

Iranian students speak out on Shah and hostages

By CRAIG PIECHURA

Despite fear of retaliation by angry Americans, two Detroit-area Iranian students Tuesday said they support holding American hostages in an effort to have the deposed shah returned to Iran.

In an interview Tuesday at Saied Aghabegi's Southfield apartment, both men said they wanted to speak directly to the American people and to ask them to investigate recent happenings in Iran.

They welcomed the chance to be interviewed on tape and agreed to be identified by their proper names "to let the people know what is really going on," explained Cyrus Rafatdaj.

Rafatdaj said he has no quarrel with the American people. "We like American people really a lot," said Rafatdaj, 27, an engineering student at Detroit Institute of Technology (DIT). "We have no bad feelings after emotional reactions by some Americans."

Rafatdaj, however, doesn't feel as generous toward the former shah, and believes most Americans wouldn't either if they "knew the reality."

Aghabegi, 22, an architecture student at Lawrence Institute of Technology (LIT), said most Americans are mad at the wrong government.

"(Americans) can show their (displeasure) better by finding what the reality is and asking their government,

asking the people in charge, 'What is going on?' Aghabegi said.

"You call this a free country. Ask your senator why we are keeping the shah when 35 million people (the population of Iran) are calling him a criminal. They are screaming for an answer and they hear not a thing."

IRANIAN STUDENTS in Tehran took 62 American embassy employees hostage Nov. 4 and are still holding dozens of Americans hostage and demanding that the United States extradite the deposed shah, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, to stand trial for ordering the murder of thousands of Iranian people.

Asked why innocent Americans are being held as political pawns, Aghabegi and Rafatdaj said they aren't convinced the embassy officials are innocent of spying and add that pressure, at times, is the only way to get the United States to pay attention.

"Some people say why didn't we take action against Mexico when the shah was allowed in that country," Rafatdaj said. "We didn't have any point from Mexico. 'Cut off the oil? They are exporting oil from Mexico. So we don't worry about it."

"How about the U.S.? Ah, the U.S. is different. Because the U.S. already is so involved with Iran since 1913 with the CIA, which spent one billion and a half dollars, according to People maga-

"I'll tell you why the U.S. was the target. Even when Black Friday happened last year in Iran... (the Shah's forces) were killing 5,000 people. And simultaneously, President Carter gave (the Shah) full support. What do you call that? Is that human rights of Carter?"

— Cyrus Rafatdaj

zine, to send back the ex-shah to Iran during the first revolution. Don't call it a revolution. It was a coup d'etat.

"I'll tell you why the U.S. was the target. Even when Black Friday happened last year in Iran — when more than four million people were outside demonstrating — according to American news (the shah's forces) were killing 5,000 people. And simultaneously, President (Jimmy) Carter gave (the shah) full support. What do you call that? Is that human rights of Carter?"

Aghabegi asked if the United States wouldn't seek the return of a suspected mass murderer and wonders whether citizens would have allowed former President Richard Nixon to leave the country during the Watergate hearings. "People in the U.S. are treating the shah just as a person, OK?" Aghabegi said. "I believe they really don't know what this guy has been doing in Iran."

"If it became obvious what they're doing over here is keeping such a criminal person, which I can compare with the Hitler or anybody else history can show, I don't think the United States people will let him stay in this country. The U.S. government will want to keep him but the American people won't let them."

ALLEGATIONS about the Shah's involvement in political assassinations

will be fully proved, said the students, and the present government of Iran welcomes its people and the entire world to evaluate the validity of the evidence.

But, knowing the national hatred of the ex-shah, the students were asked how one can expect him to receive a fair trial in Iran? The students were also asked how they could support recent executions of Kurds and ex-government officials by firing squads sanctioned by the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Students say the shah is welcome to hire the finest attorney in the world. They don't rule out holding the trial in an international court, such as the United Nations, but say it is not for them to decide.

"To the point which a revolution needs to kind of clear the atmosphere at first to be settled down I can say about those people which has been executed in Iran, they have a real nice court which goes through all those criminal things and (lists) things which was against the human beings," said Aghabegi.

"They proved those things in court (before the execution). And I believe every one of them had a fair court and a fair judge and real judgment, or justice is a better word."

Kurds, they feel, are not being executed because of their nationality but because they are working with the CIA, the Soviet Union and the ex-shah to reverse the revolution.

Recent statements released by Iranian students holding the hostages allege that the U.S. State Department anticipated eventual admission of the shah into the United States, despite assurances to the contrary to Khomeini's representatives.

The state department has refused to deny the statement, say Aghabegi and Rafatdaj.

"We have a saying," says Rafatdaj. "If you get quiet, it means yes."

contains stereo equipment and rock and roll records. He was asked if that isn't inconsistent with the Islamic code as professed by Khomeini.

Aghabegi said Moslem people aren't trying to reform the rest of the world — just the east. And when in the west you do as the western people do, unless that means acting immoral.

"We really don't want no western civilization or western culture which will adversely affect eastern culture," Aghabegi said.

"By the time I left Iran (3 1/2 years ago) I couldn't see anything different between the cities over here and Iran. There was a preoccupation with fun. People having all kinds of movies, discotheques and bars which are really not our culture."

But didn't he participate in these activities in Iran and the U.S.? And what's the danger of modern music? Aghabegi was asked.

"The danger is losing your culture. Oh, yeah, I was a disco type, a rock 'n' roll type. It wasn't really the type of thing I should do."

Both men said it will be easy to leave the "fancy things" behind when they return to Iran.

The two local students expect safe return of the hostages, if found not to be "spies in the clothes of a diplomat."

"NONE HAVE BEEN harmed yet," Aghabegi said. "Some of them have been released. This is exactly what Iranian people want (the students) to do. Not to harm them."

"But they will have to (if) again such a thing happen where the United States keep their own policy over there and use it as their own way and not negotiate to help (solve) this problem. If this happens I say a disaster can happen. That can be my personal view and that is the demand the Iranian people have been saying lately on TV."

The only acceptable concession, they say, is the release of the shah by the United States. Until that happens, the hostages will be "under the protect of Islam."

Both men reject the view of the Ayatollah as a religious fanatic intent on imposing his strict interpretation of Islamic law on a nation comprised of people of many religions.

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