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# Looking Back: The Iranian Revolution in The New York Times and Christian Science Monitor

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**Looking Back: The Iranian Revolution  
in The New York Times and Christian Science Monitor**

**A Senior Thesis for the Honors Program  
at Western Kentucky University**

**By Stephen Lega**

**Spring 1996**

**Approved By**

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## Preface

Over the years millions of Americans sat down to breakfast and read the morning's newspaper. The things they read affected how they perceived the world. Readers expected newspapers to present accurate information in a way they could understand. For a variety of reasons, the media did not always create an accurate portrayal on a situation.

Muslims said consistently they were depicted unfairly. The stereotyped Muslim was a wild-eyed militant ready to kill in the name of God. Most Muslims did not fit that mold, but it was rare that "Islamic" has not been followed by "militants" or "terrorists." Those stereotypes played a part in the coverage the Iranian Revolution. To research the topic, microfilm of old copies of *The New York Times* and *The Christian Science Monitor* was examined. The public learned about the events of the revolution as they were taking place. [I thought going in that *The New York Times* (in future reference NYT) was part of the liberal press, while *The Christian Science Monitor* (in future reference CSM) had more conservative leanings. This was the basis of my decision to use these papers.] Both publications were highly regarded in the United States and internationally.

Two semesters provided a long time to read up on events .Regardless, it would not be possible to read every article in both newspapers about Muslims from 1971 to 1981. That was why the topic was limited to the Iranian revolution and its coverage in two newspapers. Even within those boundaries it would be

unreasonable to read every article.

After the newspapers and the event were selected, the process of gathering information began. Due to time constraints, it was not realistic to read and analyze every article relating to the revolution in each publication. After reading *Roots of Revolution* by Nikki Keddie, a professor at UCLA, five events were singled out to use as a focus: (1) the shah's celebration of the 2500th anniversary of the Persian monarchy; (2) the "Black Friday" incident in which several civilians died when troops fired into a crowd; (3) Ayatollah Khomeini's return from exile and subsequent assumption of power; (4) the capture of the U.S. Embassy in Teheran, Iran; and (5) the release of the American hostages taken in the capture of the embassy.

The shortcuts used to gather this information could no doubt lead to false conclusion. However, those major events were also points during which coverage should have been at its best. Regardless, the reader should keep the shortcuts in mind while reading this paper.

## Introduction

In the mid-1900s, the United States of America was influential in Shah Reza Pahlevi's rise to power. Many Iranians believed that without the aid of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Shah would not have gained control over the country. (Keddie 142-143)

Shah Pahlevi reigned from 1953 to 1979. The American media depicted him as a progressive, modernizing (read Westernizing) leader. They reported on few, if any, abuses committed during his rule. The media was not critical of the shah until the oil price increase in the 1970s. (Keddie 142-143)

The shah had the support of the West, particularly of the United States. Shah Pahlevi's opponents were portrayed as "religious fanatics" or "communists," something that scored points with the American public during the Cold War. Unfortunately for the shah, the same actions that drew praise from the West increased anti-Western and anti-shah sentiments among Iranians. (Keddie 145)

Religion played a significant role in the revolution. Iran was considered Islamic. Unlike most Middle Eastern countries, however, Shi'i Islam predominated in Iran, not the more internationally popular Sunni Islam (Keddie 4). Within Shi'ism, certain beliefs effected the overthrow of the shah.

After the death of Mohammad, who Muslims believe was the Prophet of God, other individuals, known as imams, were viewed as leaders in the Islamic community. There were some divisions

within Shi'ism, but most Shi'i Muslims believed that the last *imam* went into *occultation*<sup>1</sup>. After the *occultation*, there was no individual designated to lead the community (Keddie 10). The scholars who would fill those leadership roles, known as the *ulama* (plural form of *alim*), played a vital role in the revolt that pulled the Shah off his throne (Keddie 20).

The *ulama* were educated in their local village or town. At this school, they learned basic literacy, classical secular literature, knowledge of the Qur'an, and an introduction to religious duties.

Further education took place at a religious college. At the college, there were two levels of advancement: preparatory and graduate (to use Western terms). The preparatory level was divided as into preliminary and secondary stages. Upon completion of any or all of the preparatory studies, a person gained the title of *mullah*, the lowest rank among the *ulama*.

Completion of graduate studies could be equated to acquiring a Ph.D. A *mullah* had to present a thesis, among other things, to finish this difficult task. When a *mullah* received his certificate, his professor (an individual viewed as an authority in that particular field of study) certified that the student

<sup>1</sup>The *occultation* occurred when the last of the *imams* went into hiding. It is believed the last *imam* will return at the end of the world, similar to the Christian belief that Christ will return in the end times.

could interpret within that field as well. Once an individual completed graduate study, he was a mujtahid.

A *mujtahid* then needed recognition from the people; the scholar needed to gather a following. His followers would come to him with questions on religious and legal matters.

*Ulama* were ranked by various titles: (1) a *mullah* (which has already been explained), (2) an aspirant to the title of *mujtahid* is called *Hujjatu-I-Islam*, "proof of Islam," (3) a *mujtahid* who has gained a following and is therefore looked to for advice is called an *Ayatollah*, "sign of God," and (4) by the consensus of the *Ayatollahs*, one from among their ranks can be selected *Ayatollah al-Uzma*, "the greatest sign of God".<sup>2</sup>

This last title was bestowed upon *Ayatollah Khomeini*, who played the main role in the Shah's downfall despite being exiled from Iran at the time.

<sup>2</sup>The information about the different ranks of the *ulama* came from an article written by Dr. John Long, who teaches "Islamic Religious Traditions" at Western Kentucky University.

## The man with the master plan

Ayatollah Khomeini received more exposure than any other individual in the Iranian Revolution in the CSM. He was first mentioned at the time of the Black Friday incident of Sept. 8, 1978. Although he had been exiled from the country, the ayatollah's popularity was on the rise in Iran. (Cooley "Shah's Throne" 9)

Khomeini was the focus of many articles after that. Millions of Iranians eagerly anticipated his return of the exiled leader. He opposed Shah Pahlevi's "white revolution" that included land reform and the enfranchisement of women (Godsell "Khomeini Reshapes" 10).

One CSM reporter, Geoffrey Godsell, predicted six things would change in a article published on Jan. 25, 1979, as Khomeini's return grew nearer if the ayatollah came to power: (1) Iran would no longer police the Middle East; (2) Iran would become a border state of the Soviet Union (no longer a U.S. spy headquarters); (3) Iran would denounce its relationship with the West; (4) Iran would no longer be a stable country; (5) Iran's oil supplies might not be as dependable as they were under Shah Pahlevi; and (6) Iran might align itself with the Palestinians in regard to Israel. (Godsell "Khomeini Reshapes" 10).

