

The post-Khomeini future for Iran and the Gulf

by Robert Dreyfuss

With a little delicate diplomacy and a few signals to the enemies of the Ayatollah Khomeini, Ronald Reagan can bring about the downfall of the Khomeini regime in Iran and the restoration of a moderate, middle-class government in Teheran within a few months. The Soviet Union, leading Iranian exile leaders, Saudi Arabia and Iraq all gave indications this week that they are prepared to cooperate with Reagan to depose the dictatorship.

That conclusion is based on extensive intelligence analysis by the *Executive Intelligence Review* and is based, in part, on similar evaluations by a number of former Iranian officials now leading the opposition to Khomeini's Dark Ages terror.

The release of the remaining 52 hostages held by Khomeini's Muslim Brotherhood gang has eliminated what one Iranian official called "Khomeini's shield." Now, many opponents of Khomeini inside and outside Iran are no longer restrained by their reluctance to do anything which might endanger the hostages' lives. "Khomeini is fair game now," said one ex-Iranian military commander. "Anyone who wants to take potshots at him and his regime can do so." For over 15 months, Khomeini and the ruling clique of mullahs have used the hostages as the propaganda means to mobilize the street mobs in defense of the weakening regime, and several political challenges to Khomeini have been blunted since 1979 by constant manipulation of the hostage issue. Now, that mechanism is gone.

For Reagan, the key to unlocking the Iranian puzzle was provided by the semi-official endorsement of Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev's December 1980 plan to neutralize the Persian Gulf by none other than the former Iranian Imperial military commander, General Gholam Ali Oveissi. Oveissi, who heads one of the anti-Khomeini exile military groups, has earned a reputation as a hardline, no-nonsense military strongman and is a firm supporter of restoring the Iranian monarchy under Reza Shah, son of the late Iranian king.

Oveissi supports Brezhnev

In an editorial in the newspaper *ARA*, published in Paris by the Iranian Liberation Army, whose leadership is close to Gen. Oveissi, the Brezhnev proposal on the Gulf was cited as a means, ironically, of "keeping the left in check." Brezhnev, said *ARA*, was "sending a message" to Reagan on the possibility of an accord to jointly pledge noninterference in Persian Gulf affairs. *ARA* then bitterly attacked the British, accusing London of "hammering down nationalist forces and uplifting religious fanatics and feudalists." Said *ARA*: "The British still believe the Middle East is part of their empire of days gone by."

The statement by the pro-Oveissi *ARA* indicates a broad convergence in strategy between Moscow and certain Iranian exile forces. Broadly, that convergence is based on the following: In December, Brezhnev

proposed during his visit to India to convene an international accord to guarantee the security and stability of the Persian Gulf and the free flow of oil to the Western industrial nations by prohibiting the establishment of military bases in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. According to key observers, between the lines of the Brezhnev proposal was the Soviet president's willingness to see the return of the fallen monarchy to Iran as long as the new Iran did not enter into a strategic agreement with the United States and NATO. In other words, Brezhnev—although the entire Soviet leadership is by no means united on this issue—is prepared to tolerate a military coup against the Khomeini regime, but only under certain very strictly defined conditions.

"For Reagan, it is very simple," said a leading Iranian exile. "There is only one way to restore Iran to stability. The American president must indirectly approach Moscow on the issue. Provided that Washington and Moscow can reach an agreement, then they can force that agreement on the British. And once that agreement is achieved, the mullahs will crumble overnight in Iran. Their regime will be gone immediately,

and the military will take power."

Who, in fact, will take power?

Iran's next regime

Only two real options exist for Iran. The first is a takeover of the country by an anti-Khomeini group combining the Iranian military and police with a broad coalition of civilian political groups, including the merchants or *bazaari*, to restore a constitutional monarchy in Teheran. The son of the fallen Shah, Reza, living in Cairo, has gathered around himself a loose consensus of former officials, including Gen. Oveissi and former Prime Minister Shahpour Bakhtiar. Although Oveissi and Bakhtiar do not like each other, they are reliably reported to have agreed on basic principles of cooperation.

The second option involves the eruption of some sort of "El Salvador"-style leftist insurrectionary movement that would include the Tudeh Communist Party, the fanatical Mujaheddin Islam guerrillas, the smaller Fedayeen-e Khalq, and other armed gangs. Should Reagan refuse to approach Moscow for cooperation

General Oveissi's ARA endorses Brezhnev plan

The following is an excerpt of an editorial that appeared in the Paris Persian-language newspaper ARA, the newspaper associated with leading Iranian exile military of the Iranian Liberation Army (ARA), an anti-Khomeini organization that includes General Ali Oveissi.

During Soviet President Brezhnev's recent visit to India he advocated the adoption of a neutral, non-aligned role toward Iran and Afghanistan by the superpowers. In fact, Brezhnev suggested that the two countries be neutralized. It seems to observers that Brezhnev is sending a message to the United States concerning positions advocated by both superpowers in regard to the war between Iran and Iraq. . . .

