

Emphasize on Justice

Considerable number of intellectuals and thinkers from around the world have so far expressed their admiration for the sublime character of Imam Khomeini (ra) and for his achievements. Here, we would like to draw the esteemed attention of our readers to the interview conducted in 2007 with Dr. Peter Scholl-Latour, an outstanding reporter who had the honour of accompanying Imam Khomeini in his flight from Paris to Tehran on the historic day of 12th of the month of Bahman of 1357 solar hijri 1979. Peter Scholl-Latour, was born in the Province of Westphalia and grew up in Lorraine. In 1978 Scholl-Latour had contact with Imam Khomeini, who was in exile in Paris at that time. He was one of the few privileged journalists who were allowed to travel with the revolutionary leader on the plane upon Imam Khomeini's return to Iran.

He got his PhD from the Sorbonne University in France, his M.A. in political science from the Paris University and also an M.A. in Islamic and Arabic studies from the Beirut University. He started his job as a reporter in 1950 and has since spent years in Africa, India and china as a reporter. He was also the author of numerous famous books. Below is the text of the interview.

Q: As you know, we are on the eve of the anniversary of the Demise of the leader of the Islamic Revolution and founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Imam Khomeini (ra). You have had certain close contacts with Imam Khomeini (ra) and have written many articles and books about him and the Islamic Revolution. Would you please express your opinion about Imam Khomeini (ra) in a few sentences?

A: Imam Khomeini was indeed a very charismatic character, his charisma being observable even at first glance. He was amazingly informed about world events

and their real causes. I am not able to find anyone comparable to Imam Khomeini even among today's famous religious figures. He had matchless spiritual and intellectual powers.

Q: As you know, in 1963 (15th of Khordad, 1342 of Solar Hijri) an Islamic uprising led for the first time in Iran by Imam Khomeini(ra) took place and was severely suppressed by the then ruling regime. At that time, there were other religious leaders in Iran too. Yet it was Imam Khomeini (ra) who managed to mobilize and urge the masses to rise against the oppressive policies of the mercenary Pahlavi regime. In your opinion, which abilities and powers of Imam Khomeini(ra) were the determining factors behind his unique success in such a mobilization? Was it his leadership capabilities or his charisma which made him such a successful leader, or were there other factors too?

A: All factors you just cited have been true with Imam Khomeini (ra). Yet, in addition to all such great qualities, Imam Khomeini (ra) had an outstanding, clear and distinct plan and program. Unlike some other Shi'a spiritual leaders who believe that no movement should be launched before the rise of Imam Mahdi (AJ), Imam Khomeini (ra) had worked hard for and written about the establishment of an Islamic government, emphasizing true social justice. Likewise, Imam Khomeini (ra) was strongly against dependence upon the West. These specifications made him different from some other religious figures. True, the 15th of Khordad uprising was suppressed, but it never died out, since about 15 years later, another uprising led by Imam Khomeini(ra) took place leading to the victory of the Islamic Revolution.

Q: To your mind, which factors were determining ones in the victory of the Islamic Revolution in 1957?

A: In my opinion, due to widespread dissatisfaction among the Iranian people the Shah had no credibility to them; the economy and politics of the country was then totally closed to the oppressed masses, depriving them of the least access to welfare and the right to take part in making decisions concerning their fate and moreover, the government of Iran was under the widespread domination and influence of America and this problem too had caused severe dissatisfaction amongst the Iranian people. And Imam Khomeini (ra) who had lived years in exile in Najaf was, at the instigation of the agents of the ruling regime – the SAVAK forced to leave Iraq, and go to France. SAVAK and the Shah imagined that this way, Imam Khomeini (ra) would be totally wiped out from the scene and forgotten by the people. But the reverse happened. I, myself have witnessed the respect and enthusiasm expressed towards Imam Khomeini (ra) by thousands of Iranians, including those living in Germany. Many University students and intellectuals who then might seem secularist rushed to Neauphle-le-Château to visit Imam Khomeini (ra) and to express their support for him. At that time, as I remember, many in the West wrongly thought that the leadership of the Islamic Revolution would be in the hands of Imam Khomeini (ra) just temporarily and particularly Americans imagined that after a short while the leftist forces would take the power in Iran, especially since at that time, the USSR was also a superpower and was thought to have a number of supporters in Iran too. The Americans thought that eventually the Toodeh or the MKO party would become the rulers in Iran. This wrong imagination was due to their lack of understanding and true knowledge about the realities in Iran and due to their being unable to understand the fact that the Islamic Revolution was a religion-based social justice-directed movement.