Khomeini would not be able to change everything, according to Godsell. The USSR would remain the only threat to the US, and Iran would still need to sell its oil. (Godsell "Khomeini Reshapes" 10)



had been closed, Khomeini said every airport in Iran would have to be shut down to prevent his return (Godsell "Is Iran" 7). By Jan. 26, 1979, Khomeini and Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar were reportedly on the verge of confrontation. Khomeini believed Bakhtiar held his position illegally by appointment of the shah. Khomeini also believed he had the support of the Iranian masses. (Godsell "Khomeini, Bakhtiar" 7)

Khomeini refused a meeting proposed by Bakhtiar's in Paris because Bakhtiar would not step down as prime minister (Godsell "Grappling" 1,8). Khomeini stayed in France during much of his exile, but French officials questioned his effectiveness as a leader in an article published on Jan. 29, 1979. According to CSM, one Frenchman called Khomeini a "narrow, unenlightened, authoritarian leader." (Browning "French" 8) Bakhtiar allowed Khomeini to return when he came to believe that was the only way to end the tensions in Iran (Godsell "Looking" 3).

Khomeini remained a major player in Iran after his return. "Religious hard-liners" captured the U.S. Embassy in Tehran on Nov. 4, 1979. The CSM reported that Khomeini was an absolutist. This was meant to explain the erratic course of the Iranian revolution. The prime minister, Mehedi Bazargan, under the government which was then controlled by Khomeini, said "Everything-at-once is an old Iranian vice that brings along a lot of perils." (Godsell "Attack" 1,7)

Regarding the hostage situation created by the capture of

the U.S. Embassy, Khomeini was quoted on Nov. 9, 1979:

If the US gives the Shah back to Iran and stops espionage against the revolution, the way to negotiations will be open in some cases. (Godsell "Why Iranians" 15).

(The shah was admitted into the United States for medical treatment.)

On Nov. 7, 1979, the CSM reported a statement directed toward Iraq issued by Khomeini. "Whoever tries to assume the shah's role of a policeman in the Gulf, his fate would not be different from that of the deposed ruler," he said. ("Tensions" 7)

Khomeini forbade any of his aides to speak with Americans (Nov. 8, 1979). Yasar Arafat, head of the Palestinian Liberation Organization, offered to help. Arafat claimed the ayatollah was one of his friends. Khomeini recognized Arafat as the first "head of state" to visit the new Iran. (Cooley "How PLO" 11)

Khomeini dominated the political scene in Iran according to a CSM article. His stubbornness was traceable to his personal vendetta against Shah Pahlevi for exiling him. Khomeini recognized Shi'i Islam as the only true authority in Iran. This added to the perception of him a symbol of power. (Godsell "Why Iranians" 15)

When an agreement to free the hostages was reached on Jan. 19, 1981, it was reported that Khomeini had tremendous influence on the deal. By agreeing to Khomeini's plan, Iran returned to its

situation before capture of the embassy on Nov. 4, 1979, the CSM reported. (Dorsey "It's 15) and (Dorsey "11th" 11)

The CSM's coverage was far from perfect, but they did do a good job of illustrating that Khomeini was the dominant individual throughout the events. There were several specifics that could have been handled better.

The CSM reported that Khomeini was exiled because of his opposition to the shah's "white revolution." It was shown in the NYT that Pahlevi had deeper reasons for wanting Khomeini out of the country. Perhaps the CSM had to cut some background from their story to make it fit in the tabloid format. Suggesting that Khomeini was exiled because he opposed the shah's reforms seemed flawed. There was no indication that all, or even a sizable number of, Iranians who simply opposed Shah Pahlevi's reforms were exiled .

Geoffrey Godsell attempted to do something good in his article from Jan. 25, 1979. As the world waited to see if Khomeini would return to his home country. Godsell wrote about six changes that would take place, and two things that would stay the same if Khomeini assumed power.

Godsell said Iran would no longer be a policeman in the Persian Gulf. He also wrote that Iran would cease to serve as a United States' spy headquarters and would denounce its relationship with the West. He suggested that Iran would favor the PLO in its conflict with Israel. Iran had no choice but to continue supplying oil to other parts of the world. On these

points, Godsell was pointing in the right direction.

Godsell did a good job on few other predictions as well. Khomeini said anyone who attempted to assume that role would meet the same fate as Shah Pahlevi. If actions speak louder than words, than the behavior of Khomeini's supporters, in particular by capturing the U.S. Embassy, indicated that Iran was not interested in helping the United States or its allies. The chairman of the PLO, Yasar Arafat, considered Khomeini a personal friend, so it would follow that Khomeini would side with his friend against Israel.

There were a few things Godsell seemed to have missed, on the other hand. He wrote that Iran would not be a stable country, but the popularity and longevity of Khomeini's rule, which lasted well into the 1980's, suggested otherwise. Iran's oil supplies would supposedly become less reliable. That fear did not materialize. The one that Godsell clearly missed was that the Soviet Union would remain the only threat to the United States. The hostage situation that was created when a group of students captured the U.S. Embassy in Teheran proved that Iran could hurt the United States.

The CSM also reported that Khomeini spent much of his exile in France. They failed to report how he wound up in France and why the French accepted him, even though some French people later grew suspicious of the ayatollah. The NYT provided this information to their readers.

A consistent problem throughout the CSM's coverage was its

treatment of Khomeini. The ayatollah was called a "narrow, unenlightened, authoritarian leader" on Jan. 29, 1979. He was portrayed as stubborn, and unwilling to compromise with the United States unless they fulfilled his demands. Not once, from its first mention of him through the resolution of the hostage situation was Khomeini, or someone who agreed with Khomeini's actions, given a chance to defend the ayatollah.

This goes against basic tenants of journalism. It is unfair to allow someone to criticize another without providing someone the opportunity to defend the person whose character was called into question. (It is preferable to allow the person to defend him- or herself.) The articles in the *CSM* showed that Khomeini was enormously popular. It could have found one credible person in Iran who would take Khomeini's side.

The *NYT* had many similarities, but some noticeable differences as well.

On Jan. 30, 1979, Khomeini's return to Iran was covered in the *NYT*. This was the first mention of the exiled leader in its pages. In one article, Khomeini pledged to drive the shah's appointed prime minister, Shahpour Bakhtiar, from power. Khomeini said he would form a rival Islamic republic, despite government demands protests. Khomeini had the support of the Iranian masses. (Apple 6)

That same day, the *NYT* published a biographical sketch of the ayatollah.

