

Iran Conducts Dialogue With ‘The Other America’

by Our Special Correspondent

If Iraq is number one on President George W. Bush’s hit list, there is no doubt that the Islamic Republic of Iran is number two. Informed circles in Tehran believe that, as soon as the United States launches its attack against Iraq (most probably in September), Israel will move against Iran. The preferred target would be the Bushehr nuclear power plant, which Iran is completing with Russian assistance.

In late June, following Bush’s Middle East speech (in which he gave the green light for Ariel Sharon to eliminate Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, thus unleashing regional war), discussion inside Israel regarding the need to smash Iran became very public and very loud. *Ha’aretz* wrote on June 29, that “During his last trip to Washington, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon predicted Iran will be a nuclear power by 2005 and will continue to seek the bomb even if its regime is replaced.” According to the article, “A nuclear-empowered Iran is perceived as the main strategic risk to Israel, because it would end its presumed monopoly [of nuclear weapons] in the region. Most elements in Israel believe that everything should be done, including, if necessary, using force, to prevent Tehran from achieving nuclear weapon capabilities.” Israel’s National Security Council is reportedly drafting a study on Israel’s policy towards Iran.

Any doubt that Israel’s policy against Iran is being shaped in coordination with Washington, was removed by the combination of Israel’s Mossad director, Ephraim Halevy, and U.S. NATO Ambassador Nicholas Burns, at the June 26 meeting of NATO’s North Atlantic Council in Brussels (see *EIR*, July 5).

If Iraq is attacked, it will lead to a total destabilization of the region. Iran has made known it will not remain idle under such circumstances. In a statement issued on July 1, Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid-Reza Asefi said, “Iran is firmly opposed to any attack against any country, particularly Iraq, aimed at changing governments or the regime in place.” The attack would constitute “an absolute violation of international conventions and does not contribute at all to calming crises.”

Dialogue, Not War

In the extremely tense situation created by these de facto declarations of upcoming war, a diametrically opposed message was taken to Tehran by veteran civil rights leader Amelia Boynton Robinson, a representative of “the other America.” Mrs. Robinson, Vice Chairman of the Board of the Schiller Institute, visited Iran on the invitation of the Islamic Republic

Iran Broadcasting Interviews LaRouche

An interview with U.S. Democratic Presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche was conducted by Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) on July 8, and broadcast on radio in the country beginning July 13. This prominent coverage of LaRouche, essentially as the other voice of America, is spreading in numerous countries. Egypt's *Al Ahram* published a major July 4 article, "The Vision of Lyndon LaRouche, Presidential Candidate for 2004, which was also published by the United Arab Emirates' *Al Khaleej*. Turkey's *Yarin* newspaper, read widely throughout government circles there, followed its June interview with LaRouche, by publishing a major article by him in July, "Political Traditions and Their Struggles in America."

IRIB asked LaRouche if he believed that no matter

which administration runs the United States, it will be the world's only superpower. "Not necessarily," the candidate answered. "As I say, there are two tendencies in the United States, from the beginning of the Republic. One was a so-called American patriotic tradition, which is nationalist; that is, it's for a community of nation-states, not an empire. The other faction, which is called the American Tory tradition, is for this kind of empire."

Asked "Is the United States targeting Iran?" LaRouche said, "Enough about the United States. The Israelis have Iran targeted, as I think everybody knows. The threat is, immediately, that Israel has three German-made submarines which are equipped with cruise missiles. Israel is crazy. Unless it's stopped, it is capable, under people like Sharon and the people behind him, of launching an attack on Iran, as well as on Iraq. This is a danger. It's a danger I think we have to be very much concerned about. I think Europe is concerned about it, others are concerned about it. We've got to stop it."

of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB) from June 20-26, accompanied by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach of the editorial board of *EIR*. They were interviewed by Iranian national television numerous times, on different programs, including two popular talk shows, as well as on national radio. Mrs. Robinson gave a press conference on June 25, to members of the Association of Islamic Editors, with 20 people attending. She also granted interviews to Farsi dailies, like *Jamei Jami*, and others. When asked in one interview, what the aim of her visit was, she answered: "Dialogue. The only way we can overcome differences is through dialogue."

Mrs. Robinson was received by IRIB Vice President of Communications and International Affairs, Mohammad Honardoost; by Dr. Hossein M.M. Sadeghi, Dean of the Faculty of Judicial Sciences and Administrative Services; by Zahra Shojaie, Presidential Adviser on Women's Affairs and Head of the Center for Women's Participation; and by two women members of Parliament, Rezazade Shiraz and Mosavari Manesh.

