

ASPIRATIONS OF EQUALITY FOR WOMEN OF THE REVOLUTIONS

IN CUBA AND IRAN

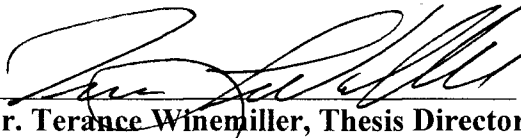
**A thesis submitted to the faculty of
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for the degree of Master of Liberal Arts**

By

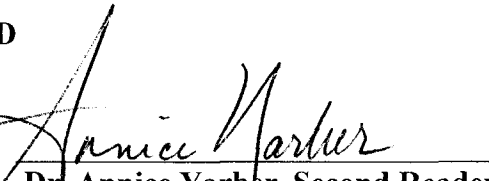
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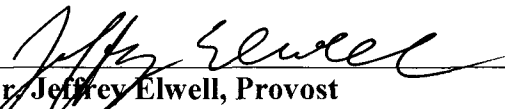
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This thesis is dedicated to the women of Cuba and Iran
who have fought for gender equality and to my daughter
Rolley Len with my hope that she will never have to face such
adversity in her time.

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INTRODUCTION

Nationalism: “My country, may it always be right. Right or wrong, my country!”¹

While governments of Cuba and Iran are both largely considered to be conservative and repressive of their citizens by democratic standards, revolutionary leaders in each country were able to utilize women through a combination of patriotism and manipulation in their efforts to take control in Cuba in 1959 and in Iran in 1979. Women in both countries believed their efforts would be for the greater good of their countries if not for themselves, but when the revolution ended what followed was an apparent disparity in equality for women in the two countries.

In both Cuba and Iran, religion has clearly played a role in government and contributes to a sense of nationalism. Dorothy Dohen writes in *Nationalism and American Catholicism*, “nationalism is more than mere patriotism; but what is this ‘something more’?”² Dohen says that the United States has an unusual relationship between patriotism and religion, as if they are intertwined from the root.³ “Americans feel they are the only religious people in the world,” she writes.⁴ In the U.S., a return to faith is seen again and again in times of war, tragedy or economic difficulty. Many Americans might quickly dismiss any comparison of their brand of devout patriotic faith with the patriotism of Iran or Cuba. However, understanding that even in a democracy like the U.S., this type of nationalism exists helps explain the perspective of citizens in

¹ Dorothy Dohen, *Nationalism & American Catholicism* (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1967), 1.

² *Ibid.*, 4.

³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

both the theocratic Islamic Republic nation of Iran and the officially atheist Socialist democratic nation of Cuba.

According to Charles Andrain in *Political Justice and Religious Values*, “Both religion and politics place high importance on the laws, rules, and norms that regulate human interactions. Distributive justice involves the link between individual interests and the common good.”⁵ **Table 1** shows factors such as cultural values and theological hierarchy that go into a person’s ability to form their political viewpoints.⁶ While those interested in spiritual justice are concerned with pleasing God, helping society, and absolving their sins, there are others who are more interested in political justice and are therefore more concerned with the church as an institution, the government, and their own individual material needs.⁷

⁵ Charles Andrain, *Political Justice and Religious Values* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Table 1.⁸ Explanations for Political Attitudes

Historical context→	Theological views→	Concepts of→	Political attitudes
	about spiritual justice	political justice	toward procedural & distributive justice
Cultural values	hierarchy, individualism egalitarianism, fatalism	hierarchy, individualism egalitarianism, fatalism	civil liberties, sexual freedom, gender equality, economic equality
↓			
Distribution & use of political power	God / \	church / \	
	society ↔ individual	government ↔ individual	
↓			
Distribution & use of income & wealth			

Dohen attributes nationalism to a citizen putting the nation's needs before their own personal needs and desires.⁹ This correlates directly with former Cuban President Fidel Castro and Ernesto "Che" Guevara's sense of duty to the State. Guevara identified first with being a Cuban revolutionary and was not concerned that he was not with his own family tending to their needs because he said he knew "the State will provide enough for their expenses and education."¹⁰ Guevara had a faith in government even in it's infancy that many people in the U.S. would not dare to have today.

In *The Cuban Revolution 25 Years Later*, the authors state that the 1959 revolution in Cuba was possible because of the intense nationalism that permeated the nation due to sentiment against Spanish colonialism and a strong desire for

⁸ Adapted from: Charles Andrain, *Political Justice and Religious Values* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 4.

⁹ Andrain, 5.

¹⁰ Ernesto Guevara, *Socialism and Man in Cuba and other works* (London: Stage 1, 1968), 50.

independence.¹¹ Once that independence from Spain was won, Cuba then had to rely on the United States for assistance, which meant the sensitivity regarding dependency continued.¹²

Prior to the revolution in 1979, Iran experienced a surge in nationalism due to Muhammad Shah Pahlavi's actual and perceived association with foreign companies and governments.¹³ Detractors of the Shah saw his rule as "an instrument of foreign imperialism and moral corruption" that brought together diverse factions of people in a united effort against him.¹⁴ The perception that foreign countries were taking over the country led to citizens identifying Shia fundamentalist clergy as being pure, above corruption and more in sync with Iranian heritage and history.¹⁵ Ruhollah Khomeini was able to tap into this belief and used devout Shia followers to weaken the Shah's government and military through protests and martyrdom.¹⁶ For example, followers celebrated martyrs and mourned them as heroes, which helped cause a demoralization of the Shah's supporters.¹⁷ This intense sense of nationalism during this time set the tone for the impending takeover by Khomeini.

¹¹ Hugh Thomas, Georges A. Fauriol, and Juan Carlos Weiss, *The Cuban Revolution, 25 Years Later* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 1.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ James Defronzo, *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2007), 275.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 316-17.

¹⁶ Ibid., 317.

¹⁷ Ibid.

PART I - BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCING FACTORS

CHAPTER ONE: RELIGION

Cuba and Iran's citizens have both historically shown a strong sense of nationalism and commitment to the success of their respective governments. Both countries also have strong ties to specific religions, in particular Catholicism and Islam.

Catholicism in Cuba



Figure 1. Catedral de la Habana, Constructed 18th Century. Photo by Christy Kirk, 2006.

While many Cubans identified themselves as being Catholic in the 1950's, only 10 percent of them were practicing routinely.¹⁸ **(Table 2)** One reason for the disparity in those who identify as Catholic and those who practice is that the Catholic Church in Cuba was controlled by the Spanish in the 19th century.¹⁹ **(Figure 1)** This was a problem for several reasons. Cubans felt disenfranchised from the Church because it was not supportive of Cuban independence, the priests were considered very conservative, and the clergy were not especially concerned with the plight of the rural poor.²⁰ The Catholic Church in Cuba was a weaker version of what existed in other Latin American countries.²¹

Table 2²² Attendance at Mass of the Family Head (farm workers, 1956)

<u>No. of times per year</u>	<u>Respondents (%)</u>
0	93.47
1	2.64
2	1.83
3	1.32
4	0.74

Source: Oscar A. Echevarría Salvat, *La Agricultura Cubana, 1934-1966: Régimen Social, Productividad y nivel de vida del sector agrícola* (Miami: Ediciones Universal, 1971), 15.

To understand the role of the Catholic Church in Cuba during and after the overthrow of Batista in 1959, it is important to look at the relationship between church

¹⁸ Ibid., 198-99.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 198.

²² Adapted from: John Kirk, *Between God and the Party: Religion and Politics in Revolutionary Cuba* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1989), 46.

and state in the period starting with the Treaty of Paris signing in 1898 and ending with the coup.²³ During this period, Cuba was Spain's last Latin American colony and the inhabitants of the country were so inherently and patriotically tied to their motherland they were considered "more Spanish than Spain."²⁴ The Catholic Church in Cuba was also ensconced in being Spanish with those in the hierarchy typically being Spanish-born.²⁵ In *Between God and the Party*, John Kirk writes of a historian who described the Cuban Catholic Church as remaining medieval and that was not necessarily a bad thing since, "there was a time when to be medieval was to be progressive and abreast of the times."²⁶ However, trying to live in the past and siding with Spain and therefore endorsing the status quo was not the right side for the church to be on during the civil war. When the war ended, the Church lost credibility.²⁷

"Cuba Libre?"²⁸

The Treaty of Paris between Spain and the United States put General John Brooke at the helm of Cuba as the military governor. With the appointment of Brooke, the newly independent republic received a setback to its nationalistic fervor as the interests of the U.S. took precedence over Cuban interests.²⁹ While the U.S. occupied Cuba from 1899-1902, the Catholic Church tried to make up for its loss of position and power in society.

²³ John Kirk, *Between God and the Party: Religion and Politics in Revolutionary Cuba* (Tampa: University of South Florida Press, 1989), 33, 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 37.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

Although the Church made gains, many citizens in Cuba felt the church leadership was being opportunistic and did not have their best interests in mind.³⁰ Brooke's term as governor weakened the Church in other ways as well.³¹ He declared a separation of church and state, which included schools and hospitals.³² That there would be no funding for religious education in public schools was a major blow to the Church since the schools were the best way to introduce Catholicism and indoctrinate new young followers.³³ Brooke also made changes to marriage services making civil marriage the only binding ceremony.³⁴

Brooke's replacement, General Leonard Wood, chose to work with the Church at least as a means to an end.³⁵ He made concessions and cooperated with the religious authorities on issues such as divorce, marriage ceremonies and cemeteries.³⁶ Because of Wood's cooperation with the Church, their leadership was perceived as favoring the U.S. occupation of Cuba.³⁷ However, the Catholic Church in Cuba made great strides in public perception in the first thirty years of the 20th Century with such actions as placing native-Cuban clergy in high ranking positions and providing education for children.³⁸

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 37, 43.

³⁴ Ibid., 37.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 38.

³⁸ Ibid., 39.

The Church as an institution was a scrappy survivor, with the leadership making decisions based on the political expediency of the results.³⁹

After Wood left his position as governor in 1902, the Church began to evolve once again with the establishment of religious fraternities and associations.⁴⁰ **(Table 3)** These groups not only came together to discuss and ponder religion, but to help the poor and unfortunate of Cuba.⁴¹ The Church used their work with the poor to further their position in Cuban society.⁴² Their public relations efforts included trying to make its religious message a part of the common person's life.⁴³ This effort included being an advocate for Cubans who were from lower socioeconomic backgrounds that previously had not been a part of the Church's consideration.⁴⁴

Table 3⁴⁵ Some of the Cuban Religious Fraternities and Associations Formed Following Independence

Year	Organization
1908	Buen Pastor
1909	Sagrado Corazón de Jesus
1910	La Milagrosa
1910	Damas de Caridad
1921	La Caridad (Damas name changed)
1921	La Inmaculada
1922	El Carmen
1923	Santo Angel Custodio

³⁹ Ibid., 38-39.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 39.

⁴¹ Ibid., 40.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Adapted from: Kirk, 39-40.

Some priests and clergy who had fled the country for Spain after realizing Cuba would soon be independent, returned and ran private schools.⁴⁶ According to Kirk, the anti-Spain sentiment had waned and the Cuban people were more accepting of Spanish influences than they were during and immediately following the civil war.⁴⁷ One significant sign that public attitudes and perceptions had changed was the large number of successful periodicals controlled by the Catholic Church.⁴⁸ **(Table 4)** Rather than being seen as an anti-nationalistic hierarchy, the church transformed into a patriotic institution and it was acceptable to be a practicing Catholic in Cuban society.⁴⁹

Table 4⁵⁰ Media controlled by the Catholic Church during the 1930's

<i>Boletín Eclesiástico</i>	Journal of the Archdiocese of Havana
<i>San Antonio</i>	Journal of the Franciscans
<i>Belen</i>	Journal of the Jesuits
<i>La Anunciata</i>	Journal of the Jesuits
<i>El Mensajero</i>	Journal of the Jesuits
<i>Esto Vir</i>	Journal of the Jesuits
<i>La Salle</i>	Journal of the Christian Brothers
<i>Don Bosco</i>	Journal of the Salesians
<i>Rosal Dominico</i>	Journal of the Dominicans
<i>Aromas del Carmelo</i>	Journal of the Carmelites
<i>El Mensajero Católico</i>	Journal of the Scolapians
<i>Mensajes</i>	Journal of the Cabelleros de Colón
<i>Nuestra Hojita</i>	Journal of the Cathedral
<i>La Milagrosa</i>	Journal of the Paulists
<i>Cultura</i>	Journal of the Paulists
<i>Diario de la Marina</i>	Newspaper, controlled religious section
<i>El Mundo</i>	Newspaper, controlled religious section
<i>El País</i>	Newspaper, controlled religious section

⁴⁶ Ibid., 36, 40.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 40.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Adapted from: Kirk, 41.

