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FOR A FREE AND DEMOCRATIC IRAN -- [FROM FOCUS ON IRAN, SEPTEMBER 1994] (Extension of Remarks - October 08, 1994)

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HON. BILL MCCOLLUM
in the House of Representatives
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1994

- Mr. McCOLLUM. Mr. Speaker, I want to call to the attention of my colleagues one of the most balanced, if not the most balanced, publications on Iran. The Azadegan Foundation founded by Gen. Dr. Bahram Aryana and now ably led by Dr. Assad Homayoun, has done a remarkable job of reporting on conditions in Iran and the need for a free and democratic Iran. The following is the September issue of Focus on Iran. I am sure you will agree that Dr. Assad Homayoun is a thoughtful and visionary leader of the Azadegan Foundation and I hope in the near future one of the democratic leaders of a free Iran.

- The text of Focus On Iran reads as follows:

[FROM FOCUS ON IRAN, SEPTEMBER 1994]

The purpose of Focus On Iran is to advance the cause of freedom and liberty of the Iranian People. For too long have their voices been muted by the self serving totalitarian regime of the clerics occupying the seats of power in Tehran. It will also serve to bring relevant information and analysis to the attention of the people of the free and democratic world so as to correlate the events with their national security and other vital interests.

In this presentation, we will endeavor to answer the following key questions regarding the nature and consequences of the activities of the current clerical regime, the aim being to illuminate the necessity for such a publication at this time, in order to make the voice of the oppressed and terrorized citizens of Iran heard by the general public as well as by the leaders and policy makers.

1. Why is a democratic Iran important to the world community?

2. Why is Focus On Iran necessary?

3. What are the potential consequences of the attitude and policies of the current regime in Iran?

4. What do we desire of our readers?

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The most important reason for a free and democratic Iran is that it will provide the people their fundamental and essential human rights. Since the onset of the current revolutionary government in 1979, the basic political economic, and religious freedoms

- of the individual citizen has become very restricted. Arbitrary imprisonments and executions have become the order of the day and religious and political persecutions have become the basic tenets of the regime.

- A stable and democratic Iran, concerned with the improvement and the wellbeing of its people through economic and social development, is less likely to be a threat to its neighbors and the adjoining region. Under these conditions. Iran could become an important factor for regional peace and stability on behalf of its own national interest and that of the international community. Closely related to Iran's role in the interests of the regional peace and stability is its potentiality as a significant force for controlling conventional/non-conventional weapons proliferation.

- A politically threatened totalitarian regime such as present-day Iran can only depend on the greater number and force of its weapons arsenal for security, rather than consent and support of its citizens. The danger of the Tehran regime seeking the acquisition of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons to insure its retention of power is real to the region and the world at large. As a consequence of these developments, the national security and unity of Iran is at risk, and it is the Iranian people that will ultimately suffer.

- A free and democratic Iran would respect the rights of all peoples not only within its borders but throughout the international community. Of particular concern is Iran's policy of supporting terrorism against individuals, groups, and even nation states. The campaign against Salman Rushdie, support of terrorism in Lebanon, Egypt and Algeria, the backing of the radical, fundamentalist regime in Sudan, and the recent acts of terrorism in Latin America, are examples of the activities of the radical clerics ruling Iran.

- Finally, a free and democratic Iran can be a force for international good. This can be achieved through a

Reformed Iran's participation in regional collective security and arms control/limitation, and the various cooperative endeavors of the United Nations. The present totalitarian theocratic regime is virtually isolated from the international community and makes no contribution to the United Nations collective security and peace making/peace keeping undertakings. Iran's isolation and loss of international credibility comes at a time when its influence for stability and peace could be most effectively used in the Middle East, the former Soviet Caucasus and Central Asia, and Afghanistan. Iran's contribution to security and peace is particularly important in the Persian Gulf region, where no security is viable without its active participation.

Focus On Iran is essential to the cause of the Iranians seeking to express to the world their fervent desire for freedom, liberty and peace, and to expose the nature of the current clerical regime ruling Iran, their behavior regarding the treatment of their own people as pertaining to the

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violation of human rights, and their utter disregard for all international norms and standards. As noted above, Iran's gross violations of human rights has been well documented, especially in the American and European press. However, those reports and observations tend to be lost in the welter of world news, deemed by editors and media reporters to be of less importance of `newsworthy' than other events.

Focus On Iran will make known to everyone the current regime's violation and buses of power, both inside Iran and in the international area. In this manner, the government will be held accountable for its actions. Their behavior will not be lost nor hidden to the world, and ultimately the regime will be forced to answer for its continuing human rights violations. Special emphasis will be given to reflecting the views and opinions of the youth and women, a perspective not generally seen outside Iran.

