

II

Pressing for Dialogue

Section 523 of the Foreign Relations Authorization Act of FY 1994–95 called on President Clinton for a comprehensive and objective report on the People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran. In the proceedings that led to the amendment’s adoption, the conference committee urged those preparing the report “to consult and talk with the widest range of people possible when compiling the report,” and noted that “nothing in this section is intended to prejudge” the Mojahedin.¹

Dialogue

Despite the committee’s emphasis, the State Department did not comply with either requirement. The Department refused to meet with representatives of the Mojahedin or National Council of Resistance and adopted a biased approach in preparing the report. This was a cause of increasing concern to members of the House and Senate. Many wrote to the State Department, stressing that the Department should meet with the subject of the report.

Representative Lincoln Diaz-Balart wrote to the Secretary of State:

I am interested in as complete a report as possible, and request that in complying with the provisions of this legislation, every possible effort be made to meet and consult directly with representatives of the People’s Mojahedin of Iran. Undoubtedly, such a meeting would contribute to the completeness and impartiality of this report....

It would be helpful for the Department of State to designate a specific representative who would act as the liaison with this opposition group during the preparation of this report.²

In another letter to the Secretary of State, Congressman William L. Clay expressed the concerns of the Iranian-American community, writing:

Those with whom I met were particularly disturbed by the suggestion of one State Department official who indicated that the fundamentalist Iranian regime is a "permanent feature." To those who are sincerely dedicated to democracy and human rights such a concession to a brutal dictatorship is most discouraging.

Congress has requested that the Administration report on the People's Mujaheddin, which is the pivotal force of the National Council of Resistance (NCR). The NCR is recognized as the main Iranian opposition to the present Iranian regime and considers itself to be the force for creating a democratic government in Iran. For these reasons, many Iranian-Americans have expressed an interest in the Administration's report and have suggested that it would be most valuable if the Administration establishes a dialogue with the National Council of Resistance in connection with this report. As one who has always advocated communications as key to understanding and progress, I concur with this sentiment and believe that a dialogue with the NCR would be most beneficial for all parties.³

Calls for a new approach and expressions of hope that there would evolve an understanding towards establishing democracy in Iran were abundant. Senator John F. Kerry, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Narcotics and International Operations, had followed the issue closely. He wrote to an Iranian in Massachusetts:

I can assure you that this provision in no way calls for a reconciliation with the Rafsanjani regime. It is my hope that you and I are both in pursuit of the same objectives of achieving democratic government and political reform in Iran and that this evaluation will develop into a fruitful dialogue.⁴

Congressman Robert G. Torricelli, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Western Hemisphere Affairs, wrote in a letter to Assistant Secretary of State Robert Pelletreau:

I am extremely concerned by information I have received from the Iran Desk at the State Department that there are currently no plans to consult with members of the People's Mujaheddin, or the National Council of Resistance, of which it is a member, in the course of developing this report. It was both stated and assumed during deliberations on this provision that an honest assessment could not occur without such consultation.⁵

Regrettably, the Department of State responded to such calls by

reiterating old accusations against the Mojahedin and refused to conduct a meaningful discussion, thereby revealing that those preparing the report were not interested in the comprehensive, objective report Congress had required. The Department's replies to members of Congress confirmed that despite the conference committee's emphasis on no prejudgments, the authors of the report had reached their conclusions before any serious review.

Joint Action

On September 21, 1994, Representatives Torricelli and Dan Burton announced in a press conference on Capitol Hill that a bipartisan coalition in Congress, consisting of 98 representatives, had called on Secretary of State Warren Christopher to ensure that a comprehensive and fair report on the Mojahedin is compiled, and that the organization is consulted directly by those preparing the report. In addition to Mr. Torricelli and Mr. Burton, the letter was sponsored by eight other members of Congress, among them Ronald Dellums, Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, Ros-Lehtinen and Robert Borski, members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Philip Crane, and... The letter reads in part,

A thorough assessment of the situation in Iran and its major players will enable us to adopt a comprehensive and suitable policy toward Iran ... Our objective was for this report to be prepared in a fair manner with no prejudgments, as specified in the Conference Committee's report. We urge you, therefore, to ensure that representatives of the Mojahedin or National Council of Resistance are consulted directly by those who prepare the report... The report will be of little value without such consultation.⁶

In the press conference, Mr. Torricelli noted the Congress's desire for a new policy on the Iranian Resistance, and criticized the lack of dialogue with the representatives of the Mojahedin and the National Council of Resistance. He said:

It is difficult to conceive of how an objective study can be reached if there won't even be a conversation with a principal party ... In the interests of the United States Government, we want a fair review. But a fair review, by necessity, requires a free and a frank conversation ... Unless and until those conversations take place, the spirit of the law cannot be complied with, and whatever report is ultimately issued can be of no value ... Therefore, we urge the Department to immediately begin these conversations to allow

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compliance with the law. . .