With the Church having such a strong influence and powerful presence in Cuban society, it is important to note that during the first thirty years of the twentieth century there were no signs of it protesting government corruption, foreign intervention, or military brutality.⁵¹ **(Figure 2)** According to Kirk, “The church deliberately ignored the harsh Cuban reality for two reasons.”⁵² First, it was believed by some that church and politics did not go together, which seems incongruous with what the church had been doing historically.⁵³ The second reason was for self-preservation purposes.⁵⁴ At this time, the Church had plenty to lose and chose not to create enemies by pointing out the flaws of other establishments.⁵⁵ That the Church would not address issues such as military torture or election fraud in spite of its authoritarian role shows that the leadership was only interested in charity and not real social justice.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ibid., 42.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.



Figure 2. The giant “Estatua de Cristo,” Constructed in 1958 is symbolic of the Church’s prominence in Havana. Photo by Christy Kirk, 2006.

The Church’s charitable works as well as the education they provided to the children of Cuba had elitist leanings.⁵⁷ A few schools did accept children from poor backgrounds, but most were reserved for the privileged, wealthier citizens.⁵⁸ Many of these students favored by the church were taught by North American nuns and students were taught to speak English since it was considered an asset.⁵⁹ To the church, the future would be in the hands of white, middle class, urban children that they were teaching.⁶⁰ Promoting North American culture in Cuba and focusing on the social elite created a negative ripple in the rural and poorer areas.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Ibid., 43.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Throughout the 1940's and 1950's, the Church maintained its cordial relationship with the government, comingling with political circles while ignoring corruption and socioeconomic disparity.⁶² When Fulgencio Batista took over as dictator of Cuba in 1952, he continued the system of flirtation with the Church that had existed and by that time the people of Cuba already held the Church in low esteem.⁶³ Batista ruled sternly and dealt with dissidents harshly, which most of the church hierarchy ignored.⁶⁴ Archbishop Enrique Pérez Serantes of Santiago de Cuba who happened to be a family friend of Fidel Castro spoke out bravely against the methods of Batista's men.⁶⁵ Pérez Serantes chastised the government for torturing and killing rebels after the July 26 Movement and along with the public pressured them to release the remaining living captives.⁶⁶ This action taken by a religious leader would prove to be history changing as Fidel Castro was among those who were released.⁶⁷

The church was factionalized, with some in the leadership disinterested in helping promote social justice and others acting as advocates.⁶⁸ Three groups of religious people joined together to work against Batista: a social reformist group of laymen, social groups like the Catholic Youth and the Young Catholic Workers, and the majority of the secular clergy.⁶⁹ According to Kirk, these groups were "aware of the repression by Batista's

⁶² Ibid, 44.

⁶³ Ibid, 44-45.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 45.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 46-47.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 47.

forces, of Cuba’s rural poverty and of the need for sweeping social reform.”⁷⁰ Those who were critical of the church felt hopeful that change would come but also felt that there was “an inability to harness this energy.”⁷¹ What the church lacked in charisma, Castro would be able to more than make up the difference.

By 1957, the average rural worker was either uninterested or disenfranchised with both the church and the government.⁷² **(Table 5 & 6)** They did not attend church regularly if at all, and a majority of marriages in the rural areas were not even executed as a religious ceremony.⁷³ **(Table 7)** However, as the rebellion led by Fidel Castro, his brother Raúl, and Guevara grew in strength and unity, many Catholics did choose to participate in the revolution.⁷⁴ That so many men and women who did not even make an effort to sit in the pews of their church no matter how safe or comfortable, would willingly be a part of a dangerous coup attempt where they might even be killed is a testament to Castro’s ability to organize and motivate the masses.

Table 5⁷⁵ Relationship of the Family Head with the Parish Priest
(farm workers, 1957)

<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Respondents (%)</u>
Have never seen	53.51
Know by sight	36.74
Have no dealings	1.94
A friend	5.43
A personal friend	2.38

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid, 46-48.

⁷³ Ibid., 46-47.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 48.

⁷⁵ Adapted from: Kirk, 47.

Table 6⁷⁶ Attendance at Mass of the Family Head (farm workers, 1956)

<u>No. of times per year</u>	<u>Respondents (%)</u>
5	93.47
6	2.64
7	1.83
8	1.32
9	0.74

Table 7⁷⁷ From Agrupacion's 1957 survey of rural conditions

Approx. 17% of marriages had been celebrated in a church service

Approx. 35% of marriages had been by civil ceremony

Approx. 40% of marriages were common-law arrangements

52% declared themselves Catholic

41% did not declare themselves any religion

88% claimed not to have attended mass in a year

Islam in Iran

In a 1979 article in *Newsweek* magazine, Meg Greenfield wrote, "No part of the world is more hopelessly and systematically misunderstood by us than that complex of religion, culture and geography known as Islam."⁷⁸ In basic religious principles, Islam is not so different from Judaism or Christianity.⁷⁹ The Koran disagrees with the Christian view of God as a father figure of human kind, but has similar views of God as being both all-powerful and to be feared, yet not to be feared as a "capricious tyrant."⁸⁰ In Christianity, the New Testament presents a gentler God compared to the one of the Old

⁷⁶Adapted from: Kirk, 46.

⁷⁷ Adapted from: Kirk., 46.

⁷⁸ Huston Smith. *Islam A Concise Introduction*. (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001), 1.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 33.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 35.

Testament and likewise the Koran also shares that God is multi-faceted cannot be described as being one-dimensional.⁸¹ While there are repercussions for misdeeds according to the Koran, Allah is repeatedly referred to as being compassionate and merciful.⁸²

Another example of how similar the religions of Islam and Christianity are is the belief that the Koran actually picks up where Jesus left off after his death and resurrection.⁸³ In *Islam: A Concise Introduction*, Huston Smith writes that the work of Jesus was “reserved for another Teacher to systemize the laws of morality” and “the Koran is this later teacher.”⁸⁴ According to Andrain in *Political Justice and Religious Values*, Jesus’ teachings say that “citizens’ identity rested mainly on ultimate spiritual values that assumed a universal perspective, not loyalty to the nation-state.”⁸⁵ One big difference between Islam and Christianity is that Islam marries religion with politics and the social order.⁸⁶

Any discussion of nationalism in Iran begins with religion. In Smith’s *Islam*, he writes that Mohammed states that all Muslims are brothers to each other and that it is only in the last two centuries that nationalism has become part of the Muslim political design.⁸⁷ Indeed, in the twentieth century Khomeini used an intense sense of nationalism

⁸¹ Ibid., 35-36.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid., 58-59.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Andrain, 2.

⁸⁶ Smith, 59.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 57.

to usher in the “golden age of Iran’s mass politics.”⁸⁸ Muslims had begun to feel linked by their nationality as well as their religious beliefs. In the years prior to the Islamic Revolution, as Iranians became more disenfranchised with the leadership of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, their sense of nationalism grew. Reza Shah disregarded the constitution when making decisions, failed to solidify his political support by creating new parties, and was perceived as too reliant on Western countries.⁸⁹ The relationships with and dependence on other countries appears to be one of the biggest factors that influenced the widespread participation in the revolution.

Khomeini capitalized on the Shah’s weaknesses. Khomeini appears to have fully understood the importance of activists and their influence on political change.⁹⁰ According to Mohsen Milani in *Political Islam Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?*, “It was he [Khomeini] who, in the blink of an eye, could mobilize millions.”⁹¹ From 1977 until Khomeini took over in 1979, Iran had the highest political participation the country had ever experienced.⁹² Many people protested the government in traditional ways: letter writing, attending demonstrations, and forming political parties or professional associations.⁹³ They also participated in new ways using Shi’i symbols and rituals that helped to provide momentum to their cause.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ John Esposito, ed. *Political Islam Revolution, Radicalism, or Reform?* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 83.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁹⁰ Andrain, 139.

⁹¹ Esposito, 84.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 81.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

During the years prior to the 1979 revolution, Mohammad Reza Shah had been perceived as trying to change the role and authority of Shi'ism.⁹⁵ According to Milani, the Shah tried to bridle and harness the religion through a "Pahlavization of Shi'ism."⁹⁶ In 1963, the Shah attempted to control the religious schools and educational system that were overseen by the clergy by closing some of them and the government also considered starting a university to the dismay of the clergy.⁹⁷ He further antagonized them by creating the Religious Corps and the Religious Propagandists, organizations that were "to spread a conservative, apolitical version of Shi'ism, one that emphasized compatibility of Shi'ism and monarchical government; to gradually strengthen the intermingling of Shi'ism and the state bureaucracy; and to demonstrate the commitment of the state to Shi'ism."⁹⁸ Mohammad Reza Shah's clear delight in Western culture including the infiltration of movies, discos and bars, was also a huge problem for the Muslim clergy and followers.⁹⁹ Movie theaters even became a highly popular target of Shi'i faithful attacks in the years before the revolution.¹⁰⁰

Khomeini had been a public political activist since the time of Mohammad Reza's father Reza Shah and published his first important political discourse following Reza Shah's removal.¹⁰¹ By the time of the revolution, Khomeini had written twenty-five books and many other shorter writings of varying degrees of difficulty, from simple to

⁹⁵ Mohsen Milani, *The Making of Iran's Islamic Revolution From Monarchy to Islamic Republic* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 63-64.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 63-65.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 64.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 86.

scholarly.¹⁰² His rhetoric was mostly reformist in nature until he was exiled from 1965-1978, but it consistently propagated three ideas: that Islam should be a way of life and form of government, that the existence of the monarchy should be questioned, and what the role of the clergy is in relation to politics.¹⁰³ Khomeini had been troubled by what he saw as the Westernization of Iran and “In a time when it was fashionable for Middle Eastern intellectuals to advocate nationalism and socialism, and when others regarded Islam as a dying faith, Khomeini raised the banner of Islam as the one force that could solve the problems facing the Islamic world.”¹⁰⁴

As early as 1971, Khomeini called for the Shah’s removal, but at that time, the clergy did not agree with his position.¹⁰⁵ However, by 1976 the number of ulama was about 23,476, and although they all didn’t get along with each other they tired of Mohammad Reza Shah’s activities and banded together.¹⁰⁶ Khomeini boldly went against the longstanding combination of Shi’ism and monarchy that existed in Iran and urged the ulama’s rule.¹⁰⁷ He was considered a “religious innovator” and according to Milani, “Khomeini’s ideas gave religious sanction to rebellion against the Pahlavis and challenged the religious legitimacy of the institution of monarchy.”¹⁰⁸ The various factions of clergy in Iran who opposed the Shah knew that he could not be overthrown

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 86-87.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 87.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 88.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 88-90.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 90.

with only one group's actions, so therefore, the factions banded together in Islamic nationalistic unity to overthrow him.¹⁰⁹

According to Nikki Keddie in *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of a Revolution*, “The intertwining of religion and politics, found in several religions, began in Islam with the Prophet Mohammad himself.”¹¹⁰ The prophet was both a religious and civic leader who applied his teachings to politics and government as much as to the spiritual aspects of life.¹¹¹ As of the start of the 21st Century, Iran was the only nation that was ruled by a member of the Islamic clergy.¹¹² Another unique religious factor in regards to Iran is that the nation is Shi'i while the rest of the Muslim world is Sunni.¹¹³ This is important to note because according to Esposito, “In Shiism, the truth is independent of the perception or the belief of the masses.”¹¹⁴ Followers are expected to try to be like the current ayatollah, but they are only expected to take the Quran at face value and must rely on any further interpretation of the Quran to be provided by the clergy.¹¹⁵ This set the tone for Khomeini to lead an Islamic Revolution because “No one understood better than Khomeini how to manipulate Iran's mass politics, whose fate was determined not in the corridors of governmental agencies but in the streets and by the crowds. He who controlled the streets and the crowds was he who ruled.”¹¹⁶ **(Figure 3)**

¹⁰⁹ Esposito, 81.

¹¹⁰ Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran Roots and Results of a Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University, 2003), 4.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Esposito, 83.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 83-84.



