

The opposition to Khomeini: perspectives and prospects

by Robert Dreyfuss

Throughout the country of Iran, the opposition to Khomeini's gang of mullahs—the "Qom mafia"—has reached a certain threshold level. Although Iranian leaders outside Iran sometimes claim to expect a slow spread of counterrevolutionary ferment in Iran, in fact, according to intelligence sources, Khomeini's own security services and *komitehs* and Revolutionary Guards are reportedly strong enough to clamp down on isolated instances of unrest and insurrection. In such circumstances, it is more likely that a successful rebellion against Khomeini will take the form of a sudden, nationwide uprising and general strike leading to the establishment of an emergency military government and the suspension of the Islamic "constitution."

Filtering out of Iran are many manifestations of anti-Khomeini resistance. In Lahijan in northern Iran last month, anti-Islamic Republic rebels seized control of the *komiteh* headquarters in that city and expelled the Revolutionary Guards, killing many of them. "Filthy mini-groups," said Ayatollah Rafsanjani, "are declaring independence in Lahijan and the occupation of the governor's office." The National Voice of Iran, a procommunist radio station based in Baku in the Soviet Union, blamed "enemies of the revolution and world-devouring U.S. imperialism" for the Lahijan uprising in a March 9 broadcast, while Radio Iran, a pro-Bakhtiar clandestine broadcasting station, had words of praise for the rebels.

In other instances around the country in the area south of Teheran and Qom, well-armed Qashqai tribesmen clashed repeatedly with the Revolutionary Guards throughout the mountainous areas in central Iran. In Isfahan, an industrial city, some of the more than 2 million Iranian refugees created by the war engaged in a near-insurrection against the forces of the regime, and all refugees were banned from entering Qom, the headquarters of the Khomeini circle. On March 24 in Teheran, a large explosion ripped through the offices of the Central Committee (*komiteh*) there, causing a great deal of damage and leading to panic among Khomeini officials. That explosion was followed soon afterwards by an explosion at Teheran's largest mosque, which is also a political and military headquarters for the Muslim Brotherhood, which helps control Khomeini.

Throughout the country, there have been dozens of attacks and assassinations against the mullahs, who go armed with their private militias. One secret society alone, operating underground in Iran, claims to have killed more than 130 mullahs in 1981. And, according to a March 10 broadcast on Radio Iran, "Reports from Teheran state that Sadeq Khalkhali, Mohammed Beheshti, Ali Qoddusi, Musavi Ardabili, Hashemi-Rafsanjani, and Ali Khamenei have been terrified by telephone calls and written messages from a group of unidentified persons and have doubled their bodyguard." Ayatollah Shirazi, a leading Khomeini fanatic, was almost killed on March 30 in Shiraz in Fars Province.

The devastating economic crisis in Iran has led to a wave of strikes in almost every Iranian city, including Teheran, Tabriz, and Isfahan. Both blue and white collar workers, along with *bazaaris* (merchants) have participated in strike actions. Behzad Nabavi, the Iranian minister of state for executive affairs, said last month that the strikes were the work of "counterrevolutionaries" seeking to "topple the government of the Islamic Republic." Bluntly, Nabavi declared that "it is not possible for the government to raise wages" and so workers must "choose between revolution and higher wages."

Also, since February, Iraq—as part of its war effort—began officially shipping weapons into Iran to Kurds, Arabs, Turks, and certain tribal elements, as part of a deliberate Iraqi political campaign to undermine the hated Khomeini clique. In response, a panicked Iranian government last week declared that it is prepared to give regional autonomy to ethnic and tribal minorities like the Kurds. But, for these groups, who have had enough of Khomeini, promises of a bit more freedom will not counterbalance the prospect of ridding Iran altogether of the Khomeini plague.

Currently, at least three separate clandestine anti-Khomeini radio stations are making their voices heard inside the country from bases in neighboring countries. Sponsored by Iranian exiles, these radio stations include Radio Iran, the Voice of Iran, and the Free Voice of Iran. Last week, Khomeini's regime took the lame measure of banning the import of short-wave radio

receivers into Iran!

