under the leadership of the ulama and local merchants. These sporadic demonstrations acquired the shape of an organized movement following a *fatva* prohibiting the use of tobacco issued by the *Marja-e-Taqlid*, Mirza Hasan Shirazi. The effect of this was felt throughout the country. In the words of Nasireddin's French physician, Dr. Feuvrier: 'Suddenly, with perfect accord, all the tobacco-merchants have closed their shops . . . No one smokes any longer, either in the city or in the Shah's entourage or even in the women's apartments. What discipline, what obedience when it is a question of submission to the counsels — or rather the orders — of an influential mullah or mujtahid of some celebrity.'⁴³ It was thus firmly established that religious injunctions of the ulama were far more effective than imperial orders of the Shah. Eventually the monarch had to give in; and, subsequently, the use of

tobacco was resumed following another *fatva*, in January 1892, reinstating its lawfulness. Nasireddin Shah had thus learnt his lesson. Realizing the power of the ulama he thanked them, after the boycott had been lifted, 'for strengthening the foundations of the State', and promised to consult them on all important matters in the future.⁴⁴ He even personally participated in the funeral of Mirza Hasan Shirazi in February 1895.

After the religious leaders had discovered their power, they began to play a more vigorous role in the constitutional movement of 1905–6. This was spear-headed by two prominent ulama, in December 1905 namely Sayyid Abdullah Behbehani and Sayyid Muhammad Tabatabai, who, along with a group of city merchants, staged a sit-in, first, at the Masjid-e-Shah and, later, when driven away from there by the authorities, at the shrine of Shah Abdul Azim. Thereafter, in July 1906, two further demonstrations were held, the first in Qum and the second before the British Embassy in Tehran. Muzaffareddin Shah, who had succeeded Nasireddin Shah in 1896, was forced to accept a Constitution on August 5, 1906; and, in accordance with it, a representative assembly was convened on August 19, 1906. This was indeed a great triumph for the ulama as a class, as the entire movement had been 'organized by a traditional group using traditional methods in the name of traditional goals – the ending of misgovernment and a return to the Sharia.'⁴⁵

In the succeeding Pahlavi regime, however, the ulama were deprived of their power. Reza Khan, the founder of the dynasty, had two paramount ambitions: first, to re-establish the imperial grandeur of Iran, and second, to make himself the absolute master of all he surveyed. In order to achieve these objectives, he proceeded to cut down every source of traditional

authority to a size of his own choice. He was not slow to realize that the ulama represented the only real force standing in the way of his ambition. Reza Khan therefore concentrated on crushing the ulama, taking numerous steps to destroy their traditional influence. They were depicted as reactionaries who in order to retain their influence, opposed all measures to reform society and who worked as stooges of foreign powers engaged in keeping the country weak and backward to suit their colonial interests. In the words of Khomeini: 'He weakened the clergy who had influence in any part of the country – cities, villages or provinces . . . He weakened them so much that even the drivers of vehicles would not let them get on their vehicles.'⁴⁶

V

Mohammad Reza Shah, who ascended the throne in 1941, followed in his father's footsteps. Disregarding the religio-cultural ethics of Iranian society and its deep veneration for Islam, he harked back to the pre-Islamic glory of Iran: 'The empire founded by Cyrus the Great', he proudly declared, 'was not based on territorial acquisitions', but on 'international tolerance and understanding . . . Indeed I see in our first empire something of the spirit of the United Nations of nearly 2,500 years later.'⁴⁷ In 1971, his nostalgia for Iran's ancient greatness led him to stage the 'Persepolis Show', to which he invited a number of heads of State and other world dignitaries. The ceremony marking the celebration cost the country around \$100 million.

Dissidents interpreted his decision to replace the Islamic calendar with an older Persian calendar as an attempt to downplay the Islamic tradition in the country, as well as to legitimize his own claim as the heir to the 2500-year-old monarchy. In 1976, on the

occasion of fiftieth anniversary of the Pahlavi dynasty, he said: 'We, the Pahlavi dynasty, nurse no love but that for Iran, no zeal but that for the dignity of Iranians, and recognize no duty but that of serving our State and our nation.'⁴⁸

Although the Shah's programme of reforms in the early sixties, labelled as the 'White Revolution', was, for different reasons, opposed by peasants, landlords and merchants as well as the National Front, the Shah singled out the ulama as its opponents, and proceeded to Qum to tell them what he thought of them. Khomeini, who, since 1961, had emerged as an outstanding leader did not take this lying down. He boldly attacked the regime, and squarely held the Shah responsible for all the ills besetting Iran. Moving ahead of his predecessors' tradition of confronting secular authority, he did not restrict himself to criticism of just certain imperial measures, but went on to decry the very foundations of monarchy. No tinkering with the inclusion of a few Islamic provisions in a constitutional apparatus could satisfy the Imam; he wanted the establishment of a truly Islamic State. While it may be doubtful whether the Revolution could or could not have taken place without the support of Khomeini and the ulama, there can be hardly any doubt about the fact that the revolutionary regime would not have survived without him and the religious leadership.

The nerve centre of the ulama-led revolutionary movement was the mosque network, with the help of which they communicated with the people and spread Khomeini's revolutionary message. 'The Revolution' in the words of Ayatollah Behishti, 'began in the mosques, reached its peak from the mosques, and must continue to flourish in the mosques.'⁴⁹ The institution of the mosque clearly played a crucial role in the entire revolu-

tionary movement. With all avenues of public expression closed – political parties banned and the press rigorously controlled –, the mosque remained relatively free. It was utilized as a free island in a sea of suppression and ‘was much more difficult to penetrate than the university campus or even the Communist cell.’⁵⁰ Soon after the Revolution, Khomeini himself said: ‘It is the mosques which brought all of this about, which initiated this movement.’⁵¹

The audio-cassettes circulated included two basic types of material. First there was the Friday sermon, followed by the sound of shots and ‘the wailing and screaming of the dying and the wounded.’ Second, speeches and statements of Imam Khomeini, first from Najaf and later from Paris. Professor Hamid Algar, who had the opportunity of observing the procedure adopted, explains: ‘The message would be recorded in Paris and read over the telephone to a number of individuals in Tehran who would have tape recorders held against the telephone. They would then telephone other individuals in provincial cities who were waiting with their tape recorders, and in a brief time the message would be duplicated and circulated throughout the country.’⁵²

VI

It would obviously be unfair to minimize the contribution of such leaders as Motahari, Taleqani, Shariatmadari, Bazargan and many others who prepared the ground for the success of the Revolution through their writings, speeches and personal sacrifices. However, hardly anyone would deny that the roles Ali Shariati and Khomeini played in making a success of the Revolution were decisive. Although Shariati is not as well known as Khomeini, his contribution is very substantial.

Indeed, if one were to agree with Emerson that 'every revolution was first a thought in one man's mind', the one man in the Iranian Revolution would, in all probability, be Shariati.

Ali Shariati was born in a deeply religious family in Mazinan, a small village located close to the Kavir Desert. He received his elementary education from his father, Muhammad Taqi Shariati, a great religious scholar who was widely respected for his erudition. The young Shariati later went to Mashhad for his secondary and university education. He started taking an active interest in politics during the fifties. He was a member of an underground organization of Islamic socialists, which had been founded in the mid-forties,⁵³ and had been imprisoned for a few months for his outspoken criticism of the Pahlavi regime. He proceeded to Paris for higher studies in 1959, and stayed there until 1964. During these five years, besides his academic pursuits, he was constantly associated with organizations working against the Pahlavi regime, as well as with leaders of the Algerian National Front in France; and he occasionally contributed articles to journals sympathetic towards Algerian independence. He was also closely connected with the publication of *Iran-e-Azad* (Free Iran), an organ of the National Front of Iran.⁵⁴ After the completion of his studies in France, he returned to Iran in 1964. His activities during his stay abroad had been closely watched by SAVAK agents; and as soon as he reached the Turko-Iran border, he was arrested. After remaining in prison for few months, he was released in 1965, partly because of public pressure, but principally because of the intervention of Algerian authorities, making a gesture of gratitude for his services to the cause of Algerian independence. The Shah agreed to his release on the request of Algerian leaders with whom Iran had by then developed friendly

relations.

Following his release, he was able to secure a teaching position on the staff of Mashhad University; but was soon forced to resign. After unsuccessfully trying to secure an academic position commensurate with his qualifications at several other institutions, he began to deliver lectures on various aspects of Islam, at Hosseini-e-Ershad, a religious centre in the north of Tehran founded by Ayatollah Motahari, where thousands of students registered for his Friday evening lectures. It was on account of his immense popularity that he was again arrested, and stayed in prison for 18 months, until March 1975. He, however, remained under close surveillance after his release, and was denied the liberty of giving any public speeches and of publishing any writings. Not being able to serve his people and share his thoughts with them, he decided to leave the country. He left for France on May 16, 1977, and then proceeded to London, where he died a few weeks later, on June 19. His sudden death in mysterious circumstances is widely believed to have been the work of SAVAK. He was buried in Damascus, close to the shrine of Hazrat Zainab, the grand-daughter of the Holy Prophet and the sister of Imam Husain. As a mark of respect to him and an acknowledgment of his support for the Palestinians, the PLO Chief, Yassir Arafat, participated in his funeral.

Although Shariati undoubtedly made a great contribution to the Islamic Revolution, he was neither a politician nor a religious scholar in any accepted sense. He, however, through his attractive eloquence, fired the imagination of the younger generation and created a deep and enduring impact on all listeners. In the words of an observer: 'His views took the foreign-educated class with a shock of surprise, for the educated young

assumed that Islam was a "backward" Arab religion. Yet here was a Westernized intellectual using the latest intellectual terminology telling them that, while Marxism and existentialism had failed to solve the problem of morality for Modern Man, Islam had the answers.⁵⁵ As a matter of fact, his message was not addressed to just an Iranian audience, but to impoverished and deprived masses all over the world, as well as to the entire ummah of Islam. That his message did reach the struggling masses in other parts of the world and was a source of inspiration to other revolutionary movements is confirmed by the fact that the Algerian freedom fighters called him 'the father of socialism', and the Ikhwan-ul-Muslimeen of Egypt, looked upon him as the 'true spirit of Islam.'⁵⁶

However, Shariati was by no means a socialist in the usual sense of the term. He was, above all, a champion of freedom, a supporter of social justice and a spokesman of the poor within the framework of the principles of Islam. He entertained the highest sentiments of respect for the ulama as flag-bearers of true freedom from the colonialism of both the capitalists and the Communists. 'You will never see', he said, 'a signature of an *alem* under the colonial pacts and exploitative conventions.' His admiration for Khomeini is evident from his reference to him as 'the call of our time.'⁵⁷

He, like Khomeini, fiercely opposed all forms of hegemony and exploitation, whether of Western or Eastern origin. Exposing the clever tactics of major powers to keep underdeveloped nations under their iron heels, he attacked all of them: 'To any movement in captive countries, the following formula and interpretation is attributed now-a-days: if it threatens American interests, it is Communism and if it attacks

Communism, they say it is done by America. If it attacks. . . America, Russia, England and France, they say it is a fascist and reactionary movement.⁵⁸

From his early youth, Shariati directed his entire energy and enormous talent towards arousing his people from the deep slumber into which they had fallen. In the pursuit of his mission, instead of confronting the great powers directly, he used symbols and metaphors to convey his message. He believed that 'attempts to describe all the facts and meanings in lay language will not survive because the audience is of various types, classes, educational backgrounds, generations, histories, points of view, insight and depth of knowledge. Therefore, the language of faith should be multi-faced, so that it may apply to each period of time. Otherwise its essence is limited to only one generation; the following generation will find it meaningless.'⁵⁹

Broadly speaking, Ali Shariati's contribution to the Islamic Revolution in Iran was two-fold. First, he created an awareness of Islamic values and heritage among the Iranian middle class, particularly the youth of the country, which in course of time paved the way for the Revolution. It was his dynamic and progressive interpretation of Islam, which inspired the youth with fresh hope and a firm belief that a return to pristine and progressive Islam would inevitably bring a social revolution as well.

Tauhid, the oneness of God, is the basis of Shariati's entire religio-political philosophy. He views the march of history as a hostile arena not between 'haves' and 'have-nots', but between the forces of *Tauhid* and *shirk* (worshipping idols besides Allah). The perennial conflict throughout the ages, he said, has been 'between two different types of man, two different types of

society, two different types of world view', of which only one had been striving for the realization of an ideal society based on the concept of *Tauhid*.⁶⁰

In order to establish the power of the people as the most important vehicle for social change, he developed his own philosophy of history. A society, he declared, advances and develops or decays and declines neither because of an element of accident nor because of Marxian dialectics nor because of any individual's achievements. The people, the masses, he said, are 'the basis, the fundamental . . . conscious factor . . . determining history and society', for, as the Quran says, 'Verily, God does not change the state of a people until they change the state of their own selves.' This, however, did not mean that there was a contradiction between man's ability to bring about change and God's laws governing social movement and advancement. 'The Quran', he says, 'looks upon these two poles — the existence in society of determining, fixed and immutable laws, and the collective and individual responsibility of man for social change and development — in such a way that not only are they not contradictory, they even complement each other.'⁶¹ In other words, 'Man is free in his deeds and actions — not determined, but obliged to follow . . . pre-existent laws of nature in order to realize his freedom.'⁶² Despite the existence of immutable laws of nature, man is not exonerated from the responsibility of fashioning 'his destiny with his own hands.'⁶³

Prophets, he affirmed, spearheaded the war against oppression and godlessness; Abraham destroyed the idols; Moses challenged the Pharaoh; Jesus fought against the Jewish priesthood; and Muhammad, the last in the line of the prophets, took on the Quraish aristocracy and the slave owners to free man from the

bondage of man and to establish and proclaim the oneness of God. This oneness of God, or *Tauhid*, he stressed, was the pivot of the teachings of Islam. The distinctions of science and religion, of serving God and serving man, of politics and religion, of ruler and the ruled, of black and white, of capitalist and proletarian, and all other such dualities, he said, were outcomes of 'the world-view of *shirk*'; in true *Tauhid*, these distinctions ceased to exist.⁶⁴ By acquiring true faith in the concept of *Tauhid*, man attained complete freedom: he then 'fears only one power, and is answerable before only one judge. He turns to only one *qibla* . . . the corollary is that all else is false and pointless — all the diverse and variegated tendencies, strivings, fears, desires and hopes of man are . . . fruitless. *Tauhid* bestows upon man independence and dignity. Submission to Him alone — the supreme norm of all being — impels man to revolt against all lying powers, all the humiliating fetters of fear and of greed.'⁶⁵

He saw Islam as a divine plan for individual and collective human endeavour to realize the purpose of man's creation. The misfortunes that had befallen the Muslims were due to their wrong approach to religion. Religion was a path towards the attainment of perfection, not a goal. 'If you turn the road into an aim or destination — work on it, adorn it, even worship it, generation after generation for hundreds of years, love it and become infatuated, so that every time its name is mentioned or your eye glimpses it, you burst into tears; if you go to war with anyone who looks askance at it, spend all your time and money on decorating, repairing and levelling it, never leave it even for a minute to go in pursuit of your worldly affairs, constantly walk on it, talk about it, and rub its dust into your eyes as if it were some cure — if you do all this generation after generation for hundreds of years',

what would become of you? You would be lost. 'Yes, this straight road will defeat you and hold you back from your aim and destination. And to be lost in this fashion after having found the road is worse than never to have found the road in the first place.'⁶⁶

The acid test of faith therefore was whether it had enabled the faithful to move 'from the lonely life of clay and satanic character toward exaltation, motion, vision, the life of spirit and divine character! If, on the contrary, it has failed to produce these results, then 'you have chosen the wrong path, or you are making a wrong use of the right path.'⁶⁷

Ali Shariati takes the murder of Abel and Cain as a parable illustrating the origin of *shirk* and thus of the class struggle between the exploiter and the exploited, the transgressor and the transgressed and the ruler and the ruled. He considers that the tale deals with two wings of human society, two modes of production. It is the story of history, the tale of bifurcated humanity in all ages, the beginning of a war that is still not concluded.'⁶⁸ It was also, he felt, a struggle of two religious beliefs, one representing the religion of *shirk*, the worship of class idols, the other representing *Tauhid*, the oneness of God and the unity of mankind. This struggle, he thought, had existed throughout history and would continue until an inevitable and universal revolution heralded the death of Cain and the establishment of the 'system of Abel', bringing in its wake 'the triumph of justice, equity and truth.'⁶⁹ This would be the ultimate outcome of the process of history, in which each human being would have to decide 'whether to move forward with history, and accelerate its determined course with the force of knowledge and science, or to stand with ignorance, egoism and opportunism in the face of history, and be

crushed.⁷⁰

Shariati returns, again and again, to the importance Islam assigns to the people, *al-nas*. They, he maintains, are the direct addressees and recipients of the divine message, and 'in the classless society, Allah stands in the same rank as *al-nas* in such a fashion that, whenever in the Quran social matters are mentioned, Allah and *al-nas* are virtually synonymous. The two words are often interchangeable, and yield the same meaning.' When, for instance, the Quran says, 'if ye lend Allah a goodly loan . . ., or that property belongs to God', it is obvious that God is in no need of a loan from anyone and that property belonging to God means that it does not belong to the capitalist but to the people. Similarly, when it is said that 'Rule belongs to God', this means that 'rule belongs to the people, not to those who present themselves as the representatives . . . of God.' However, he added, it was only in social matters that the words Allah and *al-nas* had an interchangeable sense; in the theological and cosmological order, they stood apart as Creator and created.⁷¹

His second basic contribution was to make the people conscious of their deprivation and exploitation. Without confronting secular authority and making direct references to excesses of the Pahlavi regime, he spoke in terms of metaphors and analogies that alluded to the sufferings of the people at the hands of ruthless tyrants in the past, but could easily be understood to apply to present conditions, as well. This message rang loud and clear in educated and discerning minds. He was convinced that 'The necessary factor that would persuade a social class to arise is the feeling and awareness of being exploited rather than the mere fact of being exploited . . . class self-awareness is the factor which hastens the revolution.'⁷²

His sophisticated approach is perhaps best exemplified in his 'Reflections of a Concerned Muslim on the Plight of the Oppressed People.' Describing his visit to the pyramids in Egypt, he points out that the conducting guide informed him that the six large and three small pyramids were constructed with the help of some 30,000 slaves who brought 800 million blocs of stone from Aswan to Cairo, a distance of 980 miles. At a distance of a few hundred yards from the pyramids, there was a place where, he was told, hundreds of slaves, crushed under the heavy weight of the blocs of stone they carried, were collectively buried. This burrial place of the slaves had been purposely kept close to the pyramids, so that 'their souls could be employed just as their bodies were.'

Sitting besides the common grave and pondering on the fate of those who had lost their lives, Shariati 'looked back to the pyramids and realized that, despite their magnificence, they were so strange to and distant from me! In other words, I felt so much hatred towards the great monuments of civilization which throughout history were raised upon the bones of my predecessors! My predecessors also built the great walls of China. Those who could not carry the loads were crushed under the heavy stones and put into the walls with the stones. This was how all the great monuments of civilization were constructed — at the expense of the flesh and blood of my predecessors! I viewed civilization as a curse. I felt a burning hatred for the thousands of years of oppression against my predecessors. I realized that the feelings of all those people buried together in the ditches were once the same as mine.'

Although slavery in its institutional form, he continued, had disappeared, the fates of those who now lay dead, buried and forgotten and of those who now

continued to struggle were not substantially different. The means and modes of exploitation had changed during the last five thousand years, but exploitation and consequent misery continued to exist as before. Throughout all these years, 'they pushed us forward to fight people whom we did not even know. We were compelled to kill people whom we did not despise. Some were of our own class, race and destiny. For a long time, our old and helpless parents kept looking for a way to contact us, but their searching eyes never got an answer . . . They forced us to fight, to massacre and he massacred. Our fathers and mothers as well as their ruined farms suffered the loss. If victory was achieved, it was others who enjoyed its bounties not us . . . We have to carry loads, but not for their graves; they no longer care about them. This time, it is for their palaces – great palaces besides which our generation is buried.'⁷³ Emphasizing the significance and spirit of the pilgrimage to the holy city of Makkah in his book *Hajj*, Ali Shariati urged that each person should 'live the way Ibrahim did and be the architect of the ka'aba of faith' in his own time: 'Save your people; help them step out of the lagoon of a stagnated and useless life. Awaken them from their deep sleep, so they will no longer suffer oppression and live in the darkness of ignorance. Help them move; hold their hands and lead them. Call them to Hajj for Tawaf.'⁷⁴

It is indeed a strange coincidence that when Khomeini was banished from the country in 1964, Ali Shariati returned home to keep the revolutionary movement going at the intellectual level. The revolutionary fervour ignited by Khomeini was kept alight by Shariati in the course of the next few years. Their academic backgrounds – one a product of the theological school of Qum and the other a sociologist from the Sorbonne –, life styles and idioms were entirely differ-

ent, and yet the message they delivered was largely the same. They both emphasized the need to return to Islam in the original pristine form, and thus supplied the inspirational content for the uprising against the Pahlavi regime. Their approach was different, but there was no contradiction between them. They in fact complemented each other's work and efforts. A comparison of the services of the two has been neatly summed up by a distinguished scholar. 'Khomeini', he says, 'has supplied in a masterful fashion the strategic and political leadership, as well as much of the spiritual inspiration. Dr. Shariati, by contrast, has supplied, and will continue to supply, even posthumously, the intellectual content for their commitment to the revolution.'⁷⁵

It is true that Shariati did not quite replace Khomeini during the latter's long years of exile, but he did carry on his work in a substantial way, filling what might have become an unbridgeable gulf between the June 1963 movement and the events that culminated in the overthrow of the Shah some 15 years later. In the words of a foreign observer: 'From a religious standpoint, Shariati paved the way for Khomeini in the minds of many secular, intellectual Iranians. He argued that the passive, submissive Islam of his day was the result of 200 years of Western-instigated corruption, and that most contemporary Shi'ite practices were distortions. Waiting for the twelfth Imam, to return to earth, he said, need not paralyse devout Shi'ites; on the contrary, waiting meant preparing the conditions for his arrival and following the leadership of a *faqih* . . . when one (like Khomeini) appeared.'⁷⁶

Despite the philosophical and doctrinal differences between the fundamentalists on the one hand, and Shariati, on the other, there is no denying the fact that 'he led back a large part of the alienated middle-class

generation to an identification with Islam. Maybe their understanding of Islam needs refining, and in some cases correcting, but the commitment is there, and in many cases it is the single-handed work of Dr. Shariati.⁷⁷ His claim that 'I came to disquiet the quiet' was fully borne out by the awakening he brought about in the educated youth of Iran. As a forerunner of the Iranian Revolution, his share in its successful culmination was not dissimilar to that of Voltaire in the French Revolution and of Iqbal in the creation of the Islamic State of Pakistan.

On the other hand, Khomeini's unquestioned integrity, his fearless and uncompromising determination to carry on the struggle, his courageous stand against the Shah, and his foreign supporters, made him a charismatic figure; and people followed him as they had not followed anyone in recent history. He promised them a goal, the goal of an Islamic State, which people were convinced he was capable of reaching. The role of a leader in motivating people to make sacrifices is always crucial. In the case of Iran, it was especially significant: 'The task of a leader', in the words of Kissinger, 'is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been . . . The most important quality of a leader is courage. He must act in risky situations on the confidence of his own judgment. He has a responsibility to society not to overstrain its fabric, but he must push it to the limits. He must define the margin where he can influence events. If he exceeds the margin, he may bog down. If he goes below the margin, he may become irrelevant . . . We are losing the relationship between men and events. We must find those who can bridge the gap between experience and vision.'⁷⁸ If this criterion of leadership were applied to Khomeini and Ali Shariati, it would be difficult to deny that they both do measure up to it.

In sum, the immediate aim of the Iranian Revolution was to overthrow a 'highly centralized, abominable repressive and increasingly militarized State.'⁷⁹ Public grievances had multiplied over the years owing to skewed modernization and secularization measures of the Pahlavi regime, widespread corruption, increasing disparity between the affluent and the deprived, and the third degree methods employed by SAVAK to deal with political dissidents.⁸⁰

The ulama, who traditionally had a great hold over the people, capitalized on the sufferings of the people. Most segments of society responded to the religious leaders' call to rise against the despotic rule and substitute it with a pure and pristine Islamic order.

Ironically an observation of an American political scientist nicely summarizes the scenario of the Revolution: 'The Iranian revolution of 1979 was a true revolution in the classical sense; it was also an unprecedented expression of organized Islamic fervour against a despotic, corrupt and secular monarchy. . . At the moment of the revolutionary breakthrough, the movement was dominated by the most conservative and militant faction of Persian clergy, led by Ayatollah Rouhollah Khomeini. Its success vis-a-vis the other partners of the anti-Shah coalition was due to its superior organization, as well as the ability of its charismatic leader to generate mass support by directing a chiliastic appeal to the Islamic popular conscience.'⁸¹

CHAPTER IV

BAZARGAN: A KNIFE WITHOUT A BLADE

Bazargan: A Knife Without A Blade

Since his arrival in Neauphle-le-Chateau, from Iraq in October 1978, Khomeini had been carrying out his operations through a small inner circle of devoted aides and advisors. Apart from his only surviving son, Ahmad, his son-in-law, Shahabeddin Eshraqi, the more prominent among these included the following: Mehdi Bazargan, a student of thermodynamics turned revolutionary; Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, a former cancer research scientist from Texas, Sadeq Ootbzadeh, who had been an active student leader in the United States, working against the Shah's regime in Iran; Abolhassan Banisadr, the son of an Ayatollah, who had been living in Paris in self-imposed exile for many years and had earned a reputation as a theoritician of the Islamic economic system; and Hassan Habibi, another revolutionary intellectual. They were all expected to assume active and responsible positions in the post-revolutionary Islamic Republic of Iran. And they all, except Bazargan, who had gone back earlier, accompanied Khomeini on his return to Iran on February 1, 1979.

Four days after his return to Iran, on February 5, Khomeini, rejecting Bakhtiar's claim to the constitutional legitimacy of his government, whose *de jure* authority was already being challenged by the *de facto* control of Khomeini's followers, announced the formation of a

Provisional Government, headed by Mehdi Bazargan, whom he described as 'a religious, competent and trustworthy man.' He warned that any action against this decision would be treated as an uprising and a blasphemy.¹

Born in Azerbaijan in 1908, Bazargan was one of the first of the Iranian students to go abroad for higher studies. He went to France, some 50 years earlier, to study thermodynamics. On his return home, he served first in the Ministry of Education and later in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Tehran, from where Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq picked him up to head the National Iranian Oil Company. A profoundly religious man and the author of several works on Islam, Bazargan has appropriately been described as a mullah without a turban.² He was an active member, indeed the founder, of the *Nehzet-e-Azadi*, the Liberation Movement, formed in the early sixties, which for several years acted as a component of the National Front. He was imprisoned four times during the Pahlavi rule, for his activities against its despotism and his defence of human rights. In 1963, he was imprisoned for 10 years, but released after six. He retired from politics after his release, but resumed political activities when the movement against the Shah gathered momentum. He was arrested again, but released when Shahpour Bakhtiar became the Prime Minister. Soon after Khomeini's arrival in Paris, Bazargan joined him there, and came back to Tehran ahead of him.

In a decree issued by Ayatollah Khomeini in connection with his Provisional Government announcement on February 5, 1979, Bazargan was entrusted with a four-fold task: to supervise the affairs of the country; to hold a referendum on the issue of whether or not to adopt an Islamic system of government; to form a constituent as-

sembly, comprising representatives of the people to draft a constitution; and to hold parliamentary elections on the basis of the new Constitution.³ The assignment was gratefully accepted by Bazargan, despite the realization that setting up a provisional government and establishing a new political system under unsettled circumstances was a hazardous undertaking.⁴

The new Prime Minister encountered serious difficulties from the very beginning. The real substance of power rested not with his Government, but with a secretive Revolutionary Council of 15 members, the nucleus of which had been set up on Khomeini's orders during his stay in France. Its membership, as later revealed by Dr. Mohammad Husseini (not 'Hossein' as he is often referred to) Beheshti, in a posthumously published interview, among others, included Murteza Motahari, Hashemi Rafsanjani, Musavi Ardabili, Javad Bahonar and Beheshti himself. At a later stage, Mahdavi Kani, Ali Khamenei, Mehmud Taleqani and even Mehdi Bazargan, plus some others, were also included in the Council.⁵ It was on Khomeini's return to Iran that Ayatollah Mehmud Taleqani was appointed the Council's Chairman and Dr. Beheshti its Vice-Chairman.⁶ The Revolutionary Council was the highest executive organ of the country, as well as its 'interim parliament'. It was on its proposal — a public reference to it having been made for the first time on February 5, 1979 — that Khomeini had appointed Mehdi Bazargan as the Provisional Prime Minister.

It soon became all too apparent that Bazargan's Government was unquestionably subservient to the Revolutionary Council, and that all decisions involving policy matters were taken up and decided by it. No appointments, including those of the Cabinet Ministers, could be made without its prior approval. Even the local

Revolutionary Committees, which had been set up by the ulama in each neighbourhood to deal with day-to-day local civil and police affairs, in the capital and other cities were largely autonomous and outside the control of the Government. These Committees, according to Amir Entezam, one of the Deputy Prime Ministers in Bazargan's Cabinet, had 'taken the law into their hands and were undermining the authority of the Provisional Government and damaging the revolutionary spirit.'⁷ Soon after, the *Sepah-e-Pasadaran-e-Inqilab-e-Islami* (Corps of Guards of the Islamic Revolution), a paramilitary force of zealot Muslim volunteers, was set up in May 1979,⁸ to safeguard the Revolution against its adversaries (these are later referred to as Revolutionary Guards).

II

With such serious limitations on his power, Bazargan found himself tied in knots when he tried to deal with perilous national problems: the economic chaos, the law and order anarchy, the armed and powerful leftist guerilla groups of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (Islamic Socialists) and Fidayeen-e-Khalq (Secular Marxists) and the antagonism of such ethnic minorities as the Kurds, Arabs and Baluchis. The task of rebuilding a viable political and economic structure in the face of complete chaos was difficult enough in itself; with added constraints, it was a near impossibility.

The Islamic Revolutionary Court, headed by Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali, which had ordered the execution of the top brass of the former regime, neither consulted nor informed the Government of its decisions. Prime Minister Bazargan did not conceal his helplessness: 'I have no control over the Khomeini Committee. I only learned about the first four executions from the radio.'⁹

Khalkhali later revealed that Bazargan was opposed to the execution of the former Prime Minister, Amir Abbas Hoveyda. 'But', he said, 'I follow the rules according to the principles of Islam, and, in this matter, I don't have to consult anyone.'¹⁰ These executions were fully supported by Khomeini. If there was a cancer in society, he said, it should be operated upon; and it was sheer foolishness to condemn such an operation. A surgeon who operated upon the body politic to cure a cancer could not be called a brute. Those who criticized the executions of Hoveyda and Nasiri did not know what these two had been doing. Their execution was, in fact, a blessing for society, Khomeini concluded.¹¹

Frustrated by such interference from various revolutionary institutions of the clergy, which was matched by manifestations of discontent from various leftist elements, who, despite their sacrifices for the Revolution, had been left out in the cold in the power game. Bazargan, himself, said that he had been rendered as ineffective as 'a knife without a blade.' In a televised interview, on February 28, 1979, he strongly attacked the right-wingers who played games in the name of Revolutionary Committees that were not even known to Khomeini, and threatened to tender his resignation if their interference was not stopped.¹²

This was no imaginary accusation. It was a fact that the Council and other bodies controlled by the ulama were taking direct orders from Khomeini, and that they frequently bypassed governmental authority with impunity. Some of them openly said that they did not recognize the legitimacy of Bazargan's Government. Ayatollah Ghazi Tabatabai, a senior religious leader of East Azerbaijan, for instance, told *Newsweek* that he was constantly in touch with Khomeini, from whom he received direct orders, and that he did not regard Bazar-

gan's unelected government as a true authority.¹³ The Housing Foundation Chief, Hojjatulislam Khosrowshahi, similarly acting on his own authority, issued a warning to some 90,000 owners of houses in Tehran that, if their houses remained unoccupied, they would soon be taken over. The Minister of Housing, who was supposedly in charge of his Department promptly challenged the statement, saying that no such step could be taken until a law authorizing the Government to do so was passed.¹⁴ The result of all this was that there was no co-ordination, and that contradictory policies continued to be pursued even on vital issues.