Secondly, the international community must be made aware of Iran's threat to regional stability through it conventional/non-conventional arms build-up, and state sponsored terrorism. Focus On Iran will provide national leaders with the most up-to-date assessment and commentary on Iran's covert and overt military activities and threat: potential, regional and otherwise.

Thirdly, Focus On Iran will provide the oppressed Iranians a forum, as well as support and encouragement in their fight for democracy and freedom.

Finally, Focus On Iran provides Iranian patriots throughout the world an opportunity to contribute to, and support the political liberation of Iran from its despotic rule. It will serve as an information resource and conduit for those activities leading to Iran's ultimate liberation and freedom.

Two major consequences are most likely to develop, both of which have serious repercussions domestically and internationally. In the domestic environment, greater repression of civil rights and personal liberties will continue until this theocratic totalitarianism will parallel Hitlerism and Stalinism. The economy is in shambles, and the educational system grossly overloaded. The clerics have busied themselves with the expansion of the `Islamic International' and the propagation of `Khomeinsim', to the detriment of the welfare of the people.

In the international arena, one can expect to see a wider extension of state-sponsored terrorism and activities detrimental to governments deemed not favorable by the clerics. In the era of `post-cold-war' and demise of international communism, it would indeed be ironic if these radical clerics in Iran are allowed to sponsor a `fundamentalist international'. Indeed, their threat to world peace and stability will be just as pervasive. To further elucidate our contention that the self-serving policies of the clerical regime are not only detrimental to the freedom and security of Iran, but are de-stabilizing to the region, and undermine world peace, we shall briefly review the activities of the regime in the fifteen years of its existence.

The domestic policy of the clerics can be summed up quite briefly as repression on the social front, neglect in the educational and public health arena, and chaos in the economic field.

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Except for their ardent followers, the clerics do not discriminate when it comes to oppressing the people. The women have been forced back to the dark ages. They must cover themselves from head to toe in public. They are not allowed to bear witness in court, because their legal status is half that of a man. they are not allowed to wear make-up, go to mixed beaches or swimming pools, ride in a car with someone they are not married to, wear high heels

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The situation is so oppressive that a few months ago, an American trained doctor, Mrs. Homa Darabi burned herself to death in protest of the government's policies and treatment of women.

As for men, likewise, they are not allowed to wear short sleeved shirts. Neckties have recently been outlawed by the Spiritual Leader, who has decreed their usage a cardinal sin. They are not allowed free association in social or political groups unless sanctioned by the clerics. Political parties are not allowed to be active unless they subscribe to the radical philosophy of the regime. Persecution, imprisonment, and summary executions of political opponents is the rule `by the Grace of God'.

Religious minorities are systematically persecuted. Christians, Jews, and Bahais have been assassinated or executed. In the recent past, five Christian priests have lost their lives. The Reverends Arastoo Sayyah, Bahram Dehghani, Mehdi Dibaj, Hayek Hovsepian Mehr, and most recently, Natavoos Mikhaelian have been murdered. Since the beginning of the revolution, many Shiite clerics not agreeing with `Khomeiniism' have been defrocked, exiled, and even executed. Any person perceived not to be adhering to their interpretation of the tenets of Islam, may be apprehended and punished. This could range from not fasting in the month of Ramazan to drinking alcoholic beverages, for which the punishment is normally flogging.

Many literary figures have been summarily jailed. Mr. Saeedi Sirjani, a noted and highly respected writer and researcher has been held for five months incommunicado. It has been reported that he has been tortured with the aim of extracting from his a confession with which the regime could damn him. Likewise, Mr. Niazi Kermani, another writer was detained without reason or due process of law. At one point, the businessmen of the `Bazaar' in Tehran seemed to enjoy a degree of immunity because of their past financial support of the regime. For them too, the tide has turned. Mr. Mohammad Hossein Khotani is one such businessman jailed without any reason or cause or due process.

The educational system of Iran has been destroyed. The greater majority of the eligible college age students do not get the opportunity for higher education because of the limited capacity of the universities and colleges, and the lack of trained teachers.

Last year, according to the government controlled press reports, 1,112,000 students participated in the college entrance examinations, competing for 138,486 available seats. Of the available seats, 40% had been reserved for the Islamic militia, Basij (Khomeini's red guards), and other groups associated with the regime.

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- The purpose of these reserved seats is not to create a more educated militia, but to control the students lucky enough to be accepted.

- Public health is on the verge of disaster. The number of hospital beds per capita has been declining steadily. The number of medical professionals as a percentage of population is rapidly decreasing. Infant mortality is on the rise, and the population growth factor has also increased to over three percent, one of the highest in the world. In 15 years, the population has increased from 36 million to 65 million today, and is projected to surpass 85 million by the turn of the century. Common drugs are at a premium, while more specialized drugs are non-existent. There is no serious planning to answer the immense problems of the young population in order to avert future catastrophe.