Figure 3. Supporters of the Islamic Revolution in Iran.¹¹⁷

There were several major Shiism traditions that were used to help protest the Shah's rule.¹¹⁸ First, the commemoration of the fortieth day after someone's death became a powerful symbol of dissent as the tally of protesters' who died in anti-shah demonstrations rose.¹¹⁹ Also, public prayer sessions brought people together in a show of unity.¹²⁰ Protestors peacefully demonstrated through crying and self-flagellation in religious processions in honor of martyr Imam Hossein and with synchronized chants from their rooftops of "Allah is great."¹²¹ The movement also employed the current

¹¹⁷ Photo source: <http://www.worldmagnified.com/middle-east/causes-of-islamic-revolution-of-iran> [Accessed July 15, 2010]

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 81.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

technology at the time; cassette recordings of Khomeini's speeches were disseminated amongst the masses.¹²²

During the 1970's, those workers who were part of the manufacturing, mining, electrical, gas, water, and health industries made up the largest class in Iran.¹²³ This group was not considered a threat by the Shah mainly because it was such a diverse group of people.¹²⁴ There was no unifying common denominator in the makeup of the average worker; they were skilled and unskilled, well-paid and underpaid, and literate and illiterate.¹²⁵ Also, because these industrial jobs were in cities like Teheran, the Shah's secret police, SAVAK, could keep a sharp eye out for any anti-regime activities.¹²⁶ The Shah also made sure that workers had good benefits including insurance, housing projects and a worker share ownership policy.¹²⁷ There were strikes, but they only concerned the local worker's needs and were not considered political maneuvers that were part of any greater movement.¹²⁸

According to Milani, the working class, or lumpenproletariat, that included low wage earners like domestic servants and other unskilled workers who used to be part of the agricultural sector, were the last to join in the Islamic revolution.¹²⁹ Although they were considered "politically innocuous," this group was very religious.¹³⁰ Khomeini's

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Milani, 64.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 65.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 64-65.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 65.

message had been infiltrating through the mosques they attended and after a scuffle between Iran's poor and the police in the late 1970's, the working class became more active in protests against the Shah's regime.¹³¹

Khomeini's use of Islam rather than just political rhetoric solidified his support because although his intended audience might be from different social, economic, or educational backgrounds, the religious aspect of his message unified them in ideals.¹³² Those who heard his speeches each heard them in the individual's own context, meaning that each listener extracted their own truth about issues such as "justice, salvation, virtue, liberation and equality."¹³³ This made it easier for Khomeini to reach, touch and influence the hearts and minds of the masses in Iran, including women. Khomeini's "guiding the women" into enthusiastically supporting the revolution would be a key factor in the overthrow of the Shah.¹³⁴

Although the American perception of Iranian men's attitude towards women may be negative, there is a long history of Muslim leadership being supportive of women's rights. The prophet of Islam, Muhammad, has been credited with recognizing women as valuable members of society and even having women advisors.¹³⁵ In 1923, C. Colliver Rice wrote *Persian Women and Their Ways*, an in-depth look at socio-cultural circumstances of the time and an examination of the role of Persian women in their society. She notes that Muhammad had made many reforms concerning women

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Andrain, 7.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Milani, 202.

¹³⁵ C. Colliver Rice, *Persian Women and Their Ways* (London: Seeley, Service, 1923), 97.

including laws that put limits on polygamy, divorce arrangements, and other legalities related to marriage.¹³⁶ Rice found many contradictions in the interpretations of the Koran and the way women were treated during the Qajar reign.¹³⁷

There has been much debate among modern women scholars about whether Islam is inherently sexist and if so, why?¹³⁸ According to Valentine Moghadam in *Modernizing Women Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*, “Muslim societies, like many others, harbor illusions about immutable gender differences.”¹³⁹ Moghadam states that any negative connotations about women’s rights and concerns in the Middle East should not necessarily be considered related to Islam.¹⁴⁰ Women around the globe who are members of different religions have suffered with issues of non-equality.¹⁴¹ Moghadam states that, “As late as 1998, the Southern Baptist Convention in the United States passed a resolution calling on wives to follow and obey their husbands.”¹⁴² Other religious belief systems such as Hinduism, Judaism, and Catholicism have all had issues to debate regarding women’s roles within the religion and in society.¹⁴³ Even within the list of Muslim nations there are different paradigms for women’s status in society. Within each country socioeconomic factors help to dictate an individual woman’s role in society.¹⁴⁴ One key difference between Iran and the others is that it is the only Muslim country that

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid., passim.

¹³⁸ Valentine Moghadam, *Modernizing Women* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 6-7.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 4-6.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 5.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 6.

has “direct clerical rule.”¹⁴⁵ However, it still seems that women’s issues of inequality are the result of a patriarchal society, rather than being a symptom of a particular religion.¹⁴⁶

In closing

One commonality shared by these two religions globally is the perception that they share a similar view of the role of women in society.¹⁴⁷ Both religions have used sanctity as a rationale to curb women at times, but the question arises: does this actually help a nation thrive? As recently as the mid-1990s, Catholic and Muslim leaders were linked together by a common view: women are not equal to men and should be treated differently.¹⁴⁸ Although both countries have strong ties to religions that are integrated into their histories, they seem to have extremely different attitudes towards women’s rights following the revolutions.

Khomeini persuaded women through zealous theology that the revolution would elevate their status in society, but it is his interpretation of that status that must be examined.¹⁴⁹ It appears that he did feel that women had a special role; however, that role existed in a glass box on a shelf. By contrast, Castro chose to engage women as assets necessary to create a better society and treated them as such.¹⁵⁰ Although each leader had the opportunity to exploit either religion to advance their agenda, they appear to have

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 5-6.

¹⁴⁷ Jane Bayes and Nayereh Tohidi, eds. *Globalization, Gender, and Religion* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 1-2.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Kum-Kum Bhavani, *Feminism & Race* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 348-50.

¹⁵⁰ Wilber Chaffee, Jr. and Gary Prevost, eds. *Cuba A Different America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1989), 104.

taken vastly different approaches, possibly because being Catholic did not unify Cubans across economic classes and social lines as Islam did in Iran.¹⁵¹ Khomeini and Castro did, however, both have a good understanding of “moral incentives” and how they could be used to further their cause.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Defronzo, 198.

¹⁵² Robert M. Bernardo, *The Theory of Moral Incentives in Cuba* (University: University of Alabama Press, 1971), passim.

CHAPTER TWO - ECONOMY

Politics and religion around the globe may appear to spring from differing sources with varying degrees of ideals and values, but both place a high value on power.¹⁵³

Idealistically, it seems that religious leaders would focus on the spiritual and transcendental issues and the political leaders would address more practical concerns such as running the state.¹⁵⁴ However, as can be seen in the politics of the United States, building a political or religious empire requires more than just faith in God or a political leader. In both arenas, money is power so it is important to consider the economic systems in both Iran and Cuba. What makes them successful? What causes them to be weak?

Before the 1959 revolution: Cuba under Batista

Almost seventy percent of the 11 million people who currently live on the island of Cuba were born after the revolution in 1959.¹⁵⁵ These people, until just recently, have only known Fidel Castro as their president. Socialism, ration tickets, and travel restrictions are all they have known. The difference between their lives and those of their parents and grandparents at the same age might be very dramatic. The good and bad they have learned of their country's history have not been experienced firsthand.

Before the Castro brothers, General Fulgencio Batista ruled as dictator over Cuba.

In *Women and the Cuban Revolution*, Elizabeth Stone writes that "life in

¹⁵³ Andrain, 5.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 8.

¹⁵⁵ Frances Robeles, quoted in Jeffrey Cane, "Cuba After Castro" (February 19, 2008)
<http://www.portfolio.com/news-markets/top-5/2008/02/19/Cuba-After-Castro>. Retrieved July 14, 2010.

prerevolutionary Cuba was hard” for both men and women with half the population living in huts, shacks or single room slum houses; half without electricity, half without running water or indoor toilets.¹⁵⁶ Unemployment was at the same level as in the United States during the 1930’s depression and twenty-five percent of the population was completely illiterate.¹⁵⁷ Nutrition and healthcare were largely ignored as malnutrition and hunger were rampant and infant mortality was extremely high with 80% of babies being birthed outside of hospitals.¹⁵⁸

Another concern of Cubans was the huge presence of the United States in Cuba during the 1950’s.¹⁵⁹ According to Cardoso and Helwege in *Cuba after Communism*, “U.S. companies controlled two of the three oil refineries, more than 90 percent of the telephone and electric utilities, 50 percent of the public railroads, the entire mining industry, most of the tourist industry, 40 of the 161 sugar mills, and seven of the ten largest agricultural enterprises.”¹⁶⁰ In return for allowing the U.S. to have such strong control over Cuban assets, the U.S. bought sugar from the island nation for sometimes as much as 60% more than the global prices, which meant that the U.S. was subsidizing the Cuban economy.¹⁶¹

The perception of how Cubans were faring as a society could be deceiving depending on where you looked. For example, it has been said that in 1954 more

¹⁵⁶ Elizabeth Stone, ed. *Women and the Cuban Revolution* (New York:Pathfinder Press, 1981), 6.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Eliana Cardoso and Ann Helwege, *Cuba After Communism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), 16-17.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 17.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

Cadillacs were sold in Havana than in any other city worldwide.¹⁶² Eighty-seven percent of city homes had electricity and more people owned television sets than any where else in Latin America.¹⁶³ However, not only were most rural Cubans living in shacks with no running water, but 70% of the farms were held by 8% of landowners while those who actually worked the land barely scraped by.¹⁶⁴

Over the years, statistics like these along with stories of torture and violence by Batista against anti-Batista dissidents caused many Cubans to feel the need for revolution. In *History Will Absolve Me*, Castro defends the July 26, 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks against the Batista regime explaining that the coup was a matter of defending the Cuban nation.¹⁶⁵ According to the revolutionaries, the autonomy of Cuba had been curtailed by the nation's leaders since they earned independence about fifty years earlier.¹⁶⁶ As Castro eloquently stated in his defense, "The country cannot continue begging on its knees for miracles from a few golden calves, similar to the Biblical one destroyed by the fury of the prophet. Golden calves cannot perform miracles of any kind. The problems of the Republic can be solved only if we dedicate ourselves to fight for it with the same energy, honesty, and patriotism our liberators had when they created it."¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 17-18.

¹⁶⁵ Fidel Castro, *History Will Absolve Me* (Havana: Guairas, 1967), 7.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 76.

Before the 1979 revolution: Iran's monarchy



Figure 4. Shah of Iran with his family appearing to be in extravagant surroundings.¹⁶⁸

During the 1960's, Mohammad Reza took major steps to industrialize Iran.¹⁶⁹ His fast track plan included a coalition between the Iranian government, the nation's affluent industrial community, and foreign investors.¹⁷⁰ On the surface, the Shah's activities appeared to be great for Iran's economy as well as the monarchy.¹⁷¹ **(Figure 4)** Statistics show that the gross domestic product (GDP) went from \$10.4 billion in 1960 to \$51 billion in 1977.¹⁷² By comparison, the agricultural industry went from being 24.5% of

¹⁶⁸ Photo source: <http://www.worldmagnified.com/middle-east/causes-of-islamic-revolution-of-iran>
[Accessed July 15, 2010]

¹⁶⁹ Milani, 60-61.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 60.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

the GDP to only 9.4% in just over ten years.¹⁷³ As foreign investments in Iran grew, the nation became more dependent on the West as evidenced in the rise of imported goods from \$89 million in 1963 to \$886 million in 1977.¹⁷⁴ Being so reliant on products and materials not produced in Iran caused a disconnection between the people of the industrialized society and their roots.¹⁷⁵ People who were not part of this society felt disenfranchised because working within the “triangle of fortune” between the state, native capitalists and foreign investors appeared to be the only way to have financial success.¹⁷⁶

Ironically, the Shah’s modernization of Iran helped create a new middle class, which came to be one of his greatest foes.¹⁷⁷ This group that included intellectuals and professionals such as teachers, doctors, lawyers, and writers, grew at a rapid pace.¹⁷⁸ Literacy rates improved from 14.9% in 1956 to 47% in 1976 and there was an increase in students by more than six million from 1971 to 1976 due to the government spending more on education.¹⁷⁹

In 1966 there were about 52,000 university students in Iran, but by 1976 there were more than 437,000.¹⁸⁰ According to Milani, “The higher institutions were hotbeds of opposition to the regime.”¹⁸¹ And, by 1978, 67,000 students were studying overseas

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 61.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 62.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 66.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 62.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

with more than 54,000 in the U.S. where many of them were also politically savvy.¹⁸² In spite of what might be expected, Iranians were well-informed about global matters, not only through television and radio, but through travel throughout the Western world.¹⁸³ In 1971 there were 311,492 Iranian travelers and 1,377,325 by 1977.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 67.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 66-67.