Khomeini was the son of an ayatollah and a descendent of

Mohammad. He was born in 1900, and his father died just before his first birthday. His mother and a strong-willed aunt raised him. After studying at Isfahan, Arah and Qum, he became a philosophy teacher. His commitment to Shi'i Islam was apparent even then. He believed the duty of any Shi'i Muslim was to become involved in political and social life." ("Ayatollah's Opposition" 4)

Khomeini was an outspoken opponent of Shah Pahlevi by 1941. In 1953, Khomeini's reputation grew. When the Shah visited a group of 40 mullahs, every one bowed to him except Khomeini. When 20 mullahs died in 1962-63 during fighting, Khomeini telegraphed the shah demanding the police chief at Qum be held responsible. Two hundred thousand copies of the letter were circulated among students opposed to Shah Pahlevi. ("Ayatollah's Opposition" 4)

Khomeini made a "violent speech" before 100,000 Muslims in a mosque at Qum and was then arrested. Iranian officials imprisoned him and forced him to listen to tapes of other prisoners screaming, it was reported. When he was released in 1964, he took a stronger anti-United States stance and was later exiled from Iran. ("Ayatollah's Opposition" 4)

Khomeini went to Turkey before moving on the Shi'i holy city of Najaf, Iraq. He denounced the shah's 2500th anniversary celebration. Khomeini blamed his son's death in 1977 on SAVAK, the shah's secret police. ("Ayatollah's Opposition" 4)

Articles from Jan. 31, 1979, provided more information.

Government protesters saw Khomeini as a symbol of their hatred toward the monarchy. Khomeini remained a mystery to most. Upon announcing his return, he became a national leader although the people were not knowledgeable of his plans. The *NYT* reported that Khomeini seemed inconsistent by Western standards. He used modern technology, copiers and tape recorders, to denounce the West and Pahlevi. ("Ayatollah" 1)

Khomeini remained in France during much of his exile. The Iranian people obeyed his calls from France for civil disobedience, days of mourning and general strikes. The only certainty about Khomeini's agenda was that it was based on Shi'i "clergy," according to the *NYT* article. (Vinocur "Ayatollah" 1,5)

The French had a mixed reaction to Khomeini. One general called Khomeini a brilliant tactician. That same general wondered how Khomeini could return Iran to the way it was 1300 years ago. Khomeini rejected a proposal from the National Front, another group opposed to the shah, to form a rival liberal government in Iran. (Vinocur "Ayatollah" 5)

A French left-wing academic called Khomeini stubborn and close-minded. The French hosted Khomeini because they believed it would benefit them commercially if he assumed power. As his return seemed to be inevitable, they grew concerned Khomeini would create an Islamic government. Khomeini said he would allow freedom of speech and political associations provided they did not hurt the national interest (Vinocur "Ayatollah" 5).

As Khomeini prepared to return to Iran, he restated that he

Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar for the shooting of demonstrators, in an article from Jan. 30, 1979 (Lewis "Khomeini" 5). The next day Khomeini was called an "implacable, 78-year old Moslem intellectual," in the NYT's pages. (Apple "Ayatollah" 1)

When Khomeini did return on Feb. 2, 1979, a crowd of 1200 greeted him at Teheran airport. In a speech there, he said, "I beg God to cut off the hands of all evil foreigners and all their helpers." One of his supporters held a banner which read, "You are our religious, political, military, economic, and social leader." (Apple "Khomeini" 1)

In Teheran, Khomeini visited sites associated with uprisings against Shah Pahlevi and reiterated his desire to end the monarchy in Iran (Apple "Khomeini" 12). "The man who brought down the Shah" thanked the French before his return flight to Iran ("Khomeini is Thankful" 12). The movement of nationalistic Muslims would have Bakhtiar arrested if he did not resign as prime minister, Khomeini said. He spoke against the shah, Bakhtiar and the United States. "Final victory will come when all foreigners are out of the country," he said at Mehrebad Airport. Khomeini also gave a speech at Behesti Zahra Cemetery where 100 "revolutionary martyrs" were buried (Apple "Khomeini Threatens" 1).

At the cemetery, people exclaimed, "Agha Amad!" ("The Holy One has come!"). Three interpreters said Khomeini prayed for God to cut off the hands of all foreigners. A fourth interpreter said



his statement was referring to cutting the tentacles of colonialism. (Apple "Khomeini Threatens" 7)

When students loyal to Khomeini captured the U.S. Embassy in Tehran, the NYT was there on Nov. 5, 1979. The students said they had the support of religious leaders in Iran (Gwertzman "Government" 1, 10). Khomeini's advisors publicly expressed support for the students' actions (Teltsch "Bazargan" 1, 10). Khomeini gained full control after Prime Minister Mehedi Bazargan stepped down from his position as dissolved the government. Khomeini was open about his dislike for the United States, calling it "the Great Satan which gathers the other Satans around it." (Kifner "Iran's Civil" 1, 14). When the Palestinian Liberation Organization stepped forward to help, Khomeini left that possibility open (Kifner "Iran Demands" 1, 10).

After the students captured the embassy, Khomeini ordered the female and black hostages to be released. He did so because of their "oppressed status" in the United States (Kifner "Iranian Says" 5). As negotiations for the release of the remaining hostages grew nearer, Khomeini set down four conditions for their release in September 1980. Khomeini said the students who captured the embassy had reacted nobly to the abuse of the superpowers (the West). (Rosenbaum "Year" 9)

Before the embassy was captured on Nov. 4, 1979, Khomeini encouraged Iranians to demonstrate and expand their attacks on Israel and the United States. ("Events" 6).

There were several strengths in the NYT coverage. The reader

learned why the French allowed Khomeini to remain in their country during his exile. (Remember: French leaders thought it would benefit their country if and when Khomeini assumed power.) The profile article on the ayatollah gave the reader reasons for Khomeini's opposition to the shah, and the shah's reason for wanting to get Khomeini out of Iran. Although it was curious that neither Khomeini nor the shah were quoted in the piece. The *CSM* did neither of these things.

When the hostage situation broke out, Khomeini's compassionate side showed. It never did in the *CSM*. Khomeini was quick to release female and black hostages because of the oppression they faced from their native country, the United States.

Khomeini revealed his other side as well. The students were well aware that they had the ayatollah's blessing when they captured the embassy. The PLO had minimal influence on Khomeini, but he ultimately did not allow them to work out a deal. This was one area in particular where the *NYT* did a good job of keeping its readers informed on who was involved and why they were involved.

Overall, the *NYT* presented a comprehensive, more detailed view of Khomeini, the man, than did the *CSM*. How much of this can be traced to the size of the *NYT* since it was a broadsheet as opposed to a tabloid remained unclear. This is not meant to suggest the *NYT* was perfect.

As did the *CSM*, the *NYT* often allowed criticisms of Khomeini

to go unchecked. A general in France suggested that Khomeini was intelligent, a brilliant tactician, but the general wondered how the ayatollah could return Iran to its state 1300 years ago. Khomeini said publicly that he intended to form an Islamic government, but his use of modern technological equipment, as indicated in other articles, suggested it was not meant to be the Iran of 600 C.E. This should have been clarified in the article in which the allegations were made.

