REFLECTIONS ON THE REPRODUCTION OF DICTATORSHIP IN IRAN: COMMUNICATION AND DICTATORSHIP

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> When thinking about the fall of any dictatorship, one should have no illusions that the whole system comes to an end like a bad dream with that fall. The physical existence of the system does indeed cease. But its psychological and social results live on for years, and even survive in the form of subconsciously continued behaviour. (Kapuscinski, 1985:58)

The protest movement against the Iranian dictatorial regime began in the Spring of 1977, and it gradually became a massive force that overthrew the regime in February 1979. However, soon after the revolution, the Islamic faction of revolutionary forces started to repress other political and social forces. The Islamic faction abrogated all freedoms and democratic rights gained during the revolution in order to build a society that was based on Islamic laws and led by the clergy.

A review of the analyses of the 1979 revolution reveals that scholars are divided on whether there were one or two revolutions. Those who believe in one revolution (i.e. the "Islamic Revolution") argue that rapid modernization and westernization generated anomie and moral disintegration, and fostered the desire to return to authentic culture amongst Iranians. Accordingly, these scholars consider Islam and clergymen as forces of revolution.

Scholars in favour of two revolutions (i.e. the "Iranian revolution" and the "Islamic Revolution") argue that the Shah directed repressive policies against the Left and other progressive opposition, and comparatively soft policies towards the religious groups. This unevenness put the latter group far ahead in resources such as independent organizations and financial means. According to these scholars factors such as the distribution of resources, the mistakes of the liberals and the leftists, and Khomeini's political ability made it possible for the Islamic faction to seize political power. They consider the Islamic

revolution as one alternative among others, rather than an inevitable outcome.

However, what these scholars of Iranian revolution have overlooked is the presence of a contradiction in Iranian political collective action. Here I refer to the fact that Iranians, who during the revolution demanded freedom and democracy, supported and tolerated the growth of a dictatorship of a different form when they discovered the possibility of realizing their demands after the revolution.

In this paper, the reproduction of dictatorship in Iran is studied in relation to the impacts of dictatorship on the processes of political socialization and the formation of the political culture of social groups. In order to explore the impact of dictatorship, it is not enough to learn about mechanisms and apparatuses of repression or numbers of the secret police. Instead, one should ask, what impact does living under constant fear of being reported, arrested, and tortured have on the processes of political socialization? What is the impact of living in a social environment where people cannot trust others in sharing their opinions? In other words, it is correct that the dictatorial state cannot produce a social order where its laws are "obeyed promptly, predictably", because its "bloody sword is utterly external to the wills and the consciousness of men (sic)" (Walzer, 1970:125). However, there are differences in political socialization under dictatorial or non-dictatorial regimes.

I will argue that dictatorship not only represses and censors but also educates and trains individuals. With its repression, its censorship and surveillance, dictatorship shapes and influences the social environment within which people live, interact and grow up. Therefore, dictatorship is not a power "localized" in the sphere of politics (Lefebvre, 1991:147). It is a power that "produces reality" (Foucault, 1979:194) by influencing the structures and functions of the agencies of political socialization. This in turn conditions the formation of the political culture of members of society.

In this paper, distorted communication is considered as one of the channels through which dictatorship deeply influences society. It is through communication that social groups and their identities as well as political culture are formed. Dictatorship's repression of the democratic rights undermines the conditions of communication and produces distorted communication. The presence of the distorted communication, in turn, affects the structure of social relationships and institutions, the processes of coordination of action and collective identity formation of social groups, and the size and structure of social gatherings. Accordingly, distorted communication may force people to develop new

institutions or to modify the structure of already existing institutions in order to sustain the processes of communication. For example, they may find trust and truth in their friendship and kinship relationships, rather than in the activities of formal organizations.

Following this model, I will study the Iranian political system, distorted communication, and the institution of **dowreh** (circle) in order to illustrate political values and norms that are socialized by them. However, this is not to say that other agencies of political socialization like family, school, and mass-media are not important in these regards.

Historical Background

In 1921 Reza Khan, a military commandant, staged a bloodless coup. In 1926, after establishing himself as the "dominant personality" in Iranian politics, made himself the Iranian Shah (Halliday, 1979:23; Wilber, 1986:125-126). In 1941 the Soviet Union and British armies invaded Iran and Reza Shah, who sympathized with Hitler and opposed the Allies' plan of sending supplies to the Russian front through Iran, abdicated in favour of his son Mohammad Reza (Halliday, 1979:24; Wilber, 1986:131).

After the fall of the Reza Shah, Iranians, after almost two decades of severe repression, began to enjoy freedom of expression and organization. During the 1941-53 period the political scene of Iran was dominated by the Iranian communist party, the Tudeh, and the secularist National Front, not the Islamic forces. Emerging soon after the fall of the Reza Shah, the Tudeh Party had a total of 100,000 active members, a 355,000 member trade union and three cabinet ministers in 1946 (Abrahamian, 1982:303).

