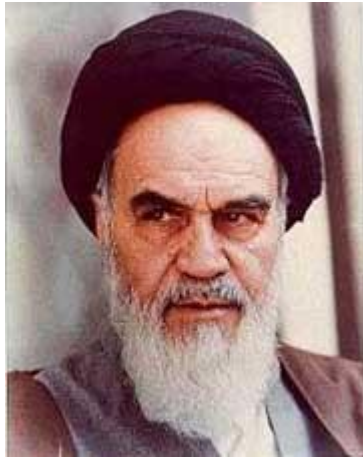


Imam Khomeini's Migration from Iraq to Paris



Iranian Civil Strife Coming of the Revolution

Beginning in early 1977, the shah took a number of steps to meet both domestic and foreign criticism of Iran's human rights record. He released political prisoners and announced new regulations to protect the legal rights of civilians brought before military courts. In July the shah replaced Hoveyda, his prime minister of twelve years, with Jamshid Amuzegar, who had served for over a decade in various cabinet posts. Unfortunately for the shah, however, Amuzegar also became unpopular, as he attempted to slow the overheated economy with measures that, although generally thought necessary, triggered a downturn in employment and private sector profits that would later compound the government's problems.

Leaders of the moderate opposition, professional groups, and the intelligentsia took advantage of the shah's accommodations and the more helpful attitude of the Carter administration to organize and speak out. Many did so in the form of open letters addressed to prominent officials in which the writers demanded adherence to the constitution and restoration of basic freedoms. Lawyers, judges, university professors, and writers formed professional associations to press these demands. The National Front, the IFM, and other political groups resumed activity.

The protest movement took a new turn in January 1978, when a government-inspired article in **Ettelaat**, one of the country's leading newspapers, **cast doubt** on Khomeini's piety and suggested that he was a British agent (!!!). The article caused a scandal in the religious community. Senior clerics, including Ayatollah Kazem Shari'atmadari, denounced the article. Seminary students took to the streets in Qom and clashed with police, and several demonstrators were killed. The Esfahan bazaar closed in protest. On February 18, mosque services and demonstrations were held in several cities to honor those killed in the Qom demonstrations. In Tabriz these demonstrations turned violent, and it was two days before order could be restored. By the summer, riots and antigovernment demonstrations had swept dozens of towns and cities. Shootings inevitably occurred, and deaths of protesters fueled public feeling against the regime.



The cycle of protests that began in Qom and Tabriz differed in **nature, composition, and intent** from the protests of the preceding year. The 1977 protests were primarily the work of middle-class intellectuals, lawyers, and secular politicians. They took the form of letters, resolutions, and declarations and were aimed at the restoration of constitutional rule. The protests that rocked Iranian cities in the first half of 1978, by contrast, were led by religious elements and were centered on mosques and religious events. They drew on traditional groups in the bazaar and among the urban working class for support. The protesters used a form of calculated violence to achieve their ends, attacking and destroying carefully selected targets that represented objectionable features of the regime: nightclubs and cinemas as symbols of moral corruption and the influence of Western culture; banks as symbols of economic exploitation; **Rastakhiz** (the party created by the shah in 1975 to run a one-party state) offices; and police stations as symbols of political repression. The protests, moreover, aimed at more fundamental change: in slogans and leaflets, the protesters attacked the shah and demanded his removal, and they depicted Khomeini as their leader and an Islamic state as their ideal. From his exile in Iraq, Khomeini continued to issue statements calling for further demonstrations, rejected any form of compromise with the regime, and called for the overthrow of the shah.



The government's position deteriorated further in August 1978, when **more than 400 people** died in a fire at the **Rex Cinema in Abadan**. Although evidence available after the Revolution suggested that the fire was deliberately started by religiously inclined students, the opposition carefully cultivated a widespread conviction that the fire was the work of **SAVAK** agents. Following the Rex Cinema fire, the shah removed Amuzegar and named Jafar Sharif-Emami prime minister. Sharif-Emami, a former minister and prime minister and a trusted royalist, had for many years served as president of the Senate. The new prime minister adopted a **policy of conciliation**. He eased press controls and permitted more open debate in the Majlis. He released a number of imprisoned clerics, revoked the imperial calendar, closed gambling casinos, and obtained from the shah the dismissal from court and public office of members of the **Bahai religion**, a sect to which the clerics strongly objected. These

