
Interview: Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr



U.S. tie to 'Irangate mullahs' has continued for over 10 years

Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr was elected President of Iran on Jan. 25, 1980, and was overthrown and fled into exile on June 6, 1981. His book first appeared in French in 1989, was translated into English this year. Initially the State Department attempted to deny the former President a visa to promote his book (see page 60), but gave in.

At a May 7 press conference in Washington, Bani-Sadr issued a scathing attack on U.S. Middle East policy, calling on the U.S. to back "changes in the political structures of the region: 1) setting up democratic governments; 2) starting a regional development plan to benefit the poor masses which invests some of the riches of the monarchs, emirs, and sheikhs; 3) ending the arms race and the policy of balancing forces which results in the spread of misery as a corollary. . . .

"The Gulf war is a striking example of thinking which does not understand the Middle East and the outcome of its actions. Saddam's government relied upon the West for commerce, arms, and the purchase of Iraq's oil. The West helped make him a menace. The American government, in claiming that Saddam's army was the fourth largest in the world, didn't tell the American people that it was not the fourth best! On the basis of that lie, the United States set Iraq back 50 years and massacred its people. Even the government in Iran that I despise supported the sanctions, and they would have worked. . . ."

Mr. Bani-Sadr was interviewed in Washington by William Jones on May 10.

EIR: Could you give me a description of the general nature of the secret relations and agreements over a period of 10 years between the United States and the Iranian government, especially with regard to the attempt to delay the release of American hostages in order to secure the victory of the Reagan-Bush ticket in 1980? I would like your description of the nature of the relationship, which you have indicated still exists.

Bani-Sadr: The initial point in the history of these relationships before the revolution, was the meeting between Ambassador [William] Sullivan and Mr. Bazargan and Mr. Arde-

bili, one of the clerics, concerning the establishment of a stable government, a coalition between the military and the clergy. Since then, the leadership of the revolution fractured into two groups; on the one hand, the pro-democracy forces, and those who supported a religious, clerical dictatorship.

At the same time, there were two different tendencies in the American leadership. One was that represented by President Carter's administration. The other was the leadership of the Republican Party, which believed that the Carter administration was a disaster for the United States, and condemned him and criticized his policies toward Iran and the revolution in Iran. When the hostages were taken, both these factions within the leaderships of these two countries came face to face. The Republican faction in this country brought the Shah into the United States from Mexico. As a reaction to that move, hostages were taken in Iran.

In Iran, the clerical forces started to use the hostages to consolidate their power against the democratic forces, and in the United States, the faction opposed to Mr. Carter started to use the incident for practically the same purpose—to consolidate power. That is why, whenever we neared or got close to an official resolution of the hostage affair between the United States and the Iranian government, the other two groups in the United States and Iran initiated actions and reactions which sabotaged the resolution of the crisis. I have listed 55 incidents in my book *The Betrayal of Hope*, whereby something happened every time we were very close to reaching an agreement with the Carter administration on the hostage question; something would take place in the United States which would have some reactions in Iran and the whole thing would fall apart.

These concluded in what is characterized as the "October Surprise," the culmination of the relationship between these two factions, the Republican faction around the Reagan-Bush camp, and the clerical faction in Iran. The deal they made was that the Americans would support the mullahs' consolidation of power, they would sell them arms, and the mullahs, on their part, would delay the release of hostages until Reagan was elected President.

On the same day that Reagan was elected President, the

Iranian side started the process of eliminating me. On that day, there was circulated a petition in the Iranian Parliament with a certain number of signatures, requesting that Khomeini fire the President from the position of commander-in-chief.

EIR: Who circulated the petition?

Bani-Sadr: The Irangate mullahs, who were involved in those secret deals with the Reagan-Bush administration, on Nov. 4, 1980—the day of the election—circulated a petition through their people in the parliament asking Khomeini to fire the President from the position of commander-in-chief. And they sent the letter to Khomeini. And they kept attempting, over and over again, until June 1981, when they got Khomeini directly involved in this process and succeeded in a coup against my administration.