Unfortunately, the West has founded its relations with the Middle East on a profit-seeking policy of obtaining oil and selling arms. The policy is old and still in practice. The oil is to be had for the West and the arms exported—and so the region is destabilized.

London is making a mistake even though they are familiar with the situation in the Middle East and the nationalist forces in Iran. London has been hammering down the nationalists and uplifting religious fa-

natics and feudalists. During the Shah's reign the imperial army was one of the strongest forces supporting the nationalists to keep Iran united. But at the same time the British and the BBC were campaigning against those forces through their fifth column. The British still believe that the Middle East is part of their empire of days gone by.

England must be reminded of the fact that as recently as 90 years ago Iran was the only independent country in Asia. . . . London's mistake and persistence in such an attitude by the British and the West has created an opportunity for communism as an alternative for the people. . . .

Iran should therefore welcome the neutrality doctrine offered by the U.S.S.R. so that it can keep the left in check and prevent them from a further active role, at the same time keeping the West distant.

The Soviets committed a mistake when they thought that keeping the West away provides better opportunities for them. And, for the West, this also applies with respect to the Soviets, and for the same reason.

The U.S.S.R. is making the same mistake because it surveys Iran and Iranians through British-fashioned glasses. Russia needs to make an evaluation of its policy and hopefully will conclude that Pishevari [a leading Iranian communist] and Khomeini will not in fact fulfill the Soviets' wish to have Iran delivered to them.

and, instead, decide to pursue a course of confrontation by attempting to impose a military government on Iran by force, then the relative Soviet moderates in the Brezhnev faction in Moscow would lose out to the radicals, and Moscow would probably lend logistical and propaganda backing to a communist takeover of Iran after a bloody civil war.

Before examining these options further, it is necessary to consider a mythical third option, namely, the continued existence of the regime of the Ayatollah Khomeini.

With the release of the last hostages, the Anglo-American intelligence faction that helped to topple the Shah and install Khomeini in 1978-79 has mobilized its entire resources in an attempt to preserve Khomeini's dying regime in a slightly new form. For example, the former U.S. ambassador to Iran, William Sullivan, who presided over the fall of the Shah, believes that an alliance between Iranian President Bani-Sadr and chief clergyman Ayatollah Beheshti, together with elements of the old National Front liberals, can manage to rule the country even after the Ayatollah Khomeini's death.

Maneuvers around Teheran

Olof Palme, Henry Kissinger, and the Trilateral Commission took actions last week toward achieving that end.

- Henry Kissinger, who often pretends to be a loyal friend of the late Shah and opponent of Khomeini, returned from a tour of the Middle East. On that tour, according to intelligence sources, Kissinger urged both Egypt and Israel to disengage from ongoing plans to assist an eventual military coup in Teheran. Then, in a secret meeting with the young Shah held in Morocco, Kissinger reportedly suggested that Reza postpone plans for an immediate return to Teheran after a military seizure of power.

- Olof Palme, the former prime minister of Sweden, arrived in Teheran in an effort to put together a left-leaning but pro-NATO government under President Bani-Sadr. Palme, a leading figure in the socialist Second International, maintains close links with Iranian radicals and socialists, especially with the National Front.

- The Trilateral Commission, the original sponsors of the Council on Foreign Relations' Project 1980s, which planned the Khomeini revolution, met in Washington under Arrigo Levi of Italy to discuss the Middle East. According to Levi, the prime subject on the agenda was the need for a "geopolitical" alliance between Washington and Teheran, regardless of what regime possesses control of power in the Iranian capital!

What Kissinger, Palme, and the Trilateral clique are seeking—in coordination with officials of the defunct

Carter administration—is to maintain at all costs the Islamic Republic of Iran and its "Islamic constitution," in order to preserve the policy of an imposed Dark Ages across the Third World. For them, the Khomeini regime is the model of an anti-technology, religious-based regime committed to "authentic values" and the "quality of life." In its official program, the Trilateral Commission has dedicated itself to the restriction of technology access in the Third World, and it encourages "appropriate technology," exactly the policy of the Bani-Sadr government.

According to Richard Cottam, the University of Pittsburgh professor and British intelligence agent who helped to train many of Khomeini's leading aides, President Bani-Sadr is seeking to install former Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh as his prime minister and to assemble a coalition of the National Front and, perhaps, Admiral Ahmad Madani, to rule the country.

Madani, currently in London, is detested by Iran's armed forces because he willingly collaborated with the Iranian government of Khomeini for over a year before he fled into exile in 1980. A member of the discredited National Front who is close to President Bani-Sadr, Madani is getting support from the Second International machine in a bid to return to Iran.

