

A Reading of the Iranian Political Scene during the Government of Jamshid Omuzkar (August 7, 1977 – August 27, 1978)

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Abstract:

The period of August 7, 1977 – August 27, 1978, the period of the government of Jamshid Amouzkar, is the beginning of the end of Pahlavi rule in Iran, as economic and security problems worsened, and the popular opposition led by the clerics against Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi increased. Despite the attempts of the Shah and the government of Amouzkar to resolve the contract that appeared in the country by making many concessions, including economic remedies and courting senior religious scholars, the general situation got out of control and the matter worsened day by day.

It seems that the external factor has played its part in the events in Iran, especially in the issue of human rights, as the United States of America, European countries and international organizations have criticized the deteriorating security situation in Tehran and the bloody activity of the SAVAK in confronting the popular opposition. Therefore, internal and external factors have combined to undermine the Shah's rule quickly since the resignation of the government of Jamshid Amuzkar.

Keywords : Shah , Jamshid Amuzkar , Economic Crisis , Political Opposition , Clergy.

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Introduction:

Jamshid Amuzkar had an enlightened political and economic thought to face crises, and he has a lot of experience through his work in the United States and the United Nations and his tenure in several ministries, but despite this, the duration of his government as it was formed on August 7, 1977 until his resignation on August 27, 1978 is the beginning of the complete collapse of the Pahlavi regime, as he could not solve the economic and political crisis that struck the country.

The accumulation of previous years of poor economic planning, the dictatorship of power, security repression, and the silence of the political opposition showed its effects with the increase in popular opposition to the Shah's rule since 1977, and the senior clerics in Iran played a major role in the escalation of political opposition in various Iranian cities. Several Iranian cities witnessed clashes between the opposition masses and the security forces, which led to several casualties and inflamed the enthusiasm of the masses against Mohammad Reza Shah.

It seems that the Shah has lost control of the Iranian scene despite having a strong army and a huge military arsenal, but the loyalty of the army commanders to the Shah has declined, and some of them have joined the opposition, and others have not carried out orders accurately.

The government of Jamshid Omuzkar is one of several governments formed after the resignation of the government of Amir Abbas Hoveyda, but all of them failed to restore calm to the Iranian street.

First: A Brief Life of Jamshid Amuzkar

Born in 1923 in Tehran, Jamshid Habibollah Amouzkar studied engineering and law at the University of Tehran, traveled to the United States in 1944 and received a Ph.D. in Hydraulic Engineering from Cornell University, worked as a teacher at the same university, then an expert on groundwater resources to the United Nations, then returned to Iran and held several important positions including the Ministry of Labor,

A Reading of the Iranian Political Scene during the Government of Jamshid Omuzkar (August 7, 1977 – August 27, 1978)

Agriculture and then the Minister of Finance in the government of Amir Abbas Hoveyda and was a member of the political bureau of the party He¹ died on 28 September 2016.

Second: The government of Jamshid Amuzkar from August 7, 1977 to August 27, 1978

Mohammad Reza Shah Jamshid Amuzkar was tasked with forming the government on August 7, 1977, and one of its most important priorities was to address the economic crisis that Iran was suffering from in various aspects, and Amuzkar announced that developing solutions to address the economic conditions would be the basis for the work of his government, and in order to implement his program, he formed his ministry of twenty-four ministers, including one minister, and the ministry also included a number of industrialists and specialists in economic affairs. In his opening speech before the parliament, Amuzkar pointed out that His government's goal is to tackle inflation and save the country's economy, and he pointed to the need to squeeze government expenditures.

The government did not succeed in its plan, as some of them accused it of following contradictory measures, which prompted it to present new plans to address the escalating economic crisis in the country, based on austerity in government expenditures, as well as issuing decisions related to determining the commercial dealings of employees, but the decision that is considered the most influential in the political and social reality of Iran is to cut the budget allocated to religious affairs within the framework of Amuzkar's arbitrary policy, as that budget was amounting to one of the About ten million dollars a year. This led to the escalation of internal opposition against the government represented by the Shah and his prime minister, especially among the merchants, clerics and their followers among the Iranian people².

(1) Mohammad Wasfi Abu Moghli, Directory of Iranian Personalities, Center for Persian Gulf Studies, Basra, 1983, pp. 11-12.

(2) Salma Adnan Mohammed, The Countries of the Arabian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula: Facts and Figures, Publications of the Center for Arabian Gulf Studies, Basra, 1978, pp. 419-421.

The government's failure to address the economic crisis, as well as its measures unacceptable by the people, led to an increase in popular discontent that escalated from the second half of 1977 through demonstrations organized in Tehran.

Tehran University and the city of Qom held large demonstrations that raised many demands for the reform of the situation, the release of freedoms, as well as the demand for the release of the detainees.

