

# Moscow's plan for post-Khomeini Iran

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Last month's Moscow visit by Iranian Foreign Ministry official Mohammad Sadr has rekindled speculation that the Soviets are preparing some kind of power play within the Gulf. Word of Soviet stirring of the Kurdish and Azerbaijani separatist networks along the Russian-Iranian-Afghani border and continuing speculation about eight to ten Soviet divisions poised to invade the natural gas-rich northern provinces of Iran are typical of the reports spreading throughout exile and intelligence circles in the United States and Europe.

*EIR*, however, has determined from a canvassing of a wide range of sources that the Russians' priority option for Iran centers around a projected post-Khomeini period of protracted civil strife in which Farsee speaking Spetsnaz units (elite Soviet military intelligence units, long-term penetration units, and sabotage units), rather than conventional military forces, will be assigned the role of penetration agents, seizing key positions within the power institutions emerging from the rubble of a civil war. When the smoke clears, according to our sources, Iran is to be the new Afghanistan absorbed into the Russian Empire.

## Destroying Iran's military

Key to this plan is the destruction of the Iranian military, generally seen as the last bastion of nationalist resistance to the twin threats of a continued Khomeini fundamentalist republic and Soviet absorption. The bloody Iran-Iraq war, which Iranian sources report has claimed over one million Iranian lives and has left another one-half million Iranians, mostly children, crippled for life, is the principal vehicle for the destruction of the Iranian military. Soviet policy, therefore, has been to sustain the war while at the same time denying either side the capacity to achieve a clear victory. This policy has also been at the center of British and Kissinger-dominated U.S. State Department policy toward the Gulf war. This genocidal collusion has been recently held up as a model of "Soviet-American cooperation" by some circles in the West, who are intent on maintaining Ronald Reagan in an election-year cage to which the Kissinger apparatus holds all the keys.

While the Soviet civil-war plot goes a long way toward explaining Moscow's serpentine diplomacy toward the Gulf, some Iranian exile leaders insist that a continuation of the

Iran-Iraq war will almost inevitably lead to an Iranian breakthrough due to the sustained human-wave tactic Khomeini has been throwing against a depleted Iraqi military defense. One Iranian source has claimed that, of the core 180,000 trained fighting troops in the Iraqi Army, 80,000 are now captured and being held in POW camps inside Iran. Should such a breakthrough occur, particularly in the Basra-to-Baghdad region, Kuwaiti government officials believe that their country would collapse within 48 hours, opening up Saudi Arabia for a concentrated assault by Khomeini fundamentalist legions. Such a fundamentalist breakout would set the course of Gulf politics for the next hundred years.

Either of these scenarios could play out before the November elections in the United States.

This has led some intelligence specialists to reopen the question of an anti-Khomeini move from within Iran over the next several months. Critical to any such popular revolt would be a clearly enunciated policy of an immediate end to the Iran-Iraq war and a return to the 1976 treaty agreement between those two nations.

Provided that such an agreement were predicated on an ambitious economic recovery and development plan—a multi-billion dollar Saudi-backed national reconstruction project based on high technology agricultural, industrial, and infrastructure development of both war-ravaged nations—the long, painful process of reversing seven years of Khomeini devastation could commence under conditions of preservation of Iranian and Iraqi national sovereignty, not Soviet conquest. According to sources, such a move is both possible and necessary in the immediate weeks ahead.

## Resistance to the mullahs

An intelligence report circulating now among European-based Iranian exile circles associated with the former Shah suggests that the view voiced by our source has considerable basis in fact. Recent events inside Iran, according to the document, indicate a high level of active resistance to the Khomeini regime and to the continued prosecution of the war.

In May, if the document is accurate, parents in the Azerbaijan city of Miyaneh attacked a bus carrying children off to the front and battled off Pasdaran guards, rescuing the children and burning the bus. In the last two weeks of June, a dozen military and civilian aircraft were hijacked and flown out of Iran.

The document additionally reports a pattern of bombings directed against secret military installations where "suicide commandos" are being brainwashed. Reportedly, one such facility in Saleh Abad outside the city of Qom was recently razed by a series of explosions that wiped out a large arsenal and destroyed several buildings. In May and June, anti-Khomeini riots reportedly broke out in three heavily populated residential areas of west Teheran on the heels of similar disturbances in Babriz, Mashhad and Zabol.