The differences between the Government and the religious leadership were not confined to domestic affairs. They were also reflected in the conduct of foreign relations. The ulama had their own representatives in the Foreign Office, as a sort of a check on its regular cadre. In certain cases, their emissaries directly responsible to the religious hierarchy were sent to some countries without the knowledge of the Government. Iranian embassies thus occasionally received conflicting briefs, one from the sanctuary of Qum and the other from the Iranian Foreign Ministry. It was not a matter of a mere difference of opinion on who should represent the country abroad, the ulama or the career diplomats; but of a fundamental divergence on foreign policy. The ulama wished to preach and promote the Islamic Revolution abroad, whereas the career diplomats were primarily concerned with national interests, of which Islam was only one aspect.¹⁵

Khomeini's distrust of the capability of career diplomats to project the Iranian Revolution was not entirely baseless. Since they were trained under the former regime and, by and large, were immersed in Western values, he suspected they would be able neither to convey the

message of Iran's Islamic Revolution nor to counter the spate of anti-revolutionary propaganda abroad. Nearly two years later, despite repeated warnings issued by him, Khomeini felt that the situation in Iranian missions abroad had not substantially improved. In November 1981, addressing members of the Co-ordinating Council for the Propagation of Islam, Khomeini said: 'Our efforts in the field of publicizing Islam have been nil from the start of our Movement. Our embassies have not done anything as well, and with their present situation they cannot do anything.'¹⁶

Fed up with the state of affairs in which he had no authority or control, Bazargan, accompanied by his Cabinet colleagues, travelled to Qum on June 26, 1979 and submitted his resignation to Khomeini. The resignation was not accepted; and, instead, the Ayatollah told the Prime Minister to carry on the work as his 'religious duty.'¹⁷ A few days later, on July 1, 1979, Bazargan and his Ministers returned to Qum and held a joint meeting with Khomeini and members of the powerful Revolutionary Council, in which the Prime Minister once again pleaded for greater authority for his Government and due restriction of the powers of the Religious Committees. This trip proved as fruitless as the last. When a news reporter asked him whether he had been able to persuade the religious authorities to give him greater control over the Religious Committees, he replied cynically with a question: 'Were they under Government control before?'¹⁸

In a national broadcast on July 4, 1979, Bazargan lashed out at his opponents, who had accused him and his colleagues of being no different from the previous regime. They believed, he said, that a revolution only meant arresting former officials, confiscating their properties, cancelling all contracts of the previous regime,

and closing national borders to the outside world. He insisted that, despite all criticism, he would continue to pursue a policy of 'modernization and revolutionary realism', and that, if the people did not approve of his approach, then they could get rid of him.¹⁹ But this was just an ostensible show of strength, which left the Government as miserably helpless to make and enforce decisions as before. The Deputy Prime Minister, Sadeq Tabatabai, was only stating a fact when he complained that the Government was unable to exercise any influence on the Revolutionary Council.²⁰

In a television speech on July 19, 1979, Bazargan once again revealed that he and his Cabinet colleagues had submitted their resignations to Khomeini several weeks ago. They had done this, he said, 'not to shirk our responsibility; but to sit out of the Government for a time, and take up the role of a critic.' Although the resignation was again not accepted and he was asked to carry on, a joint meeting of the Cabinet and other authorities was held to find ways and means of bringing about a suitable co-ordination between various power centres. Different proposals that came up for discussion included the following: the Revolutionary Council, Revolutionary Courts and Revolutionary Guards should be dissolved; the Revolutionary Council should directly administer the country by assuming the responsibility of appointing the Ministers and implementing the decisions of Government; Cabinet Ministers should be appointed as members of the Revolutionary Council and, correspondingly, some Council members should be entrusted with Cabinet responsibilities. The third alternative was approved by all concerned in the hope that, 'with the amalgamation of the two bodies, a workable pattern could be evolved to run the country efficiently.'²¹

This arrangement, too, failed to produce the desired

harmony. The basic problem of where the substance of power was to lie – with Bazargan and his Cabinet or the ulama – remained unresolved. The mere transfer of a few members of the Cabinet to the Revolutionary Council, and vice versa, was not likely to, and did not, work. Sadeq Ootbzadeh, then Chief of the National Iranian Radio and Television, thought that a resolution of the problem required that ‘the entire structure of the Government should be drastically changed to enable it to act in a revolutionary way.’ He did not specify what the ‘revolutionary way’ implied; but he was convinced that ‘to transfer a number of Cabinet Ministers to the Revolutionary Council and vice versa. . . will not solve any problems. . . the Government lacks decisiveness.’²²

Disgusted with the constant accusations of being weak and not being revolutionary enough to deal with national problems, Bazargan, in a television speech on August 31, 1979, conceded that he had not been able to achieve much, but this, he said, was because of divided responsibilities and ‘confusion all around.’ He was prepared to lay down the reins of office: ‘I am not holding on to the Premier’s chair with my two hands. If we leave this office, it will be like a second wedding.’ He advised all those who had no other object but to criticize ‘the Government for fumbling and lack of decisiveness’ to refer ‘his Government’s ineffectiveness to the Imam, and ask him to sack us.’ Reacting strongly to the frequent criticism that he and his Government had not acted in a revolutionary manner, he said, ‘if acting in a revolutionary manner means going against all international standards and disregard of laws, I accept the accusation.’²³

III

Apart from the general malaise that afflicted the

nascent Islamic Republic, a grave immediate threat to it was posed by an uprising in Kurdistan. Persistent Government efforts had failed to stem the rising tide of insurgency here, and, in fact, had only served to harden the Kurdish resolve to continue their struggle for autonomy. That Bazargan was not able to deal with the Kurds effectively is beyond dispute. But neither could the Prime Minister's critics. The Kurdish question was still nowhere near a solution long after Bazargan had left office; and it will probably remain a trouble spot in the foreseeable future. The Kurdish question is fairly complicated and does not admit of any easy solution. Spread over Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and the Soviet Union, the Kurds claim a population of about 15 million in all. They constitute around 15 per cent of the total population of Iran.²⁴ Although a few Iranian Kurds are Shias, an overwhelming majority of them are Sunnis. They speak the Kurdish language, which, with its varying dialects, is quite distinct from the Persian language, 'in vocabulary, syntax, grammar and phonetics.'²⁵

The Kurdish struggle for autonomy had erupted into the open soon after the Revolution. But it was not a new phenomenon. As far back as December 15, 1945, they had set up an independent government, which, after lasting 11 months, had been crushed by the Pahlavi regime, and their leader, Qazi Mohammad, whom the Kurds had proclaimed President of the Kurdish Peoples' Republic, had then been executed. Their aspiration for cultural autonomy and a national identity within Iran had, however, remained intact, and it naturally raised its head again after the overthrow of the Pahlavi regime. The Kurdish Democratic Party, their main political organ, which had remained underground during all these years, then revived its political activities.

In a number of interviews and public statements given by prominent Kurdish leaders, published at home and abroad, it was made abundantly clear that, until their right of 'self-determination' was conceded, they would continue to struggle and fight. Abdur Rehman Qassemou, a prominent leader of the Kurdish Democratic Party,²⁶ left no doubt about what the Kurds would do if their demand for autonomy was not accepted: 'We have fought for it for the past 34 years, and we will continue our fight for the next 34 years as well. We will use all possible democratic means, such as freedom of the press and freedom of assembly, to fight for our self-determination; but, if they open fire on us, we will answer them. We will fight for our self-determination with goodwill, but if we are put under pressure, we will use our weapons.'²⁷

Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini, a respected Kurdish religious leader, was no less firm in his resolve. While rejecting the insinuation that the Kurds wanted to separate from the rest of the country, he was not prepared to compromise on their fundamental demands. 'The Central Government', he said, 'has only one alternative: to pay more attention to the aspirations of the Kurdish people. It is true that we need gendarmerie posts, police stations and revolutionary guardsmen, but they should be picked up from local residents.'²⁸

The authorities in Tehran, however, were not prepared to concede the Kurdish demands of autonomy, which they interpreted as just a step towards complete independence, which would inevitably encourage other ethnic minorities to come out with similar claims. The predicament of the Government was succinctly explained by the Interior Minister, Hashem Sabaghian: 'If the Government shows the slightest weakness in the face of Kurds, it can be sure that very soon other ethnic groups,

such as the Arabs of Khuzistan, the Turkomans of Northern Iran, and the Baluchis in the South-east will be on its neck with similar or even stronger demands.^{'29}

This logic was unassailable on its own ground; but it was hardly acceptable to the Kurds, who were far more numerous than any other ethnic group and armed to the teeth with a large and trained guerrilla force, with dependable allies in neighbouring countries and practically complete support from the local populace. Nevertheless, the Iranian rulers' apprehension that the contagion might spread to other ethnic groups was not unfounded. These fears were confirmed by Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini, who made no secret of his intent to claim similar concessions for other ethnic groups in return for their support: 'At this critical, historical stage, decisive for all different nationalities (*khalaqha*), we expect all the Iranian people and nationalities to help and support us. We expect this because the Kurds are only one of the Iranian nationalities and their struggle is only one link in the chain of struggle by all the Iranian nationalities. If we fail, then Iran and its nationalities will also fail.'³⁰

This was a forthright stand favouring a united front; but, as a matter of fact, the problem was, by and large, confined to the Kurds. This is not intended to suggest that there was complete calm and peace in the other areas where ethnic minorities resided. Azerbaijan, a stronghold of the Azeri speaking people of Turkish origin, saw some better fighting between the rival supporters of two Ayatollahs, Khomeini and Shariatmadari. Similarly, serious clashes also took place between the Revolutionary Guards and the local guerrillas in Khuzistan. Ayatollah Shobeir Khagani, Khuzistan's religious and political leader, was convinced that the Government's unwillingness to undertake a serious discussion of the issue of autonomy for some of the country's

larger ethnic groups would lead to civil war.³¹

One way out of the impasse which might possibly have met the substance of the Kurds' demands, as well as those of other ethnic minorities, would have been to set up a federal system of government, with powers divided between the Centre and the provinces. Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini, without explicitly asking for the introduction of federalism, implied its desirability by conceding that 'national responsibilities, such as the Army, monetary policy, foreign policy and national development schemes which relate to all of Iran, should obviously be in the hands of the Central Government.'³² But the federal principle was obviously not acceptable to the revolutionary regime. They appeared to have been convinced that the demand for autonomy would inevitably lead to eventual separation. 'I was sure from the beginning', said Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, 'that the Kurdish negotiations would be fruitless, because they are not acting in good faith and their ultimate aim is separatism.'³³ There were others who used much stronger language against the Kurdish leadership, and openly accused it of conspiring against the Islamic Revolution. Hujjatulislam Fakhareddin Hijazi, a prominent member of the Islamic Republic Party and a Majlis Deputy, described Ezzeddin Hosseini as a 'dirty traitor in religious garb.' He thought that the trouble in Kurdistan was the result of an international conspiracy of Western imperialists, international Communists, Israel and some Arab States, who 'were all involved in a plot to break the power of the Islamic Revolution.'³⁴

The Kurds' demand for limited autonomy was, however, substantially supported by Ayatollah Shariatmadari, who was a notable exception to the prominent leadership's unyielding attitude on the Kurdish question. He blamed the authorities for not listening to the genuine

demands of the Kurds. 'This unnecessary fighting in Kurdistan', he said, 'would never have happened had the authorities paid timely attention to the demands of the Kurdish people. . . The poverty-stricken people would have been satisfied if their material demands had been seen to and security in the region had been taken care of.'³⁵ He was equally opposed to the deployment of the Armed Forces: 'The army had no right to intervene in political matters. Only the people in Cabinet and Parliament can do this.'³⁶

It is, no doubt, true that Kurdish leaders never used the word separation, and insisted, time and again, that they would remain an integral part of Iran; but, on the other hand, some of their statements made it unmistakably clear that they wanted only a minimal relationship with the Central Government. 'Fundamentally', said Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini, 'we accept the role of the Central Government in foreign and defence policy. But beyond that, we want to run our own show.'³⁷ The issues involved, he asserted, were neither religious nor linguistic, but purely political: 'This is not a Shia-Sunni or Kurdish-Farsi problem. The real problem is that the Government is anti-people and against all forms of liberty.'³⁸ The upshot of the whole matter was that the almost uninterrupted continuation of violent clashes between the Army and the Revolutionary Guards, on one side, and trained Kurdish guerrillas, on the other, resulted in many casualties on both sides.

In regard to Iranian allegation that the Kurds were getting armed help from abroad, especially from Iraq,³⁹ three Kurdish leaders — Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini, who has been mentioned before, Dr. Abdur Rehman Qassem-lou, of the Kurdish Democratic Party, and Dr. Azizi, of the Komala (a Kurdish abbreviation for the Revolutionary Organization of the Tribes in Kurdistan) — put for-

ward somewhat different views. Hosseini did not deny that the Kurds were getting help from Iraq, but added: 'When there are antagonisms between two countries [Iraq and Iran] and you take arms from one of them to use against the other that does not make you a traitor. It does not automatically mean depending on another Government; and to be a traitor, one should be acting against one's own people.'

Dr. Qassemlou, while not denying that some arms were received from Iraq, insisted that most of these had, in fact, been seized in fighting with Government troops: 'Some groups, some tribal chiefs may have received arms. We don't need to do this. We got the weapons from Mahabad and Sardasht garrisons last year, and from Nowsud three months ago. Also, it is quite easy to get arms from the army in the fighting. I don't believe that any country where Kurds live will give heavy arms to any group of Kurds. We control the border all the way to the north (the Soviet Union border) but, unfortunately, they don't give us any arms. For our guerrilla war we don't need arms now, . . . may be in six months or one year.' Dr. Azizi, on the other hand, maintained: 'We are not prepared to accept arms from anyone – no matter how much they promise they are given without strings.'⁴⁰

Kurdish demands were summed up in an eight-point autonomy plan towards the end of November 1979. The document was signed by Hosseini and by leaders of the Kurdish Democratic Party, the Marxist-Leninist Komala Party and the left-wing Fidayeen. These demands were formulated as follows:

1. Autonomy for Kurdistan should be officially recognized and be specially referred to in the Constitution.

2. The Kurdish region, which is, at present, divided into four Iranian provinces, (Ilam, Kermanshah, Kurdistan, and West Azerbaijan), should be recognized as an autonomous unit.
3. A 'National Assembly of Kurdistan' should be elected by a free, direct and secret vote. The Assembly shall then choose an autonomous Government of Kurdistan, which shall control all economic, social and cultural life and local security in the Kurdish region.
4. The Kurdish language should be recognized as the primary language in schools and for official letters. After the fourth year of primary studies, the Persian language will also be taught in schools.
5. Part of the national budget should be devoted to Kurdistan; and this regional budget should be expanded to take account of the backward economy that has been imposed on Kurdistan in the past.
6. Kurdish representatives should play a role in the Central Government.
7. Foreign policy, national defence (the Army), the national economy and long-term economic planning should rest with the Central Government.
8. Democratic freedoms, such as freedom of the press, free speech, political and religious freedom, should exist all over Iran.⁴²

The issue in Kurdistan was not simply a matter of autonomy; it involved a complexity of political, eco-

conomic cultural and psychological overtones. The Kurds had a long tradition of struggle against the Pahlavi regime; and, above all, feared that, once they submitted to the new regime and laid down their arms as a precondition for negotiations, they would be finished forever. The outcome of the entire process of negotiations undertaken in a whole series of meetings was just this that high-powered Government delegations went and came back without achieving anything of substance.

IV

Earlier on in his short-lived tenure Bazargan was drawn into a direct confrontation with the ulama after the death of Ayatollah-ul-Uzma Sayyid Mehmud Taleqani on September 10, 1979, who, as was revealed later, had been the President of the Revolutionary Council. The Government declared a public holiday on the day following his death. One of the highest ranking and venerated religious leaders, Taleqani had spent 15 years in prison for his constant struggle against the Pahlavi dictatorship; but only once did he publicly refer to his experiences in jail, by revealing that his daughter had been tortured by SAVAK in front of him.⁴²

A man of profound scholarship and liberal outlook, he was perhaps the only religious leader who enjoyed the respect, trust and admiration of all shades of political opinion – of the fundamentalists, the nationalists, the liberals and the leftist Mujahideen-e-Khalq, Fidayeen-e-Khalq and even the Tudeh Party. He had been elected to the 74-member Constitutional Review Assembly of Experts, with the highest number of votes, confirming the popular belief that he was virtually the only 'vital bridge of communication between the religious and secular groups in post-revolutionary Iran.'⁴³ A crowd of some 2 million mourners attended his funeral proces-

sion. The streets of Tehran were clogged with mourners, and hundreds of motorists had to return home after hours of struggle in traffic jams, unable to reach the Behisht-e-Zehra Cemetery, where he was buried in the most prominent spot. Many who, for reasons of age or health, could not attend the funeral ceremony sighed and sobbed watching the procession on television at home.

Bazargan had known Taleqani since the early forties, and his influence on him had largely shaped his religio-political philosophy, which, as he told a military court in 1963, had all along been based on the 'Islam of a living society', not on the 'Islam of superstitions, protocol and individualism.'⁴⁴ Paying tribute to his friend and mentor, Bazargan, in his funeral oration at the Tehran University grounds, from where the procession started, said that Taleqani was a true revolutionary and a great Muslim, whose interpretation of Islam was founded on the Holy Quran, rather than on 'the dry disputations of mullahs.' Taleqani, he said, had opposed 'enforced religion' and had been receptive to the acceptance of progressive ideas in other cultures, including Western culture. He recalled his association with the great leader in the fifties, when Taleqani had joined Bazargan's liberation movement, their long terms of imprisonment together in the sixties, and how, after their release, they had both worked together.

Bazargan said that Taleqani felt that there were two clear options for all those who believed that a political struggle could succeed only if it was firmly supported by faith: one was the traditional, scholastic and dry approach of preachers holding forth from pulpits, the other was a return to the Quran to present 'vibrant and living Islam' to the people. Taleqani, said Bazargan, firmly supported the second alternative, which he be-

lieved was the only way to secure the religious and national identity of the people of Iran. Taleqani had disapproved the negative reaction of fundamentalists, exhibited before and during the constitutional movement at the turn of the century, which rejected everything they regarded as European, including the study of science and technology, fearing that 'our children might become irreligious.' As opposed to this, Bazargan emphasized, Taleqani followed in the footsteps and tradition of such great Islamic reformers as Sayyid Jamaled-din Asadabadi, Mufti Mohammad Abduhu of Egypt and Mohammad Iqbal, the Philosopher Poet of Pakistan, who all believed that Muslim societies should accept and adopt the best of what the West had to offer, provided it was in keeping with the basic tenets of Islam. 'Islam in the time of the Prophet, and during its expansion and growth', said Bazargan, 'was similarly open to the world. Salman the Persian was an advisor to the Prophet. The sciences of Greece and Rome were employed by the Arabs in achieving early Islamic victories.'

Emphasizing the difference between Taleqani and other religious leaders of Iran, he said that the former had been opposed to 'religious inquisitions' and believed 'that religion imposed by force and coercion had no value before God and, therefore, no value before man. . . that Islam and the Quran were founded on the concept of freedom, and that an imposed freedom was tantamount to slavery.' He was an ardent champion of 'freedom of belief and consultation. . . opposed to fanaticism, fundamentalism and small-minded attachment to one's class or guild. He was opposed to tradition, blind imitation and the undesirable influence on Iran and Islam of both Eastern and Western culture and politics.' Unlike some religious leaders, 'he joined a political movement when the average religious figure would have rejected such involvement; and when he joined this, it

was not as a leader but as an ordinary member of the movement. He was ready to listen to lay persons, and then, having heard their views, to change his own.⁴⁵

These remarks of Bazargan stung the clerical leadership to the quick; and his speech immediately became a red-hot religio-political issue. Two days after Bazargan's provocative address, Imam Khomeini, in a memorial service for Taleqani at Qum, said, 'we have lost a brother, our country a father, and Islam a great *Mujahid*.' He, however, made it unmistakably clear that the love and admiration which the people publically demonstrated on his death were entirely due to the fact that 'they looked upon him as a representative of the Prophet and an extension of the divine.' 'Did they kiss the spade which was used to dig his grave', asked Khomeini, 'because he was a democrat or because they looked upon him as a divinely inspired person?' He did not stop at that; but went on to criticize those who called the ulama *mortaje* (reactionaries), and reminded them that it were they who had led the freedom movements not only in Iran, but also in other countries of the Middle East. It was for this reason that the Super Powers and their agents dreaded the ulama. 'The same thing that Reza Khan used to do. . . weaken the power of the clergy and Islam, seems to have been taken over by our Westernized intellectuals.'⁴⁶

Ayatollah Ahmad Azar Qumi, the Prosecutor General of the Islamic Courts of Tehran, similarly lashed out at Bazargan for calling clergymen reactionaries. 'Which clergyman is reactionary?', he asked; and then, commending the role of the clergy, he asserted: 'Clergymen have been fighting tyranny for ages.' Referring to the services the ulama had rendered, he highlighted their contribution to the struggle against the tobacco monopoly towards the end of the last century, the part

they had played in the nationalization of the oil industry in the early fifties, and their sufferings in later years at the hands of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. Repudiating the suggestion that Ayatollah Taleqani was a progressive religious leader, as opposed to others who were conservative and orthodox, he said that this was 'an aspersion on him.' There was no difference between him and other religious leaders 'We want to enforce Islamic laws as he did – the laws of Islam 1400 years ago.'⁴⁷

The Towheedi Party, an organization of the ulama was equally critical of the Prime Minister's remarks. In a special statement, it upbraided Bazargan, and reminded him of the role played by the ulama in bringing about Islamic Revolution. By blaming them for the weaknesses of his own Government, Bazargan, in its view, was simply trying 'to become a favourite of the people, for his Government has proved to be quite ineffective in solving many important problems of the country.'⁴⁸

Abolhassan Banisadr, a member of the Revolutionary Council and, later, a Minister in the post-Bazargan Cabinet and, still later, the first President of the Islamic Republic, launched his attack against Bazargan and his policies from a different angle. He charged that the Prime Minister was leading the Revolution and the country to 'a morass.' His Government was not 'doing enough' and, worse, was treading the hazardous path of 'learning by trial and error.' The Government, he asserted, 'had no plans and did not know what to do.' He alleged that 'Bazargan wished to retain the governmental structure of the previous regime and reform it.' He attributed the weakness and ineffectiveness of the Revolutionary Council to the policies of the Government 'because the Revolutionary Council was forced to work with the Bazargan Government. It was for this reason

that the operations of the Revolutionary Council had slowed down and it had lost much of its efficiency.'

Banisadr frankly declared that 'he was opposed to about 90 per cent of the Government decisions . . . My views do not tally with those of Bazargan. We disagree on basic matters. I see this complex administrative machinery in the process of disintegration and trying to destroy Iran. I see no way except to replace it completely with a new setup.'⁴⁹

Bazargan was wise enough to realize that it was neither prudent nor possible to enter into a debate on such a sensitive issue with the ulama or the Revolutionary Council, and much less with the Imam. He, however, did defend himself against the charges of weakness and inefficiency. His reply to his critics, in a television address, was an invitation to appraise the current state of affairs realistically in the light of the revolutionary upheaval, which was 'more profound than we, or even the Imam, imagined.' Many had believed, said Bazargan, that, with the toppling of the former regime, 'all problems would be solved and we would live happily ever after in peace, democracy and justice.' That was an expectation which could not be realized, because 'we never imagined how difficult it would be to get this rusted system, this unconscious patient, back to life and work.' But now, it was the lack of sufficient power and authority that prevented him from solving problems facing the country. His Government, he said, was like a 'blunt knife' with which he was being asked 'to chop wood.'⁵⁰ The fact of the matter was that the country's affairs were in the doldrums not because of his Government's lack of competence or administrative ability or revolutionary zeal, but because of the several power centres ex-

exercising authority and issuing orders which in many cases were directly opposed to the policies of the Government.

V

Imam Khomeini, who enjoyed supreme authority and exercised his powers freely, occasionally tried to maintain a balance between lay authority and religious leadership. He often advised patience; but sometimes he admonished even the Prime Minister for being too weak to handle the affairs entrusted to him. Being equally unhappy with some of the ulama and aware of their undue interference in administration, he talked to them in a language which they apparently understood. He pleaded with them to 'be very careful in your actions; behave yourselves. You are watched by God. You are watched by the whole world.'⁵¹

The confusion which followed the Revolution, was not simply due to a lack of mental harmony among the authorities or even an absence of a clearly planned and chartered course of action to be followed and implemented. Among other factors responsible, it was also the result of a nearly total destruction of the previous political and administrative structure, which could not be replaced with an efficient system of governance in a matter of months. It has been estimated that some 20,000 members of the bureaucratic elite left Iran in the three years after the Revolution.⁵² It is obvious that most of them left either immediately before or after the Revolution. A major surgical operation had taken place; and it required time and utmost vigilance to restore normalcy. Reconstruction was not easy; it was certainly not possible in a day. 'A

country in which everything has been destroyed,' said Khomeini, 'its resources wasted away, its economy in shambles, its culture in ruins and the self-respect of its people abused, cannot be made whole again either by merely adhering to the concept of an Islamic Republic or expelling all the thieves and crooks in the land.'⁵³

Despite his ability to make this realistic appraisal, Khomeini also had his own limitations. He was essentially a religious leader and a spiritual guide. He had neither the experience nor the expertise to run a government, much less a revolutionary set-up. He himself confessed that 'we did not know what would happen after the revolution, because we had no experience. . . . Now after the revolution, we have come to know that one of the results of the revolution is confusion and chaos.'⁵⁴

These words of wisdom hardly helped the Prime Minister. He was allowed neither to exercise his authority nor to lay down the reins of his office. 'My role is a weak one', he candidly admitted to Oriana Fallaci: 'If I were to say that I'm in command, that wouldn't be true.' He had even told Khomeini that he could not "direct a Government in a country where everybody wants to be boss. . . . Let me go". Khomeini replied, "I have no one else. Nobody. Stay".'

Although completely helpless before the grand Ayatollah, Bazargan, none the less, rejected the charge that Khomeini was a dictator. People, he said, willingly obeyed him; and added: 'He doesn't want to impose his own decisions, his own wishes. . . . even when he bombards me with his domineering advice, he doesn't mean to be dictatorial. He acts

that way unconsciously, without realizing it, in good faith. . . You can't compare him to a Mussolini. . . not even to a Napoleon or a de Gaulle. You have to know him, you have to understand his manner of being, his character. . . [He] thinks he's acting for the people's own good. In fact, whenever I protest, he says he's sorry, and he promises not to do it again.'

In regard to basic differences between him and Khomeini, Bazargan said that they went back to the pre-revolutionary days when he visited him in Paris. While he, said Bazargan, held the view that the best strategy to fight the Pahlavi regime would be a gradual, step-by-step one, Khomeini, on the other hand, wanted a direct and all-out confrontation. Khomeini felt, Bazargan explained, that there could be 'nothing gradual. . . no waiting; we must not lose a day, a minute. The people are calling for an immediate revolution. It's now or never.' Although Bazargan had accepted the advice, he was still convinced that 'my original strategy was the right one. If we'd followed the step-by-step method, we wouldn't have the problems we have today. The country would be experiencing its freedom in quite a different way. Everything-at-once is an old Iranian vice that brings along a lot of perils.'⁵⁵

Despite the transparent sincerity of Bazargan and his excellent record of service and sacrifice, several senior ulama blamed him for all the ills the country had suffered since he took over as Prime Minister, and accused him of deviating from the revolutionary line of action. At the end of a mass rally in Tehran, a 12-point resolution was read out, which was fully supported by the marchers. 'We are deeply alarmed', it said, 'at the lack of resolution and the conser-

vative approach of the Government. We truly demand a revolutionary and resolute approach for the reform and cleaning up of the administration.⁵⁶

VI

One of the most serious grievances of the ulama who had whipped up a campaign against Bazargan and his Government was his inability to stop Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi from being allowed to stay in the United States. The Government, it was believed, had not taken a forceful enough stand in conveying its displeasure and giving due warning of the grim consequences for the United States.

Matters came to a head when Bazargan and his Foreign Minister, Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, went to Algiers to attend the 25th anniversary celebration of Independence of Algeria on November 1, 1979. During their stay in the Algerian capital, the two Iranian dignitaries also met the American Security Advisor, Brzezinski, who was representing his country at the anniversary celebrations. Back in Iran, Bazargan's critics strongly disapproved of this meeting. The Prime Minister, it was said, had no business to hold parleys with American officials responsible for giving refuge to the 'criminal' Shah. Ahmad Khomeini, the son of Ayatollah Khomeini, apparently speaking for his father, said the Imam 'had no knowledge at all' of the meeting, and 'everyone in the country condemns this meeting.'⁵⁷ A few days later, on November 22, Khomeini himself, in unusually strong language, lashed out at the United States: 'A criminal has burned this country for 50 years. He imprisoned people. He carried out several massacres. He painted the cobble-stones and asphalt of our streets with the blood of our youth. He stole and

robbed our resources. They have given this criminal, who has committed all these crimes, refuge, which is against all international laws.⁵⁸

American diplomats were taken hostage on the morning of November 4, 1979; and the Prime Minister submitted his resignation within hours of his return to Tehran on the following day. It was no longer possible for him, he said, to carry on his duties, because of the 'opposition, interference and sabotage by irresponsible people.' Defending his meeting with Brzezinski in Algiers, Bazargan said that it was not unusual for him to meet foreign dignitaries, and that there was no need to seek Khomeini's prior approval for any such meeting: 'So far, I have met with 200 Ministers and foreign diplomats; but, in no case, did I inform the Imam or the press.' He, however, added that, in this particular case, the Foreign Minister, Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, had on his instructions, informed Khomeini of the possibility of their meeting with top American officials in Algiers; but 'the Imam did not make any comments or statements that we should not meet with the US official.'⁵⁹ Forcefully dismissing the view that he should have sought the permission of the Imam for his meeting with Brzezinski in another statement, he said: 'Neither am I the executed Prime Minister [Amir Abbas Hoveyda] nor is the Imam a Mohammad Reza Shah. A Prime Minister who is required to seek the permission of someone else for every small thing is no good.' He once again reiterated his belief 'in the orderly step-by-step implementation of the Government's programme. In my view, extremist revolutionary action is not needed at this time and under present circumstances.'⁶⁰

The students who had taken over the United States Embassy squarely accused the Government of weakness in dealing with the United States. In the words of a spokesman of the students: 'By occupying the Embassy we want to prove that if we have a compromising government, we as a nation are not compromising.'⁶¹ Bazargan did not take this and similar criticism lying down. A few days after the fall of his Government, he charged that 'prearranged agitations, a campaign of vendetta, levelling of unsubstantiated charges and raising nation-wide issues one after the other caused the down fall of his Government. . . The arbitrary arrests by the religious committees created other difficulties in the path of Government. The situation deteriorated to such an extent that even being a member of the National Front and a supporter of Mossadeq came to be regarded as a disqualification.' In an implied reference to his critics, both the rightists and the leftists, he said: 'All kinds of people climbed on the bandwagon of revolution and moved it away from its chartered course. The strategy they used was that they showed themselves to be bigger revolutionaries than the ordinary people.'⁶²

VII

Bazargan was relieved of his duties on the day following the take over of the American Embassy. His departure from office, however, did not mean an end to the accusations of his critics. As late as the end of May 1980, Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali described Bazargan as a 'Westernized intellectual' who had never condemned the former Shah 'in a clear and straightforward manner' and maintained that the former Prime Minister's 'step-by-step' policy was responsible for the killings of Revolutionary Guards

and army personnel in Kurdistan.⁶³ Thereafter, the spate of criticism against Bazargan only gathered momentum.

In July 1980, Ayatollah Meshgini, a prominent clergyman, went so far as to demand the trial of Bazargan and his Cabinet colleagues for their crimes, which, he said, 'exceeded even those committed by the deposed Shah.'⁶⁴ Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, a prominent Majlis Deputy, who was later appointed Foreign Minister in Hossein Musavi's Cabinet, held the former Prime Minister and his Government responsible for taking no concrete action in support of the Palestinians in their struggle against Zionism, confining themselves to mere lip-service of the Palestinian cause.⁶⁵

Ayatollah Mahallati alleged that Bazargan's Government had been weak, ineffective and 'not as revolutionary as it should have been.'⁶⁶ Mohammad Javad Bahonar, then a member of the Revolutionary Council and later the Prime Minister of the country, similarly, had no doubt that Bazargan's Government had been a failure, which, he believed, was the result of a concentration of power in the hands of Government officials who refused to share it with the Revolutionary Guards and the Reconstruction Crusade.⁶⁷ Dr. Hassan Ayat, a prominent member of the Islamic Republic Party and a Majlis Deputy, said that it was futile to discuss whether Bazargan committed a mistake in trying to centralize all authority. The fact of the matter, in his opinion, was that this authority was 'thoroughly mismanaged' and that he was never able to organize his politics along 'the Imam's line.'⁶⁸

Khomeini, who had himself appointed Bazargan,

was also not entirely satisfied with the way the Prime Minister and his colleagues had handled the situation. However, unlike the criticism of many others, his objection related itself to principles rather than to individuals. It was, for him, not merely a matter of difference of opinion, but of a divergence of approach and attitude between two clearly distinct types. 'We', he said, 'were two groups, one of which had come from the theological schools and the other. . . from outside the country. Neither. . . had any revolutionary experience, neither. . . possessed the necessary revolutionary spirit. That is why we erred from the very beginning', in our choice of 'the Provisional Government. We did not realize that, from the beginning, we ought to have selected a youthful and decisive government' which could really administer the country.⁶⁹

The rebuttals of such criticism attempted by two of Bazargan's former colleagues merit attention. Both raised pertinent questions, which were, however, entirely unrelated to each other. Nasser Minachi, a former Minister of National Guidance, said that the Provisional Government had been installed in office only 'to put the country back to work'; it was never expected to be able to bring about long-term and fundamental social and economic changes in society. 'Our only task', he stressed, 'was to restart social and economic activities in the country, which we did.'⁷⁰

Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, the Foreign Minister in Bazargan's Cabinet, blamed leftist elements for starting a campaign against the Government which, in course of time, also trapped others, including the ulama. In a serialized article, entitled 'Safeguarding the Constitution', in the *Kayhan International*, he said: 'The

Provisional Government is accused of having liberal tendencies. This accusation first came from leftist groups, the pseudo-left and the ultra-left, including those supporting Russia, China or America. While the ink of the Imam's command for the formation of the Provisional Government had still not dried, and while all the members of the Government had not been decided upon, . . . Marxist accusations started, and the Provisional Government was called liberal, accommodating and in 'line' of America.⁷¹

The Leftist elements had, no doubt, supported the Revolution; but had, naturally, done so in the hope that by helping to overthrow the imperialist regime, they would gain a share in the running of the country. They had joined hands with – indeed, accepted the leadership of – the ulama; but they had never wanted the kind of Islamic State that Khomeini wished to establish. They could, therefore, not be expected to lend their support to Bazargan, who may have had differences with the ulama on matters of approach and methodology for bringing about stability, but who was, none the less, a tried and trusted supporter of the Islamic Revolution.

VIII

Going back a bit in time, some two and a half months after his resignation, in an article entitled 'Whither Our Revolution' in the daily *Kayhan*, Bazargan commented on the grim situation that prevailed in the country. How was it, he reflected, that 'Arabs were against Persians. . .; Sunnis against Shias; young against old; city against village; workers against directors; employers against employees; revolutionary guards against the revolutionary commit-

tees; and the nation against the government?' He wondered why the Kurds and Azerbaijanis were up in revolt 'when we are all Muslims?' He did not prescribe any remedy to correct the situation; but his conclusion was hard to disagree with. 'It is very easy', he said, 'to blame foreigners, imperialists, colonialists and counter-revolutionaries for Iran's troubles. Perhaps it was their fault to some extent, but we ourselves are not completely without blame.'⁷² On the other hand, we have already observed that there were those who believed that Bazargan himself was responsible for the problems that the newly born Islamic State was confronted with. To add to the criticism already noted, he was accused by the usually balanced *Iranian* weekly of having 'failed to capitalize on the post-revolutionary momentum and the almost total unity of victorious Iran.' His 'step-by-step' policy for putting the house in order, it said, was nothing more than 'aspirin when an open-heart surgery was required.'⁷³ Little realizing that his own fate would eventually be much worse, the newly elected President, Banisadr, soon after his election, remarked that 'Bazargan failed to grasp revolutionary Islam and the needs of the country necessitated by events.'⁷⁴

Neither these nor the previous criticisms and accusations take account of the fact that Bazargan was saddled with all the responsibility of arresting the chaos resulting from the Revolution with miserably little authority and highly inflated, but totally unrealistic, expectations — expectations held by a people who fondly dreamt of a golden era automatically succeeding the Revolution. Instead, the reality was that the armed forces, such as was left of them, were in disarray; the police was hardly functioning because of the interference of the Re-

volutionary Guards; unemployment was rampant with 2.5 to 3 million people out of work, largely owing to the closure of factories; massive construction activity had suddenly come to a halt; inflation was soaring uncontrollably. Yet, all this was still only one side of the picture. The other side of it was presented by the aggressive activities of organized, trained and armed leftist groups, the secret but nevertheless troublesome machinations of pro-royalist elements, and the furious disillusionment of ethnic groups whose dream of autonomy was nowhere near realization. On top of all this, was the pressure of the ulama who, rightly or wrongly, but genuinely, believed that the Islamic Revolution was bound to go astray if Western educated, unturbaned groups of liberals, led by Bazargan were allowed to control the country's affairs. On the other hand, despite his differences with Bazargan and his way of handling affairs of the State, Khomeini neither condemned nor distrusted him. The Prime Minister had laid down the reins of his office, said the Ayatollah, on November 5, 1979, because he 'had become a little tired.' His departure from office, he added, did not in any way imply that he was now on the sidelines and did not participate in any of the country's affairs: 'He is one of persons most respected by all. They should not think he had been dishonoured. Not at all. He is respected.'⁷⁵

As a final comment on Bazargan's tenure as Prime Minister, it ought to be said that the surprising thing is not that he failed in this or that respect, but that he managed to keep the country intact, which in less competent hands might well have collapsed. His sincerity, can hardly be questioned. On his methods of dealing with a messy situation and on his ability to surmount hurdles, however, dispute is likely to continue.