The shipment of arms started directly after Reagan became President. I know this through documents I have, with the contracts and invoices regarding shipments of arms to Iran through Israel. They started on March 9, 1981, and continued into sometime in July 1983. After the June 1981 coup against me, [Foreign Minister Sadegh] Ghotbzadeh had plotted a coup against them and discussed it with the Reagan-Bush administration. He contacted the White House through an intermediary, who was told by Mr. Ledeen that the U.S. administration was against the coup, and that they had nothing against the Iranian government. Michael Ledeen acknowledges this contact with Ghotbzadeh, saying that the intermediary was Mr. Villalongo, who contacted Mr. Ledeen. Mr. Ledeen acknowledges in his book the fact that Mr. Villalongo called him regarding the same issues, but says the Soviets must have bugged the phone, recorded the conversation, and they must have informed the regime. You know, of course, that Ghotbzadeh and a lot of others were executed. Ledeen is saying: yes, Villalongo called me [Ledeen] and informed me; yes, I told him that no, we didn't do it [inform the Iranian government]. The Russians must have recorded their conversation and they must have informed the Iranian government.

I would also like to respond to your question with regard to the fact that this relation has continued until today. The next example was from 1982-83, where there was a story about the first consul at the Soviet embassy in Iran, who defected to Iran, which was the result of the cooperation between Iran and the British and Americans regarding a guy who was a Western spy working with the Russians.

EIR: Where did he finally end up?

Bani-Sadr: He defected to Iran, and then they sent him to England, I think. This was another example of the continuous cooperation. Then, in 1984, according to clear documentation, and this has already been disclosed, at least most of it, by Mehdi Hashemi, who was executed after Irangate for disclosing Mr. McFarlane's visit to Iran. He was an associate of Ayatollah Montazeri. [Then-Speaker of the Parliament Ali

Akbar] Rafsanjani concluded in 1984 that they needed the relationship and the support of the West to consolidate their power at the polls.

Then there was the information regarding the cooperation and the meetings between the Iranians and somebody from the Reagan administration regarding ending the Iran-Iraq War. If you look at Saddam Hussein's discussions with Ambassador [April] Glaspie, it seems indirectly that promises were made to Saddam Hussein.

EIR: What do you know of the direct role of then-Vice President Bush, earlier CIA chief, with regard to Irangate?

Bani-Sadr: First of all, there are rumors, as you mention, that some of the mullahs and other elements involved in Irangate had been recruited by the CIA since Mr. Bush became director. Miss [Barbara] Honegger, in her book *October Surprise*, mentions Mr. Beheshti's relations with German Freemasonry and the P-2 organization in Italy. But I have never seen any documents. I have no supporting documents with regard to a Bush involvement in the affair.

But all these incidents which I am relating to you are connected to each other. This proves, I think scientifically, the chain of events which took place, which are totally connected to each other regarding the relationship—a relationship which has existed since then, and which is ongoing.

There are two theories put forward by those in the United States who are investigating the October Surprise. One school of thought says that Casey was the mastermind of this operation. This theory says that Bush was not directly involved, but that he was informed about it as the vice president. The other theory says that the mere fact of having Donald Gregg participate personally in the Paris meeting indicated that Mr. Bush was directly involved, or at least knew much more than the first theory indicates. I think the second theory is more accurate, closer to reality than the first theory. Especially when I see the emotional or angry reaction of Mr. Bush regarding these issues, I become more convinced that his role in the "October Surprise" must have been much more than being merely informed about it.

I'm sure you know that a couple of days ago, Bush said that he wasn't involved, and that the whole story was untrue. If you listen to his press conference when he attacks the "rumormongers," and talks about this "Sick guy," pretending that he doesn't know who [Gary] Sick is, I think that, since the name of Casey occurred as the first one, and the one most often mentioned in relation to this affair, I think that when Bush wants to say Casey, he keeps saying "sick, sick"—as if Mr. Bush doesn't know who Mr. Sick is. Bush denies that the whole thing ever occurred, while even Mr. [Richard] Allen admits that there had been meetings in Paris, meetings which he, however, claims were spontaneous in nature.

Thirdly, Richard Brenneke was acquitted, despite government efforts to prove that Mr. Casey was not present in Paris. [Brenneke was charged with perjury for his testimony

that defendant Heinrich Rupp had flown Casey et al. to Paris—ed.] But they could not prove that he was not in Paris. I'm sure you read how Mr. Gregg, in order to prove he wasn't in Paris, came up with a photograph of himself at the beach, which Brenneke's attorney proved was a falsification, because the weather conditions on that day could not have been those in the picture. In that way, Brenneke's attorneys could discredit Gregg's evidence. Al Haig has admitted that while he was Secretary of State, he prevented the shipment of arms to Iran.

