

NEWS ON IRAN

No. 21 National Council of Resistance of Iran - Foreign Affairs Committee December 7, 1994

DOMESTIC

Clampdown

Tehran radio, Dec. 4 - The special guards corps units of the state security forces held a large-scale maneuver in Tehran. Paratroopers from the special unit engaged in some combat operations.

Tehran radio, Nov. 30 - Rafsanjani met with director generals and managers of the different departments in the intelligence directorate. He said: The die-hard enemies of the state are trying their utmost to use every opportunity and every means to cause problems in the country and deliver blows to it.

Tehran radio, Nov. 30 - Some 15,000 bases for the Students' *Bassij* were opened during the week of mobilization across the country. Alireza Afshar, the *Bassij* mobilization corps commander said that presently 28,500 bases of the *Bassij* are active nationwide.

Jomhouri-Islami, Nov. 30 - Ali Larijani, the head of the state radio and television broadcasting told a group of Russian journalists that satellite dishes are a political means used by the West to combat Islamic thinking. He stated the regime's vehement opposition to the Iranian public's use of these antennas.

Ettela'at, Nov. 28 - The intelligence department of the West Azerbaijan province held an exhibition on the activities of the department's undercover agents. The department's director general said that the Mojahedin have changed tactics in a bid to conceal their crimes.

Ettela'at, Nov. 28 - Some 24 special patrols of Tehran detective office began their operations in the capital. Deployed in the "crime prone" areas of Tehran round-the-clock, they will use mobile computers to identify suspicious vehicles.

Salam, Nov. 17 - A recently released prisoner who spent 49 days in Bandar Abbas's main prison wrote to "convey the feelings of 4,000 prisoners." Some 700 to 1,000 prisoners are kept in cell blocks that normally hold 150 inmates, he revealed. Many are forced to sleep in the bathrooms. Skin diseases, tuberculosis and rheumatism abound. One has to wait two weeks to go to the prison's infirmary.

Ressalat, Nov. 9 - The headquarters to fight narcotics has decided to send rowdy drug addicts and offenders to Farver island, southeast of Kish island in the Persian Gulf.

Executions

Hamshahri, Dec. 7 - A woman and a man were recently stoned to death in the southwestern city of Ramhormoz for murder and adultery.

Kayhan, Dec. 6 - Ten convicts were hanged yesterday in the southern city of Bandar Abbas for armed robbery and unruly behavior. They were condemned by the Islamic revolutionary court in the city.

Ressalat, Nov. 27 - A woman charged with abducting and strangling a five-year-old child of a *Bassiji* was arrested, on Saturday, tried and condemned to death on Sunday and executed on Monday.

Suicide

Jomhouri-Islami, Dec. 3 - A woman, 35, and a man, 45, committed suicide in the town of Rood-e Hen in Damavand, north of Tehran. The woman, Seyyed Sadaat Hussieni, a mother of four, hanged herself. The man, Ahmad Tamadon-Nejad, used a piece of cloth to kill himself. The two suicides were unrelated.

Leadership crisis

Le Monde, Dec. 4 - Araki's death will fuel an undesirable power struggle between the political and the religious leadership. The crisis in fact began with the death of Golpaygani last December and the selection of Araki as his successor. Khamenei put forth Araki's name in a bid to replace him once he passed away. The authoritative Shiite *Faqihs* acknowledge that Khamenei lacks the necessary scientific and religious qualifications to become a *Marja*. Those opposing Khamenei's *Marja'iat* stress that he is not fully aware of the ramifications of becoming the *Marja*. The non-Iranian Shiites who do not follow the policies of the Islamic Republic cannot accept the Iranian leader as their *Marja*, they insist.

Tehran radio, Dec. 2 - During the Friday prayer sermon, Jannati, the head of the Council of Guardians, elaborated on the history and mechanism of choosing a *Marja Taqlid* (Source of Emulation). He said: For long, knowledge and piety were the prerequisites for becoming a *Marja*. But after the start of Islamic movements, particularly Khomeini's messianic undertaking, complete knowledge of the Moslems' political and social affairs has become the more important condition for choosing a *Marja*.

BBC radio, Dec. 1 - fourteen senior clerics released a statement declaring that Montazeri is qualified to become the *Marja Taqlid*. Some of the signatories are Moussavi Ardebili, the ex-head of the judiciary, Mohammadi Gilani, the ex-chief religious judge, and Mahdavi-Kani.

