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CRISIS IN IRAN

Iran is a prize worth more than all the eleven countries the Communists have conquered in Southeast Asia, Africa and the Middle East during the past five years. If the Soviets take Iran, they will not only acquire enonnous supplies of oil, but they will deal a crippling economic blow to the West because Iran provides about a fourth of the oil for free Europe, Israel, and Japan.

And the loss would be permanent. You'll get no takers on bets placed with Jimmy the Greek on a country's winning its freedom again after it has been dragged behind the Iron Curtain.

The prevailing mythology in the U.S. State Department teaches that the Soviet Union poses no military danger until 1984, and therefore the United States can safely cancel plans for deployment of any additional strategic weapons prior to that time and can structure our foreign policy on big talk about human rights. Meanwhile, the crippling of the CIA prevents us from engaging in covert foreign operations to keep our government on top of fast,breaking events.

If you were Brezhnev, age 72 and with a short life expectancy, the handpicked successor and ideological soulmate of Nikita Khrushchev who taunted the West with his boast "we wi11 bury you," and if you surveyed the easy Communist conquests in Africa since Jimmy Carter became President, you might come to the conclusion, why wait until 1984? Would a winning quarterback, who is meeting nc opposition, cease trying to advance the ball?

The steady successes of revolutionaries armed with Co11111unist weapons have sent a clear message to the fence-sitting nations of the world. After the Soviet coup in Afghanistan, neighboring Pakistan switched its top diplomat, Yakub Khan, from Washington to Moscow, the new center of power and decision-making.

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The State Department policy is to talk about human rights in general, but to withhold help only from anti-Communist governments that deny human rights. Hence the stern U.S. disapproval of the anti-Communist governments of Chile and Nicaragua. The State Department seems oblivious to the reality that any denial of human rights in those countries is miniscule compared with the denial of human rights that takes place after the Communist curtain comes down. Witness Vietnam and Cambodia.

Iran has been a staunch pro-U.S., anti-Communist government despite its 1,250-mile common border with the U.S.S.R. Nearly 40,000 Americans currently find it profitable to make their living there.

Yet until recently, the State Department had been trying to give Iran the Chile-Nicaragua-type sermons and treatment. It took a major effort by the Iranian embassy to persuade the Carter Administration to approve the sale of $100,000 worth of riot-control gear and tear gas. Some observers think that the State Department's demands for "liberalization" in Iran is one cause of the civil disorder there today.

The Shah is fighting for his life and the life of his government in the face of violence and massive strikes that have drastically reduced the flow of oil. It is unrealistic, unfair, and self-defeating for our State Department to expect the Shah to grant U.S.-style freedoms in the f ce of an armed attack on his government.

Although little is said about Soviet involvement in the operation to overthrow the Shah, only the Soviets are capable of providing the resources to carry it on and to escalate it so massively. Even if the Soviets were not directing the demonstrations now, any collapse of the Iranian government into chaos or a vacuum would leave Iran ripe for the plucking by its covetous neighbor. It would fulfil Khrushchev's prophecy that Iran is a "rotten piece of fruit" ready to fall in Moscow's lap.

The crisis in Iran may be the event that shakes the Carter Administration out of its illusions that pious demands for unrealistic goals can substitute for a determined defense of Western interests, territo,ry, and vital resources against a Soviet takeover.

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