- The economic picture is rather bleak. There are over 12 million unemployed. The rate of inflation, according to one conservative estimate is 60%. The Rial has depreciated from $1=R70 (1979) to $1=R2550 (today). The national debt stands close to $40 billion. The per capita income has fallen from around $2000 in 1979 to under $1000 today. The GNP has had a similar fate. Very little has been added to the industry that existed, and what existed is, for the most part, in urgent need of renovation and repair. What is being purchased from abroad, aside from what is related to the armament program, is a hodge-podge, without any cohesive planning, or priorities. The determining factor is not national planning, but personal relationships.

- Capital investment, even in areas vital to the economic viability of the nation is neglected. The regime is neglecting its own life-line: oil. The oil industry, in order to remain productive, is in dire need of capital equipment. If this gross neglect continues, according to Mr. Ardeshir Fathi, the current deputy oil minister, the wells will start drying up in fifteen years. Such mismanagement of the economy, as well as the immense spending on armaments without a clear national strategy, but solely based on their radical theocracy has brought about an economic crisis of immense magnitude.

- Adverse economic conditions coupled with an oppressive social and political situation have brought about sporadic and spontaneous riots and rebellion throughout the country.

- In the past two year, riots have broken out in the cities of Arak, Mashad, Najafabad, Shiraz, and on August 2nd and 3rd of this year, in Qazvin, and more recently in Tabriz and Zanjan. According to the latest reports, the Qazvin riots left 40 dead and several hundred injured. These riots are indicative of the fact that the people of Iran have reached the point of no return. They are fed-up with the regime of the mullahs, and would like nothing more than to replace them. They need the support of the world public opinion to succeed.

For the past 15 years, the entire domestic and foreign policy of the current clerical regime has been to emphasize the Islamization and `de-Persianization' of Iran, and the promotion of the Fundamentalist International, or, to use a simpler term, `Khomeini-ism'. This at the price of much needed political and economic reforms, and against the will of the majority of the Iranian people.

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The clerical clique in Tehran views the world as a mosque which must be run by clerics who are inspired by the ecumenical revolutionary ideals of Ayatollah Khomeini. Tehran has achieved its goal of leading the militant Islamic drive to penetrate and exploit all regions susceptible to fundamentalism. The mullah-led leadership has constantly re-iterated its intention to liberate Jerusalem from the infidel, and shown its displeasure over control of Mecca by the Saudi regime. The Iranian government's indictment and pursuit of Salman Rushdie is indicative of their assumption of moral leadership of the entire Moslem world. In this regard, all clerics are unanimous. There is no such entity, as some specialists mistakenly contend, as a `moderate cleric'. Their differences are on the tactics not the goal. All mullahs ruling Iran are dedicated to the Islamic International and the theory of `Velayate Faquih' as defined by Khomeini and his successors.

Hojjatol-Islam Rafsanjani, the `President', and Ayatollah Khamenei, the `Spiritual leader' have been repeatedly speaking of the `Islamic Block'. They have come to envision themselves as leaders of a resurgent crusade against the west. They hope, ultimately, to precipitate a new round of crusades between the Moslem and the Judeo-Christian worlds. Toward this goal, and in order to paralyze the West, they have sanctioned every means including international terrorism, regardless of its consequences for the people of Iran.

Sooner or later, Iranian public opinion will overcome the odds, and its demand for the replacement of the clerical regime will come to fruition. The modern communications revolution has made the rule of force, at best, transitory. Once the world finally perceives that the majority of the people of Iran have been saying all along, ie: that the ruling clerics are not legitimate representatives of the people, then the international public opinion will support the Iranians in their quest for freedom and peace. It is the desire of the Focus on Iran to bring to its readers the urgency and necessity of their active participation by whatever means and to whatever degree of involvement they choose, in order to bring about the replacement of the current regime.

Focus On Iran, being the reflection of the voice and desires of the Iranian people--in essence the conscience of the Iranian people--would like to welcome their active participation in making themselves heard throughout the world as a force fighting for freedom and justice.

The past 15 tragic years have served to re-awaken the Iranian people, and has forced them to re-evaluate their values, beliefs, desires and outlook on life in general and their own historic truth in particular. A cohesive nation was plunged overnight from its fast track (rutted as it may have been) to development, riches, and success, to an abyss where terrorism and terrorists reign supreme, where life has become a struggle for mere survival, and people have become cannon fodder in the quest of the clerics to advance their anti-Persian, primitive ideals.

We are the voice of these people, and we mean to make ourselves heard.

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