At the same time, there has been a proliferation in recent months of organized opposition groups inside the country. Of course, the exact strength of such organizations, whose activity is very secret and not readily verified, is uncertain. But it would appear that, more than at any other time since the Khomeini revolution, there is an organized resistance. Among the groups now active in Iran, there are:

- **ARA**, or the Iranian Liberation Army, said to be headed by Gen. Javad Moinsadeh;
- **the National Resistance Movement**, and the **NEQAB** organization, loyal to Shahpour Bakhtiar;
- the monarchist **Council of Guardians of the 1906 Constitution**, active throughout the country but said to be particularly strong along southern Iran's Persian Gulf shore;
- the **Free Iran** (Azad Iran) group, formerly led by Prince Shafiq, nephew of the Shah, who was murdered in Paris in 1979, and now led by Princess Azzadeh;
- General Gholam Ali Oveissi's **Organization for the Deliverance of Iran**;
- General Rahimi's **Guardians** (*Dejban*), derived from a term meaning military police;
- the **Free People** (*Azadegan*) movement and the **Forces for the Liberation of Iran** of Gen. Bahram Aryana, former Iranian Imperial chief of staff; and so forth.

The coordination between the exile leaderships of these groups and the actual on-the-ground forces that they can deploy is, of course, top secret. At least to some extent the claims of these organizations are exaggerated. But what is certain is that should the time for an actual uprising occur, the existence of these disparate groups can rather quickly be wielded into a single, coordinated force. Many of these groups currently operate as secret societies that have managed to penetrate into the military leadership of the Islamic Republic and into the inner councils of the Khomeini machine.

For instance, said one exile activist, "Our group has been able to penetrate directly into the office of President Bani-Sadr itself, where we have planted a number of loyal officers in command. In addition, we control at least 4 of the 17 districts of Iran in the komitehs, and we have forces inside the central komiteh in Evin Prison, in Teheran itself." He said that the leadership of the group is actually living in Iran now, relying on political networks that go back many decades.

According to some accounts, in February 1981 a few of these opposition groups got together to issue an ultimatum of sorts to President Bani-Sadr. In effect, they offered Bani-Sadr a deal in which the president would be given amnesty after the counterrevolution on the condition that he now renounce the Islamic Republic itself. Of course, Bani-Sadr—who has made a great show of supporting the Iranian armed forces in an effort

to purchase their political backing for his confrontation with the mullahs—was not expected to agree to such a demand, if, for no other reason, than it would mean his immediate impeachment and trial for treason.

"But our strategy was something different: to use even the offer of an amnesty to Bani-Sadr to split the camp of the mullahs. Many of them, especially those like Khalkhali and so on, feared that Bani-Sadr might be tempted at some future point to accept the offer, and so they feared that they, the clergy, might be left out of a new arrangement between Bani-Sadr and the armed forces," said one source.

From that point on, the conflict between Bani-Sadr and the mullah-controlled Islamic Republican Party (IRP) has continued to worsen. At a March 5 rally, where Bani-Sadr addressed a large crowd, a gang of *hizbollahis* ("party of God") tried to attack the crowd and were repulsed by forces loyal to Bani-Sadr. Involved in the counterattack were armed elements from a newly established unit that was called the Presidential Guard, a paramilitary body nominally controlled by Bani-Sadr. In the next days, Prime Minister Rajai, Nabavi, and Rafsanjani attacked the establishment of the Presidential Guards.

Nabavi said on March 12, "I have received some documents indicating that such a unit exists. . . . It has also been discovered that the said unit is being maintained by the defense ministry financially. In any case, it should be said that the formation of such a unit is illegal."