CHAPTER V

EXPERIMENTING WITH DEMOCRACY

Experimenting With Democracy

As noted in the previous chapter, one of the tasks entrusted to Bazargan at the time of his appointment as Prime Minister of the Provisional Government was to prepare a draft for the new Constitution. The first step taken in this direction was the holding of a referendum to determine the future mode of government. Khomeini, who, after a month's stay in Tehran, had moved to Qum on March 1, 1979, on the same day, gave a speech at the Faiziyeh Theological School, exhorting the people to vote for an Islamic Republic in the referendum scheduled for March 30, 1979. He said: 'We have a rich code of laws ourselves. We have divine laws. Those who say Islam cannot be enforced in our times have not understood Islam; they do not know what they are saying.' However, he added: 'Everybody is free to vote the way he wants. They may vote for the monarchy and the return of Mohammad Reza, if they so wish. They are free to say that they want a Western type of regime.'¹

Nevertheless, the options of the referendum were restricted to a simple 'Yes' or 'No' to an Islamic Republic, on one hand, and the old regime, on the other. This was objected to by a number of secular organizations, such as the recently established National Democratic Party and the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, a pro-Islamic guerrilla organization with unconcealed leftist inclinations.

The logic of the Mujahideen, on the face of it, was unassailable. 'If we have confidence in the vote of the decisive majority of the people, if we are confident that they shall vote for an Islamic Republic in response to Ayatollah Khomeini's call, then why should we present ourselves to public opinion, both at home and abroad, as dictatorial and monopolistic?'²

The people, however, voted overwhelmingly in favour of an Islamic Republic, only 1.8 per cent voting against it. Congratulating the nation, Khomeini described the establishment of the Islamic Republic as 'the first day of God's Rule' and 'one of the greatest religious and national festivals'; for it was on this day that the past 'satanic domination was put aside for ever, and the rule of the deprived, which is the Rule of God sat in its place.'³ In another speech on the same day, he promised equality to all sections of society:

In an Islamic Republic, there are no privileges between the rich and the poor, the white and the black, Sunni and Shi'a, Arab and non-Arab, Turk and other than Turk. The Holy Quran gives privileges to justice and piety. The person who is pious has privileges. The person who is of good spirit has privileges. But these privileges do not relate to material things, to property. If they exist, these privileges must be done away with. All people are equal to one another. They are all given equal rights. They are all equal. The rights of religious minorities will be preserved. Islam respects them. It respects all groups. The Kurds and other groups who have a different language are all our brothers. We are with them, and they are with us. We all belong to one nation, to one faith.⁴

Following the referendum, preparations were set

afoot for the formulation of a Constitution for the Islamic Republic. A draft Constitution was prepared by a committee of legal experts, and released to the press on June 14.⁵ The draft, with its 151 articles, was debated in the press and in various judicial and political forums. An eight-day seminar on the Constitution, organized by the Association of Iranian Jurists, commenced on June 16, 1979. A total of 61 speeches were delivered by representatives of 48 social and political organizations participating in its deliberations. A summary of the proposals offered by the participants was submitted to the Government for its consideration.⁶ A period of one month was allowed to elicit further public opinion, after which all suggestions, comments and proposed amendments were to be placed before elected representatives, who would then finalize the Constitution.⁷

Elections to the 74-member Majlis-e-Khobregan (Assembly of Experts) were held on August 3, 1979. A number of important political groups had, however, already announced their decision to boycott the polls. One of the parties refusing to take part in them was the National Democratic Front, which, according to one of its prominent leaders had been founded because the National Front of Mohammad Mossadeq had 'swept towards the right' and 'slid under the wings of the clergy.'⁸ It claimed that, while it had 'no leanings towards any particular ideology', it stood for a 'two-fold course — the battle against imperialism and the struggle for the establishment of democracy.' It believed that the prevailing situation in the country was not conducive to the holding of elections: 'There is widespread unrest and chaos all over the country, dragging the whole nation towards a civil war. There is complete unrest in Khuzistan. . . The people in Kurdistan' are 'sitting on a volcano which could. . . erupt any time. In West Azerbai-

jan Province, armed rebellion had become a routine of every day.' The National Democratic Front's statement then concluded that 'to hold elections under the existing alarming conditions would only create differences among. . . various sections of the people.'⁹

The Pan-Iran Party, which had also decided against putting up any candidates, gave substantially similar reasons for its boycott. Mohsen Pezeshkpour, Head of the Executive Committee of the Party, announcing the party decision, said that elections should be postponed until greater calm and tranquility prevailed in the country. In an obvious reference to the unrest in Kurdistan and other provinces, he said that 'elections to the Assembly should take place when the various political groups and organizations have more mutual understanding; otherwise, the country may face extensive problems in the future.'¹⁰

The elections to the Assembly of Experts were also boycotted by the Muslim People's Republican Party, which enjoyed the support and blessings of Ayatollah Kazem Shariatmadari. In a letter to the Interior Ministry, the Secretary-General of the Party, Dr. Alizadeh, reasoned that the elections should be postponed, as enough time had not been given to review the draft Constitution. Fair and free elections were, in any case, not possible under existing conditions because 'imperialist forces were still at work to damage the cause of the Islamic Revolution.'¹¹ There were several other political groups which boycotted the elections, mostly for similar reasons.

A number of important individuals also criticized the elections, Abdol Karim Lahijee, a member of the Executive Committee of the Association of Iranian

Jurists and Vice-Chairman of the Human Rights Committee, expressed his displeasure at the manner in which the task of framing the Constitution had been confined to a handful of people, who could not possibly represent all interests and areas. He was also critical of the way in which seats in the Assembly had been allotted. Religious minorities, who totalled less than 500,000 people had been given 4 seats, as against 69 seats for the remaining 35.5 million people, on less than one seat per 500,000 people. He was also apprehensive that while well-known individuals in the cities would easily find themselves in the Assembly, people in smaller towns and villages would remain largely unrepresented. Making an oblique reference to the probability of a large number of ulama being elected, he said that this would result in a concentration of power in the hands of one group, and that, if this happened, 'the assembly will resemble the Rastakhiz assemblies of the past. This will wipe out the results of all the struggle.'¹²

Ali Asghar Javadi, educated at Al-Azhar and the University of Paris, a well-known fighter for freedom of the press and human rights and leader of the Jonbesh Party, was of the view that the Government of Bazargan had been hasty in calling first for the referendum and then the elections to the Assembly of Experts. The time was not ripe for such an exercise. The Government, he felt, should have waited for the critical situation to settle down before preparing the people for elections or drawing up a Constitution.¹³ Despite the criticism from these and several other sources, the elections were held on August 3, 1979, as announced. Three days before the elections, Khomeini invited every Iranian to participate in the elections 'for the sake of the greater glory of Islam', and vote for only those who were 'honest, trustworthy. . . loyal to the cause of the Revolution and fully conversant with Islam and Islamic principles.'¹⁴

The election results consequently revealed the overwhelming triumph of the Islamic Republic Party, which had been inaugurated on February 17, only a few months before the elections, by Muslim fundamentalists. Its founders included men like Dr. Mohammad Beheshti, who was to play a decisive role in Iranian politics until his death in June 1981. The Assembly of Experts met for its first session on August 19, the very day on which the Shah of Iran had returned to the country, after the fall of Mossadeq's Government, 16 years before.

In his message to the Assembly, Imam Khomeini said that the people had risen against the old regime and had toppled it down with the call of 'Allah-o-Akbar', and had, thereafter, affirmed their complete faith in Islam by voting for an Islamic Republic in the referendum. It was, therefore, imperative that the Constitution of the country should be based 'one hundred per cent upon Islamic principles', since 'even a single law not conforming to these principles would amount to a contravention of the expressed will of the people.' He cautioned the elected representatives to make sure that no attempt to impose 'Eastern or Western ideologies' succeeded, and advised those who were well-versed in religious affairs to oppose any provision of the Constitution that was not in keeping with the spirit of Islamic laws.¹⁵

The convening of the Assembly of Experts was a source of strength and satisfaction to Prime Minister Bazargan; and he expressed his happiness in claiming credit for having accomplished four-fifths of the mandate entrusted to his Government.¹⁶ He was soon disillusioned. He found that the original draft of the Constitution submitted by his Government had been altered in several vital respects including the addition of 24 new clauses. One of these pertained to the concept of *Velayat-e-Faqih*, or the rule of the clergy, which had not

figured anywhere in the original draft.

It was obvious from the composition of the Assembly of Experts, with an overwhelming majority of Islamic fundamentalists as its elected members, and Khomeini's uncompromising guidelines to them, that the eventual draft of the Constitution would be 'one hundred per cent' Islamic in content.

II

The Constitution approved by Assembly of Experts, on November 15, 1979,¹⁷ had the following salient features. In the realm of religion and matters of faith, it was declared that all Muslims were members of one single nation, and that it was obligatory on the Islamic Republic of Iran 'to lay its general policy on the basis of the coalition and unity of Muslim nations, and to strive perpetually to achieve the political economic and cultural unity of the Muslim world.'¹⁸ The religion of the State would be the Islam of the Jafari Athna Ashari faith, which, it was emphasized, would remain a provision that was 'eternal and immutable.' Other Muslim sects, such as the Hanafi, Shafei, Maleki, Hanbali, and Zaidi, would, however, be free to perform their religious rites according to their respective faiths and *fiqh* (jurisprudence). It was further clarified that in 'any region where the followers of these faiths have a majority, the local rules and regulations within the scope of the authorities of Councils shall be in conformity with these faiths', while reserving the rights of the followers of other faiths.¹⁹

The leadership of the nation would be entrusted to a *Faqih* (Jurisprudent) 'who is just, pious, has contemporary knowledge, is a brave and efficient administrator, whom a majority of the people recognize and accept as

their Leader.' If these qualifications were not found in any one person, as they had indeed been found 'in the case of Ayatollah Imam Khomeini', the leadership would be entrusted to three or five qualified religious leaders, as members of a 'Council of Leadership', who would be chosen by experts elected by the people.²⁰ The number, qualifications and manner of electing these experts, it was added, 'must be drawn up for the first term by the clergies of the first Guardian Council, approved by their majority vote, and must obtain final ratification from the leader of the Revolution. Thereafter, any amendment or revision in this law shall be within the competence of the Assembly of Experts.'²¹

The prescribed qualifications and attributes of the Leader or members of the Council of Leadership comprised academic and religious requirements for framing religious decrees and exercising religious authority as well as the possession of 'political and social insight, courage, authority, and power of management necessary for leadership.'²²

The functions of the Leader or Council of Leadership included the authority to appoint clerics to the Council of Guardians as well as the highest judicial authorities in the country. As Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, the Leader or the Council would have the power to appoint and dismiss the Chief of Joint Staffs, as well as the Chief Commander of the Corps of Islamic Revolutionary Guards, and to establish the National Defence High Council, consisting of the President, the Prime Minister, the Defence Minister, Chief of Joint Staffs, Chief of the Revolutionary Guards and two Advisors. The Leader or Council would appoint Supreme Commanders of the three Armed Forces on the recommendation of the National Defence High Council, and declare war and peace. The Leader of

Council would have the sole authority to approve the appointment of the President of the Republic after he had been elected, as well as to dismiss him after the Supreme Court had given a verdict to the effect that he had deviated from his legal duties, or after the National Assembly had indicated its disapproval of the President.

The Leader or a member of the Council of Leadership could be dismissed from his position if he failed to perform his stipulated duties or fell short of his required qualifications. Any decision in this regard would be taken by experts elected by the people under the rules and regulations laid down by the Council of Guardians.

Executive

The President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the highest single authority next to the Leader, it is stipulated, shall be directly elected by the people for a four-year term, and shall be eligible for consecutive re-election for one term. As the Chief Executive, he shall be responsible for the enforcement of the Constitution and the co-ordination of relations of the three organs of Government, namely the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary, 'excepting those matters which directly relate to the Leader.'²⁴

The presidential candidate must be of Iranian origin, with Iranian citizenship 'and must be true and faithful to the essentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official faith of the country.'²⁵ He must be elected by an absolute majority of the total number of votes cast. In case none of the candidates is able to secure the required majority of votes, the two candidates securing the highest number of votes in the first round shall contest against each other in the second round of the elections, to be held on the first Friday of the week follow-

ing the first round of elections. If both these candidates should wish to withdraw from the elections, the two candidates who polled the highest number of votes from amongst the remaining candidates shall contest against each other.²⁶ The new President must be elected within one month of the expiry of the term of office of the last President.²⁷

The President is obliged to sign all Bills approved by the Assembly and the results of the referendum. He shall nominate an individual for the office of the Prime Minister, and, after due approval of the National Assembly, shall sign a decree of his appointment. He shall sign all treaties, protocols, agreements and contracts entered into with other Governments, after they have been approved by the National Assembly. All decrees and regulations, after their approval by the Council of Ministers, shall be notified to the President. If he finds them contrary to law, he shall refer them back, along with his reasons, to the Council of Ministers. He shall, whenever he deems it necessary, convene a meeting of the Council of Ministers and preside over it. He shall sign the credentials of Iranian Ambassadors to other countries and receive the credentials of Ambassadors to Iran.

In the absence of the President, a Provisional Presidency Council composed of the Prime Minister, President of the National Assembly and President of the Supreme Court, shall perform his duties, provided that the period of the absence of the President does not exceed two months. In the case of illness for more than two months, death, resignation or dismissal of the President, the Provisional Presidency Council shall make arrangements for the election of a new President within 50 days, and in this period the duties and authority of the President shall be carried out by the Provisional Presidency Council. During the period that the Provi-

sional Council shall perform the duties of the President, neither shall a motion of no-confidence be passed against the Government nor shall an amendment in the Constitution be made.²⁸

The Ministers shall be appointed by the Prime Minister, subject to the approval of the President and a vote of confidence by the National Assembly. The Prime Minister shall continue to hold office as long as he enjoys the confidence of the National Assembly.²⁹

The assets of the Leader or members of the Council of Leadership, the President, the Prime Minister, the Ministers, their wives and children, before and after their appointment, shall be examined by the Supreme Court to ensure that these assets have not been augmented illegally.³⁰

Army and Revolutionary Guards

Foreigners shall not be appointed in the Army or security forces of the country. No military bases by foreign countries, even for peaceful purposes, shall be allowed to be set up in the country. Any utilization of army equipment, facilities or personnel for personal use shall be prohibited.

The Corps of Islamic Revolutionary Guards, established soon after the success of the Revolution, shall continue to perform its duties to safeguard the Revolution. The scope of the functions and responsibilities of this Corps, in relation to the scope of the functions and responsibilities of the Armed Forces and to requisite coordination between them, shall be determined by law. The Government shall, in conformity with principles of Islam, provide people with all facilities, including military training, required to enable them to defend the Is-

Islamic Republic of Iran.³¹

Legislature

The Majlis (National Assembly) shall consist of 270 members, who shall be elected by the people, by secret ballot, for a term of four years. Fresh elections shall be held before the expiry of the term of Assembly members to ensure continuity. The quorum for the conduct of the business of the Assembly shall be two-thirds of the total number of its members, and a majority of two-thirds of the members present shall be required for the approval of a Bill. The President, Prime Minister and other Ministers shall have the option of participating in the proceedings of the Assembly, but shall be required to participate if called upon to do so by the Assembly. They shall have the right to be heard by the Assembly. Any request to the President to attend the Majlis session must have the approval of a majority of the Assembly members. No Bill shall be presented to the Assembly without the approval of the Council of Ministers. All international conventions, protocols, treaties and pacts shall be subject to ratification by the Assembly.³²

While the imposition of Martial Law shall be against the Constitution, the Government may impose certain necessary restrictions in the event of war, or other emergencies, with the approval of the Assembly. These restrictions shall, in the first instance, not exceed a period of 30 days; and, in case the situation demands an extension of the period, the necessary approval of the Assembly shall have to be obtained again.³³ All domestic and foreign loans and the employment of foreign experts shall be subject to the approval of the Assembly.³⁴

The Assembly is debarred from enacting laws contrary to the precepts of Islam and the Constitution of the

country. In order to guard against such contraventions a Council of Guardians has been provided. It shall comprise six scholars of Islamic Law nominated by the Leader or the Council of Leadership and six jurists, qualified in various areas of law, nominated by the Supreme Judicial Council and appointed with the approval of the Assembly. The term of office of the members of the Council of Guardians shall be six years. The Assembly shall have no legal validity without the Council of Guardians, except for the approval of the credentials of members of the Assembly and the appointment of six jurists of the Council of Guardians. All enactments of the Assembly shall be submitted to the Council of Guardians, whose members shall examine these enactments within 10 days to determine whether or not they conform to the principles of Islam and the Constitution. The theologians of the Council of Guardians alone, by a majority of votes among themselves, shall decide whether an enactment of the Majlis is in conformity with the principles of Islam. In case of a question concerning constitutional law, the decision shall be taken by a majority of the members of the Council of Guardians.

Members of the Council of Guardians may or may not participate in normal sessions of the Assembly, but their presence in the House, and participation in its deliberations, shall be mandatory when an Emergency Bill is being debated in the Legislature. The Council of Guardians shall supervise the elections of the President and members of the Assembly and all referendums.³⁵

Councils

In order to speed up the implementation of plans for economic development, health, education and culture the Constitution has provided for the institution of

Councils at the levels of villages, cities and provinces. These Councils shall comprise members elected by the local people. The task of co-ordinating the functions of these Councils shall be entrusted to a High Council of the Provinces, consisting of representatives of Provincial Councils. This Council shall draw up plans and place them before the National Assembly either directly or through the Government. All authorities, including the Provincial Governors-General, shall abide by the decisions of these Councils. Councils shall also be established in production, agricultural and industrial units, and they shall be composed of representatives of the employees, who shall ensure 'Islamic justice and co-operation for drawing up plans and creating co-ordination for the progress of affairs.'³⁶

Judiciary

The independence of the Judiciary has been expressly ensured by the Constitution. It provides for a Council called the 'Judicial High Council.' It shall be composed of the President of the Supreme Court, Public Prosecutor-General, and three Judges, well-versed in Islamic theology, to be elected by the judges of the country. Members of the Judicial High Council shall be elected for five years and shall be eligible for re-election. The Minister of Justice shall be appointed from among the nominees proposed to the Prime Minister by the Judicial High Council. The President of the Supreme Court and the Public Prosecutor-General shall be appointed by the Leader or Council of Leadership for a period of five years. A Judge of the supreme Court shall not be removed from office 'without being tried' and his alleged guilt or violation, for which his dismissal is sought, being proved. The trial shall be held in an open session, unless the court decides that an open trial would be contrary to public interest. All Judges 'are re-

quired to refrain from implementing Government decrees and regulations which are contrary to law or the rules of Islam or beyond the limits of the authorities of the Executive.'³⁷

III

The timings for the finalization of the Constitution and the referendum to ascertain popular opinion on it are significant. The draft Constitution was finalized on November 15, 1979, and the referendum on it took place two weeks later. It is widely believed that had it not been for the seizure of the American Embassy on November 4, which immediately and almost entirely engaged the attention of the press and people from all walks of life, the draft Constitution would surely have been subjected to a far more serious critical appraisal than it received under the abnormal circumstances of those days. The excitement, alarm and apprehension of directly confronting a super power relegated the Constitution into the background. 'Whether it was planned that way or not', said the *Iranian* weekly in an editorial comment, 'the clergy has surely been hoping that the Embassy affair would divert people's attention, and that the Experts' masterpiece would pass into law unmolested.'³⁸

It is difficult to say how the people would have reacted if the Embassy affair had not occurred. The fact of the matter, however, is that, despite the extraordinary circumstances, a serious debate did take place, and loud protests, with warnings of dire consequences, were voiced against some of the provisions of the Constitution. The clause that came in for the sharpest criticism at various levels of public opinion, pertained to the position and powers of the Leader (or the *Velayat-e-Faqih*). As has already been indicated, the Leader had been as-

signed a pre-eminent position, with powers and authority so extensive that he was made a unique figure in the history of constitutional government. There was practically nothing that he could not do. He would not only enjoy a life-long tenure, but would also have the power to appoint and dismiss the highest authorities of the State, including the popularly elected President.

In a diatribe against the draft Constitution, Abdol Karim Lahijee, a well known lawyer, condemned it as unworkable, and maintained that it 'must be rewritten.' He failed to understand the reasons for giving such wide executive powers to the *Faqih* (Leader). 'We are degrading the *Faghih*', he said, 'by making him, for instance, Head of the Armed Forces. Moreover, giving the *Faghih* the right to reject a President elected by one hundred per cent of the people is contrary to the principles both of Islam and a republic. Most interesting of all, the people have the right to choose the *Faghih*, who is a religious personality, without prior screening of the candidates; but they cannot elect a President — a political and administrative figure — without this process. The Constitution has paved the way for control over all affairs by a turbaned elite.'³⁹

The leftist view is reflected in the comment of Makki Nejad, one of founders of the Tudeh Party in 1942, who later broke away from it, but continued his activities against the Pahlavi regime, and, after the Revolution, was a member of the Executive Committee of the Radicals' Movement. He believed that the draft Constitution was an unworkable document. It might work as long as Khomeini was alive, he said, but after him, 'this Constitution will no longer be acceptable either to the people or to the religious leaders.' He was convinced that 'according to this Constitution, we will not have a government by the people. There is only lip

service being paid to the people, while true power rests with the *Faqih*. And although there is talk of 'consultation' with the people, it is not clear how far this consultation goes and whether the *Faqih* is obliged to respect popular will.⁴⁰

The criticism of the powers of the *Faqih* and the clergy was not confined to secular leaders. The Kurdish religious leader, Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini, was highly critical of powers entrusted to the *Faqih* which he described as an attempt to impose 'a clerical (akhundi) dictatorship, which makes one group in society dominate the others. And since it acts in the name of God, it can do far greater harm than others.' He was equally opposed to the pre-eminent position the draft Constitution had accorded to the Shias. Both the principal sects of Islam, he believed, 'should have been treated equally in the document.'⁴¹

Ayatollah-ul-Uzma Kazem Shariatmadari, also took serious objection to the extensive authority of the 'Leader'. He demanded a review of this position, because it was in clear violation of Article 6, which states that the affairs of the State shall be administered by the elected President, members of the Assembly, and Councils, as well as of Article 56, which declares that absolute sovereignty over the universe and man belongs to God alone. It was for these reasons, which he believed were 'of vital importance for the whole nation', that he had not voted in favour of the draft Constitution.⁴²

Despite the extensive criticism of the powers of the *Faqih* by different shades of political opinion, his special position was strongly advocated by the clerical leadership, even before the constitutional draft was finalized. Nasser Makarem Shirazi, a member of the Assembly of Experts, saw no contradiction between the power of the

Faqih and the sovereignty of the people. The fear that the *Faqih* would assume dictatorial powers, in his view, was only 'psychological and imaginary.' In order to make the Islamic Republic truly Islamic, 'you need supervision to ensure laws are not against Islam and that they are executed correctly. This conforms with the principle of democracy and a republic.'⁴³ Fears of a theocratic dictatorship were similarly dismissed by Dr. Mohammad Mofateh, one of the founders of the Islamic Republic Party and later Dean of the College of Theology at Tehran University. He believed that the *Faqih* would only supervise State activities and protect the Constitution, without interference in the day-to-day functioning of Government. It is only when 'the Executive strays away from the Constitution', he added, that *Faqih* would step in: 'I think this is very good and necessary. If we had this provision before, we would not have shed so much blood during the Revolution. So, in order to protect the implementation of the Constitution, there must always be a person above the Executive who supervises, oversees and, through his authority, controls the Executive. . . In fact, it is this article which guarantees the continuation of our Revolution.'⁴⁴

Dr. Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, Secretary-General of the Islamic Republic Party, similarly justified the wide powers entrusted to the *Faqih*: 'There is nothing dictatorial in the system which allows Ayatollah Khomeini to declare war, make peace, appoint judges and dismiss the elected President. The people in Iran have elected Ayatollah Khomeini by their free acceptance.'⁴⁵ Reacting to the criticism that the *Faqih's* powers, including his right to reject the appointment of a duly elected President, were too-extensive. Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, one of the highest ranking ulama went a step further: 'If the whole nation votes for the President, but the *Faqih* rejects him, then for me, as a Muslim, this

President would not be acceptable. People should not follow a President who has not been approved by the Leader.'⁴⁶

Imam Khomeini, himself, stoutly defended this provision of the Constitution. After the powers of the *Faqih* had been defined and approved by the Assembly of Experts in the middle of October 1979, he said that it was the need to arrest the resulting confusion and to ensure the success of the Islamic Revolution that justified the overwhelming authority entrusted to the *Faqih*. He assured the people that there was no fear of a clerical dictatorship because 'a clergyman could not be a dictator.'⁴⁷ After the Constitution had been finalized, he once again referred to this issue. Contending against the argument that the *Velayat-e-Faqih* would be a government in itself, and pave the way for dictatorship, he said that it was, on the contrary, 'a sacred institution' which was designed 'to keep a vigilant watch over the activities of the Government' and to exercise 'a healthy check and control over the activities of the President and the Prime Minister in a bid to keep them within the boundaries of Islam. . . . As soon as a *Faqih* acts in contravention of Islamic principles, he ceases to be a *Faqih* or competent to enjoy the religious authority assigned to him.'⁴⁸

The debate on the Constitution was, in itself, an indication of the beginning of a democratic process in post-revolutionary Iran. The critics of the draft Constitution wanted a full-fledged democratic apparatus to realize the aims of the Revolution and the distribution of a due share to all sections of the population who had lent a helping hand in overthrowing the detested Pahlavi regime. This, they believed, would be the best deterrent against the revival of any dictatorship. The defenders of the draft Constitution, on the other hand, while equally

fearful of the possibility of a revival of the old days, were convinced that an Islamic system alone could prove an enduring bulwark against such a revival, and that, this system, under the guidance of the Faqih, was the only way to realize the aspirations of the people.

Amidst reports of disturbances in Iranian Baluchistan, Azerbaijan, and Kurdistan, confirmed by the Minister of the Interior, Hashemi Rafsanjani,⁴⁹ the Constitution was approved, in a referendum held on December 1-2, 1979, by 15.8 million Iranians as against only 87,516 negative votes. This was the third time, since the Revolution in February 1979, that the people had gone to the polls to register their votes. The two earlier occasions, it will be recalled, were the referendum on whether the people wanted an Islamic Republic or not and then the election of the members of the Assembly of Experts, which was required to review the constitutional draft submitted by the Government.

IV

Presidential Election

The approval of the Constitution cleared the way for the election of the President, which took place on January 25, 1980. Khomeini, whose position as the Supreme Leader had been fully recognized in the Constitution, asked the nation to choose their first President freely, but, at the same time, gave detailed guidelines. 'The future President', he said, 'must be the candidate closest to Islam, of previous good character, unattached to any pressure group, not under Western or Eastern influence. Moreover, he must be a Muslim and follow Islamic teachings, be a nationalist sympathetic to the people's aspirations, be a servant of the people. . . the future President must respect Islamic laws and the new

Constitution, particularly Article 110, referring to *Velayat-e-Faqih*.⁵⁰

It was clear from the time the Constitution was adopted, if not from the inauguration of Khomeini's era, that only those candidates would do well in the elections who had creditable record in the revolutionary movement and unquestionably toed the 'line of the Imam' – an expression which gained currency after the take over of the American Embassy on November 4, 1979. It signified forthright opposition to foreign influence, particularly that of the United States.

Initially, more than 100 candidates came forward to contest the presidential election, a staggering, unprecedented figure for the election of a Head of the State. A Supervisory Commission for the election promptly disqualified 96 of these, characterizing many of them as collaborators of the former regime. Khomeini himself interpreted the nomination of such a large number as 'a plot against the Islamic Revolution', alleging that most of the candidates had tried to enter the electoral contest 'to sabotage the election.'⁵¹

This was, however, not the only peculiarity of the presidential election. A more significant aspect of it was that, contrary to most expectations, Khomeini had not indicated his preference in favour of any candidate. Had he done so, there is no doubt whatever that, irrespective of who it was, his candidate would have won the race without any canvassing or campaigning. People would just have voted for him without question. Khomeini was too shrewd to do so. Apart from the fact that this would have reduced the election to a command performance, he knew that all the proposed candidates were his men and it would do no good to him or the country if he picked up one and annoyed the others,

along with their supporters. Knowing the weight his word carried, he must have been certain that he could destroy all chances of an undesirable candidate, even at the last minute.

There was yet another reason for his silence on his personal preference. The constitutional powers of the President were limited, as the real substance of power rested with the *Faqih*, the National Assembly and the Council of Guardians, half of whose membership, comprising six clerics, was to be appointed by him. Decisions of the National Assembly, too, were to have no legal validity without the concurrence of the Council of Guardians, which, by a simple majority could decide that a measure passed by the Assembly was not in conformity with the precepts of Islam and hence invalid. The interpretation of the Constitution itself was also the responsibility of the Council of Guardians. With the vast powers held by the Council, as a watchman of the Assembly as well as of the Constitution, there was really no chance of the President posing any serious challenge to Khomeini.

The presidential contestants left in the field were: Jalaeddin Farsi, a nominee of the Islamic Republic Party (IRP); Masoud Rajavi, the leader of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq; Abolhassan Banisadr, Minister of Finance and member of the Revolutionary Council; Admiral Ahmed Hassan Madani, Naval Commander-in-Chief and former Governor-General of Khuzistan; Sadeq Qotbzadeh, the Foreign Minister; Hassan Habibi, a member and spokesman of the Revolutionary Council; and three former Cabinet colleagues of Bazargan, namely, Dariush Forouhar, Kazem Sami and Sadeq Tabatabai. All nine contenders were comparatively young. The oldest were Madani and Forouhar, both aged 50, Sadeq Tabatabai and Masoud Rajavi were aged 37 and 32 respectively.

The remaining five were all in their forties.

Jalaleddin Farsi, the IRP nominee, apparently had the best chance. Despite some split in the ranks of the clergy — Ayatollah Khalkhali and Ayatollah Yahya Nouri openly pledging support to Banisadr, and the religious centres of Qum, Mashhad and Tabriz apparently favouring Hassan Habibi —, the hard core of the IRP leadership, notably Dr. Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, Heshemi Rafsanjani and Ali Khamenei, firmly favoured Farsi. Khamenei went so far as to say that 'if Farsi was not elected as President, the endurance and permanency of the Islamic Revolution could not be ensured or guaranteed.'⁵²

However, an unexpected obstacle appeared in the candidature of Farsi. He did not fully satisfy the constitutional requirement of being of Iranian origin, as his mother was an Afghani, although his father was of Iranian stock and he, himself, was born in Mashhad. Despite the hectic efforts of the IRP leaders and their trip to Qum to prevail on Khomeini to intercede, Farsi was disqualified. This, Dr. Mohammad Beheshti at once interpreted as a plot by 'hidden and open hands.' None of the remaining candidates, in his view, were suited to head the Islamic Republic of Iran, as they were 'explicitly opposed to the basic slogan of the revolution.'⁵³ He did not identify the 'hidden and open hands'; but there were those who believed that Farsi's disqualification was engineered by other senior clerics who were jealous of the increasing influence and power of Ayatollah Beheshti.⁵⁴

Another popular candidate, Masoud Rajavi, was also forced to withdraw. He enjoyed the massive support of many dissident groups, such as the Fidayeen-e-Khalq, a large number of university students, and a sizeable sec-

tion of the Kurdish population. He was widely projected as the inheritor of the progressive views and traditions of the deceased Ayatollah Taleqani. Big photographs showing the two together could be seen on all the major streets of the capital, and small copies of these photographs were freely distributed to the public by a large network of male and female student workers of the party. However, since he and his party had boycotted the referendum on the Constitution, he was declared ineligible. With six days left in the presidential polls, Khomeini declared that 'those who have not voted in favour of the Islamic Constitution have no right to become the President of Iran.'⁵⁵ Three days later, on January 22, 1980, Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini, the most prominent Kurdish leader, announced that the Kurds would boycott the presidential elections because their 'favourite' candidate, Masoud Rajavi, had been disqualified.⁵⁶

The post-election analysis of the *Daily Telegraph*, that, had Rajavi been allowed to contest, 'it is likely that Mr. Banisadr would have failed to obtain half the votes cast, and the contest would have gone into the second round', was not an unrealistic appraisal. Masoud Rajavi's popularity among the youth could be easily appreciated from the response he evoked from the 100,000 strong public meeting addressed by him on the Tehran University grounds on January 30, 1980. Their slogan of 'Death to reactionaries' was indicative of their resentment as well as their target. In the course of his speech, Rajavi declared: 'We have been quiet for so long. . .; but that does not mean we will be quiet in the future.'⁵⁷ This revealed the course of action which his supporters would adopt in the future. The promise was fulfilled with disastrous results a year and a half later, after the ouster of Banisadr.

Khomeini's stand had some fair reason behind it; for how could a person occupy the highest office of the State when he did not support the Constitution, the sanctity of which he was supposed to defend and protect as the Head of the State. On the other hand, it also had an illogical element, because, whereas those who had participated in the referendum on the Constitution, but had voted against it were eligible, those who had had the courage to publicly express their honest disapproval of the Constitution were declared ineligible. It was equally difficult for many to understand how, if such secular groups as the Tudeh Party, which supported both the concept of an Islamic Republic and the Constitution for purely tactical reasons, and was only marking time to make a clean sweep of the religious elements of the Revolution, could participate in the election (though it did not put up any candidate), those who had rendered countless sacrifices for the overthrow of the previous regime could be declared unfit to shoulder responsibilities in the Islamic Republic.⁵⁸

However, Khomeini and his close circle of advisors were by no means unaware of the designs and stratagems of the Tudeh and other secular groups; and it is almost equally certain that, if the Tudeh had put up a candidate who had been likely to win the election, his fate would have been no different, one or another pretext being found to disqualify him. It was also believed by some astute observers in the Capital that, if nothing else had worked, Khomeini himself would have come forward as a candidate, and would thus have, clearly and unquestionably, swept away all his rivals.

There are others who are convinced that the decision to disqualify Masoud Rajavi was based on principles, and that it had little to do with the political philosophy of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq. After all, Jalaeddin Farsi,

a nominee of the party that was evidently closest to Khomeini, too, was disqualified, despite the pleadings and entreaties of his influential colleagues. To persuade Khomeini to change a decision he had once taken was never easy; to expect him to compromise on what he believed was a matter of principle was to expect the impossible. This constituted both his strength, which led to the success of the Revolution, and his weakness, which cost him heavily — and was to cost him more in the days that lay ahead of him.

V

With the removal of Farsi and Rajavi, the field was left open for Banisadr and Madani, the two candidates believed to be stronger than the others. The chances of Banisadr, the son of an Ayatollah and a well-known confidant of Khomeini since his exile in France, were bright from the very beginning. He organized his campaign skilfully, and his previous record of having been jailed twice for his revolutionary activities also enhanced his image. In a shrewd and remarkable move, he announced his candidature not in Tehran but in Qum, after a meeting with Khomeini. It was consequently widely believed that he enjoyed the 'go-ahead blessings' of the Imam, which gave him the boost needed to win the support of many who had no other way of choosing the best out of the various candidates in the field. In an equally clever attempt to win the backing of the poor, as well as the more religious sections of society, he, on the eve of the election, declared his resolve to abolish all bank interest. Photographs showing him with Imam Khomeini, too, were widely displayed to create a psychological impact on the voters. This was, of course, not confined to Banisadr. Practically all candidates tried to establish their legitimacy by widely distributing colour photographs portraying them together with Imam Khomeini.

Admiral Hasan Madani, on the other hand, drew his support from the Armed Forces, backed by those sections of the civilian population which wished to see a strong man installed in office – a reputation which he had earned as the Naval Chief as well as the Governor-General of Khuzistan. But this reputation was also a source of a certain amount of uneasiness among the ulama, who wished to retain their influence even when they, themselves, were not directly wielding power. The prospects for this were not bright in the event of Admiral Madani's election. His military background also alienated many of those who dreaded a return to the former kind of regime through an army coup.

