

Minister 'stirred up Kurds' hostility'

From Liz Thurgood
in Tehran

A dispute between the Iranian Government and the religious Moslem leaders threatened to erupt last night over allegations that the Defence Minister was guilty of working against the revolution.

This latest dispute, which coincided with reports from southern Iran that another four oil pipelines had been blown up, centred around Mr Mostafa Chamran, Iran's new Defence Minister and one of Ayatollah Khomeini's special envoys, Mr Mehdi Bahadoran, who has just returned from a four-week tour of the strife-torn Western provinces of Kurdistan and West Azarbaijan.

In a report presented earlier this week to Ayatollah Khomeini, Mr Bahadoran accused the 48-year-old Mr Chamran of arming feudal landlords in Kurdistan with the express purpose of "creating permanent hostility and prejudice" between Kurdish and Turkish-speaking Iranians.

The Prime Minister's office issued a strong denial, describing the allegations as "a complete lie." The statement added that Mr Bahadoran was not

"and never had been" one of Ayatollah Khomeini's representatives.

There was no official reaction from the Ayatollah's bureau in the holy city of Qom, but aides confirmed by telephone that Mr Bahadoran had written authority from Ayatollah Montazri, head of the council of exports to act as Khomeini's representative in Kurdistan.

Saboteurs have blown up another four crude oil pipelines in the Southwestern province of Khuzestan. The explosions, which have reportedly not affected Iran's daily crude oil production of four million barrels, followed new reports of possible disruptions in the oil industry involving pay disputes.

According to the Government news agency, the explosions took place late on Wednesday in the Masjed-e Soliman and Ahwaz areas. Oil from one pipeline spilled into the desert and caught fire, but the fire was put out quickly.

Reuter adds: Iran's revolutionary leader Ayatollah Khomeini has ordered a halt to executions until further notice, the Islamic Revolutionary Prosecutor's office said yesterday.