Since the end of the Second World War, Iranians had been in favour of the nationalization of the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (Halliday, 1979:24-25). In 1951, Mohammad Mossadeq, the leader of the National Front, became prime minister. Mossadeq nationalized the oil industry as soon as he took office. This, however, put his government in conflict with the Shah and the British and US governments. In September 1951, the British oil company removed all its staff, and closed down its oil installations. At the same time, the British government reinforced its naval presence. in the Gulf (Abrahamian, 1982:268; see also Carter, 1978:59-60). On July 1952, Mossadeq clashed with the Shah on the nomination of the war minister.

Following the Shah's refusal of his nominee, Mossadeq resigned and appealed directly to the public, publicly criticizing the Shah for violating the constitution. Following popular pressure, the Shah had to ask for Mossadeq's return to office (Abarahamian, 1982:268-272).

The first military coup against Mossadeq failed and the Shah escaped to Rome. However, after three days, the second military coup, organized by the CIA, succeeded in August 1953. After the coup, the Shah abrogated all democratic rights and banned and crushed all opposition. In 1975, the Secretary General of Amnesty International said: "No country in the world has a worse record in human rights than Iran" (Halliday, 1979:85).

In 1960-1963, as a result of an economic crisis, several strong protest demonstrations took place in Iran. In several cases the regime used the army in order to control the situation. The regime of the Shah, however, was in difficulty not only from domestic problems but also from the new US Administration's pressures. As Halliday (1979:26-27) writes, the Kennedy Administration made it

> be known that it would only continue to support the Shah on condition that he put through a programme of reforms. A $35 million US loan was made dependent on certain policies being implemented...within which land reform held a special place.

In 1963, the Shah announced his "White revolution". His reforms, however, dissatisfied religious leaders, in particular, the issues of land reform and women's rights. In July 1963, for three days religious forces rioted under the leadership of Khomeini. Despite the presence of general discontent, the riots were restricted to a small number of towns (including Qom), and few towns and workers, civil servants and students did not join them (Abrahamian, 1982:425-26). It is important to note that when the Islamic forces were protesting against the Shah's reforms, in the Iranian universities the slogan of the protestors was "Yes to reforms; No to Dictatorship!"

The 1960-63 defeat of the opposition marked "the end of any hope that the forces released during the 1941-53 period could soon reverse the verdict of the 1953 coup" (Halliday, 1979:234). In the late 1960s, different opposition groups, influenced by the Cuban and Vietnamese Revolutions, emerged in Iran and opted for armed struggle. However, by early 1976, as a result of heavy losses as well as the

development of schisms among them, they failed to realize their plans to spark the popular revolution by their armed struggle and sacrifice.

The 1979 Revolution

After the December 1973 oil price increase, Iran's annual revenue quadrupled, jumping from $5 billion to $19 billion (Graham, 1980:16; see also Halliday, 1979:138-139). The Shah predicted that by the year 2000, Iran would become one of the top five world powers (Nyrop, 1978:6). However, after two years, international oil demand dropped. Considering that oil revenue made up 78 percent of the Iranian budget the impact of such fluctuations in international demand was dramatic (Graham, 1980:100). After a brief period of economic boom where "Iran's GNP grew by 30.3 percent in 1973-1974 and by a further 42 percent in 1974-1975", there was "the economic debacle" (Amir Arjomand, 1986:397; see also Nafisi, 1982:200, Hetherington, 1982:373).

Iranians started to face such difficulties as a high rate of inflation and shortages of housing and commodities. Housing became one of the main social problems. The annual inflation rate reached "about 30 percent" (Kazemi, 1980:89). The regime blamed bazaaris for inflation, and in August 1975 started the 'anti-profiteering' and 'price war' campaign. This campaign generated more shortages, stimulated the black-market, and added the bazaaris to the malcontents (Graham, 1980:96). Regarding the devastating impact of this anti-profiteering campaign on the bazaar, Parsa (1989:103) writes that by

> October 1977, approximately 109,800 Tehran shopkeepers, out of a total of 200,000, had been investigated for price-controlled violations....According to the Ministry of Interior, 20,000 shopkeepers had been jailed by the end of 1977. By fall 1978, the nationwide total of shopkeepers in violation of the controls was 220,000.

Furthermore, the regime challenged the economic viability of the bazaar. State corporations were established to import and distribute basic foods, such as wheat, sugar, and meat (Abrahamian, 1982:443). In 1976 it was suggested that the bazaar be demolished. These factors pushed bazaaris into the opposition. As one bazaari said, "if we would let him, the Shah would destroy us" (Parsa, 1989:102).

The bazaar is not only a commercial centre but also a community

that "includes one, or several, mosques, public baths, the old religious schools and numerous tea houses" (Graham, 1980:223).

Financially, the bazaar is a strong economic centre that controls the carpet trade and other major export items (e.g. nuts and dried fruits). This enables the bazaaris access to foreign exchange. In total, the bazaar accounts for two-thirds of domestic trade and accounts for at least 30 percent of all imports (Graham, 1980:224). For instance, by the time of the revolution Tehran's central bazaar had,

> close to forty thousand shops and workshops, one-half of which were located within the covered bazaar and the remainder in the immediate vicinity. Shopkeepers outside the covered bazaar followed bazaari politics, even though their shops were not part of the bazaar proper. (Parsa, 1989:92)

Bazaar mobilization has always played a crucial role in Iranian political history. The financial support of the bazaar, for instance, was decisive in the victory of the 1979 Revolution. The bazaar financially aided the university students and teachers as well as the striking workforces, civil servants, and oil-workers (Graham, 1980:225; see also Zabih, 1979:27-30).

