

How did the Iranian revolution transmute?

Communist Collective Praxis (Praxies.org)

Forty years on, considering the backgrounds and causes of the 1979 Revolution in Iran, it would be worthy to regard the most significant reasons acknowledged as the roots of the revolution. Among all other reasons, the Land Reform Program (1962-4) is the major element in a variety of the economic and social reforms labeled as the “White Revolution”, “The Shah and People Revolution” and glorified as “Mohammad Reza Shah’s greatest service to the people” and the eve of formation of a “modern society”. Demagogic advertisements, started during the reign of Pahlavi II and have been especially echoed in Pahlavi monarchy sympathizers and other monarchist media propaganda in recent years, are only incomplete and distorted cuts of socioeconomic background and transformation which have been addressed to the target audiences about that certain period, so they obscure the historical reality. In this article, we will explore the origins of the land reform, its noticeable direct effects, contradictions and crises which are caused by its top-down implementation which provided a basis for the emerging capitalism in Iran, dependent on the imperial powers. However, in some ways it prepared the material conditions to achieve an anti-monarchical revolution in 1979.

Decades earlier, The Constitutional Revolution (1905-11) shook the pillars

of Iran's feudal society and especially its political sovereignty. Yet because of the domination of liberal ideas and moderate intellectuals in revolutionary movements, it could not go into the depth of Iranian peasantry; ultimately, this had become one of the main reasons of its eventual failure. For many centuries, peasants and villagers, who constituted around eighty percent of total Persian population, were living in extreme poverty and misery which was due to the feudal sovereignty, domination of lords and noble landlords, the clergy and Shahs as the pyramid head. Since the rule of Naser al-Din Shah, imperial powers and at the top of them Great Britain, got involved and improved the feudal relations towards their interests. Iranian revolutionaries and communists, since the constitutional revolution, the Social Democratic Party (Ferqa'ye Ejtemā'iyūn-e 'āmmīyūn) and Communist party of Iran until 1960s, were the only forces who considered the radical reform and revolution in land relations and peasant's freedom pivotal to the democratic reforms in Iran and they were fighting for it.

Although during the rule of Reza Shah the influence of imperialism and foreign capital in Iran developed, it did not affect the hierarchy of the Iranian feudal society. At the time of Reza Shah's dethronement in 1941, large landlord families owned one-half of the land while 95 to 98 percent of Iranian peasantry did not own anything, even a small piece of their "Arian homeland" (Keddie 1981: 103), 23 percent less than a hectare, 10 percent between 1 to 3 hectares and only seven percent owned more than three hectares of a land plot. On the other hand, Reza Shah left more than 1.2 million hectares of land beside many assets and possessions for his children and family, while thousands of peasants were living there in an extremely difficult situation, severe poverty and with no rights (Abrahamian, 378: 1982). In fact, by large scale expropriation of fertile lands, Reza Shah became the richest Iranian landlord and positioned himself at the top of the feudal hierarchy. His confrontation with feudal landlords was also to establish central government authority all over Iran. Therefore, it is not surprising that during his reign, there was no change or improvement in living conditions of most Iranians, namely peasants. Reza Shah did not seek to change the social relations in order to transform the mass of peasants into "free" workers and citizens; instead he was trying to "modernize" his subjects' appearance. He obliged all adult males to wear Western-styled dress and "Pahlavi cap" and forbade women to wear veil.

After the coup d'état of 1953 and return of Mohammad Reza Shah by U.S. and British intelligence services, capitalist relations in industry and finance, depending on imperialism, developed further and reached the top levels of government. But feudal relations in the outskirts of large cities were the major obstacle to capitalist development. The contradiction between the comprador bourgeoisie (middlemen and tradesmen of imperialist capitalism) and feudalism, was one of the domestic reasons for land reform. In the same period, John F. Kennedy,

the US president of that time, was insisting on political, economic and social reforms in dominated countries in order to prevent popular uprisings and block communist activities. He called his doctrine “Rescue of Freedom” and based on that he put pressure on those countries to reform. Accordingly, he supported Ali Amini in the election of the prime minister who intended to carry out the land reforms program (Abrahamian 2008: 131). Although Mohammad Reza Shah was afraid of Amini’s threat to his power and his support from U.S., he accepted this program. Thus, the land reforms were implemented during Pahlavi’s Monarchy, which followed various important goals. The first stage of “White Revolution” program was commenced with the announcement of the Six-point Reforms Program in the National Peasants Congress by Mohammad Reza Shah on 11 January 1963. Since then, this program was executed in different stages, and there was government propaganda in favor of Shah and shameful depictions of poor peasants bowing the Shah in order to receive land documents. In this regard, Shah utilized these reforms to sell himself as a modern leader who is serving his subjects; “White Revolution” and “The Revolution of Shah and People” are obviously expressing this advertisement.

