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## Iranian Elections

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# Khomeini's fanatics stronger than ever

by Judith Wyer

In Iran's April 16 parliamentary elections, the most extreme wing of the ruling Islamic Republican Party (IRP) led by President Ali Khamenei and Speaker of the House Hashemi-Rafsanjani scored a major victory. The Iranian people had nothing to do with the "election." The official Iranian news service, Teheran Domestic Service, admitted that the voting hours were twice extended; this occurred, not because of widespread enthusiasm, as the regime claimed, but because so few voters turned out.

Eyewitness reports indicate that the Khomeini regime utilized such thug tactics as refusing to give Iranians of voting age food ration cards if they did not vote. Weeks before, the legal voting age was lowered from 18 to 16 in order to increase voter turnout. Iranian peasants, illiterates, and youth associated with Khomeini's fanatical Hesballahi (Party of God) were herded into booths with instructions on how to vote in order to give a modicum of legitimacy to the regime.

### A consolidation

This time around, the last vestige of secular influence within the IRP was wiped out when Mehdi Bazargan, a cabinet member in Khomeini's first government, withdrew his name as a candidate just before the polls opened. According to one Iranian source, "The radicals are totally in power now, there is no turning back, since there is nothing within the ruling party to replace them."

The Khomeini regime has now consolidated a power base to intensify the war with Iraq over the coming months, before the summer heat sets in and, to spread the Islamic Revolution across the Gulf. Up to 1 million Iranians, many of them school children, are now massed to wage another bloody human-wave attack aimed at taking Iraq's second-largest city, Basra, near the Persian Gulf.

Khomeini is now prepared to escalate terrorist attacks on Iraq's Arab oil-exporting allies. Less than a week after the elections, a Saudi supertanker exploded in Iranian waters 70 miles south of the Iranian oil-loading terminal at Kharg Island. The 24-yard hole in the hull of the 357,000-ton tanker was reportedly made by an Exocet missile, the same French-made marine warfare missile used in the Anglo-Argentine Malvinas war.

Since Iraq is known to have such missiles, the Western media, beginning with the British Broadcasting Corporation,

quickly accused Iraq of having mistakenly hit the Saudi tanker. But there is evidence that Iran hit the ship and left Iraq to take the blame. *EIR* has learned that late last year, shortly after Iraq revealed that it had both Exocets and Super-Étendard jet fighters, Iran quietly secured its own arsenal of Exocets from Argentina.

### Khomeini's price for peace

The Khomeini regime is now more than ever under the influence of a grouping led by Khomeini and Hashemi-Rafsanjani, both Soviet-trained, who are doing Moscow's work in driving the United States out of the Mideast. Thus the regime has redoubled its effort to pry apart the alliance between Iraq and its major funders, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, by inducing Iraq's allies to accept a formula for ending the the Gulf war. Iran's price is that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein be replaced, and that the Gulf states, which eagerly want the war ended for fear of its spreading, break all military ties with the United States.

Iran's ambassador to Kuwait, Ali Shams Ardekani, publicly called for such a "peace" on April 24, when he urged that Iran and its oil-exporting Arab neighbors make a "collective declaration" guaranteeing the borders of all states in the region as part of a new Gulf-wide security system. Ardekani insisted that "very soon" Iraqis opposed to Hussein will "liberate Baghdad."

According to the London *Guardian* April 25, the Khomeini regime is backing off from insisting that Hussein's successor be a fundamentalist zealot, and may be prepared to accept a secular regime, for a while. European sources report that through various channels, including Syria, Iran is quietly attempting to induce Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to agree to halt aid to Saddam Hussein and "let him fall" in exchange for ending the Gulf war, which has already cost both countries tens of billions of dollars.

The destruction of the Saudi tanker will benefit only Iran, by undermining relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Iraq's chief source of badly needed funds. Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah, a close ally of Syrian President Hafez al Assad, is believed to be amenable to withdrawing funds from Hussein.

Ardekani demanded that the Arab Gulf states stop seeking security under the "American umbrella" or that of another superpower. Iran does not have "any essential" problem with Saudi Arabia, he said. "Our problems are with the schemes the United States is imposing on the states of the region . . . the best way for self protection is to stay away from the United States."

The tanker bombing is only the most recent of a spate of terrorist incidents which have swept the Gulf states, such as last December's multiple bombings in Kuwait. Iran has stepped up its pressure on the Gulf states to meet its demands by announcing that it is training students from the Gulf states at the Qom theological seminary—a move to create new terrorist capabilities.