**Iran: From Mossadegh to Mahsa Amini**

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October 13, 2022

“My tongue will tell the anger of my heart, or else my heart concealing it will break.”

Shakespeare’s advice is heeded by the Iranian women expressing the anger of their hearts against the religious and economic oppression of Ayatollahs. Their hearts are broken, but not tamed and as Jorge Borges says, they have learned no matter how many pieces their hearts are broken into the world is not going to fix them. Hence, they decided to plant their gardens and decorate their souls, instead of waiting for someone to bring flowers, and have learned they have to endure because they are strong.

Khomeini’s revolt, a frontal attack on the dynasty in 1979, wasn’t a bolt from blue. The tyranny of the Shah, a tinpot dictator imposed by the US-UK nexus, was limitless. The cowardly king had a history of abandoning his country. When United Front, a melange of Marxists, mullahs, and the nationalist led by Mossadegh, nationalized the oil wealth of Iran, Reza Shah fled to Italy. Mossadegh’s failure to nationalize lands and Britain’s de facto blockade of Iran created an economic crisis. The infamous operation, Ajax, planned by the CIA and M16, in collaboration with the landowning class, to overthrow a popularly-elected premier to protect western interests was successfully accomplished. The restoration of the monarchy was catastrophic for the left, especially for Tudeh- Communist- Party of Iran, which had to face the brunt of the assault. Mossadegh’s ally, Ayatollah Kashani, joined the king and became a class collaborator. Shah restored the monopoly of oil to the British, and Iran, once again, became the client-state of imperialism.

Ayatollah Kashani was in league with Fada’iyn-Islam, a terrorist Islamist group allegedly involved in the assassination of at least two Iranian prime ministers, Ali Razmara in 1951 and Hassan Ali Mansour in 1965. The group of religious fascists was ultimately banned, but continued to inspire Khomeini’s Revolutionary Guards.

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“The bulk of the stormtroopers of fascism,” Aijaz Ahmed says, “comes from among those victimized masses who have been spiritually destroyed and morally disoriented by the cruelties they suffer in their everyday life.” They develop a reactionary mindset and hence, “the anticommunism of the Islamic nationalists [of Iran] hasn’t produced social regeneration but clerical fascism.”

The Khomeini revolution was unique in the Muslim world because it overthrew an oppressive dynasty with popular support. Its mass support came from the peasants and the urban petty bourgeoisie. The Communist party, crushed by Shah, played second fiddle to the clergy, which completed a bourgeois revolution and crushed the remaining communists. It was a rare moment “when revolution and counter-revolution were condensed in the same moment.” It decided the fate of socialism in the Middle East, where it was decisively defeated and replaced by Islamic fundamentalism. It also heralded the downfall of the Soviet Union where instead of empowering the proletariat politically and theoretically, the ruling bureaucracy chose perestroika, committed hara-kiri and exposed the entire world to the savage destruction of global perestroika and glasnost.

The “combination of the power of reactionary political Islam, the compradorian submission, and impoverishment through informalization [unregulated] of the bazaar economy,” Samir Amin says, are responsible for the depoliticization of the Muslim world. “The triumph of this bazaar economy has been described from the beginning as the major outcome of the ‘Khomeini revolution'” and had led to the destruction of Somalia. It is characteristic of most Arab countries and Pakistan. “Modern political Islam had been invented by the orientalists in the service of the British authority in India before being adopted intact by Mawdudi of Pakistan,” who, “took up the theme, stipulating that power comes from God alone, thus repudiating the concept of citizens having the right to make laws, the state being solely entrusted with enforcement of the law defined once and for all (the sharia).”

Islamism is a potent weapon in the hands of the ruling classes of the Muslim world. It provides multiple justifications to subdue people into conformity to the laws of the neo-liberal state without offering economic relief to the people. It denies the rights to the oppressed nationalities, Irani Kurdistan and Irani and Pakistani Baluchistan are vivid examples. The state conveniently shifts the blame of internal class contradictions to an external international conspiracy aimed against Islam and the country. After the upsurge of the women’s movement in Iran, Khamenei has pointed his finger at Israel and the US for their involvement in Iranian affairs. His claim cannot be rejected outrightly. The unilateral cancellation of the US-Iran nuclear deal, clamping sanctions, and Israeli intent of attacking Iran are enough reasons not to trust the imperialist powers. Besides, bringing regime change through coloured revolutions in which George Soros’ National Endowment of Democracy and CIA play a central part is a favourite pastime of imperialism, but the raw material for stroking such a change comes from the besieged country itself. Before blaming the US, the Irani government must reflect on the stifling conditions created by its authoritarian rule.

For its failure to provide relief to its people and locate the cause of their deprivation in the indigenous system of private ownership, and appropriation, Islamism shifts the blame to the sinful attitudes of the masses for not following the tenets of Islam, for instance, moral corruption, and violation of hijab by women, which provoke divine ire. The strategy also provides the ideological justification of absolutism for the theocratic state. The hierarchy gets a license to arrange a democracy of its choice and selects its handpicked candidates for the presidency in the name of piety. The religious ideology of alienation only comes into play when all other avenues to control people through consent are exhausted, and the threat of active revolution is in sight.

Political Islam has no conflict with neo-liberal capitalism. Both refute the class struggle and lead their followers to specific identities without flirting with property relations. The benign conflict between the two, if any, is cultural. Political Islam promises an imaginary world where everything that socialism promises in this world is offered. The postponement does not confront neo-liberal capitalism. For Samir Amin, the regimes following the charade of political Islam aim to restore theocratic conservative political power of the Mameluke type, a military caste that ruled two hundred years ago. It pretended to follow the sharia law, fleeced all profits from the national economy, and played a subsidiary role in the capitalist economy of its era.

In the ordinary circumstance, the dominant classes do not maintain their power by force but by identifying their interests with the class interests of the subaltern and people are trained to follow them, but there are moments in history when the social classes, Gramsci says, become detached from their traditional parties, the immediate situation becomes delicate and dangerous because the field is open for the violent solution. The situation indicates the crisis of the ruling class hegemony or the general crisis of the state. With women burning their hijabs in public, the men supporting them, and the ever-increasing morbidity and mortality of the protesters are clarion calls that the hegemony of the Iranian ruling class has been challenged. There is no alternate leadership or a party that can solve the problem. Hence, the man of destiny, the Gramscian Caesar or the Ayatollah will continue to dominate, but without a consent-based hegemony.

Women’s liberation does not mean winning an equal share in repressive features of male prerogative but overthrowing the oppressive economic system. Throwing off the hijab is refusal, denial of complicity with the system. Women in Iran, as Nizam Hikmet says, “do not want to listen to songs anymore, they want to sing.” They know like Marx that if they “take from religion its exclusive power, it will no longer exist.”

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