Based on propaganda machine of Pahlavi regime, Shah distributed feudal aristocrats’ lands among most of peasants and made them owner of the lands to farm in. However, this was merely a partial and twisted façade of its truth. In fact, large tracts of lands were distributed again among small groups of elites. Though, this time, the owners were not feudal lords, but rich courtiers and new capitalists and only part of these lands were owned by peasants. Owning small land plots by peasants resulted in smaller amount of agricultural production, not even adequate for their subsistence. Therefore, their living conditions deteriorated and many of them migrated to large cities looking for a job. In fact, the land reform was one of the most significant policies of turning a mass population of peasants into “free” people. On the one hand, they got free from landlord domination relations, but on the other hand, they had no choice other than selling their labor-power in order to survive. Thus, “white revolution” could be named as the primitive accumulation of the genesis of capitalist production relations in Iran. Consequently, with these reforms, bourgeois-landlord socio-economic structures were virtually replaced by the relations based on the hegemony of dependent bourgeoisie. In this regard, it can be said that the capitalist production relations were expanded and to some extent established in Iran. At the time, this course of events was analyzed deeply and critically reviewed by Iranian Marxists. Clerics and religious figures were among the critics as well. While the Marxists were criticizing the land reforms program and other Pahlavi’s policies from a progressive perspective, critics from religious forces like Khomeini opposed the program from a reactionary standpoint and based on their interests. In the following lines, through five points, inspired by Bijan Jazani’s *The Thirty-Year History of Iran*, we will review the effects

of the implementation of the land reforms and the sovereignty of dependent bourgeoisie.

1. Full-scale growth of comprador or dependent bourgeoisie allying with Western imperialism is the first characteristic of the genesis of capitalism in Iran. Comprador-bourgeoisie in Iran which was born on the ground of state bureaucracy and commerce, found its way into industry, finance and agriculture, and in allying with the state, which is the court, capital and international banks, formed a new oligarchy. This new oligarchy is the famous “thousand families” who had all privileges and concessions and exploiting the resources of the country with their extraordinary affluence. In the right-wing terminology this oligarchy is called “political and economic elite”. Fred Halliday, in his famous book, *Iran Dictatorship and Development*, notes that in 1974, 85 percent of companies whose gross profit was exceeding 100 million US dollars were controlled by only 45 families (Halliday 1979: 141).

The usage of “comprador” for Iran’s capitalism in Marxist analysis and terminology is less about nationalism but mainly aims to describe the characteristics of capitalism in the age of imperialism in a dominated country which is aligned with the requirements of foreign monopoly capitalism. It should be mentioned that the special role of the royal system and courtiers is the base of the formation of part of comprador-bourgeoisie which is bureaucratic bourgeoisie. This bourgeoisie has the central and dominant position in politics and it does not let other parts of bourgeoisie to take part in major decision makings. In Mohammad Reza Shah’s time, the Ministry of Courtier and other various dependent organs such as Organization of Royal Houses, Royal Organization of Social services, Farah Pahlavi’s Charity Population, Ashraf Pahlavi’s Charity Population, Taj Sport Club, etc. were formed by courtiers and with the help of Organization of National Intelligence and Security of the Nation (SAVAK), everything in the country was under their control.

2. The second characteristic of capitalism in Iran was excessive exploitation by global capitalism under the neo-colonial relations. This process took place due to the increase of foreign investments in Iran and the rise of production and export of crude oil which was at the highest figure in the middle of 1970s. This helped the creation of a larger state bureaucracy. Economic dependency was the root of political and military dependency. Iran under Pahlavi was the “island of stability and equanimity” and imperialists’ main political, military and economy ally in the Middle East which was playing the role of a gendarme and repressing the liberation movements such as “Dhofar Liberation Front” in Oman. Both Reza and Mohammad Reza Pahlavi owed their thrones to the coups supported by imperial powers in 1921 and 1953. During the period of quadrupling of oil price which led to the increase in Iran’s total budget, Shah showed an unquenchable thirst for buying arms and became the largest client of international arms companies. As

