
Book Review

The real ‘Irangate’ scandal could outdo Watergate

by Mark Burdman

October Surprise

by Barbara Honegger

Tudor Publishing Company, New York, 1989
323 pages, hardbound, \$19.95

The standard gossip line in CIA circles about Barbara Honegger's *October Surprise* is that the book is factually "unreliable," and that its author is "a flake" and "a kook." Such statements may say more about the accusers than about the accused. Especially in view of the ongoing saga of Bush administration back-channel deals and offers to fundamentalist Iran, *October Surprise* is a piece of potential political dynamite.

Today, as Kissinger and U.S. State Department mouthpieces repeatedly exult about "Rafsanjani the moderate and pragmatist," and as President Bush expresses on a near-daily basis his fervent wish to tighten relations with Iran, Honegger's book stands as a "smoking gun," showing that there has been a continuity of what could, in shorthand, be called the "Bush-CIA-Kissinger-Rafsanjani axis," dating back to at least the summer-autumn of 1980. Her book points to the continuities of U.S. policy toward Iran that have been in operation for at least the entirety of the Reagan-Bush years, involving many of the same personages we see in action now.

Should the latest episodes of U.S.-Iranian dirty dealings blow up in the Bush administration's face, or should other international or domestic crises upset the prevailing Washington "consensus," it is perfectly possible, as Honegger puts it, that "a scandal of far greater magnitude than Watergate could cast a shadow over [Bush's] tenure in office." In the best case, such a scandal could help get to the bottom of, and root out, what has been rotten in American foreign policy since the 1968-76 period of Henry Kissinger's tenure in office.

Honegger indicates, that what she is basically writing, is the *real story of Irangate*, which begins not in 1984-85, as

the various Irangate investigative bodies have claimed, but at least as early as the fall of 1980. Her thesis is that the Reagan-Bush presidential campaign conspired to postpone the release of American hostages from Teheran in the weeks leading up to the November 1980 elections, in order to head off a so-called "October Surprise." In October 1980, "October Surprise" was the name given to the option whereby the hostages would be released at the last minute before the elections, assuring Jimmy Carter's reelection. But, as the book title suggests, it has since become the generic name for the Reagan-Bush-CIA deals with Iran dating from that period.

In return for Teheran's de facto agreement to deny Jimmy Carter reelection, the Reagan-Bush campaign promised to transfer a vast amount of weapons to Ayatollah Khomeini's Iran. These shipments began, perhaps as early as November 1980, but certainly as early as the first weeks of 1981. In some cases, they involved the diversion of essential military supplies from European NATO stocks, endangering European security in the process. These arrangements solidified the "Bush-CIA-Kissinger-Rafsanjani axis."

Strong circumstantial evidence exists that George Bush was personally present at a meeting in Paris on Oct. 19 or 20, 1980 to discuss with Iranian leaders, the arrangements for transferring arms to Iran in return for delaying the hostages' release. Even if Bush were not personally involved, there is a wide array of sources who have identified the presence in Paris of Reagan-Bush campaign manager (and later CIA head) William Casey, and other senior personnel of the campaign. Whether directly or indirectly, Henry Kissinger was involved. One of Honegger's informants calls the whole 1980-81 policy to arm Iran "a Kissinger operation."

Subjectively, Honegger is writing not only as a private person concerned with treacherous activity in high places, but also as a former Reagan administration official who became disappointed and disillusioned with those she formerly admired. For reasons other than Iran arms sales, she was the first Reagan administration official to resign, in June 1983.

Among her indicated sources of information are U.S. intelligence officials who feel they were betrayed and "left hung out to dry" by Bush and others, after they had participated in a controversial and covert operation.

The book *October Surprise* might be seen as benefiting Jimmy Carter (including Carter's unmistakable presidential ambitions for 1992) and the Democratic Party more generally, although it would be simplistic to portray Honegger as a "Democratic Party asset." After all, the curious fact must be emphasized that leading Democratic Party officials, including past years' Democratic presidential candidates, most recently Dukakis, have never seized on the "October Surprise" story. Honegger has no adequate explanation in her book for why the Democrats have held back from making a stink about the affair.

