
PHIL STANFORD

Iranian crisis brought home

I THINK I KNEW WE WERE in big trouble, when, on the fourth day of the crisis in Iran, I ran into an old friend from the antiwar movement down by Dupont Circle. He had bags under his eyes and he looked terrible.

"You know," he said, "I'm really depressed by this Iranian business. It's awful what will happen if the hostages are killed."

I asked him what he thought we should do.

"I would send in the Special Forces to rescue them," he said. "I would parachute them into the embassy."

I pointed out that this would be futile. The embassy where the hostages were being held was surrounded by thousands of very angry people. Not only would the Special Forces troops be slaughtered, but so would the hostages.

"I know," he said, "but it might prevent something worse from happening."

I said I didn't get it.

"You see," he said, "the longer this goes on, the more the pressure builds up. And if in the end the hostages are killed anyway, Carter doesn't have any choice except to launch a full-scale invasion of Iran. Or maybe use a nuclear weapon. It's better to do something now."

I told him I understood, but I didn't, then.

It would be difficult to overstate the outrage that swept across this country when our embassy and the sixty or so people in it were seized in Tehran on November 4. It was, as few public events

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ever are, an intensely personal experience for most Americans. The pictures, on television and in the newspapers, of the chanting mobs, with their captives bound and blindfolded, helpless as figures in a dream, touched something deep in the national psyche. The reaction was instantaneous and genuine. Kidnapping in the name of God or anything else is truly an abominable act.

At this writing, as the crisis enters into its fourth week, no one can predict what will happen. It seems clear that if any of the Americans now in captivity are killed, the response of this country will be swift and terrible. Perhaps some compromise that would allow both sides to save face can be worked out. Perhaps the shah will leave and the immediate crisis will blow over. But even if the hostages are released unharmed, Carter may find it politically impossible not to order some sort of military action against Iran. Either way, there is no obvious reason to be optimistic.

Since the day of the seizure, both governments have taken progressively tougher positions, but the basic issue remains the same. Iran, or the Ayatollah Khomeini speaking for Iran, demands that the United States send back the shah, who came to the United States to receive medical treatment. Then Iran will release the hostages. As Khomeini told Mike Wallace on "60 Minutes," the Iranians want to try the shah for what they consider his crimes against the people. "We want him back to show the extent of the crimes committed by this person during thirty-seven years of his rule," said the ayatollah. "Why was it that he was killing so many people? Why was it that he was massacring? Why was it that he thought he had a mission to accomplish, by killing the people, by oppressing them?"

For Khomeini and the students who hold the hostages, the shah's return is not negotiable, and they say they are prepared to die if necessary. As most U.S. commentators see it, Khomeini is a religious fanatic. This explains his unwillingness to listen to reason.

The United States, on the other hand, absolutely refuses to consider handing over the shah. This, as it is explained, is a matter of principle. As Carter told the

AFL-CIO convention on November 16, "The actions of the Iranian leaders and the radicals who invaded our embassy were completely unjustified. They and all others must know that the United States of America will not yield to international terrorism or to blackmail." Carter elaborated. "We are dedicated to the principles and the honor of our nation."

The United States is as unyielding on the matter as is Iran. But of course, no one has suggested that we are being fanatical.

On the sixteenth day, Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, then Iran's Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, suggested that the hostages might be freed if the United States would agree to having the shah tried by an international tribunal. He was quickly denounced by the students, but there are those who think that some sort of modern-day version of the Nuremberg trials is still a possible solution. George Hansen, the conservative congressman from Idaho, made a similar proposal when he visited the hostages in late November. Hansen, however, called for a congressional investigation. "I tried to tell them," said Hansen later, "that you've got to sit through a congressional hearing sometime and watch someone get dissected with a scalpel real good over a period of weeks and months to appreciate that's a pretty good forum and it will get to the bottom of things."

It is safe to say that this is not exactly what the Iranian students have in mind. As they are probably aware—if the American public is not—Congress has held hearings on Iran before.

In 1976 a House subcommittee heard witnesses on the question of human rights in Iran. One of them, a William J. Butler, of the International Commission of Jurists, testified about the total lack of political liberties and the brutal repression of dissidents in Iran. At that time there were, he said, approximately six thousand political prisoners in Iran, many of whom had been subjected to torture.

Another witness was the Iranian poet Reza Baraheni, then living in exile in the United States. According to Baraheni, thousands of persons had been executed during the twenty-three years of the shah's rule. Since 1957, when the SAVAK, Iran's secret police, was created, more than 300,000 people had been imprisoned. Baraheni quoted an Amnesty In-

ternational report that placed the total number of political prisoners in Iran at "anything from 25,000 to 100,000."

