

Middle East Report by Thierry Lalevée

Clouds gather over the Gulf

The Soviet Union appears to be on the verge of making a bid for power in Iran.

Moscow has suddenly shifted its stance in regard to Iran. An Aug. 27 editorial on Radio Moscow announced that the "regime of Khomeini is worse than the Shah."

Signed by "Observer," a reference to a highly placed communist used to announce major political changes, the editorial went on to denounce the Iranian regime as "oppressive" and "worthy of the Middle Ages" for its "repression against the left-wing progressive elements" which had brought Khomeini to power!

The timing of the Soviet denunciation is of special interest. In relation to Iran's internal situation: Quietly for months now, the Moscow-controlled Tudeh communist party has been reorganizing itself after being shattered during the mullahs' 1982 crackdown. The leadership was reorganized last spring in East Germany, following the death of the former secretary general, Prince Eskandari, whom, because of his opposition to Khomeini, the Soviets had purged in August 1978.

The Tudeh party has consolidated an alliance with the left-communist group, the Fedayeen-e-Khalq, and another alliance with the Mujahedeen-e-Khalq of Massoud Rajavi—the so-called "Islam-Marxists." This is an important step, as Moscow has succeeded to some extent in recent months in selling the Mujahedeen to gullible European and American politicians as an alternative to Khomeini. Scores of

European parliamentarians signed a Rajavi resolution on human rights in Iran. Most admitted afterwards that they knew nothing about the Mujahedeen.

Does the new coalition of the left signify that these KGB-controlled operations inside Iran now plan a bid for power? Moscow's sudden shift to denunciation of the mullahs regime might indicate so. Viewed from conditions inside Iran, such a power bid could only be activated under conditions of disintegration of the Islamic republic around the death of Ayatollah Khomeini.

Yet, for Moscow, the issue is not to organize a new popular revolution based on conditions internal to Iran. A revolt's success would actually only depend on the ability of Moscow to move its troops across Iran's northern border, or its Afghan border, with relative speed.

Moscow is moving on these two fronts simultaneously, and may intend to present President Reagan with a fait accompli in the Gulf by the time of Gorbachov's November summit with the President.

Henry Kissinger and the crowd associated with the Carter administration's destabilization of the Shah, are playing their own role. Kissinger has begun contacting all of Iran's various exile factions, promising them the end of the Khomeini regime. He has also tightened his grip over certain Iranian

monarchists networks, promising that, when Khomeini goes, the young Shah will return to Iran.

Only fools can believe that Kissinger will ever hold to his promises and they should look at the small print in the contract. The Moscow deal that Kissinger is associated with, is based on the plans for a division of Iran which would effectively destroy it, perhaps forever, as an independent country in the region.

Meanwhile, the Iraq-Iran war has assumed a new intensity with the bombardment of Kharg Island, and what the Iranian fanatics do in the Gulf is only to Moscow's advantage. If Washington is confronted with a major political and military crisis in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, it will be easier for Moscow to impose its own regional terms in the course of ensuing "crisis management" conducted by the Kissingerians from the U.S. side.

Any such deals would involve not only Iran, but, as Gorbachov has already hinted, Afghanistan and Pakistan as well.

With Moscow controlling Iran's military lifeline, the hardcore mullahs as well as those KGB agents trained in East Germany and at Patrice Lumumba University in Moscow, now attired in mullah robes, are entirely committed to wrecking Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. By early September, there will be more than 150,000 Iranian pilgrims in Mecca, and countless Iranian allies among other delegations. Not enough to overthrow the Saudi monarchy as some may dream, but enough to create major disruptions.

Kuwait, meanwhile, in the first week of August, received ominous threats from Iran's terrorists, the Hezbollah. As during June and July, such threats could be followed by terrorist atrocities shaking the stability of the tiny sheikhdom.