



**INTRODUCTION
BY MIRON REZUN**

Iran is all the more significant from a purely political and strategic point of view, because it is at the crossroads of East-West communications and at a crossroads in its own history.

Now that the war between Iran and Iraq is seemingly at an end, Iran is expected to continue to play a pivotal role in Middle East politics. For instance, will the Arab world now require the assistance of the Iranians in their age-old struggle against the Zionist state? What about the balance of power in so delicate a region, such as the Persian Gulf, where the flow of oil will continue to impact on the industrialized economies of the west, and Japan? Will Canada, now that we have diplomatic relations with Teheran, act as a conduit for an eventual resumption of relations between Iran and the United States? Or are we to see another war, another round, a final showdown, between Iran and Iraq sometime in the future?

Without exaggeration, probably no other country in the past ten years has captured the attention of Western states than Iran. From the startling events of 1979 when the Islamic Revolution took hold in this strategic Middle Eastern country to the bloody Iran-Iraq conflict which now seems to be over, the foreign and domestic policies of Iran have left many Western nations at the edge of their seats trying to determine what will happen next.

The same is true for the experts, the advisors and academics whose main task it is to help politicians understand Iran. In the confusing world of Middle East politics, it is their job to clarify events and to make suggestions based on their research that will unravel the tangled web of Iranian domestic and foreign policies which appear to us daily in our newspapers and on television.

Now, as the situation stabilizes and the UN sponsored ceasefire has taken effect, one has a perfect framework to examine the policies which have led to today's situation. For never before in the past 8 years have the questions been so important, and the stakes so high.

It is into this background that the INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON IRAN will be held from Friday, October 21 to Sunday, October 23, 1988. As the first of its kind to be held in Canada - focussing exclusively on Iran - it will present the latest research and bring together some of the most distinguished scholars of the Iranian scene, some of whom are profiled below.

Born in England, Dr. Roger Savory is a Professor Emeritus of the University of Toronto. He served in Iran during World War II and has had a lifelong association with Iranian foreign policy. He has written extensively in his principle field of interest which is Iranian History from the 13th century to present, as well as the field of religion and politics in Iran. Until the Iranian revolution, he maintained close contacts with that country, where he has travelled widely.

His paper, to be presented at the first session on Friday, October 21, will take a close look at the history of the economic and political imperatives of Iranian foreign policy, in terms of Shia' ideology, the state religion of Iran.

Originally from Iran, but now based in Washington, Shireen Hunter is the "rising star" on today's Middle East scene. She has considerable personal experience in the area of Iranian affairs and is widely sought as an authority on Iranian foreign policy. She appears regularly on television in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, and makes commentaries worldwide.

Shireen Hunter will discuss Iran and the Arab world, on Friday, October 21 at 4:30 pm and she will take part in two other panels as discussant for William Beeman, Saturday, on the topic of Iran and the United States, and with British journalist Edward Mortimer, on Sunday, who will discuss Iran's relations with Western Europe.

Shaul Bakhash is probably the world's greatest living expert on Iran. A Robinson Professor of History at George Mason University, he was born in Tehran, Iran, and was educated at Harvard and Oxford Universities. His many years spent in Iran as a journalist for Iranian as well as Western publications have given him a special insight into the particular problems and issues of the region.

Mr. Bakhash's paper, presented on Saturday, October 22 at 4:15 pm, deals mainly with Iran and Israel, an interesting relationship in view of the fact that these two countries have had a common enemy - the Arabs. His paper also takes a close look at the interlinking relationships between Iran, Israel, Syria and Lebanon.

William O. Beeman is a professor of Anthropology at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where he specializes in Iranian culture and society. He has authored several books, most notably *Language, Status and Power in Iran*, as well as numerous popular articles which have appeared in magazines and newspapers.

In his paper, entitled "Double Demons," Professor Beeman confronts both religious symbolism and revolutionary zeal in a stirring interpretation of the US-Iranian relationship. Presented on Saturday, October 22 at 11:00 am, Professor Beeman's paper is sure to raise some significant questions regarding US-Iranian misconceptions of each other.

Paul George is a Canadian scholar who is currently finishing his PhD through the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. Mr. George has been a consultant in geopolitics to the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service and is a regular contributor of geopolitical analysis to the *Toronto Globe and Mail*.

Paul George will discuss in Sunday's final session "Prospects for the Future" after the Iran-Iraq war. He will be followed thereafter by Dr. Abbas Maleki, Director of the Institute of International Affairs in Tehran, who will elaborate on the same theme from an Iranian perspective.

Other participants in the INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON IRAN are Ismael Shakeri of the University of Toronto; Ashok Kapur, author and professor at the University of Waterloo; Ali-Fuat Borovali of Ankara, Turkey; John Sigler, author and Professor Emeritus, Carleton University; Zalmay Khalilzad, author and Professor, Columbia University; Samuel Nesdoly, Professor, Acadia University; Gabriel Fischer, Professor at Acadia University; William Millward of Montreal; David H. Goldberg, National Director, Canadian Professor for Peace in the Middle East; Roger Hill, Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security; Edward Mortimer, journalist, *The Financial Times* of London; and Dr. Abbas Maleki, Director of the Institute of International Affairs, Tehran, Iran.

For further information on the INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON IRAN, Please contact Dr. Miron Rezun, Room 216, Tilley Hall, Ext. 7494, or Melynda Jarratt, Room 208, Tilley Hall, Ext. 7703.

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Article by Melynda Jarratt
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