PART II–WOMEN BEFORE AND DURING THE REVOLUTIONS

CHAPTER THREE–WOMEN OF CUBA

Cuban Women during Batista

Prior to the revolution, Cuban women were mostly dependent on men for their well-being.¹⁸⁵ Society dictated that a woman's role was in the home.¹⁸⁶ Women experienced the burden of dependence because of limited work opportunities, lack of financial independence, and limited options regarding family planning and childcare.¹⁸⁷ According to Stone, this attitude in the time prior to the revolution created a “legacy of social and economic backwardness” that could only be cured by healing the nation as a whole.¹⁸⁸

Ironically, there were not many deficiencies in the areas of marriage or divorce as there were in some patriarchal societies because of the almost complete absence of wedding nuptials.¹⁸⁹ In a study by the Cuban Academy of Sciences, Cuba showed “a relatively low marital rate, equivalent to less than five unions for every 1,000 inhabitant per year.”¹⁹⁰ The rate actually rose after 1959 and that is attributed to two factors: the legalization of “free unions” and “the general enthusiasm generated by real people's

¹⁸⁵ Chaffee, 103.

¹⁸⁶ Stone, 5.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 6-7.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Margaret Randall, *Women in Cuba Twenty Years Later* (New York: Smyrna Press, 1981), 96-97.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 96.

power” that made men and women want to make commitments and start families in their exuberance after the life-changing events after the revolution.¹⁹¹

Role of Women in the Revolution

In 1959, the revolution led by Fidel and Raul Castro and Ernesto Che Guevara overthrew the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista in Cuba. The upheaval was possible not only because of women’s support of the men who fought, but also because they themselves took up arms. The lack of widespread female independence in society and feeling the pressure of social and economic inequalities in many aspects of their lives would likely cause Cuban women to feel disenfranchised. Cuban women have traditionally taken part in protests and demonstrations and the revolution’s leaders wisely made use of their abilities.¹⁹²

In *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War*, Guevara tells the story of a mule he and his comrades confiscated from a merchant with ties to Batista.¹⁹³ The troops discussed whether to walk the animal to their next destination or to kill it and carry its meat.¹⁹⁴ He describes the adaptability, diligence, and skill of the mule as it carefully makes its way across treacherous landscapes.¹⁹⁵ “The mule made its way downward, decisively and surefooted, in places where we had to crawl along, clinging to vines, or

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 96-97.

¹⁹² Stone, 5.

¹⁹³ Ernesto Che Guevara, *Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1996), 225.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

hanging on as best we could...” writes Guevara.¹⁹⁶ Instead of standing at a ledge digging in his hooves, the mule found a way to circumvent and overcome obstacles. While mules are typically associated with the trait of stubbornness, this mule is an excellent symbol of Castro’s ability to continuously adapt over time with the times.

Castro came into power in 1959, a time when women were not always afforded the same opportunities as men even in democratic societies. Even before becoming President, Castro wisely integrated women into his campaign of revolution. From the start, Castro and Guevara “looked for men and women who are made of good timber.”¹⁹⁷ They praised the loyalty of their supporters who became heroes and leaders in the party including Celia Sánchez, the first woman to join the Rebel army.¹⁹⁸ Sánchez was also an organizer of the July 26 Movement and recruited fighters to the cause.¹⁹⁹ Women had been part of the revolution’s fighters since March of 1957 and the Mariana Grajales platoon consisting of all women was formed about six months later.²⁰⁰ Not only were women combatants in his army, they were allowed a vote in such critical matters as putting a comrade to death.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 26.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 26, 28.

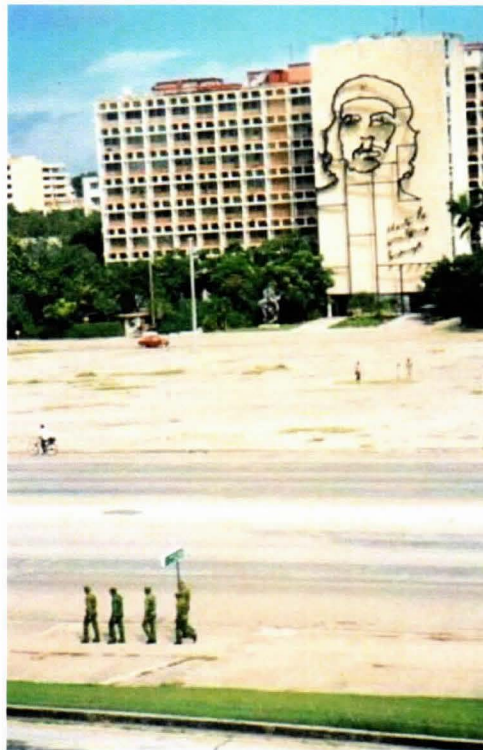
¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 26.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 56.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 228.

Cuba's socialism: Patria o Muerte!

Castro's leadership philosophy is reflected in the writings of his revolutionary comrade, Ernesto "Che" Guevara. **(Figure 5)** To be successful, a socialist state must be able to maintain, nurture and cultivate itself.²⁰² The key ingredient is man himself and collectively, the men of Cuba formed "a personage which will systematically repeat itself: the masses."²⁰³ Castro knew that to guarantee longevity and strength in his government, he had to entrust a system that would make sure there was never a glitch that could dismantle the machine he built.



**Figure 5. Soldiers march past sculpture of Ernesto Guevara in Revolution Square.
Photo by Christy Kirk, 2004.**

²⁰² Guevara, *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, 4-5.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

Guevara points out that the masses are not sheep, although they can be led by an appropriate leader.²⁰⁴ For people to risk death on behalf of their nation, they must feel there is an inherent value to their actions or for their sacrifice.²⁰⁵ There were many heroes in actual combat during the revolution, but the Cuban government sought to encourage people to be heroes in their everyday lives.²⁰⁶ Whether it was supporting soldiers, working in the sugar cane fields, or taking an office job it is clear that all citizens were important to the success of the nation as a whole. This also meant that women were in fact crucial to the future of Cuba.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 5.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 4.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER FOUR–WOMEN OF IRAN

Iranian Women during Pahlavi Rule

After the Qajar dynasty ended, Reza Khan Pahlavi became Shah. As the Shah of Persia, and after the 1935 name change, Iran, he apparently sought to remedy the social imbalance that had previously existed.²⁰⁷ While in power, Reza Shah implemented many changes such as not requiring women to wear the veil and encouraging education of girls and women.²⁰⁸ During his rule, women were encouraged to go to college, become teachers, and work for the state and to not wear the veil, but many of his economic actions only reinforced the nation's patriarchal society.²⁰⁹ His reforms included the suppression of any political organizations including those aimed at helping women.²¹⁰ While both father, Reza Shah, and son, Mohammad Reza Shah, made some reforms regarding women, they only affected a small number of the population; women who were already a part of affluent society.²¹¹ Once Reza Shah stepped down in 1941, pro-women groups flourished.²¹²

In 1941, Mohammed Reza continued the Pahlavi regime when he replaced his father as shah at the age of twenty-two. The young shah was likely influenced by his father's relatively progressive attitude towards women. Literacy among women rose, they could vote, be elected to office, and in 1978, women comprised thirty-eight percent

²⁰⁷ Rouhangiz Shiranipour, "Women's Rights, Writing and Education in Iran," *Changing English*, vol. 9, no 1 (2002):39.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 39-40.

²⁰⁹ Maryam Poya, *Women, Work & Islamism: Ideology and Resistance in Iran* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 3, 36.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 39.

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3, 53.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 40.

of the collegiate student body.²¹³ Things appeared to be improving for the women of Iran. In *Iran: The Illusion of Power*, Robert Graham points out that this was considered to be an influence of western culture and brought out “a latent chauvinism and at times xenophobia” in Iranian society.²¹⁴ An example of public criticism of the Shah’s actions can be seen in the 1966 formation of the Women’s Organization of Iran, which was to help improve women’s role in society, but was seen by some as a means to “Europeanize” them.²¹⁵

Shah Mohammed Reza was not necessarily “pro-woman,” but he saw the political uses of reforms and his regime was relatively progressive towards women’s issues.²¹⁶ Although revolutions occur because of a combination of conditions, one factor in the Shah’s overthrow was his push for the advancement of women, because it caused a discomfort in society towards his policies and the Shah himself.²¹⁷ Earlier in his political, religious rhetoric, Khomeini had denounced Mohammad Reza’s father Reza Shah for actions such as requiring women to not wear the veil.²¹⁸ Later, he criticized Mohammad Reza for actions such as passing the Family Protection Bill that allowed women to ask for divorce in certain circumstances.²¹⁹

²¹³ Shiranipour, 40.

²¹⁴ Robert Graham, *Iran: The Illusion of Power* (London: Croom Helm, 1978), 190.

²¹⁵ Mehran Kamrava, *Revolution in Iran: The Roots of Turmoil* (London: Routledge, 1990), 101.

²¹⁶ Keddie, 223.

²¹⁷ Kamrava, 1, 5.

²¹⁸ Milani, 86-87.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

In spite of improvements made during the Pahlavi reign, a lot of women supported Khomeini because they felt the revolution would give them a better position in life.²²⁰ The women who protested during the 1979 revolution, many of whom were low paid workers who were seeking relief, included women who felt their lives were in conflict with their religious beliefs.²²¹ Although women would appear to be “liberated” by losing their chadors and going to work or university, many felt that not wearing the veil meant they were not free to practice their religion.²²² Ironically, what became a symbol of female suppression to the Western world was a sign of freedom to Islamic women.

Role of women in the revolution

On February 1, 1979, Ruhollah Khomeini returned to Iran from exile in France and within ten days he and his followers took governmental control from Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. **(Figure 6)** Many women supported the coup because they were led to believe that Khomeini was in favor of improving women’s rights and role in their society.

²²⁰ Poya, 125.

²²¹ Ibid., 123.

²²² Ibid.



Figure 6. Ayatollah Khomeini returns to Iran after 14 years exile, February 1, 1979.²²³

In *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, Azar Nafisi discusses how Nabokov's *Invitation to a Beheading* expresses "the texture of life in a totalitarian society, where you are completely alone in the illusory world of false promises, where you can no longer differentiate between your savior and your executioner."²²⁴ It is this type of confusion in identity that led to millions of women assisting in the Iranian revolution of 1979.²²⁵ Just as there is a history of Islam showing signs of being supportive of women's rights, there

²²³ Photo source: <http://www.payvand.com/news/09/feb/1025.html> [Accessed July 15, 2010]

²²⁴ Azar Nafisi, *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (New York: Random House, 2003), 23.

²²⁵ Poya, 122-123.

is also history of political protest by female citizens, such as when thousands of women marched in Iran and spoke out against the Russian government in 1911.²²⁶

But why would millions of Iranian women, religious or not, assist in the Islamic fundamentalist revolt that promoted Shi'ism when religious fundamentalism is often tied to misogyny?²²⁷ Women were lured into supporting the revolution by the idea that their participation made them “revivalists” who would bring about “returning to the golden age of Islam.”²²⁸ Islam not only has a history of being sympathetic to women’s issues, but respecting the stages of life that women experience.²²⁹ The women mistakenly thought that if they assisted in the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Shah that their cause would be furthered without “separate feminist efforts.”²³⁰

Non-religious women also participated and wore headscarves given to them at protests.²³¹ The veil became symbolic of solidarity and was worn by choice during the revolution.²³² Another reason that Shi'ism was embraced as a means of government was that as a strain of Islam that only occurred in Iran, it was familiar.²³³ Khomeini was able to promote the revolution among women by using propaganda and keeping the message

²²⁶ Masoud Kazemzadeh, *Islamic Fundamentalism, Feminism, and Gender Inequality in Iran Under Khomeini* (New York: University Press, 2002), 14.

²²⁷ Bhavani, 348.

²²⁸ Ibid., 348-350.

²²⁹ Ibid., 351.

²³⁰ Keddie, 292.

²³¹ Poya, 124.

²³² Bhavani, 351.