Then came the sudden death of Khomeini's eldest son (Mustafa Khomeini) in October 1977, and the condolence ceremonies held for him in Tehran, Qom and Mashhad, which deepened the situation of the Iranian opposition, which demanded Khomeini's return to Iran, to escalate the situation between the government and the Iranian people. In his speech to the Iranian people, Khomeini expressed his adherence to his position against the Shah's government, and that the death of his son would not deter him from continuing his approach¹.

Third: Growing popular opposition to the Shah's rule

The government took the initiative to harm Khomeini in a direct way, by publishing an article in one of the pro-government newspapers (Itlaat), in its issue of November 7, 1977, entitled Iran and Red and Black Colonialism, under the pseudonym (Ahmad Rashidi). The Ministry of Information forced the newspaper to publish this article, but it later turned out that the author of the article was the Minister of Information himself (Dariush Humayne). At the beginning of the article, he praised the Shah's White Revolution, and then he directly and explicitly transcended the person of Khomeini, as he described him as a "black reactionary", and his cooperation with a foreigner against the interest of the country, and when this newspaper arrived in Qom, the city appeared to be in confusion, and the next day the students and professors of the seminary went on strike in protest. On this article, demonstrations took place, and a number of clerics gave speeches condemning this act. In addition, senior clerics demanded that the government

(1) Shapur Haqiqat, Iran from the Shah to the Ayatollahs, Dar al-Shams, d.m., d.t., p. 11.

A Reading of the Iranian Political Scene during the Government of Jamshid Omuzkar (August 7, 1977 – August 27, 1978)

allow them to respond to the article, prosecute its author, and apologize, which led to the complete disruption of the city of Qom. On the afternoon of January 9, the students of religious schools came out in a large demonstration to the house of Hossein Nouri, who gave a speech in which he denounced the previous article, and the government's rejection of their demands regarding the article, especially its refusal to apologize, and then the death of Mustafa Khomeini, which inflamed the enthusiasm of the demonstrators who demanded the abolition of the monarchy and the return to the constitution. At this time, the glass of the National Bank in Qom was smashed, and the policemen, who were fully prepared, attacked the demonstrators and shot them¹.

The next day, government newspapers reported the demonstrations as acts of vandalism by a group of rioting students, claiming that they were raising slogans (anti-national interests). Meanwhile, religious scholars in the city of Qom issued a statement with the following statement: "In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, we belong to God and to Him we return. The bloody tragedy in Qom was on the twenty-ninth Monday of Muharram 1398 AH. Q, corresponding to (the nineteenth of Dimah) due to the degrading demands and articles published in the Ettelaat newspaper, which offended the sanctities of Islam and the great references, their shadows lasted, especially to the highly respected Shiite authority Hazrat Sayyid Khomeini, which led to the agitation and anxiety of everyone..." (2)

The next day, at the funeral of the dead, other clashes took place with the authorities, which led to a number of other deaths, and other demonstrations took place in several cities such as Isfahan, Mashhad, and Najafabad, and these demonstrations were not without clashes and deaths. Thus, this article was an important reason to stir up the Iranian people,

(1) Shapur Haqiqat, Previous reference, p. 13.

(2) Seyyed Jalal al-Din al-Madani, Contemporary Political History of Iran, translated by Salem Mashkour, Islamic Media Organization, Tehran, 1993, p. 36.

and very much against the Shah's regime, so the government exiled a number of clerics to remote areas of the country in its attempt to suppress the demonstrations, which led to the expansion of the demonstrations, including universities, at which point the government was forced to officially close a number of them⁽¹⁾.

Fourth: Tabriz Uprising

Madari, along with a large number of clerics in the city of Tabriz, the second largest city in Iran, issued a fatwa announcing the commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the martyrs of the Qom massacre, which fell on February 18, 1978. Peaceful demonstrations spread in many Iranian cities, including: Tehran, Isfahan, Mashhad, Shiraz and others, and the city of Tabriz witnessed a general strike, and when the demonstrators headed towards the mosques, they were surprised to see them closed by the security and police men, which affected them, in addition to this, the police director killed one of the demonstrators, so the demonstrators carried the body, and roamed around the city, and those demonstrations turned into bloody clashes, which lasted for two consecutive days (February 18 and 19), and then the residents of the city went to burn and destroy police stations, and cinemas Hotels, banks, and offices of the Ennahda Party (Rastakhiz), which led to the recall of the army forces, which in turn used tanks and warplanes and these clashes continued until midnight, after the government was forced to declare martial law in the city and these clashes resulted in the death and wounding of a large number of people, and approximately (four hundred to four hundred and fifty) people, and a number of university students were arrested for participating in the demonstrations. Moreover, the Iranian government announced that it would impose The Tabriz uprising has had a profound

(1) S. L. Agayev, Iran in the Past and the Present, translated by: Research and Information Center, Baghdad, 1983, pp. 6-7.

