

Iran considers rebel demands

From Liz Thurgood in Gonbad-e-Kavous, Iran

AS THE Iranian Government considers a list of demands for autonomy put forward by the rebel Turkomans, the town of Gonbad-e-Kavous remained tense, but quiet, yesterday after the Armed Forces took control in what many believe to have been an unnecessary show of might.

Not a shot was fired last night as the Turkomans beat a swift, but orderly, retreat from their heavily fortified positions. Their weapons had already been hidden, but, the chief of a local Turkoman political committee said "We will use them again if we have to."

The Turkomans are waiting for the Government to act on a five-point list of demands for autonomy. Anxious to appear a peace-loving people, they have set no deadline.

Among their demands, now in the hands of the Interior Ministry, is the redistribution of the rich agricultural land surrounding Gonbad now in the hands of the Shah's favoured officers, the right to set up their own police and gendarmic forces, and official recognition of Turkoman as their second language.

The Turkomans have not decided whether to demand a complete purge of the Armed Forces and the creation of a people's army. This demand has been made repeatedly by the Marxist Fedayeen guerrilla group.

The Turkoman committees accuse Iran's Shi'ite Mosque of embarking on a slur campaign aimed at discrediting their attempt to end repression. Reports that the Fedayeen guerrillas led the Turkoman rebellion, which is believed to have taken several hundred lives during the past 10 days, are denied.

"The Fedayeen only sent medical teams and lent political support," said a member of one Turkoman committee. "They are not involved in the fighting."

Meanwhile, the village of Piravash was attacked early yesterday by a large group of militiamen. Five men were taken hostage and under the pretext of searching houses for weapons, gold and money was taken. Outside the small village the dead body of a young man was found, allegedly shot while fleeing from the militiamen.

UPI adds from Tehran: The Turkomans yesterday released 18 Government hostages, including the police chief of Gonbad-e-Kavous. But none of the Turkoman rebels held by local authorities had been reported freed. An unspecified number of the town's residents were seized during the fighting.

Revolutionary guards have arrested 32 agents of the former regime, including the former Information Minister, Mr. Reza Anshahi-Tehrani, several known torturers, and pro-Shah clergymen. Four Moslem priests were disrobed in Roudsar, 143 miles North-west of Tehran, on charges that they supported the Shah's regime.

The Persian-language newspaper, Ettelaat, has reported that a key general of the Shah's Army was trying to raise an army of dissident Kurds to spark a regional revolt in the troubled Kurdish provinces in Western Iran.

General Palizban, the Shah's former Governor-General in Kermanshah who has been reported to be working underground since the revolution, was recruiting tribesmen to fight Kurds from a rival radical group, the paper said.

The paper also claimed Tehran's former military commander General Gholam Ali Oveisi, was hiding near the Turkish and Iraqi borders with Iran.

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Article - Untitled Article

Reuter adds: More than 99 per cent of Iranians who voted in last weekend's referendum approved the creation of an Islamic Republic to replace the monarchy, according to preliminary results announced yesterday by the Interior Ministry.

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