#### **The rest of the crew**

Khomeini was not the only Muslim mentioned during the Revolution, nor was he the first mentioned in the coverage in the CSM.

Prime Minister Jaafar Sharif-Emani was mentioned on Sept. 12, 1978. The shah named Sharif-Emani to his position by in hopes of placating conservative Muslims (Cooley "Shah's Throne" 1,9). It was believed that Sharif-Emani's appointment would open a dialogue between the *mullahs* and the Iranian government (Cooley "Zahedi" 1). Soon after his appointment, the Black Friday incident occurred.

On Jan. 31, 1979, CSM mentioned Ayatollah Allaneh Nuri as Iranians awaited Khomeini's return. Nuri wrote that the time for purification had come in an piece for an Iranian paper. After Nuri's writing was published, many Muslims took to the streets and destroyed signs of Western influence. (Godsell "Iran's Purification" 3)

Mehedi Bazargan was elected prime minister after Khomeini

formally assumed power. Bazargan considered resigning on more than on occasion because his decisions were often overruled by the "fundamentalists" in Iran. After the capture of the U.S. Embassy, Bazargan was criticized for speaking to the national security adviser of the Carter Administration. This was reported on Nov. 5, 1979. (Godsell "Attack" 7)

On Nov. 7, 1979, it was reported that Bazargan and his entire cabinet did resign. Bazargan, a "pragmatist," had grown frustrated by confrontations with the "fundamentalists" (Godsell "Bazargan" 1). Bazargan fought to keep the fundamentalists out of the daily operations of the government. Bazargan was associated with an intellectual group, the Muslim People's Islamic Republican Party ("Tensions" 7).

The Muslim People's Islamic Republican Party was a moderate organization led by Ayatollah Kazem Shariat-Madari. Shariat-Madari was second only to Khomeini in respect among the Shi'i Muslims in Iran. (Godsell "Attack" 7)

Ayatollah Muhammad Beheshti led the fundamentalists. Beheshti was the head of the Islamic Republican Party and was the vice-president of the Assembly of Experts. The Assembly was writing a new constitution for Iran. Many believed he would seek the Iranian presidency. (Godsell "Attack" 7)

Ayatollah Hussein Ali Motazari, the president of the Assembly of Experts, also was believed to be seeking the presidency. Motazari had the support of Col. Muammar al-Qadafi. Khomeini had criticized al-Qadafi for the disappearance from

Lebanon of another Shi'i Muslim leader, Manssar al-Sadez.

(Godsell "Attack" 7)

After the U.S. Embassy was captured, the CSM reported on Nov. 8, 1979, that the Palestinian Liberation Organization offered to help free the hostages. A few individual members of the PLO were singled out for their efforts. The PLO's United Nations Observer, Dr. Zahedi Terzi, said the group was getting involved purely for humanitarian reasons. PLO Chairman Yasar Arafat sent two aides Abu Jihad and Abu Walid to help U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark. Arafat said he would go to Iran personally if needed. (Cooley "How PLO" 1,11)

The PLO intervened for the United States on other occasions. In 1976, when fighting broke out in Islamic West, the PLO protected the U.S. Embassy. (Cooley "How PLO" 11)

Abu Jihad, who also went by Khalid al-Wazir was another leader within the PLO. Since 1975, he had served as the senior military commander in Lebanon. When delicate situations arose in China, Cuba, Vietnam and North Korea, Jihad served as a liaison. Al-Fatah, the conservative Islamic branch of the PLO, and anti-communist nations like Saudi Arabia, respected Jihad. (Cooley "How PLO" 11)

The PLO was referred to as a guerilla group. The group said it would recognize Israel's right to exist to improve relations with the United States. However, senior Arab diplomats didn't think Arafat would recognize Israel without formal recognition of the PLO in exchange. (Temke "Arafat" 15)

Behzad Nabavi came onto the scene as negotiations for the release of the hostages intensified. "The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States finally reached an agreement on resolving the issue of the hostages today," he said on Jan. 18, 1981, in the CSM. (Dorsey "It's" 15)

In an article published on Jan. 20, 1981, Nabavi called the agreement a great victory for the Iranian nation. Nabavi added that Iran had capitulated the world's greatest oppressor (the United States). He also criticized Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr for saying Iran was forced into a position of weakness by delaying the release of the hostages. (Dorsey "11th" 11)

How did this compare with CSM's coverage of Khomeini? It was good for readers to know that Jaafar Sharif-Emani was appointed prime minister. It was also good for readers to know that he was put in that position by Shah Pahlevi as an attempt to pacify his Muslims critics. However, the reader does not know what qualities Sharif-Emani possessed that allowed him to fill that role. Regardless, his appointment had no real impact because the Black Friday incident occurred soon after his appointment. The paper never explained why Muslims did not accept Pahlevi's attempt to ease their concerns.

The real problems with the coverage emerged after Khomeini assumed power. Terms such as "fundamentalists," "pragmatists" and "moderates" described various individuals and groups. The connotation from the articles was that fundamentalists were the group that sided with Khomeini. That did not adequately describe

why the term "fundamentalists" was appropriate. Some fundamentalists were identified for the reader, but that did not accurately explain what the term meant.

Similar things were written about pragmatists and moderates. They were clearly opponents of Khomeini, but that, again, leaves the reader grasping at straws if they wanted to understand what the moderates believed.

The biggest flaw in this area was not that the CSM published those terms. It was the assumption of knowledge on the readers part. The average reader was not likely to be familiar with the nuances of Iranian culture. This was contrasted with an element of American culture to illustrate how this was relevant.

If the Republican party held a convention in which they announced formally their candidate for president. The average reader would understand what the position of president was and would have a general idea of what the Republican party represented. On the other hand, the average reader did not have a background allowing him or her to readily distinguish fundamentalists in Iran from moderates ideologically.

These references were made in stories involving Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, a moderate. His decisions were often overturned by fundamentalists. Readers need to know by what legal authority the fundamentalists were able to do this as well as what power the prime minister of Iran held.

In that story about Bazargan, it was clarified that Ayatollah Hussein Ali Motazeri would likely seek the presidency.

Motazeri, a fundamentalists and presumably a Khomeini supporter, had the backing of Libya's Muammar al-Qadafi. However, al-Qadafi was on Khomeini's bad side. Readers could read that Khomeini blamed the death of a Shi'i Muslim by the name of Massar al-Sadez on al-Qadafi. This did not illustrate how that affected Motazeri or why Khomeini was concerned about al-Sadez's death.