Baraheni also told the committee about his own experiences in prison. In 1973, in retaliation for his book that criticized the shah's regime, Baraheni was arrested and tortured. He was beaten with a wire whip, his fingers were broken, and he was told that unless he confessed, his wife and daughter would be raped in front of him. After 102 days he was released from prison.

Another document presented to the committee quoted a newspaper account of a report by a French lawyer, Yves Baudelot, who was sent in 1974 by the International Association of Democratic Jurists to investigate conditions of political prisoners in Iran. "According to the prisoners that Mr. Baudelot could question, and who have undergone the torture cruelty," said the article, "the most frequently practiced are the following: scourging with a metallic whip, metallic table heated white-hot on which the prisoner is extended, burns from cigarettes, electric charge to the sex organs, hanging up by arms to the ceiling, and introduction of a broken bottle in the anus." The article also described how tortures are practiced on prisoners' families. One former prisoner told Baudelot about "a woman who was raped in front of her husband, of a 17-year-old given a whipping and subjected to the electric torture in front of his father, of a 4-year-old child whipped and

whose neck was cut in front of his mother. One of the persons questioned by the lawyer told him that it had been so unbearable for him to see his son tortured that he had wished he had a knife to kill him rather than watch him suffer."

The same volume in which this appeal contains a letter signed by an official of the Nixon administration:

"We are aware," says the letter, "of many accusations of use of torture or brutality by Iranian authorities, but have not found any significant evidence to corroborate those accusations or to define such practices, if they exist."

None of this, of course, is to deny that the shah could not also be fun and games. In 1960 he published a book of his own, entitled *Mission for My Country*, in the course of which he praised Iran's two-party system. As *Newsweek* once noted, however, one of them was the "Yes Party" and the other was the "Of Course Party." Nevertheless there were, count them, two political parties in Iran. In his book the shah said that any ruler who would limit his country to a single party would be a Hitler or a Mussolini.

In 1975, the shah formed a new political party called the Resurgence party, which he decreed would henceforth be the only political party in Iran. Anyone who did not enter the new political party, said the shah, would be considered a

traitor. "Such a person belongs in an Iranian prison, or if he desires, he can leave the country tomorrow without even paying an exit fee, and can go anywhere he likes because he is not an Iranian, and he has no nation, and his activities are illegal and punishable according to law."

And then, to avoid possible embarrassment, the shah banned his own book, and had it removed from every library in the country.

Outside the embassy in Tehran the mobs shout, "Death to the Shah. Death to Carter." Considering everything, it is not too difficult to understand why they are ticked off at the shah. It is also understandable that they would be angry at the United States. It is at this point indisputable that the CIA was responsible for the coup that in 1953 overthrew Premier Mohammed Mossadegh and brought the shah back to power. It is also well known that the CIA, with the assistance of Israeli intelligence, created the SAVAK. Over the years, Iran has been a virtual fiefdom of the CIA, and was seen as a model of the benefits of a good covert intelligence operation. Covertly and overtly, the United States has supported the shah. Under Nixon and Kissinger, Iran was to be one of the "twin pillars" of U.S. support in the Middle East, and was supplied with billions of dollars worth of high-technology weapons.

But Carter? Surely the Iranian students are mistaken. Why should they hate Carter?

Perhaps at least part of the reason may have to do with the way Carter, the spokesman for human rights, embraced the shah in the White House in 1977. And part of it can be explained by the fact that it was Carter, finally, who permitted the shah to enter the United States. To even an impartial observer, either act could be taken as evidence of the United States' continued support for the shah and for his brutality toward the Iranian people.

There is, however, another possible explanation.

It was early morning, September 8, 1978, when the crowd began to assemble in Jaleh Square in downtown Tehran. By 8 A.M., the numbers were already in the thousands. In a year of protests against the shah's rule, which began in January of 1978 with the death of twenty persons in the holy city of Qom and then spread to the rest of the country, the



crowds gaining in size and strength each month, this was to be one of the largest. As was usual in these demonstrations, the crowd in Jaleh Square was unarmed. It was also quite unaware that at seven o'clock that morning the shah had declared martial law in Tehran and eleven other Iranian cities, making it illegal to hold public demonstrations against the government.

At 9 A.M. the crowd was told to disperse. Instead, many of the demonstrators sat where they were. Others began walking toward the soldiers, some carrying flowers that they intended, as in previous demonstrations, to give to them. They never got there.

