

## Sabotage of Iran's role in Land-Bridge will backfire

by Muriel Mirak Weissbach

On April 10, a court in Berlin handed down a guilty verdict in a murder case which was to have immediate political repercussions in Europe, and on its relations to many strategically central nations in Eurasia. In the celebrated "Mykonos" trial, named after the restaurant in Berlin in which four Iranian Kurd dissidents were shot in a gangland-style murder in 1992, Judge Kubsch sentenced an Iranian grocer, Kazem Darabi, and a Lebanese accomplice, Abbas Rhyael, to life imprisonment, and two others, Youssef Amin and Mohammed Atris, to eleven and five years, respectively.

The extraordinary aspect of the verdict was that the judge deliberated that the men had been merely material executors of orders issued by the Committee for Special Operations in Teheran, which is made up of Iran's President, the religious leader, the minister of intelligence, and other security officers. With the exception of the intelligence minister, Ali Fellahian, none of the others was named, but the government as a whole, was. The formulation of the judge was, "The Iranian political leadership is responsible. It is proved that there was an official liquidation order." This is the first time that a court has held a government responsible for crimes committed, in this case, murder. In essence, it said it held Iran responsible for state terrorism.

Whereas the two countries directly involved, Germany and Iran, tended to respond in a low-key manner, others immediately seized upon the verdict, exploiting it to motivate demands for immediate and total rupture of relations between Europe, and especially Germany, to Iran. The official statements of government spokesmen in Bonn, were moderate. Although he did announce a temporary pause in the "critical dialogue" with Iran, German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel refused to be provoked to drastic actions, saying that it was his job "to contribute to calm, not to unrest." Kinkel's rational, measured response was echoed by an impressive array of polit-

ical figures, such as Free Democratic Party parliamentarian Jürgen Möllemann, Karsten Voigt of the Social Democratic Party, as well as industry leaders, such as Christoph Wolf, spokesman for the DIHT umbrella organization of German industry and trade. Wolf called for continuation of the dialogue, and maintenance of Hermes export credits to Iran. And in Teheran, the reaction was also measured. The Iranian leadership was unanimous in qualifying the court's decision as "politically motivated," and attributed it to pressures brought to bear by "Zionists and the U.S.A." In addressing Friday prayers one day after the ruling, President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani limited himself to saying Germany would pay a price for the gesture, in lost economic deals, but he specifically ruled out a break in relations, and predicted that the ambassadors from the European Union (EU) countries who had been recalled for consultations, would "come crawling back" to their posts in Teheran. Iran recalled its ambassador from Bonn for consultations; announced the expulsion of four German diplomats, a routine diplomatic gesture; and canceled a visit of a high-ranking trade delegation to Germany, but did no more. Although radical students organized demonstrations against the German Embassy in Teheran, police demonstratively prevented any storming of the building.

Most significant among the responses to the affair, were those splashed across the pages of the London press. The *Times* ran a euphoric editorial entitled "A sharp German Lesson: Bombers and Killers Should Not Be Engaged in Dialogue." It stated, "Europe's 'critical dialogue' with Iran died in a Berlin courtroom yesterday." Cataloguing a list of measures the British Establishment would like to see imposed, from expulsion of Iranian officials, to tougher visa restrictions, to an embargo, the editorial brazenly admitted that Britain has led the charge against Iran for Europe: "Britain has long argued that Teheran's refusal to lift the *fatwa* on Salman Rushdie . . . was suffi-

cient evidence that it was not serious in seeking better relations with the West. . . . For the past five years it has been lobbying its partners to ensure that the critical dialogue, agreed in 1992, was more critical and less of a dialogue.” Then comes the crux of the question: “The problem has been Germany.” Bonn wanted to be a bridge to Iran; Bonn, which had none of the Middle East connections of London or Paris, “saw Iran as an area where they could give a diplomatic lead while themselves profiting from trade relations.”

Even prior to the sentencing, the *Guardian* had brandished the fact that “Britain and the Scandinavian countries, [were] pushing the Dutch presidency of the EU to take concerted action against Iran.” The author, Ian Black, had bluntly stated, “British officials see the Mykonos trial as a ‘fantastic opportunity’ to end Iran’s use of Europe as a springboard for subversion, defense procurement, and terrorism.”

### Who supports state terrorism?

For once, the British press were telling the truth.

