

PLO role in Iran questioned

The offer by the Palestine Liberation Organization to mediate between the United States and Ayatollah Khomeini's hordes to rescue American hostages, while a useful action should it succeed in saving lives, brings into focus what has been until now a dangerous PLO flirtation with Iran's Muslim Brotherhood rulers. According to informed sources, the PLO contains within it elements which belong to the Muslim Brotherhood machine dating back to the founding of the PLO in 1964.

From the start of the Khomeini revolution, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat established close and warm relations with the Khomeini dictatorship. Even before the revolution, the PLO worked closely with the Shi'ite movement in southern Lebanon, especially the fascist Al Amal group run by Imam Musa Sadr, whose military commander, Mustafa Chamran, is now the overall director of Iran's intelligence services and the defense minister.

Reportedly, Saudi Arabia and Iraq have recently grown increasingly concerned with the tight relation-

ship between the PLO and Khomeini's regime. *Le Figaro* reported that Saudi Arabia has even threatened to reduce its financial subsidies to the PLO unless the Palestinians halted their cooperation with Iran.

From Oct. 11 to Oct. 19, PLO leaders Khalil al-Wazir (Abu Jihad) and Hani al-Hassan brought a delegation of the PLO to Iran for a full-scale round of strategic coordination. While in Iran, Abu Jihad and Hassan met with Khomeini, Yazdi, Ayatollah Montazeri, and many other leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood elite there. Following the meetings, several wild claims were made, including the statement that the PLO had received offers of 70,000 volunteers from Iran to fight in southern Lebanon.

But most dangerous was the pattern of PLO activities in the Gulf. Immediately following the visit to Iran, Abu Jihad called a meeting with all of the PLO representatives in the Gulf countries. Ostensibly, the purpose of the meeting, in the PLO's own words, was an effort to smooth relations between Iran and the Arab Gulf countries. That, according to observers, can only be taken as an effort to isolate Iraq and, in effect, to win support in the Arab world for the Oman plan for a Gulf security pact.

Persian Gulf. In September, Madani ordered the start of large-scale naval maneuvers in the Gulf, which were taken with alarm by the Iraqis and the smaller Gulf states on the Arab side. The threatening maneuvers, which involved the entire Iranian Navy, were run directly by Madani. Said Madani:

"We shall not be the policemen of the Persian Gulf, but of the Iranian nation in safeguarding what belongs to her. It was to achieve this idea that maneuvers on a larger scale than in the past have been held We believe that countries with vested interests should act. We speak from a position of strength when we say that we shall crush any misdemeanor."

What made Madani's statement especially alarming was the fact that it followed by days a statement from Ayatollah Rouhani that Iran would soon reassert its long-abandoned claim to the island nation of Bahrain, and also statements from various Iranian Shiite religious leaders that Iran would seek to whip up Islamic fundamentalism among the population of the Arab Gulf countries.

It was at this time that the British and the British colony of Oman began launching their proposal for the creation of a Gulf Security Pact linking Oman, Saudi Arabia, the smaller Arab states, and, eventually, Iran!

According to European sources, the government of Oman has been organizing since September for a pact

to be created that would bring foreign (American and British) troops into the Gulf. The nation of Oman, perhaps the most British-dominated state in the entire world, announced at the end of October that it has received "financial and military" support from Iran for the establishment of a series of military installations in the Straits of Hormuz. At the same time, a top-level delegation from Oman visited Iran several times during the summer and fall to work out the details of the plan, which was kept secret. The United States announced last week, meanwhile, that it has begun the establishment of top-secret radar installations at the Hormuz Straits.

In an unusual interview, Yazdi himself hinted that Iran might well consider forming an alliance with Oman to protect the straits. Yazdi said that he "was not acquainted with" any plans by Oman to protect navigation in the straits, but that Iran does consider that it has a responsibility for the area. He said that the extent of Iran's "readiness to cooperate" with Oman in protecting the straits "depends on the circumstances," and he refused to comment any further. The Yazdi admission, which may have been inadvertent, is all the more unusual because Yazdi has been meeting recently with representatives of the terrorist PFLOAG, the "liberation" movement that is based in nearby South Yemen.

—Robert Dreyfuss