Asharq-Al-Owsat, Nov. 24 - Ahmad Khomeini called on his father's greatest critic to save the country from disintegration. A Montazeri's colleague said that Ahmad Khomeini kissed Montazeri's hand and appealed for

forgiveness, asking him to organize the necessary forces to save the country from the catastrophes looming on the horizon.

FEATURE

"Where does Khamenei's *Marja'iat* lead to?", news analysis,
By the NOI editor

Less than a week after 2Araki died, the row over who should succeed him continues to rage within the clerical regime and among the mullahs. Despite widespread propaganda, Khamenei has failed to foist himself on others. In a private meeting in the holy city of Qom, some defiant clerics said recently: "Even if we lose our heads, we cannot allow Khamenei to be the *Marja*. The regime has made a mockery of God's religion." This religious dictatorship cannot decipher the issue of *Marja'iat* through a letter writing campaign in favor, or official confirmation of Khamenei by this or that personality. Only a handful of pro-Khamenei clerics have endorsed him so far. Most religious and political figures in Qom, Najaf and Mashad and even most pro-government clergy refrained from playing the regime's game.

A high-ranking government official said: "Although Khamenei has a strangle hold on political power, he lacks the spiritual power, which cannot be attained through testimonials, intimidation or blackmail. They are walking into the lion's den. If Khamenei is qualified, there is no need to venerate him so much. And if he is unfit, this or that person's praise will not make him worthy of being a *Marja*. They are toying with these issues. When that happens, people lose their trust. They recognize that *Marja'iat* has become a pawn in the hands of a few turbaned figures. A man who rides in a bulletproof car and is so distant from the populace that even if you see 100 of his secretaries you cannot have access to him, cannot possibly be considered as a *Marja*."

For these reasons, even those clerics, traditionally close to Khamenei, did not nominate him at all, some mentioning him among a host of other candidates. Once the pro-Khamenei Society of Militant Clergy presented a list that originally did not include Khamenei's name, it earned the wrath of the Intelligence Ministry. So did the Society of Qom Theologians. In their list, they put another cleric, Behjat, first and Khamenei third. The Ministry's agents moved in swiftly to threaten the list's authors.

In real terms, joint lists by these two traditional centers of clergy in Qom, debilitate Khamenei's *Marja'iat*. Otherwise, if they felt Khamenei was minimally qualified, they would have refrained from adding other names.

Rafsanjani and company, sensing that getting embroiled in this conflict is playing with fire, have kept silent and failed to support Khamenei. The daily *Ettela'at*, close to Rafsanjani, has been strangely inconspicuous about the matter. The "Imam's line" faction, consisting of a number of former senior officials, displayed its opposition by keeping absolutely silent.

Many clergy privately and publicly support Montazeri who until a few months before Khomeini's death, was his

successor. Several weeks ago, 14 prominent clergy, most of whom hold important posts in the government, endorsed Montazeri as the *Marja*. The Pasdaran Corps staged a demonstration in front of the home of Mo'men, a member of the Council of Guardians and one of the 14, demanding that he resign.

Khomeini's son, Ahmad, has reportedly visited Montazeri several times. In his message of condolences to Khamenei, Ahmad openly refused to endorse him as *Marja*, saying the *ulama* (the learned) in the seminaries, particularly in Qom, should choose the qualified *Marjas*.

Obviously, the ruling apparatus is vigorously trying to establish Khamenei as the *Marja Taqlid*; it had prepared the ground long before Araki's death. But this is not something to which the mullahs of Qom and Mashad will acquiesce. For, the elevation of a third-rate mullah such as Khamenei to the rank of Grand Ayatollah is a *coup de grace* to the most fundamental institution of the traditional Shiite clergy in Iran in the past several centuries. In the words of a senior government official, "*Marja'iat* will no longer exist and the seminaries must be shut down." In short, Khamenei's *Marja'iat* will render the regime devoid of an ideological and religious future.

Presently, the regime has arranged numerous meetings in its entire organs, from the ministries to the Guards Corps to the armed forces, to brief the rank and file. To suppress any voice of dissent, the Intelligence Ministry has been ordered to identify dissident clerics and silence them through threats or by offering incentives. In some cases, the Guards have attacked homes of a number of these clerics, confiscated their books and properties and arrested some of them.

Ironically, the mullahs' efforts to establish Khamenei as the *Marja* puts an end to the regime's legitimacy among its supporters and will rapidly intensify desertions among their ranks. It will also escalate its crises on the top and in the body of the regime. Under such circumstances, the Iranian Resistance and its democratic alternative, the National Council of Resistance of Iran are the primary victors. These crises and internal feuding will enhance prospects for the regime's disintegration and its definite overthrow by the National Liberation Army of Iran.

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