It was precisely this fear that had prompted the students holding the American hostages to release a 'secret document' rummaged from the records that had fallen into their hands during the take-over of the American Embassy. It was by no means a coincidence that this document was published in the *Jamhuri-e-Islami* on January 24, just a day before the election. The inevitable result of this was that many of his otherwise strong supporters began to have second thoughts about his suitability. There is little doubt that Madani would have done better if this story had not appeared in the press at such a critical time.

The document revealed that Michael Matrnikov, a political officer of the American Embassy, and later one of the hostages, had had a three-hour meeting with Asad Sabetpour, the Mayor of Abadan, who was a friend of Madani and had asked for the meeting to find out if America would support Madani's candidacy. Matrnikov is reported to have replied that, although America could not directly interfere in the election, it would watch the election 'with interest', and would have no objection to the maintenance of 'an information link' with the

American Embassy. The document further disclosed that a nephew of General Jahanshah Palizban, who had been indulging in 'counter-revolutionary activities', had left Iran with the help of Madani, who was a 'friend of the family.'⁵⁹ Madani's reaction was understandably sharp and bitter. 'I know' he said, 'that the students have been exploited by certain people whose interest were at stake through my election', and wondered who these students were and from where they had come.⁶⁰

Imam Khomeini, who had been hospitalized on January 24, for a heart ailment, addressed the nation on radio and television the same evening. That the people were really concerned over his health is evidenced by the fact that in the city of Qum alone more than 2,000 sheep were sacrificed as an offering for his recovery.⁶¹ Setting the people's fears for his health at rest, he said: 'My health is better. . . My illness is not important. . . More important is the unity of the people.' In regard to the next day's election, he advised the various presidential candidates to co-operate with each other after one of them had been elected. The one who was elected should be fully supported by the people. 'But', he added, 'the President as a personality is less important' than the dedication with which he works in the interests of the nation. 'If he works in this spirit, he will remain; and if he does not, he will be ousted.'⁶² Khomeini, himself, cast his vote in a polling booth wheeled to his bed in the hospital.

The polling on election day was brisk and heavy all over the country. According to an announcement of the Ministry of the Interior, a total of 14.46 million votes (nearly 44 per cent of the total population) were cast.⁶³ Abolhassan Banisadr captured nearly 76 per cent of the votes polled. Born in 1935 in Hamadan, he had entered politics as a student in the early fifties in

support of Mossadeq. He had left Iran in 1965 for Paris, where he remained until the success of the Revolution. He returned to Iran along with Khomeini in February 1979. His association with Khomeini dated back to 1972, when they met at the funeral of Banisadr's father in the holy city of Najaf in Iraq. When Khomeini was forced to leave Iraq in 1978, he stayed in Banisadr's apartment in Paris for a few days, before shifting to Neauphle-le-Chateau. It was in the capacity of one of the closest aides of the Ayatollah that he was first noted on the international scene.

Immediately after his landslide victory, Banisadr made it unmistakably clear that he would not tolerate a parallel government of either the students holding the American hostages or the powerful Revolutionary Council. 'How is it possible to run a country when a group called "students following the Imam's line" acts in a tyrannical manner and creates a State within a State?' he asked.⁶⁴ Flushed with the success which, in all probability, even he, himself, had not anticipated, he asserted that it would be he and not the Revolutionary Council which would govern the country: 'I don't think the Council can oppose this popular wave of feeling.'⁶⁵ He was apparently not worried by the strength and popular hold of the Islamic Republic Party either. It was 'dead on election day', he proudly declared.⁶⁶ In an exclusive interview with *The Middle East*, he asserted that 'I will not tolerate. . . anyone toying with the elected Government or its decisions, no matter who they are.'⁶⁷

This show of strength was partly the result of the confidence that an overwhelming majority of the People's votes had given him. But it was also partly due to the lesson he had learnt from the fate of Bazargan's Provisional Government, that unless he restricted the numerous power centres right from the very beginning,

he would find it more and more difficult to do so as time went on, and 'himself become increasingly paralyzed.'⁶⁸

Although there was never much love lost between Banisadr and the ulama led by Beheshti, the Islamic Republic Party Chief, matters came to a head with the presidential election. Soon after the election, in an address to IRP members, Beheshti, said that, if Jalaeddin Farsi, the IRP candidate, had been allowed to contest the elections, 'the result would have been different from what it is today.' They would, he added, none the less, co-operate with the President so long as he remains in line with 'our Revolution. If not, we will warn and criticize. If he does not listen to us, we will defend ourselves. . . Besides, the President is not very important; the real power lies in the hands of the Government and the National Assembly.'⁶⁹ The same note was struck by Dr. Hassan Ayat, a member of the IRP Central Committee. 'The Constitution', he said, 'makes the President only a ceremonial post. . . The Prime Minister plays a much more important role than the President.'⁷⁰

In order to stop the President elect from formally assuming office immediately, Beheshti claimed that, according to the Constitution, he could take the oath of office only before the National Assembly, which had still to be elected.⁷¹ This was his reaction to Banisadr's earlier statement to the effect that Imam Khomeini would soon administer the oath of office and install him as the President.

This is not to suggest that all powerful ulama were opposed to Banisadr. He had his own lobby among them, which lent him its unqualified support. Hojjatul-islam Hasan Lahooti, former Chief of the Revolutionary Guards and a close associate of Imam Khomeini, con-

gratulated Banisadr on his election, and berated the 'opportunistic group' which, he said, had now been fully exposed by the election results.⁷² Ayatollah Allama Yahya Nouri, a well-known revolutionary leader, strongly criticized Ayatollah Beheshti's statement on the procedure for the oath of office. The official formalities, he said, were far less important than national considerations and 'the urgent demands of the people who suffered and waited 2,500 years for a day on which to rule the country themselves. . . The question as to whether the oath-taking ceremony should be held in the National Assembly or in the presence of the Imam was bureaucratic and formal in nature, and should not be permitted to become a tool for playing with the sentiments and the destiny of the Iranian people.'⁷³

VI

Despite the determined attempts of Beheshti and his supporters, Banisadr was sworn in, on February 4, 1980, as the first President of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The ceremony was conducted by Khomeini in the hospital where he was being treated for his heart condition. Before taking the oath of office, Banisadr paid a visit to Behishti-e-Zehra, where martyrs of the Revolution lie buried amidst other distinguished personalities. In a forceful speech to a massive gathering, he said: 'Today our economy is paralyzed, the political atmosphere is plunged into discord, our culture is no longer operative, and our social environment is disorganized.' He appealed for unity and hard work, and pledged support to disinherited people all over the world: 'The message of our Revolution, as told by our Imam, the idol-crushing Khomeini, to the Iranian nation, to present day mankind, and the generations to follow, is a command for a general salvation of mankind. . . . This command states that we, the people of Iran, so long as our brothers in

Palestine, Afghanistan and the Philippines, and all over the world, have not been freed, will obey the call to become martyrs and will not lay down our arms. . . 'Our Revolution will not win, if it is not exported. We are going to create a new order in which deprived people will not always be deprived, and oppressors will not always be oppressors.'⁷⁴

Banisadr was not only sworn in as the President against the wishes of Beheshti; but, on the orders of Khomeini, was henceforth to preside over the Revolutionary Council until the Majlis (National Assembly), replaced the Council after the forthcoming elections. This decision paved the way for the elimination of the past dual authority, and next to Khomeini, made Banisadr the most powerful individual in the State. In order to leave no doubt about the position of the President, Khomeini, on February 19, 1980, also delegated his powers of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces to Banisadr, which, under Article 110 of the Constitution, had been assigned to the *Faqih*. These powers included the authority to declare war, make peace, appoint the Chiefs of Staff and Head of the Revolutionary Guards, and nominate members of the National Defence Council. A few days later, in an unexpected development, Khomeini further announced that, henceforth, while he would continue to issue rulings on religious affairs, all matters pertaining to political affairs should be directly addressed to the President.⁷⁵

These developments, coming in quick succession, left little room for speculation on where Khomeini's sympathies and support lay. The real test of the extent of Banisadr's powers, however, was to come only after the parliamentary elections. If a substantial number of his supporters were not elected to the Majlis, it would be difficult for him to move forward; for it was the Maj-

lis not the President, who was the constitutional custodian of authority. Since his induction in office against their wishes, Banisadr's adversaries had kept a comparatively low profile; but they were, nevertheless, busy campaigning to gain a parliamentary majority in the forthcoming elections. This was to be their last chance, and they were not unaware of it.

The elections to the 270-member unicameral Majlis were scheduled for March 14, 1980. Two days before in a message to the nation, Khomeini appealed to the people to participate fully in the elections and spurn the evil designs of the enemies of the Islamic Republic — the supporters of the former regime, including, in particular, the agents of the Government of the United States. He exhorted the people to vote for those who were faithful to Islam, loyal to the Constitution, favoured neither the left nor the right, and had a clear record.⁷⁶

The implication of this advice, repeatedly broadcast by the national network, was obvious: The people should vote for Muslims who belonged to no such left-wing groups as the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, the Islamic Socialists, the Fidayeen-e-Khalq, the Marxist leftists and the Tudeh Party.

The parliamentary elections were conducted in two phases. The candidates securing an absolute majority of votes (over 50 per cent), were to be declared elected in the first phase. In constituencies where no one gained an absolute majority, the two candidates securing the highest number of votes were to stand against each other in the second round of polling. The candidates in the field might be broadly classified as belonging to one or another of the following four groups: the ulama or those supported by the ulama; President Banisadr's group; some leftist organizations and those who were in-

dependent of any particular line. The Islamic Republic Party had put up 153 candidates. Banisadr's group, whose support was wide, but not formally organized, fielded 128 candidates. The Tudeh, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq and Fidayeen-e-Khalq put up 90, 13 and 4 candidates, respectively.⁷⁷

The candidates ranged from such well-known persons as former Interior Minister Rafsanjani (later Speaker of the Majlis) and former War Minister Khamenei (later President of the Islamic Republic of Iran) representing the IRP, to a Qajar ex-Princess, a big carpet merchant and an Arab tribal chief.⁷⁸

Charges of irregularities and malpractices were levelled by all kinds of losers in the elections, whether independent or belonging to some such party as the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, and were mostly directed against the workers of the Islamic Republic Party. Dariush Forouhar, a former leader of the Pan Iran Party, a Cabinet Minister, and a candidate for the Presidential election, resigned his Cabinet post as a protest against what he described was a 'widespread, shameless fraud.' He said, 'I have fought for the principle of fairplay all my life. I won't stomach this circus.'⁷⁹ Karim Sanjabi, Bazargan's first Foreign Minister, from February to April 1979, cabled President Banisadr that the supervisory officials at Kermanshah, where he had attained an absolute majority, had somehow managed to deprive him of his victory.⁸⁰ Against a background of mass-illiteracy and hardly any electoral tradition, this phenomenon of irregularities was not unexpected. The possibility that elections in certain areas were rigged cannot be ruled out, but to say that the elections, as a whole, were political farce would not be fair either.

In the first round, only 98 candidates obtained an

absolute majority. The second round was held after 54 days, on May 9, 1980. The IRP emerged as the single largest party after the second round of the elections, which clearly revealed the hold of the ulama on the people. Although cynically expressed, the comment of a former editor of the *Kayhan International* summed up the causes of the success of the clerics: 'The centre of Iranian politics is still in the street with the mob. The IRP, with more than 80,000 turbaned cadres operating from more than 20,000 mosques and shrines throughout the country, is unbeatable in the present mobocratic situation.'⁸¹

CHAPTER VI
THE CRUCIAL 444 DAYS

6

The Crucial 444 Days

A single event in the entire history of relations between the United States and Iran shook the American State Department and provoked sharp reactions from many capitals of the world. This was the seizure of the American Embassy in Tehran. On the cold and cloudy morning of November 4, 1979, around four to five hundred young Iranian students stormed the Embassy in downtown Tehran. After a few hours of resistance by its security guards, the 27-acre compound of the Embassy, along with the American personnel inside, had passed into the hands of the students, who described themselves as 'followers of the line of the Imam.' At the time of the assault on the Embassy, Bruce Laingen, the American Charge d'Affairs, and two of his colleagues were in the Iranian Foreign Office, which then detained them within its premises.

This dramatic stroke was Iran's response to the American decision to admit the fugitive Shahanshah to the United States. After an odyssey of thousands of miles – from Iran to Egypt to Morocco to the Bahamas to Mexico – in search of shelter and security, Reza Shah had landed at New York's Laguardia Airport on October 22, 1979. His arrival had been kept a strictly guarded secret, and airport officials had been told to make security arrangements to receive a 'valuable shipment' from

the Bank of Mexico.¹ He had, the American Government said, been permitted to come to the United States on 'humanitarian grounds'; and he was driven straight to a hospital for treatment of the cancer from which he was reported to have been suffering for the last few years.

American authorities were far from unaware of how this decision would be received in Iran. The State Department had been warned of serious consequences 'at least ten times' by Ali Asghar Agah, the Iranian Charge d'Affairs in Washington. A similar warning was conveyed personally by the Iranian Foreign Minister to the American Secretary of State, during the former's visit to attend the opening session of the UN General Assembly in September 1979. An official letter of protest from the Iranian Foreign Ministry, demanding Reza Shah's extradition, was also delivered to the State Department. Convinced that the Shah's illness was more political than medical, the Iranian Government, in this letter also demanded that two Iranian surgeons practising in the United States should be allowed to examine him.

Instead of officially acknowledging this letter, the State Department had an official on its Iranian Desk telephonically inform Asghar Agah, that Iranian doctors could examine 'the Shah's medical records' with an 'authorized doctor of the State Department' acting as intermediary. This condition was not acceptable to the doctors deputed by the Iranian authorities as they would have no means of knowing whether the medical record was that of 'the Shah or a guinea pig.'² Officials of the State Department are reported to have privately confessed to Asghar Agah that, whereas they were keen to normalize relations with Iran, and were aware of its displeasure at the Shah's admission to the United States, there were 'pressures on Carter. . . to bring the Shah to

the USA.’³ That Carter was being induced by Rockefeller, Kissinger and Brzezinski ‘to let the Shah come into our country’, and had subsequently, adopted ‘this as a joint project’, has been confirmed by him in his *Memoirs*, published three years later.⁴ The pressure on Carter partly came from influential and well-known friends of the Shah; but, mostly, it emanated from the close relationship the United States had had with the Pahlavi regime.

Although the American President was widely supported on the decision to admit the Shah, there were certain distinguished Americans who doubted the wisdom of this decision. Senator Edward Kennedy, a rival of President Carter in the forthcoming presidential election, strongly objected to the decision: ‘How do we justify the United States, on the one hand, accepting that individual because he would like to come here and stay here with umpteen billions of dollars that he has stolen from Iran, and, at the same time, say to Hispanics [people of Spanish and Latin American descent] who are here illegally that they have to wait nine years to bring their children to this country? The Shah had the reins of power and ran one of the most violent regimes in the history of mankind in the form of terrorism and the basic fundamental violation of human rights.’⁵ Andrew Young, a former American Ambassador to the United Nations, was no less critical of the decision: ‘Our protecting the Shah is about like our protecting Adolf Eichmann.’⁶

In Iran, the students’ seizure of the American Embassy and its diplomats was immediately hailed by its top leadership. In a speech given in the Assembly of Experts on the same day, Beheshti upheld the action of the ‘enraged faithful youth’, defending it as an appropriate response to Reza Shah’s admission to the United States;

which was 'a great insult to our revolutionary nation.'⁷ On the following day, Khomeini, himself, justified the students' attack on the ground that the American Embassy was 'a centre of espionage and plotting', and went on to describe the seizure of American diplomats as a 'revolution greater than the first one.'⁸

A few weeks later, Khomeini accused the United States of shielding the criminal Shah in an attempt to cover up their own crimes against the people of Iran. They, he alleged, had consistently helped him to dissipate 'our national dignity, our national assets, the talents of our youth, and everything else we had.' He refused to believe that 'humanitarian grounds' had moved the United States to give the Shah asylum: 'Is the Shah alone a human being? Aren't 35 million Iranians human beings? Weren't the Vietnamese human beings?' He advised the American Government to try to understand the transformation that had taken place in Iran. A nation that had offered countless sacrifices could no longer be 'pushed around' as it had been in the past. The only way to a resolution of the crisis, Khomeini said, was to be found in 'the extradition of the deposed Shah of Iran and measures to compensate Iran for damages caused by his tyranny.'⁹

II

To secure the release of the hostages, the United States dispatched Ramsey Clark, a former Attorney General and well-known critic of the Shah, and, therefore, supposed to carry some influence with Khomeini and William Miller, a Persian-speaking former foreign service officer who had served in Iran, to Tehran. Before the two-man Commission could reach Tehran, Khomeini announced, on November 7, 1979, that neither he nor any member of the Revolutionary

Council would meet them; and reiterated the demand that Reza Shah must be returned to Iran before any negotiations could take place.¹⁰

In deference to the wishes of the Pope, Khomeini condescended to meet the Vatican's envoy Monsignor Annibale Bugnini, who delivered a personal message from Pope John Paul II, pleading for the release of the hostages. In a lengthy reply to him, Khomeini dwelt on the miseries 'of 33 million people of Iran, who for fifty years have been under the yoke of colonialism and American domination.' He wondered why the Pope had remained indifferent through all these years, and never 'thought of intervening in support of this oppressed nation.' How was it, he wondered, that 'the Vatican had no knowledge of what passed in this country' and what its people suffered. He demanded that the Shah should be returned to the Iranian nation to stand trial for his crimes: 'This man who has killed thousands of our youths, subjected them to torture, sawed away their legs – give him back to us, so that he may be tried in the presence of representatives from everywhere.' President Carter, in his opinion, was equally guilty, for he had sheltered a criminal.

Addressing the Pope's representative, he said 'If Jesus Christ were to be here today, he would have demanded an explanation from Mr. Carter. If Jesus Christ were here today, he would have delivered us from the clutches of these enemies of humanity and these enemies of God's creation. You are his (Christ's) representatives and you, too, must do the same thing that Christ would have done.'

Referring to the possibility that the United States might take military action or impose economic sanctions, he declared that he was not afraid of either. If

America should decide to land troops in Iran, the entire population of the country, a majority of whom 'long for martyrdom', will fight back; and 'after you have killed us all you are free to do what you want with Iran.' As for threats of an economic blockade: 'If we have to choose between protecting our honour and satiating our stomachs, we will certainly prefer to remain hungry and preserve our honour.'¹¹

In retaliation to these strong words, the United States, on November 15, 1979 froze Iranian Government assets in American banks, amounting to some \$6.5 billion according to the United States and \$8.5 billion according to Iran. However, the action was also taken because Abolhassan Banisadr, then Minister of Finance as well as of Foreign Affairs, had indicated the possibility that Iran might withdraw its assets from American banks. News of this had reached Washington in the small hours of the morning of November, 15; and it was promptly conveyed to Brzezinski, the National Security Advisor, William Miller, the Treasury Secretary, and Cyrus Vance, the Secretary of State. Carter was the last to be informed, at 5.45 a.m. After necessary formalities had been quickly disposed of, the President signed the order to freeze Iran's assets at 8 in the morning.¹²

This apparently forceful measure had no more effect on Iran than to harden the Iranian resolve that nothing short of the return of the Shah should lead to the release of hostages. If this demand was not conceded, the hostages were to be put on trial for espionage, for which Iran claimed it possessed sufficient proof in the shape of secret documents that had fallen into its hands after the take over of the American Embassy.

In order to diffuse the situation and bring the crisis to a speedy end, Carter's administration worked hecti-

cally to find a new home for the Shah. After three days of secret negotiations personally conducted by the White House Chief of Staff, Hamilton Jordan, Panama agreed to admit the Shah. On December 15, 1979, having stayed in the United States for 54 days, Reza Shah moved on to Panama, his sixth haven in the 11 months since he had left Iran.

This was immediately construed as a victory for Iran by Sadeq Qotbzadeh, who had succeeded Banisadr as Foreign Minister of Iran. But the students, who were no less elated, still remained adamant that the hostages were to be tried if the Shah was not returned to Iran. The contention that, since their most wanted man was no longer in American hands, America was in no position to hand him over to Iran did not convince them. Instead, it increased their anger against the 'Great Satan' who they said, had cleverly smuggled the Shah out of his own country with no other intent than to protect him. The trial of the hostages as spies, they asserted, had now become inevitable.

Towards the end of December 1979, the UN Security Council unanimously approved a US-sponsored resolution for the release of the hostages. The resolution gave the UN Secretary-General only seven days to break the stalemate of the hostage issue; failing which, a debate on the imposition of sanctions was to be convened. Consequently, Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim travelled to Tehran without delay, on January 1, 1980. The students holding the hostages had by then emerged as a strong power centre, whose authority was second only to that of Khomeini, if not, as suggested by several diplomatic observers, even greater so far as the hostage issue was concerned. These students refused to discuss the release of the hostages, and would not even allow the Secretary-General to meet the captives. They un-

compromisingly stipulated that the release of the spies in the Embassy compound could be secured only by handing over the arch-criminal hiding in Panama. They publically ridiculed Kurt Waldheim by putting up a poster on the American Embassy wall showing him kissing the hand of the Shah's twin sister, Ashraf Pahlavi, during his official visit to Iran a year before. This picture was also reproduced in several dailies of Tehran. In order to show Waldheim the extent of the havoc the Shah had wrought in Iran, he was taken to a former Army Officer's Club in Tehran, where he encountered a gathering of hundreds of crippled and blinded victims of the Shah's SAVAK.

During his 64-hour stay in Tehran, he met Foreign Minister Sadeq Qotbzadeh and had a two-hour session with members of the Revolutionary Council. Apart from getting these authorities to agree to the establishment of a UN International Commission to study allegations against the deposed Shah, his visit was not very productive; for he was able to see neither the Imam nor the hostages, the two main objectives of his visit to Tehran.

With the practical failure of Waldheim's mission to Tehran, as well as of the favourable verdict of the International Court of Justice, a US-sponsored resolution on economic sanctions against Iran was moved on January 13, 1980. It called for a stoppage of all supplies, except food and medicine, to Iran by land, sea and air. The resolution was vetoed by the Soviet Union. This indirect Soviet support for Iran came in the wake of the entry of Russian Forces into Afghanistan. The Red Army had marched into Afghanistan towards the end of 1979, with 25,000 soldiers equipped with massive armaments, to lend a helping hand to the Communist regime of Babrak Karmal, which had only a few days earlier

been installed in office. The Soviet veto, alleged the United States Ambassador to the UN, was clearly 'an act of political expediency designed to buy Iranian silence on Afghanistan.'¹³ It also implied that there was a collusion of interests between Iran and Russia. This allegation was promptly challenged by Iranian leaders.

In the heat of the Iranian presidential election campaign, Banisadr, then Finance Minister, did not conceal his views on ultimate Russian designs concerning Iran: 'They want us to be divided rather than united; so that they can capture the divided parts, as they did with Afghanistan, and reach the waters of the Indian Ocean.'¹⁴ The Foreign Minister Qotbzadeh, too, made it clear that Iran would not 'remain indifferent towards the escalating Soviet presence along our borders.'¹⁵

The United States urged all Member States of the United Nations to ignore the Soviet veto and introduce effective sanctions against Iran for its violation of International Law and the code of diplomatic immunity. But Iran did not take the threat of an economic blockade very seriously. Even before the sanctions resolution was moved, Iran's Minister of Commerce, Reza Sadr, had received strong assurances of the continued supply of required commodities from several countries. Nevertheless, Reza Sadr issued a grim warning: 'If the American Fleet blocks the mouth of the Persian Gulf, that will result in war.'¹⁶ Ali Akbar Moinefar, Iran's Oil Minister, who was equally confident of help not only from the non-aligned and the socialist countries, but also from some of 'those countries which appear to be in the US camp', bolstered this confidence with the counter-threat that Iran 'will definitely use the oil weapon' and 'cut supplies against any country which imposes sanctions against us.'¹⁷

The earlier fate of UN sanctions against Rhodesia, in 1966, and South Africa, in 1971, lent strength to the belief that sanctions against Iran, too, would produce no material effect. The United States was also quite aware that, although an economic blockade might hurt the Iranians, it could not bring them to their knees and induce the release of the hostages. However, the call for sanctions did have a publicity value, and perhaps helped the Carter administration to demonstrate, to the American people, that the Government was 'doing something' to secure the release of the hostages and, to the world at large, that Iran deserved to be punished for its defiance of International Law. The students holding the hostages were depicted as 'terrorists. . . swimming in the sea of support from Iranian Government and people.' The strategy of sanctions, it was hoped, would help 'to separate them from that support.'¹⁸

Meanwhile, through his intermediaries President Carter was in close though highly secretive contact with President Banisadr and Foreign Minister Qotbzadeh. Two American secret agents — Hector Villalon, an Argentina businessman, and Christian Bourguet, a French lawyer — frequently visited Iran, and personally reported their progress to such senior American officials as Hamilton Jordan, Carter's Chief Staff Aide, and Harold Saunders, Assistant Secretary of State, who were sometimes in Europe and sometimes in America, and, on other occasions, communicated with them through coded messages. Both the secret agents had easy and frequent access to the Iranian President and Foreign Minister. The risks these four individuals took cannot be overemphasized. 'Khomeini', says Carter, 'had forbidden any Iranian official to even talk to an American, yet now the President of Iran was planning with me how to get our hostages home. Although Banisadr was apparently keeping his plans secret from some other mem-

bers of the Revolutionary Council, Qotbzadeh was deeply involved. . . These two men were our best hope. . . I was pleased at some of the reports we were gathering.'

A relevant part of an observation recorded by Carter in his diary on February 4, 1980, read as follows: 'Apparently Banisadr is sending word to us directly that he wants to proceed with a resolution of the hostage question. . . He [Banisadr] does not want us to identify him as a friend of the United States or as a moderate. He wants to be known as a revolutionary, protecting the interests of Iran against both super powers' threats. . .' His remarks in a subsequent entry, on the following day, are equally revealing: 'Ham [Hamilton Jordan] got a call from his people in Iran. They 've been meeting regularly with Qotbzadeh since they got over there – I think four times. They met twice with Banisadr, and say that everything seems to be pretty well on track. They claim that they have'nt been to bed in 3 or 4 days and they're asleep now while the Revolutionary Council meets.'¹⁹

It was not a mere coincidence that on January 14, 1980, the day following the American motion for sanctions against Iran the Revolutionary Council ordered the expulsion of all American journalists from Iran. Although the explanation offered for this decision was that the journalists were misusing the freedom given to them by writing against the Revolution, some also interpreted it as a shrewd move to curtail the power of militant students, whose access to American media was tending to block the efforts of those among the Iranian authorities who wanted to negotiate and diffuse the explosive situation.²⁰ The point is that through the American journalists, the militant students could directly address their views to the American audience, and their views were often more extravagant than those of many a member of the Revolutionary Council. Thus

the resultant unfavourable public reaction in America made not only the task of the Iranian secret negotiations more difficult, but also that of their American counterparts.

III

The idea of setting up an International Commission, on which Kurt Waldheim had already secured informal agreement during his visit to Iran, was finally approved by the Revolutionary Council, after a lengthy session, on February 3, 1980. 'The International Investigation Commission', the Council's spokesman, Hassan Habibi, said, 'will consider the Shah's crimes, his violation of human rights and the return of his wealth to Iran.'²¹ It is significant that these terms of reference did not include the oft-repeated Iranian demand for the return of the Shah to face trial as a precondition to any negotiation for the solution of the hostage crisis.

The five-member International Investigating Commission subsequently established comprised: Mohammad Bedjaoui, Algeria's Ambassador to the UN; Andrés Aguilar Mawdsley, former Justice Minister of Venezuela; Adib Daoudy, Foreign Policy Advisor to the Syrian President; Hector Wilfred Jayawardene, a distinguished lawyer from Sri Lanka and a former Chairman of the UNESCO Conference on Human Rights; and Louis-Edmond Pettiti, a former President of the Paris Bar Association. The Commission arrived in Tehran on February 23, 1980. This, at first, appeared to be a major breakthrough towards a resolution of the crisis, which would lead to the release of the hostages. However, such optimism was damped when, the very day the Commission arrived, Khomeini declared that it would be up to the Islamic National Assembly, whose election was to be held in two phases on March 14 and April 3 to decide on the

release of the hostages. His tone and temper in censuring the deposed Shah and the United States was as inflexible as ever. He concluded by calling upon the people to carry on their struggle until the Shah and his property were returned to Iran.²²

On the other hand, this statement boosted the morale of the students, who had been lying low during the last few days while the initiative to bargain on the hostage issue had shifted to Banisadr, recently elected President by an overwhelming majority, Qotbzadeh, the Foreign Minister and Hassan Habibi, the spokesman of the Revolutionary Council. This renewed strength of the militant students was expressed in their reaction to the statement Habibi made on February 24, 1980, to the effect that members of the Commission would be allowed to meet the hostages if they deemed it necessary. 'The work of the UN Commission', said a spokesman of the students, 'has nothing to do with the hostages; so there will be no plan for the Commission to visit the Embassy.'²³ This was a slap in the face, not only for Habibi, but also for the President and the Foreign Minister, who had all, more than once, indicated that the Commission members would be allowed to meet the hostages. Curiously enough, the decision to permit the Commission to meet the hostages had been endorsed by the Revolutionary Council, reportedly, with the approval of the Imam. This situation developed into a full-blooded confrontation between the President and the students. There is little doubt that the students enjoyed the blessings of the Islamic Republic Party, which, at the height of the controversy, told them: 'Keep the hostages who are in your detention under your revolutionary control.'²⁴ It was, however, not clear which side Khomeini favoured — the President, the students or some third party whose alliance one or the other of these two claimed. Breaking his silence on the issue, the

Imam came out with a solution on March 10, 1980: the students should give members of the Commission all documents pertaining to the intervention of the United States; the Commission should be allowed to meet those hostages whose names appeared in these documents, for purposes of interrogation; and if the Commission issued its report, on the crimes of the deposed Shah and the intervention of the United States, before leaving Tehran, they should then be allowed to meet all the hostages. He declared his full support for the Revolutionary Council as well as for the President, and asked the people to do the same; for 'today is the day of unity and solidarity.'²⁵ However, the Commission found all this unacceptable, and, angrily abandoning their mission, left Tehran the next day.

The situation thus created raised some new issues. First, it seemed to signify a retraction from the commitment that UN sources claimed Iran had given to permit the International Commission to see all the hostages. This, quite a few people interpreted as a breach of faith; for, they said, it had been agreed that, while the Commission would complete its work in Tehran, it would submit its report to Secretary-General Waldheim in New York. On the other hand, the Imam's statement did represent a compromise solution. The polarization between the students and the Government had become so sharp that supporting one side would obviously have amounted to letting down the other. Hence, Khomeini chose to placate both sides – the students, by accepting their contention that the hostages should not be removed from the Embassy premises, and the Government, by permitting the Commission to see some of the hostages right away and the rest after the release of the Commission's report – though with the proviso that the report would be issued in Tehran.

Second, despite the Imam's appeal to the people to support the President, the fact of the matter was that Banisadr's prestige had received a definite set-back. As a corollary of this, it had become unmistakably clear that, although the students appeared to be the victors, in actual effect, the real victor were the Islamic fundamentalists led by Mohammad Beheshti, whose unconditional support for the students was never in doubt, and whose confrontation with President Banisadr was now no longer a secret.

Third, these circumstances inevitably turned the hostages into pawns in an internal power struggle. Banisadr wanted to get rid of the hostages, so that he could concentrate on consolidating his own position; whereas Beheshti and his colleagues wanted to prolong the crisis, so that they might use it to help them gain a clear majority in the forthcoming elections to the Majlis.

IV

Amidst reports that the Iranian Government was in touch with the authorities in Panama, and that a French lawyer representing Iran had flown to Panama, carrying a demand for the Shah's extradition, the ailing fugitive Shah left for Cairo on March 24, 1980. Speaking on April 1, 1980, the first anniversary of the establishment of the Islamic Republic, Khomeini directly accused the United States of having smuggled the Shah into Egypt. 'The Great Satan', he said, in order to maintain a reign of terror, 'resorts to all possible means and satanic plans.' This satan, he added, 'imposes Mohammad Reza on Egypt, and yet claims to be aloof from the issue, not knowing that the nations have been awakened and have read' his plans. Urging the Iranian people to carry on their struggle, Khomeini asked them to sink their differences and 'use all their efforts to destroy the hopes of

our main enemy, the United States.'²⁶

With the failure of the International Commission and the uncompromising stand of Khomeini that the hostage issue could be resolved only by the Majlis, the political rivals of President Carter increased their pressure on him to take strong action and abandon his 'wait and see' policy. The Republican presidential candidate, Ronald Reagan, charged Carter with having 'dilled and dallied', and advocated 'extreme pressure' to secure the release of the hostages. George Bush, another presidential candidate, similarly disparaged Carter's 'policy of appeasement, of backing, filling and hand wringing' and urged that the United States should break its diplomatic relations with Iran.²⁷

A different note was struck by George Ball, a former Under-Secretary of State. In an article entitled 'The Options on Iran', he reviewed various alternatives available to America. He rejected the option of military action to secure the release of the hostages; for, in that event, 'we would only get them killed.' The option of tightening economic pressures on Iran would also serve no meaningful purpose and in either case, 'the powerful mullah propaganda network would promptly and effectively use our action to prove that America is an imperialist power determined to reimpose the Shah and "again dominate" Iran.' It would, additionally, give a splendid boost to the Tudeh Party inside the country, and an opportunity to the Soviet Union, sharing a long common border with Iran, to offer its assistance in dealing with the 'imperialist Americans.' Furthermore, he added, show of force against Iran, whether military or economic, would inevitably be viewed 'as an attack on Islam itself.' The strong action counselled by campaigners for the forthcoming presidential election George Ball found understandable, but doubted that 'the Ayatollah is

shaken by a paroxysm of fear when George Bush fiercely aims his popgun and demands that we close the Iranian Embassy in Washington, when Ronald Reagan mutters darkly about economic boycott or even military action.'

After reviewing the various options George Ball counselled that, since the hostage issue was a delicate matter, no such action should be taken which could cost the country heavily, either in the short or in the long run, or which the Americans might later have to repent. In sum, he advised, 'we must do everything possible to bring back the hostages safe – even if that means pursuing the difficult course of doing nothing.'²⁸

American efforts to secure the release of the hostages through third party connections had failed. Their new endeavour, backed by no less a personage than President Baniadr and his Foreign Minister, to get the hostages transferred from the physical custody of their youthful captors, who on several occasions had threatened to kill all, to the charge of the Revolutionary Council, which could at least be relied upon for their continued safety, also came to naught. Then, Khomeini's declaration that the American hostages would remain in the custody of the students until the Iranian Parliament decided their fate finally confirmed that there was no hope of an early solution of the crisis.

