

Proscription of Tudeh Party-Other security developments- Government appointments

Summary and key dates

Proscription of Tudeh Party (May 4, 1983). Trial of Tudeh supporters (December). Proscription of Bahai organizations (Aug. 29). Clashes with Kurdish and Mujaheddin guerrillas (March to September). Ministerial appointments (Dec. 7). Inaugural meeting of Assembly of Experts (July 14). Hijacking of Iranian aircraft to France (July 6). Expulsion of Soviet diplomats (May 5).

The Iranian government moved decisively during 1983 to crush the *Tudeh* (People's) Party, which had constituted the sole remaining legal source of opposition to the regime. The party was declared illegal in May, and most of its leaders were arrested and detained. [For government moves against *Tudeh* in 1982 see pages 31798;32099.]

Established in 1920 as the Communist Party of Iran, the party had been proscribed in 1931. After reconstituting itself as the *Tudeh* Party in 1942, it was represented briefly in the cabinet in 1946-47 [see 8084A; 8432], but was again declared illegal in 1949 [see 9785A], many of its leaders being imprisoned. The party supported the revolution in 1979, which it referred to as a "people's revolution of religious tendency", and it called for a "yes" vote in the constitutional referendum on the establishment of an Islamic republic in March of that year [see page 310143].

After a number of reports at the beginning of 1983 that *Tudeh* leaders had been detained, *Islamic Republic*, the official journal of the ruling Islamic Republic Party, confirmed on March 15 that 30 leading *Tudeh* activists, including Mr Nureddin Kianouri, the secretary-general, had been arrested during February. Those detained also reportedly included a number of party members who, as Army officers, had been arrested after an alleged coup attempt in 1953 [see 13010 A; 13959 A].

The arrests were denounced as illegal by the "National Voice of Iran", a pro-*Tudeh* radio station which had been broadcasting from Baku, in the Soviet Union, since 1959. In a broadcast on March 23, the radio claimed that, as a pretext for the moves against *Tudeh*, the Iranian authorities were circulating leaflets purporting to be from the party denouncing the regime.

In the first of a series of public "confessions" by *Tudeh* leaders, Mr Kianouri appeared on Iranian television on April 30 and described his party's activities as those of "treason and espionage against the Islamic Republic". In particular Mr Kianouri claimed that he had been in constant contact with Soviet agents, and that *Tudeh* members in the armed forces had passed military secrets to the Soviet Union.

Further arrests were reported in a communique issued by the Revolutionary Guards headquarters on April 29, which stated that quantities of arms and ammunition had been seized from the houses of *Tudeh* sympathizers. All *Tudeh* members were ordered on May 2 to register at Revolutionary Guard centres.

In a further series of televised confessions, broadcast on May 3, *Tudeh* members stated that they had worked for the KGB (the Soviet State security Committee). A *Tudeh* central committee statement published the following day in L'Humanite, the French Communist party newspaper, asserted that there

was no truth in the “confessions”, which it claimed had been obtained through “physical and psychological torture”.

The *Tudeh* Party was officially proscribed in a statement issued on May 4 by Hojatolislam Hossein Mussavi Tabrizi, the then Islamic Revolutionary Prosecutor-General (whose resignation was reported on Tehran radio on Jan. 24, 1984). The statement said that the party had been dissolved on the basis of Articles 9, 24 and 26 of the constitution, and that “any activity in favour of it [was] illegal and counter-revolutionary”.

Mr Mohsen Rezai, commander of the Revolutionary Guards, announced on May 10 that approximately 1,000 *Tudeh* members and sympathizers were currently under arrest, and he added that those who had already confessed to their crimes had “signed their own execution order”. Among those reported to be detained was Mr Eshan Tabari, the party's leading theoretician.

L'Humanite of June 16 reported that five of those held, including the wife of Mr Kianouri, had died in prison as a result of torture, and on June 20 it was reported that 39 supporters of *Tudeh* in the armed forces, together with two civilian central committee members, had been executed although this was not confirmed by the Iranian government.

Disproving earlier reports of his execution, Mr Kianouri appeared on television again on Aug. 27, and, with other *Tudeh* officials, denied that the earlier televised confessions had been extracted under the influence of drugs or torture.