In the 1970s, the Shah increased his efforts to reduce the clergy's power. In 1971, for example, the Shah established 'The Religious Corps' that were sent into the villages as Islamic preachers (Wilber, 1986:178). In addition, the government increasingly took control of holy endowments (owqaf) (Bill, 1982:25).

In 1975 the Shah decided to establish a one party political system and pressured Iranians to join it. The Shah said:

> We must straighten out Iranians' ranks. To do so, we divide them into two categories: those who believe in Monarchy, the Constitution, and the Sixth Bahman Revolution (the Shah's White Revolution); and those who don't....A person who does not enter the new political party and does not believe in the three cardinal principles which I referred to, will have only two choices....Such an individual belongs in an Iranian prison, or if he desires he can leave the country tomorrow, without even paying exit fees. (cited in Halliday, 1979:47)

The new party, the Resurgence Party, with its branches in all cities and

villages, became a new instrument of control in Iran.

Despite the widespread discontent, Iranians could not express their frustrations in mass protest as a result of the presence of strong repression. Jimmy Carter's stress on the theme of human rights during his electoral campaign, and the fact that he mentioned Iran as a friend country with a bad record, worked in favour of the Iranian opposition.

In order to please the new president, the Shah made some mild political reforms. For instance, in early 1977 a new law was passed which declared that "all political detainees had to be charged or released within twenty-four hours and that trials for political opponents were to be held by civilian rather than military courts" (Parsa, 1989:108; see also Graham, 1980:211; Abrahamian, 1982: 500). Iranian intellectuals and former opposition politicians, taking advantage of Carter's human rights campaign and the Shah's controlled liberalizations, started to speak up early in 1977 (Abrahamian, 1982:500-510; see also Zabih, 1979:49). As Moghadam (1989:152) summarizes:

> social democratic and liberal intellectuals began to write open letters of protest and criticism. A number of associations and societies were formed and revived, such as the Association of Iranian Jurists, the Writers' Society, and the National Association of University Teachers, which demanded improved civil and political rights, and end to censorship, and academic freedom

After almost two years of mass protests, strikes and street fighting, the Shah left Iran, and in February 1979 the revolution succeeded. There emerged a situation where political forces were in balance. The Islamic forces were divided among themselves into three factions: fundamentalists, moderate and radical. The Left was strong but highly divided among themselves and included independent, pro-Soviet, Maoists, pro-Albanian, and Trotskyist groups. There were also national minorities, like Kurds, Turkemen and Arabs, who were not Shi'a Muslims and demanded regional autonomy from the central government. In addition, there were liberal, social democratic, and independent organizations.

Critical Review of the Analyses of the 1979 Iranian Revolution

Scholars of Iranian revolution are divided on whether there were one or two revolutions. Generally speaking, these two positions are based on two approaches, namely breakdown[1] and the resource mobilization[2] approaches.

Those following the breakdown approach argue that what underlaid the widespread desire for revolutionary changes was "a fundamental disorientation and anomie more than a superficial and short-run frustration of material expectation" (Amir Arjomand, 1986:397). Swenson (1985:124), expressing this line of analysis, suggests that the presence of rapid modernization and anomie, as well as the leadership position occupied by the Islamic clergy Islam and the clergy as the motivated the Revolution:

> the Persian carpet of interwoven cultural codes experienced transformation and modification under the rapid, secularist, "modernization" processes during Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi's regime. Rapid social change is intrinsically psychologically disequilibrating; that experienced in Iran...inherently implied radical alterations in 'making sense' of material and moral value changes. This disequilibrating experience leads to a sense of incohesion, fragmentation, disintegration in the passing away of traditional ways of rendering meaning.

Explaining why the revolution took place in 1979 and not before, she points out that "the toll of rapid modernization had not yet been wrought upon the masses." She goes on to state that the revolution "was brought about through the mobilization of the masses at the local level by mullahs and enlightened Muslim martyrs" (1985:125; see also Arani, 1980:14-15; Kimmel, 1989:494). Islam was "both the means and the end of this revolution" (Kimmel, 1989:507; Amir Arjomand, 1984; Skocpol, 1982:275). These authors emphasize 'rapid' modernization and westernization as the cause of the revolution. However, they do not explain why the 1925-1941 modernization by the father of the Shah[3] was not more rapid and traumatic than that of 1960s-1970s. Why is it that

> the strongly anti-clerical measures of Reza Shah (1925-41) did not arouse any massive protest movements or concerted action by the ulama and/or the bazaaris,

> whereas his son's measures toward the ulama (which were....less extreme and less of a sudden wrench with Islamic tradition) did arouse protest. (Keddie, 1982:288)

Scholars in favour of two revolutions, using the resource mobilization approach, argue that at the time of revolution the Left and other progressive forces were far behind the religious groups in terms of independent resources.[4] They do not believe that the revolution was made by Islamic ideology and leaders. First of all, the clergy were late in joining the revolution. In late August 1977, when Khomeini realized the lack of initiative on the part of the clerics, he issued a statement inviting them to take advantage of political reform. Khomeini said:

> today we are faced with an opportunity [an opening] in Iran and you should take advantage of it....Today members of various parties find fault and voice their criticism in signed letters to the Shah and the government. You should write too and a few of the learned members of the clergy should sign also....others have done so and we have witnessed that they have said a lot but nothing has happened to them. (cited in Nomani, 1990:8-9)

In addition, Moghadam (1989: 152) writes that "it was not until late 1978 that the Ayatollah Khomeini became the undisputed leader of the revolution. Even so, the Islamicists saw fit to rule with the National Front and other secularists, liberals, and social democrats, for the first year." Thus, the revolution was not started by Islamic leaders.

