

There is widespread agreement that Khomeini's death will touch off a new struggle for power. There is no obvious successor or plausible alternative to this 81-year-old man. Ayatollah Beheshti might have had the ability to carry on, but even that was not entirely certain. There are no established institutional structures or ongoing programs in the government. Khomeini can leave a last will and testament, but it is far from evident whether it will be carried out after he is gone.

At this point, one can imagine three possibilities for post-Khomeini Iran. First, Khomeini could successfully transfer sufficient authority to the I.R.P. to enable the revolution to muddle through on the brink of chaos for several more years. Second, a military coup could occur, with or without a civil war, that would restore a moderate civilian government resembling that of Bakhtiar. Such a government would be conservative in social and economic policy and follow a pro-Western foreign policy. Third, democratic forces could gather enough strength within the military and the clergy to emerge victorious after a struggle that would likely plunge Iran into a period of civil war.

Only this third option would preserve and extend the gains of the Iranian revolution. Despite the failures of Khomeini's leadership, the revolution has maintained its anti-monarchist and anti-imperialist character. In addition, Khomeini's own words, if not the deeds of his regime, lend an aura of legitimacy to his opponents' democratic demands. Even if the Bani-Sadr/Rajavi forces take power, there remains considerable doubt that their alliance could hold together. There is also the question of whether outside powers would stand idly by while the revolution was being put back on a progressive track.

It must be understood that the ease with which Khomeini and the Islamic Republican Party achieved a monopoly of power in Iran was greatly facilitated by the failure of the various democratic elements to form a broadly based coalition that supported concrete proposals for social and economic change. During the crucial year of 1979, while the I.R.P. clerics, relying on the mantle of Khomeini's undisputed leadership, were building a nationwide organization, a dominant propaganda machine and an extensive patronage system, the main democratic personalities and groups were often involved in factional maneuvering to gain Khomeini's temporary support in the ongoing battle for power inside Iran.

Khomeini exploited the rivalries among the democratic elements and eventually eliminated them altogether. If a coalition of democratic forces similar to the National Council of Resistance formed in Paris by Rajavi and Bani-Sadr a few months ago had existed in the early months of 1979, Khomeini and the I.R.P. might not have been able to sidetrack the revolution—certainly not with such apparent ease. It remains, of course, to be discovered whether the democratic elements of the Iranian revolution have learned this essential lesson from the tragic turn of events over the last several months. One thing, though, is clear: without a solid organizational structure and a coherent and carefully spelled-out program, the democratic forces have no realistic prospect of achieving their objectives. Quite possibly, a second

failure on their part would demoralize the democratic constituency in Iran for a long time to come.

Let us hope that Khomeini's own words of late December 1978 will come back to haunt him: "Whenever repression is intensified to an extraordinary degree, the natural and inevitable result will be an explosion. Hence the revolutionary movement, which will continue until the Shah's regime is destroyed." Now, of course, the "revolutionary movement" has turned against Khomeini's regime. □



■ APPEAL FROM EXILE

Khomeini's Reign Of Terror

MANSOUR FARHANG

Human liberation in one part of the world is ultimately inseparable from liberation in other parts. Thus, all people who support the cause of freedom are morally obliged to speak out in defense of the rights and the humanity of the Iranian people, whose peaceful and popular revolution has been transformed into religious fascism.

On behalf of President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, I wish to appeal to the conscience of the world, to all men and women supporting the cause of human freedom, to break their silence and condemn the crimes of Ayatollah Khomeini's regime.

No government in recent decades has established such totalitarian and barbaric political order as the present government of Iran. During a four-month period last year, more than 3,000 innocent people were executed without public hearings. The regime intrudes upon the most intimate aspects of daily life. Homes are entered and their occupants seized not only for political reasons but also on the mere suspicion that they have violated the dictates of the state in the conduct of their private affairs. There are currently about 50,000 political prisoners in Iranian jails, where torture is routinely practiced. It has also been estimated that another 50,000 dissidents have been driven underground. Hundreds of people have been killed or imprisoned for giving shelter to critics of the regime. It is a tragedy that these hideous crimes are being committed

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in the name of Islam and the Shiite tradition.

The condemnation of these continuing crimes in Iran by all concerned people will expose the true face of Khomeini's regime and provide hope and inspiration to the Iranian people, who are living under an unimaginable reign of terror. Before the revolutionary victory of February 1979, Iranians suffered under the political and economic oppression of the Shah. In the present struggle, we are opposing not only political and economic oppression but also cultural and religious totalitarianism.