The soldiers opened up with machine guns and semiautomatic rifles. Helicopter gunships joined in. According to some accounts, the massacre lasted twenty minutes, and when it was over the bodies lay in piles. The lowest believable estimate of the dead that day in Jaleh Square is five hundred to eight hundred. Those working from hospital death certificates and graves in a nearby cemetery place the number at three thousand to four thousand.

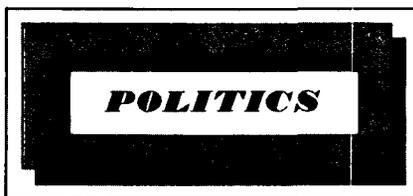
Two days later, Jimmy Carter called the shah from Camp David, interrupting the discussions with Begin and Sadat, to reassure him of the continued friendship and support of the United States.

On the twentieth day, a spring-like Saturday in November, I passed a sidewalk vendor in Georgetown selling T-shirts that said NUKE IRAN. He was wearing one of the T-shirts himself, smiling over the mushroom cloud and the words on his chest.

"That's really smart," I said. "Do you have any idea what a nuclear war is?"

He shrugged. "It's only a T-shirt, man."

Maybe he wasn't serious, but there are lots of people around here who are. If not about dropping the big one now, at least a lot of small and medium-sized ones. Nor is it only the conservatives who are salivating over the prospect of a few well-placed punitive air strikes against Iran. Liberals, many of whom couldn't really get into Vietnam, are full of righteous indignation too. And the old Vietnam antiwar crowd, apparently unable to deal with a situation in which both countries are guilty and both aggrieved, is confused and silent. If war comes it will be a popular one indeed. □



PETER SCHRAG

A nongovernor who would be nonpresident

JERRY BROWN PROBABLY always knew there was a terrible flaw in liberal politics, but he's never known what to do about it. Brown, indeed, has never even been certain whether the flaw really lies in the liberal part of it or in the politics part of it. Many people of his generation do not, and so they join organizations like Common Cause—but he suffers more from the affliction than do most. Thus while most of the press, particularly the California press, regards his famous vacillations as just another political slalom—the twists and turns of expediency—Brown seems to detest the compromising through which ordinary politicians earn their living as much as he hates the clichés and slogans of his liberal heritage. That he often engages in both seems to be not so much a matter of choice as of an irresistible impulse. What else explains Brown's appointment of a one-time POW who was accused of collaborating with the North Vietnamese to a supervisor's post in—of all places—Orange County? What other possible reason can there be, five days into his penurious official campaign for the presidency, for Brown's sudden disappearance from his nervous entourage to spend an afternoon with an Indian holy man at an "International Conference on Transpersonal Psychology"?

When Brown first became governor of California in 1974, all of that was charming, even refreshing: the ringing declarations, for example, that until the educational bureaucracy became more productive he wasn't going to give it any more tax money; the attacks on the mental health establishment; the flirtation

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with the ideas of Illich and Schumacher; the search for antipoliticians to head some of the state's major offices and fill some of its more powerful jobs. It was even charming in 1976 when he flashed in the pans of a few presidential primaries. But now that he pretends to be a serious candidate for president it is no longer charming or even interesting. It is only boring and tacky.

In the 1980 campaign, officially launched last November 8 from a lectern in Washington adorned with the words "Wow! Brown Now," Brown has declared himself a sort of political scavenger waiting to feed off the entrails of his Democratic rivals, should one of them be eliminated from the race. That sort of strategy isn't new, particularly for a candidate who trails badly in the polls, nor is it particularly flattering to one who prides himself on his fresh brand of politics. But it is a strategy particularly fitting to a major officeholder who has swooped around and over the battles of national politics without leaving much more than his droppings. There is little in the public record to show that Brown has been governor of the largest state in the union for the past five years (or indeed of any state), nor can one detect from anything occurring since his reelection in 1978 that anyone, either in California or elsewhere, considers him a major force in American politics. One way or another, he has lived off the political initiatives of other people: Cesar Chavez, Howard Jarvis, Tom Hayden.

The real irony for Brown, the great critic of bureaucrats and big-government solutions, is that his own tenure as governor has been closely tied to a network of new bureaucracies so large and intrusive that they may properly be classed as a whole new layer of government. Some of them—the Agricultural Labor Relations Board, for example—were created by his administration; others, like the state Energy Commission, were approved just before Brown came into the governor's office. But they have become what they are—and in most instances that means extremely active—under his appointees and through his influence. And while Brown has talked a great deal about eliminating useless agencies, reducing the state budget, reforming the \$4 billion Medical program, and a variety of other measures to streamline state government, he has never really had the patience to administer the state government, let alone reform it. Thus while Brown the candidate may legitimately be able to claim that under his direction