

Khomeini panicked over opposition

by Mary Lalevéé, Wiesbaden Bureau

There are increasing reports on internal dissatisfaction and rebellions inside Iran. In the last week alone, there have been reports on rebellions in the cities of Isfahan and Meshad, brutally repressed by the Iranian authorities, of bombings against government buildings and representatives, and increasing revolt by the various tribal groups which make up Iran's population. The Kurds are being treated with great harshness: after an amnesty had been declared for Kurdish guerrillas who gave themselves up, those who actually did so were executed. There are also reports of mass imprisonments and banishment of entire Kurdish families.

Faced with the disintegration of support for his mullah regime, Khomeini is on a "flight forward" in an attempt to turn the attention of the population away from food shortages and repression. One indication of this was the execution Sept. 15 of Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, one of the architects of the Iranian "revolution." Thus far the government has refrained from moving against religious leader Shariat Madari, whom Ghotbzadeh had implicated in the attempted overthrow of Khomeini. Fear of the reaction of Shariat Madari's Azerbaijani supporters is one reason. Another is the government's unwillingness to have information published concerning Shariat Madari's links with Turkey, which is reported to have supplied money and weapons for the plotters. The Iranian government is presently negotiating a big economic package with Turkey, and the Iranians need the deal too much to jeopardize it with the embarrassing publication of these facts now.

Iraqi war another diversion

Khomeini is also using the war with Iraq to turn the population's attention away from hardship. The second anniversary of the war, which began on Sept. 22, 1980, was marked in Teheran by a military parade, with Iraqi prisoners of war forced to carry pictures of Khomeini. Khomeini has announced that the "final phase" of the war had begun, and there have been repeated reports in the last two weeks that the Iranians are preparing a major offensive against the Iraqi port of Basra. Some say that as many as 50,000 Iranian troops are massed on the border in preparation.

Iraq announced yesterday that its airforce had attacked military targets in five cities in Iran, and that this was a

"warning" to the Iranian regime not to launch an offensive. A military communiqué said that "Iraq is ready to deal a deadly blow to the enemy, if they dare to attack."

Iraq now has the advantage of being backed—verbally at least—by the other Arab states. The recent Arab League meeting at Fez agreed unanimously to support Iraq if its territory was invaded by Iran. Even Syria, ally of Khomeini, was forced to agree, albeit reluctantly.

Former American ambassador to Saudi Arabia James Akins told a conference in London earlier this week that if the next Iranian offensive against Iraq were repulsed, it could mean the end of the Khomeini regime, leading to a takeover by the military in Iran. He said that the upcoming battle could well decide the Gulf War finally, as Iran was fast running out of manpower for its human wave assaults. While Iraq is reported to have lost as many as 50,000 troops in the two-year war, Iran is said to have lost three times that many.

Akins warned of the consequences of an Iranian victory, and called for Western support for Iraq. He said that if the Iranians did defeat Iraq, Iran would simply absorb at least part of Iraq, and Saudi Arabia would have to become politically deferential to Iran. He stressed that the regime in Iran had at most the support of 15 percent of the population and that a new revolution is inevitable.

Tribal-based opposition grows

Opposition is coming increasingly from tribal-based groups, rather than from political opposition. One of the reasons for this is that the Khomeini regime has simply eliminated the leadership and members of many political organizations. Executions without trial are commonplace. Even with a trial, the recent government decision to appoint students at Islamic schools judges means there will be little hope of justice for opponents of the regime. Reports now say as many as 19 people per day on average are executed by the Iranian regime.

One report speaks of the recent capture and killing of a large group of the opposition Mujahedin e Khalq, in the Khuzestan province, where they were accused of planning the killings of leading military and government officials.

One exile source said that "something could be organized around the tribal groups," which he described as "fiercely nationalistic," and "not at all oriented to the mosques."

These nomadic groups are reported to have links to the British, as well as earlier to the Germans, dating back to World War I, when members of the Kashgai tribe, for instance, fought with the Germans against the British.

The leader of the Kashgai tribe, Khoshrow, was imprisoned some time ago by the Iranian authorities, obviously fearing an organized revolt by his tribe. They hesitated to execute him, however, fearing equally much a reaction by the Kashgai. However, two days ago, it was reported that he had been executed. This is yet further evidence of Khomeini's flight forward, and the fact that the regime does not care about the possibility of such a revolt.