We all know that the hostages were not freed until the day Mr. Reagan was sworn in as President. We also know that the contact with the Irangate mullahs who hold power in Iran has continued. I have given you an example. I could give you more examples of this. With all this known, how could the President of the country publicly deny that anything has happened? He could have said, "Yes, there was something going on, but we did not make any deal." But how could he claim that there was nothing going on and deny the whole thing?

EIR: You refer in your book to the assassination of Swedish Prime Minister Olof Palme, a murder which is still unresolved, where you say that people in Iran believe that he was assassinated by one of the mafias dealing in arms and drugs, because he wanted to halt Sweden's secret arms sales to Iran. During the course of the police investigation, Swedish Army General Algernon, the person in charge of Swedish arms shipments, allegedly threw himself in front of a subway train, and was killed instantly. Do you have any information with regard to the Palme murder or to the alleged suicide of Algernon?

Bani-Sadr: The information I have, which has not been disproved otherwise, is that General Algernon was killed because he had information concerning the shipment of arms. As you know, the Swedish authorities arrested someone for the assassination of Palme, tried to put the blame on him and said that he was insane or something. They were never able to come to any conclusion to that investigation.

EIR: With regard to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, do you believe that Saddam Hussein was set up or provoked by the Americans into launching his attack? You refer in your book to the fact that Brzezinski gave Saddam Hussein some assurances of U.S. support during the Iran-Iraq War.

Bani-Sadr: I received information twice in Iran that Brzezinski had meetings with Saddam Hussein and persuaded him or provoked him to invade Iran. Since the book was published, I received new information that, in fact, it was not Mr. Brzezinski, but the American ambassador to Saudi Arabia at the time, along with the Saudi Prince, who met with Saddam Hussein and persuaded him to attack Iran. The meeting took place and Saddam was persuaded to do this. Saddam Hussein was meeting both with Ambassador Glaspie and also your U.S. chargé d'affaires in Iraq. It has been

clearly stated that, "Yes, we have cooperation with the United States in the war against Iran." And your government hasn't denied it. In those discussions, Hussein is asking them, "Why are you not fulfilling the promises you have made to me?"

Based on information and proof from Iran and from reading Ambassador Glaspie's responses to Saddam Hussein, it's clear that Saddam Hussein gets the message that he can take over the two islands Warba and Bubiyan, which actually were promised to him before the invasion of Iran. When Miss Glaspie says that we didn't think he was going to invade the whole of Kuwait, it indicates they knew that he was going to take something, some part of Kuwait.

EIR: What do you consider the overall goal of the Bush Gulf war and U.S. policy in the area resulting from the destruction of Iraq?

Bani-Sadr: There are two theories about the U.S. intentions behind the Gulf war. One of the theories says that the United States was caught by surprise, didn't know what to do, and then they started acting. From the time when they started to act, they became actively involved in order to take advantage of the situation. The second theory says that, because of all the signals he was getting, and the responses of Miss Glaspie, Saddam Hussein was actually trapped into invading Kuwait.

Given the current conditions in the region, I tend to agree with the first theory, and think that it is more accurate than the other one, since I don't believe that the American government has the ability or the wisdom to be able to plan everything they have done beforehand. In fact, I think they did not plan it, but were caught by surprise, and then took advantage of the situation.

But, in effect, they have created new problems without resolving any of the old ones. They destroyed Iraq completely, but Saddam remains in power. Bush can agree with Israel, in particular, whether Saddam is to stay or go. And if Saddam doesn't leave the region, then Mr. Bush will have to leave the region.

From now on, no leaders in the region will have any respect for an American President who has continuously said that Saddam must go, deploying something like 700,000 troops from all different countries to the region in order to achieve the goal of taking out Saddam. But Saddam is still in power. Because of that, no regional leaders would be really scared of what the Americans might do to them. I know that there are some negotiations going on to persuade Saddam to go into exile, but his power structure is still in place, and you can see he has not accepted the proposal. A result of what has happened, and a reflection of it we see in Mr. Shamir's attitude to the United States, where it seems he is openly ignoring the interests of the United States in the region. As a result of the fact that Saddam is still in power, Mr. Shamir is resisting U.S. efforts to get him to make concessions to the Arab powers.