Halliday states, the costs of Pahlavi's military budget increased from 67 million USD to 9.4 billion USD between 1954 and 1977, constituting 32 percent of the country's total budget. The United States sold arms in value of 17 billion USD to Iran between 1950 and 1977 (Halliday 1979:87). To compare, although there were more military threats towards China and its troops were ten times more than Iran, these two countries had the same military budget. In 1978, the number of Iran's aircraft was way more than number of Iran's trained pilots. At the time of revolution, about 50 thousand U.S. citizens used to work in Iran, while 80 percent of them were military and security forces. Iran's army, despite Pahlavi's propaganda which sold it as a symbol of national power and dignity of Iranian monarchy in the Middle East, was a repression tool for domestic security first and foremost. The main mission of Reza Shah's army was to repress nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, as these tribes had more or less authority on the margins of Iran. However, this very army formed by Reza Shah could not stop the alliance forces in 1921 even for two days. The most important military operations during the reign of Mohammed Reza Shah were the repression of Azerbaijan Democratic Party in 1946 and notorious coup in 1953. There is a noticeable point in the symbolic action of the royal regime which called the date of the capture of Tabriz by military forces in 1946 the "Army Day".

3. Peasants' specific subordinate situation is the third characteristic of capitalism in Iran. After implementing the land reforms, and through the forces of gendarmes, feudal relations of domination were replaced by political and economic domination of agricultural and bureaucratic branches of comprador bourgeoisie, in the form of Land Reform Ministry, cooperative companies, various banks, agricultural corporations, agro-industrial complexes, etc. Subsequently, a large number of peasants had no land, the majority of fertile lands were controlled by large Agro-industrial companies linked to comprador bourgeoisie, and thousands of peasants had to migrate to cities in order to provide cheap labor force for Iran's developing capitalism. Overpopulation in cities and peri-urbanization can be mentioned as its impacts. Despite the claim of the regime, implementation of land reforms could not noticeably increase the areas under cultivation, neither raise the rate of growth of agricultural production, or improve the quality of life for peasants especially the poor ones, and it could not even eradicate the old feudal relations of domination in all aspects. Based on the reports, in 1975, 60 percent of peasant men and 90 percent of peasant women were illiterate. 90 percent of villages did not have any healthcare facilities. Out of ten thousand doctors, five thousand were in Tehran, three thousand were in other cities and only 1500 were in the countryside, where approximately half of the country's population lived. In other words, 18 millions of Iranians did not have access to any advanced medical services. Based on the statistics given by the Statistical Center of Iran published in 1979, only 11.5 percent of villages had access to

water pipeline, 6.8 percent had electricity and only 3,120 villages had access to telecommunications in 1977. Only 8 thousand kilometers connection roads for villages were built, while 300 thousand kilometers were planned (Halliday 1979: 110-111). For Iranian peasants, this was the outcome of top-down land reforms.

4. The fourth characteristic of capitalism in Iran, in Jazani's words, was the formation of the "minority of consumers" which were against the middle class and the poor majority. This minority was only three percent of the population and it consisted of bourgeoisie and wealthy petty-bourgeoisie. However, they consumed most of society's facilities and services such as tourism, healthcare and communication services, culture and art products, airports, beach resorts, luxury cars, villas, ski resorts, hotels, casinos, etc. According to a report by International Labor Organization in 1973, 55 percent of all expenditures was for top 20 percent of the richest, 3.7 percent was for 20 percent of the poorest, and 26 percent was for the 40 percent of population. Fred Halliday says despite the huge income from selling oil and injecting it to the country's economy, in the beginning of 1970s, health condition in Iran was not quite different from other Asian countries. Life expectancy was 50 years, which was a year less than that of India. Infant mortality rate was 139 in 1000, the same as India. Ervand Abrahamian states "Iran still had one of the worst infant mortality and doctor-patient rate in the Middle East. It also had one of the lowest percentages of population in higher education. Moreover, 68 percent of adults remained illiterate, 60 percent of children did not complete primary school, and only 30 percent of applicants found university places within the country" (Abrahamian 2008:141-142). On the eve of 1979 revolution, 42 percent of the population of Tehran did not have proper housing conditions. Tehran, with a population of more than 4 million, did not have drainage system, metro or public transportation. Oil income did not end the mass poverty, it merely transformed it to a modern poverty.