measures, however, did not quell public protests. On September 4, more than 100,000 took part in the public prayers to mark the end of [Ramazan](#), the Muslim fasting month. The ceremony became an occasion for antigovernment demonstrations that continued for the next two days, growing larger and more radical in composition and in the slogans of the participants. The government declared martial law in Tehran and eleven other cities on the night of September 7-8, 1978. The next day, troops fired into a crowd of demonstrators at **Tehran's Jaleh Square**. A large number of protesters, certainly many more than the official figure of eighty-seven, were killed. The Jaleh Square shooting came to be known as "**Black Friday**". It considerably radicalized the opposition movement and made compromise with the regime, even by the moderates, less likely. In October the Iraqi authorities, unable to persuade Khomeini to refrain from further political activity, **expelled him from the country**. Khomeini went to France and **established his headquarters** at Neauphle-le-Château, outside Paris. Khomeini's arrival in France provided new impetus to the revolutionary movement. It gave Khomeini and his movement exposure in the world press and media. It made possible easy telephone communication with lieutenants in Tehran and other Iranian cities, thus permitting better coordination of the opposition movement. It allowed Iranian political and religious leaders, who were cut off from Khomeini while he was in Iraq, to visit him for direct consultations. One of these visitors was National Front leader Karim Sanjabi. After a meeting with Khomeini early in November 1978, Sanjabi issued a three-point statement that for the first time committed the National Front to the Khomeini demand for the deposition of the shah and the establishment of a government that would be "**democratic and Islamic**".



Scattered strikes had occurred in a few private sector and government industries between June and August 1978. Beginning in September, workers in the public sector began to go on strike on a large scale. When the demands of strikers for improved salary and working benefits were quickly met by the Sharif-Emami government, oil workers and civil servants made demands for changes in the political system. The unavailability of fuel oil and freight transport and shortages of raw materials resulting from a customs strike led to the shutting down of most private sector industries in November.

On November 5, 1978, after violent demonstrations in Tehran, the shah replaced Sharif-Emami with General Gholam-Reza Azhari, commander of the Imperial Guard. The shah, addressing the nation for the first time in many months, declared he had heard the people's "**revolutionary message**," promised to correct past mistakes, and urged a period of quiet and order so that the government could undertake the necessary reforms. Presumably to placate public opinion, the shah allowed the arrest of 132 former leaders and government officials, including former Prime Minister Hoveyda, a former chief of SAVAK, and several former cabinet ministers. He also ordered the release of more than 1,000 political prisoners, including a Khomeini associate, Ayatollah Hosain Ali Montazeri.

The appointment of a government dominated by the military brought about some short-lived abatement in the strike fever, and oil production improved. Khomeini dismissed the shah's promises as worthless, however, and called for continued protests. The Azhari government did not, as expected, use coercion to bring striking government workers back to work. The strikes resumed, virtually shutting down the government, and clashes between demonstrators and troops became a daily occurrence. On December 9 and 10, 1978, in the largest antigovernment demonstrations in a year, several hundred thousand persons participated in marches in Tehran and the provinces to mark Moharram, the month in which Shia mourning occurs.

In December 1978, the shah finally began exploratory talks with members of the moderate opposition. Discussions with Karim Sanjabi proved unfruitful: the National Front leader was bound by his agreement with Khomeini. At the end of December another National Front leader, Shapour Bakhtiar, agreed to form a government on condition the shah leave the country. Bakhtiar secured a vote of confidence from the two houses of the Majlis on January 3, 1979, and presented his cabinet to the shah three days later. The shah, announcing he was going abroad for a short holiday, left the country on January 16, 1979. As his aircraft took off, celebrations broke out across the country.

The Bakhtiar Government

Once installed as prime minister, Bakhtiar took several measures designed to appeal to elements in the opposition movement. He lifted restrictions on the press; the newspapers, on strike since November, resumed publication. He set free remaining political prisoners and promised the dissolution of SAVAK, the lifting of martial law, and free elections. He announced Iran's withdrawal from CENTO, canceled US\$7 billion worth of arms orders from the United States, and announced Iran would no longer sell oil to South Africa or Israel. Although Bakhtiar won the qualified support of moderate clerics like Shariatmadari, his measures did not win him the support of Khomeini and the main opposition elements, who were now committed to the overthrow of the monarchy and the establishment of a new political order. The National Front, with which Bakhtiar had been associated for nearly thirty years, expelled him from the movement. Khomeini declared Bakhtiar's government illegal. Bazargan, in Khomeini's name, persuaded the oil workers to pump enough oil to ease domestic hardship, however, and some normalcy returned to the bazaar in the wake of Bakhtiar's appointment. But strikes in both the public and the private sector and large-scale demonstrations against the government continued. When, on January 29, 1979, Khomeini called for a street "referendum" on the monarchy and the Bakhtiar government, there was a massive turnout.