It is important to note that the political struggle in Iran today is not between the clerical and the nonclerical forces. Only a tiny minority of the mullahs have arrogated to themselves the divine right to govern Iran. A theologian as prominent as Sheik Ali Tehrani is in prison. Young clerics like Ahmad Mohaddess, Amir Sharif-Razi, Yunes Baraij and Mohsen Aleesehaq—all with records of devotion in religion and resistance—were recently executed. Habib Ashouri, another distinguished theologian and scholar, was executed for criticizing the regime. Many high-ranking ayatollahs in Qum, Teheran, Isfahan and Mashhad are under virtual house arrest. Ayatollah Lahouti, who spent twelve years in the Shah's prisons and was an outspoken opponent of the present regime, died mysteriously. Ayatollah Golzadeh Ghafouri, a popular theologian and political figure, was forced into seclusion after the execution of his son last year. Thus it is sheer deception for Khomeini to present himself as the only legitimate spokesman for the Iranian Shiite hierarchy. In fact, according to the teaching of Shia Islam, acceptance of religious authority is voluntary. Khomeini violates this tradition when, in the name of Islam,

he justifies execution or imprisonment as an appropriate punishment for refusal to follow his orders.

Political opposition of any type is not tolerated in Iran today. Those who dare to speak out against the government are quickly—and often brutally—silenced. Dr. Shaffaii, a well-known physician, and his wife were executed for supporting the People's Mujahedeen in Isfahan. Abolfazl Ghassemi, a 67-year-old National Front leader who was elected to Parliament from his native city of Dareh-Gaz, was sentenced to life imprisonment for criticizing the regime, and just last week, another prominent National Front leader, Shokrollah Paknezhad, was executed. Incidents such as the killing of Mujahedeen members Rahman Rahnama and Jamshid Jalilpour in Tabriz prison are so commonplace that they are not even announced to the public.

The Iranian regime has a special hatred for artists, writers and intellectuals. Hussain Navab, a young and talented journalist, was executed simply because he was a popular editorial writer for *Engelab-e Islami*, the newspaper of Bani-Sadr's supporters and the largest-circulation daily until the government shut it down last June. Rashid Sadrolhefazi, an engineer and political activist, and Manouchehr Massoudi, a prominent lawyer who spent time in the Shah's prison and defended many political prisoners of the Shah's regime, were executed because they had worked in Bani-Sadr's offices. Saïd Soltanpour and Abdol-Reza Ghafouri, progressive writers affiliated with the Fedayeen Khalq, the Marxist guerrilla organization, were executed without public trial.

The Iranian regime pretends not to care what others think of its repressive actions. For example, Amnesty Interna-



tional's request to investigate charges of political executions was rejected by Khomeini as part of a conspiracy against the Islamic Republic. Needless to say, this seeming disregard for world opinion should not be taken seriously. No repressive government has ever admitted that it was influenced by international expressions of concern about its policies. The

present Iranian regime is no exception. Silence is not a defensible option. Those who support the cause of freedom and justice out of moral or humanistic conviction have no choice but to speak with greater urgency in the face of this repressive regime's total disregard of human values and the right of people to defend them. □

Organizing Statement of the Emergency Committee for the Defense of Democracy and Human Rights in Iran

We who sign this statement welcomed the Iranian revolution and considered its triumph a great victory of the Iranian people against a cruel monarchy and foreign domination.

We were appalled by the coup against the constitutional order of Iran engineered by the Central Intelligence Agency in 1953, which began twenty-seven years of tyranny. We opposed the role of the C.I.A. in establishing the Savak and in guiding the policy of suppression of democratic rights and the exploitation of the population. We also opposed the weight of the American presence in Iran during the Shah's years, especially the sale of advanced arms designed to dominate the region for American financial and geopolitical interests.

Above all, we worked to expose the sustained violations of human rights by the Shah's regime, the systematic torture and the wholesale suppression of political dissent.

The Iranian revolution unfolded amidst universal demands in Iran for an end to censorship, for the release from prison of all dissidents irrespective of their political persuasion and for the realization of full democratic rights of political groups to organize, meet, publish and to present their views and programs to the nation.

Whatever our own political persuasions, we were united in the belief that a free polity in which all might exercise their rights was inseparable from the quest for a just order expressed by all participants in the Iranian revolution itself. This fundamental promise of the revolution has not been kept.

