



During the Summer of 1979, thousands of Iranians flooded the streets and fought for the change despite their class, religious beliefs, and political allegiance. The protests erupted into a bloody uprising against Iran's self-appointed King – the Shah.



Hasaneh Neighborhood, Tehran, Iran
September 7, 1978

Before the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Reza Shirazi, a photojournalist, meets up with his friend Ali, the guy wearing the brown shirt, on a rooftop. Ali's picture is taken. Ali: "I know I'm good looking but save your film for something important!" Ali then tries sharing with Reza an Ayatollah Khomeini cassette tape. Cassette tapes were a popular form of communicating political ideas in Iran.



SCENARIO 1: Should Reza take the Cassette Tape?

Reza must decide. Ali: "Come on, Reza. Let's change Iran." How should Reza respond to Ali?



SCENARIO 2: Should Reza choose violence?

A group of guys then come up to the rooftop: Amr, Samir, and Sayid. They get into a heated debate about the place of Khomeini and capitalism in society. The man mainly yelling is Sayid, a communist, wearing a brown shirt and a bluish-gray dress jacket over it. Sayid states: "We are a nation of equality greater than Western Capitalism or your Paganism. Understand?" How should Reza respond?

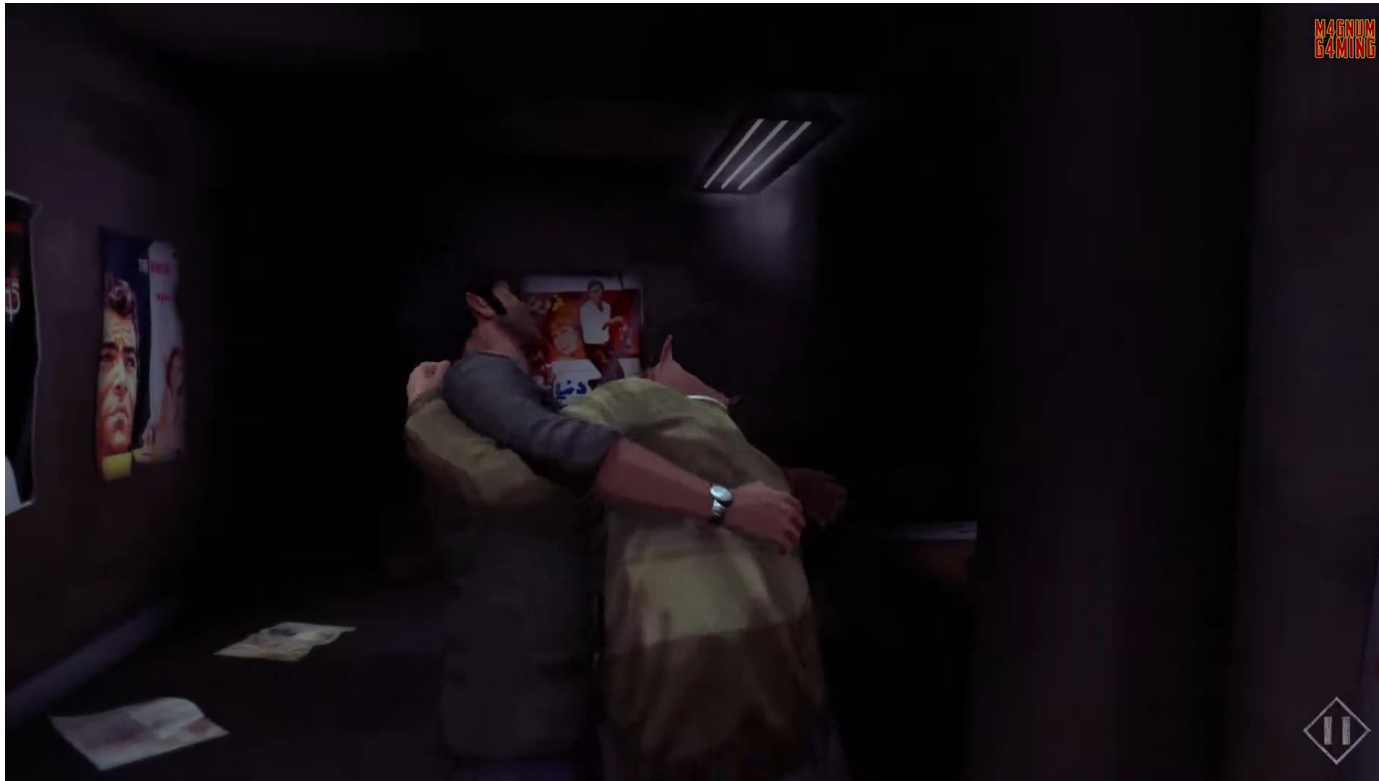


After everyone chills out, Reza and Ali wander around the streets of Tehran. Ali eventually takes Reza to a political rally against the Shah. The woman speaking is named Bibi, one of the main political leaders. Bibi: “We know the truth, and we can no longer be afraid to speak it.”



