

# Is the end for Bani-Sadr near?

by Nancy Coker

“The overwhelming majority of the people want a prime minister who represents order, security and moderation. They are gradually getting fed up with personal and group anarchy and with the tendency that wants to consolidate murder instead of decisiveness.” With those plaintive words, Iranian President Abolhassan Bani-Sadr pleaded his case in an interview in his own newspaper, *Islamic Revolution*. In the interview, calculated to answer the Islamic Republican Party led by Ayatollah Beheshti, Bani-Sadr denounced what he called attempts to put the country under “religious fascism” by groups “seeking to reestablish political despotism under the guise of religion.”

Beheshti, said Bani-Sadr, is trying to place Iran under a fascist and “obscurantist dictatorship.”

But the interview represented the crying out of a politically dead man. Almost entirely lacking a political base when he was elected, Bani-Sadr is now scrambling to put together a coalition that can withstand the intense pressures of the IRP mafia and Beheshti. His chances of success are rated nil. Increasingly, Bani-Sadr is being pushed into a bloc with the Iranian left, in particular the Islamic Mujaheddin party, and further and further away from the mainstream of the country. To that extent, Zbigniew Brzezinski and the National Security Council are ready to dump Bani-Sadr in favor of the Beheshti IRP faction.

## London's Bani-Sadr

Since his election in January, Bani-Sadr has been the darling of the Anglo-American circles associated with Cyrus Vance's State Department and Britain's Lord Carrington and the Royal Institute for International Affairs.

When he was elected, he was viewed as the Great White Hope by the Vance-Carrington faction. Immediately after his election, Vance and Carrington put together the United Nations Iran Commission whose mission was to seek a way to reconcile the United States and Iran and have Bani-Sadr lead Iran into a de facto bloc with

the Anglo-Americans against the Soviet Union over Afghanistan. That operation, however, collapsed in February when it was undercut by the Beheshti-IRP faction which convinced Ayatollah Khomeini not to go along. Bani-Sadr proved unable to win enough Iranian support for his proposed deal.

Now, despite repeated urgings from the British, Bani-Sadr has been incapable of even putting together a government, and Iran is still without a prime minister and a cabinet.

Moreover, the recent parliamentary elections, which resulted in a majority for the IRP, have given Beheshti a political power base upon which to relaunch his bid for power. In this context, Beheshti and the mullahs around him—including Ayatollah Khalkhali, the head of Iran's Muslim Brotherhood, and the radicals around Ahmed Khomeini, the son of the ayatollah, Ayatollah Montazeri, and the so-called “Libyan faction”—are much closer politically to the Brzezinski faction in Washington than the relatively more sane Vance-Carrington clique. With Foreign Minister Ghotbzadeh trailing along behind them, the radicals are building up for an immediate confrontation with the Soviet Union over Afghanistan and with Saudi Arabia and Iraq in the Persian Gulf, as Brzezinski seeks.

Last week, in the first action of the attempted comeback by Bani-Sadr, he announced the dismissal of Ayatollah Khalkhali as revolutionary judge.

To build a base for himself, Bani-Sadr has been seeking to forge alliance with both the left and the military. Concerning the latter, he let it be known that his choice for prime minister was Admiral Ahmed Madani, who is very close to British Petroleum, and who has a reputation for being relatively anti-clerical that gains him support among the middle class. The *Financial Times*, reporting on Bani-Sadr's activities, said that Bani-Sadr “has correctly tapped the public mood of intense weariness with revolutionary confusion and the intolerant swaggering of the mullahs.”

When Beheshti's IRP attacked the armed forces for trying to stage a coup d'etat with the “cooperation of Fifth Columnists, Free Masons, British intelligence, and Israeli intelligence,” and when Khalkhali also accused the army leadership of plotting with the CIA to overthrow the regime, Bani-Sadr defended the integrity of the armed forces. According to Iranian sources, Bani-Sadr desperately needs to build up the regular army as a political counterweight to the Revolutionary Guard, commanded by Abu Sharif of the so-called “Syrian faction,” including Ghotbzadeh, Defense Minister Chamran, and acting Prime Minister Tabatabai. He thus seeks to defend the army against its critics.