It bears noting that if the Department cannot comply with the will of the Congress, having been asked, we do have the option in the future that it be compelled, and obviously we would hope that would not be necessary.⁷

Congressman Burton criticized the State Department's "one-sided view" of the issue, saying:

We all want freedom, democracy, and human rights in Iran, and the people who are working the hardest in that direction right now are the Mojahedin. For us not to talk to them, as a government, is a serious, serious mistake. And so, I would just say to the State Department, if they are watching now, or to the administration, if they are watching right now, let's get on with it. Let's get on with the will of Congress. Speak to the Mojahedin. They speak for a large segment of the people over there, which is growing every single day. The people over there want freedom, human rights and democracy. We should do everything we can to bring that about.⁸

Congressman Torricelli responded to reporters' questions about why the State Department refused to meet with members of the Resistance:

I think that there is a formal excuse, and there's a reason. The excuse is, of course, that they disagreed with the acts that have allegedly taken place in the past for which they claim the People's Mojahedin is responsible, but to speak with representatives and to learn about the organization and its purposes and, indeed, to inquire as to the veracity of those allegations, there is no reason not to have a conversation. Indeed, it may make the consultations all the more important for the veracity of the report.

However, I think the real reason is that, incredibly, despite the fact that there may be no government in the world that is more in contradiction with the objectives of the United States Government and our purpose in the world, than the government in Tehran, I believe that there is a continuing intention not to offend or contradict some in the Iranian government. Most Americans would find that shocking.⁹

Congressman Burton added:

In 1987, we did, as a government, have a dialogue with the Mojahedin. Now I can't understand why we would do that in 1987, and not do it today, especially in view of the fact that their support has grown in Iran, not decreased.¹⁰

Another senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee,

Congressman Gary Ackerman (D-NY), joined Representatives Torricelli and Burton at the conference and released a statement to the press. In his bulletin, Congressman Ackerman stressed the necessity of establishing a dialogue with the Mojahedin:

The language in this legislation was intended to achieve an unbiased assessment of the resistance, with no prejudgments. Such a report cannot be accomplished without a direct dialogue. If we do not establish a liaison with the Iranian resistance now, we may well forgo the opportunity to pursue a reasonable and reasoned foreign policy toward Iran when the status quo in that beleaguered nation changes.¹¹

On the same day, Senator Dave Durenberger (R-MN) issued a press release announcing:

Senator Durenberger is one of 12 senators who have called for meetings between the State Department and the pro-democrat People's Mojahedin (part of the Iranian National Council of Resistance) and is one of 100 members of Congress who support a balanced Presidential report.¹²

The press release revealed that the Senator had written to the Secretary of State: "It is the clear intent that this report be prepared in an unbiased manner and that it not be based on any prejudgments."

The office of Congressman Ed Towns (D-NY) also issued a news release, stating:

Congressman Ed Towns stressed that the United States must side with the people of Iran, not with the despots ruling over them. He also urged the administration to establish dialogue with the National Council of Resistance of Iran, in order to cultivate the seeds of friendship and cooperation with the people of Iran.¹³

A number of other representatives also wrote letters to the Secretary of State to express concern about the way in which the report was being prepared and to encourage the Department to prepare an objective report. In a Congressional hearing, Rep. Ackerman questioned Robert Pelletreau, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, on the matter and called on him to establish dialogue with the Mojahedin. While insisting that the report on the Mojahedin would be comprehensive, Mr. Pelletreau repeated old accusations from the Irangate affair to defend the Department's unjustifiable policy against Iran's democratic opposition.¹⁴

The Media

The call for an objective approach and dialogue with the representatives of the Iranian Resistance went beyond Capitol Hill. In an editorial, *The New York Times* presented a candid appeal: "Listen to All Iranian Voices." The editorial read in part:

In dealing with a dictatorship, it is simple prudence to listen to its critics. This has not been U.S. policy in dealing with Iran's clerical tyranny. The State Department has shunned all contact with a key opposition group, the People's Mujaheddin, which also happens to be the group most loudly denounced by Iran.¹⁵

In criticizing the State Department, the *New York Times* endorsed the congressional will. The paper also stressed: "It is especially distasteful that this boycott is treated as a victory by Iranian mullahs."