5. The formation of royal dictatorship is the fifth characteristic of capitalism in Iran. This point is visible in two aspects: First, special concentration of state power in Shah, making him a god-like figure, and his absolute control over all political and military sectors and various parts of bourgeoisie, which resulted in narrowing their objection and expression of dissatisfaction. In this form of state, Shah and courtiers took control of all parts of the ruling classes and demanded their blind obedience. The right of political activity was taken away from all classes. In 1974, the Resurgence Party (Hezb-e Rastāqiz) was founded and introduced as the only legal party by royal regime. Shah officially stated that all legal political activities should be done under the umbrella of this party. Intellectuals, youths and educated people were not allowed to express their views at all and by just carrying a forbidden book, e.g. *The Little Black Fish* a children story by Samad Behrangi, they might spend months in the regime's dungeon-like prisons. Universities and other higher education centers were bureaucratic

institutions under the supervision of SAVAK and they were under control of a branch of Royal Guard called University Guard. Instead of independent teachers, sycophantic bureaucrats were getting university positions. Even a minor criticism of courtiers or country's situation was punished with whipping and torture. Political prisoners were tried in military courts.

Second aspect of royal dictatorship is the intensification of a brutal police state and establishment of the dreadful Information and Security Organization called SAVAK. SAVAK, which is the predecessor of The Ministry of Intelligence of the Islamic Republic of Iran, was set up in 1957 and with the help and training of U.S. and Israeli intelligence services, CIA and Mossad, was the forefront of domestic repression. SAVAK's budget, based on the official reports, was 255 million USD in 1973 and 310 million USD in 1974. Similar to the Islamic Republic's Al Quds Force, SAVAK had some operations outside of the country, liaison with foreign espionage services and spying on Iranians who lived abroad. Since 1973 Tehran had been the headquarters of the CIA in the Middle East (previously in Cyprus). In the words of the Secretary General of Amnesty International in 1975, "No country in the world has a worse record in human rights than Iran". Using reports by Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists in 1976, alleged methods of torture include whipping and beating, electric shocks, the extraction of nails and teeth, boiling water pumped into the rectum, heavy weights hung on the testicles, tying the prisoner to a metal table heated to a white heat, inserting a broken bottle into the anus, and rape were different ways of pressures on prisoners and political activists (Halliday 1979: 80).

Over all of these political, social and economic contradictions and crises arising from the capitalist regime in 1970s under the reign of a royal dictatorship, the waves of 1979 revolution appeared.

Pahlavi regime was using various tools of repression against the political opposition with the help of western intelligence services, the army and SAVAK in order to safeguard its own existence. After the coup 1953, Shah and imperial powers could achieve one of their main goals which was extirpating of Tudeh party. Party's leader was expatriated, and the coup regime focused its extreme invasion on loyal members of the party. The most brilliant organ of the party, the Military Organization, has been detected and repressed just a year after the coup and its communist officers were executed in firing squad. While Dr. Mosaddegh was imprisoned for three years and except Dr. Fatemi, the foreign minister of Mosaddegh's cabinet who was executed, other National Front leaders were released after short time. Tudeh party lost the great and unique twelve-year opportunity and was unable to respond to the strategic necessities of the Iranian revolutionary movement, so they were erased from political and social struggles of Iran and they only got back after the 1979 revolution as a residue of Soviet Union's diplomacy system. The Middle years of 1970s were a period of stagnation

in political protests and struggles. Nationalist-Religious activists formed a council which had a grandiloquent title called National Resistance Movement of Iran which was a gathering of a few academics, Bazaar merchants and clerics and they considered it as an alternative to Tudeh party in Iran's politics.

The short period of political opening between 1960 and 1962 which finally led to the so-called White Revolution (a sort of economic and social reforms including land reforms program launched in by Mohammad Reza Pahlavi) was the last chance for traditional opposition forces to present themselves. By losing this opportunity, they showed that they are incapable of making any changes in the society. In 1961, an anti-communist group called "Freedom Movement of Iran" (Nahzat-e āzādi-e Irān) branched from National Front out, which was led by the Iranian figure of liberalism, Mehdi Bazargan. The Freedom Movement and Bazargan sought to synthesize Islam and politics, and to present a political interpretation of Islam and the necessity of establishing an Islamic state, for the first time in Iran.