The message communicated by Mrs. Robinson was straightforward: The aggressive stance adopted by Washington against Iran, among other nations, is an extension into foreign policy, of the racism which targeted African-Americans prior to 1965, when landmark civil rights legislation was passed. To defeat the aims of the Anglo-American power structures threatening war, she stressed, nations must come together, just as in the days of the civil rights struggles, just as black and white Americans and people the world over joined to support the demands of the movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King. She emphasized that Dr. King fought not for the rights of African-Americans, nor for civil rights alone,

but for human rights of all peoples, for all time. That struggle, she said, has been taken up and carried forward since Dr. King's death, by Lyndon LaRouche, whose program for monetary reform and economic reconstruction addresses the underlying cause for today's war danger—the worldwide economic breakdown crisis.

Mrs. Robinson and her husband fought for the right to vote and the goals of the civil rights movement for 35 years before Dr. Martin Luther King, on their request, came to their city of Selma, Alabama. She told Iranian journalists and officials that when King arrived, on Jan. 2, 1965, "the people heard that he was a 'communist'—this is dividing and conquering, this is what the system has been doing all the time: They divided the Indians, they divided the black people, now they're dividing the world. They told them . . . he would get them into trouble, 'Don't have anything to do with him.' " Mrs. Robinson gave over her house and office to King and his staff, and their collaboration developed.

To explain how, finally, the 1965 Voting Rights Act and 1964 Civil Rights Act were passed, Mrs. Robinson said that white Americans underwent a change: "Since 1965 and in fact during the struggle, the struggle was not because of blacks, it was because of justice. The struggle was not only black people who were struggling, there were whites, there were people of all nationalities, and that was because they, no doubt, had a change of heart themselves. They didn't just wake up and say, 'I am a racist;' they had been *taught*. So, just like a person who has a clear conscience of evil, and realizes he has to do good, they had to clear their conscience of what they had been taught, and what they saw around them, and they realized, as Dr. King has said, you cannot judge people because of the



Visiting Iran's 17th-Century "Renaissance City" of Isfahan with Iranian hosts, are American civil rights veteran and Larouche associate Amelia Boynton Robinson (in black), and Muriel Mirak Weissbach of EIR. Mrs. Robinson's tour was widely covered in the country.

color of their skin, but because of the contents of their character."

"Dr. King had a program that would change the world," Mrs. Robinson told one journalist, "and it could not be changed, until the hearts were changed in people." In this process of changing hearts, religion plays a great role: "That's why you have people who are members of certain denominations or certain religions that they embrace, because they realize that this is a guideline, the Bible is a guideline, and according to the Bible, I can have a Heaven right here on Earth. Because if you can not clear your conscience of the evils that one perhaps might think of, and the hate . . . you won't do yourself any good, because even money will not cure your conscience."

The American civil rights heroine was asked to explain the power of Dr. King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech, and said, "It was because he was a man who did not just speak . . . he was a man who spoke from the heart. Seemingly it excelled even the ministers or anyone else that spoke of religion." Dr. King was able to change people because of the power of love, Mrs. Robinson said, and his readiness to sacrifice for freedom: "And that was the thing that Dr. King was trying to tell the world. That there such a thing as love, and that it comes from above, and that if you embrace love, you embrace God, and if embrace God, you can have a Heaven right here on Earth." And, she continued, "though Dr. King is dead, his sermons that he preached, his objectives, are still living. And Lyndon LaRouche, who has picked up the broken pieces of Dr. King's movement, is carrying it forward, in an international way, with political as well as economic aims."

How To Change the U.S.A.

The life-or-death issue for Iranians whom Mrs. Robinson addressed, is how they can defend their nation from imminent attack. First and foremost, they seek to understand *why* the U.S. government is doing what it is doing, not only targetting Iran, but in other parts of the world. Thus a good deal of attention was paid during the visit, to Lyndon LaRouche's analysis of the Sept. 11 attacks on New York and Washington. LaRouche had said that very day, that it was a covert strategic assault, an attempted coup d'état, launched by rogue U.S. military and security elements, in order to force the Bush Administration into a Clash of Civilizations.

Several Iranian journalists raised this issue in their interviews with Mrs. Robinson and Mrs. Mirak-Weissbach, who filled in the picture, emphasizing the fact that it is the ongoing financial and monetary breakdown crisis which has driven the fi-

nancial oligarchy behind those attacks, to seek to maintain its political power through sheer military force. Interviewers asked about the arrests of Muslims and Arabs in the United States following the Sept. 11 attack: Are these not violations of civil rights, human rights, and the U.S. Constitution? The only answer that could be given was affirmative. Elaboration of the measures taken under Attorney General John Ashcroft, illustrated how, in the name of "homeland security," the machinery of a police-state apparatus is being set up. The fact that no declaration of war has even been made by the government, betrays the fraud of the "POWs"; just as the "enemy combatant" designation, used to place U.S. citizens under military detention without evidence, demonstrates the wanton disregard for law.