When the hostage crisis arose, the PLO quickly offered its services to resolve the situation. Individuals in the PLO such as Abu Jihad had handled difficult international situations previously. The CSM did not specify what Abu Jihad had done in those situations, however.

In a later article, the PLO was called a guerilla group. This was not attributed to anyone, and therefore it could be assumed that the CSM believed this to be an acknowledged fact. Guerilla group seemed to have pejorative implications, so using that description without a clarification was questionable at best.

As a resolution to the hostage situation drew nearer, Behzad Nabavi appeared on the scene. He was not identified in the CSM, when a NYT's reader would have known Nabavi was the chief negotiator for Iran. Nabavi was critical of Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr in the CSM, but no one defended Bani-Sadr. This lack of fairness had extended beyond the treatment of Khomeini.

The NYT did not bring Muslims into its coverage of the 2500th Anniversary. Instead, the event was treated as a global



party. (Curtis "After the Ball" 10 and "Persian" 43,82)

When the *NYT* coverage of the Black Friday incident (Sept. 8, 1978) took place, the newspapers' employees were on strike. On the microfilm for the dates during the strike (Aug. 10, 1978-Nov. 5 1978), the *NYT* reproduced Associated Press wire material. Although readers did not see this, it provided background information which may explain later developments in the *NYT*'s coverage.

Premier Jaafar Sharif-Emani, a "devout Moslem," was the first individual mentioned on the wire releases (and the *CSM*). An AP story from Sept. 10, 1978, said Sharif-Emani closed all casinos and announced that all "legal" parties could participate in government. (Raein 83)

During a government crackdown following the Black Friday incident, Sheik Yahya Nosiri Noori was arrested. The government claimed it found documents advocating burning theaters, banks and liquor stores, according to a wire release from Sept. 13, 1978. (AP II 103)

In the first story the *NYT* published about the hostage situation (Nov. 5, 1979), Khomeini was portrayed as a supporter of the captors. Mehedi Bazargan, the Iranian prime minister, and Ibrahim Yazdi, an Iranian foreign minister, were explicitly separated from the captors' actions. The United States would have preferred to work with Bazargan (Gwertzman "Government" 1, 10). He had previously met with a U.S. official in Algiers ("Iran Leaders" 1, 12), and the U.S. government understood the

difference between the pragmatic Bazargan and Khomeini (Gwertzman "US" 1, 12). Any chance of that happening ended when Khomeini's advisors showed their support for the captors. That prompted Bazargan to step down from his already weak position as prime minister (Teltsch "Bazargan" 1, 10).

The next individual mentioned in the NYT was Behzad Nabavi, Iran's chief negotiator during the hostage situation. He was first identified in an article by Robert Bennett on Jan. 20, 1981.

Nabavi claimed banks in the United States caused the delay in the hostage release by denying Iran its rightful claims. He said the banks added an 11-page appendix to the agreement after it had been worked out (Bennett "US Banks" 1). Nabavi called the appendix "an underhanded maneuver for delaying the final solution of the problem." He also said Iran would take more serious action if the United States did not meet the deadline to unfreeze Iranian holdings. "The government of the Islamic Republic of Iran severely condemned this subterfuge by the U.S. banks," he said. ("Iran Aide" 1,7)

When reports emerged that the hostages were taken to the airport, Nabavi denied the claim. He said Iran would put the hostages on trial as spies before it would negotiate with then President-elect Ronald Reagan. Nabavi blamed the entire situation on the "nest of spies," meaning the U.S. Embassy in Teheran. ("Iran Aide" 7)

Around that same time, the NYT ran a short profile on

Nabavi. He had a background in literature, law and electrical engineering. Once the Iranian Parliament approved Khomeini's conditions for the release of the hostages, Nabavi stepped into the limelight. He dressed in revolutionary garb, combat jackets and open-collared shirts. He was close friends with fellow religious traditionalist Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Rajai and was an opponent of liberal President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr. (Blair "Leader" 6)

In 1970, Nabavi was jailed for allegedly betraying SAVAK. He met Rajai while he was in prison. While he was still a student, Nabavi joined the underground movement opposed to the shah. He began his career as a political activist by joining a group called Fadaizeen Islam, founded by the fundamentalist "clergyman" Navab Safavi. It was betrayal from within that movement that landed Nabavi in jail. (Blair "Leader" 6)

Nabavi grew up in a middle-class home. He earned his law degree, a master's in literature and studied electrical engineering at Teheran Polytechnic. He was a husband and a father of two children. He was described as someone who was simple, not elegant and as "one who always greeted you in a friendly way." (Blair "Leader" 6)

At new conferences, Nabavi was known to make jokes sometimes. Because Nabavi's statements were coming through a Persian translator, it was difficult to tell what he really meant at times. His harsh statements about the United States were believed have been made for political purposes in Iran. Many

people expected him to gain a higher position for his role in the negotiations. (Blair "Leader" 6)

On Jan. 21, 1981, the *NYT* reported that Nabavi had signed an agreement releasing the hostages (Gwertzman "Alive" 1,3). Upon the announcement Nabavi commented on the captors of the embassy. "The students have done their divine duty," he said. "They didn't leave the trenches, they resisted. I wish them all the best." (Kifner "Teheran Captors" 8)

Three Algerians had acted as intermediaries during the negotiations -- Abdel Karim Gharib, the Algerian ambassador to Iran; Redha Maleh, the ambassador to the United States; and Mohammad Seghier Mostafah, director of the Algerian Central Bank. (Kifner "Teheran Captors" 8)

The *NYT* did not mention any Muslims in its coverage of the 2500th anniversary celebration. In a nation predominated by Muslims, this hardly seemed acceptable. The *CSM* had mentioned at least mentioned Khomeini in passing, but that wasn't enough either. Muslims certainly were involved in various parts of the celebration, but none of them were mentioned collectively or individually.

At the time of the Black Friday incident, the *NYT*'s workers were on strike. The Associated Press wire stories that were republished on the microfilm left something to be desired, however. Sharif-Emani, a devout Muslim, had taken steps to restrict gambling and public political opposition to the shah. These provide possible reasons for the demonstrations of Black

Friday, although that was not clear from the stories. The reader should have known what effect Sharif-Emani's actions had on the demonstrations. The *NYT* failed to report that Shah Pahlevi had appointed Sharif-Emani to settle down his Muslim opponents, which was something the *CSM* did do.

Ayatollah Khomeini wasn't the only individual concerned about the hostage situation. Two Iranian officials were not supportive of the capture. Prime Minister Bazargan had a running feud with the fundamentalists, and he had enough when the hostage situation arose. It would have been nice for the *NYT* to illustrate some of the other times Bazargan had been overruled, but it was clear that the takeover of the embassy was the last straw for him. Again, this was an area in which the *NYT* did a good job of reporting.