²³³ Ibid.

simple: Shi'ism was good for women.²³⁴ It did not take long for the women of Iran to experience the repercussions of the Ayatollah's true view of feminism.²³⁵

Prior to the revolution in 1979, there were more than 9,000 mosques in Iran.²³⁶ These religious venues served as the foundation for the revolution because they could easily communicate with endless numbers of worshippers throughout the country undetected and unfettered.²³⁷ Iranian women were enticed to join in the protests against Pahlavi's leadership through their own religious beliefs.²³⁸

While some women were aggressive in their participation, even stealing and reissuing weapons to members of the revolution, some chose to be active more covertly.²³⁹ They worked in hospitals and mosques or organized childcare for the women who were more active.²⁴⁰ Millions of women demonstrated daily, marching and protesting.²⁴¹ Headscarves were given out at rallies and even nonreligious females donned them as a sign of unity.²⁴² Women disrupted business as usual by participating in strikes at their jobs and universities.²⁴³

²³⁴ Kamrava, 11-13.

²³⁵ Shiranipour, 35.

²³⁶ Charles Kurzman, *The Unthinkable Revolution in Iran* (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 37.

²³⁷ Ibid., 38.

²³⁸ Poya, 3.

²³⁹ Ibid., 124.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 123.

²⁴² Ibid., 124.

²⁴³ Kurzman, 77, 102-3.

PART III–INFLUENCES AND OUTCOMES

CHAPTER FIVE–THE SOVIET INFLUENCE

After the revolutions in Cuba in 1959 and Iran in 1979, Russia was poised to become stronger allies with the new governments. In the tiny island nation of Cuba, the Soviets saw an opportunity to gain a globally strategic position that would have an effect logistically, politically and psychologically on the entire world. In Iran, Russia needed to maintain their use of the oil-rich country's assets without pause. How was Russia influential in the development of these newly evolved countries? What affect did Russia's relationship with Cuba and Iran have on women's roles in each nation's society?

The Soviet Model: Socialism as gender equalizer

According to L. Rzhantsyna in *Women, Work, and Family in the Soviet Union*, “Socialism has shown the whole world how the ‘woman’s question’ should be solved. It provided the basic conditions for equality: elimination of all forms of exploitation and oppression and the involvement of women in social production and sociopolitical life.”²⁴⁴ For socialism to be successful long-term, employment must be available to all members of society and all members of society must be able and ready to work. This meant that Russia as a socialist nation had to ensure that not only were there plenty of jobs and workers, but also that the workers were satisfied and would want to stay employed,

²⁴⁴ Gail Lapidus, ed. *Women, Work and Family in the Soviet Union* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1982), 4.

including the women.²⁴⁵ Special consideration must be given to the fact that working women may be mothers and/or caretakers as well as working outside the home.²⁴⁶ The Socialist Party saw protection of working women as their “duty” rather than an option.²⁴⁷ Assistance with issues such as childcare, maternity leave, and limiting the number of hours women could work allowed women to tend to their families both financially and domestically.²⁴⁸ Women want to work for many reasons and the Soviets felt that women should have a positive attitude towards work based on the idea of moral incentives, because working was good for the nation and also provided them with economic independence.²⁴⁹ With more than 51% of women in the workforce, the Soviet Union had the largest female percentage of any industrial nation worldwide and the difference was especially great when compared to Islamic nations.²⁵⁰ That the rate of female employment steadily grew from the 1920’s until 1980 is a sign that Rzhaneitsyna was correct in the assertion that Russia was a model mentor.²⁵¹ **(Table 8)**

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 4.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., passim.

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 47-49.

²⁵⁰ Ibid., x.

²⁵¹ Ibid., xv, 4.

Table 8²⁵² Average Annual Number and Percentage of Female Workers and Employees 1922-80 (U.S.S.R.)

Year	Total of workers and employees (in thousands)	Number of female workers and employees (in thousands)	Women as % of total
1922	6,200	1,560	25
1926	9,900	2,265	23
1928	11,400	2,795	24
1940	33,900	13,190	39
1945	28,600	15,920	56
1950	40,400	19,180	47
1955	50,300	23,040	46
1960	62,000	29,250	47
1965	76,900	37,680	49
1970	90,200	45,800	51
1973	97,500	49,959	51
1976	104,235	53,632	51
1979	110,592	56,678	51
1980	112,480	57,700	51

Sources: Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR, Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR: 1922-1972 (Moscow, 1972), pp. 345 and 348; idem., Zhenshchiny SSSR (Moscow, 1975), pp. 28-29; idem., Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR za 60 let (Moscow, 1977), p. 470; "Zhenshchiny v SSSR," Vestnik statistiki, 1980, no. 1, p. 70; Tsentral'noe statisticheskoe upravlenie pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR, SSSR v tsifrah v 1978 godu: kratkii statisticheskii sbornik (Moscow, 1979), pp. 178-79; idem., Narodnoe khoziaistvo SSSR v 1979 godu (Moscow, 1980), pp. 387-88, 391; idem., SSSR v tsifrah v 1980 godu: kratkii statisticheskii sbornik (Moscow, 1981), p. 160.

Sociologists in the Soviet Union who have studied women's roles in the workforce have said that, "the overwhelming majority of women interviewed attached great importance to the contribution of work to economic independence, social status, and personal satisfaction; relatively few indicated they would withdraw from the labor force even if that were to become economically feasible."²⁵³ As a person's lifestyle improves either through a single female having financial independence or by being part of a

²⁵² Adapted from: Gail Lapidus, ed. *Women, Work and Family in the Soviet Union* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1982), xv.

²⁵³ Lapidus, xvii.

double-income household, expectations go up for quality of life and workplace circumstances.²⁵⁴ In addition, A.G. Volkov states in *Women, Work, and Family*, “The elimination of private ownership and women’s inequality has done away with the proprietary nature of marriage and led to fundamental changes in the relationship between the sexes.”²⁵⁵

Mechanized technology helped women take jobs that previously included a limited number of women.²⁵⁶ This use of machinery allowed more women to attempt these jobs and also improve their ability to perform the tasks necessary to keep the job.²⁵⁷ Government regulations were activated with the intention of protecting women from participating in hazardous assignments or from losing their job because of lack of training or physical ability.²⁵⁸ The Soviet Union made great strides to create a positive environment for working women including: having meaningful jobs available for women, equal pay for equal work, and ample educational and training opportunities.²⁵⁹

Studies of demographics and labor statistics show that “family composition and size are secondary to material and moral incentives in the expansion of female employment,” but that social services and special considerations for women made it easier for women to choose to work outside the home and have a family.²⁶⁰ Soviet women who worked were able to receive paid pregnancy and maternity leave, have

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 8-9.

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 219.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 9.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 9-11.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 10-11.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 22-23.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 49.

access to government-ran childcare assistance at institutions, and to receive benefits for nursing homes and hospital care.²⁶¹ Although there were still issues related to women working outside the home that went unresolved, these improvements to women's job conditions were made in consideration of "motherhood and children and systematic resolution of the contradictions of female labor" and went a long way to improving the lifestyle of women with or without families.²⁶² Having such a progressive attitude about women's roles in the workforce helped the nation by understanding the responsibilities that the roles of being a mother, a wife, or a caretaker meant in their society.²⁶³

In Cuba

"We can –and must – survive." - Fidel Castro²⁶⁴

Contrary to what might be popularly assumed, Castro's leadership in the revolution and his revolutionary activities were not being supported or promoted by the Soviet Union.²⁶⁵ He verbally sparred with the Cuban Communist Party, the Populist Socialist Party (PSP), prior to the revolution and openly criticized their affiliation with Batista's government.²⁶⁶ In turn, the PSP who was backed by the Soviet Union chastised Castro's effort, and chose not to help him in his efforts.²⁶⁷ In fact, rather than being seen

²⁶¹ Ibid., 44.

²⁶² Ibid., 23.

²⁶³ Ibid., passim.

²⁶⁴ Beatriz Pagés, *Can Cuba Survive?* (Melbourne: Ocean, 1992), 1.

²⁶⁵ Thomas, 2.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

as a socialist warrior, Castro actually became a “folk-hero” in the United States because of his charisma and positive media attention prior to Batista’s departure.²⁶⁸

In *The Cuban Revolution 25 Years Later*, Hugh Thomas provides a vivid description of Castro as a leader, “A ruthless but effective political opportunist with demonstrated ideological fluidity, Castro’s primary passions were, and remain, unchallenged personal power, a sense of historical self-importance, and extreme Cuban nationalism.”²⁶⁹ According to Thomas, Castro turned to the Soviet Union as a long-term scaffold to assist his political goals.²⁷⁰ Castro sought to capitalize on the prevalent anti-American sentiment in Cuba, to supply the nation with much needed military support and political strength, and to fulfill his desire to secure his position as a global force.²⁷¹ The early years of his administration have been called “improvisation” rather than anything near a well prepared execution of plan of action.²⁷²

Castro’s Council of Ministers annulled the Constitution of 1940 and replaced it with a Fundamental Law that on its surface may have seemed to be written for the people, but is considered by some to be contradictory and merely a tool to enable Castro to maintain efficient and total control.²⁷³ By creating the Cuban Communist Party that was similar to the Soviet model of communism, Castro weakened the former party, the

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 3.

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 4.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁷² Ibid., 6-7.

²⁷³ Ibid., 7-8.

PSP, and kept control of party activities in the government's hands.²⁷⁴ He put himself in charge of the military, political party, state and national governments and his brother Raúl was second in command.²⁷⁵ Whether or not Castro embraced communism in his heart, he saw an opportunity in the Soviet style of government to further his cause and "as a political opportunist, has changed and adapted to circumstances whenever necessary to preserve his power and enable him to pursue his unchanging primary goals."²⁷⁶ The Bay of Pigs invasion in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 solidified Castro's clout and presidency and Marxism-Leninism was clearly a part of the Cuba government to stay.²⁷⁷ Thomas summarizes the effect of Castro's organization and efficiency by saying, "The extent of his personal power is unsurpassed."²⁷⁸

Cuba relied on assistance from the Soviet Union for many years and when the USSR was dismantled many around the world wondered what that would mean to Cuba's autonomy.²⁷⁹ Cuba followed the Soviet's Marxism-Leninism model for socialism, but according to former President Fidel Castro, unlike the Soviet Union, Cuba will be able to survive and so will socialism.²⁸⁰ Castro states, "The causes that gave rise to revolutions and socialism are very far from having disappeared from the world. In the end, capitalism has meant poverty, hunger, backwardness and underdevelopment for 4 billion people in the world. That is what we inherited from capitalism. Since those causes have

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 9.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., 14-15.

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 14.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 14.

²⁷⁹ Pagés, *passim*.

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 1-6.

not disappeared, how can anyone speak of the disappearance of revolutionary and socialist ideas?”²⁸¹

To Castro, socialism was not a simple, one-definition term.²⁸² He understood and emphasized that socialism was a varying system and there was no way to replicate a system from one country in exactly the same way in another country.²⁸³ The almost organic, flexible nature of socialism meant that the system would continue to survive in some form.²⁸⁴ Whether or not socialism is everlasting in Cuba remains to be seen, but Castro has carefully observed the triumphs and mistakes made by its mentor country as well as other revolutionary movements around the globe and attempted to learn from them.²⁸⁵

The effect that the Soviet Union had on Cuba’s development was not just as a socialist role model during the initial phases after the revolution. Cuba’s ability to continuously adapt and survive was tested when USSR fell apart and Cuba like an orphaned child would have to define itself with limited guidance.²⁸⁶ The Cuban Constitution includes a “commitment to solidarity with other Socialist countries,” but Castro says it’s important to understand the statement in the context of the time it was written.²⁸⁷ Once the Soviet Union was no longer able to assist Cuba economically as it

²⁸¹ Ibid., 3.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 6, 14-17.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., passim.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 23.

had for so many years, Cuba was forced to look elsewhere for trade.²⁸⁸ Because they could no longer rely on the trade agreements made with the Soviet Union, Cuba saw a reduction in imports of resources such as raw materials, fuel, fertilizers, metal, cereals and wood.²⁸⁹ Not relying on the support of the Soviet Union provided the island nation an opportunity to show it could exist on its own, using its own diplomacy skills and fostering the Cuban democratic model.²⁹⁰

By the end of the 1980s, Cuba had become as reliant on the Soviet Union as it had been on the United States in the first half of the 20th century.²⁹¹ **(Table 9)** The Soviet Union subsidized exports out of Cuba and Central Intelligence Agency estimates of the amount of aid to the island nation range in the billions.²⁹² Not anticipating such a vast failure as that in Eastern Europe, Castro had not prepared his country by diversifying their economic interests or putting competent leaders in governmental economic management positions.²⁹³ **(Table10)**

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 18-19.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 43-44.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 21-23.