The truth of the matter is, that the political fallout from the Mykonos trial has little or nothing to do with state terrorism. Anyone seriously concerned with state terrorism, would be mounting campaigns internationally, to impose punitive actions against the British government, which harbors in London the offices of literally every major terrorist operation, and has prevented legislation which would ban such support. During celebrated debates in the House of Commons in January and February, the Major government teamed up with George Galloway of the Labour Party, to defeat the “Conspiracy and Incitement Bill,” presented by Tory MP Nigel Waterson, which would have banned persons residing in Britain, from plotting and conducting terrorist operations overseas. Galloway went on record saying, “We are all in favor of controlling terrorism in Britain . . . but we are talking about terrorism in other countries, and what is defined as terrorism by foreign dictatorships, where there is no democratic process. . . . The bill will criminalize such people, even though they have not broken any law in Britain—or at least they would not have done so until the bill became law—or caused any harm to the Queen’s peace in her realm. They will fall open to prosecution in this country under the bill because they are inciting, supporting, or organizing events in distant tyrannies, which are clearly offenses under the laws of such tyrants.”

Thus, the arguments bandied about by British press organs and British assets within the political structures of Europe, including the rotating chairman of the EU, the Dutch government, are a fraud. Such arguments have been elaborated since the Mykonos affair, to allege that Iran has received advanced missile systems from Russia, that it intends to develop a military capability at its Bushehr nuclear plant, and so forth. The allegation, that Iran had sponsored the terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia against U.S. installations, was recycled in the United States by the *Washington Post*, right after the Mykonos sentence, and promptly exploited by Anglophile

House Speaker Newt Gingrich, to call for military strikes against Iran.

### The real casus belli

If the terrorism charge is fraudulent, then what is the nature of the “crime” for which the British Establishment wants to punish Iran? As Lyndon LaRouche laid out in an interview with Iranian state television last December (see p. 32), the British assault intends to destroy Iran as a nation, because of its crucial geostrategic position. British geopolitical strategy has defined itself historically in terms of the thrust to control what one of the granddaddies of geopolitics, Sir Halford Mackinder, called the “Eurasian heartland,” the vast continental expanse from western Europe to China. The British have created two world wars in this century to prevent cooperation among western continental Europe and Russia, which would have led to the development of Eurasia.

Since the collapse of communism has removed the East-West divide, and has allowed for the emergence of new, independent sovereign republics across Central Asia, the potential to realize the perspective of Eurasian economic development, through vast infrastructure projects, has been revived. The Chinese government, in particular, has led the initiative to rebuild the historic Silk Route, by constructing a Eurasian Land-Bridge from China, along several routes, westward, into Europe. Along two of the routes, one through Central Asia and the other, southern route, across the subcontinent, lies Iran, as the crucial link into Europe through Turkey. Since Iran completed the railway link last May between the Iranian city Mashhad and Sarakhs on the border with Turkmenistan, on to Tajan, it reestablished the missing link for all of Central Asia. Through this rail connection, the landlocked Central Asian republics regain access to the sea at Bandar Abbas, as well as to Europe overland. That is the real *casus belli*.

Iran has not only completed one crucial rail link in the overall network, but its government has been energetically organizing, at an increasing pace over the past year, to consolidate economic and political agreements with virtually all of the countries potentially participant in the grand Land-Bridge concept. Together with Turkey, Iran has emerged as the leading protagonist on the “western” end of the Land-Bridge.

What is crucial for the full realization of the Eurasian Land-Bridge potential is, most emphatically, economic cooperation with western Europe, which means Germany first and foremost. Germany is still the greatest producer of industrial export goods, machine tools, and transportation technology, and is Iran’s number-one trade partner. Through massive expansion of German-Iranian economic cooperation, the entire project could move ahead rapidly, and with the most positive effects on German employment. In addition to Iranian-European economic collaboration, what is required for the success of the Land-Bridge is the political support of the United States government. The combination of the United States and China in this effort, will be decisive.

In this light, several otherwise uncanny developments

over the past months, become comprehensible. First, the hysterical anti-China campaign launched in the United States, laying the basis for Congressional attempts to deny China Most Favored Nation trade status, and to poison relations between Beijing and Washington, has been the work of the British to sabotage the promise of Eurasian development. The campaign is being run by the British intelligence front organization Christian Solidarity International (CSI), under the leadership of Baroness Caroline Cox, deputy speaker of the British House of Lords. The same anti-China hysteria in Europe, aimed at condemning China for human rights violations at the Geneva Human Rights Commission, has been started by London. Similarly, the series of attempted destabilizations of the Turkish government of Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, through stoking the Cyprus tensions, to orchestrating anti-German hysteria within Turkey, bear the paw print of intelligence operations. In this context, Britain's clamor for breaking ties with Iran in the wake of the Mykonos decision, appears as one more step in a calculated process.