When the hostage negotiations were taking place, the *NYT* clearly identified Behzad Nabavi as Iran's chief negotiator. The paper even ran a profile piece suggesting Nabavi wasn't as opposed to America as some of his statements implied. (By making those statements, Nabavi increased his status on Iran's political scene.) At the same time, the *NYT* fell into the same trap as the *CSM*. *NYT* identified Nabavi as a pragmatist. This was somehow different than the fundamentalists who backed Khomeini. Since Nabavi was a Khomeini supporter as well, there was an important need to clarify what separated a pragmatist from a fundamentalist, even more so than was needed when the *CSM* loosely made reference to fundamentalists and moderates. At least *CSM*

readers could understand those two groups to be opponents.

The *NYT* also identified the three Algerians who served as mediators during the hostage situation and their title. This illustrated why each individual was selected to assist in the negotiating process.

### **Group activities**

Individuals were not the only ones characterized in the coverage of the events surrounding the revolution.

The village *mullahs* were looked down upon by the shah and his supporters. As early as Oct. 15, 1971, the *CSM* reported that the Islamic leaders appealed mainly to the lower classes at the time of the shah's 2500th anniversary celebration. (Cooley "Prosperity" 2)

Before the Black Friday incident of Sept. 8, 1978, the shah's opponents took to the streets. Thirty-seven people died in street violence. The government then banned public demonstrations. ("Iran Bans" 2). The shah's opponents defied the ban and said Iran was their country ("Tehran Demonstrators Defy" 2). Curfews were imposed on towns highly influenced by "clergy of the Shia branch of Islam," meaning the *mullahs* (Cooley "Shah's Throne" 9).

When Khomeini returned to Iran in Feb. 1979, millions of Iranians anticipated the event. (Godsell "Khomeini Reshapes" 10) The Iranian masses supported him. Some Air Iran workers went on strike to pressure the government into permitting Khomeini back into Iran. Khomeini's supporters viewed the Iranian Constitution

the same way they viewed the shah (Godsell "Khomeini, Bakhtiar" 7).

In Tehran, Khomeini's supporters converted an old school building into a residence for him. The CSM reported that it appeared as if the building was being converted into the headquarters for a revolution. Khomeini's supporters were described as slightly suspicious in an article on Jan. 26, 1979. (Allaway "Carpets" 4)

As Khomeini's return was further delayed, his supporters grew restless. Many took to the streets on Jan. 29, 1979, and made it clear that machine guns would come out if Khomeini was not allowed to return. (Godsell "Grappling" 1,8)

Following the publishing of the piece by Ayatollah Nuri (the time for purification had come) in an Iranian paper, some people burned buildings in the red light district of Teheran on Jan. 31, 1979. A belief that foreign influence had defeated Islam motivated them. A nightclub, a brewery and a movie theater were destroyed. Islam was puritanical on sex and prohibited gambling, alcohol and usury, according to the CSM article. Violence against Westerners was on the rise in Iran as well. Signs indicated that some of the lower ranks of the military were loyal to Khomeini. (Godsell "Looking" 3)

It was a group of students loyal to Khomeini who captured the U.S. Embassy on Nov. 4, 1979. Those "religious hard-liners" sought to bring the deposed shah to justice (Godsell "Attack" 1). The United States government had permitted the shah to enter the

country for medical care. The United States ruled out military intervention early, according to a CSM article from Nov. 9, 1979, because its leaders were convinced any action would lead to the hostages being killed (Cooley "Use of Force" 14).

The "hard-line religious fundamentalists" who controlled the political scene in Iran sought to create a theocratic republic. Fundamentalists had shown they were willing to use violence to get the shah to return. (Godsell "Attack" 1,7)

According to an article from Nov. 7, 1979, the Assembly of Experts and the Revolutionary Council were led by fundamentalists and "Muslim clerics." These groups were less open to Western reasoning and logic than pragmatists like Prime Minister Bazargan. (Godsell "Bazargan" 1)

The fundamentalists drew their support from the 50 percent of the Iranian population that was poor and illiterate ("Tensions" 7). Fundamentalists believed the shah was the tool of the United States (Godsell "Why Iranians" 15). Over the course of the negotiations, the fundamentalists weakened their liberal critics. Some reports stated that the fundamentalists believed they would score points internationally by releasing the hostages (Dorsey "It's" 15).

The moderates, led by Ayatollah Shariat-Madari, sought to create a secular government sensitive to the demands of the "Shia clergy." Like the fundamentalists, the pragmatists wanted Shah Pahlevi back in Iran. Unlike the fundamentalists, they gave no indication that they were willing to use violence to achieve



their goals, according to the Nov. 5, 1979, issue of CSM.

(Godsell "Attack" 1)

Criticism of the fundamentalists came from other places in the Middle East as well. "A regime led by modernists will be better respected than a fundamentalist regime," an Arab ambassador said. (Dorsey "11th" 11)

Algeria played an important role in the hostage negotiations. The country was tied to the Soviet Union ideologically and militarily and 99 percent of its people were Muslims. Algeria was described as a "moderate socialist state with Western leanings," in an article on Jan. 20, 1981. (Yemma "Why" 4)

The CSM indicated that Khomeini had widespread support among the Iranian populace. They never explain why this was so. People did not just flock to the ayatollah; they were drawn to him for a reason, or maybe a variety of reasons. The reader couldn't deduce that information from the CSM because it just wasn't there.

In a story that explained how an old school building was being transformed for Khomeini, his supporters were called suspicious. Not by a source in the story, but by the reporter, Tony Allaway. This violated the concept of fairness. The "suspicious" people should have been allowed to defend themselves. This revealed the reporter's bias against Khomeini. For the reporter to write that a group of individuals was suspicious without support was not good journalism. Allaway would have been better off describing the people actions and letting

the readers decide if they were suspicious.

A new phrase was introduced with the capture of the U.S. Embassy. "Religious hard-liners" were responsible. This group supported Khomeini, and may or may not have been the same as the fundamentalists. Because readers could not clearly identify what these hard-liners believed, they had no way to connect them with or separate them from the fundamentalists. Although even if they could link them to the fundamentalists, the CSM didn't clarify who a fundamentalist was anyway.

Another term was introduced by an Arab ambassador (why wasn't he or she identified?) in a quotation. The ambassador said a modernist government in Iran would command greater respect than a fundamentalist one. There has to be a reason or reasons why this was the case. It probably had something to do with the ideology of the modernists as over against the fundamentalists. But at this point, the meaning of those terms remained unclear.

Algeria took on the role of mediator during the hostage negotiations. The CSM described it as a moderate socialist state with Western leanings. What made it Western leaning? The same article suggested that Algeria had multiple ties to the Soviet Union. That was inconsistent with the way Algeria was identified. Assuming the CSM's earlier stories were accurate, its connections to the Soviet Union would be a turn off to both the United States and Iran. Besides, the CSM never stated why Algeria was selected to fill that role in the first place.