²⁹¹ Cardoso, 31.

²⁹² Ibid., 31.

²⁹³ Thomas, 28-29.

Table 9²⁹⁴ Cuba's trade partners, 1989

Importing country or region	Percent of Cuban exports
USSR	60
Other Eastern European countries	16
EEC	8
China	4
Japan	2
Canada	2
Other Latin American countries	4
Rest of the world	4

Source: Anuario Estadístico de Cuba, 1989.

Table 10²⁹⁵ Composition of Cuban exports, 1989

	Percent of total exports
Reexports of petroleum from USSR	4.0
Sugar	72.6
Nonsugar total	23.5
Metallic minerals & crude iron	10.5
Tobacco	1.6
Citrus fruit	2.6
Fish products	2.4
Other	6.4

Source: CEPAL, *Estudio económico de América Latina y el Caribe 1989*: Cuba, Santiago, 1990.

Although Castro's government claimed that Soviet assistance was not crucial for Cuba's survival, it became clear as their aid trickled out that their support was a vital necessity.²⁹⁶ In 1990, Cuba's subsidy aid from the Soviet Union was reduced from approximately \$4.5 billion to only \$2.2 billion, while development aid was only cut by

²⁹⁴ Adapted from: Cardoso, 78.

²⁹⁵ Adapted from: Cardoso, 79.

²⁹⁶ Cardoso, 31-32.

about \$1 million.²⁹⁷ In the first six months of 1991, Cuba saw a 25% reduction in trade.²⁹⁸ Over the years, Cuba's position in Latin America diminished and Cuba had to quickly find ways to increase what exports they already had, create new products, and develop new markets.²⁹⁹ (Table 11)

Table 11³⁰⁰ Relative Position in Latin America in GNP Per Capita

Position	1952	1981
1	Venezuela	Venezuela
2	Argentina	Uruguay
3	Cuba	Argentina
4	Chile	Chile
5	Panama	Mexico
6	Uruguay	Brazil
7	Brazil	Panama
8	Mexico	Paraguay
9	Columbia	Costa Rica
10	Costa Rica	Columbia
11	Dom. Rep.	Dom. Rep.
12	Guatemala	Ecuador
13	El Salvador	Peru
14	Nicaragua	Guatemala
15	Honduras	Cuba
16	Ecuador	Nicaragua
17	Peru	El Salvador
18	Paraguay	Honduras
19	Bolivia	Bolivia
20	Haiti	Haiti

Source: Table prepared by Jorge Sanguinety and Ernesto Betancourt on the basis of data from the *World Development Report 1983* for 1981 figures and the "Tipologia Socio-Economica de los Países Latino-americanos" published in a special issue of *Revista Interamericana de Ciencias Sociales*, Vol. II., OAS Secretariat, Washington, DC 1963.

²⁹⁷ Ibid., 31.

²⁹⁸ Ibid., 32.

²⁹⁹ Pagés, 44-45.

³⁰⁰ Adapted from: Hugh Thomas, Georges A. Fauriol, and Juan Carlos Weiss, *The Cuban Revolution, 25 Years Later* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1984), 29.

Tourism was also promoted more ardently than before in an effort “to get through a difficult period of adaptation to the new conditions created by what happened in Eastern Europe.”³⁰¹ **(Figure 7)** Castro relied on imports from other countries for both raw and finished materials. **(Figures 8 & 9)** For exports, he had to use the resources he had, so beautiful beaches, cigar sales and factory tours, and tours of sugar plantations were just some of the attractions used to lure visitors.³⁰² In 1990, the tourism industry made \$250 million, which helped the economy, but not nearly enough.³⁰³ Travelers from around the world visit Cuba, but the United States travel ban has kept Cuba from truly benefiting from tourism.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 45.

³⁰² Cardoso, 39-40.

³⁰³ Ibid., 40.



Figure 7. View from popular tourist spot the Hotel Nacional, Havana. Photo by Christy Kirk, 2006.



Figure 8. Utility poles and 18-wheelers arrive at the Port of Havana. Photos by Christy Kirk, 2006.



Figure 9. Medical supplies from China in a hospital, Havana. Photo by Christy Kirk, 2006.

Castro states that while there would never be any major changes to the system, there would always be small, but important, adjustments made over the years to help the Party evolve and develop.³⁰⁴ One example of change Castro gives is the plan to announce at the 1991 Congress that those who practice religion to join the Communist Party.³⁰⁵ Following the revolution in 1959, members of the Catholic faith were not allowed to join the Party because of their support of the wealthy landowners and those with purely commercial interests in the nation as a precautionary measure to protect the

³⁰⁴ Pagés, 24.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 24-25.

new government.³⁰⁶ According to Castro, it was decided that “There is nothing incompatible about supporting the political concept of socialism and communism and believing in God. One thing concerns what is human, and the other, what is divine; one the things of this world, and the other those of the next.”³⁰⁷ This change reflects an interesting development in the government’s perception and acceptance of religion considering the role of the Catholic Church prior to the revolution. By 1969, Cuba, who once had a large number of clergy, not only had the least number of priests in all of Latin America, but the highest ratio of priests to citizens as well. **(Table 12)**

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 25.

Table 12³⁰⁸ The Latin American Clergy, 1969

Country	Inhabitants per priest	Total Priests
Chile	3,443	2,459
Ecuador	3,845	1,585
Colombia	4,263	4,858
Costa Rica	4,347	367
Uruguay	4,354	627
Paraguay	4,594	446
Argentina	4,722	5,530
Venezuela	4,852	1,904
Panama	5,128	257
Bolivia	5,419	855
Peru	5,500	2,311
Mexico	5,947	8,649
Nicaragua	5,992	300
Brazil	7,764	12,427
Guatemala	7,951	517
El Salvador	8,222	395
Honduras	8,942	260
Dom. Rep.	8,945	446
Haiti	11,005	410
Cuba	38,003	215

Source: *Annuario Pontificio per l'Anno 1970* (Citta del Vaticano: Tipografia Poliglotta Vaticana, 1970).

In Iran

Russia and Iran's relationship is politically and economically intertwined in history and has evolved over many years.³⁰⁹ In 1864, a little more than 100 years before the Islamic revolution, Russian Chancellor, Prince A.M. Gorchakov wrote of the Persian people this way, "The position of Russia in Central Asia is that of all civilized States which are brought into contact with half savage, nomad populations, possessing no fixed

³⁰⁸ Adapted from: Frederick C. Turner, *Catholicism and Political Development in Latin America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1971), 16.

³⁰⁹ Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), *passim*.

social organization.”³¹⁰ Gorchakov went on to explain that the Russian plan of action for dealing with Persia was that, “the tribes on the frontier have to be reduced to a state of more or less perfect submission.”³¹¹ Interestingly, not only were Persians of the time considered almost savage prior to the First World War, in 1910 Americans were seen by the superpowers of the day as non-threatening, but also not easily intimidated.³¹² How perceptions would change globally so drastically in less than a century is hard to fathom. Persia remained part of the Central Asia tug-of-war between Britain and Russia until the fall of the Russian government in 1918 after which Britain was able to strengthen its interests.³¹³ According to Firuz Kazemzadeh in *Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914*, “the unwillingness of Britain to hold Persia by force saved Persian independence.”³¹⁴

In 1910, Russia had the opportunity to help Persia build railroads and although they really did not have a desire for Persia to have a rail system, the Russian government knew that helping Persia build an infrastructure rather than allowing Germany to do so, kept Germany from developing a stronghold in the Russian realm of power.³¹⁵ Over the years, the relationship between Russia and Iran continued and developed, even if it was out of necessity, into one of give and take rather than that of a dominant parent and passive child role.³¹⁶ When Khomeini took over in 1979, the Soviet Union had already

³¹⁰ Ibid., 8.

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid., 8, 581.

³¹³ Ibid., 679.

³¹⁴ Ibid.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 594-596.

³¹⁶ Robert O. Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East: Soviet Policy Since the Invasion of Afghanistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 6-11.
F. Kazemzadeh, 8-9.

been providing economic aid to the Middle East for decades.³¹⁷ Rather than just giving large sums of financial aid, the Soviets typically invested in countries via large scale projects such as building steel mills in Iran.³¹⁸ They also sent advisors to assist with the projects and provided scholarships for Middle Eastern students to attend school in Moscow.³¹⁹

According to Robert Freedman's *Moscow and the Middle East: Soviet Policy since the Invasion of Afghanistan*, "Given the fact that one of the central components of Marxism-Leninism is atheism, it is argued that this factor precludes any genuinely close relationship between the Soviet Union and such countries as Khomeini's Iran."³²⁰

Khomeini even compared the spread of communism to fighting the evil United States of America.³²¹ Yet, the Soviet Union maintained a powerful interest in Iran and Iran also had certain imperative needs met through the relationship.³²² The Soviet Union and its allies needed use of the waterways in the Middle East and assurance that no anti-Soviet military would be allowed close by on Middle Eastern soil, and the Middle Eastern countries needed Soviet-made weapons.³²³ **(Table 13)** According to U.S. government statistics, the Soviet Union provided more weaponry to the Middle East than any other country.³²⁴

³¹⁷ Freedman, 6.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

³¹⁹ Ibid.

³²⁰ Ibid., 9-10.

³²¹ Ibid., 10.

³²² Ibid., 3-6.

³²³ Ibid., 3-4.

³²⁴ Ibid., 4-5.

Table 13³²⁵ Numbers of weapons delivered by major suppliers to Near East and South Asia (1981-1988)

<u>Weapons category</u>	<u>U.S.</u>	<u>U.S.S.R.</u>	<u>Major Western European</u>
Tanks & self-propelled guns	2,698	5,065	495
Artillery	1,153	9,465	1,785
APCs & armored cars	3,582	9,745	1,475
Major surface combatants	4	32	26
Minor surface combatants	16	33	82
Submarines	0	15	6
Supersonic combat aircraft	253	1,460	345
Subsonic combat aircraft	6	140	85
Other aircraft	54	370	245
Helicopters	33	1,035	250
Guided missile boats	0	10	32
Surface-to-air missiles	1,843	19,905	2,540

(Major Western European countries include: France, United Kingdom, West Germany, and Italy.)

Source: Richard F. Grimmett, Trends in Conventional Arms Transfers to the Third World by Major Suppliers 1981-1988 (Washington: Congressional Research Service 1989), p. 59.

³²⁵ Adapted from: Robert O. Freedman, *Moscow and the Middle East: Soviet Policy Since the Invasion of Afghanistan* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5.

CHAPTER SIX–WOMEN AFTER THE REVOLUTIONS

Margaret Randall, a United States citizen who lived in Cuba for many years, writes in *Women in Cuba: Twenty Years Later*, “The fact is that the liberation of women is neither a fad nor illusion but a necessary step on the historical agenda.”³²⁶ Randall points out that societal gender issues share certain commonalities no matter what country you examine, but that each setting still comes with its own set of distinct elements regarding background, perspective and female response.³²⁷ She provides this example of a woman from the U.S. responding to women’s rights activities, “In a Midwestern state, an articulate thirty-five-year-old single mother and student told me, ‘The women’s movement made me real angry and then didn’t come through...’ She became a charismatic Christian!”³²⁸ How would women in Cuba and Iran feel after Castro and Khomeini encouraged them to put their passion to work for the revolutions? Would their efforts be rewarded or would the female segment of society blend into the background once again?

According to *Institutionalizing Gender Equality*, “Putting gender equality on the political agenda has been part of the ongoing struggle in relatively newly independent countries or countries moving from totalitarian regimes to more democratic ones.”³²⁹ Although neither Cuba nor Iran became an actual democracy, both Castro and Khomeini courted women to assist and participate in the revolutions of 1959 and 1979 by inspiring them with the notion that women would be elevated in society, that women were

³²⁶ Randall, 16.

³²⁷ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

³²⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

³²⁹ Henk van Dam, Angela Khadar, and Minke Valk, eds. *Institutionalizing gender equality: commitment, policy and practice* (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 2000), 68.

important and had vital roles to play in society. If Castro's actions after becoming president can be considered pseudo-feminist, then there must have been a benefit to the nation that allowed him to ignore any ambivalence toward women's issues, while Khomeini disregarded the idea of equality between men and women no matter what good it might do for Iran.