A case of 'high treason'

Honegger believes that the "Irangate scandal" as the public has come to know it, is actually a gigantic diversion and coverup, to keep attention away from the real truth of the treacherous U.S.-Iranian relationship.

"Many covert operations, by their very nature, are lies," Honegger writes on page 147. "Even the 'revelations' of the Iran/Contra affair were part of a covert operation on a vast scale. The 'Big Lie' of the Iran/Contra scandal was the general impression left with the public that Israeli shipments of U.S. arms to Iran did not begin until 1985, and then only reluctantly in an attempt to get Americans who were first taken hostage in 1984 out of Lebanon. The Senate Intelligence Committee, the Tower Commission, and the Iran/Contra special prosecutor's investigation therefore focused only on events from 1984 forward. This arbitrary time limit on where they looked for an explanation of the origins of U.S. arms deliveries to Iran, whether self-imposed or by outside mandate, was justified on the grounds that the alleged 'Contra diversions' didn't take place until Reagan's second term. The real purpose of these 1984-forward limitations, in fact, was to divert attention away from reports that massive quantities of U.S. arms and spare parts had been shipped to Iran from the United States and Europe, as well as from Israel, beginning almost immediately after Mr. Reagan and Mr. Bush gained the White House, in 1981. Had the Iran/Contra Committees or the special prosecutor been allowed to consider these earlier shipments, they would not have been able to avoid the smoking question: Why were U.S. arms being shipped to Iran in 1981 and 1982 when there were *no* U.S. hostages either in Teheran or in Lebanon?"

Testimony that such arms sales were taking place, comes from a wide assortment of sources, including, among others, Swedish arms dealer Sven Klang; CIA operative Richard Brenneke (who was indicted in Denver, Colorado on May 11, 1989, the day before *October Surprise* was officially released); and Glenn McDuffie. McDuffie is a former 35-

year employee of Westinghouse Corporation who, as part of his job had worked with the U.S. Army Missile Command (MICOM). He then sued Westinghouse for having fired him for protesting that Westinghouse supervisors may have diverted critical HAWK missile parts to Iran beginning in the early 1980s.

Many other potential witnesses, sources, and experts, as well as individuals involved in such dealings, can no longer testify, since they have been murdered or have died, in many cases under strange circumstances. Others are in prison, their ability to speak restricted. The Epilogue to the book, ironically entitled, "A Kinder, Gentler Nation," itemizes 14 peculiar murders; 8 cases of attempted assassination or severe physical threats; and 1 frameup (former CIA pilot Heinrich Rupp, who claimed to have flown Reagan-Bush campaign manager William Casey to Paris on the night of October 18, 1980, and who was framed in 1987-88 for alleged bank fraud). It is instructive to compare Honegger's list, with the list published in EIR's recently issued Special Report, *Irangate, the Secret Government and the LaRouche Case*.

Honegger does not mince words about what was at stake in the autumn 1980 behind-the-scenes deals. "Is it possible," she asks on page 61, "that the Ronald Reagan who 'everyone knows' was incapable of harboring an unkind thought could have conceived, let alone acted upon, such a 'secret plan': to conspire with the most radical fanatics of an enemy nation to interfere with the negotiations of a sitting U.S. President to subject 52 Americans to 76 days of unnecessary captivity in order to gain election victory? Finally, is it possible that these men would run such a phenomenal risk and subject themselves to possibly as many as four presidential terms, 12 [sic] years, of blackmail by a medieval despot just to increase their chances of winning the White House? As we shall see, the answer to these questions is, astonishingly: Yes."