The government which has emerged in Iran has established a one-party state and resistance to its role has been met with repression. Nationalists, socialists, national minorities and dissenting individuals have been prevented from exercising their democratic rights. Political parties have been outlawed, newspapers closed, meetings forbidden and a monopoly of both the political process and the means of communication allocated to one faction of the religious movement.

Religion has served not merely as a source of ideas or guiding principles for those who subscribe to them, but rather as a rigid prescriptive imposed on all and made an inseparable part of the State. This theocratic development never was part of the Iranian revolution, nor of the Islamic faith itself.

Arbitrary executions have been widespread and

thousands have been arrested without charges, right of defense or the protection of a judicial process. Indeed, prominent among the victims of this repression have been numerous individuals who played courageous roles in the struggle against the Shah, including many who spent years in the Shah's prisons. The national minorities, whose aspirations for autonomy and the expression of their culture placed them in the front ranks of the long struggle against the Pahlevi tyranny, have found their just demands treated as ruthlessly by the present government.

As in the past, we oppose injustice in Iran. We defended the Iranian revolution then and we defend it today. It is precisely because of these convictions that we join together again to call for the renewal of the promise of the Iranian revolution: for the right of all those who fought against the Shah to exercise their democratic rights in Iran, for an end to autocratic rule, imprisonment of opponents, arbitrary execution and the use of terror against those who appeal to the Iranian people for a different course of action than that decreed by the new rulers of Iran.

We support no particular political tendency in Iran, save that of the sacred rights of the Iranian people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural future free from outside interference of any kind. Pointing to the failures of the current Iranian leaders provides no pretext for outside intervention, especially by the two superpowers.

Our pledge is to speak out on behalf of Iranian national and human rights and to inform the American people as accurately as possible about unfolding developments in Iran.

—Mary Anderson, American Friends Service Committee; Rev. William Sloan Coffin, Riverside Church, New York City; David Dellinger, author; Prof. William Dorman, California State University at Sacramento; Prof. Richard Falk, Princeton University; Jack Levine, lawyer; Don Luce, Southeast Asia Resource Center; Prof. Everest Mendelson, Harvard University; Prof. Saul Mendlovitz, Rutgers University; Prof. Tom Ricks, Georgetown University; Prof. Edward Said, Columbia University; Ralph Schoenman, author; George Wald and Ruth Wald, scientists; Prof. Burns Weston, Iowa University; C. Dale White, Methodist Bishop.

LETTERS.

IRANIAN BAHAIS

N.E. Vienna, Va.

Mansour Farhang writes in his article on Iran ["Khomeini's Reign of Terror," *The Nation*, Jan. 30] that "human liberation in one part of the world is ultimately inseparable from liberation in other parts." Farhang's interview on *The MacNeil-Lehrer Report* three years ago gave the impression that he did not believe in liberation for Bahais. Has he changed his mind? Has he the courage to denounce the persecution of the Bahais in Iran, including the recent execution of the members of the Bahai National Assembly and the Bahai assembly of Teheran? Does he advocate amending the Iranian Constitution so that it protects Bahais as well as Moslems, Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians? Does he believe that Bahais should be left in peace and given freedom like everyone else? If Farhang fails to respond, many of us will know what to think about the fine words of his article.

John Huddleston

FARHANG REPLIES

Princeton, N.J.

I have never made an extensive study of the treatment of Bahais in Iran, nor have I written about it. My unfortunately phrased remarks to which Huddleston alludes have been interpreted to mean something other than what I believe. The execution of more than 4,000 Iranians during the past seven months demonstrates beyond doubt that Khomeini has set out to eliminate anyone he arbitrarily defines as a threat to his rule. Among the victims of this shocking assault, the Iranian Bahais are the only people whose persecution, which includes confiscation and destruction of property, as well as summary arrests and executions, is motivated solely by fascist aggression without any provocation whatsoever. For the Bahais in Iran pose no threat at all to the regime.

The truth is that not only have the Bahais been persecuted for more than a century but they have also been the most vulnerable of all the religious minorities in the country. This has been the case regardless of what ideological or political orientation happens to be in power.