The lack of independent resources whereby the opposition could gather and organize themselves without fear of being attacked and arrested by the police, led Iranians to use mosques, funeral ceremonies and other safe institutions. For instance, in October 1977, the Iranian Writers' Society organized a number of poetry readings. These were held at the Irano-German Institute in Tehran in late October and attracted crowds of over 10,000 (Graham, 1980:210; see also Zabih, 1979:20, Kamrava, 1990:87). What is significant about this event is that at the place of gathering, the Irano-German Institute, diplomatic immunity protected the participants. The following month, however, when the Writers' Society organized another poetry reading program on the Tehran university campus, participants were attacked by the police. The same phenomenon happened to bazaaris who in the initial stages of the

uprising mobilized outside the mosque. Because of repressеion, and in absence of alternative channels of moilization, the bazaaris changed their position, and began to encourage the clergy to oppose the regime (Parsa, 1989:95; see also Zabih, 1979:31).

Those in favour of one revolution stress the presence of Islamic demands. For instance, Kimmel (1989:507) in demonstrating Islam as the motive of revolution, quotes Khomeini's remark: "We did not want oil. We did not want independence. We wanted Islam." Amir Arjomand (1986:405) mentions Khomeini's famous statement, "we did not make the Islamic revolution so the Persian melon would be cheap", in order to show that the revolution was driven by Islamic motivations rather than economic ones (see also Snow and Marshall, 1984:139).

What should be stressed is that these authors quote Khomeini's remarks after seizing power, and not before. Theorists in favour of two revolutions, by contrast, emphasize how Khomeini's positions during and after the revolution were 180 degrees apart. During the revolution, Khomeini said that under the Shah regime "the individual's freedoms are eliminated, elections are prohibited, press and political parties are suppressed, agriculture is ruined" (*L'Unitá*, 5.6.1978; see also Bayat, 1983:33-34; Parsa, 1989:209). Khomeini accused the Shah of "condemning the working class to a life of poverty, misery and drudgery, creating shantytowns and neglecting low-income housing (Abrahamian, 1991:113). Therefore the reaction of a factory worker to Khomeini's statement is understandable. He said:

> they say we have not made revolution for economic betterment! what have we made it for, then? They say, for Islam! What does Islam mean then? We made it for the betterment of the conditions of our lives. (cited in Bayat, 1987:48)

Khomeini in Paris did not disclose his real agenda. For example, in a Paris interview, Khomeini responding to a question about "Whether the Islamic government means theocracy?" answered:

> No. We do not intend to govern. We only indicate to people objectives and vindications of Islam. Since the majority of Iranian people are Muslim, the Islamic government means the government sustained by the majority of people. (*Pæse Sera*, 24.10.1978)

Although the above sketch of Iranian revolution confirms the two-revolutions arguments, these scholars have overlooked the support and tolerance of the masses for Khomeini's repressive policies after the Revolution.

Political Socialization and Political Culture

Political culture consists of political values and attitudes, as well as beliefs about forms of political interaction and political institutions. As Verba (1969:513) explains, "it refers not to what is happening in the world of politics, but what people believe about those happenings." Political culture shapes and influences the processes of interpretation and understanding of political life.

Political socialization consists of a life experience process through which members of a society acquire their political culture. Political culture is formed as the result of the processes of political socialization in agencies such as school, family, workplace, mass media, political parties, voluntary associations, as well as experiences with the political system (Verba, 1969:551; see also Kavanagh, 1972:35). According to Dowse (1986:215) there are different types of agencies in which joining them "involves the learning of skills, attitudes, and norms much more specific to the institution."

Following this argument, I maintain that depending upon the values and goals of the agencies there will be different political cultures. In this regard, Gramsci's distinction (1989:181) between the 'corporate', 'class' and, 'hegemonic' or universal levels of consciousness is used. The corporate level refers to the moment when the members of a social group "are conscious of its unity and homogeneity, and of the need to organize it, but in the case of the wider social group this is not yet so" (Gramsci, 1989:181). For example, trade unions at this stage of development tend to "articulate a 'corporate consciousness' which focuses on their shared interests, but this may co-exist with rivalry against some other group of workers" (Hunt, 1990:312). The class awareness level consists of a situation where the members of a social class become conscious of their common interests "but still in the purely economic field" (Gramsci, 1989:181). The hegemonic or universal moment refers to a level where a class transcends "the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interest of other subordinate groups too" (Gramsci, 1989: 181; see also Hunt, 1990:312).