The trial of 100 *Tudeh* supporters in the armed forces, including Capt. Bahram Afzali, commander of the Iranian Navy until April [see below], began on Dec. 6. Iran's official news agency IRNA reported on Jan. 21, 1984, that all the accused had been sentenced to prison terms of between eight months and life after being convicted on a number of charges including (i) attempting to overthrow the Islamic Republic, (ii) espionage, (iii) possession and concealment of arms, and (iv) failing to observe the law prohibiting the military from belonging to political parties.

The names of 86 of those sentenced were published by the government. This list did not include Capt. Afzali, although his trial was reported to have ended on Dec. 8; nor did it include the names of 13 of the accused who had been found guilty on Dec. 27 of espionage and conspiracy to overthrow the regime, but whose sentences had yet to be decided.

IRNA reported on Feb. 4 that three leaders of *Tudeh* 's military wing had been sentenced to death after being found guilty of spying for the Soviet Union.

The detention and execution of members of Iran's Bahai community continued during 1983, despite a number of international appeals to the Iranian government.

The Bahai delegation at the United Nations in Geneva claimed on March 16 that three Bahais, two men and a woman, had been executed in the southern Iranian city of Shiraz on March 12. The previous day, the UN Commission on Human Rights had adopted a resolution criticizing the Iranian government for its treatment of the Bahai community. [For earlier reports of harassment of the Bahais, see pages 31798;32100.]

On May 22 (the anniversary of the founding of the Bahai religion in President Reagan of the United States made a personal appeal to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Iranian national leader, to spare the lives of 22 Bahais reportedly sentenced to death in February.

US administration officials subsequently said that the appeal had been prompted by a number of recent

congressional resolutions expressing concern over the fate of the 300,000-strong Bahai community in Iran (an estimated 100,000 Bahais being resident in the USA). An Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman dismissed the appeal on May 25 as an “interference in the internal affairs of Iran and as such without value”.

A Bahai spokesman in New York reported on June 16 that six Bahais had recently been executed in Shiraz after being accused of spying. According to the Bahai Centre in London, 16 of the 22 Bahais referred to by President Reagan were executed on June 16 and 18 after refusing to sign statements renouncing their faith; a further three were reported to have been killed on June 30.

A government edict issued on Aug. 29 banned all Bahai organizations, including charitable and educational institutions, membership of which became a criminal offence punishable by death. Bahai sources in London and New York reported that, in conformity with the Bahai principle of loyalty to the state, all such organizations would be abolished.

In an interview with the Tehran daily *Kayhan*, published on the same day as the edict, Hojatolislam Tabrizi denied that any Bahais had been executed because of their religion, insisting that only those convicted of espionage or treason had been condemned. He added that, although the government did not recognize Bahaism as a religion, those who practised their beliefs in private would not be subjected to harassment.

Fierce clashes between the security forces and Kurdish guerrillas continued throughout 1983, although the lack of independent confirmation made it difficult to assess the two sides’ conflicting claims.

In a series of raids in late March on Kurdish strongpoints near Sera (40 miles south-east of Mahabad in north-western Iran — see map on page 31849], government forces claimed to have killed 30 guerrillas and captured 10. A spokesman for the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI, one of the two main Kurdish opposition groups, the other being the Marxist Komalah—see pages 31797-98; 32100] 98; claimed that guerrillas had killed over 200 Revolutionary Guards in the battle, during which Kurdish positions had been attacked with helicopters, tanks and heavy artillery.

The Governor-General of Kurdistan claimed on March 26 that over 1,000 “insurgents and counter-revolutionaries” had surrendered over the past twelve months.

Tehran radio reported on May 3 that a combined offensive involving Revolutionary Guards, Army, Air Force and gendarmerie units and also Kurdish fighters loyal to the regime, had succeeded in capturing the guerrillas’ “joint command centre” at Badenshub (near Sanandaj), killing or wounding 80 guerrillas. On May 26 the government announced that security forces had recently successfully completed a two-week operation to clear guerrillas from over 100 villages in Iranian Kurdistan. IRNA reported on June 12 that 100 Kurdish fighters had been killed or wounded in a security sweep between Mahabad and Bukan (10 miles north of Sera).

