

# Bani-Sadr on Bush's role in hostage deal

by Jeffrey Steinberg

The President of Iran at the time of the 1979 takeover of the American embassy in Teheran and the 444-day hostage siege is now touring the United States promoting his autobiographical account of the Iranian Revolution. Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, who is now living in exile in Paris, provides new evidence that the Reagan-Bush 1980 campaign intervened to block an early release of the American hostages, because it might have helped Jimmy Carter win re-election.

The account of the Reagan-Bush "October Surprise" in Bani-Sadr's book, *My Turn To Speak: Iran, The Revolution and Secret Deals with the U.S.*, bolsters reports published in *EIR* as early as Dec. 2, 1980. Those reports identified the late Ayatollah Beheshti, an Iranian fundamentalist cleric and Freemason, as one of the key negotiators with the Reagan camp for the delay in the hostage release. *EIR* provided details of a Nov. 12, 1980 Paris meeting between Beheshti and former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, and warned that Kissinger and his group—including Michael Ledeen, William Hyland, and David Abshire—had been acting on behalf of the Reagan-Bush campaign since at least early October 1980 to cut a separate hostage deal behind the back of President Carter. *EIR* cited as evidence of that secret treasonous deal the fact that reactionary clerics in the Iranian parliament had staged a walkout in mid-October which had preempted the presentation of a Carter administration hostage release package that would have likely brought the Americans home on Election Eve.

According to Bani-Sadr, he, too, concluded in the early autumn of 1980 that Beheshti, along with Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, presently the President of Iran, had obtained the go-ahead from Ayatollah Khomeini to cut a secret deal with the GOP.

On Sept. 3, 1980, Bani-Sadr, in his capacity as President of Iran, had received a formal communiqué from the Carter White House via the West German ambassador in Teheran, proposing concrete steps for freeing the hostages. Yet before that arrangement could be finalized, Ayatollah Khomeini suddenly announced that the responsibility for negotiating with the Americans over the hostages would be solely in the hands of the parliament, dominated by the mullahs led by Beheshti and its Speaker Rafsanjani.

## More details to be exposed

Bani-Sadr's book, which has been available in France since 1989, was released in a U.S. edition at the beginning of May, at precisely the point that the "October Surprise" was once again surfacing to plague President Bush.

The State Department fueled the scandal by briefly blocking Bani-Sadr's visa. It was finally signed on May 4, and he arrived from Paris the next day.

On May 7, 1991, at a press briefing at the National Press Club, the ex-Iranian official, in response to a question from *EIR*'s William Jones, said that he could cite 55 separate instances in which the mullahs had blocked hostage negotiations that could have led to the release of the Americans months before their eventual freeing—on the day of the Reagan-Bush inauguration in January 1981. He told the press that he had other detailed evidence that he could not release to the public.

The next morning, Bani-Sadr delivered a detailed briefing to a closed-door session of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, at the behest of Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), chairman of the Middle East subcommittee and a former member of the House Irangate panel.

Congressional Democrats are in the process of conducting an informal probe of the scandal, preparatory to the decision to launch a full-scale probe.

For his part, President Bush is showing signs of wear and tear over the scandal that refuses to go away. At his own press conference on the morning of May 8, Bush blew up at reporters probing allegations that he had been in Paris in October 1980, participating in the final secret negotiating session with the mullahs. Denying that he was in Paris at the time, and citing Secret Service logs that accounted for his entire schedule on the dates in question, Bush nevertheless pointedly refused to account for the actions of other Reagan-Bush campaign officials.

## A curious note about Olof Palme

Another element in the *EIR* Irangate dossier that was confirmed by the Bani-Sadr book has to do with another head of state, Sweden's Olof Palme. Palme was assassinated on the streets of Stockholm on Feb. 28, 1986. *EIR* linked the Palme murder to his moves to shut down the Swedish elements of the Iran-Contra arms-for-hostages circuit. Now, according to Bani-Sadr, the Swedish prime minister, who was then out of office but heading up a prestigious United Nations disarmament group, visited him in Teheran in March 1981, and revealed that he too had information that the Reagan-Bush team had cut a secret deal with the mullahs. Palme warned Bani-Sadr that the latter's life was in danger, and proposed to mediate an attempted cease-fire in the ongoing war with Iraq. Palme's extensive diplomatic efforts in the Persian Gulf may have afforded him access to information tracing the arms-for-hostages arrangements back to the critical 1980 juncture.