

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

A bogus option for Iran

With the Khomeini experiment gone awry, the British solution is a Zia-style dictatorship.

The demise of President Rajai and Prime Minister Bahonar signals the start of a new, even more chaotic, phase of the Iranian "revolution."

The British, working through Secretary of State Alexander Haig and the same mindless crew of Iranians who overthrew the Shah and put Khomeini into power, are now preparing to breathe new life into their Iranian experiment by attempting to transform the Khomeini regime into an Islamic military dictatorship à la Ziaul Haq's Pakistan.

Such a government would retain Khomeini as a symbolic centerpiece. However, the radical mullahs would be out, and the Mujaheddin, linked to the Socialist International would be in, thus restoring a semblance of order to Iran—a necessary prerequisite for facilitating the strategic manipulation of Iran against the Soviet Union, as well as the systematic deindustrialization and depopulation of the country.

Haig's State Department is fully in tow behind this largely British plan to preserve Khomeini's Islamic Republic in all its essential features. The *New York Post*, citing the State Department as a source, makes this clear: "There is a growing feeling among government experts and academics, and even some ex-hostages, that the survival and stability of Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution may be in the national interest of the United States. . . .

The real long-term threat, just over the horizon from Teheran, is the Soviet Union. . . . Since January, Washington has been making small, quiet gestures to the Khomeini regime, selling wheat, offering to buy oil, winking at Israeli shipments of spare parts to Iran."

Why is a new Anglo-American version of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran unworkable? The Soviets have no intention of sitting by and giving London and Washington a free hand in the destabilized situation in Iran and the region, and are prepared to demonstrate their sentiments

Nevertheless, Haig and his controllers are plunging ahead. Following the Aug. 30 assassination of Rajai and Bahonar, a delegation of "moderate" ayatollahs visited Khomeini to urge him to soften his line, i.e., to get him to cooperate with the Anglo-American scenario. Immediately after the meeting, Khomeini issued a plea for moderation and restraint in the pursuit of "justice" in the wake of the murders.

But, for the first time, Khomeini was openly defied by the radical mullahs. In one day alone, there were 55 executions of "traitors to Islam." More important, Prosecutor General Amlashi rebuked Khomeini by issuing official orders to speed up the trial and execution of 4,000 political prisoners now in jail. Ayatollah Montazeri, long considered Khomeini's likely successor,

announced strong support for Amlashi and directly attacked Khomeini.

According to one intelligence source, "What the moderate ayatollahs are proposing is that Khomeini be salvaged, that he announce that he has erred in recent decisions, and then retire to the holy city of Qom to his spiritual life. They will keep Khomeini around as a symbol, but that is all."

In an interview, ex-President Bani-Sadr, now living in exile in France, extended an olive branch to Khomeini by letting it be known that while he backed the murder of Rajai and Bahonar, he refused to authorize a hit on Khomeini, stating that it would cause civil war. In what amounted to a combined ultimatum and offer to Khomeini, Bani-Sadr said: "Khomeini will give in to the will of the people, just as he gave in to Reagan" on the hostages.

The operation to retool the Khomeini regime has been initiated by the same group of British Petroleum-connected insiders that carried out the 1977-78 destabilization, among them Gen. Hossein Fardoust, the director of the Shah's intelligence agency Savak, who betrayed the Shah by deliberately conducting misinformation to him and later defected to the Khomeini camp to head up Khomeini's intelligence operation, Savama. "Fardoust," commented one source, "is the perfect double agent."

Other old-boy figures in the operation are said to be the Shah's chief of staff, General Gharabaghi, and former naval chief Admiral Habibollahi, as well as former Foreign Ministers Ibrahim Yazdi and Sadeh Ghotbzadeh.