A Reading of the Iranian Political Scene during the Government of Jamshid Omuzkar (August 7, 1977 – August 27, 1978)

impact on both the people and the Iranian government, as there is no public trust in the government that killed their sons¹.

The 40th anniversary of the martyrs of the city of Tabriz came at the end of March, when markets and universities were struck, large processions were organized, and then turned into bloody clashes in both Tehran and Isfahan, but the most violent of these clashes took place in the city of Yazd, where the police shot at demonstrators who were chanting "Death to the Shah" and "Long live Khomeini." These demonstrations lasted for three days, which led to the Shah's hasty return, and he himself directed the police and security forces in the face of the demonstrators, and a large number of the city's residents were killed, and a number of others were arrested. At the end of these events, the government exiled a number of Yazd scholars to the city of Iranshahr⁽²⁾.

Fifth: The Shah's Measures in the Face of the Opposition

These events shook the Imperial Regime, and in the face of the inability of the security and police services to detect and eliminate these demonstrations early (according to the regime's point of view), the formation of "groups to confront the disturbers" was announced. An organization consisting of the Shah's characters, the "Revenge Organization", was also formed, with the task of liquidating the opponents of the Imperial Regime³.

Despite this, the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of the martyrs continued, as soon as the fortieth anniversary of the martyrs of the city of Yazd arrived on the tenth of May, a general strike was declared in the markets and educational institutions. Demonstrations were also organized in many cities, and like their predecessors, these demonstrations turned into clashes in most Iranian cities, including the capital, Tehran. As for the demonstrations in the city of Qom, they were

(1) Sayyid Jalal al-Din al-Madani, previous source, p. 39.

(2) Mamoun Youssef, "The Events of Iran Shake the Rastakhiz Party", Tehran, 1978, pp. 15-16.

(3) Ibid., p. 19.

more violent, as the policemen continued to chase the demonstrators in the alleys and streets, until they stormed the house of the Orbital Sharia in its absence, and shot at those inside, killing one person and wounding another. However, the Shari'a of Madari has confirmed that: "There were about 100 students and non-students in Al-Biruni [Al-Barani], who were sitting, and that day was the anniversary of the death of Fatima al-Zahra (peace be upon her) on the second of Jumada II, where they were waiting for the preacher, and there was no one among them with weapons or a participant in a demonstration." This incident left a great impact on the Iranian street, prompting the government to issue an official apology to Sharia Madari for it, explaining: "The soldiers did not know that it was our house [according to Ayatollah Madari] because they were from outside the city of Qom."⁽¹⁾ .

In an attempt to reduce the crisis on the one hand, and to continue with the "approach of freedom" on the other, the Shah made some economic reforms. The Shah also visited the city of Mashhad, apologized for the Orbital Sharia, promised to reopen the Faydiyya Madrasah, released a number of clerics and merchants detained since 1975, and promised 100% free elections. It is possible that some parties and groups that were involved in these elections will participate in these elections. previously banned, such as the National Front, right-wing Iranian nationalists, other democrats, and political dissidents².

The Shah announced this after it became clear to him that his only party (the Iranian Renaissance – Rastakhizmal Iran) had failed in the face of the recent events in the country that led to deep divisions within the party, as the head of the party's constructive wing, Hoshank Ansari, submitted his resignation from the party, followed by the head of the progressive wing, Abdolmajid Majidi, which led to the formation of a third wing of

(1) Muhammad Abdullah Al-Azzawi, *Bazarkan and the Difficult Labor: A Study in the Struggle for Power in Iran*, Dar Al-Wataniya Al-Jadida, Damascus, 2010, p. 104.

(2) Hassan Al-Jaf, *Al-Wajeez fi Tarikh Iran*, vol. 4, Bayt al-Hikma, Baghdad, 2003, p. 296.

**A Reading of the Iranian Political Scene during the Government of
Jamshid Omuzkar (August 7, 1977 – August 27, 1978)**

the party called the "Group for the Study of Iranian Problems", headed by Hoshank Nahavandi (director of Princess Farah's private office). He also presented MP Mohsen Bazshkpour (MP for Ahvaz, and former head of the Party of Advocates of Iranian Nationalism), and with three members who resigned from the Ennahda Party, announcing the restructuring of their old party and the resumption of their activity, then Bazshkpour began to criticize the Ennahda Party, and this action encouraged Hoshank Nahavandi (head of the third wing of the Ennahda Party) to declare his group's independence from the Ennahda Party through its political activity, in the name of the "New Society"¹

In early 1978, the Shah presented US President Jimmy Carter with a list of military purchases worth more than \$10 billion, and on the other hand, in July of the same year, the Shah arrived in Iran with the 79th plane out of a total of 80 planes that the Shah had purchased. The Shah's request for military equipment and weapons was also approved, provided that the request was divided into four years. This was at a time when the economic crisis in Iran intensified, and following the Iranian economic recession in the second half of 1978, the unemployment rate rose to about 400,000 people, which led to the increasing discontent of the working class and its participation in anti-government demonstrations.