SCENARIO 3: Pro-SAVAK or Anti-SAVAK?

SAVAK troops appear and begin to break up the political rally. Bibi yells: “This isn’t right, we are supposed to be on the same side. We’re all countrymen.” Ali, while Bibi is yelling, asks Reza to pick a side as Reza has notoriously been “neutral” when it comes to politics. While SAVAK continues to swarm the area, how should Reza respond to the SAVAK situation?



Reza and Ali must flee the scene as SAVAK further breaks up the political rally. After moving down a few streets, Ali takes Reza to a private area. Reza and Ali fight off two guys named Nazar and Jafar in a secret area, and then are allowed entrance into revolutionary headquarters once Nazar and Jafar realize they are on the same side as Ali and Reza.



Reza and his friend Ali are then shown around by Bibi. While in the secret hideout, three men are arguing about Ayatollah Khomeini. Amir: “Ah! I doubt he means that.” Amir looks down at a bunch of papers that are scattered on the floor which appear to have Khomeini rhetoric on them.

Samir: “Why not?” Samir is trying to gather the papers together that scattered on the floor.

Amir: “These clerics, they hide behind their religion. But the truth is – they want to rule this country!”

Samir: “Khomeini is doing what your supposed great leader Mossadegh failed at creating – an independent Iran.” Samir stands up, getting heated.

Amir: “It was Mossadegh who fought to nationalize our oil! Not your clerics.”

Maziar: “What are you saying, kid? It was us, the Mujaheddin who fought the Americans and the British!” Maziar is looking at Amir angrily.

Samir: “And you failed, because you lacked conviction.” Samir accuses Maziar.

Maziar: “What are you saying?!”

Samir: “Any movement in this country, void of Islam is destined to fail!”

The men are now all yelling at each other and getting even more angrily excited. Bibi enters and breaks up the argument.

Bibi: “Enough! Enough! Tudeh, National Front, Communist, Mujahedeen, Islamic – it doesn’t matter. In the eyes of this regime, none of you count. How are we going to beat our oppressors if we can’t come together and put aside our differences. Only then can we bring about real change. Khomeini is the spiritual leader, yes, I get it – but he is just one of many.”

The men in unison: “She’s right.”

Bibi: “Now get back to work. There is much to be done.”



Scenario 4: Who is the mole?

Reza and Bibi go to the next room. Reza gets accused of being a mole by all the men. Bibi and Ali back up Reza. SAVAK is now storming the secret hideout. Bibi asks you to accuse the spy. Pick one:

- Sayid, the Communist
- Amir, the Anti-Cleric and Anti-Khomeini/Tudeh party
- Nazar, “Neutral” politics
- Jafar, “Neutral” politics
- Samir, Pro-Cleric and Khomeini/National Front
- Maziar, the Mujaheddin



After fleeing from SAVAK again, Reza and Ali have dinner with Reza's family. Reza's family is wealthy and prominent. They have ties to the Shah. Ali leaves the room to take a phone call. Reza's brother Hossein, a member of SAVAK, is criticizing Reza for his photojournalism and for Ali's antics, stating that Ali is putting the family at risk. We learn that Ali is Reza's cousin.



Scenario 5: Brotherly love?

Hossein tells Reza: “Ali has no place in this family or Iran! He’s done for! His time is up!” Should Reza support Hossein or Ali?



Reza and Ali leave the household after dinner. After a few months pass, Reza and friends witness severe violence on the streets with protestors clashing with SAVAK. Him, Ali, and Bibi are cornered.



Reza is thrown in Evin Prison.

Have students break up into groups of 3 or so. For smaller classes, work in pairs of two. They will need to discuss with each other each decision. Tell them to not skip ahead so they can simulate the game as a playthrough. This will prevent the ending from being given away. They have 20 minutes to make their choices for 5 scenarios.

You will want 10 minutes to dole out the punishments. Once the students have worked together in groups through the entire packet, you reiterate that Reza ends up in Evin Prison. Reza will now be interrogated by a ruthless leader named Hajj Agha, a pro-Khomeini warden of the prison. Hajj Agha has a file on Reza containing documents and pictures from Reza's photojournalism. He was taking photos the entire time during the revolution up until he was caught. The country is now the Islamic Republic of Iran. The year is 1980.

After sharing the punishments, read some of the facts about Evin Prison.

Evin Prison – The Interrogation

Scenario 1, the cassette tape situation:

If students decided that the cassette was Khomeini propaganda, Reza gets the cattle prod during the interrogation by Hajj Agha.

If students picked any other choice, Reza would get tea and a scolding.

Scenario 2, the roof top:

If students decided to support Sayid, the communist, Reza would get a cattle prod.