President Carter, who had so far appeared spineless, inside as well as outside the country, and who had continued to waver between restraint and action because of conflicting counsel from his advisors, now announced four major policy steps to mount punitive action against Iran. These were: snapping diplomatic ties with Iran; banning all American exports to Iran, except food-stuffs and medicines; using the already frozen Iranian assets in

the United States to settle American claims against Iran; and stopping the issue of entry visas to all Iranians, except for 'humanitarian reasons or where the national interest of our country requires.' He concluded this policy statement by holding out a warning that 'other actions may become necessary if these steps do not produce the prompt release of hostages.'²⁹

The Iranian reaction to Carter's announcement was, as usual, one of defiance. Khomeini responded thus: 'If Carter has done anything in his whole life which can be said to be for the good and in the favour of the oppressed, it is this severance of relations. Relations between an oppressed State which has stood up to liberate itself from the clutches of international plunderers and . . . a world-gorging pillager are ever to the disadvantage of the oppressed nation and to the benefit of the plunderer. We welcome this severance of relations as a good omen, since this is an evidence of the American Government's disappointments' and the shattering of its hopes by Iran.³⁰

The severance of American-Iranian diplomatic relations was hailed not only by the Revolutionary Council, but also by practically all political parties, ranging from the ultra-rightist Islamic Republic Party to the ultra-leftist Tudeh Party.³¹ Massive public demonstrations were held on Friday, April 11, 1980, in response to President Banisadr's appeal to express national unity. In Tehran, the demonstration turned out to be one of the greatest marches ever organized. It has been estimated that about 2 million people took part in it, including groups of armed women and uniformed children, to show that Iran was ready to fight the United States. Motorists in the city blew their horns and kept their headlights on in the day as an expression of joy. This was reminiscent of the mood and style of the jubilation

that had arisen the day the former Shahanshah had left the country.

To the renewed threat of economic sanctions, Iran reacted with its own threats. Foreign Minister Qotbzadeh said that, while it would have no impact on Iran, it would surely affect its dealings with those countries which decided to support the American sanctions.³² President Banisadr made it clear that Iran would neither buy any goods nor sell 'a single drop of oil', or even 'snake's poison' (a Persian expression which means 'next to nothing'), to countries that supported American policies against Iran.³³

Finding that neither the severance of diplomatic ties nor the economic boycott had any effect on Iran, and that the release of the hostages remained as deadlocked as ever, President Carter announced fresh measures against Iran on April 17, 1980. Among others, these measures included the take-over of the \$300 million worth of military equipment purchased by Iran in the United States, which had previously been impounded, for use by the American Forces or for sale to other countries. The President also requested the American Congress for authority to pay compensation to the hostages and their families from the frozen Iranian assets in the United States. If these measures did not yield the release of the hostages, said the American President, 'the only next step available that I can see would be some sort of military action, which is the prerogative and the right of the United States under these circumstances.'³⁴ This was not the 'empty threat' that many Iranian leaders optimistically believed it to be, but a prelude to the implementation of a well-thought-out and meticulously planned military action against Iran.

V

Precisely a week after this announcement, six C-130 transport aircraft, with a team of 90 American commandos massively equipped, took off from an island off Muscat, and, flying over the Sea of Oman, reached Tabas in the Dasht-e-Kavir, located at a distance of 250 miles from Tehran, on the midnight of 24-25 April 1980. They were joined by eight helicopters, which took off from the American aircraft carrier, Nimitz, located in the Gulf of Oman. Their mission was to reach the American Embassy premises and rescue the hostages.

The story of how the rescue mission was mounted and why it was later abandoned has come to us, in different versions, from various sources. Here, we first turn to a document prepared by Iranian authorities and presented to the 'International Conference on US Interventions in Iran', held at Tehran in June 1980. According to it, the helicopters, after refuelling, were to fly the commandos from Tabas to a site near Garmsar, situated some 50 miles south-east of Tehran, while the other aircraft having dropped the commandos and equipment, would leave Iran. After off-loading the commandos, the helicopters were to be flown to a hiding-place located at a distance of 15 minutes of flying time, where they would be camouflaged and have radar operating to forewarn them of any approach towards them. In addition, four groups of nine persons each, dressed in the uniforms of Iranian Revolutionary Guards and army personnel, would stand guard around the hiding-place.

The commandos dropped near Garmsar were to be

transported by a truck and two pick-ups, to a garage where they would remain until the following night. Exactly at midnight between 25 and 26 April, one group of commandos was to leave, in the truck and one pick-up, for the Amjadieh Stadium located opposite the American Embassy, from where they were to enter the Embassy compound, free the hostages and take them to the Stadium.

Coinciding with this operation, another group of commandos was to head for the Iranian Foreign Office in the remaining pick-up, where American Charge d'Affairs, Bruce Laingen, and his two colleagues had been detained since November, 4, 1979. As the rescue mission was put in operation, two of the helicopters were to orbit the area to direct ground operations and render any required assistance. The 52 hostages rescued from the Embassy and the Foreign Office were finally to board four helicopters waiting for them inside the Stadium. The remaining two helicopters were to hide somewhere as a reserve force. As a precautionary measure, 12 sites were selected for possible emergency landings. Accompanied by the commandos, the hostages were to be flown from the Stadium to an auxiliary airfield near Qum, where they were to be picked up by C-130 transport aircraft, which would have reached there by the time the helicopters were to land. Soon after the rescued hostages had boarded the planes, the helicopters were to be made unoperational and abandoned on the airfield. At this final stage, a few American fighter planes would appear and escort the C-130 out of Iran. The rescue mission was to have completed its assignment by 3:30 in the morning of April 26, 1980.

But things went wrong with a vengeance. One of the helicopters had to return to the Nimitz because of a

technical fault, while another, after flying for about 40 miles in Iranian airspace, had to make a forced landing near Kerman because of some defect. The six remaining helicopters landed at the appointed site at 3 minutes after midnight on April 25, 1980. Soon after the arrival of the five C-130 planes and six helicopters, an Iranian fuel tanker was discovered entering the area. The commandos fired at the tanker; but, despite sustaining injuries, the driver, was able to escape from the tanker's flaming wreckage. Meanwhile, in the light of the flames, the commandos spotted a bus carrying 50 passengers. It was immediately stopped and the air taken out of its tyres. A Persian-speaking member of the commando team asked the passengers to get off the bus and move, with their hands above their heads, towards the aircraft. They were forced to stay there until the following morning.

After refuelling, one of the helicopters, in the process of taking off, collided with one of the C-130. There was an explosion, which, apart from destroying both aircraft, killed and injured a number of commandos. This was the last straw. The rescue mission was called off; and its members hurriedly sped away, leaving behind the dead bodies of nine of their completely burnt colleagues.

The Iranian document also claims that, after the aborted operation, five new trucks and two Mazda pick-up vans were found on the route which the rescue mission was to take from Garmsar to Tehran. The owner of the garrage where the commandos were to hide for a night, before assaulting the Embassy, had, it states, also been identified.³⁵

This fantastic story would at once have been dismissed as a figment of Iranian imagination if the entire episode had not already been corroborated, with only

minor differences, by earlier American press coverage, and later by President Carter, himself, in a minute-to-minute account in his *Memoirs*.³⁶ The mission, which was the result of four months of intensive training and seven rehearsals in desert sites of the United States,³⁷ was aborted, according to American sources, because of the loss of a third helicopter, which developed hydraulic trouble after reaching the first site of the operation, thus reducing the total number of available helicopters to five, instead of the minimum six required to carry out the operation. The account of the collision of helicopter plane is very similar to that in the Iranian document.

However, in its 'Confidential Foreign Report' the *Economist* comes out with an entirely different version of the entire episode. According to it, to begin with, the raid on Iran was aimed not so much at rescuing the hostages, as 'at deterring the Russians from launching a military attack against Iran', on the pattern of their invasion of Afghanistan. The Americans believed that the Soviet Union had stationed 12 divisions along the Iranian border, and was preparing to push its Forces into Iran, after it had succeeded in fomenting serious trouble among various ethnic groups in Kurdistan, Baluchistan, Mazandaran and Azerbaijan through its local agents. (The actual strength of the Soviet Forces, according to the Report, was 24 divisions.)

By launching a raid against Iran, the United States wished to show the Soviets its capability to reach Iran undetected. To hoodwink the Russians, and keep the American mission to Iran a secret, Israel extended its special assistance to the United States. At the time that the American planes were to take off from Egypt (not Muscat, as stated in other reports) for Tabas in Iran, on the night of April 24, 1980, Israeli missile boats were

carrying out a naval exercise, with 'firing and flares', in the Mediterranean sea between Beirut and Cyprus, so as to jam the devices of Soviet spyships normally cruising the area, thus stopping them from detecting the movements of the American planes. A similar exercise was undertaken by Egypt to jam Russian surveillance devices operating in Libya.

An American-Iranian task force mobilized for the rescue of the hostages, numbering between 2,500 and 3,000 men, had been stationed in the Tabas area several days ahead of the operation. The force was divided into various groups. The duties assigned to different groups included: guiding the helicopters as they came from Tabas towards Tehran; providing vehicles to carry the commandos; organizing a force around the Embassy to block any encroachment against rescue operation; disrupting Tehran's telecommunications with the outside world; putting radio and television out of action; and attacking the police stations and staging clashes 'in order to divert public attention from the embassy.'

The reason for aborting the mission at Tabas in the very first stage of the operation, the Report continues, was not that some helicopters developed mechanical defects, but that the Russians, in spite of all American precautionary measures, had noted the entry of American aircraft into Iran. Iranian authorities were promptly informed of the impending attack; but they took no action. The Russians, therefore, decided to move in themselves and quickly dispatched dozens of Migs. A showdown between American and Russian Forces appeared dangerously imminent in the skies of Iran. It was at this point that the Kremlin called upon the White House to immediately withdraw the American Forces or face the consequences of 'a massive Soviet thrust into Iranian territory.' After quick consultations with his top ad-

visors, President Carter agreed to withdraw at once, and, accordingly, 'ordered the mission to pack up and go, regardless of what it abandoned in the way of equipment or even the bodies of fallen Americans.'

Casting doubt on the story about how a collision between a helicopter and a C-130 caused an explosion, the Report states: 'We believe that the collision – if there was one – was not the cause of the explosion. The C-130 may have been hit by some outside agent, possibly by distant shots or even a long-range missile or rocket. In exploding, it ignited the helicopter.'

The United States emerged as a loser and had to lump its humiliation; but it had, none the less, succeeded in showing the Soviet Union that it could reach any area 'of potential conflict and that it could establish in Iran a grand force able to handle the landing of much bigger troop contingents.' The mission had also provided the United States with an opportunity to test its ability to collaborate with its friends, as well as to assess the capability of the Russian electronic apparatus in the region. Furthermore, the exercise had also shown that the United States could 'move military forces around the region without permission; in this case . . . it flew C-130s over Saudi Arabia without permission.'³⁸

Yet another theory about the episode gained currency in certain circles in Tehran soon after details of the rescue mission came to light. According to this, the American commandos were never meant to secure the release of the hostages, whom they could hardly have reached, and, even if they had, could, under no circumstances, have rescued safely. The real object of the commandos, it contends, was to kidnap Khomeini, then residing in the outskirts of Tehran, and use him as a bargaining counter to secure the release of the hostages.

Which of these versions of the incident, or which elements in these, reflect what actually happened, we do not yet have sufficient data to determine. However, both the American and the official Iranian accounts are so bizarre — so much a concatenation of one blunder after another — that reason and the law of averages suggest that there may be more than a little substance to the other two theories taken together.

Be that as it may, the rescue mission had been dispatched to Iran on the sole responsibility of President Carter. That all his advisors did not agree with the plan, was foreshadowed by the resignation of the Secretary of State, Cyrus Vance, on April 21, four days before the mission. We now know that the resignation was a direct result of serious differences on the advisability of the undertaking. Cyrus Vance felt that it would, whether successful or not, affect American relations with Muslim countries in the Gulf region, push Iran closer to the Soviet Union, provoke the militant students to harm the hostages, endanger the lives of some 200 Americans residing in Iran, embarrass the American allies who had not been consulted, besides thinking that chances of success were far from bright.³⁹ He was also fearful that the American rescue attempt might lead to anti-American riots in Iran, which could lead to the toppling of President Abolhassan Banisadr, 'the only US hope for relative moderation.'⁴⁰

Speaking at Harvard University a few weeks after his resignation, Cyrus Vance pointed out a number of fallacies in American foreign policy. In an apparent reference to the Tabas operation, he said that one of these was 'the fear of negotiation, the worry that somehow we will always come out second-best in any bargain. This fallacy assumes we have a realistic alternative of going it alone, of not bothering to recognize the legiti-

mate interests and desires of other peoples.' He was equally critical 'of the military solution to non-military problems. It arises in particularly acute form at times of frustration, when the processes of negotiation are seen as slow-moving and tedious.'⁴¹

The Iranian nation's reaction to the attempted raid is contained in the speech Imam Khomeini gave on April 25, 1980. He said that Carter, by undertaking the rescue mission, had proved that he had 'lost his power of thinking' and was therefore 'incapable of running such a vast country as America.' He was interested only in retaining his Presidency, even if it meant setting 'the world on fire.' But in committing this mistake, he must once again have 'realized what country he is confronting, what school of thought and action he is playing with.' In a stern warning against any such attempt in the future, Khomeini said that 'Carter should know that an attack on Iran is an attack on all the Muslims' lands.'⁴²

The feelings of the Iranian people were also reflected in a commentary from Tehran Radio: 'Surely this must suffice to show the world devourers that it is not possible to confront the Revolution. Surely they must now realize that whosoever seeks to put out the lamp that has been lighted by God shall perish.'⁴³ A few weeks later, Khomeini reiterated the belief that America's failure in the desert of Tabas was the work of God. Addressing the delegates to the 'International Conference on US Interventions in Iran; he said: 'Who had crashed down Mr. Carter's helicopter which invaded Iran? Have we done that? Have the sand pebbles done it? The sand pebbles were acting for God. Wind is the agent of God. . . These sand pebbles are agents of God. . . There is no power but the power of God.'⁴⁴

The American hostages held in the Embassy compound were soon scattered over different cities to thwart plans of any fresh attack for their release. 'We decided to keep the hostages in various cities', announced the students, 'so that we won't be forced to kill the spies (hostages) if the US Government repeats its foolish action.'⁴⁵

VI

Despite the strongest condemnation of the United States by practically all shades of political opinion, a number of Iranian leaders and distinguished personalities still pleaded for the release of the hostages. Defence Minister, Mostafa Ali Chamaran, advocated the release of the hostages because the colonialist policy of the United States, which was responsible for '50 years of oppression and torture', was 'our target. . . not individuals who are of no consequence.'⁴⁶ Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, a former Foreign Minister and a member of the Majlis, similarly believed that it was the United States that should be put in the dock, instead of holding a few persons hostage.⁴⁷

A closely argued and a spirited plea for the release of the hostages came from President Banisadr. Strongly opposing a trial of the hostages as spies, he pointed out that, if the hostages were tried without giving them the facility of assistance by lawyers, no one knew 'where it would lead to.' If, on the other hand, they were provided with these facilities, objections would be raised on the ground that foreigners were being given privileges that local people had been denied. And again, if the trial found some of them not guilty, then it would not be easy to defend the detention of innocent persons for such a long time.⁴⁸

Ahmad Madani, a candidate in the recent presidential election and a member of the Majlis, opposed the continued detention of the hostages, as holding on to them had done more harm than good to the Iranian nation: 'The country's image as the oppressed has become that of the oppressor.'⁴⁹

In a detailed letter to members of the Majlis, Foreign Minister Qotbzadeh put forward a plea for the release of the hostages. After first analysing how the policies of both the United States and the Soviet Union had, each in its own way, aimed at isolating Iran internationally, he proceeded to argue against the trial of the hostages, which certain sections of Iranian public opinion were demanding. The total number of the hostages against whom charges of espionage could be established, he began, amounted to no more than 11 or 13. It was evidently not possible to initiate legally viable charges against the rest, many of whom had entered the Embassy on the fateful day of the capture of the embassy only to have their visas renewed. A trial of even those who were believed to be spies would pose serious problems. If they were summarily tried and convicted in 'a few hours or a couple of days', this might convince the Iranians of their guilt but 'such summary trials will create, in the world public opinion, the impression that our claims so far have been empty, and we lack internationally accepted evidence.' If, on the other hand, an international tribunal were set up, the evidence the Iranians could give against the United States would be 'the agony they have felt in their blood for years'; but such evidence, though convincing enough for the Iranian people, would hardly suffice for members of the tribunal and the world audience, because they 'have not suffered what we have' at the hands of American imperialism.

Such a trial would pose two other serious problems. One, even if sufficient evidence were brought up against some of the hostages, how could the past confinement of those found innocent be defended. Two, no matter how conclusive the proof of spying against any diplomat, it would still not convince anyone outside Iran that it justified his detention and trial; for, all over the world, diplomats caught spying were simply expelled, not tried by the host country. 'No matter how you look at it', Qotbzadeh maintained, 'a trial of the hostages will be of no use to us. If we insist on keeping them, we should keep them as hostages, not as convicts. And if we do not want to hold them any more, we had better discuss conditions for their release.'

In addition to political, judicial and ethical disadvantages, he added, the hostage issue had created serious economic problems for Iran. Iranian assets amounting to \$8.5 billion had been frozen in the United States which used to yield an interest of 8 per cent per annum, or nearly \$2 million per day; so that the total loss suffered by Iran, since the freezing of the assets on November 15, 1979 amounted to about \$550 million, 'equivalent to 80 billion rials or the entire budget of the Reconstruction Crusade in the past year.' In addition to this, as a result of the economic sanctions, Iran had to spend \$5.2 billion extra on its imports. The only beneficiaries of this colossal amount of money were the very imperialists the Iranians wished to fight.

Qotbzadeh was not unaware that his arguments against the continued detention of the hostages could be exploited by the Soviet lobby in Iran, and might be interpreted as a pro-American posture by others as well. While he made no explicit attempt to defend himself against such an eventuality, he did pose a few questions for supporters of the Soviet Union in Iran: (1) Why did

the Russian judge at the International Court of Justice at the Hague rule that the hostages must be freed? (2) Why did the Soviet Union condemn the taking of hostages? (3) Why did the Soviet lackeys in Iran refuse to endorse the taking of hostages officially in their newspapers? (4) Why have they not protested against the Soviet condemnation of the taking of hostage?⁵⁰

In an interview with *Time*, Qotbzadeh reiterated his complete disapproval of the idea of a trial of the hostages. He said: 'Such trials, from any angle you look at them, are against our interest. Our main demand – the extradition of the criminal Shah to Iran – has become irrelevant.' However, his stand on the release of the hostages was not unconditional: 'We cannot let the hostages go without first having the United States give us back what it has taken from us. There are many wrongs which have to be righted.' In his view, the complications that had arisen were largely the result of the machinations of the Soviet Union and its local agents, in the shape of Iran's Tudeh Party: 'The Soviets are going to inordinate lengths to make sure Iran sinks deeper and deeper into international isolation. . . It wants us cornered and helpless, so that, in desperation, we will turn north.'⁵¹

Apart from such pleas made by moderates, a perceptible moderation had also crept into the utterances of hard-liners. Beheshti, one of the prime supporters of the militant students, now indicated that he was not opposed to the release of the hostages. The only reason for holding the American diplomats, he said, was to show the world how cruel and aggressive the United States had been in its policy in Iran, and to establish its independence of the superpowers.⁵² Prime Minister Rajaie, too, sounded conciliatory when, in reply to a message concerning the release of the hostages from Ed-

mund Muskie, who had succeeded Cyrus Vance as Secretary of State, he said that if the United States could convince Iran of its repentance, it would be prepared to talk.⁵³

At about this time, Khomeini, himself, made a statement which seemed to open a door to negotiation. After reiterating his oft-repeated condemnation of the United States, he listed four conditions on which the hostages could be released: delivery of the property of the defunct Shah; cancellation of all US claims against Iran; guarantee to ensure that the United States would not again interfere in Iran's political and military affairs; release of all Iranian assets in the United States. He was, however, careful to add that the final decision rested with the Majlis, whose members were free to act as they deemed fit.⁵⁴

Taking its cue from Khomeini's speech, the Majlis, a few days later, appointed a seven-member Special Committee to decide on the fate of the hostages. This Committee convened a session of the Majlis to discuss conditions for the release of the hostages on October 30. However, many of those Deputies who were opposed to taking a decision on the release of the hostages boycotted this session. In consequence, the session fell short of a quorum by no less than 17 members; and the discussion was postponed for two days. Partly as a result of Ayatollah Montazeri's strong criticism of those who had absented themselves from the session, describing their attitude as 'unacceptable to the Muslim revolutionary people',⁵⁵ and partly due to the strong stand taken by the *Jamhouri-e-Islami*, the official organ of the Islamic Republic Party, the recalcitrant members turned up at the next session of the Assembly.

In its editorial on November 1, 1980, this newspaper

advocated that prompt action be taken either towards the release of the hostages before the United States' presidential elections, so as to gain maximum advantage, or towards an early decision to put the captives on trial. Following a detailed review of the objectives of the capture of American Embassy personnel and keeping them as hostages, the *Jamhuri-e-Islami* declared that these objectives had by now been largely realized. It observed that it would, therefore, not be wise to postpone a decision on the hostage issue until the 'day of judgment.' Indeed, such an indefinite postponement would be against the interests of the nation. If the hostages were after all to be released, this should best be done at the most opportune moment. The newspaper went on to emphasize that, under present circumstances, America was willing to concede great advantages to Iran, and that, if this opportunity was allowed to slip away, the next American President might well not be ready to accept Iran's conditions.⁵⁶

The Islamic Majlis, meeting on November 2, 1980, held a full debate on conditions for the release of the 52 hostages. After more than four hours of deliberations, 200 Deputies voted to endorse the four conditions set by Imam Khomeini. The Muslim students who had by now held the American diplomats for about a year met with Imam Khomeini on November 3; and he told them to delegate the charge and responsibility of the hostages to the Government.

In his address to the students, the Imam stressed that the Iranian people should not be afraid of any superpower, since they would have everything they desired as long as Almighty God was on their side and the nation continued to fight for Islam. Thanking the students, the Imam said that the service the students had rendered by seizing and holding the 'corrupt people' had

'crushed all fears in the minds of the people and in the minds of the peoples of [other] nations and governments', so that 'the monstrous picture' some people had painted of the superpowers had been torn to shreds.⁵⁷

VII

President Carter described the Iranian decisions to free the hostages as a significant development. 'Our policy', he said, is based on two fundamental objectives. . . protecting the honour and vital interests of the United States and working to ensure the earliest possible safe release of the hostage. As we understand the Parliament's proposals, they appear to offer a positive basis for achieving both of these objectives. We are pursuing the matter through diplomatic channels. Any action taken by our Government will be in full accordance with our laws and our Constitution.⁵⁸

However, a spokesman of the State Department, John Tratter, indicated that the 'formulation of a response will need time', adding that the United States 'did not feel under the pressure of time.' Meanwhile, Ronald Reagan, then US President-elect, addressing a press conference, made it clear that he would not interfere: 'It is our problem as Americans, but the President [Carter] is still the President.'⁵⁹ Soon after this, the US Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, personally went to Algeria, which was acting as an intermediary between the United States and Iran, to hand over the formal American reply to Iran's conditions for the release of the hostages.

The Iranian Government, on its side, had formed another Special Committee headed by Behzad Nabavi, the official spokesman of the Government, to study the American response to Iran's four conditions. It soon be-

came apparent that Iran wanted a more explicit American response to the terms it had fixed for the release of the hostages. The reply received, Prime Minister Rajaie observed, was 'neither explicit nor clear.'⁶⁰

Clarifications on America's earlier reply to Iran's terms were delivered to Tehran on December 4, through an Algerian intermediary. The Iranian reaction to these clarifications was more positive. The Majlis Speaker, Hashemi Rafsanjani, described the new American statement as 'much clearer', although, he added, several obscure points remained to be settled.⁶¹ One of these evidently was the wealth of the deposed monarch, which Iran wanted to be returned to it. Since no precise information or figures on that fortune were available, Iran proposed that the United States give some kind of guarantee to the Algerian Government that, in future, whenever any part of that wealth was recovered, it would be confiscated and credited to the Algerian account in the United States.

This was not acceptable to the American negotiators. The US Defence Secretary, Harold Brown, declared that the United States could not accede to what amounted to a demand for ransom in exchange for the release of the American hostages. Speaking on CBC's 'Face the Nation', he said that there were some things the Iranians were stipulating which 'a President does not have the authority to do.'⁶² President-elect Ronald Reagan went a step further, characterizing the Iranians who seized the Embassy as barbarians: 'No, I don't think you pay ransom for people that have been kidnapped by barbarians.' In a later statement, he added: 'What have they got to be mad about? They are the ones who did the kidnapping.'⁶³

In a sharp rejoinder to Ronald Reagan, Rafsanjani,

speaking from the floor of the Majlis, said: 'We call it ransom. The deposit of a financial guarantee is necessary to prevent you from swindling us. You call this treatment barbaric and uncivilized; but the savage crimes of the US in the world are not considered savage and are said to be signs of civilization. . . We did not expect more from him [Reagan] than this, but we should answer him. Of course, we have many things to talk about. We have already spoken by our actions. We have said repeatedly that we are at war with the United States. We do not consider Saddam's imposed war [as a war] between Iraq and Iran. We regard it as a war launched by the United States and its agents. . . Everyday somewhere in the world, the blood of militant people runs from the claws and teeth of the United States. . . They are civilized and we are savage?. . . Reagan has said they will not pay any ransom for the hostages. You dishonourable people, if you were to settle the account of the Iranian nation and return what you have taken from the time of the coup of 1953 up to now, the treasury of the United States would be empty. . . Your prosperity is the fruit of our destruction.'⁶⁴

Former US Attorney General Ramsey Clark pleaded for sanity: 'You rarely make it easier to deal with people when you call them "criminals" and "barbarians."' We ought to try to get together. The idea that you can bully the Iranians into submission after all they have endured is psychologically unsound. Their whole being depends, historically and psychologically, on resistance and defiance; and you simply make it much more difficult when you engage in emotional name-calling.'⁶⁵

Back in Iran, Ayatollah Allamah Yahya Nouri, the hero of the 'Black Friday' uprising two years ago, claimed that Americans detained in Iran were spies, not

hostages, and demanded their trial. He added that there was no provision for ransom in Islam, and that criminals should be put on trial without any negotiations on terms and conditions. He believed Iran's rights were just and lawful, and that these rights should not have been presented in the unIslamic and funny way to which the Government had resorted. He ridiculed the terms offered by Iran, especially the stipulation for a United States guarantee of non-interference in Iranian affairs. 'It is like asking a scorpion not to bite.'⁶⁶

Dr. Mohammad Beheshti, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and one of the top IRP leaders, ruled that the 'Majlis's verdict is final', and that the Government was empowered to act only within the framework set by the Majlis. On the question of the possibility of trying the hostages, Beheshti gave the following verdict: 'If the Government finally declares that the US response to our terms is not acceptable, the hostages will be tried in an open court.'⁶⁷

On January 12, 1981, the Majlis was presented with two emergency bills aimed at solving the deadlock. The first asked the Majlis to approve a third party arbitrator to settle financial and legal disputes. The second proposed appropriate measures for the legal nationalization of the wealth of the Shah and his relatives, which, it was thought, would make it easier for the United States to return the Shah's assets to Iran.

A week later, a total of \$7.955 billion of the Iranian assets in the United States were transferred to the Algerian account in the United States.⁶⁸ As a consequence, the final scene of the 444-day ordeal, starting on the morning of November 4, 1979, was staged on the evening of January 20, 1981, when the 52 American hostages left the soil of Iran to return home.

The prolonged crisis had taken its toll in many ways. Not least, it led or, at least, contributed to: the fall of Bazargan's Government; the removal of Abolhassan Banisadr from his office of Foreign Minister, just 18 days after his appointment; the resignation of Cyrus Vance, on differences with the President (an event which had taken place for the first time since William Jennings Bryan resigned owing to his differences with President Woodrow Wilson);⁶⁹ Carter's landslide defeat in the Presidential elections;⁷⁰ and Iraq's invasion of Iran in September 1980.

VIII

However, two questions remain to be answered: Who exactly were the students and what were their motives? So far, we have only noted that they called themselves 'followers of the line of the Imam' and that they were militant nationalists whose power the crisis enhanced. To begin with, these students actually were an oddly mixed group including ultra-rightist Islamic fundamentalists, secular members of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, and a sizeable number of Marxist Fidayeen-e-Khalq. It was only much later that the religious component of the students began to dominate by gradually weeding out the leftists. As indicated by a subsequent statement of Hojjatulislam Mousavi Khomeini, who had joined the students as a representative of Imam Khomeini, soon after the Embassy take-over, plans to seize the Embassy had been prepared several days before the assault on it. Khomeini has also acknowledged that he had been aware of the students' plans, since they had asked him to inform Khomeini of their decision to capture the American Embassy. He had, however, refused to do this, because it would have been 'politically unwise to let the Imam have any prior knowledge' of an attack on the Embassy.⁷¹

It appears reasonable to suppose that the students, at first, intended to do no more than make a symbolic protest against the Shah's admission into the United States, and that they would later have vacated the Embassy premises and released the hostages if Khomeini had ordered them to do so. It may be recalled that the American Embassy had also been attacked a few months earlier, in February 1979, but that, on the intervention of the authorities, the crowd had promptly dispersed. It turned out to be a different story this time mainly because of two important reasons. First, the Imam immediately lent his full support to the students. This support was further strengthened when large crowds thronged the area to cheer and applaud the students. What particularly impressed and delighted the man in the street was the fact that the student action had been aimed at securing the return of the Shah. Second, the Bazargan Government, which had been under constant attack by Islamic fundamentalists and rendered far too weak to maintain its authority, was obliged to resign within hours of the Embassy take-over.

The students, who had not expected the spontaneous support they received from the leadership as well as from the public, felt greatly encouraged and discovered their power. In addition to this, the publicity they received at home and abroad convinced them that their action had redounded to the glory of the Revolution. Thus, hereafter, it had become almost impossible to control the students — even if Khomeini, himself, had asked them to behave and release the hostages, they would probably have refused. The Imam had been caught in a twofold predicament. One, it was he who had whipped up the mass hysteria against the United States; and now, after all that had happened, largely as a consequence of this, to ask the students to release the Americans would, at least, have cost him the loss of

some popularity and charisma. Two, fully aware of the mood of the people, Khomeini prudently felt that it would be wiser to follow them, instead of trying to lead them.

The explanation that the students later gave for the take-over of the Embassy is, in all probability, an after-thought, an effort at rationalizing their action. In an interview with the *Ettelaat*, two days before the first anniversary of the Embassy assault, a spokesman of the students asserted that their action was aimed at consolidating the Islamic Revolution, which was being weakened by groups who had come to acquire influence, but had actually deviated from 'the line of the Imam.' It was intended to revive the revolutionary spirit, which was fading away under the erosive influence of the Provisional Government. It was their action that had led to the rupture of diplomatic relations with America – a development which forced the nation to realize the need for self-reliance. Thus, the real reason for taking over the Embassy, the spokesman emphasized, was that the Revolution was going astray and the United States was plotting against the Revolution.⁷²

CHAPTER VII

THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY: BATTLE OF WITS

The Struggle For Supremacy Battle Of Wits

An internal struggle for power between fundamentalists and liberals started smouldering soon after Bazar-gan took over as the Prime Minister of the Provisional Government. This flared up into an open conflict with Banisadr's election as the first President of the Islamic Republic, and took the shape of a decisive trial of strength soon after the Islamic Republic Party gained a clear majority in the elections to the unicameral Majlis. The fundamentalists were led by IRP Chief, Sayyid Mohammad Hosseini Beheshti, and the liberals by President Abolhassan Banisadr. Each of these two strong personalities had his own perception of priorities and his own vision of the country's future.

The fundamentalists uncompromisingly stood for a traditional Islamic order, the destinies of which they alone would not only guide, but directly control. This, they believed, was the only way to fulfil the aspirations of the people, who, through their countless sacrifices, had paved the way for the success of the Revolution and the creation of the Islamic Republic. The other side, while not denying the supreme role Islam had played in the Revolution and should continue to play in the reconstruction of society, also advocated realism in facing the grim and ugly realities of the world in which they

lived. This, they insisted, was the only way to preserve and protect the fruits of the Revolution. The supporters of each side thus vied with one another to prove themselves greater revolutionaries and truer Muslims than the others. Both sides insisted on establishing the supremacy of the Constitution, but each side interpreted this differently from its own particular point of view.

The first test of strength and will ensued on the issue of the appointment of the Prime Minister. The Constitution provided that the Prime Minister and his Cabinet colleagues would be proposed by the Majlis and approved by the President, but it was silent on how the matter would be resolved if there was a difference of opinion between the two authorities. It was almost certain from the very beginning that Banisadr, with his Western education and liberal background and hardly any political base, would be no match for the firmly entrenched '180,000 clerics in Iran, one for every 200 Iranians',¹ most of whom were convinced that the West was responsible for all their miseries, and that only an ideal Islamic system could deliver them from these and solve the problems of the country. This is not to suggest that all of them were with the Islamic Republic Party. They were not; but the IRP, with its clear majority in the Majlis, was hardly ever challenged when it spoke in the name of Islam and issued statements on important policy matters. This factor, therefore, weighed heavily in the choice of a Prime Minister.

The dispute as to who, the President or the Majlis, would select the Prime Minister, however, remained unresolved. Dr. Hassan Ayat, a leading member of the Islamic Republic Party and a Majlis Deputy, insisted that the Prime Minister would be chosen by the majority party. The Banisadr group, on the other hand, was of the view that it was the right of the President, who had

been elected by an overwhelming majority of the people, to select the Prime Minister. Basing his right on what he believed was his Constitutional Prerogative, Banisadr, towards the end of May 1980, floated the candidature of Hassan Habibi, though his name had not been formally proposed by the Majlis. When asked to comment on the possibility of Habibi becoming the Prime Minister, the President said that, although he had not yet been appointed, 'by the grace of God, he would be appointed.'²

A contemporary of Banisadr at Tehran University, Hassan Ebrahim Habibi had, from his youth, been engaged in anti-regime activities, and had to leave Iran in 1955 to avoid arrest. He studied law at the Sorbonne for some time, but later gave it up to pursue Islamic studies. Deeply influenced by Dr. Ali Shariati, he showed considerable interest in the Algerian struggle for liberation, as well as in the Palestinian movement. 'His views on 'Islamic Economics' were 'far more radical than those of Banisadr — stressing. . . the need for a rigid upper limit to personal wealth and widespread nationalization.'³ He had returned to Iran along with Khomeini in 1979, and later was appointed a member of the Bazargan Cabinet. After the resignation of Bazargan in November 1979, he retained his Cabinet position along with his membership of the Revolutionary Council, of which he was the official spokesman. He had also been one of the contenders for the presidential office, but had secured only an insignificant number of votes in the election.

Banisadr had supported Habibi's candidacy for the premiership, presumably in the hope that he would be acceptable to the IRP majority in the legislature. This was, however, not to be. The IRP Chief, Mohammad Beheshti, publicly said that the Transport Minister, Musa Kalantri, would be their choice, as he was 'very re-

ligious and revolutionary.’ Three fundamental virtues were required to qualify for the premiership: a firm belief in the Islamic ideology, the capacity to safeguard the Islamic Revolution, and the revolutionary zeal to tackle the country’s problems, he said, and with all of these, Musa Kalantri was fully endowed.⁴ It was clear now that the IRP would not accept anyone who was not a *Maktabi* – that is a member of the traditional Iranian school of Islamic thought. They were equally opposed to anyone who had, even remotely, been exposed to Western influences, irrespective of his acknowledged record of service to the Revolution and to Islam. It was, therefore, no wonder that Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali, a Deputy from Qum, declared that anyone ‘who believes in the Western style of democracy will not, and will never, be allowed to function as Premier.’⁵

The implications of this statement were not lost on Banisadr, who had, himself, pursued his higher studies abroad. Realizing that it represented an attack on him and his group of supporters, he hit back by describing his opponents as opportunists whose intrigues imperilled the future of the country. He warned his adversaries that, if they did not give up their manoeuvres, he would be forced to use his Constitutional powers, which empowered him to co-ordinate relations between the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. Indeed, it was his duty to do so; for, if he did not discharge his Constitutional obligations, ‘society will give itself the right to try me for my failure.’⁶ As a consequence of these differences, an intermittent spate of polemics ensued in the column of the *Jamhuri-e-Islami*, the IRP organ, and the *Inqilab-e-Islami*, an evening paper founded by President Banisadr.

