
Iran after Beheshti

Chaos to prompt Soviet takeover?

by Judith Wyer

The bombing in Teheran that wiped out the most powerful members of Ayatollah Khomeini's government, including strongman Ayatollah Beheshti, could only have been the work of intelligence agencies from outside Iran.

The operation involved a degree of technical capability available only to the most powerful foreign agencies. It also required a level of accrued intelligence and penetration of Khomeini's ranks which only British intelligence, the CIA, Israeli intelligence, and the Soviet KGB possess.

The decision to eliminate Beheshti and other senior operatives of the ruling Islamic Republican Party (IRP) has invited a wave of unprecedented chaos for Iran, as the fragmented Iranian leadership battles for survival.

The bombing occurred during a secret meeting of the Islamic Republican Party intended to consolidate Iran under Beheshti's control. Beheshti and the IRP had just ousted President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr from office following months of brutal infighting. Had Beheshti lived and consolidated power, he would probably have brought a semblance of unity to Iran. Now, however, the disintegration of Iran has greatly accelerated. As one Iranian source observed "Beheshti was the brains of Khomeini's regime; now without him, Iran will go wild."

Should Iran slide into total chaos, the fragile stability of the strategic Persian Gulf region could be jeopardized. The U.S.S.R., which shares a 1,500-mile border with Iran, could not stand idle.

Enter Lord Carrington

Less than 72 hours after the Teheran bombing, Britain began negotiations through the British ambassador to Moscow with the Soviet foreign ministry over legitimating Soviet control of Afghanistan. A few days later, the British foreign secretary, Lord Carrington, arrived in Moscow for talks on Afghanistan.

Carrington's mission was part of a British strategy to draw the Kremlin into what has become known as a "new Yalta" agreement whereby sections of the world,

most importantly the Balkans and the Middle East, would be newly carved up by the big powers. European sources report that London and its Haig-centered allies within the Reagan administration are prepared to hand over all or part of Iran to the Soviets as part of such a "Yalta" agreement.

By creating chaos in Iran, London aims to draw the U.S.S.R. into a crisis-management arrangement which could entail a Soviet takeover of the country.

Alexander Haig and his State Department underlings were the first to respond to the bombing in Iran. Haig warned of the likelihood that the Soviets would take advantage of growing chaos by intervening there, and other State Department sources predicted a Soviet military occupation of the northern Iranian province of Azerbaijan.

Chaos begins

Since the bombing incident, the fanatical mullahs and pro-Bani-Sadr leftists have battled for control of Iran with a wave of bloody executions and killings. The mullahs are attempting to scapegoat such leftist groups as the Mujaheddin-e-Khalq for the bombing, while Bani-Sadr—reportedly in hiding in the Kurdish section of Iran—makes a public call for the overthrow of the mullahs.

A Washington source warned July 8 that in every major city in Iran, powerful contingents of pro- and anti-Khomeini forces are mobilized. These mobs could open the way for the complete disintegration of Iran, he said.

Editorial comments in American and European newspapers predict that the superpowers, "like it or not," will soon be drawn into Iran to manage the crisis there. Syndicated columnist Joseph Kraft wrote on July 2 that once the mullahs and the Mujaheddin destroy one another, the Iranian military and the Iran communist party (Tudeh) will be left to fight it out. Such a polarization could, in fact, invite a partition of Iran between the superpowers.

Twice before in the 20th century Iran has experienced a total breakdown of all centralized power. Both times, London successfully drew the Russians into a crisis-management agreement resembling the one Carrington is now pressing. In both instances, the country has been divided, and Iran's northern neighbor has occupied a part of the country. In both instances, the partitions were part of a world war configuration.

One Arab source observed recently that the Soviets "know the name of this Yalta game, and won't be easily drawn in." But he concluded that if the Iranian chaos should become a real strategic threat to the Soviet Union, Moscow will have no choice but to move into Iran, a move which he called "an invitation to global disaster."