In author Honegger's view, actions committed by then-private citizen George Bush and others represent gross violations of the U.S. Constitution, in fact what she calls "high treason": selling arms to a nation that has committed an act of war against the U.S., and thereby violating the law against "aiding and abetting" the enemy. What she suggests, at one point, is that there is a line of continuity between the old Watergate scandal of the Nixon-Kissinger administration, and the Iran arms-for-hostages deals, both respecting the source of funds for the deals, and the nature of constitutional abuses and methods of action employed. The "October Surprise" Irangate actions constitute, however, a much worse crime, in her view. She calls upon the U.S. Congress to open up an official investigation and/or to appoint a special prosecutor to deal with the matter.

In one sequence toward the end of the book, Honegger goes further, and points to a possible connection between the circumstances surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and the later events, including the overthrow of

the Shah of Iran and the treasonous arms sales to Iran. The reader is invited to come to his or her own conclusions about the leads Honegger provides here.

In part, Honegger's case rests on showing that the culprits who were involved in the "October Surprise" events of 1980, are, for all intents and purposes, the same individuals and institutions who have since covered up the truth of the 1980 events. What percentage of the public knows, for example, that "Irangate" protagonist Robert McFarlane was an aide to Sen. John Tower in 1980, that FBI head William Sessions (whose FBI was required to investigate Tower upon his appointment by Bush as U.S. defense secretary) is a political protégé of Tower, that Irangate-linked arms merchant Sam Cummings is Tower's brother-in-law, and that, during the hearings for Tower's confirmation earlier this year, Georgia Sen. Sam Nunn (D) threatened to make a national issue of what Tower did or did not know about the fall 1980 arms sales?

The coverup of the "October Surprise" story is part of a much bigger operation against the American population, she claims. According to Honegger, the Reagan White House and National Security Council ran "an operation headed by a senior CIA disinformation expert recommended by Vice President Bush's national security adviser, Donald Gregg." The relevant "CIA psychological warfare veteran" recommended by Gregg was Walter Raymond, to head "what was euphemistically called the 'Office of Public Diplomacy' According to one report by the Government Accounting Office (GAO), the investigative arm of Congress, the 'Public Diplomacy' program amounted to a 'legally prohibited covert propaganda campaign designed to influence the media and the public.' In these efforts, Donald Gregg and Walt Raymond, Jr. were certain to have the enthusiastic support of Vice President George Bush. . . . A senior NSC official acknowledged that the 'public diplomacy' apparatus was modeled after CIA covert operations aimed at *enemy* populations overseas."

Some of this material will be familiar to those who have been following the political frameup in the U.S. of Lyndon LaRouche and associates. Walter Raymond has been one of the inner-core members of the "Get LaRouche task force. Also, the density of repetitively worded slanders against LaRouche has all the earmarks of a CIA disinformation campaign, although the prominent role of the KGB cannot be overlooked.

Follow the tracks of Brzezinski

Aside from certain problems of style, unnecessary, constant repetitions of certain facts, and the maddening absence of an index (although this is being corrected for the next edition of the book, we have been told), the main problem of *October Surprise* is that it stops where the full story begins. If hostage-taking has provided an effective diplomatic cover

for American backing for the Ayatollahs' Iran, then it must be assumed that the 1979 hostage-taking itself, as well as the placing of Khomeini into power, were well-planned *international* events. Venal Reagan-Bush presidential campaign ambitions ("just to increase their chances of winning the White House") can hardly be the ultimate explanation, for an operation so wide-ranging and nefarious.

Aside from referring to the 1980 book *Hostage to Khomeini*, a good starting point for figuring out the story is the case of Zbigniew Brzezinski. Brzezinski is a star player in the "October Surprise" story, operating as what appears to be a Reagan-Bush "mole." But Brzezinski is more than that. During the Carter administration, as Carter's national security adviser, Brzezinski was a leading proponent of the "Islamic fundamentalist card" policy for the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. Trace that policy out, and the relevant British Foreign Office and Soviet input to that policy, and the real story begins to emerge.

Ultimately, the problem with the book *October Surprise* is that it begs the *real* questions. If the United States is ever to be a republican nation again, there must be an urgent investigation and reversal of those political and cultural impulses which have caused one calamitous American mistake in the Middle East and Persian Gulf after another.

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