Following this distinction, I differentiate between institutions and agencies of political socialization with 'corporate' and 'universal' values and goals. Depending on the type of the agencies their members are socialized with corporate or universal conceptions of democracy. A social group which is at a corporate level is engaged in articulating and defending its own corporate interest and develops a corporate rather than a universal concept of democracy. For them, democracy consists of an ensemble of rules that protect the immediate interests of that particular social group.

Dictatorship and Communication

Communication has an essential role in the processes of political socialization. It is through the process of communication that individuals reach an understanding and agreement on an issue, realize their shared common interests, and coordinate their actions. The formation of collective identity and political culture of a social group is the result of the processes of communication within and between social groups and classes. Dictatorship, with the suppression of democratic rights, indeed undermines the conditions of communication.

Habermas, in his theory of 'pragmatic universal', develops the theory of communicative action in relation to the *conditions* of communication, rather than to the content of communication (i.e. information) or means of communication. According to Habermas there are four conditions: comprehensibility, truth, trust, and normative background which need to be fulfilled in order to have a communicative action. In a process of reaching understanding the speaker must

> choose a comprehensive expression so that speaker and hearer can understand one another. The speaker must have the intention of communicating a true proposition....so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker. The speaker must want to express his intentions trustfully so that the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker (can trust). Finally, the speaker must choose an utterance that is right so that the hearer can accept the utterance and speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background. (Habermas, 1979:2-3)

As soon as one of these elements, for any reason, comes under question, the stream of communication halts and it can be interrupted or distorted.

In order to rectify the disturbed communication it is essential that "no external constraints" prevent "participants from assessing evidence and argument, and in which each participant has an equal and open chance of entering into discussion" (Giddens, 1985:131). These conditions are not met in a dictatorial regime and the following section deals with the issue of communication under dictatorship.

Vertical, Horizontal, and Oblique Voices

Hirschman, in his argument on the differences between democratic and non-democratic social environments, has developed two terms, 'voice' and 'exit', as means of communication between the citizens and the government, consumer and seller, employer and employee. In a democratic social environment, an unsatisfied consumer or citizen can communicate his/her feelings by voice (writing, wording, marching in the street, and so on), or by exit (changing the store, voting for another political party). In a non-democratic situation, however, one or both of these mechanisms may be absent. If there exists only one store, one employer, or one political party, then exit is impossible, making voice the only option. The worst scenario, however, is when a person can use neither of these mechanisms, as, for example, in totalitarian one-party systems, terrorist groups, and criminal gangs (Hirschman, 1970:121). Accordingly, in a dictatorial regime, exit and voice are absent; exit becomes 'exile', voice becomes 'silence' or 'oblique voice'.

O'Donnell, based on his experience in Argentina, distinguishes 'vertical voice' from 'horizontal voice'. The vertical voice consists of voice that is "addressed to the 'top', by customers or citizens, toward managers or governments," but when "I am addressing others, or others are addressing me, claiming that we share some relevant characteristics, we are using horizontal voice" (O'Donnell, 1986:250). What must be emphasized is the importance of the role of the horizontal voice in the formation of political culture and collective identity. In a democratic environment:

> we assume that we have the right to address others, without fear of sanctions, on the basis of the belief that those others are 'like me' in some dimension that at least I consider relevant. If we actually recognize ourselves as a 'we' (for example, as workers who have the right to unionize), we have taken a necessary, and at times sufficient, step towards the formation of a collective

> identity. (O'Donnell 1986:250)

Under dictatorship, "oblique voice" or symbolic language replaces the horizontal voice, which means certain unconventional...ways of dressing, clapping hands with excessive enthusiasm in front of the public authorities, going to the recital of singers or musicians who were known to disagree with the regime, some quick glances in the streets and other public spaces (O'Donnell, 1986261) .

In summary, the argument on the voice suggests that dictatorship, while inhibiting the use of horizontal voice, encourages the use of vertical and oblique voice. The fear of using horizontal voice and the presence of mistrust lead individuals to an atomized and privatized life based on mistrust. Accordingly, they approach with caution the "few remaining occasions of sociability" (O'Donnell, 1986:260; See also Politzer, 1989).

The Iranian Political System

Bill defines the Iranian political system as a "circular" or "web" system with the Shah at the centre surrounded by an elite network. The rivalry and conflict between elites at all levels of Iranian society stems from their struggle to gain greater favour with then Shah (Bill, 1972:40-41, 42; see also Bill, 1973:141). In this political system the Shah was the ultimate decision maker and the network that served as channels of access included

> ministers, generals, courtiers....relatives, personal friends, old classmates and trusted advisors. These personalities 'who circle the power of the monarch' filter and relay information and petition to the Shah. They, in turn, are surrounded by their own entourages each member of [whom] serves as a lower level but additional channel to power. (Bill, 1973:134)

Due to the lack of formal political institutions, members of the political network as well as their drivers, cooks, and secretaries were sought after as intermediaries between the petitioner and the power. The Shah's administration was highly "centralized, totally unintegrated, and responsive only to him" (Fatemi, 1982:49; see also Halliday, 1979:54, Kamrava, 17-23). The Shah appointed "prime minister, ministers, deputy ministers, ambassadors, governors, and executives of government

organizations" (Fatemi, 1982:51).