In the aftermath of the 1963 crisis caused by the defeat of the so-called White Revolution, royal regime could consolidate its power and political position in a new level. Traditional oppositions such as National Front and Tudeh members with their conservative strategies and parliamentary methods were completely isolated. But Regime strangled even the slightest oppositions or thinking of opposition and did not let any political forces to breathe, even the obedient and innocuous ones. Terror, brutal repression and the ineffectiveness of the policies of the Freedom Movement of Iran, as well as the Tudeh Party, meant a political dead end in Iran.

It was in this situation that the guerrilla warfare became one of the most effective ways to fight against the Shah's autocratic regime, a warfare which officially started with the sound of Feda'i Guerrillas' bullets on February 8, 1971 in Siahkal. The event of Siahkal was the beginning of a new communist movement and opened a new path in Iran's political scene which changed the rhythm of upheavals toward the 1979 revolution. International atmosphere was inspiring for them to devise and implement their action as well. The foundations of this armed revolutionary struggle were mostly theorized by militant Marxists like Masoud Ahmad Zadeh, Amirparviz Pouyan and Bijan Jazani. The struggle atmosphere in Iran was radicalized because of guerrilla movement and most parts of the society were involved. One can claim that the revolutionary leftists in Iran experienced one of the most successful periods in those dark years.

Armed struggle and guerrilla methods among Marxists led them to establish the Organization of Iranian People's Guerrillas Feda'i Fighters. Besides, religious forces diverged from Freedom Movement formed People's Mujahedin of Iran. In a society which capitalism was developing rapidly and imperialist domination was fully developed, the political bankruptcy of religious movements

such as clergy and Freedom Movement and the transformation of Marxism into a hegemonic force, intellectual and political core, religious youths from modern-middle-class background had to use Marxism in order to express their ideas and opinions. Ideological foundations of People's Mujahedin were a mixture of Marxist tradition and religious convictions. They defined themselves against imperialism, class oppression and royal autocracy, and they used Islamic texts and scriptures to express their thoughts. By joining the armed struggle, People's Mujahedin of Iran moved towards the front line of Islamic movement and all other Islamic forces such as academics, opposition clergies and even those who were close to Khomeini like Rafsanjani, Motahhari and Beheshti were pushed to the background.

After the establishment of People's Mujahedin, the impact and reflection of Marxism became an important issue among the religious forces. Many religious political activists inevitably distanced themselves from the visible parts of the reactionary religious tradition such as its feudal and medieval context, anti-feminism, supporting the ruling class, clericalism, etc. In fact, over the period of 1960s through the middle of 1970s, the intellectual, ideological and political polarization of the society was around Islamist and Marxism camps. Imperialism and bourgeoisie frightened by communism which was becoming more popular, did not have any choice other than investing in the Islamic movement. After ideological turn to Marxism, some fractions of the People's Mujahedin who had power in organization leadership, expressed the issue of organization's eclectic ideology as one of the hurdles in the genesis of revolutionary struggles' direction. They emphasized on the contradictions between the religious tradition as well as its reactionary beliefs and requirements of a revolutionary struggle in that period of time. After long ideological struggles and changes (which included violent actions in a few cases), they released a detailed statement and officially declared an ideological turn towards Marxism. Taghi Shahram was the leader and the theorist of this deep ideological turn, which was unprecedented in the Islamic world and history. Mujahedin's turn to Marxism caused some defections among Islamic forces. In that period, the rivalry between Marxist and Islamist camps to become hegemonic ended up in Marxists' predominance.

Revival of Islamic forces and their return to the political struggle in order to take the leadership role, took place after January 1977, led by clergymen and at the top of them, Khomeini. This was the result of severe repression of leftist organizations. In the period of the decline of Islamic forces during 1974-1976, Marxists lost this valuable opportunity, because of the destructive attacks of SAVAK, assassination of organizational and ideological leaders and war against guerrilla movement. The survivors of the communist movement who were criticizing guerrilla method, could not find an alternative to the very strategy of convergence and progress in the past years. This resulted in sowing discord

between them which continued until the revolutionary changes in 1979.