II

The growing rift among the ranks of his followers was naturally a matter of deep concern for Imam Khomeini, and he did not conceal his anxiety. He said that, while he had never worried about the success of the movement against the Shah, 'now I am worried.' Continuing collisions between leaders of the two sides, he said, would lead to an instability which would damage the country from within; and there would then be no need for anyone to 'come from abroad to harm us.' Without holding anyone group responsible for the sorry state of affairs, he warned all concerned that, under existing circumstances, 'we cannot govern the country. No one could.'⁷

This warning did not produce the desired effect on either side. Within a few days of Khomeini's address, President Banisadr charged Hassan Ayat of hatching a conspiracy to overthrow him, and published the texts of tapes of conversations between Ayat and his collaborators, which suggested that Banisadr was both an 'American agent' and in league with the Mujahideen-e-Khalq.⁸ Ayat, reacting sharply, described this as an attempt 'to crush my personality.' He did not, however, deny his differences with Banisadr, which, he revealed, dated back to the time when the Constitutional provisions relating to the *Velayat-e-Faqih* were being debated in the Assembly of Experts. Banisadr, he alleged, had insisted on including certain provisions that would have had a 'Western impact on the Constitution' which he had strongly opposed. It was because he had been a staunch supporter of the concept of the *Velayat-e-Faqih* while Banisadr had been opposed to it, that he had been singled out for retaliation.⁹

The conflict began to gather momentum: 'Now,' the

President admitted candidly, 'every day we are at each other's throats. The Majlis says something and I say something else. . . We are in a serious war with the United States, and internally we are in this shape.' But this, he added, by no means implied that he would submit to the wishes of the majority party in the Legislature. It was his duty, he insisted, to fulfil the aspirations of the people who had reposed full confidence in him, for they had not elected him 'because they are in love with my looks.'¹⁰

The issue of the selection of the Prime Minister remained unresolved. Since Banisadr was not prepared to accept a nominee of the IRP, he, in a shrewd move, offered the post of Prime Minister to Ahmad Khomeini, the only surviving son of Imam Khomeini. Ahmad was known to be his personal friend; but it was evident that, even if the IRP leaders did not favour his candidature, they, in deference to Khomeini, would not be able to oppose the appointment. This proposal, however, was promptly rejected by Khomeini himself, who said 'Ahmad can serve his country much better if he is free from such responsibility.'¹¹

Banisadr's next choice was Mostafa Mirsalim, the 33-year-old Deputy Minister and Head of the National Police, with a Master's degree in Civil Engineering from a French University. He was formally proposed to the Majlis; and there appeared to be no real difficulty in obtaining a confirmation from the Majlis, for, despite his past Western connection, he was also a member of the IRP. Considering that his proposal of Mirsalim offered a compromise, Banisadr, in a television interview, contended that he had given his share of concessions, and it was now up to the 'others' to do the same. He could not, Banisadr added, be expected to accept responsibility for a Cabinet whose members had been selected

entirely according to the wishes of a single political party.¹² But early hopes of a resolution of the impasse were soon shattered. Mirsalim was just not acceptable to the IRP. They, instead, proposed Jalaeddin Farsi, who had earlier, openly talked about this 'disagreements with President Banisadr over ideological matters.'¹³

As a consequence, Banisadr requested the Majlis to postpone its discussion on the appointment of the Prime Minister, and suggested the setting up of a special committee to examine candidates for this office, which would comprise one representative of Imam Khomeini, one of the President and one of the Majlis. This compromise move, too, came to nothing as Khomeini refused to appoint his nominee. 'The selection of a Prime Minister', said a statement from his office, was 'the sole concern of the President and the Parliament.'¹⁴

Khomeini's decision to steer clear of party politics was probably dictated by his perception of the desirability of avoiding any identification with any one of the rival groups. The IRP rejection of the compromise candidate, Mirsalim, however, was odd. A partial explanation of this riddle was offered by Hassan Ayat, in an exclusive interview with the *Tehran Times*. The IRP, he said, was not hostile to Mirsalim, but there were some other aspects of the issue, which led to the IRP preference for Farsi as a better candidate for the post. As if issuing an ultimatum to Banisadr, Ayat significantly added: 'There is a provision in the Constitution by which a President can be removed and a new President elected.'¹⁵ In his weekly press conference, Beheshti did not directly reject this solution but considered it as 'a last resort.' Regarding the choice of a Prime Minister, he said that Jalaeddin Farsi and Mohammad Ali Rajaie were the only 'two possibles.'¹⁶

The controversy between President and Majlis now revolved around the basic question of who finally represented the will of the people: the President, who was freely elected by an overwhelming majority of the people, or the members of the Majlis, who, too, were the directly elected representatives of the people. The IRP daily, *Jamhuri-e-Islami*, commenting on the relationship between the Majlis and the President, drew attention to a statement that Banisadr had made to the effect that, if the candidates to the Majlis, at the time of their election, had openly expressed their opposition to the President, the people would not have elected them as their representatives. This, the newspaper's front-page story said, was correct as far as it went; but it was, at the same time, far from the whole truth. In fact, it maintained, if the President, at the time of his election, had said that, after his election, he would not respect the wishes of the elected representatives of the people, the number of votes cast in his favour would not have exceeded the votes polled in favour of the defeated candidate, Admiral Ahmad Madani.¹⁷

Khomeini, without supporting either of the two rival groups, expressed his displeasure at the current state of affairs. In his message on Qods Day – the day symbolizing the Palestinian struggle for a homeland – on August 6, 1980, Khomeini addressed a few words of advice to the rival factions: 'What kind of Islam is it that every day a newspaper belonging to one group hurls abuse at another. . . Why is it that the Parliament and the President should be against one another and behave as they have done? Why should it be like this? . . . I advise them sincerely, I admonish them on behalf of Islam, not to dispute among themselves. . . What is that inheritance for the distribution of which you are disputing among yourselves? Have the people given all their youths and martyrs to invite you to come and dispute

and fight amongst each other for that inheritance?’

He counselled the President to select a Prime Minister who would reinforce Islamic laws, not one who would try to revive nationalism, for ‘nationalism is no more than a pretext to displace Islam.’ He reprimanded the newspapers which were ‘magnifying, perpetuating and publicizing disputes. . .between the President and the Parliament.’ He asked the political leaders and the members of Parliament who ‘have come from inside the country and outside the country and sit and dispute together’ to set aside their selfish interests. He wanted all authorities, the President and the members of Parliament and the Government, to remember that their common enemy was plotting ‘against the nation, not against you or me or anybody else. No, it doesn’t do anything of the kind. Do not be vain and feel self-important.’ In conclusion, he advised them to ‘rise for the sake of God and Islam. Let us go forward in the name of God and for the sake of Islam, and, God willing, victory will be ours.’¹⁸

Responding to both Khomeini’s strong denunciation of the power-seekers and the pressure of the IRP majority in the Majlis, Banisadr proposed Mohammad Ali Rajaie, the 47-year-old Education Minister, for the office of Prime Minister. He had been nominated by a select committee of the Majlis, after it had examined 13 candidates for the post of Prime Minister. This committee had been set up by the Majlis after it had rejected Banisadr’s candidate, Mirsalim, and Khomeini had refused to nominate a representative to the special committee proposed by Banisadr. Rajaie had served in the Air Force, during the former regime, and had later taken to school teaching. He was known for his anti-communist views as well as for having served two terms of imprisonment under Pahlavi rule.

The President, in his official letter to the Majlis, had proposed Rajaie's candidature only out of respect for 'the expressed desires of honourable Deputies.'¹⁹ There was, however, little doubt that Rajaie was not Banisadr's man in any sense of the term. Less than two days before his proposal to the Majlis, Banisadr had publicly said that Rajaie was not competent to run the country, and, indeed, was 'incapable of doing anything.' He had, nevertheless, decided to propose his name for the top office, under pressure of the Majlis, 'because I did not want to push the country towards further chaos.'²⁰

The language of Banisadr's letter to the Majlis, as much as his earlier belittling remarks about Rajaie, were strongly criticized by some members of the Majlis. One of them proposed that the President should be asked to change the wording of his letter, while another demanded that 'the President should answer for it to the Majlis.' The Speaker of the Majlis, Hashemi Rafsanjani, himself, took objection to the fact that the text of the letter had been announced on the radio before submission to the Majlis. This, he said, 'was a question which we must consider later.'²¹ The matter was, however, not pushed further, at least not for the time being.

Despite the fact that Rajaie was not a member of the IRP, he was fully supported by the Party. Beheshti, the Party Chief but not himself a member of the Majlis, expressed full confidence in Rajaie. He described him as 'a pious man and a *mujahid* [striver in the way of Islam]' and pledged full support of the Party for him and his Government.²² In consequence, Mohammad Ali Rajaie was heavily supported in a vote of confidence. The overwhelming approval of the Majlis was, however, no indication of an end to the struggle between the two rival factions. Reza Nobari, Governor of the Central Bank of Iran and close associate of the President,

expressed his disapproval of the choice. Rajaie, he felt, lacked an understanding of the complexities of present-day world politics and 'a real knowledge of Islamic economics.'²³ Interestingly enough, Jalaeddin Farsi, the IRP's alternate candidate for the premiership, also criticized the appointment of Rajaie. Mincing no words, Farsi maintained that Rajaie was incapable of providing the required leadership. The fate of Rajaie, he asserted, would be no different from that of Bazargan. Whereas Bazargan, he added, had erred in emphasizing specialization at the cost of loyalty to Islamic ideals, Rajaie would go wrong in the opposite direction, by stressing Islamic ideals to the detriment of due emphasis on ability and competence to handle political and economic problems. 'It is not enough', he said, 'to be a follower of the Imam to be a Prime Minister.' Many people followed the Imam; and by that reckoning any one of them would be fit to be a Prime Minister.²⁴

III

The next phase of the conflict involved a dispute on the composition of the Cabinet. Both the President and the Prime Minister relied on Constitutional provisions to assert their respective rights to select the Ministers. Invoking the Constitutional provision that 'Ministers shall be appointed by the Prime Minister, approved by the President and introduced to the Assembly to get a vote of confidence', Rajaie wanted his nominees to be formally approved by the President for ratification by the Majlis. Banisadr, on the other hand, contended that the Constitution implied that the President must scrutinize the names of the Cabinet Ministers before they could be proposed for formal approval of the Majlis. To do otherwise, he said, 'amounts to my mere rubber stamping or approval which is less than the powers permitted by the Constitution.'²⁵

As in the case of the selection of the Prime Minister, the Constitution did not specify what should happen if the President and the Prime Minister did not agree on the selection of Cabinet Ministers. It had perhaps been hoped that even if such a situation arose, it would be amicably resolved through mutual consultations. But the game of power politics has its own rules, which are hardly ever compatible with noble intentions and pious hopes. In consequence, there was a deadlock, with a complete lack of understanding between President and Prime Minister, which Baniadr appropriately described as 'the beginning of an explosion.'²⁶ Later, however, he did reluctantly agree to approve most of the names proposed for inclusion in the Cabinet, but flatly refused to accept Hossein Musavi, the Editor of *Jamhuri-e-Islami*, as the Foreign Minister. (Musavi eventually rose to become the Prime Minister after the death of Javad Bahonar in a bomb explosion in August 1981.)

With the cabinet issue still not fully resolved, Baniadr publicly lashed out at his opponents. Speaking in the Shohada Square, at a meeting held on September 8, 1980 to commemorate those who had laid down their lives two years earlier, he referred to his opponents as a 'minority group' comprising 'dangerous elements.' He asserted that they were not sincere, and raised slogans in the name of Islam only to monopolize power within their own hands. Making a reference to selections for the Cabinet, he said that, Ministers were being imposed on him. He had approved some of them, though they were 'not quite suitable', only to show that 'I wish to negotiate with the Parliament, and I am willing to work with it.' He, however, warned the approved members of the Cabinet that they 'should not go their own way.' If they did, he would 'recommend their dismissal' and would 'not work with them under any condition.'²⁷

The following day, Rajaie reacted bitterly to the remarks of Banisadr. Speaking in the Majlis, he said that if the President ever again made such remarks about his Ministers, he would refuse to sit with him across the table.²⁸ Taking their cue from the Prime Minister's remarks, 104 members of the Majlis demanded that the President should appear before it to answer for the accusations he had made in his speech. The next evening Beheshti and Rafsanjani appeared on television to castigate the President for his remarks. Beheshti maintained that Banisadr's allegations about obstacles being placed in his way were patently incorrect. On the contrary, he charged, the President was, himself, not abiding by the Constitution and was over-stepping limits imposed by it. 'It was not', he said, 'up to President Banisadr to set a new line for the Majlis, or for the nation, when a line had already been set by Imam Khomeini.' He also wished that the President had identified that 'minority group' he had referred to in his speech, so that they might have answered the President. Rafsanjani's reaction was no less sharp. Directly challenging Banisadr, he said that 'President Banisadr had thrown a gauntlet and was now waiting for the unnamed opponents to pick it up.' He held Banisadr responsible for changing his role from that of the President of the Republic to that of a mere spokesman of the group confronting the Majlis. He did not deny the differences with the President; 'but', he said, 'we did not go to the extent of declaring war, as Banisadr had done yesterday.'²⁹

Each side was now grimly arrayed against the other, intent on undoing its adversary. Which of the two factions would lose more heavily than the other in the long run was a matter of opinion — and the opinions among competent observers sharply varied. But chances of their coming to a peaceful settlement had almost disappeared. It was during this increasingly acrimonious

struggle for power that the Iraq-Iran war started. The war of words and occasional disturbances on the common border of the two countries turned into a full-scale war when Iraqi planes attacked several Iranian Airports on September 22, 1980.

IV

Hopes that an all out war with a powerful enemy would lead to a suspension of internal disputes were soon frustrated. The war itself raised a new burning issue: who had the final authority to decide policy matters concerning the war? Within 10 days of the commencement of hostilities, Rafsanjani asserted that any decision regarding the continuation or termination of war could, according to the Constitution, only be taken by the Majlis.³⁰ This claim was promptly challenged by the President. Basing his counter claim on Article 110 of the Constitution, he said that the authority for taking a decision on such a vital issue rested with the 'leadership' and 'not the Majlis.' He, in effect, accused Rafsanjani of undermining the Constitution: 'What is to be expected from others', he said, 'when the Speaker of the Majlis himself violates the Constitution.'³¹

As a result of this dispute, the foreign policy of Iran lacked consistency and cohesion. Instances of the Prime Minister's office issuing policy statements contradicting earlier ones made by the President were far from infrequent. There was similar confusion in the projection and propagation of Iran's point of view on the war. It was because of this absence of internal harmony, said Jamshed Haggio, a Deputy Foreign Minister, that many countries which might have supported Iran did, in fact, not do so.³² It was also largely on account its internal conflicts that Iran did not participate to present its case

in the UN deliberations on the war.

The fundamentalists believed that no useful purpose would be served by presenting Iran's point of view to the World Assembly, since the American influence on smaller countries would, in any case prevent them from openly sympathizing with Iran's just cause. Banisadr's supporters, on the other hand, favoured attending the United Nations session on the Iraq-Iran war. It was because of this confusion created by internal power politics, said Banisadr's daily, *Inqilab-e-Islami*, that the Security Council had not condemned the aggressor Iraq. If Iran had participated in the session of the Security Council, it would have exposed the crime of Iraq, and thus the Security Council would certainly not have approved the resolution in the form proposed by the accomplices of Saddam Hussain. Referring to the price Iran had to pay for its international isolation, the daily said that this was the first time in contemporary history that a ruthless regime had imposed an aggressive war against a country without a single State protesting against the invasion.³³

President Banisadr, who had been delegated the powers of the Supreme Commander by Khomeini soon after the presidential elections, had taken over the active command of the Armed Forces on the commencement of the war with Iraq. He was consequently spending most of his time at various theatres of war near the borders. But, despite his preoccupation with defence affairs, Banisadr continued to contribute a column to the *Inqilab-e-Islami*, giving his views and comments on current political affairs. In these, he quite often accused the Prime Minister, the Parliament and the Defence Council, (created on the orders of Khomeini to take important decisions relating to the war) of attempts to accumulate power and take undue advantage of his pre-

occupation with the war and continued absence from the Capital. He was equally critical of the National Radio and Television, which, he alleged, his opponents had penetrated to weaken his position. Hence, he declared, he would not appear on television so long as the concerned authorities did not mend their ways.³⁴

In an angry reaction to the unfortunate rifts and infighting, Khomeini, on November 16, 1980, admonished both groups and urged them to behave: 'I expect the Government, the President, the Prime Minister and the rest of our men in the Government to be united and to maintain their unity throughout. If...our enemies...triumph, then nothing shall remain of the Government or of the President or of the Prime Minister or of the clergymen or the Majlis or of the Bazaries [merchants].'³⁵ This stern warning had little effect on either of the warring factions struggling to emerge as the supreme power. Since neither side was prepared to compromise, a head on collision was only a matter of time.

Arguments offered by each side appeared to carry their own weight. A recurring theme of Banisadr's speeches, interviews and writings was that there was no freedom of speech; anyone who had the courage to disagree with the ulama was condemned as a 'liberal' and answered with clubs and sticks. Knowledge and expertise had become a disqualification. People were being misled in the name of Islam. The media had passed into the hands of a single group of people. He had only one newspaper, the *Inqilab-e-Islami*, to keep the people informed of what was going on behind the scenes; and he was convinced this, too, would be forcibly shut down. But he was not prepared to give in. He was determined to carry on the struggle, and discharge the responsibilities with which the people had entrusted him.

In a hard hitting speech on Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram, corresponding to November 19, 1980, Bani-sadr identified himself with the Armed Forces, and blasted all those who, he said, were trying to weaken the morale of the Army. He was equally critical of those who, were, according to him, taking advantage of his absence from the political scene to stab him in the back. It was not fair, he said, that, while 'we are engaged on the war fronts, there are some groups who are engaged here in conquering political fronts.' This attitude, he added, would inevitably drag the country into only another version of the dictatorship from which it had just freed itself. If a new dictatorship were imposed, what difference would then remain between a 'compassionate Islamic Republic and the brutal Pahlavi regime.' Implying that the ulama were meddling in affairs of the war, he pleaded with them to refrain from doing so; for 'every task requires knowledge, expertise and information.'³⁶

In a sharp and quick rejoinder Beheshti criticized what he called an unnecessary emphasis on expertise. In an Islamic Revolution, he said, adherence to its ideology and Godly virtues was of supreme importance. To uphold these values was the true aim, and everything else was only a means to the realization of this end. He was not against expertise and knowledge, but neither, by itself was enough. It was 'belief and action' supported by 'expertise' which was the criterion of qualifying for a position in the Islamic Government. Therefore, the faith, the doctrine and the values of an individual were matters of primary concern. He, nevertheless, strongly repudiated the allegation that the religious leaders or the Islamic Government were opposed to expertise. They valued expertise highly, but gave due priority to

faith and commitment to Islamic ideology.³⁷

With reference to Banisadr's plea for freedom of speech, Hojatulislam Sayyid Ali Khamenei, the Friday prayers leader of Tehran, (who later became the President), conceded that everyone had a right to express himself, but added: 'freedom has a limit, and the limit is defined by Islam.'³⁸ Later on, Beheshti defended the limitations on freedom of expression in the name of stability and harmony: 'Any move which tries to upset this stability, any act, speech or writing which harms the atmosphere of harmony would not be acceptable for our Revolution, our revolutionary nation.'³⁹

V

The mounting battle of words between Banisadr and his critics erupted into a active confrontation when the supporters of the two sides took to the streets. Towards the end of November 1980, the local branch of the Office for Co-ordination between People and President at Mashhad, the capital city of Khorasan, organized a public meeting. Those invited to speak at the meeting included: Ahmed Salamatian, a Majlis Deputy and one of the closest associates of Banisadr, and Ayatollah Lahooti, another Majlis Deputy and Friday prayers leader of the city of Rasht, who, despite his clerical position, was an outspoken critic of the ruling Islamic Republic Party and an avowed supporter of Banisadr. After the meeting, the President's supporters assembled in front of the IRP office, and shouted such aggressive slogans as the following: 'Our radio and television must be freed from the hands of the ruling party.' 'Death to the corrupt three: Khamenei, Beheshti, Rafsanjani?' 'Banisadr, we are your supporters.' This demonstration was promptly challenged by a much larger group of supporters of the Islamic Republic Party, chanting their

own familiar and popular slogans: '*Hizb faqat hizbolah, Rahbar faqat Rouhollah* [the only party is the party of God, the only leader is Rouhollah]'. 'An opponent of the ulama is an opponent of the Imam.' 'Death to Maoism.'⁴⁰ A serious clash between the two was averted only because Banisadr's supporters retreated.

The speeches of Salamatian and Lahooti, which were fully reported by the *Inqilab-e-Islami*, provoked a sharp reaction from IRP circles. Massive marches in support of the IRP leadership were organized by the fundamentalists in Mashhad, Qum and Tehran; and the bazars in these cities were closed on the following day as a protest against the demonstration in front of the IRP office at Mashhad. In Mashhad, a crowd of about half a million people assembled to register their support in favour of the clergy.

Majlis Deputies representing the Islamic Republic Party were more than peeved by the activities of the President and his supporters, and contemplated taking a strong action against him. Beheshti, in one of his weekly Press Conferences, on December 10, 1980, hinted at possible action by the Majlis: 'The Islamic Consultative Assembly is preparing a detailed law on the duties of the President, and after it is approved by the Majlis, the problem would be solved.'⁴¹

Six days later, on December 16, 67 Deputies of the Majlis, in a joint move, accused the President of revealing national secrets in his newspaper, and demanded his prosecution and punishment. They charged that the President, who was supposed to protect the Constitution, had published sensitive material in a distorted fashion that was likely to create misunderstandings between the Army and the nation, weaken the Parliament, help the enemy and cause serious damage to the Islamic

Revolution and the independence of the country. The petitioners asked the High Judicial Council and the High Defence Council to investigate this threat to the Constitution and stability of the country and to punish the offenders.⁴²

Matters had been brought to this critical point as a result of Banisadr's comments on current developments in his diary in the *Inqilab-e-Islami*. Only a day before the presentation of the petition to the Majlis, the President had referred to competent and qualified Iranians leaving the country. He had observed that this was due to the negative policies and measures currently adopted at home. This would not only mean that the people who were driven away would 'definitely campaign against Islam and our Government', but would also signify a set-back to the export of Islamic revolutionary ideas. 'Will not the people of the world', he asked, 'tell us that, before converting others to your own religion it is better to convert your own educated people to your own religion and make them accept that Islam is a better way. . .of life.' In order to stem the growing interference of the clergy in affairs of State, he strongly advocated the need for drawing a line of demarcation between 'the real *Maktabis* and the *Maktabi*-like opportunists.' It was also necessary, he said, to ensure that only those responsibilities were entrusted to the *Makatabis* which were 'in conformity with their wisdom.'⁴³

At about this time, Ayatollah Hossein Ali Montazeri, one the most eminent of the ulama, called for a public march on December 18, 1980 to express the people's indignation at intrigues and plots against the Islamic Republic and insults to the leadership of the Islamic Revolution. This announcement came in the wake of demonstrations in Isfahan and Mashhad, in which the

principle of *Vellayat-e-Faqih* (the Constitutional position of Religious Jurist held by Imam Khomeini) was denounced and pictures of Khomeini were torn. Certain quarters in the Capital believed that the real motive for organizing a march was not so much to express solidarity with Khomeini as to show Banisadr the strength of the clergy and its hold on the people. However, just a day before the mass demonstration was to be held, it was called off on orders issued from Khomeini's office. The notification indicated that 'while sincerely thanking the people for their feelings', Imam Khomeini believed that, in view of the present sensitive situation and the fact that the entire energy of the people must be devoted to the struggle against the enemy, plus the fact that the Imam had already asked the people not to show any reaction to insults levelled against him, the march should be cancelled.⁴⁴

This last-minute cancellation was probably a result of the consideration that it might lead to violent clashes between the supporters of the ulama and of the liberals. There had been rumours at that time that a resolution condemning Banisadr and expressing no confidence in him would be adopted at the end of the march. A cancellation of the march was therefore regarded as the only sure way of avoiding a likely collision. An additional concern may have been the fear that popular participation in the demonstration might not turn out to be as impressive as in previous ones, which could then be embarrassing for both the Imam and the ulama in general.

Meanwhile, the appointment of Cabinet Ministers remained an unresolved issue between the Prime Minister and the President. Prime Minister Rajaie complained to the Majlis that he had proposed more than 10 candidates to head the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Com-

merce and Economic Affairs, and Finance, but the President had refused to endorse any one of them. Since the President maintained that the Constitution empowered him to approve or disapprove the names suggested to him, Rajaie proposed that both he and the President should appear before the Majlis to sort out this dispute. The implications of this proposal were obvious; for there was no doubt that, if the President appeared in the Majlis, he would not only be outvoted, but would also be rebuffed by the IRP members. Indeed, Hassan Ayat, in accordance with his earlier stance, claimed that the President need not be consulted at all on this question, and that even his formal approval was unnecessary.⁴⁵

However, such threats to his position had little effect on Banisadr. He continued to insist that he was acting within the powers entrusted to him by the Constitution. It was his right alone, he said, to make appointments; and if someone else, even the Prime Minister, made any, this would be against the Constitution. This is precisely what Banisadr told Prime Minister Rajaie when he appointed Dr. Karim Kiyai the Managing Director of the National Bank of Iran. Acting against the law, he wrote to Rajaie, was not in keeping with the dignity of the Prime Minister. It was the duty of everyone to obey the law, but especially of the Prime Minister, who should respect the law more than others.⁴⁶

One of the Banisadr's standing grievances and constant complaints was that the religious leaders, instead of confining themselves to the areas in which they had specialized, were interfering in everything, including affairs connected with the war, about which they had no knowledge. On the other hand, in November 1980, after the loss of part of the city of Khoramshahar to Iraq, Hojjatulislam Khamenei, criticizing the strategy

employed in the defence of the city, maintained that this would never have happened if the advice of the ulama had been heeded. Early in January 1981, Ayatollah Montazeri and Beheshti wondered why the Army was not taking the offensive when the nation was repeatedly being told that, whereas the Iraqi Forces had been enfeebled, those of Iran were in 'excellent combat condition and high morale.'⁴⁸

Ignoring this criticism and assuming that the people who had voted for him would continue to lend their support to him and stand by him in all eventualities, Banisadr virtually declared war on his political rivals, who, he often asserted, were enemies of the State, the Revolution and Islam. In a strongly worded statement, made on January 31, 1981, he exhorted his supporters to move forward fearlessly 'against opportunists, stick-wielders and. . . imposters, so that they may be wiped out from your way.' If the activities of these people were not stopped, the nation would have to face a situation which would be 'worse than the previous regimes' time', and the country would again be dragged 'towards the graveyard, dictatorship, corruption and destruction'. He assured the people that there was nothing to fear: 'You people who did not fear the Shah's regime, you people who have sent his regime to the graveyard, what makes you afraid of the other imposters? Stand up to confront them. Stand up to resist them and throw them out of your way.'⁴⁹ This fiery outburst could be considered to be Banisadr's reply to the statement Beheshti had issued a few days earlier, expressing regret at not having liquidated the group which helped the 'enemy' in the same way 'as we executed other corrupt elements' after the success of the Islamic Revolution.⁵⁰

Khomeini once again asked rival groups to realize that their mutual friction was causing serious damage to

the Revolution and the State. Angrily condemning all those 'who were biting one another like scorpions and snakes', he threatened that, if they did not behave; he would 'take back from them whatever I have given them.'⁵¹ Although Khomeini's denunciation was directed against both factions – one led by Beheshti and the other by Banisadr – without, of course, mentioning either by name, there were some indications that these harsh words were essentially meant more for the fundamentalists than for the liberals. In a message read by Ahmad Khomeini, on behalf of his father, to a large public meeting on the occasion of the second anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, Khomeini issued a stern warning to the clergymen serving in the courts and the tribunals, the reconstruction crusades and other organs not to 'interfere in matters in which they have no authority; for, in addition to their interference being illegal, due to their lack of authority', it would, 'lead to the nation's mistrust of the clergy and consequently their estrangement from you'. This would cause 'great damage to Islam and an Islamic country', and be counted 'among the big and unpardonable sins.'⁵²

The race for power was even more forcefully condemned by Mehdi Bazargan, the first Prime Minister of the Provisional Government of the Islamic Republic, when he addressed the Majlis in February 1981. Expressing the anxiety of everyone, Bazargan first upbraided Banisadr as 'a freelance writer and political preacher' who was mostly concerned about 'his post and himself' and was trying to exercise greater authority than the Constitution gave him. But he was equally critical of Rajaie, who 'strengthens the ruling group and tries to block ways of the President.' Bazargan advised him to consider the President's viewpoint on the choice of Cabinet Ministers. Not sparing Ayatollah Beheshti, Bazargan said that, contrary to the principles of separa-

tion of powers between the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary, there was little that was 'not under his influence, officially or unofficially.' Addressing a 'brotherly and humble request' to Beheshti and his colleagues, he asked them 'to respect the position and responsibilities of the President, and to co-operate with others' according to the Constitution.⁵³

In spite of these entreaties, there was hardly any sign of an improvement in the perilous situation. Indeed, it worsened and became more violent; for instance, Ayatollah Lahooti, who had been one of the main speakers at the meeting preceding the confrontation in Mashhad was attacked at a public meeting in a mosque. Both he and his wife were manhandled by a group of miscreants. Ahmad Khomeini, apparently on behalf of his father, promptly addressed a strongly worded letter to the members of the Majlis. 'I swear by God', he said, 'that Islam is in danger.' He wanted the members to take immediate cognizance of what was happening, for 'tomorrow will be too late.' Recalling his services to the cause of Islam and the Revolution, he said that Ayatollah Lahooti 'had been tortured more than the torture meted out to all the clergies put together.' The latter ominously warned all authorities responsible for the maintenance of law and order that, 'if we do not halt these fearless elements, ignorant of God, then tomorrow the tide will turn against other personalities.'⁵⁴

This admonishment was apparently directed against the IRP, whose workers were supposedly responsible for the attack on Ayatollah Lahooti. In his reply to this criticism, Beheshti conceded the presence of undesirable elements in the ranks of the Islamic Republic Party, who, he said, were 'local agents of alien powers' and had infiltrated into it 'in order to deliver blows both from inside and outside.'⁵⁵

CHAPTER VIII

THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY: THE DEADLY ROUND



The Struggle For Supremacy

The Deadly Round

With neither side prepared to play a secondary role in guiding the destinies of the nascent republic, a fresh round of the destructive game of factional politics started in March 1981. The new flare-up in the continuing conflict was sparked by a speech President Baniadr delivered, in connection with the death anniversary of Dr. Mohammad Mossadeq, in the Tehran University campus on March 5. In a three-hour-long speech, Baniadr at various points, referred to what he called his opponents' tactics to weaken his authority and to lower the morale of the Armed Forces, of which he was the Commander-in-Chief. He made it clear to his audience, estimated at about a hundred thousand people, that he had been elected by an overwhelming majority of the people to shoulder the responsibilities of the Presidency. He declared that he would never betray the Islamic Revolution, and would continue to strive for the fulfilment of its aspirations. In return, he asked for the full support of the people; for as long as they stood fast, no danger could threaten the independence of Iran, the people's freedom and the Islamic Republic.

Referring to the Iraq-Iran war, he said that there were some people in the country who were scared of Iran's victory, because they feared that in the event of

victory, the triumph might be construed as a personal victory of the President. In fact, the victory would be that of the soldiers, the Pasdars and those men and women who, from one end of the country to the other, were arrayed against the enemy. The victory of the Islamic Revolution, he added, was the victory of Islam. There were others who thought in terms of possible defeat, and waited for it in order to put the blame on others. But if defeat should come, it would be such a catastrophe for all that, in comparison, the question of who had committed the mistakes responsible for the defeat would fade into insignificance.¹

Some sections of the audience took objection to the remarks of the President and attempted to disturb the meeting. They were promptly identified by Banisadr's supporters as members of his rival group. The identity cards of some of them allegedly revealed their involvement with various organs affiliated to or in sympathy with the Islamic Republic Party. In the ensuing clashes, 43 persons were reported to have been injured.

Two days later, the IRP issued the 'Party's Views', and blamed the President for the disturbances. The statement accused Banisadr of acting both as a self-appointed policeman and a prosecutor, and requested the authorities to take immediate appropriate action and reveal the facts to the people. Commenting on the events taking place during this President's speech, it said that the IRP could not remain indifferent and silently watch illegal guards of the President, just like the former Imperial guards, attack the people and break their heads. They could not remain unconcerned when people, instead of chanting 'Death to the United States', began to chant 'Death to Beheshti.' It asked: 'What was the reason for attacking those who were wearing green jackets and had beards? Is being a Revolutionary Guard

or having a beard a sin, while having a moustache [a reference to Banisadr] is the right thing to do?' It added that the Iranian nation knew its enemies and the enemies of Islam and the Islamic Republic. It charged that those who had gathered in the University campus were related to the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, the National Front, members of SAVAK, and various leftist groups.²

Ayatollah Khalkhali, a Majlis Deputy who seldom missed an opportunity to strike out at President Banisadr, went further and demanded his impeachment for violation of the Constitution and betrayal of the responsibilities entrusted to him. Expressing his anger and contempt on the floor of the Assembly, he tore up a copy of Banisadr's *Inqilab-e-Islami*.³ The President, on the other hand, continued to maintain a firm attitude, and refused to bow to threats from his opponents and pressures from the Majlis. He reiterated his resolve to 'stand tough and strong' even at the cost of losing his office. If a decision was forced on him, he would refer the issue to the people and inform them of the actual state of affairs.⁴ In contrast, Beheshti stuck to the stand that the verdict of the majority of the Majlis should be accepted by everyone, including the President.⁵

II

It was almost certain that should the President emerge victorious, the greatest beneficiaries would be the leftist groups, who, next to the ulama were the best organized and most powerful elements in post-revolutionary Iran. There was equally little doubt that in an inevitable second round of the struggle for power, Banisadr, with no political base of his own, would eventually be dislodged by the leftists. It was clear that, irrespective of which section of the leftists — the Tudeh, the Fidayeen-e-Khalq, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq or some

other secular force – came to power in the next and final round, this would seal the fate of clergy for a long time to come, if not for ever.

To save the situation from further deterioration, Khomeini took the matter in his own hands. He summoned President Banisadr, Chief Justice and IRP Chief Mohammad Beheshti, Majlis Speaker Rafsanjani, Prosecutor-General Ardebili, Tehran Friday Imam Ali Khamenei and former Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan on March 16, 1981 for a joint meeting, impressing upon them the urgent necessity of unity in their ranks, particularly in view of the prolonging war with Iraq. As a prescription for settling disputes, the following directives, which 'should be strictly adhered to', were issued:

1. The sanctity and supremacy of the Constitution must be maintained and neither the civil nor the army authorities must be allowed to violate it.
2. No one has a right to weaken or insult any one of the recognized authorities in interviews and speeches in the press. The authorities referred to were the President, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Prosecutor-General, Islamic Majlis, and the Council of Guardians of the Constitution.
3. The President must be acknowledged as the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, and the Commanders of the Armed Forces must obey him in accordance with the regulations.
4. The Supreme Defence Council must be administered in the manner stipulated in the Constitution, and Sayyid Ali Khamenei and Mostafa Chamaran would represent him (i.e. Khomeini)

in the Council.