Even membership in the web system did not create security. As Zonis (1971:241) comments, "when the Shah reached the conclusion that a given member of the elite [was] dysfunctional, in any sense, no amount of wealth or membership [could] save the individual from dismissal, disgrace, or demotion" (see also Bill, 1973:144).

The Iranian political system disturbed the processes of social group formation by both reinforcing vertical voice and obstructing horizontal voice. The atomization of the members of social groups was shared by all social classes. For instance, many scholars believe that the collapse of the Iranian army after the departure of the Shah in 1979 was due to the absence of the spirit of comradeship in the army. This occurred because the generals had to report to the Shah and no general could visit Tehran or meet with another general without the Shah's specific permission (Halliday, 1979:68; see also Afshar, 1985:186-189).

Distorted Communication in Iran

This section aims to illustrate the impact of dictatorship on four conditions of communication in Iran.

Dictatorship and Intelligibility: Under dictatorship the intelligibility of language suffers. Dictatorship, by inhibiting the use of horizontal voice, encourages the use of oblique voice or symbolic language. For instance, Bill (1972:76) reporting his survey of 50 Iranian poems writes that there is:

> an extraordinary emphasis upon such themes as 'walls', 'loneliness,' 'darkness,' 'fatigue,' and 'nothingness'. These poems deplore the situation of the Iranian intellectual and obliquely criticize and condemn the existing sociopolitical system in which the intellectual is chained.

Accordingly, in Iran such terms as "oppressiveness, darkness...collapse, quagmire, putrefaction, cage, bars, chain" were prohibited because they "could hide allusions to the Shah's regime" (Kapuscinski, 1985:44). This created paranoia among both Iranians and the censors, because it became difficult to understand the real intention of a speaker or writer.

Dictatorship and Trust: Under dictatorship the issue of trust, as a result of the high risk, becomes the main element of communication. The presence of mistrust amongst Iranians is referred to by several authors. It does not have any class boundaries and crosses all social strata. Zonis (1971:268) writes that "the inability of Iranians to count on, to be assured of the meaning of the behaviour of others is taught early. So are Iranians taught early in life to mask their own thoughts" (see also Westwood, 1965:124).

The following example illustrates how deeply political repression can influence and shape everyday life and ways of seeing of members of a dictatorial society. It is about a conversation between an old man with a bad heart and a SAVAK agent (Iranian secret police)[5] at a bus stop in Iran on a hot afternoon. The old man said:

> "It's so oppressive you can't catch your breath". "So it is," the Savak agent replied immediately, edging closer to the winded stranger; "It's getting more and more oppressive and people are fighting for air." "Too true," replied the naive old man, clapping his hand over his heart, "such heavy air, so oppressive." Immediately, the Savak agent barked, "Now you'll have a chance to regain your strength," and marched him off.

The other people at the bus stop

> ....had been listening in dread, for they had sensed from the beginning that the feeble elderly man was committing an unpardonable error by saying "oppressive" to a stranger. Experience had taught them to avoid uttering such terms as oppressiveness, darkness, burden, abyss, collapse....because all of them, these nouns, verbs, adjectives, and pronouns, could hide allusions to the Shah's regime.

The strong presence of paranoia and suspicion is illustrated in the rest of account:

> for a moment....a new doubt flashed through the heads of the people standing at the bus stop: What if the sick old man was a Savak agent too? Because he had criticized the regime (by using "oppressive" in conversation), he must have been free to criticize. (Kapuscinski, 1985:44-5)

Dictatorship and Truth: In Iran, instead of truth there existed rumour. The presence of severe censorship and control over the means of communication and information, as well as government fabrications, led Iranians to distrust their mass media. In Iran truth was related to trust.

Fatemi (1982:58) points out how rumour encouraged Iranians in their struggle against the Shah:

> the hypothesis that the Shah was no longer the master of his destiny gained particular momentum in the first week of January 1979, when the leaders of the United States, Britain, West Germany, and France attended their long-scheduled summit meeting on the Island of Guadeloupe. According to the Teheran Grapevine, the participants decided, among other things, that "the Shah must go."

Dictatorship and the Normative Background: The intervention of the Shah in all spheres of social life, made Iranians perceive him as the main enemy. In this way the sources of all social problems were reduced to the Shah (Westwood, 1965:134). The normative background was narrowed down to the opposition to a common enemy and Iranians communicated and understood each other's grievances on this basis. This narrow normative background created what Khomeini called the "unity of purpose"(Khomeini, 1981:253; See also Moghadam, 1987: 13). Green (1982:87), for example, writes that

> a prominent academic and researcher at the Plan and Budget Organization revealed in an interview during the midst of the revolution, 'I hate Khomeini, but if anyone says anything bad about him I get angry. Why, you ask? Because I hate the Shah even more!'"

Iranians believed that once they had overthrown the Shah's regime all problems would be solved. As a result of the distortion of communication they did not realize that the basis of one's opposition to the Shah was different from another's. As the result of the distortion of elements of communication, the processes of collective identity formation of social groups was disturbed, wherein, members of social groups did not draw their social and class boundaries by becoming aware of their identity in the processes of communication.