Expressed Equality for Women in Cuba

Although Cuba's economy has suffered during the Castro regime, the nation has made tremendous strides in social welfare.³³⁰ In the first two years of Castro's leadership, social reform was quick and sent a clear message to the people of Cuba.³³¹ According to Kirk, "The reductions in rents and telephone rates, the condemnation of racism, the intent to nationalize educational and medical services, and the steep tariffs on imported luxury items indicated to many middle-class Cubans that the revolution could only bring them misfortune."³³² However, those in the lower socioeconomic classes appreciated the reforms and social restructuring that took place with the Castro administration.³³³ Being able to have hope created a sense of nationalism that had long been missing from the nation and this brought people together and strengthened the cause of the fidelistas.³³⁴

³³⁰ Cardoso, 31-32.

³³¹ Kirk, 74.

³³² Ibid.

³³³ Ibid.

³³⁴ Ibid.

Fidel Castro rewarded women for their efforts in the revolution when he became Cuba's president. Since Castro came into power in 1959, his policies have evolved and adapted to the needs of the country as a whole. Out of necessity, he became an adaptive dictator. One of the areas of flexibility was women's role in Cuban society. In Cuba, women were given more equal footing with men and better opportunities following the revolution. Some of the improvements involved reproductive health, childcare and kindergartens, and certain protections on the job.³³⁵

Castro has consistently shown that he believes women should have the same rights as a man, if not better. In 1966, Castro talked about his feeling regarding women's role in the revolution and in society stating, "This revolution has really been two revolutions for women; it has meant a double liberation: as part of the exploited sector of the country, and second, as women, who were discriminated against not only as workers but also as women."³³⁶ According to Castro, he agreed with the Marxist idea that women's oppression starts with being shut in at home, with no economic independence, limited social life and menial domestic tasks.³³⁷ The changes in women's roles in Cuban society are considered "dramatic" because of the accelerated rate at which the nation's paradigm evolved during such a relatively brief period.³³⁸ Instead of simply making short term societal changes after the revolution, the Cuban government has continued to evolve

³³⁵ Gaby Küppers, *Compañeras* (London: Latin America Bureau, 1994), 102.

³³⁶ Stone, 12.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

³³⁸ Stone, 5.

through adaptation over many years.³³⁹ President Castro made it clear that a socialist state cannot succeed without “complete equality” between the sexes.³⁴⁰

After the revolution, approximately 194,000 women were already working outside the home, but 70% of them were domestic servants who worked long hours for little pay and no secure benefits.³⁴¹ President Castro wanted to change women’s role in society through employment opportunities, but faced daunting circumstances in the labor force.³⁴² Unemployment among men was high with 700,000 men unemployed and 300,000 underemployed, so at that time there was no room for women to be incorporated into the economic status quo.³⁴³ During the 1960s, in an effort to promote women working outside the home, women were invited to participate in voluntary labor working on weekends in rural areas doing things such as helping with picking crops.³⁴⁴ Not only did this help the economy, but many women were said to have enjoyed working outside the home and appreciated the social aspects as well.³⁴⁵

In 1968, the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) canvassed neighborhoods reaching out to over 600,000 women and their families in an effort to encourage them to either go to work or go to school.³⁴⁶ The FMC set out to educate and reeducate women from all segments of society.³⁴⁷ From prostitutes and peasants to young girls who taught reading and writing in rural Cuba, women experienced a revolution through proactive and

³³⁹ Küppers, 102-103.

³⁴⁰ Ibid., 103.

³⁴¹ Randall, 23.

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid.

³⁴⁴ Stone, 13.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Randall 24-25.

progressive education efforts.³⁴⁸ For women, working outside the home meant learning new trades and skills, but the results of their commitment were better education opportunities for them and future generations of females, increased political and professional opportunities, and financial independence.³⁴⁹ Industrial jobs that were so important to the economy were not very popular with women, so the government passed two laws that kept certain jobs held open for women and certain jobs would be only for men.³⁵⁰ Castro created jobs for women, encouraged them to work outside the home and praised them for their contributions to society.³⁵¹ A goal was set for one million women to be in the workforce by 1975 and by 1980 there were many more than that.³⁵²

From 1969 to 1974, 713,924 women chose to work, but almost as many stopped working.³⁵³ The Cuban government had motivated women to try working outside the home, but now needed to focus on retention of those women to maintain productivity. One reason women decided to return to the home was that there was not much need for the additional income because the cost of living was so low, food and other products were rationed, and luxury items were not readily available.³⁵⁴ Families had all the cash flow they could possibly need, but nothing to spend it on.³⁵⁵ Other issues women faced when going to work outside the home were reported to the Second Congress of the FMC by its President Vilma Espín including: pressures of home and family, lack of economic

³⁴⁸ Ibid.

³⁴⁹ Ibid.

³⁵⁰ Stone, 13-14.

³⁵¹ Chaffee, 104.

³⁵² Ibid.

³⁵³ Stone, 14-15.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 15.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

incentive, lack of minimal hygiene and protection at jobsite, negative attitudes about women's right to work, and a lack of understanding about women's role in society.³⁵⁶

These would be issues that Castro would need to address if he wanted his socialist state to thrive.

A deterrent that kept many women from choosing to work was not having readily available childcare. Prior to the revolution, the few childcare centers in Cuba were ran by charitable groups and used by upper class families.³⁵⁷ The FMC realized that having access to a daycare would help women feel comfortable going to work instead of staying at home.³⁵⁸ They started training former domestic servants quickly in an effort to staff the centers, but soon established three teacher training institutes where women would go for four years and study subjects such as psychology, nutrition, and teaching methods.³⁵⁹ This meant that the centers were more than just babysitters. According to Randall, "For Cubans, the primary goal of a day care is to educate children. Secondarily, the centers are established to free mothers to work."³⁶⁰

By 1980, almost 800 daycare centers were open throughout Cuba; however, it was still not possible for all Cuban preschool children to attend.³⁶¹ Children from forty-five days old up to six years old attended these schools.³⁶² Those who attended would receive food, clothing, medical care, dental care, psychiatric services and the beginning

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Randall, 29.

³⁵⁸ Ibid.

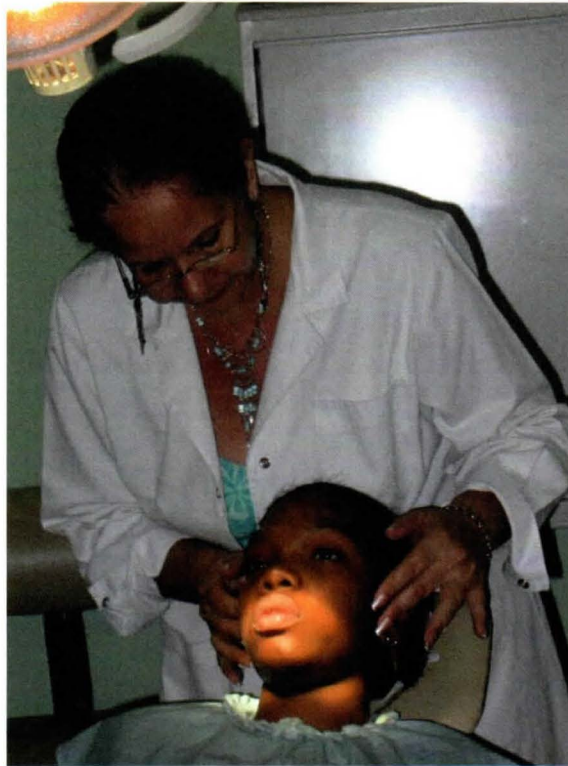
³⁵⁹ Ibid.

³⁶⁰ Ibid., 30.

³⁶¹ Ibid.

³⁶² Ibid., 29.

of an education.³⁶³ **(Figures 10 and 11)** Because of the Cuban government's economic woes and the extensive benefits provided by the daycares, the government could not afford to accept all Cuban children into the centers.³⁶⁴ Priority was given to families with mothers who worked and at first a small fee was charged, then removed in 1965, and in 1977 a fee on a sliding scale based on income was added.³⁶⁵



**Figure 10. A young girl receives dental care in Havana.
Photo by Christy Kirk, 2006.**

³⁶³ Ibid., 29-30.

³⁶⁴ Randall, 30.

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 29.



Figure 11. Schoolgirls at recess in a co-ed school in Havana. Photo by Christy Kirk, 2004.



Figure 12. Teenaged maternity ward in Havana. Photo by Christy Kirk, 2006.

The Cuban government took great care to offer healthcare services to all Cubans without regard to their income and that caused all people to live longer, healthier lives and a lower infant mortality rate.³⁶⁶ **(Figure 12)** While the life expectancy and mortality rates may be similar to other nearby countries, the difference is that in Cuba there is not a large disparity between the health statistics of the poor and those who have a better income.³⁶⁷ **(Table 14)**

³⁶⁶ Cardoso, 33.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

Table 14³⁶⁸ Trends in welfare indicators in Cuba 1960-1988 (Cardoso, 36)

	<u>1960</u>	<u>1987</u>
Life expectancy	63	75
Under age five child mortality	87	14

Source: United Nations, *Human Development Report 1991*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

Women's Suppression of Rights in Iran

As a whole, women had begun to publicly and privately submit to the role that Khomeini's propaganda assured would lead to "the golden age of Islam," when women were afforded extensive civil rights.³⁶⁹ But instead, the Ayatollah Khomeini made drastic regressive changes regarding women's rights within weeks of the transition of power. After the revolution, women were conspicuous targets of the Ayatollah's conservative religious beliefs. He repealed the Family Protection Act of 1967 and instituted Islamic law.³⁷⁰ This affected women dramatically because the act had included many provisions regarding marriage and divorce such as giving women the ability to apply for divorce and requiring husbands to get permission from their first wife before taking more wives.³⁷¹ Abortions became illegal, family planning clinics were shut down, and men were allowed to marry girls as young as age nine.³⁷² These changes helped cause the population in Iran to soar by the 1990's, alarming the government, who instead of encouraging family

³⁶⁸ Adapted from: Cardoso, 36.

³⁶⁹ Bhavani, 350.

³⁷⁰ Azadeh Kian, "Women and Politics in Post-Islamist Iran: The Gender Conscious Drive to Change," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 24, no 1: 76.

³⁷¹ Shiranipour, 35.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 2, 35, 77.

planning, implemented ideas such as no rations for “extra” children and free vasectomies and female sterilization.³⁷³

In *Islamic Fundamentalism, Feminism, and Gender Inequality in Iran Under Khomeini*, Masoud Kazemzadeh examines Iran’s Qanon Qesas, or Bill of Retribution, which is described as “probably one of the most misogynistic codes of law in existence in contemporary society.”³⁷⁴ After years of progress, women had practically all their civil rights taken away, except they retained their right to vote.³⁷⁵ Women lost civil rights, were required to wear the veil, and were not allowed to work. **(Table 15)** Muslim women as well as those who were non-religious felt the backlash.³⁷⁶ There was a tremendous psychological and emotional impact on the women of Iran, many of whom supported the Ayatollah during the revolution. Even though he had seemed to advocate women’s rights and gained support prior to the revolution, it became clear that he had no problem with female oppression.³⁷⁷

³⁷³ Bhavani, 360-1.

³⁷⁴ M. Kazemzadeh, 18.

³⁷⁵ Bhavani, 353.

³⁷⁶ Kian, 77.

³⁷⁷ M. Kazemzadeh, 17.

Table 15³⁷⁸ Unemployment rates for men and women in urban areas before and after the revolution; total and employed columns are in thousands

Economically Active Population

	Total	Employed	Unemployment rate
Women 1976	489	460	5.9%
Men 1976	3846	3653	5.0%
Women 1986	741	525	29.1%
Men 1986	6285	5428	13.6%

Source: The unemployment rate results are based on calculations from the 1976 and 1986 census data provided by the Islamic Republic of Iran, Plan and Budget Organization, Statistical Centre of Iran, Iran Statistical Yearbook 1369 [March 1990-March 1991], (in Farsi), Table 3-1, p.62.

Khomeini's view appears to have been reflected throughout the male population, however, it seems that many men adjusted to the new rules simply by ignoring women's circumstances and perhaps they were simply glad the Ayatollah was not addressing them with his conservative stance. According to Nafisi, men would avoid looking directly at a woman, as if not seeing her meant they did not have to acknowledge her plight.³⁷⁹ Even in public roles, women were expected to be "silent and invisible."³⁸⁰

³⁷⁸ Adapted from Masoud Kazemzadeh, *Islamic Fundamentalism, Feminism, and Gender Inequality in Iran Under Khomeini* (New York: University Press, 2002), 38.

