

## Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

### Not so simple, Mr. Reagan

*'Spy trials' and a brewing Iranian civil war may ambush the Reagan administration.*

A little-reported incident in Iran at the end of December casts light on a crisis in Iran that may explode in Ronald Reagan's face soon after his inauguration.

Following a demonstration by Muslim Brotherhood-controlled Afghanistan rebels outside the Soviet embassy in Teheran, some of the radical demonstrators attacked and damaged the premises. The incident, which bore an eerie resemblance to the November 1979 seizure of the U.S. embassy, undoubtedly had the quiet backing of the ruling Iran clergy and Savama, the secret police of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime.

Immediately afterward, Moscow sent a sharp diplomatic protest to the Iranian government.

More significantly, Soviet television suddenly began reporting that the Iranian revolution, after two years, "has failed."

This could well be a signal that the Soviet Union and its reportedly very extensive KGB underground in Iran is preparing for a showdown with the faltering clergy. Last week, the mayor of Teheran resigned from his post, complaining that the activity of the Tudeh communist party and allied leftists made it impossible for him to carry out his function.

Throughout northern Iran, in Azerbaijan and other provinces, as well as among the clergy itself, the Soviet Union reportedly has built up a powerful apparatus of agents

and sympathizers, bolstered by the dispatch of several thousand Soviet citizens disguised as Iranians across the border into key positions in "revolutionary Iran."

For the KGB and other elements of the Soviet leadership, the regime of Ayatollah Khomeini has been viewed as useful chiefly in terms of its value in destabilizing the West and the Western supply of oil from the Persian Gulf.

Although Moscow is aware that the chief control over Khomeini lies in the long-established presence of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) in Iran's religious leadership, the KGB considers it expedient to cooperate with London in encouraging the spread of Islamic fundamentalism.

KGB General Kim Philby, the son of Harry St.-John Philby, the most important SIS operative in the Middle East in the 20th century and one of the founders of the Muslim Brotherhood secret society, represents the fulcrum of this KGB-British intelligence interface.

At present, Moscow thinks that the Reagan administration, out of a combination of naiveté and poor calculation, may try some sort of heavy-handed military action against Iran.

To help the new President make the hoped-for mistake, the British and the Philby faction in Moscow may collaborate to arrange the convening "spy trials" for the U.S. hostages.

Under the current conditions, show trials of the "Great Satan's spies" would guarantee some sort of overreaction by Reagan.

And any U.S. move into the Gulf, such as seizing Iran's Kharg Island or parts of the Saudi Arabian oil fields, would provoke an immediate Soviet countermove in northern Iran, where the Soviet Union's own assets could easily invite the Red Army in.

Since mid-December, advisers to Reagan have been meeting in the offices of the Heritage Foundation, a British intelligence think tank in Washington, to prepare policy documents aimed at one single purpose: to convince Reagan to support an intensified U.S. military presence in the Gulf, founded on the Egypt-Israel alliance.

The chief objective of both the British and the KGB is to prevent Reagan from approaching the crisis in Iran on the basis of the offer made by Soviet President Leonid I. Brezhnev in India in mid-December. Brezhnev proposed that the U.S.S.R. join other international forces to reach an accord on neutralization of the Persian Gulf, including a set of guarantees for ensuring the flow of oil from the Gulf to consuming nations.

Brezhnev's proposal was viewed with intense dislike by the KGB and the heirs of the old class-war Comintern network inside the Soviet Union, along with the Philbyites.

Should Reagan, impelled by the force of events, choose not to accept Brezhnev's offer to pursue an accord, then the impending collapse of the Khomeini regime will result in a conflict that may soon assume the dimensions of the Spanish Civil War—but with far deadlier consequences.