There were unconfirmed reports in June of renewed attacks by Kurdish fighters on army bases around Sardasht, near the Iraqi frontier [see map on page 30303], and also of a number of assassinations of local Guards commanders. The “Free Voice of Iran” (an opposition radio station based in Baghdad, the Iraqi capital) claimed on June 13 that Kurdish fighters had assassinated Hojatolislam Zeyneddin Fakhri, a Friday prayers leader, near Kamyaran (50 miles south-east of Sanandaj). A KDPI spokesman in Paris claimed on Oct. 10 that guerrillas had captured Bukan.

According to a report in *The Sunday Times* of Sept. 11, there had also been a number of clashes between Revolutionary Guards and Turkoman and Tartar tribesmen in north-eastern Iran, near the towns of Gonbad-e-Qavus and Quchan. [For earlier tension between the Turkomans and the

government, see page 30308.] Recent clashes had reportedly arisen from government attempts to impose the veil on Turkoman women and prevent them from working on farms. Several thousand tribesmen were said to have fled with their families across the Soviet border, where the authorities had housed them in camps near Ashkhabad.

During 1983 it became apparent that the government had largely succeeded in crushing the *Mujaheddin* opposition, who were noticeably less active than in previous years. On April 15 the government announced that 35 Mujaheddin guerrillas had been killed in operations in the northern provinces of Gilan and Mazandaran, and that another 43 had been captured in Mahabad.

A *Mujaheddin* spokesman in London claimed on Aug. 15 that 56 people, including 11 young girls, had been executed in early July for alleged links with the *Mujaheddin*. A Paris-based group, the *Mujaheddin-e-Khalq* (“*People's Mujaheddin*”), reported at the same time that 28 sympathizers had been executed in Bahktaran.

In other security developments, Saudi radio, quoting “diplomatic sources in Cyprus”, reported on May 28 that five Air Force officers had recently been arrested after planning to stage a coup. The attempt was apparently foiled after security forces discovered plans to bomb Ayatollah Khomeini's residence in northern Tehran.

In a rare overt demonstration against the regime, several hundred Tehran residents responded to a call by opposition radios on Aug. 6 (the anniversary of the monarchist constitution of 1907] by forming their cars into a queue and driving for several hours around the middle-class quarters of Tehran. Women participants were reported to be unveiled and wearing light make-up. The demonstration was dispersed by police, reportedly without violence or arrests.

A report on Iran published on Sept. 27 by Amnesty International, the London-based human rights monitoring organization, claimed that torture of political detainees in Iran was commonplace, and that “in most cases defendants did not have fair trials”. An Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman denounced the report as “downright lies” on Sept. 29.

The *Majlis* (Iranian parliament) approved on Dec. 7, 1983, the government's nominations of Mr Hoseyn Nili-Ahmadabadi as Minister of Industry and Mines *vice* Mr Moustafa Hashemi and Mr Abbas Ali Zali as Minister of Agriculture *vice* Mr Mohammed Salamati. It rejected however the government's nomination of a replacement for Mr Mohammed Shahab Gonabadi as Minister of Housing and Urban Development. (Government nominations to all three posts had earlier been rejected by the *Majlis* on Aug. 28)

On July 11, 1983, the *Majlis* had voted to re-elect Hojatolislam Hashemi Ali Akbar Rafsanjani as Speaker.

In an appointment announced by the Supreme Defence Council on April 30, Capt. Esfandiyar Hoseyni became commander of the Iranian Navy *vice* Capt. Afzali, who was subsequently arrested in connection with his links with the *Tudeh* party. In a further defence appointment on Nov. 25, Col. Hushan Seddiq became commander of the Iranian Air force *vice* Col. Mohammed Hasan Mojinpur, who was commended by the Supreme Defence Council for his “outstanding and honest services” to the nation.

IRNA reported on March 29 that the *Majlis* had approved a bill enabling women to institute divorce proceedings against their husbands, providing that they had “moral or ideological” grounds for the action. (Under existing Iranian law, only men were permitted to open divorce proceedings; they were not required to specify their reason for doing so.)

The inaugural meeting of the Assembly of Experts (which had been elected on Dec. 10, 1982, with the task of choosing a successor to Ayatollah Khomeini— see page 32098] was held in Tehran on July 14. The 83-member Assembly elected Ayatollah Ali Mishkini, the Friday prayers leader of the holy city of Qom, as its chairman. The Assembly was then presented with a sealed copy of Ayatollah Khomeini's will, which was not however reported to give any guidance as to the succession.