But such a policy, in most observers' view, is a pipe dream. Should the United States attempt to restore its pre-Khomeini geopolitical alliance with Iran now that the hostages are out, even with a government led by the apparent moderates like Bani-Sadr and Madani, the country would still lurch toward civil war and eventual breakup into its constituent provinces. A different policy indeed is required.

Arc of stability

So, for Reagan, the choice is quite clear. The Soviet proposal by Brezhnev has defined the options in the sharpest of terms. Already, the proposal has won support from Iraq and, indirectly, from Saudi Arabia, the two most important states in the Gulf region. The pro-Iraqi *Al-Destour* magazine, published in London, carried an article recently by an official of the Iraq Baath party, which compared the Brezhnev proposal for the Gulf to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's proposed Arab National Charter of February 1980. That Iraqi plan called for the removal of all foreign military bases in the Gulf and the establishment of a zone of peace in the area based on the political principles of nonalignment.

Crown Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia then declared in an interview that the two superpowers should "quit poking their nose" into the Gulf, adding that the Gulf could then become an "oasis of prosperity and stability." According to Fahd, the Jan. 24 meeting of heads of

state of 42 Islamic countries in Mecca would discuss a strategy for military and political security in the Gulf region. In fact, together Iraq and Saudi Arabia will be the dominant powers at the Mecca summit, and for that reason Khomeini's shattered regime has refused to attend the meeting.

Thus, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and the leading Iranian exiles are all committed to a policy of nonalignment in the Gulf. General Oveissi, in a personal statement this week pledging his support for the return of the Shah to Iran, also declared that Iran would neither tilt toward the "East or the West," but would remain neutral. Quietly, French President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing is providing support to the Gulf states in their neutrality bid.

For Reagan, this means that to continue the policy associated with former President Carter's Rapid Deployment Force and associated network of forward bases in Oman, Egypt, Kenya, and Somalia will be to enter into a direct confrontation with virtually every state in the region. Such a policy will be a dangerously

destabilizing factor in the Gulf. In particular, radical and communist elements and some extremist Palestinian groups have already made plans to launch terrorist attacks on American personnel in the Gulf. According to several sources, these attacks might receive support from Anglo-American intelligence networks to provide a pretext for deploying the RDF into the Gulf and occupying certain strategic areas.

At present, there is no indication that Reagan intends to maintain the RDF policy, and in fact certain members of Reagan's "kitchen cabinet" and other envoys who traveled to Moscow for Reagan have reportedly begun preliminary discussions with Brezhnev on the Gulf stability plan. Within the administration, the new secretary of state, General Alexander Haig, remains a strong advocate of continuing the Brzezinski RDF scheme.

Should Reagan choose to abandon the RDF concept, it is virtually certain that he can easily bring about a coup d'état in Teheran and guarantee the long-term stability of the Gulf.

Trilateral spokesman: 'a geopolitical ally'

On Jan. 14-15, a secretive meeting of a special Trilateral Commission task force on the Middle East was held at the Cosmos Club in Washington, D.C. Participants included George Franklin, North American director of the Commission; Ambassador Kidehara of Japan; Arrigo Levi of Italy, a regular contributor to La Stampa, a daily owned by the Agnelli FIAT firm; and Joseph Sisco, a former undersecretary of state and underling to Henry Kissinger. The draft report of the task force will be one of the two working papers at the Commission's annual meeting this March at the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington, D.C.

An investigative journalist provided EIR with the following extracts from a discussion with Arrigo Levi in Washington.

Q: What is your assessment of the recent Brezhnev proposal for the demilitarization and effective neutralization of the Gulf area?

A: We must take into account former Soviet actions. Afghanistan cannot be simply set aside. Inevitably, the West must answer what the Soviets have done in Afghanistan. The nations in the region won't accept what has happened in Afghanistan. Nor will Europe,

especially with the recent Soviet warnings to Poland.

Q: But aren't there signs of a Soviet shift, against the clergy inside Iran? Doesn't this suggest a more general policy reorientation in the region by Moscow?

A: Attempts by Afghanistan to come to a détente with Pakistan should be seen in this light. But there is something more basic going on. The changes in the Gulf situation may be dramatic. After the hostages are released, the geopolitical situation will make of America the natural ally of Iran. Clearly, the disturbing factor of the hostages will soon become a thing of the past. In contrast, the geopolitical realities are permanent. Once the hostages are released, the relations of Iran to both the superpowers will change radically. We will see a growing rapprochement of Iran with the West. Once the hostages are out of the way, the West still will have to develop a policy toward the Islamic movement.

Q: What then is the future for Islamic fundamentalism?

A: Not much in its extreme form. In that form, it will disappear. In that form, it is creating too many immediate reactions and counterreactions; it can't sustain itself. We are moving into a new period, and everybody is maneuvering. When the hostages are released, geopolitical factors will become paramount, irrespective of the exact government in power in Iran.