Bakhtiar sought unsuccessfully to persuade Khomeini to postpone his return to Iran until conditions in the country were normalized. Khomeini refused to receive a member of the regency council Bakhtiar sent as an emissary to Paris and after some hesitation rejected Bakhtiar's offer to come to Paris personally for consultations. Bakhtiar's attempt to prevent Khomeini's imminent return by **closing the Mehrabad Airport** at Tehran on January 26, 1979, proved to be only a stopgap measure.



Khomeini arrived in Tehran from Paris on **February 1, 1979**, received a rapturous welcome from millions of Iranians, and announced he would "smash in the mouth of the Bakhtiar government." He labeled the government illegal and called for the strikes and demonstrations to continue. A girls' secondary school at which Khomeini established his headquarters in Tehran became the center of opposition activity. A multitude of decisions, and the coordination of the opposition movement, were handled here by what came to be known as the *komiteh-ye Imam*, or the Imam's committee. On February 5, Khomeini named Mehdi Bazargan as prime minister of a provisional government. Although Bazargan did not immediately announce a cabinet, the move reinforced the conditions of dual authority that increasingly came to characterize the closing days of the Pahlavi monarchy. In many large urban centers local *komitehs* (revolutionary committees) had assumed responsibility for municipal functions, including neighborhood security and the distribution of such basic necessities as fuel oil. Government ministries and such services as the customs and the posts remained largely paralyzed. Bakhtiar's cabinet ministers proved unable to assert their authority or, in many instances, even to enter their offices. The loyalty of the armed forces was being seriously eroded by months of confrontation with the people on the streets. There were instances of troops who refused to fire on the crowds, and desertions were rising. In late January, air force technicians at the Khatami Air Base in Esfahan became involved in a confrontation with their officers. In his statements, Khomeini had attempted to win the army rank and file over to the side of the opposition. Following Khomeini's arrival in Tehran, clandestine contacts took place between Khomeini's representatives and a number of military commanders. These contacts were encouraged by United States Ambassador William Sullivan, who had no confidence in the Bakhtiar government, thought the triumph of the Khomeini forces **inevitable**, and believed future stability in Iran could be assured only if an accommodation could be reached between the armed forces and the Khomeini camp. Contacts between the military chiefs and the Khomeini camp were also being encouraged by United States general Robert E. Huyser, who had arrived in Tehran on January 4, 1979, as President Carter's special emissary. Huyser's assignment was to keep the Iranian army intact, to encourage the military to maintain support for the Bakhtiar government, and to prepare the army for a takeover, should that become necessary. Huyser began a round of almost daily meetings with the service chiefs of the army, navy, and air force, plus heads of the National Police and the Gendarmerie who were sometimes joined by the chief of SAVAK. He dissuaded those so inclined from attempting a coup immediately upon Khomeini's return to Iran, but he failed to get the commanders to take any other concerted action. He left Iran on February 3, before the final confrontation between the army and the revolutionary forces.

On February 8, **uniformed airmen** appeared at Khomeini's home and publicly pledged their allegiance to him. On February 9, air force technicians at the Doshan Tappeh Air Base outside Tehran mutinied. Units of the Imperial Guard failed to put down the insurrection. The next day, the arsenal was opened, and weapons were

distributed to crowds outside the air base. The government announced a curfew beginning in the afternoon, but the curfew was universally ignored. Over the next twenty-four hours, revolutionaries seized police barracks, prisons, and buildings. On February 11, twenty-two senior military commanders met and announced that the armed forces would observe neutrality in the confrontation between the government and the people. The army's withdrawal from the streets was tantamount to a withdrawal of support for the Bakhtiar government and acted as a trigger for a general uprising. By late afternoon on February 12, Bakhtiar was in hiding, and key points throughout the capital were in rebel hands. **The Pahlavi monarchy had collapsed.**