



DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Washington, D.C. 20520

SECRET-SENSITIVE

December 13, 1978

MEMORANDUM TO THE FILES

FROM: NEA/IRN - Henry Precht

SUBJECT: Conversation with Dr. Ibrahim Yazdi, Adviser to Khomeini, December 12, 1978, at Dominique's Restaurant

I had dinner with Robert Hirschman of WETA and Dr. Yazdi and for a short time Marvin Zonis at Hirschman's invitation. Yazdi, an American citizen, was on his way to spend a day in Houston where he is in cancer research. He has known Khomeini since the early 1960's. Yazdi is a reserved, exceedingly calm, but very persistent idealist. I believe he is intelligent and honest with himself. The following paragraphs summarize the main points in our conversation:

-- The President's December 12 statement: Yazdi regretted the President's statement because it again showed total American support for the Shah and denigrated the opposition, specifically Khomeini. He did not know whether Khomeini would react strongly to the President's implied and "not true" criticism.

-- Khomeini on violence: Yazdi said that following the September 8 "massacre," Iranians had asked Khomeini for permission to take up arms against the Shah. Khomeini had refused, but authorized them to acquire arms in the event an armed struggle might be necessary at a later stage. He indicated that if the army attempted to crack down harshly, Khomeini would be obliged to issue a call to arms. I asked him about the "torrents of blood" statement attributed to Khomeini. Yazdi said that he had complained to UPI that Khomeini had made no such call for violence. I asked if Khomeini did not feel responsibility for the violence and destruction against banks, movie theaters, hotels, etc.? Yazdi said Khomeini had not called for such actions and that some were the work of SAVAK. He acknowledged that it was not possible to control strictly their followers in Iran and that

SECRET-SENSITIVE

XDS-4, 12/13/98 (PRECHT, HENRY)

Khomeini must bear some of the responsibility for the destruction. I asked about responsibility for the assassination of American military personnel. Yazdi again denied this was Khomeini's doing, but asked in turn whether the Americans who trained and equipped the Iranian army were not responsible for the deaths of innocent Iranians?

Yazdi's position on violence is that the Iranian Government has been responsible for the killing of innocent persons in Iran. The Khomeini revolt is an unarmed one that suffers from the violence of the Government.

-- The December 10-11 demonstrations: I asked Yazdi whether Khomeini's group considered the peaceful demonstrations a defeat. Some people believed that Khomeini wanted violence on Ashura and that he had been committed to bring down the Shah on that day. Yazdi denied that Khomeini had made such assertions. He said that their people in Iran had planned the demonstrations to show to the outside world that they were capable of absolute discipline and a peaceful expression of their views. He felt that they had succeeded enormously.

Yazdi said the opposition had had two choices: It could have marched toward the Palace or it could have marched as it chose in a neutral direction. The Government had no such choice. If it had attempted to prohibit the demonstrations, there would have been a slaughter and the army would have been unable to hold together.

I asked about the Khomeini organization in Iran. Yazdi did not want to talk about this but made a passing reference to our "central committee and delegations and means of communication."

-- The Islamic Republic: I asked if Khomeini's people came to power what would happen to such responsible figures as Dr. Yeganeh whose only defect perhaps was that he had served the Shah's Government? Yazdi said that if such men were otherwise clean and were willing to work for the new Government, there would

SECRET-SENSITIVE

-4-

-- The military: After the Shah, Khomeini forces would purge the senior Generals, if any remained in the country. He said a number of officers had come secretly to see Khomeini and he was confident of support within the army. The task of the Islamic Republic would be to educate the army to a national mission rather than one of protecting the Shah.

Yazdi said the Islamic Republic would probably cancel many arms sales contracts as they did not serve Iran's interests. It would pay its debts for any contracts that were cancelled. He said the new Government would be happy to buy tractors instead from the U.S.

-- The future of the Shah: I described a number of arrangements ranging to the "King of Sweden model" which might be adopted to preserve a position for the Shah. Yazdi was uncompromising. The Shah must go and his system must be abolished. We were dealing with a mass revolution. If Khomeini argued that the Shah could stay with reduced powers, he would be rejected by his followers.

Would it be possible for a Sanjabi to negotiate a new government? Would Khomeini accept that? "No."

Wasn't it necessary to keep the Shah in order to preserve military discipline and prevent civil war? Yazdi was confident that once the Shah was gone, Iran's problems would be solved and the military would have no choice but to sign up with the Islamic Republic.

-- The U.S. Role: The U.S. was crucial, Yazdi said. If the U.S. withdrew its support of the Shah, he would fall immediately. If the support continued, the U.S. would suffer the same fate as the Shah in Iran. Would the Ayatollah call for violence against Americans if he called for a holy war on Shah's regime? That was a real possibility, Yazdi said, particularly, if the U.S. continued to make statements such as the President's statement of December 12. He could not, of course, control all of the Iranians who were in a rage in any event.

SECRET-SENSITIVE