Partly this is designed to prepare the way, eventually, for an actual military alliance between Iran and NATO.

But for now, Bani-Sadr is just trying to stay alive politically. This has taken him so far as to defend the army and the air force when members of the IRP noted that the U.S. helicopters on the ground in Iran, abandoned after the aborted American raid, were bombed by the Iranian Air Force, thus destroying precious papers and evidence concerning the raid.

### The Stanford mafia

In the pages of the Iranian press, the IRP has taken to attacking the so-called "Stanford mafia" around Bani-Sadr. This group derives its name from the fact that many, if not most, of them have been trained at Stanford University in California. Bani-Sadr is well-known for statements following the Iranian Revolution that "Tehran is a monstrous parasitical city ..." which "I propose to depopulate." He called for the Cambodianization of Iran "by persuasion and not by force." Bani-Sadr's prime intelligence contacts in Europe are with the anthropology and sociology departments of the Sorbonne and the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes of Paris. He is a protégé of French radicals, Jean Pierre Vigières, René Dumont, and Michel Foucault who worked with Jean Paul Sartre in running French environmentalist and terrorist networks. In Britain, Bani-Sadr is associated with the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation and in Italy, with the Lelio Basso Foundation which works closely with the Mujaheddin.

According to travelers recently returned from Iran, numerous government ministries are presently staffed with young Iranians who were educated either at Stanford University or Georgetown University in Washington.

For every step that he takes toward bringing Iran into alignment with the Anglo-American camp, Bani-Sadr is thus further tarred by the IRP-Beheshti crowd as an American "agent."

According to sources close to Bani-Sadr, the Iranian president is also seeking to form an alliance with the Mujaheddin. Recently, the leader of the Mujaheddin, Massoud Rajavi, served as a mediator between Bani-Sadr and the rebel Kurds, although the mission failed to reach any positive result. Rajavi's international connections reveal his close links to the same political circles that, in the days before the revolution, backed Bani-Sadr. Attacking the U.S. raid into Iran last month, in an interview in an Iranian newspaper, Rajavi made an argument that sounded exactly like something that Cyrus Vance might have said just before he resigned. The hostage-taking episode in Iran "enabled some forces in the United States to overcome the public's Vietnam complex, push moderate elements aside, ensure that Brzezinski's line prevails over Vance's, isolate Iran ... and blackmail the European allies."

# Iran embraces Afghan rebels

by Judith Wyer

The Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers ended this week sharply divided over the issue of challenging Soviet military presence in Afghanistan. Iranian Foreign Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh led the call for an Islamic opposition to the U.S.S.R., with Pakistan's military strongman General Zia ul-Haq supporting him. They were opposed by Syria, Algeria, Libya, South Yemen and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Ghotbzadeh issued the most virulent anti-Soviet diatribe at the conference and stunned the participants from the 38 Islamic nations when he paraded eight Afghan Muslim insurgents into the conference hall as part of the Iranian delegation. Ghotbzadeh called for full backing by the Islamic nations of the Muslim rebels' insurgency against the Soviet-backed government of Babrak Karmal. In his speech to the gathering he called the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan "a flagrant violation of international law carried out in total disrespect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan." Ghotbzadeh later told the press that "for us the liberation of Afghanistan is not less important than the liberation of Palestine." He warned that if the hostilities do not cease between the Muslim rebels and Soviet occupying troops, "we have no choice but to help them with everything we have. ... We will go all the way" with the Afghan rebels.

Western diplomats were surprised by Ghotbzadeh's vitriolic denunciation of Moscow in view of a newly agreed upon Iranian-Soviet trade package. One source noted that Iran "has never taken such a blatant public stance against the U.S.S.R."

Also a little unnerved by Ghotbzadeh's performance was Pakistan's General Zia, whose country hosted the affair. In his keynote speech, Zia issued a more low key denunciation of the Soviet occupation of Pakistan's neighbor and in this context urged the conference to back his plan to create an "Islamic Army" to contain "the Soviet threat" to the region. The Islamic governments of Pakistan and Iran are the prime client states of Great Britain in its effort to forge a NATO-controlled