The Institution of the Dowreh

After the coup d'etat of 1953, the suppression of political organizations and persecution of all forms of political activities led Iranians interested in politics to informal, small and selected forms of group. Except for a few who decided to stage organized political activities and therefore undertook the underground form of political activity, the people opted for *dowreh* (circle), a small social setting of trusted persons. As Green (1982:43) explains, "an activity such as arguing about politics, generally a risky proposition, was often undertaken within the security of groups that were composed of old friends who had known and trusted one another for years."

Dowreh consists of a small number of people, from 10 to 20, who "organize about some common purpose and meet on a regular basis. Dowrehs exist for card playing, poetry, music, and, of course, politics" (Zonis, 1971:238). Dowrehs meet monthly, weekly, or more often. The way that Miller determines the number of dowreh participants indicates the informal character of this institution. The number of people is "limited to those who can stand beside a buffet dinner table or sit along the walls of a living room" (Miller, 1969:164).[6]

Miller (1969:159), distinguishing between "dowreh" and the "system of dowreh", writes that "the dowreh is an upper class social habit, while the system refers to a particularly Persian behaviour of political activity and communication." Dowreh, according to Miller (1969:163-164), has a "general meaning of social circle, salon or clique. It expresses the gracious manner associated both with past Iranian social patterns and with attitudes acquired by those who have been educated abroad or who have lived for considerable periods in the West."

Writing about the dowreh system, Miller (1969:159) says "in the absence of effective political parties, the dowreh system is the substitute used by Iranian politicians to discuss, organize and communicate with their followers" (see also Banuazizi, 1977:238). The dowreh system includes the bazaari shopkeepers, artisans and labourers who meet each other

> regularly in bazaar caravansaries, teahouses and restaurants that serve as the headquarters for those in a particular craft or trade. Very much in the pattern of the old guilds, merchants and workers....will gather together over tea or kebab, to discuss business, exchange rumour and news and, inevitably, debate politics. (Miller,

1969:165; see also Spooner, 1971:171-172; Thaiss, 1971:201-202)

Dowreh, indeed, is a circle of homogeneous people who share similar socio-political ideas and backgrounds as well as interests and perspectives. It is not a "public" of people who are divided in their ideas on an issue, nor was it a "public sphere", namely a social realm open to all citizens "with the guarantee of freedom of assembly and association and the freedom to express and publish their opinions- about matters of general interest" (Habermas, 1974:49; see also Habermas, 1989).

Borrowing the Gramscian distinction, one can argue that dowreh system is a social setting at a corporate stage where a corporate perspective can develop. The formation of homogeneous groups that were not permitted to interact outwardly with other groups led them to develop a corporate or non-universal perspective of democracy.

Dowreh participants were engaged in elaborating, defining and reinforcing the immediate interests and ideas of their members rather than that of the larger or the whole society. They did not, and were not able to, develop a universal perspective as a result of the lack of communication and social struggle with other social forces. Dowreh reinforces norms and values shared by its members and is a place for articulating their immediate needs. Therefore, the concept of democracy that could emerge in this kind of gathering was a corporate one: democracy not as a universal value, but as a system of rules that satisfies and protects the needs of the small group.

To summarize, the absence of democratic rights that guarantee the fulfilment of four conditions of communication, led Iranians to seek guarantee in small, informal and selected forms of groups. However, in these groups it was the corporate rather than the universal perspective of democracy that developed.

Conclusion

The corporate conception of democracy had played an important role in the reproduction of dictatorship in Iran and the change of Iranian political collective action. After the victory of the revolution, Khomeini and his faction had the ability to attack one section of opposition while exempting the remainder and maintaining their support or tolerance. For instance, Khomeini called for the repression of the independent press because, according to him, their critiques of the government would

during the revolution became an obstacle to the anti-imperialist struggle. The leftist groups, stressing the difference between the bourgeois and revolutionary democracy, did not support the protest of independent journalists. However, as soon as censorship was exercised over leftist publications, they came to recognize the government as repressive.[7]

The role of corporate perspective of democracy in the process of the establishment of the new dictatorship can be summarized as follows:

> when the national minorities mobilized for autonomy, bazaaris did not join their struggles. Students and the Fedayeen were the only groups who actively supported the national minorities. When universities came under attack, bazaaris and liberal organizations approved of the assault because students had shifted to the left....By the time bazaaris began mobilizing and came under attack, other groups and classes had either been demobilized or did not have an interest in joining their struggles. As a result, repression against one social group or class did not invoke new protests by other groups, which might have led to the escalation of conflict and, consequently, neutralized repression. (Parsa, 1989:295-296)

The corporate perspective of democracy functioned in dividing the Iranian political and social forces in the sense that they agreed on the suppression of other groups' rights. The corporate conception of democracy allowed Khomeini's success in following his suppression of democratic institutions and rights, as well as in crushing political, religious and ethnic groups with the mass support or tolerance.

Notes

1. See Tilly, 1975:4-6.

2. On Resource Mobilization theory see among others: Tilly (1978); Zald (1977, 1988); Turner (1987, 1992); and Freeman (1979).

