

What's at stake in Iran

NATO, Kissinger moot regional chaos, oil crisis and World War III

The continuing crisis in Iran has become the keystone of a major destabilization scheme choreographed by NATO to plunge the entire northern tier, from the eastern Mediterranean to the Indian subcontinent, into chaos.

Should the Shah fall, or be forced to abdicate, the delicate balance of the region will be thrown askew, setting the stage for parallel reactionary upsurges in neighboring Turkey and Pakistan and leading to heightened tensions in Saudi Arabia and the strategic Persian Gulf.

In pushing the Iran crisis to the brink, NATO is flirting with transforming the region into a flashpoint for confrontation with the Soviets in a Cuban-style missile crisis, precisely along the lines called for by top British strategists and, most recently, by Henry Kissinger. With Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) in the home stretch, the Soviets are less than willing to tolerate such provocations, and are letting that fact be known. In a Novosti release provided exclusively to this news service, the Soviets have underlined the need to maintain stability in Iran and the Middle East. The Soviet statement, following a similar tough message from Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev, represents a firm warning to Kissinger, who last week issued a provocative call for U.S. or NATO intervention into Iran to stop "Soviet expansion" there, and his allies in NATO and the U.S. government.

And in signing a 20-year friendship and cooperation treaty with Afghanistan last week, the Soviet leadership likewise made it clear that they will not back down in any confrontation growing out of the Iran crisis, that they have regional interests that cannot be compromised.

Staging U.S.-Soviet showdown

With such high strategic stakes hanging over Iran's situation, various cold warriors have begun to press the U.S. for a military intervention "to save the Shah." One variant of the scenario involves a massive U.S. military intervention, Santo-Domingo-style, to "evacuate Americans." The Carter Administration has attempted to keep the question of a U.S. evacuation quiet in order not to suggest any loss of U.S. confidence in the Shah. According to the *New York Times*, the Defense Department has called on all

dependents of military personnel to remain in Iran and for all other companies with large numbers of U.S. nationals to comply with this call. But the Middle Eastern magazine *Events* this week writes that the U.S. naval facility at Bahrain could be used for such an armed intervention, and the Greek Communist Party daily *Rizospastis* reported two weeks ago that there has been a discreet U.S. military buildup on Cyprus in light of the Iranian crisis. And NATO Secretary General Luns is calling for a major strategic debate within the Alliance over the question of Iran.

In addition to fueling a U.S.-Soviet crisis, any move like that could trigger a new "oil shortage" hoax. With oil production in Iran once again down, the West German daily *Sueddeutsche Zeitung* of Dec. 3 favorably recalled the 1974 "invade-the-oilfields" scenario of then-Defense Secretary, now Energy Secretary James Schlesinger, as a still-live option for activation today. Schlesinger has already made public his hopes that a world oil crisis will result from Iran's troubles.

The Turkish tinderbox

Turkish officials fear that the situation in Iran will spill over into Turkey, setting off a wave of tribal unrest among Turkey's large Kurdish populations in southeast Turkey. The activation of separatist tribal movements to weaken the control of central governments has been the time-tested method for manipulating régimes, such as the independent-minded Turkish government of Bulent Ecevit, into implementing unpopular policy dictates put forth by the International Monetary Fund and allied institutions. Turkey is already besieged by a wave of sectarian violence that has killed more than 700 people since the beginning of this year.

Similarly, repercussions from Iran threaten to surface in Pakistan, where Baluchistan separatists are prepared to rev up their breakaway strategy. The Soviets have reported that British-linked Chinese tribal agents are behind the separatist tribal movements throughout the region, a revelation that makes it clear that they view such operations as direct provocations against the integrity of the Soviet state and its regional interests.