

# The Nation's man in Tehran: Who is Robert Dreyfuss?

Bill Van Auken  
22 June 2009

In its coverage of the recent political upheavals in Iran, the position of the *Nation* magazine, the self-styled voice of progressive politics, has become increasingly indistinguishable from that of the US political establishment.

Robert Dreyfuss, the magazine's principal correspondent on the Iranian events—and on “politics and national security” generally—has parroted the unverified charge of a stolen election and characterized the incumbent President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, as well as his supporters, as a “virtual fascist movement.”

In a June 17 column entitled: “Battle Lines in Iran,” Dreyfuss, who had just returned from covering the election in Tehran, speculated on the trajectory of the Iranian “showdown.”

He wrote: “Thirty years ago, it was the decision of the Shah of Iran not to confront the revolutionaries with violence that allowed the anti-Shah movement to grow strong enough to oust the Shah. Then, as now, a relatively small number of deaths—‘martyrs’—triggered a traditional, Shiite forty-day cycle of memorial marches and ceremonial protests and led to a crescendo of protest by the end of 1978.”

This is an astonishing statement. While the number killed by the Shah's troops and the notorious SAVAK secret police is disputed—the government today puts it at 60,000, while its opponents claim only about 3,000—there is no question that virtually every one of the demonstrations that erupted in 1978-79 saw scores, if not hundreds, of workers and students mowed down by automatic weapons fire in cities across the country.

SAVAK, trained by the CIA, was among the most

sadistic secret police forces in the world, known for its systematic and hideous torture of anyone suspected of being an opponent of the monarchical regime. Its victims numbered in the tens of thousands.

How is one to account for this whitewashing of a brutal dictatorship by a journalist now posing as a champion of democracy? Who is this man?

Iran is not a new subject of inquiry for Robert Dreyfuss. He authored a book in the wake of the Iranian Revolution entitled “Hostage to Khomeini.”

The book's foreword, addressed “to the American people,” describes it as “an indictment of President Carter's role in contributing to the downfall of the Shah and Khomeini's seizure of power.”

It speaks favorably of the “incoming government of Ronald Reagan,” presenting the change in administrations as an opportunity “for the entire Khomeini regime to be swept away during 1981 and replaced with a government of sanity.”

Dreyfuss exhorts his readers: “Let the officials in Washington know that the American people will not tolerate our government treating the Khomeini regime as anything but the outlaw dictatorship that it is.”

The book presents the Iranian Revolution not as a movement of millions against a hated dictatorship, but rather as a vast conspiracy orchestrated from within the Carter administration, in collaboration with British, Israeli and even Soviet intelligence.

“The Carter administration—with deliberate malice aforethought—had given aid to the movement that organized the overthrow of the Shah of Iran,” he wrote. The White House, he continued, “was involved every step of the way ... from behind-the-scenes deals with traitors in the Shah's military to the final ultimatum to the beaten leader in 1979 to leave Iran. Perhaps no other chapter in American history is so replete with

treachery to the ideals upon which the nation was founded.”

Precisely what “ideals” were violated by Washington’s failure—not for want of trying—to keep the Shah on his Peacock Throne, Dreyfuss did not spell out.

The book was put out by New Benjamin Franklin House Publishing Co., which had produced other volumes that year, including “What every Conservative Should Know about Communism,” written by Lyndon LaRouche.

Dreyfuss held the title of “Middle East Intelligence Director” for LaRouche’s *Executive Intelligence Review*, the flagship publication of what the *Washington Post* described in 1985 as a network which “had more than 100 intelligence operatives working for it at times, and copies the government in its information-gathering operation.”

Political Research Associates, a think tank that specializes in tracking the activities of the extreme right, wrote of Dreyfuss’s former employer: “The LaRouche organization and its various front groups are a fascist movement whose pronouncements echo elements of Nazi ideology.”

The PRA added that the organization had built: “an international network for spying and propaganda, with links to the upper levels of government, business, and organized crime. The LaRouchites traded information with intelligence agencies in the United States” as well as in other countries.

According to published reports, one of the agencies with which it traded information was SAVAK, during the period in which it was carrying out its most murderous repression in Iran, while hunting down student opponents of the regime abroad.

After being driven into exile by the revolution, Empress Farah Diba Pahlavi, the Shah’s widow, told the West German magazine *Bunte*: “To understand what has gone on in Iran, one must read what Robert Dreyfuss wrote in the *Executive Intelligence Review*.” The magazine used the quote in its promotional advertising, aimed principally at corporate executives and right-wing politicians.

The *Nation* describes Dreyfuss merely as “an investigative journalist in Alexandria, Virginia, specializing in politics and national security.” Nowhere does it inform its readers that its principal

correspondent on Iran is a former member of a fascistic organization who publicly defended the Shah’s dictatorship.

These credentials should have disqualified Dreyfuss from saying anything about the events in Iran. Nothing this man writes has any credibility.

The real question is: how has an individual of this character surfaced as the *Nation*’s correspondent in Tehran and its principal commentator on international affairs?



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**