### **Will Europe commit suicide?**

If the scenarios spun by British intelligence were to take hold, the EU would deliberate on April 29, at its council of ministers meeting, to break all ties with Iran, and perhaps even to go further than the Berlin court, to call for an investigation of Iranian President Rafsanjani. Germany would heed the calls of the Social Democrats and the Greens in the parliamentary opposition, for putting all relations with Iran on ice, and denying the country any goods, or credit. At the same time, German-Turkish tensions would further escalate, and the Europeans would jump on the bandwagon to condemn China at the UN, and follow up with economic sanctions.

Were the Europeans to play along with such intrigue, they would be cutting their own throats. There are ample indications that not all among them are lemmings. First, when the Dutch chairman of the EU demanded that all member countries recall their ambassadors from Teheran, for consultations leading to a "unified European policy" toward Iran, Italy showed signs of hesitation, and Greece refused outright. Spokesmen of German industry and culture stepped forward with calls for continuing the "critical dialogue" with Iran, indeed, developing it further. The head of the German industrialists' association DIHT, Christoph Wolf, said, "We do not think this decision will have disastrous effects on economic relations, beyond a passing irritation." The *Thüringer Allgemeine* carried an interview on April 15 with Foreign Minister Kinkel, who declared categorically that he would not support sanctions. "First of all, we believe that economic sanctions are not an appropriate instrument of response. For neither one nor the other side." He pointed to the historical record: "For more than 100 years, we have had good relations to Iran. As far as sanctions are concerned, they would affect the people in the first place. It is not our intention to cut our relations to the Iranian people."

Among the considerations of such rational political fig-

ures, is national self-interest: Anyone in Europe with an understanding of elementary economic facts, will see that cutting relations with Iran would be counterproductive. Iran is not only a leading oil supplier, exporting 2.5 million barrels per day of crude, but it is a take-off economy which, due to its Eurasian infrastructure orientation, is capable of growing at a breathtaking pace, and absorbing massive amounts of technological imports from Europe. As the French daily *Libération* pointed out, Germany is Iran's major supplier, followed by the UAE, Japan, France, Italy, and the U.K. Italy is the leading importer of Iranian goods, followed by France, the Netherlands, and Germany. Europe exported FF 22 billion (about \$4.5 billion) worth of equipment and consumer goods to Iran in 1995, and imported FF 35 billion worth, 95% of which was oil. Germany, which has twice the Iranian imports of France, is the only European nation with a positive balance of payments: for the first 11 months of 1996, German exports were worth FF 6.9 billion (having been FF 26.8 billion in 1992), whereas imports were worth FF 3.36 billion.

A further consideration, more political in nature, is no less pertinent. As a leading expert from the German Orient Institute explained to *EIR*, the anti-Iran ferment generated by the Mykonos decision, could undermine the Clinton administration's efforts to chart out a new Iran policy, which, he said, was just in the process of being worked out. The Iran and Central Asia desks at the State Department, he said, were just being restructured and restaffed, in order to fit with the new policy. As if to confirm this reading, reports appeared in the Persian daily *Ettela'at* on April 16, that both former Assistant Secretary of State for Near East Affairs Robert Pelletreau, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Energy, Sanctions, and Commodities William Ramsay, spoke out in favor of reappraising the sanctions regime which has characterized U.S. policy thus far. Ramsay, who was presented as the first of the new Clinton team to call for a revision, reportedly said the cost of sanctions would be "very high" in terms of lost exports and market. Pelletreau said further, he thought Washington should open the door wide, to initiate a dialogue with Iran, by making clear that Washington has no intention of overthrowing the current government in Teheran.

### **The boomerang**

While western European governments were caught up in the tangle of diplomatic gestures and considerations of economic self-interest, government forces to the east were responding to the Mykonos fallout with quite a different spirit. In a nutshell, Iran's economic partners in Russia and China not only refused to be affected negatively by the events in Berlin, but rather strengthened their own commitments to Teheran. As the German Orient Institute expert had described it, Iran wants better relations with the West, including the United States, but for the time being, it will be forced to concentrate on a new constellation, consisting of Iran, Russia, India, and China.

It may or may not be coincidental, that just as the Mykonos

verdict was sending shock waves through Europe, the Iranian Speaker of the Majlis (Parliament), Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri, also a leading candidate to become President, was in Moscow for an official four-day visit. And, Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia-Pacific Affairs Allaedin Boroujerdi was visiting Beijing. Boroujerdi is the person who presented the Iranian government's economic program at the May 1996 conference on the Eurasian Land-Bridge in Beijing.