Meanwhile, the Iranian people continued their demonstrations. At the beginning of August, which coincided with the Ramadan holiday, violent demonstrations broke out in most Iranian cities, including Mashhad, Tabriz, Shiraz, Behbahan, and Isfahan⁽²⁾.

On August 19, 1978, during the imperial celebrations on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the overthrow of the government of Dr. Mohamed Mossadegh, a fire broke out in the Rex Cinema in the city of Abadan, killing between four hundred and seven hundred people, including men, women and children.

(1) Hassan Al-Jaf, Previous reference p. 297.

(2) Ahmad Shaker Abdul-Alaq, Political Parties and Organizations in Iran 1963-1979, Al-Rafid Publications, Baghdad, 2016, p. 45.

The fire shook the Iranian street at a time when accusations were exchanged between the government and its opponents, each of which was based on several things. However, the fact that the Iranian people have realized is that the incident was fabricated, and the government's purpose was to discredit the opposition and split its ranks.

Sixth: The dismissal of the government of Jamshid Amuzkar

Following the incident, the Shah held a press conference in which he renewed his accusations of Moscow and "religious reaction." The government also declared official mourning for the victims. The government claimed to have arrested ten people accused of involvement in the incident. The Shah attributed the incident to unknown political reasons. Iranian cities were filled with demonstrations denouncing the government, chanting: "Burn the Shah, destroy the Pahlaviyya." They then addressed their slogans to the army members present there, saying: "Soldiers, you are not to blame, the Shah is the culprit", which prompted the Shah to dismiss the government of Jamshid Amuzkar (the government of the economic crisis) on August 27, 1978. This incident is thus the second turning point in the march of the popular revolution against the regime¹.

Conclusion:

The duration of Jamshid Amuzkar's government, a full year and several days, is the beginning of the end of the Pahlavi regime in Iran that began in 1925. The most prominent public events in Iran during the reign of Amuzkar were:

- The suffocating economic crisis that has negatively affected various segments of Iranian society.
- Clerical opposition to Iran's ruling authority grows
- The SAVAK has increased its repression of dissidents, especially in public demonstrations and sit-ins.
- The Rastakhiz party, the Shah's party, disintegrated due to the lack of a program to address the economic crisis and political opposition.

(1) Ahmad Shaker Abdul-Alaq, Previous reference, p. 47.

A Reading of the Iranian Political Scene during the Government of Jamshid Omuzkar (August 7, 1977 – August 27, 1978)

- The Shah's continuation of his armament program and the building of the army, which takes the largest percentage of the state treasury, generated general discontent among the people.
- The spread of popular opposition in various Iranian cities, the capital Tehran, Tabriz, Qom, Yazd and other cities.
- The government of Jamshid Amuzkar failed to resolve the economic and political crisis due to the Shah's intransigent positions, which led to his resignation .

Sources:

- (1) Ahmad Shaker Abdul Alaq, *Political Parties and Organizations in Iran 1963-1979*, Al-Rafid Publications, Baghdad, 2016.
- (2) Hassan Al-Jaf, *Al-Wajeez fi Tarikh Iran*, vol. 4, Bayt al-Hikma, Baghdad, 2003.
- (3) Salma Adnan Mohammed, *The Countries of the Arabian Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, Facts and Figures*, Publications of the Center for Arab Gulf Studies, Basra, 1978.
- (4) S. L. Agayev, *Iran in the Past and the Present*, Translation: Research and Information Center, Baghdad, 1983.
- (5) Seyyed Jalal al-Din al-Madani, *Contemporary Political History of Iran*, translated by Salem Mashkour, Islamic Media Organization, Tehran, 1993.
- (6) Shapour Haqiqat, *Iran from the Shah to the Ayatollahs*, Dar al-Shams, D.M., D.T.
- (7) Mamoun Youssef, "The Events in Iran Shake the Rastakhiz Party", Tehran, 1978.
- (8) Mohammad Abdullah Al-Azzawi, *Bazarkan and the Difficult Labor: A Study in the Struggle for Power in Iran*, New National House, Damascus, 2010.
- (9) Muhammad Wasfi Abu Moghli, *A Guide to Iranian Personalities*, Center for Persian Gulf Studies, Basra, 1983.