If students decided to fight Sayid, the communist, Reza would get a cattle prod.

Life is sometimes arbitrary.

Scenario 3, pro-SAVAK or anti-SAVAK:

If students didn't respond (...) or supported SAVAK, Reza gets another cattle prod.

If students accused SAVAK of working for the Shah, the interrogator gives Reza a break. Life is not fair in Evin.

Scenario 4, who is the mole:

Ask student groups who Reza thought the mole was. Whoever the group of students picked for choice 4 is dead.

Scenario 5, brotherly love?:

If the students have Reza support Hossein, the interrogator brings out Hossein, Hossein dies. The interrogator sees Hossein as anti-Islamic Republic.

If the students support Ali, the interrogator brings out Ali, Ali dies.

If students respond with “you don’t know anything,” Hossein brings Ali out, Ali dies. Hossein has outed Reza and Ali to the Islamic Republic.

Discussion (post-scenario punishments meted to Reza):

How did this exercise make you feel or expand your understanding of the 1979 revolution?

Make sure to emphasize that the original game was made to invoke empathy and show that the 1979 Revolution was more nuanced with various political parties. The creator, Navid Khonsari, and his team spent years interviewing and collecting real sources from people who experienced the revolution which are shown throughout the game.

If students ask about the game

I did change a few names/scenarios for the sake of time and clearer narrative, and some names weren’t known/I couldn’t figure them out. Throughout the entire game, Reza is being tortured by Hajj Agha for information about the events that occur. For both time purposes, narrative purposes, and the surprise of landing in prison, I changed a bit of the narrative. About game from Steam:



Key Features

CRITICAL CHOICES - The choices you make will shape your experience in the Revolution, and the fates of those around you -- both in the present and the future.

CINEMATIC EXPERIENCE - Branching cinematic story told through motion captured animation and voice over performances. Discover the rarely seen world of Tehran in the 1970's, through a striking visual style.

EXPLORATION - Explore the world of the collapsing city under martial law: covert headquarters, rioting protests, bustling city streets and more.

PHOTOGRAPHY - Take photos of the period accurate in-game world and compare them to the original archival photos captured by celebrated photojournalists.

UNIQUE GAMEPLAY - Including urban triage, interactive action scenes and photo processing.

KEY COLLECTABLES - Discover and unlock more than 80+ unique stories that color and enhance your experience of the Iranian Revolution: including primary sources like archival videos, home movies, graffiti, photographs and more.

BASED ON TRUE EVENTS - Based on real firsthand testimonies of freedom fighters, witnesses and casualties of the revolution which helped define the 21st Century, as well as those who were imprisoned in Iran's notorious Evin Prison.

Facts about Evin

(Sources: <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2004/iran0604/5.htm>, <https://www.dw.com/en/irans-evin-prison-experience-was-psychological-torture-says-former-prisoner/a-63509722>, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2022/11/iran-mahsa-amini-protest-evin-prison-fire/671950/>)

- Built in 1971, located in the hills of northern Tehran
- During the late period of the Shah's rule, thousands of political prisoners were subjected to horrifying conditions, tortured, and executed there under the control of SAVAK.
- After 1979 Revolution, the new government detained those associated with the Shah, and also experienced horrifying conditions and torture.

- In 1988, political prisoners from the Tudeh to the communist party were killed (approximately 5000).
- It is under formal control of the National Prisons Office, but the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC, Sepah) and the Ministry of Intelligence and Security have judicial authority.
- Harsher crackdown and torture since 2000. Many intellectuals are held there, one prisoner stated: “We were all in there together, and it was like a university.”
- Tactics include torture, threats of indefinite imprisonment and torture of family members, deception and humiliation, multiple interrogations lasting up to five or six hours, denial of medical care, and denial of family visits.
- Narrative:
- Anoosheh Ashoori is a British-Iranian businessman who was locked up for more than four years at Evin, two of which he spent in the section of the jail where Iranian authorities said the fire broke out. He was arrested in 2017 while visiting his mother in Iran, on charges of "spying for Israel." "I was in total shock. I was numb from head to toe. I didn't know what was going on, and I was taken blindfolded," he said about his arrest. He told DW about the squalid conditions and abuse he suffered during his detainment in ward 7, hall 12, of Evin prison. "The situation in hall 12 was extremely dire. We struggled with bed bugs, cockroaches, huge rats, and foul food," he said. Up to 70 people were housed in hall 12 in four rooms, he added.
- During the recent protests, more than 14k prisoners are being held captive, all peaceful protestors.
 - If you guys are comfortable mention: Women are being married off to prison guards so that they can be killed (interpretation of the Quran; no virginal girls can be killed).
- Riot at Evin Prison on October 15-16, 2022. Prisoners were threatened to be shot. Shots were fired as prisoners called out "Death to Khamenei." 8 prisoners died, 57 injured.