3. Reza Shah secularized the judiciary and educational system of Iran that were in the hands of clergy. In addition, in the political sphere, Reza Shah's policies reduced the political power of traditional groups such as the clergy. The percentage of clerics serving as deputies in parliament declined from 40 percent in the sixth majles to 30 percent in the seventh

majles to zero in the eleventh majles which met in 1937. At the same time, Reza Shah favoured greater participation by women in social life. He ordered that the chador, or traditional women's veil, be abandoned in favour of western clothing. The Majles even passed a `uniform dress law' instituting compulsory Western dress for men (Parsa, 1989:36; see also Akhavi, 1980:37-55, Abrahamian, 1982:140-144, Carter, 1978:54).

4. Moghadam (1989:153), comparing the resources, writes: "It is sufficient to note that in Iran on the eve of the revolution, no liberal or left-wing parties or institutions operated legally. On the other hand, there existed a nationwide network of mosques, theological seminaries, religious shrines, charitable endowments, and religious lecture halls.... The religious thought was given predominance and allowed dissemination in a way never enjoyed by the left or even liberals. The *resources* that were available to the clergy had been consistently denied to the Left" (see also Moghadam, 1988; Green, 1982:xiii; Abrahamian, 1985:149-174, Akhavi, 1980:129). Hiro (1988:20) writes that "estimates of qualified clerics vary from 90,000 to 120,000 and there are an unknown number of unqualified village preachers, prayer leaders, theological school teachers and procession organisers."

5. In 1957, the ill-famed secret police SAVAK (National Security and Information Organization) was created with the help of Israeli and US advisors. Branches of SAVAK were present in universities, factories, and offices. Their activities were so multifarious that today "almost anyone who does voice protest about the government runs the risk of being suspected of being a SAVAK agent" (Halliday, 1979:82; see alsoAbrahamian, 1982:435-37; Rudolph, 1978:372). Although the exact number of its personnel is not available, "informed United States government sources estimate the number of full-time personnel at 10,000. The agency is also believed to employ a large number of part-time informants... estimated...as high as 200,000" (Rudolph, 1978:373).

6. The Shah's regime did not tolerate formal groups and organizations. Bill (1972: 47-48) writes that in "1961, for example, eight middle-class Iranian friends and scholars met and formed a dowrah to discuss sociopolitical issues. They agreed upon certain areas of concern and mimeographed a confidential one-page statement presenting their mutual

opposition to corruption, injustice, and oppression. Each member took a copy and the rest were locked away. Five months later, the Chief of the Secret Police called on one of the men and confronted him with a copy of the statement. It was one of the original eight copies. The dowrah broke up immediately. This kind of occurrence explains a great deal about the secret police and the dowrah system, but it also sheds light on one of the major reasons why social interaction in Iran is extremely informal. In the episode described, there was one real element of organization and formality --- the printed statement. And this was the evidence that was used to destroy the dowrah and to threaten the lives of its members."

7. The same mechanism was used in suppressing women's rights in Iran. See Haines and Woods, 1986:43-47; Sansarian, 1982:99-102; Afshar Soraya, 1983:157-162; Tabari, 1982:126-140; Abrahamian, 1989:189-190.

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*Translations from Italian and Persian sources are mine.

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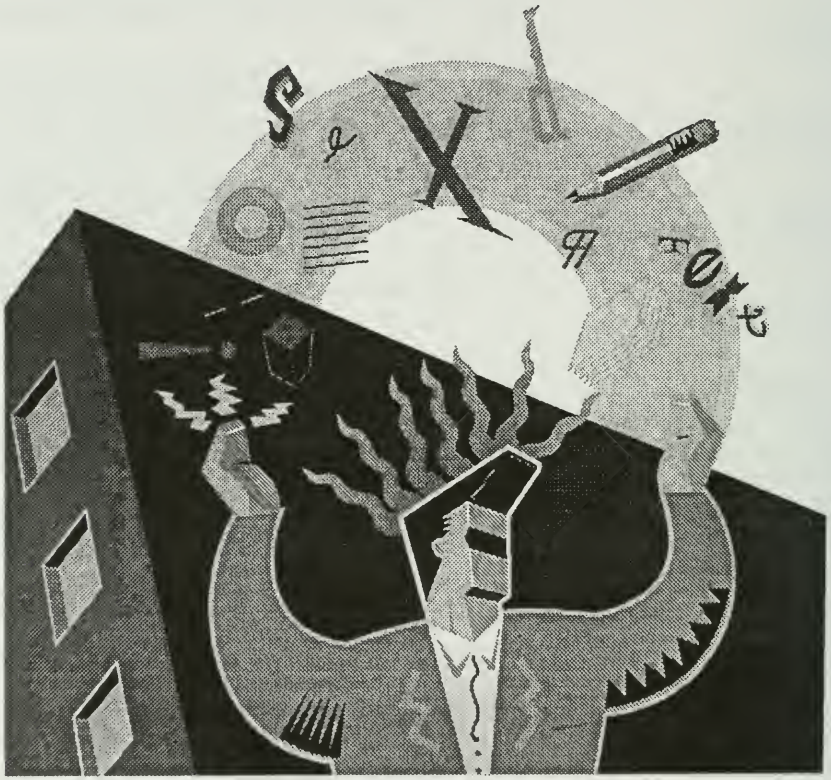

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