

EIRSpecialReport

Who is keeping Khomeini in power?

by Robert Dreyfuss

More than 26 months after the mob upsurge that accompanied Ayatollah Khomeini's February 1979 coup d'état, conditions within Iran have reached a point at which the fall of the Islamic Republic is a serious possibility. Virtually the whole of Khomeini's original constituency, including the middle class, students, merchants, and some tribal leaders, has abandoned him. Only a tiny fraction of the population still supports the ayatollah and his hangers-on. Strikes and anti-Khomeini demonstrations are commonplace throughout the country. Even among the grand ayatollahs, the chief leaders of Iran's Shiite community, a majority now opposes Khomeini's version of Islamic government.

Yet Khomeini is still there.

The continued existence of the Islamic Republic is generally recognized in Washington as a danger to the stability of the entire Middle East and to the most fundamental U.S. interests. Iranian exiles are willing to cooperate with a potential Reagan initiative on Iran. An opportunity now exists for American moves to help Iran rid itself of the mullahs, provided that the White House defines such a policy in conjunction with its French and German allies, and in coordination with the Soviet Union.

How does the Teheran regime still manage to cling to power?

The fact is that Khomeini is supported from the outside by an international consortium of powers. In general terms, the coalition propping up the mullahs is precisely the one that, in 1977-78, launched the destabilization of Iran, toppled the Shah, and created the Islamic Republic in the first place.

That constellation of forces includes the London oil and financial aristocracy centered around British Petroleum, Royal Dutch Shell, and the City of London banks; the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and its world-famous Orientalist Division; the Socialist Second International, including Willy Brandt, Olof Palme, and, in the United States, the "Ramsey Clark faction"; and the world zero-growth movement.

It is also this London-centered coalition that controls the runaway government of Menachem Begin in Israel and uses the pro-Begin faction of



Muslim cleric leads mourning in Tabriz for an Azerbaijani killed in a clash with Khomeini supporters.

the Mossad, Israel's intelligence service, to support the Khomeini movement.

Finally, the Soviet KGB intelligence service and "Comintern"-style networks of communist parties and fellow travelers in the Arab world and Iran continue to supply moral and political support—and arms—to Tehran.

I filed this report after a series of trips to London, Frankfurt, Paris, and Los Angeles, where I met and discussed the Iran crisis with leading members of the Iranian exile community. In the pages that follow, we will look at the real reasons for the survival of the Khomeini regime, at the brewing insurrection in Iran, at the Iran exiles, and at the prospects for a new government.

Khomeini's friends in London and Moscow

The Khomeini regime was installed to force a drastic increase in the price of oil and a sharp reduction in world energy consumption, as part of an overall Malthusian strategy to reduce world industrialization and population. In part, the strategy was successful. The Iranian revolution forced the price of oil to \$38 per barrel in 1979 from about \$14 in 1978; and Teheran's war with the Iraqis eliminated a great portion of Iraq's 4 million barrels of oil per day in exports, further squeezing global oil supplies.

At the same time, the rise in energy prices has contributed to an industrial recession in the United States and Western Europe. During the Iranian revolu-

tion and the jump in oil prices, Paul Volcker applied a drastic tightening of credit, with worldwide effects, including a cutback in industrial investment. *The increase in the cost of energy caused by the Iran crisis and Volcker's interest-rate squeeze were the twin applications of London's policy since 1979.*

To understand the enormous implications of any change of government in Iran today, consider the following:

Should the Iran-Iraq war come to an end, and some sort of stable government replace Khomeini, there would immediately exist the potential for up to 10 million barrels a day in additional oil production, based on 1978 output levels. Although less than 10 million barrels would start to flow right away, given market conditions and damage to Iranian and Iraqi oil fields and infrastructure, the renewed flow of oil would set into motion an unprecedented development: *a regular and steady decrease throughout the 1980s in the real price of OPEC oil.*

Saudi Arabia, currently producing more than 10 million barrels per day, would probably cut its output quite sharply to accommodate renewed Iran-Iraq oil. Such a measure, however, would give the Saudis almost fingertip control over world oil prices: using the weapon of its spare capacity, Saudi Arabia could enforce a stable, noninflationary oil price for the foreseeable future. OPEC's hawks, Libya, Algeria, and Kuwait, would completely lose their power over world oil markets.