The first NYT references made to groups of Muslims was

during the Black Friday coverage when the *NYT* was dealing with a strike.

Reports on the Associated Press wire said 86 people died because of shootings that took place on Sept. 8, 1978, following anti-government demonstrations. The demonstrations took place after a call for them came from the "Moslem clergy" who opposed the shah's Westernization efforts. (The shah was in power at this time). The government's efforts in the oil-rich, anti-communist nation included attempts to loosen the grip of the "clergy."  
(Raein 82)

The mullahs ("or priests") felt the shah's reforms were contrary to Koranic teachings. Some of those reforms were:

- \* suffrage for women,
- \* allowing women to attend universities and
- \* allowing women to remove their veils. (Raein 83)

Conservative "Moslem" opponents of the shah were also bothered by these parts of his reforms:

- \* transferring land from religious groups to peasants,
- \* increased freedom for women, including an end to segregation in universities,
- \* removal of some restrictions on the sale of alcohol and
- \* relaxation of religious censorship of movies and television. (AP II 103).

Religious leaders denied calling for the demonstrations. They blamed them on leftists. The government blamed "terror

groups" which it called "Islamic Marxists." These groups had joined the religious leaders in calling for a return to Islamic law. The government also blamed these groups for fires in Abadon (southwestern Iran) that killed 377 people in August 1978. (Raein 83)

On Jan. 30, 1979, 100 mullahs, "or lower ranking clerics," staged a sit-in demanding Khomeini's return after the government closed the airports in Teheran, Iran (Apple 6). An Iranian journalist had written a book in which he referred to the mullahs as "far right-wing (Vinocur "Ayatollah" 5)."

After the hostages' release (January 1981), there was speculation about the United States-Iranian relationship. One diplomat said the situation in Iran would not change until the "Robespierres in clerical garb disappear." This statement was referring to the mullahs. The diplomat added, "This could happen sooner than we think. Khomeini is dying." (Nossiter "Some" 2)

Although Khomeini announced his return to Iran, the violence that began on Jan. 27, 1979, continued the next day. Forty people died and 400 were injured on Jan. 27. There were no reported injuries on Jan. 28, 1979, but rioters burned a dozen buildings in a working class district. The anti-government, Khomeini-supporters called for an armed uprising and distributed instructions on how to make bombs. (Apple 1,6)

Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar blamed the violence on "commandos armed with knives and Molotov cocktails" who attacked a police station. Journalists at the news conference challenged

Bakhtiar, saying they had seen the troops fire before any action took place. (Apple 6)

Demonstrators chanted, "Machine guns, machine guns, the answer to all." In Qazirun Square in Teheran, rioters burned two movie theaters, three restaurants, a brewery and several bordellos. The brewery was disassembled brick by brick and was viewed as a symbol of Western decadence (Apple 6). The United States was considered the "Great Satan" by the demonstrators (Kifner "Iranian Says" 5).

Khomeini's supporters admitted that the hands of thieves would be cut off if the right criteria were met, in an article from Jan. 30, 1979 (Vinocur "Ayatollah" 5). At the time of Khomeini's return (February 1980), people demonstrated in support of him. Near Teheran University, one supporter threw a rock that hit a soldier. The crowd refused to disperse until asked to do so by a "Moslem clergyman." (Apple "Khomeini" 12)

Khomeini's return was a highly emotional event for his supporters. The celebration was described as "gaudy, excessive, thoroughly Oriental in its excitement" (Apple "Khomeini" 12). One man cried and another said, "... it is the wish of God that he is here. I can't believe that after 37 years of murdering people under the shah, the Ayatollah is here." Another man mistakenly believed the journalists travelling with Khomeini had some thing to do with his return. He presented two American reporters with yellow narcissus. Narcissus were placed at sites where anti-shah demonstrators were gunned down by soldiers (Markam 1,9).

A small group of Khomeini's supporters took matters into their own hands on Nov. 4, 1979. "Islamic militants" captured the U.S. Embassy in Teheran (Kifner "Iranian Says" 1) and took 52 hostages (Bennett "\$6 billion" 1,6). The hostages were taken shortly after Shah Pahlevi was admitted to a hospital in New York for cancer treatment (Kifner "Iranian Says" 1).

The students who captured the embassy were confident that they had the support of Khomeini, and they wanted the United States to return the shah to Iran. Pahlevi had been admitted to the United States for medical treatment (Gwertzman "Government" 1, 10). A spokesman for the students said they had 100 hostages, 90 of whom were Americans. The embassy had been captured previously on Feb. 5, 1979, but that situation was resolved quickly ("Tehran students" 1, 10). The students took photos of the hostages sitting blindfolded. The spokesman said they were treating the hostages humanely, but not brotherly ("Iran Leaders" 1, 12).

Other Muslims denounced the actions of the students. In the United States, the Iranian Society of University Teachers and Students condemned the capture of the "imperialist embassy" ("Tehran students" 1, 10). The Egyptian government was critical, and Turkey called for Khomeini to be overthrown (Cumming "Many" 12).

The Palestinian Liberation Organization also committed itself to helping the United States. Yasar Arafat, the head of the PLO, sent a two-person delegation to speak with the mullahs

(Kifner "Iran Demands" 1, 10). The PLO also said it would either (Kifner "Iran Demands" 1, 10). The PLO also said it did not want compensation in exchange for its help (Page "PLO" 10). President Jimmy Carter gave the United States delegation permission to speak with the PLO even though the PLO's plans were uncertain. They said only that they would not act as mediators (Gwertzman "President's" 1, 14).

Khomeini was operating out of the city of Qum. Three entities of the revolution were present there. (1) The revolutionary committee were there led by Khomeini and mullahs. (2) The eyes and ears of the revolution, the neighborhood militia organizations, were active as well. (3) The third group, tribunals, were headed by mullahs and acted as the judiciary of the revolution. ("Holy City" 12)

Hundreds of students broke away from demonstrations that were taking place in Teheran. They climbed the walls of the embassy and captured most of the Americans inside. The students wanted to remove Western/liberal ideas from Iran (Kifner "Iranian Says" 5). President Ronald Reagan referred to the captors as barbarians in an article published on Jan. 21, 1981 (Nossiter "Some" 2).

David Rosenbaum presented a more detailed depiction of the events on Jan. 20, 1981, as the negotiations for the release of the hostages were nearing an end.