³⁷⁹ Nafisi, 183.

³⁸⁰ Bhavani, 358.

Nafisi points out that any attempt to punish one segment of society only results in the whole country being punished.³⁸¹ The reign of Khomeini only increased women's feelings of disillusionment that had been present before the revolution.³⁸² The changes he implemented stunned the women of Iran along with the rest of the world and left many people wondering how any woman could have willfully supported such a coup.³⁸³

According to Kazemzadeh, "thanks to the misogynist policies of Ayatollah Khomeini and his fundamentalist successors, no country possesses a generation of women so aware of their trampled-on rights and so self-consciously feminist."³⁸⁴ This overwhelming sense that they have contributed to their own repression could have led them to have feelings of permanent helplessness, but instead it inspired many. Since the revolution, Iranian women have continued to protest against their oppressors. Forms of protest range from passive acts such as hair coloring to the horrifying practice of self-immolation, or setting oneself on fire.³⁸⁵ Threats of violence, jail, and execution did not deter them. Living under a regime that has allowed nine year old girls to be raped and executed appears to have fueled the feminist movement in Iran.³⁸⁶ In *Reading Lolita*, Nafisi saved a quote from a letter Henry James sent to a friend regarding the death of the friend's husband in war.³⁸⁷ In this letter, James writes, "Feel, feel I say-feel for all you're worth, and even if it half kills you, for that is the only way to live, especially to live at

³⁸¹ Nafisi, 70.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 158.

³⁸³ Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi, "The Politics of Women's Rights in the Contemporary Muslim World," *Journal of Women's History*, vol. 10, no 4 (winter):214.

³⁸⁴ M. Kazemzadeh, 73.

³⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 32-33.

³⁸⁷ Nafisi, 215.

this terrible pressure.”³⁸⁸ Nafisi intended to share this quote with one of her students to show that she should continue to have hope and resolve in the face of adversity.³⁸⁹

James’ words convey how many Iranian women may have felt about remaining vigilant in expressing their opposition to misogyny in spite of the inherent dangers.³⁹⁰

The exchange of power between Mohammed Reza Pahlavi and Ruhollah Khomeini was the result of many years of unrest in Iran. There were many reasons that it came to fruition, including an overwhelming number of protesters of the Pahlavi regime. The women who saw the revolution as a revivalist effort supported Khomeini with hopes that women would gain better status in society.³⁹¹ Within weeks of gaining power, the Ayatollah Khomeini made sweeping changes regarding women’s rights that reversed any progress made by the previous regime. The revolution of 1978-79 in Iran relied greatly on the support of women to successfully overthrow Shah Mohammed Reza, and it is apparent that many of these women were misguided in their confidence that the regime change would mean improvements for women as evidenced by the extreme reversal of women’s rights that followed the rise to power of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 215.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 215.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 214-115.

³⁹¹ Poya, 125.

CONCLUSIONS

The governments of Cuba and Iran are both considered by many to be oppressive by democratic standards. Revolutionary leaders in each country were able to persuade massive numbers of women through a combination of nationalism and hope for the future in their efforts to take control in Cuba in 1959 and in Iran in 1979. Women in both countries believed their efforts would be for the greater good of their countries if not for themselves, but when the revolution ended what followed was a disparity in equality for women in the two countries.

Moghadam provides the following criteria as an example how women's societal roles can be judged: political expression, work and mobility, family matters, education, health and sexual control, and cultural expression.³⁹² According to Moghadam, this selection "focuses on women's betterment rather than on culture or religion..."³⁹³ However, in the case of Cuba and Iran, culture and religion must be considered. Both countries have histories intertwined with religion and global affairs that have created a sense of nationalism in each that cannot be removed or neutralized. In both Cuba and Iran, nationalism was clearly a factor in each nation's revolution. In Cuba, nationalism came about due to a desire for independence; independence from Spain and then the United States. In Iran, the influx of western influences had a huge impact on nationalism. A sense of nationalism helped spread the revolutionary fervor in both Cuba and Iran. While each nation's revolutionary leaders and foot soldiers had their own independent reasons for wanting a coup, both relied heavily on women to achieve their goals.

³⁹² Moghadam, 9.

³⁹³ Ibid.

After the revolution began in Cuba, Castro saw quickly that the nation needed a firm structure of government, strong and numerous workers, and reliable allies with plenty of resources if it was to remain stable. Although he originally was a detractor of the Soviet Union he saw an opportunity to build a coalition that would maintain Cuba's status until the 1990's.³⁹⁴ Castro kept the Church, who for years supported more materialistic leaders, at a distance and embraced socialism. According to Carolina Aguilar, in *Compañeras: Voices from the Latin American Women's Movement*, "There can be no socialist revolution without complete equality and justice between both men and women..." and "The process whereby a woman becomes a free and equal being is an extremely complex one. It touches on her areas of work and family, but also her mentality, which is a very difficult sphere..."³⁹⁵ When faced with the realities of running a country of millions, socialism was the answer to Castro's dilemma. Using socialism as a model, Cuba actually became the prototype for other Latin American movements.³⁹⁶

For Cuba to survive and for Castro to stay in control, women had to be given equal status in society. Although Castro should not be considered feminist for his efforts to promote equality between men and women, he is definitely a realist. Women having the ability to work outside the home while still being able to maintain families and social lives meant long term success for his regime.

The revolution in Cuba began in 1959 at a time when even women in the United States were seen as being able to fulfill only the roles of mother, wife or caretaker. Over the last fifty years, Castro has made sure that Cuba's governmental authority continues as

³⁹⁴ Thomas, 4-7.

³⁹⁵ Ibid., 103.

³⁹⁶ Küppers, 102.

an organic creature that is subject to change and modification as needs arise. His position has been similar to that of a parent who adjusts his or her tone and rules of discipline depending on the circumstance. It has been said by many that Castro is simply a political opportunist, greedy for control and manipulative in his methods, but if this is true, the women in Cuba have been well-served due to his self-centeredness.

But if a leader makes political maneuvers that are said to be based on religious values, does that make him or her any less opportunistic? Khomeini spoke out against the monarchy for years prior to the Islamic Revolution in 1979. He used his religious beliefs as the basis of his rhetoric and spread his revolutionary gospel through mosques. When the Shah had women remove their veils, some women felt pressured to not practice their religion and many women in Iran believed that once the Shah was overthrown they would have more freedoms and be held in high esteem.³⁹⁷ Just as some women in the United States feel that having religious freedom and serving your family and husband first is extremely important, women in Iran saw the revolution as an opportunity to protest against what they felt was a westernization of their society. But when it came to so-called protection and exaltation the women of Iran only expected an inch from their new leader and Khomeini gave them a yard.

The repression of women in Iran by Khomeini after the revolution was as quick as Castro's inception of socialism and spread of women's rights in Cuba. Iranian women realized too late that their perception of how things would be was not reality and many

³⁹⁷ Poya, 125.

were confused as to how they could be in such a predicament.³⁹⁸ Women lost many rights and even the right to vote which had been retained became a mockery in later years. **(Figure 13)** Khomeini played to women’s sense of nostalgia for the “golden age of Islam” and used their passion to further his own desires and in return for their support, the women of Iran were harshly punished.³⁹⁹



Figure 13. Iranian women protesting a “rigged” election in Iran.⁴⁰⁰

The future of Cuba as a socialist state and Iran as a theocratic nation is truly uncertain. Their respective revolutions were within a mere twenty years of each other and both governments are relatively young and new compared to others in the infinite

³⁹⁸ Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi, “The Politics of Women’s Rights in the Contemporary Muslim World,” *Journal of Women’s History*, vol. 10, no 4 (winter):214.

³⁹⁹ Bhavani, 348-50.

⁴⁰⁰ Photo source: <http://www.opednews.com/populum/diarypage.php?did=13604> [Accessed July 15, 2010]

chronicles of history. Women were key components in each country's revolution and the governments established afterwards are considered unique models. Although Castro and Khomeini did what was most convenient for their personal longevity, what will be best for the nation as a whole?

Cuba and Iran's relationship with the Soviet Union is possibly the best example that could be used to predict how each country will progress over the coming years. Castro saw an opportunity to strengthen his nation in multiple ways by creating an alliance with the Soviets and adopting socialism. Once the relationship fizzled, it was crucial for him to make new diplomatic alliances to survive and he did. Castro has also adjusted restrictions on Cubans in recent years including releasing political prisoners and has never waived from his course of female equality. Iran, however, has relied heavily on building arms to maintain its strength and tightening limitations on its people, especially women. Currently, leadership in Iran enjoys discussing the use of nuclear power in a clearly passive-aggressive attempt at diplomacy. This attitude towards public policy is a tool of divisiveness globally and probably within the country as well.

In both Cuba and Iran, it will be the politics of the people and their reactions to their leaders that shape the future of each country. Since both nations' regimes are metaphorically still in adolescence, it may be too early to guess how long each will last and what changes lie ahead. The world will have to wait and watch as the men and women of Cuba and Iran decide for themselves.

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APPENDIX A

Important dates in Cuba's recent history⁴⁰¹

1898-1901	The United States occupies Cuba
1934	The Platt Amendment is abrogated, formally ending U.S. rights to intervene in Cuba
1953	Fidel Castro leads an unsuccessful revolt against Fulgencio Batista's dictatorship
1956	Castro begins new revolt against Batista
1959	Batista is overthrown: Castro takes power
1961	Bay of Pigs invasion by U.S.-backed anti-Castro exiles ends in defeat
1962	Cuban Missile Crisis
1967	Cuban leader Ernesto "Che" Guevara killed by government forces while leading guerillas in Bolivia
1975	Cuban troops sent to Angola
1980	Mariel boat lift: Castro sends several thousand criminals and mental patients to the United States
1989	Withdrawal from Angola begins. Castro opposes Glasnost and Perestroika. Castro upstages Gorbachev during the Soviet leader's visit to Havana.
1990	Economy severely deteriorates with curtailment of Soviet aid.

⁴⁰¹ Cardoso, 16.

APPENDIX B

Important dates in Iran's recent history⁴⁰²

- | | |
|---------|--|
| 1905-11 | Constitutional revolution establishes a Constitution and a parliament Majiles. Formation of diverse women's movements, resulting in the establishment of girls' schools in 1907. |
| 1917-25 | Women's participation in nationalist and communist movements. |
| 1925 | Reza Khan becomes Shah, beginning the Pahlavi dynasty. |
| 1935-36 | Reza Shah initiates campaign to force women to abandon the veil in all public places. |
| 1938 | Women are admitted to Tehran University. |
| 1941 | Allied forces occupy Iran, forcing Reza Shah's abdication in favor of his son, Mohammad Reza Shah. |
| 1957 | Shah's secret service, SAVAK, is created with the help of the CIA. |
| 1958 | State control over women's movements. Various women's organizations are grouped into a High Council of Women. The Shah's twin sister heads the new organization. |
| 1963 | Shah declares his "White Revolution." There are violent demonstrations against the Shah. Women achieve the right to vote. |
| 1964 | Ayatollah Khomeini sent into exile, first to Turkey, then Iraq. |
| 1966 | State control over women's movements. The Women's Organization of Iran is established. |
| 1967 | Majiles passes Family protection Laws. Women are accepted into the judiciary and drafted into the police and army. |
| 1977 | A group of leading intellectuals protest against the Shah. Also, there is a protest of shantytown dwellers against slum clearances. |
| 1978 | Shah attacks Khomeini through the media. Mass demonstrations throughout Iran's cities. Khomeini calls for overthrow of the Shah. Martial |

⁴⁰² Poya, xii.

law declared in Tehran and 11 other cities. Black Friday: hundreds of protesters killed by police in Tehran. Oil workers, television workers, bank workers, and telephone workers all go on strike. Shah appoints military government, Khomeini calls for Islamic Republic. Millions protest in the streets and a general strike brings the economy to a standstill.

1979

Shah flees Iran.

Co-education is banned. Female judge appointments stopped. Women released from military service. Women must wear Islamic dress. Married women cannot attend high school. Daycare centers are closed. Women flogged for swimming in men's section of Caspian Sea. Executed for prostitution and corruption. Right to divorce and custody of children is solely for men. More than fifty hostages taken from the US embassy.