5. The implementation of the decisions of the Defence Council would rest with the Commander-in-Chief, and the Armed Forces must carry out his orders.
6. Investigations of complaints relating to issues of the war and differences between officials of the Islamic Republic must be entrusted to a three-member Commission comprising a representative of the President, a representative of 'the other side', and another 'from my side.' The decision of the majority of the Commission would prevail.
7. Since speeches of the President, the Prime Minister, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, and the Speaker of the Islamic Majlis had provided opportunities 'to the deviated groups and opposers of the Islamic Republic [to] launch conspiracies and cause corruption, these (officials) should not deliver speeches until the end of the imposed war.' Exceptions would, however, be made for 'healthy, constructive and guiding interviews.'
8. The three-member Commission would 'minutely investigate' the newspapers, radio and television. In case the majority of the Commission considered any of these media to be 'harmful', the Prosecutor-General would be requested to take proper legal action against it.
9. All officials must co-operate and help each other in solving the problems of the country.

10. In the Friday prayer sermons, the Imams must emphasize the need for harmony, and avoid those issues which tend to create discord and disunity. They must also exhort the people to support the Armed Forces.⁶

This important initiative of Imam Khomeini was immediately welcomed by top leaders. Beheshti believed that the directives of the Imam illuminated many vital issues, and that it provided cause for satisfaction to all those who were committed to the preservation of national unity. 'our friends', he elaborated, 'have cause to be very happy at the directives. But those in the Fifth Column stand humiliated.' President Banisadr was equally gratified: 'By the will of God, the foundations of this Republic will be strengthened ever increasingly with the strict implementation of the Law.' Majlis Speaker Rafsanjani called for a complete and total preparedness to implement the Imam's directives. Addressing the Majlis, he said: 'We know that under the present circumstances it can, 100 per cent, solve all our problems.' But his optimism was not sustained by the events that followed.

The tripartite Commission comprised Hojjatulislam Shahabeddin Eshraqi (Khomeini's son-in-law) representing Banisadr, Mahdavi Kani representing Khomeini and Hojjatulislam Mohammad Yazdi, representing 'the other side' (i.e. Beheshti, Rafsanjani and Rajaie), who was also appointed the spokesman of the Commission, towards the end of April 1981. After several meetings, the Commission announced the names of those who were 'causing differences.' Apart from mentioning the names of Ali Asghar Javadi and Karim Sanjabi, whose newspaper articles and other writings were found to be 'insulting and humiliating the official authorities of the country',⁷ it announced that the *Jabbah-e-Melli*, the official organ

of the National Front, the *Mizan*, a newspaper closely affiliated with the National Freedom Movement of Mehdi Bazargan, and *Inqilab-e-Islami*, founded by President Banisadr, were not adhering to the guidelines laid down by the Imam. A few days later, the *Inqilab-e-Islami* was called a 'wrong-doer' for raising questions regarding the release of the American hostages with intentions of 'weakening the Government and confusing. . . public opinion', which was 'a definite violation' of the orders of the Imam.⁸

This was not the only evidence supporting the growing view that the ring was being tightened around Banisadr. In reply to an open letter from the President to the High Judicial Council, maintaining that the transfer of Judges should have his prior concurrence, he was informed that this demand could not be accepted, as this task had been assigned to the Judicial Council under Article 160 of the Constitution. The reply added that, in fact, his suggestion amounted to interference in the affairs of the Judiciary, and told him not to 'trifle with the honour, dignity and impartiality of the Judges.' In conclusion, it drew the President's attention to Article 142 of the Constitution, under which he was obliged to submit details of his assets and properties to the Supreme Court, and asked him to comply with this Constitutional provision 'at the earliest.'⁹

Khomeini, who had so far refrained from favouring either side in the struggle between the President and the Majlis, now came out in support of the latter by affirming the supremacy of the legislature and highlighting the role of the ulama in bringing about radical transformations in society. In an address to a group of Deputies on the anniversary of the founding of the Majlis, he said: 'I repeat here that the Majlis is the highest authority in the country, and that once it passes a Bill endors-

ed by the Council of Guardians, no person has any right to disapprove of it.' He was convinced that all the sacrifices offered by millions of people were made solely for the establishment of an Islamic system of Government and that, in no case, would they support an individual who was opposed to Islam. Such persons were, therefore, advised 'to go to Europe or the United States or anywhere else.' The people, he said, were committed only to Islam, and not to any individual: 'The nation is neither with you nor anybody else. It is with Islam. If ever I utter a single word against Islam, this nation would turn me out. The nation has a moral attachment to no one and to nothing but Islam.'

Addressing himself to those who were opposed to the ulama and were trying to weaken them as an institution, he advised them to 'remember that, in each and every corner of the country, there is a religious leader to whom the people are attached and whose order they follow.' Posing a question to the adversaries of the ulama, he pointedly asked: 'What did you do for this nation during the past years which you think would qualify you for demanding the elimination of the ulama from the scene. What service of any significance — except for mere rhetoric — did you do for the nation during all the past years? Nothing! You keep on saying that you said such and such on such and such occasion; well, suppose you did, so what? What did you do?'

Recalling the services of the ulama as pioneers of the struggle against the Pahlavi regime, he said they were the first to raise their voice against the Government of the day. It was the ideology of Islam and the leadership of the ulama that played the most significant role in inspiring people to lay down their lives for the cause. Everyone should, therefore, 'appreciate the value of Islam and the ulama; for, if you do away with the ulama, after

some 50 years, you will find no trace of Islam. . . these are the people who have collected and classified everything in order to safeguard our knowledge of Islam, and they are still busy working in our theological schools.' Islam was the only deterring force 'which has blocked the returning here of the United States or the coming here of the Soviet Union.' Both the super powers were well aware that they would be 'annihilated in our territories' by the people, whose commitment to Islam was deep and firm. He strongly pleaded for strict adherence to limits imposed by law by all authorities. 'We should delineate the limits of the President', he added, 'and then, if he should take a step beyond his limit, I will oppose him, and I will do so even if the people should approve of him. And so on with the Prime Minister and the Majlis and with the Council of Guardians and with the Judicial Branch, as well as with the Executive Branch.'

Returning to the theme of the supremacy of the Majlis, he reiterated that decisions of the Majlis were binding on everyone: 'if you do not want to be pushed away from the scene, you should comply with that which the Majlis passes.' It was not enough to call oneself a revolutionary. Action and the spirit of one's deeds tested the claim of being a revolutionary; for 'even Satan would consider himself as being a revolutionary in words.' The high positions that different personalities were holding were all due to the sacrifices 'of the people living in the pits and mud houses.' In conclusion, he ominously warned all high officials to 'beware of the day when the people will find out what goes on in your true inner self. . . in which case, it will be. . . impossible for you to wait the recurring of another February 11, [the anniversary of Independence] ; for, on that day, we will all be doomed to destruction.'¹⁰

This was not the first time that Khomeini had dwelt at length on the role of Islam and the clergy in the revolutionary movement. What distinguished this from his numerous earlier speeches on the subject was the fact that much of what he said was meant for the consumption of the President, as well as of others who had taken on the ulama for a final showdown. Four days after Khomeini's speech, Hojjatulislam Mohammad Yazdi announced that the Tripartite Commission had completed its assignment. Its investigation, he indicated, revealed infringements of the Imam's 10-point decree by the President in his public speeches and interviews, as well as in his refusal to approve the appointment of Ministers.¹¹

In a subsequent statement, the spokesman of the Commission tried to substantiate this charge against the President. Firstly, 'Mr. Banisadr', he said, 'had mentioned that people should be consulted about. . .major issues, and. . . had proposed some type of public referendum .' This, he asserted, was in clear violation of Article 59 of the Constitution, which stipulated that a two-thirds majority of the Majlis was required to issue a call for a plebiscite, and that no individual, irrespective of his position, could ask for it. Secondly, the President had blatantly exceeded his authority in his open letter to the High Judicial Council regarding the removal and the transfer of Judges. Thirdly, the President had violated the Constitution by not complying with the requirement of submitting details of his personal wealth to the Ministry of Justice. Instead, he had interpreted the Judicial Council's reminder on this issue 'as a sort of threat' to him, and had said that 'he would supply such information to the nation.' This, Yazdi said, was an unreasonable attitude, since the law stipulated that the inventory was to be supplied to the Ministry of Justice, not to the public. It was not only the President

who was required to furnish these details. A standard form had been prepared, which had to be filled in and returned by 'the Leader of the Revolution, the immediate members of his family, the Prime Minister, and all the Ministers, as well as the President.'¹²

In a prompt rejoinder, Banisadr denied that he had violated the Constitution, and suggested that 'a debate be held in which all who have been involved in the process could participate.' If all concerned would agree to take part in such a debate, the 'facts will be revealed to all people.' Concerning the submission of details of his personal wealth, he said that he had told Beheshti to wait until the end of the war. This, he believed, was a clear indication that, after the war was over, he would not continue 'to work under such conditions.' Banisadr was evidently unhappy with the functioning of the Commission, which he felt was not maintaining a fair standard of impartiality. He was unable to understand the Commission's silence on various infringements of the law by his opponents. It was, in effect, seeking to aid people who belonged to a particular clique and 'are bent on monopolizing everything.' He had no doubt that it had become 'a tool for eliminating the President', which also 'quite openly aids and abets others in schemes for his elimination.' How was it, he sarcastically asked, that whereas according to law, Judges cannot be members of parties, 'the Chief Justice of the State is himself a member and the Secretary-General of the Islamic Republic Party.'¹³

Beheshti responded sharply without delay. The Constitution, he said, had entrusted the President with the role of co-ordinating operations of the three branches of Government, namely the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary. It would be perfectly legitimate for him to undertake such co-ordination when

these three organs of Government were unable to achieve co-ordination among themselves. But if, on the other hand, the mutual co-ordination and smooth functioning of the three organs already existed then 'why this should be singled out as having been a device for eliminating the role of the President.' Regarding the claim that, according to law, a Judge cannot be a member of a political party, Beheshti asked which law Banisadr was referring to: 'What are those laws and where are they written?' Moreover, the Imam was quite aware of his membership of the Party when he appointed him Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The basic Islamic criterion for the appointment of a Judge, Beheshti stressed, was that a Judge should be just, fair and impartial and 'able to harness his emotions.' All other considerations were Western in import, and therefore should be discarded. Making a pointed reference to Banisadr's Western educational background, he added: 'Tell them not to impose the Western criterion on us, and tell them to abandon the idea of making us just another example of the Western culture in which. . . they have been reared.'¹⁴

On June 17, 1981, the Prosecutor's office announced that five newspapers, *Inqilab-e-Islami*, *Mizan*, *Arman-e-Mellat*, *Jabbah-e-Melli* and *Mardom* (an organ of the Tudeh Party), were being ordered to stop their publication with immediate effect for 'printing provocative materials during the time of war.' Banisadr reacted immediately by announcing that, despite the closure of his newspaper, he would continue to keep the people informed of his views and activities 'through cassettes and communiques.'¹⁵ Speaking to a large gathering of people in his home town, Hamadan, on the following day, Banisadr reiterated his resolve to continue his efforts to establish the supremacy of law: 'Future days will approve only an enactment of laws, and not the rule

of individual under the pretext of law.¹⁶

III

The last scene of the power struggle, leading to the removal of the country's first elected President, opened on June 10, 1981, when the Majlis passed a Bill stating that all Bills passed in the Assembly and duly approved by the Council of Guardians would have to be signed by the President within five days of their submission. If the President failed to sign a Bill within the stipulated period, it would be submitted to the Prime Minister and be approved by him. The President's power to block or delay legislation approved by the Majlis was thus taken away. On the same day, Ayatollah Khomeini stripped Banisadr of his authority as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, which was Constitutionally vested with the *Velayat-e-Faqih*, but had been delegated by him to Banisadr after the Presidential elections. The National Front then called for a mass rally in support of President Banisadr and against the *Qassas* (Retaliation) Bill approved by the Majlis.

A few hours before the rally, scheduled for the afternoon of June 15, Imam Khomeini addressed the nation on the radio. He took all those who had sponsored the demonstration to task, but especially singled out the National Front, which had distributed leaflets and handbills describing the *Qassas* Bill as inhuman and asking people to attend the rally proposed to register their protest against the Bill. Khomeini characterized the opposition to the *Qassas* Bill as a 'revolt against the Holy Quran' and an endeavour 'to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran.' This attempt of the National Front, supported by the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, he said, to rise against the injunctions of the Holy Quran was an unprecedented act in the history of Iran; for even during the

‘tyrannical reign of Reza Khan and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, such a treacherous insult had not been inflicted on the Holy Quran.’

Alluding to Banisadr and his tacit support for dissident elements, he declared that his religious conscience had made him withdraw his vote of confidence from political deviationists. Without mincing words, he called upon his followers to rise against all forces ranged against the Islamic Government of Iran. It was naive; he said, to expect that the Muslim nation would remain a mere spectator of the political stage on which splinter groups and dissidents were aligning themselves with the National Front to mount demonstrations against Islam. ‘It is quite unthinkable’, he added, ‘that the Muslim nation should only witness such. . .counter-revolutionary activities and . . .anti-Islamic articles in provocative journals.’ Referring to Banisadr and his association with what he called un-Islamic elements, Khomeini said that he had many a time warned the President that the Iranian people would destroy his political career if he encroached upon the jurisdiction of Islam but he had not heeded this counsel. He now advised Banisadr ‘to stop creating obstructions in the path, and to stop weakening the Majlis and Islamic jurisprudents.’ He then went on to denounce the National Front ‘as an agnostic party’, since it had called for a ‘national insurrection. . .against Islamic enterprise.’¹⁷ In response to this aggressive speech, Khomeini’s followers appeared in the streets, many of them wearing white coffins – ready for martyrdom in the defence of Islam – shouting such slogans as ‘Death to Banisadr’ and ‘Death to Shah the Second.’ But the National Front leadership and its adherents, seeing the mood of the people, wisely chose to stay away from the Firdowsi Square in downtown Tehran, where the rally was supposed to have been held.

A day earlier, on June 14, some IRP members of the Majlis had delivered fiery speeches on the floor of the House; and Rafsanjani had disclosed that letters from some 120 Majlis Deputies had proposed that the issue of the political incompetence of the President be put before the Majlis for a debate.¹⁸ In the following Friday prayer sermons at the Tehran University campus, IRP leaders bluntly criticized the President. Sayyid Ali Khamenei, the Imam of the congregation charged that Banisadr was an ambitious adventurer who wanted to monopolize executive legislative and judicial powers, and was attempting to push the country back to the old imperial days, when all these powers were concentrated in the hands of the Shah. He held him responsible for standing in the way of the 'institutionalizing of. . .Islamic principles.' It was for this reason that all dissident groups, such as the National Front, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq and various leftist groups, who were opposed to the Islamic Revolution, had 'gathered around him.'¹⁹ Hojjatulislam Mohammad Yazdi, the spokesman of the Tripartite Commission condemned Banisadr for his dictatorial, ambitious and unconcealed endeavours not only to bypass the authority of the Majlis, but also to dissolve it. Since Banisadr respected neither Islamic Law nor the authority of the Islamic Majlis, he was unfit for the office of the President of the Islamic Republic.²⁰ President Banisadr's own nominee to the Tripartite Commission, Ayatollah Eshraqi, resigned his membership of the Commission on June 16, because, he said, the President had failed 'to follow the path of law'. He also maintained that the people surrounding the President were 'very dangerous.'²¹ With Eshraqi's resignation, the Commission was dissolved.

The debate on impeaching the President opened in the Majlis on June 20. While most participators in the debate bitterly condemned the President, there were a

few notable exceptions. Ali Akbar Moïnfâr, who had been the Oil Minister in Bazargan's Cabinet, said that, although he had no desire to defend the President, he was rather anxious about the future of the Islamic Republic. Engineer Sahabi struck a similar note by saying that he was opposing the move to impeach the President not because he was in total agreement with what the President had done, but 'because it is a crucial and historical issue' and he 'had reservations on the manner in which the proposal for Banisadr's impeachment had been presented.'²² Despite these pleas for caution and restraint, the Majlis, on June 21, resolved by 177 votes, with one against and 12 abstentions, that President Banisadr was not competent to hold the office of the President.²³ Soon after this the Prosecutor of Tehran, Ali Quddusi, issued summons for the arrest of Banisadr who, for the last few days, had been in hiding – and, according to some, had actually left the country.

The resolution of the Majlis was promptly approved by Khomeini, who alone, under Article 110 of the Constitution, was vested with the power to dismiss the President. On the same day, in an address to a group of visitors, Khomeini berated both the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, and the deposed President. Directly addressing the 'hypocrite leaders of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq', he said that, by initiating a revolt against the Islamic Government, 'you have committed a crime which has darkened the pages of history.' He warned them that, even 'if you mobilize all your forces, you are still a drop of water compared to the huge flood of Muslims' who were eternally vigilant. He described the dismissed President as one of those pro-Western intellectuals who lacked the art of practical politics, and reminded him of his earlier advice to avoid 'the trivial concerns of this mortal world. You should have been aware that excessive ambition ultimately leads to self-destruction.' It was be-

cause of this attitude, Khomeini asserted that all those who had supported Banisadr earlier had become his enemies. 'No wonder that you have wasted 11 million votes.'²⁴

However, criticism of Banisadr was not confined to Islamic fundamentalists. Later, in August 1981, the Communist Party Chief, Nouredin Kianouri, described the ousted President as a 'traitor with a mental illness that is politically very dangerous. He is incredibly ego-centric, and believes he is the greatest thinker of the century.' He suggested that the ousted President and Masoud Rajavi, the leader of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, who fled from Iran together, deserved to be 'locked up together in a psychiatric hospital.'²⁵

It was, indeed, unfortunate that President Banisadr had to go the way he did. There is little doubt that he was a victim of the struggle for supremacy, but he was, in no small measure, himself also responsible for his ignominious fall. Banisadr did have fine qualities of leadership, personal courage, a clear vision, and a sound theoretical perception of the problems facing the new Islamic Republic, but he was also highly ambitious and, at times, arrogant, too. His greatest failing was his inability to assess the power of his adversaries. Without a popular base in shape of an organized political party, and without Constitutional powers to enforce his authority on the Majlis or the Council of Ministers, he tried to play the mixed role of an American President and a British Prime Minister. From the very beginning of his tenure as President, he entered into a bitter but unnecessary feud with the ulama. He publicly ridiculed the Prime Minister, Mohammad Ali Rajaie, and openly criticized the IRP chief, Mohammad Beheshti, who was an extremely shrewd politician, and had gradually built up a position that was next only to that of Khomeini.

However, Banisadr was not alone in his battle with the religious leadership; he did have the support of all the moderate and liberal, as well as such leftist groups as the Mujahideen-e-Khalq. The silent majority who had voted for him had, as far as one could see, also not withdrawn their support from him. His practically constant presence at the war fronts, as the Supreme Commander, had not only endeared him to the rank and file of the Army, but had also raised his stock among senior officers. His *Inqilab-e-Islami* was considered to be the best-selling daily; and the large crowds that thronged his public meetings seemed to verify his immense popularity. All these signs of support had led him to believe that he could easily take on the IRP dominated Majlis, which alone stood in the way of his supremacy.

The signs, however, were deceptive. Banisadr's calculations had apparently missed two extremely vital factors. First, he underrated the deep commitment of the people to Islam and the hold of the ulama, with thousands of mosques as their forums for motivating the masses. Due to his long absence from the country, he had been unable to gauge the full extent of the influence that the religious leaders had acquired in consolidating their position. Despite a facade of modernization and Westernization, the people retained a basic attachment to their Islamic traditions. Second, he failed to realize that the support from Khomeini he had all along enjoyed was not likely to continue in the face of a direct confrontation between the ulama and the liberal elements which the President represented. Khomeini, above everything else, was a religious leader and, under no circumstances, was he going to desert his constituency. His numerous speeches, in which he highlighted the role of the ulama in bringing about the Islamic Revolution, and his recurring emphasis on pure and pristine Islam, as the basis for the reconstruction of Iranian so-

ciety, were all unmistakable indicators of where his sympathy and support lay.

IV

As we have seen, the internal powers struggle had gathered momentum in March 1981, when Iran gained substantial success in its war with Iraq. Banisadr was not wrong in thinking that his opponents feared that, in the event of Iran's victory in war, he would emerge as a hero. They were also apprehensive that in that case, after Khomeini's death, they would not be able to stand against him. Hence, the fundamentalists decided that the sooner he was removed from his position of influence and authority, the better it would be for them. On the other hand, while liberal intellectuals appreciated his services and disapproved the tactics employed by his opponents, their support was really confined to private discussions in upper-middle class homes. Even Banisadr's other supporters among the silent majority were just that — silent. They were certainly no match for the IRP activists, on or off the streets. The leftists who had supported him, and later, after his ouster, had waged street battles against the clergy, were never fighting his battle. In fact, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, who spearheaded the latter movement, had never had any contact with the deposed President. All they had been looking for was an opportunity to take on the fundamentalists; and Banisadr's overthrow provided them with a lever to strike.

The leftists, nevertheless, avoided a direct confrontation with the Revolutionary Guards, who had become not only more alert, but also unsparing in dealing with their opponents. Instead, they resorted to terrorist methods. Their first prominent victim was Ali Khamenei, who, during his recent Friday sermons had been casti-

gating both the President and the Mujahideen-e-Khalq. He was seriously wounded when a bomb exploded in the Abu Zar Mosque in Tehran, soon after he had finished leading the noon prayers. The worst, however, came a few days later, when, on the evening of June 28, the IRP Headquarters in downtown Tehran were blasted by a powerful bomb hidden in the hall where the top leadership of the Party was holding its biweekly meeting. The casualties, estimated to be well over 100, included four Ministers, six Deputy Ministers, 27 members of the Majlis, and the IRP Chief, Ayatollah Mohammad Beheshti, who was widely believed to have masterminded Banisadr's impeachment. Prime Minister Rajaie, Majlis Speaker Rafsanjani, and Behzad Nabavi, a member of the Cabinet and Government spokesman, escaped only because they had left the meeting a few minutes before the explosion. The death of several distinguished luminaries of revolutionary Iran was mourned throughout the country; and in Tehran, it is estimated that more than one million people turned out to join the funeral procession.

Speaking to the mourners, Rafsanjani held the Mujahideen-e-Khalq responsible for the grim tragedy. It would now be naive to believe, he said, that those who had committed the crime were 'supporters of the people' and were 'campaigning for God and the people': Indicating how these elements would be dealt in future, he said that 'after this horrible crime, how can anyone expect us to let them do what they like to do.'²⁶

In his condolence message, Khomeini reiterated his resolve to carry on the struggle despite this horrifying incident and the calamity that had befallen the nation. Addressing the superpowers and their local agents, he declared:

'A nation which has risen up for establishing Islamic justice, fulfilling the canons of the Great Quran, expelling the superpowers' criminals in order to live independently and freely has also prepared itself for martyrdom and for giving martyrs. And it will not be intimidated at the sight of the superpowers' intention being carried out by a handful of professional criminals for martyring the best of its noble children . . . Your and your supporters' problem is that you are aware neither of Islam nor of spiritual power nor of the Muslim nation nor of the motivation behind self-sacrifice. You have not understood the nation which sacrificed the lives of its youth in order to bring down the filthy Pahlavi regime and to liberate itself from the hands of Great Satan [The American Government], and which stands firmly with unprecedented courage and without any regret. You have not come to know the nation whose invalids long for martyrdom in hospital beds and who invite their comrades to martyrdom . . . You have crept into your holes and launch stupid crimes in order to intimidate the martyr-nourishing and self-sacrificing nation. Little do you seem to know that the word 'fear' does not exist in the culture of martyrdom . . . Believing in the eternal power of the Supreme Lord, the Iranian nation will pace ever forward like a surging sea . . . and they will send . . . to hell your people who have crept into your holes and are breathing the last breath of life. The Supreme Lord is behind this nation and will protect it.'²⁷

While Khomeini and the IRP leadership placed the blame for the explosion on the superpowers, especially 'the Great Satan', and the dissident groups led by the deposed President Banisadr, there was another theory, too: that the Iranian army — either because it was sick and tired of the continued power struggle or because of

its lingering loyalty to the old regime or because it was in sympathy with Banisadr – was at the back of this tragedy. According to this view, the attack on Ali Khamenei, a few days before the explosion, and the death of Mostafa Chamaran, a Defence Minister in Bazargan's Cabinet and later a member of the Defence Council, killed 'accidentally' in the Iraq-Iran war on June 21, were links of a chain. The Army, it maintained, wanted to get rid of Khomeini's men, whether in the Defence Council, which guided the war policies and directly reported to Khomeini, or among those who wielded direct political power, such as the IRP leadership, and then launch a coup. The Army did not proceed with its plans, they added, because Rafsanjani, Behzad Nabavi and Rajaie had escaped unhurt.²⁸

This theory appears plausible, and the explanation it offered must also have occurred to Khomeini and the surviving leadership of the IRP. But, since no follow up action was taken against any Army elements, it is difficult to subscribe to this view in its entirety. However, if all the top IRP leaders had been killed, as was obviously intended by the perpetrators of the explosion, the Army, being the only likely body to fill the power vacuum, would in all probability have done so, even if it had not actually planned the attack. There is also little doubt that a section of senior Air Force officers was in sympathy with the ousted President. The way in which Banisadr and Rajavi managed to escape from Iran in an Air Force plane leaving Tehran on the night of July 28, could only have been managed with the connivance of some Air Force officers. Furthermore, Banisadr could not have remained hidden in Tehran for several weeks without the protection of some powerful elements, who later arranged or helped to smuggle him out of the country. He was well on his way out of Iran when the Government came to know of his flight. Two Phantom

planes then chased his plane, but they were too late, and Banisadr reached Paris safely. This dramatic episode supported the view, held by many, that the Armed Forces, or at least a section of it, were more in favour of Banisadr than the clerical regime.

The full story of Banisadr's escape, after a month and a half of hiding in Tehran, was revealed after he had reached Paris. Banisadr and Rajavi, dressed in military uniforms, reached a military airfield in Tehran in an army van, hiding behind crates of eggs, and boarded an Iranian Air Force Boeing 707, which was supposedly scheduled to fly to South-west Iran on a routine mission. The plane was piloted by Colonel Behzad Moezi, a highly experienced and skilful flier, who had flown the Shah on his last journey from Iran on January 16, 1979. He had been imprisoned by the revolutionary regime for pro-Shah sympathies, but was later released by Banisadr, after the Iraq-Iran war started in September 1980. The plane took off at 10.30 at night from Tehran and reached a military airfield in Evreux, 45 miles from Paris, a few hours later.

In Paris, Banisadr, who claimed that he was still the President, named Masoud Rajavi, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq leader of some 100,000 trained guerrillas, as the Prime Minister of his Government in Exile, and said that he hoped to return to Iran to lead the people as soon as Khomeini had been overthrown. Although, at the time, it was not possible to predict Banisadr's chances, many wondered, why, if he had the support he claimed, he had fled the country. Was it a simple act of cowardice or a calculated strategy that he did not stay in Iran to lead his people, instead of escaping? His own logic for abandoning the political arena is interesting. He believed that a large number of his followers were wasting their precious time in protecting him, that he could show, to

the world as well as to the Iranian authorities, his strength and popularity by arranging 'an escape from a military base in a military plane', and that he should make full preparations 'for the tumultuous events' that were to take place 'in the next few weeks.'²⁹

Banisadr may have convinced himself with these arguments, but many others thought that by withdrawing from Iran to a safe sanctuary, leaving his followers to face the retaliation of his opponents on their own he failed to measure up to the stature of a leader, and that, therefore, his chances of staging a triumphant comeback were dismal. In the words of one such critic: 'If he could not do anything as President, and if he cannot organize a revolt from within Tehran itself, what can Banisadr possibly do from Paris?'³⁰ Khomeini reacted along similar lines: 'A group of bankrupt politicians who escaped the country disguised in women's clothes are now claiming that they are going to lead the country! They claim that the whole of Iran supports them. Well, if the whole country supports you, why have you gone? You were in Iran, and you had all your supporters with you.'³¹ He was, however, prepared to let him, and others who had fled, come back to Iran. This offer, he said, was made not because of his weakened position, but because 'the door of repentance is still open. The Blessed and Supreme Lord and Islam have left open the door of repentance. If all those who have fled abroad and . . . want to overthrow the Iranian Government repent and return to their own country and really want to serve their country. . . they can do so.'³² At the same time, he told those trying to overthrow the Islamic Government by throwing 'crackers' at innocent people that they could do it no real harm: 'Any kid can plant a bomb somewhere and explode it. This isn't important. This shows impotence, misfortune and deviation.'³³

The killing of high officials and Revolutionary Guards in various parts of the country was gradually controlled, but not completely eliminated. Attacks on the hideouts of Mujahideen guerrillas and summary trials of those captured, often leading to their execution, definitely helped to reduce terrorist activities. The Government's capacity to deal with the insurgency and restore law and order belied all predictions to the effect that the Mujahideen were too well organized to be overpowered by an administration that was already collapsing under the weight of the Iraq-Iran war, the critical economic situation and the prevailing political chaos. According to one report, this marvellous feat was achieved with the help of 'a team of highly professional, meticulously schooled intelligence agents from the Soviet Union', brought in to lend a helping hand to the party in power in order to contain the insurgency. Khomeini's regime decided to request Soviet assistance in improving security when it found that 'it was unable to organize an efficient intelligence and security organization to cope with last summer's spectacular wave of assassinations of Government leaders.' In order to conceal their identity, the Soviet security experts spoke flawless Farsi and offered *namaz* (prayers) along with those whom they were training. According to a *Time* correspondent, these security men, along with other Soviet advisors who followed them, would enable the Russians to gain 'the bridgehead in Iran that they have coveted for decades. The goal of the Soviets is to establish themselves so firmly that they can exercise a decisive influence on Iranian foreign policy or, in the course of a future political explosion in the country, install a puppet regime.'³⁴

In the absence of concrete evidence, it is as difficult to substantiate this story as it is to refute it. Prime Minister Musavi, however, spiritedly denied that Iran had

invited any security experts from the Soviet Union,³⁵ which is quite understandable in terms of the religious leadership's consistent condemnation of Russian Imperialism being only a shade less harsh than that of American attempts to establish their hegemony in the region. The theory of Soviet assistance may thus, in fact, be no more than a ploy to convince Iranian dissidents, in and outside the country, that the Iranian Government was incapable of handling its problems without help from outside. That there was no love lost between the Iranian revolutionary regime and the Soviet Union became irrefutably apparent when, in February 1983, the Iranian Government arrested about 70 members of the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party, including Nouredin Kianouri, the Secretary-General of the Party. Appearing on the Iranian National Television, Kianouri, a few months later, confessed that he had been passing sensitive information to the Soviet Union: 'Our violations consisted of the delivery of top secret military and political documents to our bosses at the Russian Embassy.'³⁶

V

After the removal of Banisadr, a Provisional Presidency Council, composed of the Prime Minister, the Majlis speaker and the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court was set up, as required by Article 130 of the Constitution. Fresh presidential elections were held on July 24, in which Prime Minister Rajaie was elected as President, with more votes than were polled by Banisadr. The heavy turn out on polling day was largely the result of the exhortations of religious leaders who told the people to participate in the elections as a religious duty and to rectify their earlier mistake of having chosen a 'liberal' President. Some three weeks before the election, Imam Khomeini said: 'It is the responsibility of all citizens to cast their votes and choose a President who

would, at least, be known for his belief in Islam. ., In case we get a President who turns out to be unfit, everything will be ruined. Don't say that others will vote. I, too, should vote; you should vote; the farmer who is working in his field should vote. It is a duty. It is a Divine duty.³⁷

Mohammad Ali Rajaie was formally inducted as the President by Imam Khomeini on August 2, 1981. In the investiture ceremony held at his residence, attended by high officials, the Imam gave a 'few words of advice' to the elected President – which in fact was a lengthy lecture. After dwelling on the insignificance of a human being in the entire cosmos, he advised the President-elect not to be intoxicated by the high office and the exalted position that had been entrusted to him. Human life was too short and uncertain and high worldly status was too insignificant to be given any importance. What was important was submission to Almighty God and to carry out His commands in all matters: 'Yesterday you were a Prime Minister. Before that you were a Cabinet Minister. And before that you were a simple student at school. It is not known when you will depart from this world; perhaps, God forbid, immediately after you leave this place or even while you are present here, a bomb may explode and they will lead the last prayers for us. Well now, since this is a factual possibility, why should one change after one is elected President. After all what is the Presidency?'

Emphasizing the accountability of all officials for their deeds before God and man, and that the responsibilities of an individual were in proportion to the authority entrusted to him, he extended a stern warning to the new President:

'You have been elected with more than 13 million

votes, and the volume of your responsibility has grown accordingly. . . I have approved of your becoming the President of this Islamic country so that you will put into effect the canons of Islam here. If you, God forbid, should default, then the 13 million or so people who have voted for you will demand an account from you. It is up to you to think whether or not you will be able to give a satisfactory answer before God and the people . . . continue to serve the people as you did in the past, serve the people who toiled, who let their blood be shed or gave away their wealth and who thereby elevated you to such a position. . . If you take one foul step then you will see how the 13 million people who cast their votes for you will tomorrow shout "Death to Rajaie." That is the way of all Revolutions. That is the nature of the Revolution. After a Revolution, the masses will not submit to anyone unconditionally. . . Once they have turned their backs on you — well, you can go home and rest. But another calling to account will await you in the Hereafter. You should make arrangements in preparation for that. . . You should work for the oppressed and the barefooted people who have been weakened throughout history.'

Towards the end of the speech, he once again reminded the President that, 'had it not been for our people' you would still 'have been serving in the prison and suffering tortures along with other devout people. . . You owe everything to this nation.'³⁸

President Rajaie, however, was not destined to last in office beyond a few weeks. He and Prime Minister Mohammad Javad Bahonar were killed in a bomb blast in the premises of the Prime Minister in Central Tehran on August 31, 1981. The incendiary bomb was so powerful that it charred the bodies of the victims

beyond recognition, and they could be identified only by their dental records. The Mujahideen chief, Masoud Rajavi, not only acknowledged responsibility for the explosion, but also boasted that even Khomeini was within their reach. Asked by a correspondent in Paris whether Khomeini was on their target list, he said: 'We have not recommended this solution, because we have a better one: Inviting Mr. Khomeini to appear on television inside a court with a jury of 36 million people. . . The problem is not to kill somebody so that the change will come one day sooner. There is more profit for us in making the people understand why Khomeini is guilty.'³⁹

The simultaneous assassination of the President and the Prime Minister was the biggest loss the Revolutionary regime had suffered since the massacre at the IRP Headquarters in June 1981. However, the nation managed to tide over this second shock, too, with remarkable calm. As if anticipating the catastrophe lurking ahead, Khomeini, exactly two weeks earlier, in an address to a gathering of his followers, had said that the forces of East and West, the superpowers and their satellites, were plotting against Iran only 'because the programme of this Republic is Islam.' But there was no cause for alarm or worry. The 'juvenile delinquents' who were now engaged in terrorism would be destroyed, and no one should entertain the notion that the 'assassination of a few personalities, however great, will cause the defeat of our nation. . . Ours is not a regime' in which 'if the leader is killed, the whole country collapses. . . The nation which destroyed the very foundations of monarchy will stand firm, even if a personality as high as the President is removed from the scene.'