Q: You pointed out the West's displeasure with the victory of the Islamic Revolution. Which changes do you think were made by the Islamic Revolution in Iran's foreign policy?

A: During my past visit to Iran and in the course of my meetings with a number of Iranian religious figures, I realized that the Revolution is on the path of perfection, and I am sure Imam Khomeini (ra) knew this. As we all know, shortly after the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, eight-year-war was imposed on this country. The Ba'thist regime of Iraq wrongly thought that since Iran was in the post-Revolution period and going through various problems, including those concerning the military and defence systems, it could easily and promptly defeat Iran, particularly since at that time the Iraqi army had been fully equipped and supported by the two super-powers of that time, the U.S. and the (former) Soviet Unions. And at first, the Ba'thist army succeeded in occupying a number of Iranian cities, including Abadan and Khoramshahr. Yet, Imam Khomeini (ra) who had already ordered the formation of the organizations for people's mobilization, thereby creating a great unified national and religious force, succeeded in leading the country towards victory and the expulsion of the aggressors from the Iranian lands.

Q: Regarding the imposed war, let's now put forth this question; the territorial claims of the Ba'thist regime against Iran which were used as pretexts by that regime for attacking Iran were also made while the Shah ruled Iran. Why do you think the attack did not take place at that time?

A: Saddam Hussein and the Western intelligence agencies imagined that after the Revolution, Iran would be in a very weak position and so would not be able to resist the powerful Ba'thist forces. They believed that through defeating Iran in

that war, they would defeat the Islamic Revolution and witness that Revolution's collapse. The Americans wanted to crush the Islamic Revolution and to replace the Islamic regime of Iran with a monarchical regime and/or any other regime which would serve the American government and the West's interests. Saddam, too, had coveted the oil-rich, gas-rich Khuzestan Province and after the Islamic Revolution, thought that he would be able to capture Khuzestan in a very short time. Of course, Saddam might have had expansionist ambitions before too, but before the Revolution, he found no chance, since Shah was one of the closest allies of the United States of America in the region.

Q: In your remarks, you pointed out that many in the West believed that the Islamic Revolution would not last long, while as we see, in spite of so many plots and obstructions, the Islamic Republic has come out victorious and is progressing quite markedly. In your opinion, what causes have been behind such success?

A: I believe the Islamic Revolution has brought about basic changes in Iran, and as we see, Iran has turned into a significant country in the region; a country which plays a determining role in the preservation of regional stability and security. As for the economic progresses made by Iran in the post-Revolution years, I should say they are amazing. Also, after the Islamic Revolution in Iran, many efforts have been made towards education, in particular for the deprived classes of the people, but these achievements have not been adequately publicized abroad. Likewise, in the fields of civil rights, freedom of expression and the like many positive steps have been taken in Iran, having made Iran much more advanced and progressive than her neighbour countries. I do believe Imam Khomeini (ra) has played the most significant role in Iran's making such great achievements.

Q: As the last question, let's request you to give us a remark concerning your evaluation of Iran, taking into view the fact that you have made several visits to Iran?

A: In the past, some in the West imagined that the Islamic Republic of Iran would turn into a center for extremist riots, but this imagination turned out to be a wrong one, because just the opposite, Iran became the center for peace, security and stability. Iran is now the most powerful and the most stable country in the region. The American's plots for pressuring Iran through attacking Iraq and Afghanistan which are two Muslim neighbours of Iran have totally failed. Had the Americans the ability to realize the facts, they would have understood the reality that Iran is an stabilized country in the region. Of course, this fact has already been acknowledged by some Western figures, including Germans.

Dear readers, please note that this interview was conducted about 10 years ago, namely before the creation of the terrorist takfiri Daesh (ISIS), at the hands of the enemies of God and before the Muslim revolutionary men from Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan heroically and unitedly stepped into the scene and started fighting those blood-thirsty mercenaries of Zionists, creating the noblest epics and presenting most beautiful pictures of true Islam - the pure Islam of Prophet Muhammad(PBUH).

Translated by Nayyereh Towhidi

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