A record income from oil exports of US \$ 23,000 million in the financial year 1982–83 was the principal factor in the continuing recovery of the economy, which showed a balance-of-payments surplus of \$ 6,000 million in March 1983. Although industrial production remained well below pre-revolution levels, the agricultural sector had continued to expand, with egg production in 1982 being 120 per cent above the 1978 figure, potatoes showing an increase of 50 per cent, and rice an increase of 20 per cent over the same period.

The relative buoyancy of the economy in 1983 was illustrated by the fact that foreign debts incurred before the revolution were starting to be honoured. In January, the government paid \$ 333,000,000 to the French oil company Société nationale Elf Aquitaine in respect of debts incurred before 1979.

Mr Hossein Moussavi, the Prime Minister, announced on Nov. 27 that the defence budget for 1984-85 was 350,000 million rials (\$ 3,923 million), adding that there were provisions to increase it to 500,000 million rials (\$ 5,602 million) should the need arise.

Iran's relations with France, which were already strained due to France's open support for Iraq in the Gulf war [see 32594 A; 32687A], deteriorated further as a result of the hijack to Paris of an Iran Air Boeing 747 flight from Dubai (United Arab Emirates) to Tehran on July 6.

After the aircraft, with 385 passengers and crew on board, had made a scheduled stop at Shiraz, five armed men who claimed to be members of the *Mujaheddin-e-Khalq* ordered the pilot to fly to Paris. Half of the passengers were freed at a refuelling stop in Kuwait, and the aircraft landed at Orly airport in Paris on the morning of July 7.

In radio negotiations with the hijackers, Mr Massoud Rajavi, the leader of the *Mujaheddin-e-Khalq* denied that the hijackers were members of the group and expressed his disapproval of their action. The hijackers surrendered to French police after Mr Rajavi had persuaded them to release the remaining hostages.

After the Iranian government had demanded the hijackers' extradition, French officials commented that, while they would be prosecuted for air piracy, the hijackers' request for political asylum would be given sympathetic consideration. Hojatolislam Rafsanjani denounced the use of Mr Rajavi as a mediator on July 8, and accused France, the USA, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia of participating in the planning of the hijack, adding that Iran would take its revenge. The following day the Iranian government closed the French cultural centre in Tehran and the French consulates in Tehran and Isfahan.

An Air France jet on a flight from Vienna to Paris was hijacked on Aug. 27 by five Arab gunmen, who forced it to land at Tehran after making three stops at Geneva (Switzerland), Sicily (Italy), and Damascus (Syria). The gunmen, who were described by Tehran radio as Lebanese with Tunisian passports and members of the hitherto unknown "Islamic Liberation Movement", demanded the release within 48 hours of all Lebanese prisoners held in France and also the justification by the French government of its policies with regard to Chad, Lebanon and Iraq. After the French government had refused to meet their demands, the hijackers surrendered to the Iranian authorities on Aug. 31, having been offered political asylum in Iran.

On Dec. 24 the French government closed the (Iranian) Islamic Cultural Centre in Paris and expelled

three Iranian diplomats. Three French diplomats, including the first secretary at the embassy, were expelled from Iran two days later.

Iran's relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated following the suppression of the *Tudeh* Party, and there were reports in the first half of 1983 of a number of clashes between Iranian and Soviet troops on the border with Afghanistan, following which Iran reinforced its units in the area.

Mr Vasily Safranchok, head of the Middle East department in the Soviet Foreign Ministry, visited Tehran for talks on “mutual relations and a number of international issues” on April 5.

18 Soviet diplomats, who had been accused by the Iranian authorities of having links with the *Tudeh* Party, were expelled from Iran on May 5. On May 20 the Soviet government ordered the expulsion of three Iranian diplomats from Moscow.—(BBC Summary of World Broadcasts - International Herald Tribune - Times - Guardian - Le Monde - New York Times - Daily Telegraph - Financial Times Sunday Times - Economist) (*Prev. rep. 32098 C; Cabinet changes 32535 A; Iran-Iraq war 32594 A*)

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