The most frequent argument given by researchers explaining the leadership of protests by Islamic forces is the power of clergy network and their ability to organize. Although this factor is not far from the reality, we believe that the focus should not be on the existence of the organizational network power of clerics. We should look for an answer to the question of how they took such power? Shall we say, as the liberal and Islamic figures claim, that this power was rooted in people's religious beliefs or in their devotion to the clerics? Or was it rooted in chains of specific and long-term changes based on the interests and aspirations of ruling class and imperialism? According to the historical narratives and documents, it can be said that the support of clerics by imperialism and the state was not limited to the second half of 1970s, but existed during the reign of Mohammad Reza as a strategic orientation. This was the main factor of clerics' organizational capability on the eve of 1979 revolution. As John Foran says, "the path for a political culture and Islamic discourse was made [prior to the 1979 revolution]... [the] resistant Islam of Khomeini, the fundamentalist Islam of Shariati, and liberal Islam of Bazargan, and the Liberation Movement were among the nationalist constitutional culture" (Foran 1999: 122), however, it would be considered as a discursive feature of the multi-dimensional phenomenon of political Islam.

The revival of Shi'i clerics' power was simultaneous to Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's path to the throne in 1941. Strengthening of Shi'i clerics' establishment against the danger of communism and Tudeh party expansion was the approach of British imperialism and courtiers. This was among the first steps of imperialist strategy called "The Green Belt" in order to form an Islamic reactionary region surrounding Soviet Union, which reached its culmination in the late 1970s by military support of Mujahedin in Afghanistan and propaganda campaigns against the leftist state in Afghanistan. The similar pattern could be found in Iran. British imperialism and courtiers supported clerics to rebuild their power and helped them to increase their influence against Tudeh party. They paved the path for the return of an extremely reactionary marja' (the highest level Shia authority to make legal decisions within the confines of Islamic law) named Ayatollah Qomi from Najaf to Qom in 1943. After his death, their attention turned to Ayatollah Borujerdi, so they provided the necessary facilities for his migration from Borujerdi to Qom and made him the leading marja' in Shi'ite world. In response to the imperialists' favors, Borujerdi supported their interests and royal dictatorship in crucial times such as the coup in 1953. In return, he was permitted to spread the roots of Seminary of Qom to all parts of the society. Seminary of Qom was a medium size organization in 1941, in the late years of the reign of Reza Shah there were only 500 theology students. In late 1940s, with the Borujerdi arrangements and the support of British and courtiers, over three thousand theology students were studying there. In the beginning of 1940s, with the wave of Islamism among

courtiers, many Islamic policies were implemented such as allowance for holding religious processions, gender segregation in schools, introducing scripture classes into school curriculum, permission to form religious organizations and issuing religious publications and various financial supports as well.

Imperialist and courtier support in order to strengthen Islamic forces was not limited to Seminary of Qom and clerics. In the 1940s, small circles of Islamic academics including students and teachers, and at the center of them Mehdi Bazargan, formed the Islamic Association of Students in order to oppose Tudeh party. It was during this time that Iranian mixture of liberalism and Islamism was rising with captivating titles: “Religious Intellectuals” or “Religious Modernism”. In the 1950s and 1960s, when communists were being executed, tortured or exiled and even small gatherings or protests were not tolerated, Bazargan and his like-minded formed a movement called “Islamization Association”. The association opened public offices for various meetings among pupils, students, engineers and other social groups under the support of the royal regime.

In the late 1960s, the darkest years of autocracy and dictatorship, Islamic academics were receiving unprecedented facilities from royal regime for their lesson, discussions and lectures in Hosseinieh Ershad, the key base for religious people of Tehran. SAVAK closed Hosseinieh Ershad, only when there was the possibility of attracting new members by People’s Mujahedin. In fact, with the formation of People’s Mujahedin and its progress, Hosseinieh Ershad became a useless project for SAVAK.

After the emergence of People’s Mujahedin of Iran in 1970s, Khomeini became less central even more. However, in the period of implementing human rights policies by Jimmy Carter, Khomeini jumped into the political arena yet again. In the context of repressed protests and social grievances which erupted in this period, imperialists were following the “Green Belt” strategy in this region and in order to break the communism grip in Iran, they provided step by step the requirements for Khomeini to take the power. The moderate Islamic figures played an important role to be a mediator between Khomeini and imperialists (Abrahamian 2008: 155).