Shaykh Mohammed Taghi Falsafi, an anti-Bahai preacher and a passionate supporter of the 1953 coup, is currently one of Khomeini's favorite mullahs and a very important person in his ruling circles. Furthermore, the present government in Iran is heavily influenced by Anjoman-e Hojjati'yeh, an anti-Bahai organization that was founded in the mid-1950s. Even though Anjoman-e Hojjati'yeh never took part in prerevolutionary opposition politics, after the revolutionary victory of 1979, its members joined the elements that formed the Islamic Republican Party. President Said-Ali Kham-

enei and Foreign Minister Ali-Akbar Velayati have been active in Anjoman-e Hojjati'yeh for years.

Since the early months of the revolutionary victory and particularly since the forced resignation of Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan in November 1979, the Khomeini regime, just like the Shah's regime during the 1955-56 period of state-led persecution of the Bahais, has increasingly repressed its progressive political opponents and used the Bahais as scapegoats. However, there is no comparison between the brutality inflicted on dissidents and Bahais in 1955-56 and the present period. Khomeini is far more brutal than the Shah ever was.

The Bahais and other religious minorities in Iran are not, as in the past, merely faced with intolerance and opportunistic exploitation of their vulnerability. They are, rather, confronted with a fascist totalitarian system whose ideology rejects diversity and coexistence. No protection could be gained by amending the Constitution, a fascist document that should be abolished rather than altered. Therefore, the struggle for religious freedom in Iran is inseparable from the struggle for the complete destruction of the regime itself. And it is imperative that the crimes and the repressive policies of the regime be exposed as widely as possible. Such a campaign should make a special effort to reach the Islamic world and focus on the violation of the human and democratic rights of all Iranians.

Mansour Farhang

FEMINISTS AND PLATH

New York City

I am disappointed that Katha Pollitt, in her otherwise thoughtful and judicious consideration, and deserved celebration, of Sylvia Plath's *Collected Poems* ["A Note of Triumph," *The Nation*, Jan. 16] should have chosen to joust, however glancingly, with a homemade scarecrow called "the feminists."

There is no feminist party line on Plath, on motherhood or on any other issue, except the full participation of women in human endeavors. Pollitt writes that "... the feminists, too, will have to come to terms with the tenderness and purity of Plath's maternal feelings. . . ." I don't see what "coming to terms" is necessary. The redemption of motherhood as valid adult experience and valid subject matter for poetry and fiction has long been a primary feminist concern, reflected in the work of Audre Lorde, Susan Griffin, Alta, Alice Walker, Marie Ponsot, Robin Morgan, Sharon Olds and myself, to name just a few self-identified feminists who have written as mothers. Although if Plath's "maternal feelings" as evinced in her work were limited to "tenderness and purity," we would be deal-

ing with a very different and less important poet. It is precisely the complexity of observation and insight, the by-no-means pure emotional depth, of Plath's poems on mothering and on her children, that make them of more than sentimental value to readers, feminists included.

I know of no feminist critic who thinks, or would "like to think," that Plath was unknown at the time of her death. And I wonder how Pollitt knows what "many feminists would like to think." Even critics who are not feminists have noted that Plath's career, though not her work, was subsumed by that of Ted Hughes during their marriage.

I have the impression that Pollitt, in an effort to be balanced and fair, felt obliged to take feminist critics to task because she had so aptly pointed out those male critics who diminish or sensationalize Plath's achievement because of her gender. But if Pollitt had seen fit to quote specific feminist critics, as she quotes Alvarez, Steiner, Spender, Howe et al., I might know at whom her rebuttal was directed; and a reader not familiar with feminist writing would not get the impression such writing was done by a Central Committee.

Marilyn Hacker

POLLITT REPLIES

New York City
Good point.

Katha Pollitt

TASSAWAYS NOT RECOMMENDED

Washington, D.C.

The article on tampons [Kathleen A. Wanda, "Tampons Can Be Harmful to Health," Jan. 2-9] was well done, and we are happy to see *The Nation* publicize this very important issue. However, there was one misstatement, which we ask you to correct.

Woman Health International did not "recommend" Tassaways as an alternative to tampons (we do not recommend any specific product or device) but merely reported what several doctors had said about it.

What W.H.I. does recommend, first of all, is that all tampon boxes have warning labels on them to advise women of the danger of toxic shock syndrome. Other recommendations are:

(1) Further labeling that would list fibers and additives present in tampons, and medical contraindications.

(2) Immediate removal of superabsorbent additives, deodorants and any known toxic substance from tampons.

(3) A research program to develop a safe, effective tampon or substitute device and a parallel investigation of the synergistic long-term effects of exposure to chemicals and fibers that have been used in tampons for more than forty-seven years.

Charlotte Oram
Information Director, W.H.I.