A military correspondent for a leading Russian daily, *Sevodniya*, Pavel Felgenauer, shared his views with *EIR* on April 15, on the impact the EU actions against Iran would have. The immediate effect, in Felgenauer's view, would be to "pressure Iran to move toward Russia. This is happening already. . . . Russia is increasingly accepting Iranian overtures. The two sides are enhancing trade, and we are pledging to finish some important arms deals. . . . Cooperation is growing all the time, and evolving into a strategic partnership. The direction things are going, is beneficial for Russia." Furthermore, he placed the Iranian-Russian friendship in a broader context, in which Moscow and Beijing forge closer strategic ties, and both Russia and China seek to bring India and Pakistan into a broader regional framework of cooperation.

The "Russia-China-Iran triangle" which would thus come into being, said Felgenauer, would involve still more. "Keep in mind, that we also have very good relations with India, and both we and China want to pull India in. But it goes even beyond that. China and Pakistan have good relations. Pakistan has not been brought into such arrangements before. But now, things are improving between India and Pakistan, and both Moscow and Beijing would be glad if *both* of them joined in."

As if to buttress Felgenauer's analysis, it was reported in the Iranian press, that Deputy Foreign Minister Boroujerdi, in China to discuss "further promotion of Teheran-Beijing relations," would "exchange views on the latest regional and international developments with Chinese political officials, including Foreign Minister Qian Qichen." *Ettela'at* mentioned that "a number of giant projects have been carried out in Iran, in cooperation with China," while China is "also involved in several development projects" in Iran, including construction of the Teheran metro, five cement factories, power plants, and others. As for Beijing's response to Mykonos, *Xinhua* quoted from a statement by Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, to the effect that China has a "tradition of friendship" with Iran.

And, in Moscow, the red carpet had been rolled out for Nateq Nouri. Russian President Boris Yeltsin said, relations between the two would "be strengthened and would develop. We have positive collaboration with Iran which will tend to grow." The head of the security commission of the Russian State Duma, Viktor Ilushin, condemned the Mykonos decision explicitly, as politically motivated, and questioned the authority of a German court to even make such judgments on senior authorities of Iran, according to *Ettela'at*.

During the visit, one issue discussed was continued cooperation on the Bushehr nuclear plant which is being built in

Iran with Russian help. Also discussed was upgrading the military defense of the plant, with the purchase of \$3 billion worth of military equipment. But the most important development in Nateq Nouri's visit, was the apparent agreement on his proposal for a regional axis. According to *Ettela'at* on April 16, Nouri presented to the Russians a plan for a regional grouping, which would include Russia, China, Iran, and the Central Asian Republics. Speaking to reporters in Teheran upon his return, Nouri said that Yeltsin welcomed the idea. In addition, agreements were signed in the form of several letters of understanding, including on production of "Tupolev 330 aircraft in Iran, establishment of trade and commerce bureaus, building of underground railway wagons, drilling for petroleum and gas, Russian participation in the Pars gas field project." Discussions were also held, he said, on air and sea lines, joint automobile production, and technology transfer for Tupolev 214 aircraft, with the Tatarstan Republic, and, in meetings with Tatar President Mintimer Shaimiyev on April 14, Nouri agreed on cooperation in these areas.

Even though preliminary, the reports on the two visits to Beijing and Moscow, confirm that whatever the British may think they are achieving, by fuelling the anti-Iran sentiment, they are actually contributing to the opposite. Indeed, the more that Iran is subjected to the ultimatum diplomacy which the Dutch chairman of the EU would like to force through, the more Iran will turn its back on potential economic partners in the West, and consolidate ties with Russia, China, Pakistan, India, Turkey, and the Central Asian Republics. And the more Iran will tend to exert leadership in the Islamic world, by providing a perspective for development through cooperation. Among other diplomatic initiatives, the Iranian government has been organizing at the highest level, to make sure that the summit meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference, to take place in Teheran in December, will be successful. What is meant by this, is that this organization should coordinate its activities with regional economic cooperation organizations, like the Economic Cooperation Organization, in furtherance of the Eurasian Land-bridge approach.

Finally, whatever the British geopoliticians believe they may be unleashing inside Iran, in the perspective, perhaps, of defeating the Rafsanjani political current in the May 23 Presidential elections, there, too, personalities and political processes will not necessarily respond in knee-jerk fashion. In this regard, there is one explosive development, totally ignored by the press outside Iran, which pertains directly to the continuity of policy. That is the announcement of the formation of a new institution, called the Assembly for Determining the Expediency of the Islamic System. The new political body, with members selected by the highest religious authority, leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, is headed by Rafsanjani, who will cease to be President after May. The body seems to be shaped to ensure that the economic policy orientation which has prevailed in the past eight years of reconstruction and development, be continued, regardless of who is elected President.