Reverting to his old theme, he said that as long as the people adhered to Islam, the loss of a few individuals

did not matter, for 'Islam is a religion founded by God. God always exists and so does Islam. God will protect Islam even if you and I are no longer present.' Comparing the Iranian nation with secular powers, he said that their complete faith in God would pull the Iranians through the difficulties, and that this was what distinguished them from the others: 'You have the protection that the United States and other infidel Governments do not have, and that is God. You revolted for God. Our nation, men, women, old and young, all revolted for God. When everything is for God, then it is unworthy of us to speculate as to what will happen next.'⁴⁰

A million grief-stricken mourners taking part in the funeral on the day following the assassination left no one – not even the worst critics of the regime – in any doubt about the massive popular support the religious leadership enjoyed. Echoing the sentiments of the people, Rafsanjani said, 'We are always prepared to face such unpleasant incidents', and added that 'our nation is ready to undertake the responsibility of perpetuating the Revolution. . . this Revolution should continue. . . in the presence of the people, whether we are alive or not.'⁴¹ As before, the United States and its agents were blamed for the explosion. In an official statement, the Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned 'the criminal US imperialism' for spilling 'the blood of two pious and revolutionary men. . . The US must know that the message of the Islamic Revolution has been exported to all parts of the world; and these actions are not only incapable of destroying this message, but also make it more effective.'⁴²

Addressing a part of the crowd of mourners in the Majlis compound, where the funeral prayers were held, Ayatollah Sadeq Khalkhali said that, even if Rajaie, Bahonar and Beheshti are not among us any more, our

leader has 36 million Rajaies, Bahonars, and Beheshtis. If the corrupt US intends to come back to Iran 'with the help of such mercenaries as Banisadr, Rajavi and Aryan', a General in the former Imperial Army, it will have to 'step over the bodies of 36 million people.'⁴³

Addressing a group of persons who called on him to offer their condolences, Khomeini, on August 31, said: 'A nation which has risen against all world powers, a nation that has risen for Islam, has risen for God and has risen to enact the dictates of the Holy Quran, cannot be pushed back by these assassinations. . . Difficult as it is for us to endure the agony of such a loss, our people are still standing as determined as before to dedicate more martyrs. They have passed the point of no return and will not be intimidated. Those blind-hearted who think that the Islamic Republic will collapse in the absence of a few people, their thoughts are not Islamic, they are estranged from Islam and from religious faith. . . Grieved as we are. . .we have others queuing up to fill their places. . .'⁴⁴

Two days later, Imam Khomeini issued a stern warning to Muslims all over the world. He said that though, for the moment, Iran seemed to be the only victim of the conspiracies of 'oppressors of the world'; their real target was Islam: 'If, Allah forbid, this movement, which is against all superpowers and against world devils, should be. . .defeated, that will mean the defeat of all the oppressed masses of the world, of all the Muslims, and of Islam in all Muslim countries.' He was especially critical of the Mujahideen-e-Khalq, who, he maintained were responsible for the assassination, and were acting at the behest of foreign powers. 'Our nation', he said, 'has now realized that the people who claimed to be serving the people. . .have' in fact been 'a bunch of criminals' acting 'against the people and in the service of

the superpowers.⁴⁵

VI

In dealing with the disorders following the dismissal of Banisadr, the Government resorted to harsh measures against the insurgents and terrorists. Many Mujahideen-Khalq guerrillas were accused and summarily sentenced to death by Islamic Revolutionary Courts. Despite the fact that Khomeini advised judicial authorities to exercise restraint, and not 'to trespass the dictates of Allah and the canons of Islam in issuing decrees',⁴⁶ many observers, inside as well as outside Iran, felt that a virtual reign of terror had been let loose and that many innocent persons had been executed.

In an interview with Hossein Musavi, the Iranian Foreign Minister, during his visit to New York to attend a session of the UN General Assembly, a *New York Times*' reporter suggested that there had been as many as 10,000 executions in Iran. Musavi denied the allegation, and said that, had it been so, it would surely have destroyed the Revolution.⁴⁷ It was a standing grievance of supporters of the Revolution that, while the Western press invariably gave wide coverage to the executions of the Mujahideen and their followers by the Government, it seldom referred to the killings of Revolutionary Guards and prominent Iranian officials by the Mujahideen. The Prosecutor-General, Hojjatulislam Musavi Tabrizi, in a Friday sermon, on November 13, 1981, said that within one month, from September 23 to October 23, the Mujahideen had assassinated 370 people. These victims were just 'workers of Islamic associations, farmers of rural Islamic Councils, Friday prayer leaders . . . spiritual and moral guides, men and women in public busses, along with children who could not yet speak.' He added that, within the last 22 days, these

terrorists had martyred 29 people, wounded 54 others, set ablaze 14 cars, launched 25 armed attacks, and destroyed 16 major items of public property.⁴⁸

Although the Government had adopted strong security measures to restore order, no place and no individual was beyond the reach of the insurgents. Indeed, the President and the Prime Minister's assassination in the heavily guarded Prime Ministry seemed to support the view that the Mujahideen had deeply infiltrated into the ranks of the organs responsible for security. According to one report, the powerful incendiary bomb that set fire to the building and killed the two dignitaries was deposited in a brief-case, supposedly containing secret documents, by one of a few highly trusted top officials.⁴⁹ Later, Iranian authorities, themselves, said, that Masoud Kashmiri, who was the Secretary of the Iranian Security Council and had acquired their complete confidence, had been responsible for the bloodshed.⁵⁰ This story may or may not be true, but there is no denying the fact that the Mujahideen were operating at the highest level inside the Government, and that they enjoyed firm support from certain quarters of the Revolutionary Guards.

Despite these occurrences, the popular support for Khomeini, though somewhat reduced, was still formidable. It had been demonstrated many times and in many ways during the last few months by millions of pro-Khomeini marchers in the funeral processions. The morale of the armed forces fighting the protracted war with Iraq was high, and there were hardly any adverse reactions among people experiencing difficulties owing to shortages of such commodities as milk and meat. . . . There was thus hardly any basis for the claim Masoud Rajavi made in an interview to a *Time's* correspondent in Paris, to the effect that '90 per cent of Khomeini's

leadership is gone', and his supporters 'are falling down like the leaves of autumn.'⁵¹

The vacuum created by the death of the President and the Prime Minister was promptly filled. Mahdavi Kani, the Interior Minister in Bahonar's Cabinet, succeeded him as the Prime Minister and was duly approved by the Majlis on September 3. The presidential election was scheduled to be held within 50 days, as stipulated in the Constitution. The new Prime Minister presented his Cabinet to Imam Khomeini on September 7, 1981. Addressing members of the Cabinet, he derided the propaganda that Iran had been weakened by the death of the President and the Prime Minister. 'It has become clear', he said, 'that, following such events as these, the power of the nation continues to be strengthened further. Indeed, the power of the nation is identical with the force of Islam and God Almighty.' The sustaining force of the country was not one or the other individual, however powerful, but the force of Islam, which was the shield of the country. It was not difficult to plant bombs and kill innocent citizens; but it was impossible to stay in power without the support of the people, who were committed only to Islamic principles. Referring to deposed President Banisadr, he asked: 'Where is that country in the world where the President is elected by 11 million votes and is deprived of the confidence of the same number of people when he deviates from Islam? He could not stay in the country and had to flee.' He ridiculed the claim that the frequent blasts had so unnerved the administration that 'the Islamic Government has been virtually toppled.' He declared that, on the contrary, 'Iran is the most stable country in the world, and the string of explosions testifies to this solidarity.'

His reasoning was simple: 'If this Government was on the verge of collapse the deviationist factions would

not be troubling themselves to perpetuate such sabotage. They would let the decrepit Government fall apart in time on its own. . . . In the course of time, they witnessed the failure of this plot, and then to bomb blasts, one following the other. No country can be destroyed with explosions and no nation will be destroyed by assassinations.' In conclusion, he assured the new Cabinet that 'God Almighty is your supporter. You should be determined to accomplish your duties, and you should not fear these sporadic explosions.'⁵²

Reiterating his faith that no harm could be done to the State in a message for the third anniversary of the 'Black Friday', he described the day as one of the 'Aiyam-Allah' (days of God) that would always be remembered as testimony to 'the profound courage. . . of the nation in confrontation with . . . brutal, criminal tyranny.' A nation that had the courage and the capacity to withstand such catastrophies could never be subdued. This day, he said, 'should be a lesson for those. . . individuals who falsely assume that with the martyrdom of a few committed Government authorities, the determined array of . . . Muslims will be dispersed.' It should be realized that those who had deviated from the path of Islam and those superpowers who had lost all hope of controlling the national resources of Iran had combined their nefarious efforts to malign the Islamic Government and to launch a malicious propaganda campaign to 'describe Iran as a bankrupt and unstable country.' These tactics were doomed to failure, as Iran was determined to follow its 'Islamic and humanitarian objectives.'⁵³

Although Khomeini's Government and the ulama's capacity to motivate the people and bring them out on the streets to demonstrate their power remained intact, they were unable to completely stem the rising tide of terrorism. On September 11, Ayatollah Sayyid Asadollah

Madani, Imam of Tabriz, and six other persons were killed by a grenade explosion while they were offering their Friday prayers. A few days earlier, Ayatollah Sheikh Ali Qodوسی, the Prosecutor-General of the Islamic Revolutionary Court, had been assassinated in his office. These killings were also attributed to the superpowers. The tactics employed by the enemies of Islam and the Revolution, said Imam Khomeini, would have no effect on the people who were determined to carry on the duty assigned to them by God. The history of Islam was replete with such tragic incidents; but no one could crush Islam: 'The Iranian nation and the committed clergy have lined up for a formidable resistance. Thus, when the flag drops from the hands of a Muslim warrior, another combatant will take his place and pledge to safeguard the flag of Islam. . . I fervently beseech God to curse and condemn the superpowers of the East and the West, who contrive brutal conspiracies in order to disillusion our Islamic nation' which 'accomplished the Islamic Revolution by dedicating countless martyrs.'⁵⁴

VII

The third presidential election was held on Friday, October 2, 1981. In a message issued a few days before, Khomeini asked the nation to participate fully in the election; for it 'is not only a social and national duty, but also a religious and Islamic duty.' Any indifference on the part of the people at this crucial hour would cost the country heavily. It would surely mean, he added, that the Islamic Republic of Iran 'will be substituted by one of the two superpowers, even if it is in the guise of nationalism or Islam.'⁵⁵

Contrary to all fears that there might be widespread disturbances, the election, with the exception of minor

clashes in some areas, went off peacefully, and the turnout of voters was unusually high. This happened despite the pall of gloom caused by the tragedy of an air crash near Tehran on the evening of September 29, which killed several top Army officers, including the Defence Minister, Colonel Namju, the former Defence Minister, General Fakuri, the Deputy Commander-in-Chief, General Valiollah Fallahi, and Deputy Commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards, Kalahdouz, who were travelling from Ahwaz to Tehran, carrying a number of dead bodies and disabled soldiers from the war front.

The electoral triumph of Ali Khamenei, the Secretary-General of the Islamic Republic Party, was a forgone conclusion; for the opposition did not put up any candidates. All the contestants belonged to the ruling Islamic Republic Party. The cover candidate of the Party, Prime Minister Mahdavi Kani, had withdrawn two days earlier, leaving only a few less important individuals to contest the election against Ali Khamenei. The significance of this election does not lie in the victory of the ruling clerical party – for it was too obvious to be in any doubt –, but in the fact that the people responded to the call of Khomeini and came out in millions to cast their votes in what might otherwise have been viewed as an electoral farce. It was thus established once again that Khomeini's charisma had not waned.

It was no coincidence that Banisadr and Masoud Rajavi had announced their Government-in-Exile on the eve of the presidential election. But no one in Iran took this seriously; nor did Shahpour Bakhtiar, the last Prime Minister appointed by the late Shah of Iran, who, for obvious reasons, had his own accounts to settle with Khomeini. 'So far as I am concerned', he said in a comment from Paris, where he was residing in exile, 'it is a

joke fabricated 50 kilometres away from Paris. Let's be serious, what kind of Government is it? Whose government? These people are not credit worthy; they have been involved in all kinds of executions and assassinations.⁵⁶ Whether the announcement was just an expression of despair at having been relegated to the background, virtually forgotten by the world press, which at one time had given him wide coverage, or a realistic appraisal is not possible to say. But later events definitely proved that, though Banisadr and Rajavi could cause trouble for a while, they were unable to enlist the mass support required to overthrow Khomeini.

Sayyid Ali Khamenei was elected President with 95 per cent of the votes cast. He polled more than 16 million votes, whereas his two predecessors, Banisadr and Rajaie, had polled 11 and 13 million votes, respectively. The ulama's claim that, despite serious trouble at home and adverse propaganda abroad, they still held sway was clearly established. There was, however, an additional reason for Khamenei's 16 million votes: shortly before the election, the voting age had been reduced from 16 to 15 years, thus increasing the number of potential voters.

Contrary to earlier statements to the effect that he would retain the existing Cabinet, President Khamenei proposed the name of Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati as Prime Minister, in place of Mahdavi Kani, to the Majlis for ratification. Dr. Velayati, a medical specialist who had studied in the United States, had been elected to the Majlis as Deputy from Tehran in the first round of elections. At first, it seemed that there was little likelihood that the Majlis would not approve his nomination, but then, to the surprise of many, it refused to give its approval. Several observers therefore felt that Iran had now entered a new phase of intrigues and infighting.

The supporters of the clergy, however, viewed the situation differently. They thought it signalled the beginning of a healthy democratic process. The surprise of the Majlis' refusal to rubber stamp the nomination of the President, who was also the chief of Islamic Republic Party, was matched by that of his subsequent statement that the 'Party policy has never restricted independent decision-making on the part of its members.'⁵⁷

On October 27, President Khamenei nominated Mir Hossein Musavi, the Foreign Minister for the Premiership, as his second choice for the consideration of the Majlis. A former Editor of the *Jamhour-e-Islami* and one-time member of the Revolutionary Council, Musavi was approved by the Majlis two days later.

With the establishment of the new Government, the struggle for supremacy, which had commenced soon after the Revolution, came to an apparent end. It had cost the country dearly and had tarnished its image abroad. The Khomeini regime, however, interpreted it as the successful culmination of yet another phase of the Islamic Revolution. Cleansing the Government of all liberal and Westernized elements, it believed, had been the third and most important phase of the Revolution – the first being the overthrow of the Shah and the second, the occupation of the American Embassy in November 1979.

CHAPTER I

NOTES

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⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 116.

⁷² Ali Shariati, *Capitalism Wakes Up* (translated by Mahmoud Mohseni), Tehran, 1981), p. 7.

⁷³ Ali Shariati, *Reflections of a Concerned Muslim on the Plight of the Oppressed People* (Tehran, n.d.), p. 4-5.

⁷⁴ Ali Shariati, *Hajj* (Tehran, n.d.), pp. 37-38.

⁷⁵ Kalim Siddiqui ed., *The Islamic Revolution*, p. 43.

⁷⁶ *The Washington Quarterly*, Autumn 1980, p. 69.

⁷⁷ Kalim Siddiqui, ed. *The Islamic Revolution*, p. 47.

⁷⁸ *Time*, October 20, 1980, p. 35.

⁷⁹ Eqbal Ahmad, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

⁸⁰ Nikki R. Kiddie, 'Religion, Society and Revolution in Modern Iran', in Michael E. Bowine and Nikki R. Kiddie (eds), *Modern Iran, The Dialectics of Continuity and Change*, (New York, 1981), p. 31.

⁸¹ *Current History*, April 1980, p. 175.

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- ¹ *Tehran Journal*, February 6, 1979.
- ² *Kayhan International*, February 6, 1979.
- ³ For the Persian text of Khomeini's decree, see *Iran Week*, June 29, 1979, p. 15.
- ⁴ *Tehran Journal*, February 6, 1979.
- ⁵ *Tehran Times*, August 6, 1981.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, September 9, 1981.
- ⁷ *Tehran Journal*, March 3, 1979.
- ⁸ *Message of Revolution*, May 18, 1983, p. 8.
- ⁹ *Kayhan International*, February 28, 1979.
- ¹⁰ *Tehran Times*, December 18, 1979.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, December 12, 1979.
- ¹² *Kayhan International*, March 3, 1979.
- ¹³ *Newsweek*, March 12, 1979, p. 18.
- ¹⁴ *The Iranian*, August 22, 1979, p. 6.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 18, 1979, p. 15.
- ¹⁶ *Tehran Times*, November 16, 1979.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, July 1, 1979.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, July 2, 1979.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, July 5, 1979.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, July 7, 1979.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, July 21, 1979.
- ²² Sadeq Qotbzadeh's interview in *Iran Week*, September 7, 1979, p. 6.
- ²³ *Tehran Times*, September 2, 1979.
- ²⁴ *Arabia, The Islamic World Review*, February 1982, p. 16.
- ²⁵ Rouhollah K. Ramzani, *The Northern Tier* (New York, 1966), p. 34.
- ²⁶ The Kurdish Democratic Party enjoyed the support of practically all leftist elements in Iran, including the Tudeh Party, which acknowledged, in its 1975 programme of action, that 'national minorities must enjoy the exercise of their right to self-determination'. *Arabia, The Islamic World Review*, February 1982, p. 17.
- ²⁷ Interview given to *Iran Week*, August 10, 1979, p. 21.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 16.
- ²⁹ *Tehran Times*, September 3, 1979.
- ³⁰ Interview given to *The Iranian*, December 1, 1979, p. 8.

- 31 Interview given to *Iran Week*, July 20, 1979, p. 7.
- 32 Interview given to *The Iranian*, December 1, 1979, p. 10.
- 33 *Tehran Times*, October 23, 1979.
- 34 *Ibid.*, May 24, 1980.
- 35 *Ibid.*, October 10, 1979.
- 36 Interview given to *The Middle East*, January 1980, p. 33.
- 37 *Time*, August 13, 1979, p. 8.
- 38 Interview given to *The Middle East*, July 1980, p. 18.
- 39 *Iran Week*, October 19, 1979, pp. 6, 8 & 13.
- 40 *The Middle East*, July 1980, p. 19.
- 41 *The Times*, December 4, 1979.
- 42 *Kayhan International*, September 11, 1979.
- 43 *Ibid.*
- 44 *Iran Week*, June 29, 1979, p. 19.
- 45 *Kayhan International*, September 15, 1979.
- 46 *Tehran Times*, September 15, 1979.
- 47 *Ibid.*, September 16, 1979.
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 *Ibid.*, September 18, 1979.
- 51 *Ibid.*, July 4, 1979.
- 52 *The Middle East Journal*, Winter 1982, p. 29.
- 53 *Tehran Times*, September 15, 1979.
- 54 *Ibid.*, October 25, 1979.
- 55 *New York Times*, October 28, 1979.
- 56 *Tehran Times*, October 27, 1979.
- 57 *Ibid.*, November 6, 1979.
- 58 *Selected Messages and Speeches of Imam Khomeini*, p. 77.
- 59 *Iran Week*, November 16, 1979, p. 6.
- 60 *Tehran Times*, November 7, 1979.
- 61 *The Iranian*, November 7, 1979, p. 15.
- 62 *Tehran Times*, November 18, 1979.
- 63 *Ibid.*, May 25, 1980.
- 64 *Ibid.*, July 27, 1980.
- 65 *Ibid.*
- 66 *Ibid.*, July 31, 1979.
- 67 *Ibid.*, August 21, 1980.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, August 24, 1980.

⁶⁹*The Message of Peace*, September 10, 1980, p. 18.

⁷⁰*Tehran Times*, August 21, 1980.

⁷¹*Kayhan International*, November 23, 1980.

⁷²*Kayhan*, Bahman 1, 1358/January 21, 1980.

⁷³*The Iranian*, February 2, 1980, p. 4.

⁷⁴*Tehran Times*, February 10, 1980.

⁷⁵*Selected Messages and Speeches of Imam Khomeini*, p. 57.

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- ¹ *Kayhan International*, March 3, 1979.
- ² *Ibid.*, March 19, 1979.
- ³ *Selected Messages and Speeches of Imam Khomeini*, p. 2.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- ⁵ Interview given by Hassan Habibi to *The Iranian*, January 19, 1980, p. 8.
- ⁶ Masouduzzafar, *The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran* (Tehran, 1980), p. vi.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁸ Shokrollah Paknejad, *The Iranian*, August 1, 1979, p. 13.
- ⁹ *Tehran Times*, July 28, 1979.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, July 30, 1979.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, August 2, 1979.
- ¹² Interview given to *The Iranian*, July 18, 1979, p. 8.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, August 8, 1979, p. 8.
- ¹⁴ *Tehran Times*, August 2, 1979.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, August 20, 1979.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ Two seats of the original 74-member Assembly had fallen vacant: one due to the death of Ayatollah Mehmd Taleqani, in September 1979, and the other due to the absence of the Kurdish representative. Neither of these was filled.
- ¹⁸ Masouduzzafar, *op. cit.*, Article 11. The various provisions of the Constitution will hereafter be referred to by their Article numbers.
- ¹⁹ Article 12.
- ²⁰ Article 107.
- ²¹ Article 108.
- ²² Article 109.
- ²³ Article 110.
- ²⁴ Article 113.
- ²⁵ Article 115.
- ²⁶ Article 117.
- ²⁷ Article 119.
- ²⁸ For powers and functions of the President, see Articles 123–132.
- ²⁹ Articles 133 and 135.
- ³⁰ Article 142.

- ³¹ Articles 150-151.
- ³² Articles 63, 64, 65, 70, 74, & 77.
- ³³ Article 79.
- ³⁴ Articles 80 and 82.
- ³⁵ Articles 91-99.
- ³⁶ Articles 100-104.
- ³⁷ Articles 156-170.
- ³⁸ *The Iranian*, November 24, 1979, p. 3.
- ³⁹ Interview given to *The Iranian*, December 15, 1979, pp. 12-13.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, November 24, 1979, p. 13.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, December 1, 1979.
- ⁴² *Tehran Times*, December 10, 1979.
- ⁴³ Interview given to *The Iranian*, October 17, 1979, p. 10.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, December 22, 1979, p. 8.
- ⁴⁵ *Tehran Times*, December 13, 1979.
- ⁴⁶ *The Iranian*, November 24, 1979, p. 7.
- ⁴⁷ *Tehran Times*, October 25, 1979.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, December 30, 1979.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, December 3, 1979.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, January 5, 1980.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, January 13, 1980.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, January 14, 1980.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, January 15, 1980.
- ⁵⁴ *International Herald Tribune*, January 30, 1980.
- ⁵⁵ *Tehran Times*, January 20, 1980.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, January 23, 1980.
- ⁵⁷ *The Daily Telegraph*, January 31, 1980.
- ⁵⁸ *Tehran Times*, January 22, 1980.
- ⁵⁹ *The Daily Telegraph*, January 28, 1980.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁶¹ *Newsweek*, February 2, 1980.
- ⁶² *Tehran Times*, January 26, 1980.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*, January 29, 1980.
- ⁶⁴ *The Middle East*, March 1980, p. 32.
- ⁶⁵ *International Herald Tribune*, January 30, 1980.
- ⁶⁶ *Tehran Times*, January 30, 1980.
- ⁶⁷ *The Middle East*, April 1980, p. 11.

⁶⁸*The Iranian*, February 9, 1980, p. 3.

⁶⁹*Tehran Times*, January 30, 1980.

⁷⁰*The Iranian*, February 2, 1980, p. 10.

⁷¹For similar views, see Dr. Hassan Ayat's interview given to *The Iranian*, February 2, 1980, pp. 8–10.

⁷²*Tehran Times*, February 2, 1980.

⁷³*Ibid.*, February 3, 1980.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, February 5, 1980.

⁷⁵*Ibid.*, March 8, 1980.

⁷⁶*Kayhan*, Isfand 22, 1359/March 13, 1980.

⁷⁷*Tehran Times*, March 10, 1980.

⁷⁸*International Herald Tribune*, March 12, 1980.

⁷⁹*Time*, March 31, 1980, p. 6.

⁸⁰*Tehran Times*, March 31, 1980.

⁸¹*International Herald Tribune*, March 22-23, 1980.

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¹ *Time*, November 5, 1979, p. 3.

² Ali Asghar Agah in 'Consequences of Domineering Decisions of the U. S. Government with Respect to the Iranian Citizens and Assets in the United States of America', a paper presented to the *International Conference on US Interventions in Iran*, held in Tehran in June 1980 (in possession of the author).

³ *Ibid.*, and *Washington Post*, December 22, 1979.

⁴ Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of the President*, (New York, 1982), p. 452.

⁵ *Daily Mail*, December 4, 1979.

⁶ *Newsweek*, November 26, 1979, p. 9.

⁷ *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, p. 366.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 364.

⁹ *Time*, January 7, 1980 (Man of the Year Issue), pp. 16-17.

¹⁰ *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, p. 352.

¹¹ For the full text of the speech see *The Message of Peace*, November 30, 1979, pp. 7-10. It was in token of respect for the words of Khomeini that thousands of Iranians, including the students holding the hostages, fasted for five days.

¹² *Newsweek*, November 26, 1979, p. 15.

¹³ *Tehran Times*, January 15, 1980.

¹⁴ *Newsweek*, January 28, 1980, p. 12.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Tehran Times*, January 12, 1980.

¹⁷ Interview given to *The Iranian*, January 12, 1980, p. 8.

¹⁸ *Time*, January 21, 1980, p. 36.

¹⁹ Jimmy Carter, *op. cit.*, pp. 484-86.

²⁰ *International Herald Tribune*, January 16, 1980.

²¹ *Tehran Times*, February 5, 1980.

²² *Ibid.*, February 24, 1980.

²³ *Ibid.*, February 25, 1980.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, March 9, 1980.

²⁵ *Kayhan*, Isfand 20, 1350/March 11, 1980.

²⁶ *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, p. 55.

²⁷ *Newsweek*, April 7, 1980, p. 12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

- ²⁹ *Time*, April 21, 1980, p. 9.
- ³⁰ For the full text, see *The Message of Peace*, May 14, 1980, p. 16.
- ³¹ For details, see *Kayhan*, Farverdin 19, 1359/April 9, 1980.
- ³² *Tehran Times*, April 10, 1980.
- ³³ *Ibid.*, April 12, 1980.
- ³⁴ *Time*, April 28, 1980, p. 15.
- ³⁵ 'America's Unsuccessful Attack on Iran (in the Tabas Desert)', a paper presented to the *International Conference on US Interventions in Iran*, held in Tehran, June 1980 (in possession of the author).
- ³⁶ Jimmy Carter, *op. cit.*, pp. 509–518.
- ³⁷ *Time*, May 5, 1980, p. 5 and 11.
- ³⁸ *The Economist*, April 30, 1980, pp. 3–7. The 'Confidential Foreign Report' was supplied only to subscribers. The permission to quote from it was specially obtained by the author.
- ³⁹ *Newsweek*, May 12, 1980, p. 24.
- ⁴⁰ *Time*, May 12, 1980, p. 12.
- ⁴¹ *Newsweek*, June 16, 1980, p. 32.
- ⁴² *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, p. 78.
- ⁴³ *Tehran Times*, April 26, 1980.
- ⁴⁴ *Khomeini's address to the delegates to the International Conference on US Interventions in Iran* on June 4, 1980 (in possession of the author).
- ⁴⁵ *Tehran Times*, April 28, 1980.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, April 30, 1980.
- ⁴⁷ *Kayhan*, Urdi Behesht 27, 1359/May 17, 1980.
- ⁴⁸ *Tehran Times*, June 12, 1980.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, July 16, 1980.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, September 15, 1980. This letter was written a few weeks before it was published.
- ⁵¹ *Time*, September 1, 1980, p. 23.
- ⁵² *Tehran Times*, August 28, 1980 and September 4, 1980.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, September 11, 1980.
- ⁵⁴ *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, pp. 293-94.
- ⁵⁵ *Tehran Times*, November 1, 1980.
- ⁵⁶ *Jamhuri-e-Islami*, Aban 10, 1359/November 1, 1980.
- ⁵⁷ *Tehran Times*, November 4, 1980.
- ⁵⁸ *Kayhan International*, November 4, 1980.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, November 8, 1980.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, November 24, 1980.

⁶¹ *Tehran Times*, December 9, 1980.

⁶² *Ibid.*, December 23, 1980.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, December 30, 1980.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, December 30, 1980.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, December 31, 1980.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, January 1, 1981.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ Jimmy Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁶⁹ *New Leader*, May 19, 1980, p. 4.

⁷⁰ 'If the hostages were released', Carter has said, 'I was convinced my re-election would be assured', Jimmy Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 566.

⁷¹ *Tehran Times*, January 17, 1980.

⁷² *Ettelaat*, Aban 11, 1359/November 2, 1980.

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- ¹ *The Economist*, May 31, 1980, p. 39.
- ² *Tehran Times*, May 25, 1980.
- ³ *The Middle East*, July 1980, p. 20.
- ⁴ *Tehran Times*, June 7, 1980.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, June 10, 1980.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, June 12, 1980.
- ⁸ *Inqilab-e-Islami*, Khordad 29, 1359/June 19, 1980.
- ⁹ *Tehran Times*, June 21, 1980.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, July 1, 1980.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, July 23, 1980.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, July 27, 1980.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, July 26, 1980.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, July 29, 1980.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, July 30, 1980.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁷ *Jamhuri-e-Islami*, Mordad 13, 1359/August 4, 1980.
- ¹⁸ For the full text of the speech, see *The Message of Peace*, September 10, 1980, pp. 11–14.
- ¹⁹ *Tehran Times*, August 10, 1980.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, August 11, 1980.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² *Kayhan*, Mordad 23, 1359/August 14, 1980.
- ²³ *Tehran Times*, August 14, 1980.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, August 20, 1980.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, August 26, 1980.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, September 9, 1980.
- ²⁸ *Jamhuri-e-Islami*, Shahriwar 19, 1359/September 10, 1980.
- ²⁹ *Tehran Times*, September 10, 1980.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, October 1, 1980.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, October 2, 1980.
- ³² *Kayhan*, Mehr 16, 1359/October 8, 1980.
- ³³ *Inqilab-e-Islami*, Mehr 15, 1359/October 7, 1980.

- ³⁴ *Tehran Times*, October 11, 1980.
- ³⁵ *Islamic Republic Party Weekly Bulletin*, December 1, 1980, p. 18.
- ³⁶ *Tehran Times*, November 22, 1980.
- ³⁷ *Jamhuri-e-Islami*, Azar 3, 1359/November 24, 1980.
- ³⁸ *Tehran Times*, November 29, 1980.
- ³⁹ *Islamic Republic Party Weekly Bulletin*, December 29, 1980, p. 12.
- ⁴⁰ *Kayhan*, Azar 9, 1359/November 30, 1980.
- ⁴¹ *Islamic Republic Party Weekly Bulletin*, December 22, 1980, p. 7.
- ⁴² *Tehran Times*, December 17, 1980.
- ⁴³ *Inqilab-e-Islami*, Azar 24, 1359/December 15, 1980.
- ⁴⁴ *Kayhan International*, December 20, 1980.
- ⁴⁵ *Tehran Times*, December 23, 1980.
- ⁴⁶ *Inqilab-e-Islami*, Dey 6, 1359/December 27, 1980.
- ⁴⁷ *Tehran Times*, November 29, 1980.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, January 3, 1981.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, February 1, 1981.
- ⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, January 11, 1981.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, February 5, 1981.
- ⁵² *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, p. 29.
- ⁵³ *Tehran Times*, February 16, 1981.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, February 18, 1981.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, February 23, 1981.

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¹ *Inqilab-e-Islami*, Esfand 16, 1359/March 7, 1981.

² *Jamhour-e-Islami*, Esfand 16, 1359/March 7, 1981.

³ *Tehran Times*, March 9 and 10, 1981.

⁴ *Inqilab-e-Islami*, Esfand 20, 1359/March 11, 1981.

⁵ *Islamic Republic Party Weekly Bulletin*, March 22, 1981, pp. 16-17.

⁶ *Tehran Times*, March 18, 1981.

⁷ *Ibid.*, April 24, 1981.

⁸ *Ibid.*, May 7, 1981.

⁹ *Ibid.*, May 27, 1981.

¹⁰ For the full text of the speech see *Islamic Republic Party Weekly Bulletin*, June 12, 1981, pp. 2-17. For Khomeini's views on the role of ulama in the Revolution see Hamid Algar's interview with him, *Islam and Revolution*, pp. 329-343.

¹¹ *Tehran Times*, June 2, 1981.

¹² *Kayhan International*, June 4, 1981.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Tehran Times*, June 8, 1981.

¹⁶ *Kayhan International*, June 9, 1981.

¹⁷ *Tehran Times*, June 16, 1981.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, June 15, 1981.

¹⁹ *Islamic Republic Party Weekly Bulletin*, July 3, 1981, p. 17.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²¹ *Tehran Times*, June 17, 1981.

²² *Ibid.*, June 21, 1981.

²³ *Ibid.*, June 22, 1981.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, June 23, 1981.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, August 3, 1981.

²⁶ *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, p. 164.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 168-170.

²⁸ *Newsweek*, July 13, 1981, pp. 10-11.

²⁹ *Time*, August 10, 1981, p. 23.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Tehran Times*, August 11, 1981.

³² *Islamic Republic Party Weekly Bulletin*, April 28, 1981, p. 21.

- ³³ *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- ³⁴ *Time*, November 23, 1981, p. 19.
- ³⁵ *Tehran Times*, November 23, 1981.
- ³⁶ *The Times*, May 5, 1983. Also see, *Confession of the Central Cadre of the Tudeh Party*, published by the Islamic Propagation Organization (Tehran, 1983).
- ³⁷ *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, pp. 196-197. For the full text of the speech see pp. 192-199.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.* For the full text of the speech see pp. 218-223.
- ³⁹ *Time*, September 14, 1981, p. 12.
- ⁴⁰ *Tehran Times*, August 19, 1981.
- ⁴¹ *Kayhan International*, August 31, 1981.
- ⁴² *Tehran Times*, September 1, 1981.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁴ *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, pp. 246-47.
- ⁴⁵ *Islamic Republic Party Weekly Bulletin*, September 18, 1981, pp. 6-7.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- ⁴⁷ *Tehran Times*, October 15, 1981.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, November 14, 1981.
- ⁴⁹ *Time*, September 14, 1981, p. 10.
- ⁵⁰ *Jamhuri-e-Islami*, Mehr 7, 1360/September 29, 1981.
- ⁵¹ *Time*, September 14, 1981, p. 12.
- ⁵² *Tehran Times*, September 8, 1981.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, September 9, 1981.
- ⁵⁴ *The Dawn of the Islamic Revolution*, pp. 288-89.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 329.
- ⁵⁶ *Kayhan International*, October 3, 1981.
- ⁵⁷ *Tehran Times*, October 24, 1981.

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The Iranian Revolution was a mass upsurge in which practically every section of the society participated in order to overthrow the entire political, cultural, economic and social apparatus that, in one form or another, had persisted for 2500 years. It differed from the earlier great revolutions — the French in 1789, the Russian in 1917 and the Chinese in 1949 — not only in content, but also in inspiration. Unlike any of them the Iranian Revolution was led by Ulema who looked back to their past as a model for their future.

The author gives us a beautiful and skilful commentary on the Revolution as it passes through the three phases described in Iran as the overthrow of the Shah, the occupation of the American embassy and cleansing the government of all liberal and westernized elements. The book is an essential reading for all students and scholars of Iran. It is the first book of its kind by a leading historian of Pakistan.

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