Another egregious case of violation of human rights which was brought up, in answer to questions by the press, is that of LaRouche and his associates, from his 1989 frame-up and incarceration, to more recent events. Mrs. Robinson detailed how, in the 2000 election campaign, LaRouche's votes had been stolen, and his delegates denied, through illegal operations by the Democratic Party leadership. The fact that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Democratic Party had the right to disenfranchise LaRouche voters, she said, meant that the 1965 Voting Rights Act, for which she and others had so long fought, had been ripped to shreds.

One obvious area of concern touched on in the interviews, was the brutal treatment of Palestinians by the Sharon government of Israel. One question posed, was: How can the United States claim to be fighting terrorism, when it is backing the state terrorism of Israel? Mrs. Robinson shocked press conference with her answer: "You know, our President is like a

child! He'll say anything that comes up. What comes up, comes up. And if he doesn't say something stupid, he will listen to somebody else, who does. The terrorists are right there in the United States of America. And if Osama bin Laden is a terrorist, we made him that way, because we educated him, we gave him money, we told him we wanted him to destroy the Soviet Union. . . . Then [after Sept. 11], we turned around and said, 'It's bin Laden, it's the Muslims.' So don't pay any attention to that. It's all a pretext, for economic reasons."

What Is Islamic Culture?

Although Amelia Robinson has been engaged in an ecumenical dialogue with Islam through speeches and events at mosques in America, this was her first political visit to an Islamic country. A special effort was made by the IRIB hosts to give the American civil rights leader a glance at some of the high-points of Islamic culture, with a short visit to Isfahan, the 17th-Century city built by the Safavid dynasty. The city is known as the "Florence of Iran," and that Italian Renaissance city is its sister city. Built by Shah Abbas, Isfahan has numerous magnificent examples of Islamic architecture, including the Si-o-seh Pol Bridge, which is 330 meters long; and the Juur and Charjup bridges, which are constructed as two-story arcades across the river. There is the Ali Qapu Pavillion, a magnificent structure of the same period, five stories high, with a music room built according to a very advanced understanding of acoustics; and the Palace of Forty Pillars (Chehel Sotun), whose walls are adorned with beautiful paintings of diplomatic encounters between the Safavid dynasts, and foreign guests, from India, and from Turkestan.

The high-point for these visitors, as today, was passing through the vast bazaar, to the complex of madrassas (schools) and mosques known as the Meida-i-Imam (Naqsh-e-Jahan), and the Imam's Mosque, decorated in magnificent polychrome ceramic tiles. The last building visited was the Sheikh Lotfollah mosque, built in the same style. Mrs. Robinson remarked at how people in the United States who are so ready to condemn "Islam" as the culture of terrorism, know absolutely nothing about the great civilization built by Islam. She urged her interlocutors to defend their culture against outside pressures, and never to give up this foundation of their identity. In face of attacks and threats from the Anglo-American oligarchy, she said, Iran should remain steadfast, and never relinquish its independence, its sovereignty, and especially its culture.

Despite the escalating hostilities against Iran, the response of the country's leaders is not undifferentiated. To be sure,



Amelia Robinson (second from right) with IRIB Protocol Director Dr. Abbas Eftekhari (left), TV talk show host Ali Dorostkar, and Muriel Mirak-Weissbach.

following Bush's "axis of evil" formulation, the entire country, regardless of political differences, rejected the accusation in a spirit of unity. And, following that provocation by Washington, a hard-line tendency prevailed inside Iran, regarding the advisability of opening any contacts with America. For a time, those who proposed seeking relations with the United States could not speak up.

Yet, as the threatening tones out of Washington have increased in intensity, there have been indications that Iran does not want to accept the perspective of a permanent adversary relationship. The former President and current head of the Expediency Council, Ayatollah Ali Akhbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, delivered a speech at the Friday prayers in Tehran on June 21, in which he said, "If America drops its bullying as well as its imperialist policies, the Islamic Republic of Iran is ready to cooperate with that country." Rafsanjani's statements would not have been issued, had Ayatollah Khamenei, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution, and ultimate authority, not endorsed them. This indicates that even on the side of the conservatives, there would be an openness to altering current relations—but on Iran's conditions.

Another indication of the willingness, on the part of both political fronts in Iran, to enter dialogue with "the other America," can be read in the attention given there to the ideas of Lyndon LaRouche. Mrs. Robinson's visit is the second this year by LaRouche associates. In March, Mrs. Mirak-Weissbach and her husband Michael Weissbach were invited by the foreign policy think-tank, Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS), to a conference on the post-Sept. 11 strategic situation in the Persian Gulf and Asia. At that time, LaRouche's analyses of the attempted coup d'état made headlines, after former President Rafsanjani had quoted him in a speech.