After the massacre on September 8, 1978 Khomeini got assured of the deteriorating situation of royal regime, moved to Paris from Iraq on October 5, 1978 and in this way attracted the international media and public opinion. While he was going to Kuwait, he was deterred from entering in the country, but suddenly he decided to go to Paris. While in October 1979 he said this decision and action was the result of “helps from the unseen world”, later it was cleared that it was due to the intellectuals and religious academics’ advice. Khomeini’s excessive activities in France and French state’s tolerance under Valéry Giscard d’Estaing presidency, who was Shah’s ally, was odd and strange. Many years later, Giscard d’Estaing revealed that immediately after Khomeini’s entrance to Paris, he asked

for political asylum and Mohammad Reza Shah requested French state to provide comfortable facilities for him. French State was the pioneer of the policy which was later officially presented in Guadeloupe Conference in January 1979. As French state was expecting inevitable fall of Shah, it demanded all attentions to Khomeini as Shah's successor. Khomeini's main goal of settling in Paris was to be at the center of international attention. He did 113 interviews during his 4 months stay in France. He could possibly send peaceful and reassuring messages to the western countries' leaders. His messages were translated immediately by religious intellectuals and modern Islamic figures like Ghotbzadeh, Banisadr and Yazdi in order to notify other states. The most significant negotiations were during the Guadeloupe Conference, while in Iran people were organizing all innovative protests and demonstrations.

On January 4, 1979, the leaders of four imperial powers, the United States, France, Great Britain and West Germany, gathered in Caribbean Sea, Guadeloupe Island (Two Weeks in January, 2016) to hold a summit in order to determine their policy in regard to Iran's critical situation. Western states were anxious about a plausible civil war in Iran, as if Shah stayed longer in power. In that case, they assumed that communists would have a powerful influence which could lead to the interference of Soviet Unions. As Europe depended on Iran's oil and favored regional stability, Khomeini was not an irrational choice for them. The main output of Guadeloupe conference was an agreement between these four states on the departure of Shah and collaboration with Khomeini.

Islamic forces used 1978 Tasu'a and Ashura (9th and 10th of Moharram) demonstrations as a maneuver to practice the impact and display of their power. They tried their best to keep the demonstration peaceful by forbidding the non-religious banners and chants, even prohibiting "Death to Shah" chant and giving rough responses to those who violated this prohibition. Imperialists took Islamic forces into account after this maneuver and even Khomeini understood his impact level after looking at demonstration photos (Abrahamian 2008:16).

Khomeini formed a council called "the Revolution Council" in late January 1979 in order to pursue and coordinate his activities and reach some agreements with imperialist leaders. The most effective members of this council were moderate Islamic figures, who were renowned later as religious intellectuals or modernist and nationalist-religious figures. During its life time from January 1979 to July 1980, the Revolution Council played a significant role of coordination of negotiation and agreement between Islamic forces and imperialists, inducing Khomeini and the protest leaders. The Revolution Council also planned the future repression of the revolutionary forces and communists and consolidation of Islamic regime in the period of crisis. They should be held responsible for many catastrophic measures which were taken in the first couple of years of Islamic regime, such as Kurdistan armed invasion in summer 1979 and anti-cultural coup

(the so called “Iranian Cultural Revolution”) and the closure of universities.

For a few days the control of events was lost by generals as well as Khomeini and his followers. These events radicalized general rebellion and led to the victory of revolution in February 11th. Tehran was overwhelmed by armed struggle. Saturday night, February 10th, people defeated the martial law and it was the beginning of the end of Shah’s regime on February 11th. Secret negotiations between army officers and Islamic figures were continued. But, revolutionary people, disrespectful of these agreements, invaded royal regime’s repression centers, Evin prison, SAVAK’s main headquarter in Saltanat Abad, Senate and Council parliaments, Radio and TV center, Police, etc. and expressed a glance of their revolutionary potential, which was actualized in about a week and resulted in destroying the organs of Shah’s regime and disturbed all secret agreements.

Khomeini was absent from February 11th and appeared on media on February 15th by a public speech. He used his specific social base among parts of the modern middle and traditional classes, urban poor and villagers who were bounded around the Islamic ideology. However, it was the secret negotiations with imperialism and the agreement to bring Khomeini into power that increased the impact of his specific social base and increased his influence on following events. It was not possible for Khomeini to take power in this easy and straightforward way without the support of imperialism. This is so that the existence of imperialism all over the world is entangled with the (ultra)reactionary and oppressive policies. Therefore, a true revolutionary and liberation movement should necessarily orient itself against imperialism.

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