At 11 a.m. on Nov. 4, 1979, a group of students

chains around the U.S. Embassy, but met no resistance from the Iranian guards there. The "irrational mob" followed Islamic ascetics, the mullahs. The Americans who were taken hostage were bound, blindfolded and paraded before a vengeful, chanting crowd. These militants wanted the United States to return the shah, who was receiving medical treatment in there. (Rosenbaum "Year" 8)

Before the hostages were released on Jan. 21, 1981, they were taken to the airport where two Algerian planes were waiting for them. Islamic militants were at the airport shouting, "God is great! Death to America!" Two militants propelled the hostages toward the plane through the hostile crowd. (Kifner "Teheran Captors" 1,8)

When the hostages returned to the United States, the *NYT* reported on Jan. 22, 1981, tales of beatings, months in solitary confinement, a constant fear of death and physical and mental mistreatment. One Marine sergeant was told that his mother died. A hostage who was released early said the captors played a game of Russian roulette with the staff secretaries. However, another hostage called the Russian roulette story a sheer fabrication. Most of the hostages did not receive mail. Their captor told them it was because their families did not care to write them. (Quindlen "Tales" 1,10)

The U.S. State Department said examinations revealed a pattern of abuse by the captors. Hostages reportedly were forced to stay outside for hours. The captors manacled some hostages to chairs for 15 days. ("US Says" 7)



A lighter story about Islam appeared simultaneously. Around the world, charging interest was a common banking practice. However, the Koran forbade *riba*, interpreted as usury and charging of excessive interest. Muslims adopted the practice of sharing profits as an alternative. Modernists sought to end the Islamic prohibition, but many Muslims followed the tradition. In Islam, a belief was that a person should only receive something if he or she made an effort or took a risk. ("Islamic Views" 11)

The last group mentioned in the *NYT*'s coverage was Iranians in the United States, many of whom were students.

On Jan. 23, 1981, an article described how some Iranians in the United States reacted to the news the hostages release. Students at the University of Southern California celebrated in the traditional Muslim way -- with strong coffee. One student, Ali Sadaghi, said, "I feel happy from deep in my heart." Some students recalled threats they had received during the situation because they were Iranian. (Lindsey "Many Iranians" 9)

Some Iranians considered the allegations of abuse by the United States as propaganda to prepare for more action in the Persian Gulf. One student, who was in the Organization of Iranian People (which opposed Khomeini), said the hostages should have been tried as spies. (Lindsey "Many Iranians" 9)

Because Muslims were left out of the 2500th anniversary coverage completely, the critique of the *NYT* began at the Black Friday incident. As was written earlier, the *NYT* was dealing with a strike at the time. (This was the only area the strike

affected.) A problem that has been reported, but not critiqued was the reference to the mullahs as "clergy" and "priests." This was an inaccurate description. Within Islam there was no formal ministry. So the use of those terms illustrated a misunderstanding of Islam by the *NYT*'s reporters and editors.

Beyond that, the AP stories from that time were acceptable. They explained some of the mullahs' objections to Shah Pahlevi's reforms. They also clarified that the shah's opponents were not just conservative Muslims, but also liberals/communists. The Iranian government manufactured an opposition that it called "Islamic Marxists," but there was no indication that there was a group professing Islam and Marxism in the same breath. Good reporting was not writing down what people said, it was also checking to see if what they said was true.

As Khomeini's return approached, Iranians were tiring of the delays. They became increasingly violent, but the *NYT* made it clear that the people were sometimes provoked by government troops. Through the *NYT*'s coverage, the reader could see how the violence was both active and reactive.

Khomeini's supporters were overwhelmed with joy upon his return. The tremendous masses that turned out for the event and the quotations in the stories brought that out. Here was another instance of good journalism by the *NYT*.

That good journalism continued into the coverage of the hostage situation. Readers knew who captured the U.S. Embassy (students loyal to Khomeini), why they did it (they wanted the

United States to return the shah), and who supported them (Khomeini and the mullahs) as well as who didn't ("pragmatists" like Mehedi Bazargan). The NYT also pointed out things the CSM didn't, such as the fact that was the second time the embassy was captured. The first time the situation was handled quickly, while the more recent situation created bigger problems.

There were other Muslims who wanted the hostages freed. Both in the United States and abroad, Iranian students and teachers criticized the captors. The government's of Egypt and Turkey agreed with the students. Readers were also able to find out about the PLO's involvement. Although the NYT did show the PLO's motive were suspect to some, it pointed out the Carter Administration was willing to accept their help, too. These stories were organized, readable and understandable.

#### **The rest of the story**

What would a reader make of all this? From the coverage of the earliest incident, the 2500th Anniversary, the two papers messed up. Muslims were not mentioned. A later story in the NYT gave people reason to believe many Muslims in Iran would have objected to the celebration itself. This was never addressed. Muslims were mentioned after this, but not always fairly.

More than likely, the average reader would not be as concerned about the lack of fairness to the ayatollah and his supporters in each publication. For publications of the caliber of CSM or NYT, one article like that was surprising. The two papers should have taken enough pride in themselves to get more

than quotes from speeches by Khomeini.

It should be considered a cardinal sin to run a story in which one side presented its case. If the other side cannot be contacted or refused to comment that should be spelled out explicitly within the story. This may not hold true in feature stories as much as it would in others, but features stories were lacking in coverage of both these issues, with the notable exceptions of the *NYT*'s stories on Khomeini and Behzad Nabavi, Iran's chief hostage negotiator.

Another consistent problem in the coverage in both papers was the use and misuse of terms. Words like fundamentalists, pragmatists and moderates were placed throughout the stories. Readers would not know what those words really meant. The use of these words was questionable because of the negative connotation associated with fundamentalists in the United States. Another word, which did not have links to an early 20th century Christian movement, would have been more appropriate. Better background information about Iranian culture would clarify what these terms were supposed to mean.

On a few occasions, the mullahs were referred to as ascetics or clergy. This was entirely wrong. Nothing in the stories justified applying the term ascetics to the mullahs, and nothing could justify use of the word clergy. There was no formal ministry within in Shi'i Islam. Muslims were encouraged to interpret the Koran for themselves, and to consult the mullahs as an alternative to doing it themselves.

There were things that the two papers did well, also. *CSM* and *NYT* did an excellent job of putting Khomeini in perspective. He commanded respect and inspired fear. He was intelligent, devoted to his beliefs and clearly the peoples' leader. But the United States had reason to be wary of him; this point was also presented in the coverage.

For the most part, *NYT* could come to similar conclusions about other people and groups mentioned in the paper. The Algerians who assisted with the hostage negotiations had connections to the United States, Iran and banking. The captors of the embassy wanted the shah back. In the *CSM*, this information was noticeably missing from stories on the objections of other Arab nations to a fundamentalist government in Iran, why Bakhtiar's appointment as prime minister could not end frustrations against the shah, and how Khomeini wound up in France during his exile.

All in all, the papers did an adequate job of detailing the play by play of the developments. What they needed more of was the how and why those developments took place, the heart of good journalism.

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