

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Iran's
Gluttonous
Revolution

By Flora Lewis

PARIS, June 14 — The revolution eats its children, goes the saying, and the greater the upheaval the greater the gluttony. Iran now, like the Soviets three generations ago and France in the 18th century, is descending into a dictatorship of blood and horror.

Americans have paid little attention since the blessed relief of the hostages' return. But Iran's travail and the international dangers surrounding it have not eased.

President Bani-Sadr, himself besieged, has said that in two and a half years of revolutionary rule the country's condition has worsened in every way. There is no security, the economy is crippled, the war with Iraq goes on, he said in a statement issued from his office while demonstrators outside called for his death as they had once called for the death of the Shah.

Reports from Teheran and a document distributed by Iranian exiles in the United States show that the situation is worse than anarchy. It has developed a gory logic that can only bring mounting disaster.

The Iranian parliament meets in a charade of legalism. One deputy accuses the President of treason and another says, "I wish he had known that hostility against the Imam (Khomeini) and the religious leadership means hostility against God."

It has to consider a new code, submitted by the Prime Minister for final approval, which includes a "Bill of Vengeance." This document, confirmed as authentic by Western diplomats in Teheran, ostensibly implements Islamic law though few Moslems elsewhere would accept it. Its very detail and precision make it more appalling even than the frenzied violence of chaos.

Premeditated murder, the bill rules, is subject to *qassas* (vengeance) and the parent, guardian or next-of-kin of the victim may slay the murderer with the assent of an Islamic judge or his representative. The crime need be established only by testimony of two

male witnesses and the sentence is to be carried out immediately.

If a Moslem man has killed a Moslem woman, her family must pay him half his *khoon-baha* (blood worth) before executing him. But if a woman has murdered a man, no penalty need be paid for taking revenge.

If an injury short of death has been inflicted, the width, length and depth of the vengeful wound must be equal. An exception is made for skull wounds, which need not be measured in depth.

"To preserve fairness, the extent of the injury must be measured accurately." So clothes over the spot must be removed or covering hair shaved, and if the "criminal's resistance may cause an increase in the extent of the retaliatory wound, his hands and feet must be bound."

Vengeance can be exacted immediately after the crime, and if later the original victim dies of the wounds, the criminal can be killed on payment of a penalty.

These are only extracts of the bill. They give a more chilling insight than any reports of speeches or riots into the texture of life which the dominant factions seek to impose. Iranian expatriates appeal to the world to speak against this "gross violation of human rights" and quote their great poet Saadi who said, "The mistletoe is as ir-

revocable — speaking when the times require silence and silence when it is time to speak."

What can we say that might make a difference? Just as before the revolution, we are now interested in the strategic and international significance of Iranian events and little concerned with how people there treat each other. That led to disaster for the United States before, and so it might again.

Ironically, the revolution so far has not provoked the widespread catastrophe elsewhere that were feared. With the industrial world in recession, Iran's oil is not missed. The long, stalemated war with Iraq has not spread as yet, and patriotic reaction seems to have held off the danger of Iran's splitting into fragments that would tempt greedy neighbors, especially the Soviets.

Though Communists and pro-Soviet agents are evidently active, Moscow has remained remarkably cautious in trying any overt moves. And the visible failure of the revolution to improve anyone's lot seems to have contained explosions of fundamentalist exaltation in the rest of the Islamic world.

But almost anything still can happen, except, it seems, the emergence of a happier, more humane society which might provide the Moslem model so many of the original revolutionaries hoped to achieve.

For the moment, Afghanistan and Poland are keeping Moscow busy and the United States has won time to plan defense of strategic Western interests in the region. Certainly, there is nothing the U.S. Government can do now to relieve the dreadful situation inside Iran, though as people we can try to sustain the wan hopes of moderates with concern and sympathy. It will be anti-American if we encourage or even are indifferent to repression.

The values of tolerance and compassion are in short supply in the world. That's the buildup everyone needs in self-defense.