From London's standpoint, this would be a catas-

trophe. Current British policy calls for oil prices to roughly double by 1982 to approximately \$70-\$80 per barrel. Under current conditions of a world oil glut, and a few indications that OPEC prices have already started to drop slightly, the British are dedicated to maintaining the Khomeini regime.

Thus the British-controlled Seven Sisters, led from London by British Petroleum and Shell and from New York by Mobil Oil, are currently exploiting their extensive intelligence links to both the Bani-Sadr and Beheshti factions in the Iranian government. Their policy is to encourage a prolonged Persian Gulf conflict that will keep oil markets off balance and contain further OPEC price cuts.

The Trilateral view

In a February 1981 report titled "The Middle East and the Trilateral Countries," the Trilateral Commission task force headed by Joseph Sisco noted somberly that "a new irredentism has been created in the Gulf, increasing the possibility of renewed warfare between Iran and Iraq in the next several years." Sisco expects the "clash between modernization and Islam" in the Gulf to "set in motion revolutionary demands, fracture the social structure, and upset traditional sectors of society, lending strength to the possibility of an Islamic revival" in Saudi Arabia.

Alvin Cottrell, a geopolitician at the Washington, D.C. Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) at Georgetown University, concurs. Cottrell foresees "permanent instability" in the Gulf and a drawn-out Iran-Iraq war; and, although he pretends to maintain friendly contacts with the anti-Khomeini exiles, Cottrell believes that a stable "Khomeini-style" regime will eventually emerge in Iran, allied with the Anglo-American camp.

This is also the view of former U.S. Ambassador to Iran William Sullivan, who now works for George Ball and Averell Harriman at the American Assembly in New York, and is a strong partisan of the Ayatollah Beheshti, the strongman of the ruling Islamic Republican Party. (Among Iranians, Beheshti is often called "Sullivan's mullah" because of their close links in 1978-79.)

The Iraq war

The Anglo-Trilateral faction is doing its best to obstruct a settlement of the Iran-Iraq conflict, which would bring Iran's armed forces back from the war front to the cities. In that case, the army—generally hostile to Khomeini and filled with supporters of the monarchy—would play an increased role in political life, and the possibility of a military coup d'état would sharply increase.

An additional reason to prolong the war is the hope shared by London and the Muslim Brotherhood in Iran that the war will undermine Saddam Hussein's prodevelopment government in Iraq.

On Iraq, the U.S. policy—by default, since Washington has not developed a coherent Middle East policy—is to continue Carter's policy, namely, to destabilize the Hussein regime. In the past two months, American intelligence personnel have streamed to Iraq, including Joseph Malone, a former Beirut CIA station chief; Miles Copeland, a CIA veteran; and Alfred Lilienthal, a CIA-linked anti-Zionist crusader. All the visitors have close ties to London intelligence organizations, and they believe a prolonged war will undercut Hussein. An April 12 visit to Baghdad by Morris Draper of the State Department, intended to improve U.S.-Iraq relations, came to nothing, sources say.

The Soviet dimension

The KGB faction in the Soviet Union is positioned to take advantage of the Iran crisis. President Brezhnev does not intend to make any power play to seize control of Iran, because he and his Politburo allies value their détente relationship with France and West Germany too highly to risk it all by taking Iran. On the other hand, the KGB and the CPSU International Section under Central Committee member Boris Ponomarev have taken advantage of the Iranian situation to increase Soviet intelligence activities there, especially in the northern border areas, and to support the Tudeh (Communist) Party.

According to Iraqi sources, since the start of the war the Soviet Union has cut Iraq off from weapons supply, and Moscow has even refused to return to Iraq two Soviet-made bombers sent to the U.S.S.R. for repairs last year.

At the same time, the Soviets have encouraged their allies in the world communist movement, particularly the communist parties of the Arab sector and the Syrian government, to support the Khomeini regime; and Moscow has approved arms supply to Khomeini from Libya, Syria, North Korea, and other countries. A great deal of Iran's arms supply also comes from the black-market arms traffickers tied to Anglo-Israeli secret services, and from secret U.S. and NATO transfers.

The Soviet calculation at present is that the British will succeed in maintaining the Khomeini-led clergy in power, which means the eventual breakup of the nation into statelets and tribal provinces. At that point a Soviet move into Iran—possibly following a procommunist coup in some provincial capitals and in Teheran itself—would be likely. A strong Western resolve to support the re-establishment of order in Iran would, however, probably suffice to deter Soviet action.