

## Middle East Report by Judith Wyer

### Moscow's power play in Iran

*The Soviets are building up Islam-Marxism in Iran, failing which a military intervention may occur.*

In early December the publication of the newly reorganized Iranian Communist Party *Rah-e-Tudeh* issued a call to the powerful leftist faction of Ayatollah Khomeini's Islamic Republic Party to form a united front to take power in Iran.

Three months ago, Moscow had initiated a campaign in a Sept. 9 commentary of Radio Baku for a united front against what it claims are Anglo-American anti-Soviet "rightists" dominating both Iran and Pakistan. That broadcast voiced support for the movement for the Restoration of Democracy, a coalition led by the Pakistani Peoples' Party challenging Pakistani strongman Zia ul-Haq.

The Soviet move came after the Khomeini arrest of the leadership of the Iranian Communist Party (Tudeh) and the late-August televised denunciation of Marxism by the jailed Tudeh leader, Nuruddin Kianuri. Though the Soviet press has denounced the arrests and the upcoming public trial, evidence indicates that Moscow played a role in scrapping the Tudeh old guard to make way for a leadership espousing the Islamic-Marxist ideology the Kremlin is pushing in the Mideast.

The Imami faction of Khomeini's inner circle is favored by the dictator, and many of the Imami's leaders, such as terrorist Ayatollah Khomeini and Industry Minister Bezaad Nabavi, have links in East Germany and the Soviet KGB going back to long before the February 1979 Khomeini takeover. These leftists espouse the Islamic-Marxist worldview that is being pro-

moted today by Geidar Ali Reza Aliyev, Soviet first deputy prime minister, who maintains direct control over Radio Baku. Aliyev has been the most powerful figure in the Azerbaijani region, whose capital is Baku, since he became head of the KGB there in 1967. His penetration of Iran goes back to the Soviet occupation of Iranian Azerbaijan in the mid-1940s.

For the past 18 months the Soviet Union has consistently attacked a gang of feudal Iranian mullahs, known as the Hojitia group, as assets of the United States and its British ally for its role in backing the Muslim insurgency against the Soviet occupying force in Afghanistan. It is explicitly against the Hojitia grouping, for which Khomeini is known to have no liking, that Moscow is attempting to build a unified opposition.

If this tactic fails, it is possible that Moscow may use a military strategy to put down the Hojitia.

The Northeast region of Iran is the historical center of the feudal religious oligarchy known today as the Hojitia. It is from cities like Meshed, a stronghold of the Hojitia, that major military support is organized for the Afghan Muslim rebels. An occupation of northeastern Iran would be justified as securing Soviet forces and the pro-Soviet government in Afghanistan.

Over the past two months an unprecedented war of words has broken out between Iran and the U.S.S.R., with Soviet propaganda denouncing Iran for its anti-Soviet activities in

Afghanistan.

European sources report that over the past six months there have been a number of incidents on the Turkish-Soviet border, near the Iran-Afghan border.

There are reports that Iranians have fled into Soviet Turkmenistan after being harassed by Khomeini's Revolutionary Guard. These Iranian refugees are said to be armed and trained by the Soviets and redeployed into northeastern Iran for sabotage operations there.

Soviet efforts to warm relations with the People's Republic of China are seen as an integral aspect of a potential Soviet move into northeastern Iran. Moscow aims to remove troops from the Sino-Soviet border to its border with Afghanistan and Iran.

Just how much of a threat is actually posed by Iran to the Soviet hold on Afghanistan is questionable. But Moscow is creating a pretext for a potential move into Iran, while it steps up its bid to build an internal alliance of leftist mullahs and various Islam-Marxist groupings, like the Fadayeen al-Khalq and the Mujahiddin al-Khalq.

But there are other prominent figures in Khomeini's opposition that Moscow is now vigorously courting. The November 1983 issue of the Soviet publication *Religion and Science*, in an article on Iran, singles out for praise Ayatollah Shariat-Madari, the second most powerful Ayatollah in Iran, now under house arrest. Earlier this year Aliyev sent an emissary to West Germany to confer with Ahmed Shariat-Madari, the Ayatollah's son. Though the aging Shariat-Madari is by no means a leftist, Iranian sources say that he could be desperate enough now to ally with Moscow. He has a broad following in the Iran's northwestern Azerbaijan, an area twice occupied by Soviet forces in this century.