Rafsanjani was equally upset. "What role does this guard play? On what legal ground has it been established? Where does it get its budget? Who are these people?" An official statement by one of Khomeini's organizations bluntly accused Bani-Sadr of committing

Ayatollah Qomi says regime violates Islam

According to an Agence France Presse dispatch that appeared in the French daily Le Monde April 11, the "grand ayatollah" of the holy city of Mashad, Hassan Qomi, has "broken his silence" and has issued "very grave accusations" against the leadership of the country, accusing the leaders of not being "true Muslims," and deploring that the Mashad clergy is not listened to by the Iranian leadership. Le Monde labels the Qomi attack "the most vehement" to be issued from his school at Mashad to date. Le Monde quotes Ayatollah Qomi as saying:

All that these leaders do, including [President] Bani-Sadr, is not Islamic; they do it in the name of

treason: "The gathering of Savak members, counterrevolutionary groups, and bankrupt nationalists around the president are a particular cause of concern."

Then, Nabavi directly attacked Bani-Sadr. "We realize that there have been moves aimed at weakening and overthrowing the government. The president himself has had a hand in these," he said. Kalkhali accused Bani-Sadr of treason, and there continue to be rumors that Bani-Sadr will be put on trial.

But Bani-Sadr—whose position improved somewhat after a March 16 threat to resign—is making some kind of counterattack over the economic issue. Citing figures that appear shocking even to veteran observers of the Iranian revolution, Bani-Sadr showed that the productivity of the Iranian economy is collapsing so fast that the country cannot survive much longer without a peace settlement with Iraq and a reconstruction program. Since then, however, the IRP clergy have made new efforts to isolate Bani-Sadr, not because they fear his personality, but because they fear that he might be used by the armed forces as a vehicle for increasing the military's influence in the government and then eventually staging a coup.

For instance, *Mizan*, the pro-Bani-Sadr newspaper published by former Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan, who is the leader of the so-called liberal faction, was closed down this week, and its editor, former Commerce Minister Reza Sadr, arrested.

"The disagreement within Khomeini's group is now taking the form of a fatal wound that will eventually lead to the destruction of the regime," said Radio Iran on March 15. "The past threat and the present silence by Khomeini on the subject of the attacks on each other by the Bani-Sadr and Beheshti groups show that he is unable to use his influence over his lackeys."

Islam, but their trials, their tortures, their decisions, the confiscation of personal wealth, are against the Islamic law. Often, the Islamic tribunals are directed by people who don't know Islam, who are corrupted, without mercy, and the great majority of their decisions have no value. . . .

In order for the country to escape from the crisis, it is necessary that all the revolutionary organizations that exist in Iran be dissolved, for they are corrupted, including the *komitehs* [Islamic security forces] and the *pasdarans* [guardians of the revolution]. . . .

The true clergy doesn't want power, it does not approve the clergy that governs us. The true work of the clergy is to give its opinion to the people and to enlighten them. True Islam is the religion of pardon and of mercy, as the Prophet showed when he pardoned his greatest enemies.

Interview

Shahpour Bakhtiar discusses Iran



The following is an EIR interview conducted by Robert Dreyfuss on April 9, 1981, with Dr. Shahpour Bakhtiar, the former Prime Minister of Iran. Dr. Bakhtiar headed the Shah's government in Iran for 40 days in January-February 1979, just before the return of the Ayatollah Khomeini and the coup d'état that overthrew Bakhtiar and ended Iran's monarchy.

During his tenure, Dr. Bakhtiar fought the efforts of Khomeini's mullahs, and predicted that if the mullahs took over Iran, only chaos and destruction would follow. But Bakhtiar was unable to persuade a sufficient number of so-called moderates to support his government, and he was faced with traitors inside the Iranian military command who, in collaboration with the Anglo-American secret services, were working behind-the-scenes to bring Khomeini to power. In addition, the British and American ambassadors in Teheran and Gen. Robert E. Huyser, President Carter's special envoy, deliberately worked to undermine Bakhtiar's government.

Since then, Bakhtiar has been a leader of the Iran exile movement. He is now living in Paris.

EIR: It's been more than two years since the mullahs took over Iran. So far, the Iranian resistance has not developed a unified leadership, and personal differences seem to keep the exiles divided. Is it possible that this will change in the near future?

Bakhtiar: As far as I am concerned, after the mullahs