The media covered the congressional initiative widely. *The Washington Times* wrote:

The resistance is gaining broad support in Congress, which has called on the Clinton administration to produce a fresh review of the Iranian opposition... Last week, New Jersey Democrat Robert Torricelli and Indiana Republican Dan Burton, both members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, held a news conference on the Capitol grounds to endorse the resistance. Mr. Torricelli called it "the most effective opposition to the Tehran government."¹⁶

U.S. policy on Iran and its bearing on the State Department's approach to the Iranian democratic opposition were also scrutinized. Arnold Beichman, a well-known research fellow at the Hoover Institute, described the State Department's no-contact attitude vis-a-vis the Iranian Resistance as a mistake. He wrote: "The State Department is on a collision course with members of Congress who think the time has come to support the Iranian opposition, both inside and outside the country." Mr. Beichman added: "Confronting the State Department's refusal to deal with the People's Mujaheddin are scores of members of both houses of Congress pressing for support of Iran opposition groups..."¹⁷

Peter Rodman, a respected Middle East expert, said the following:

The State Department, moreover, is inclined to view Iran's revolutionary regime as "deeply rooted" in the society and therefore a "permanent feature"

of the region. The department is opposed to any contacts with a prominent exile group, the People's Mujaheddin, on the grounds of its Iraqi connections and past leftism and anti-Americanism. An unusually broad bipartisan coalition of 98 House members and 12 Senators wrote to Christopher on September 9 to urge that the department consult with the Mujaheddin in the process of preparing a congressionally mandated report on the group and its activities. Given the strategic menace represented by the Iranian regime, it may be self-defeating to continue to shun an apparently vigorous resistance group that is turning to us for help, whatever its provenance. It can't be worse than the incumbents. Antigovernment riots in early August in the northwestern city of Qazvin suggest the regime might not be a "permanent feature" after all. In any case, it is difficult to see why the United States should do it the favor of treating it as such.¹⁸

The Boston Globe ran an editorial criticizing the contradictions between the administration's words and deeds. The editorial also referred to the anti-Mojahedin campaign by Tehran's lobby in Washington, recalling: "The Iranian clerics demanded similar U.S. condemnations of the Mujahedeen - the opposition group they find most threatening - during their missiles-for-hostages deals with Reagan."¹⁹

The Indianapolis Star's editorial stressed the need to support the National Council of Resistance in countering terrorism:

Closer relations between the United States and Iranian resistance might help dislodge the present Tehran regime and strangle its support of international terrorism aimed at wrecking the Arab-Israeli peace process and keeping the Middle East in turmoil. Rajavi promises to form an elective, representative republic that will end terrorism and oppression, respect human rights and strive for peace with its neighbors.²⁰

In an analytical review in the *Houston Post*, Stephen Green wrote:

Although the Iranian government repeatedly has demonstrated that it has no intention of behaving as a civilized state, American diplomats keep trying to find ways to normalize U.S.-Tehran relations. Such efforts are a waste of time.

In recognizing that the policy of refusing to do business with the Mojahedin is flawed, Congress has ordered the administration to make an "objective" report on the Iranian resistance ... The law specifically requires administration officials to consult directly with the Mojahedin in preparing the report ... As Rep. Gary Ackerman, D-NY, a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, has noted, the "language in the legislation was intended to achieve an unbiased assessment of the resistance with no

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prejudgments. Such a report cannot be accomplished without a direct dialogue."²¹

Middle East experts also cited the congressional criticisms of U.S. policy on Iran. An Army War College fellow, Colonel Harry Summers, rejected the State Department's policy on the clerical dictatorship in Iran as a "cowardly appeasement policy," adding:

In words that Great Britain's Neville Chamberlain, who attempted to curry favor with Adolph Hitler on the eve of World War II, would have found familiar, the State Department is once again toadying up to dictators, this time the radical mullahs that rule Iran. "The United States is not really trying to overthrow the Iranian regime," said Robert H. Pelletreau, the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern Affairs during his testimony before Congress last March. "We believe the Iranian regime is a permanent feature."²²

John Hughes, a former State Department official, remarked: "If the U.S. can talk with the Irish Republican Army and the North Koreans and the former military junta of Lt. Gen. Raoul Cedras in Haiti, it is difficult to see why it cannot explore face to face with the Iranian Mojahedin the accusations against them."²³

The *Albuquerque Journal* published an article called, "Friend or Foe? Congress Pushes For Assessment," in which Rep. Steven Schiff is quoted:

Although he missed the deadline for signing the letter, Rep. Steve Schiff, R-NM, said in a recent telephone interview he supports its intent. "The letter does not demand that the State Department make these people our allies," Schiff said. "If it turns out these people go beyond our framework, then we should back off. But we should always be looking to see what opposition groups we can work with ... Just be open-minded, objective, that's all we asked for."

In response to the accusations made against the Mojahedin, Rep. Schiff added:

"Even if some of the allegations turn out to be true, the State Department should take an objective, unbiased look at the group. In that arena there aren't too many boy scouts," he said. "We need to remember that Iran is the principal destabilizer in the Middle East."²⁴

The article also refers to a statement by Rep. Joe Skeen's

spokeswoman, who told a delegation of Iranian-Americans, "We are asking the State Department to recognize this organization and the seriousness of human rights abuses occurring in Iran."²⁵

In an article entitled "Who's The Real Terrorist?" the *National Journal* wrote:

The Mujahedin's agents in Washington are distributing a 161-page book, hot off the presses of a Paris publisher, that disputes State's assertions that the group supports terrorism, is non-democratic and lacks significant backing in Iran. The book, *Appeasing Tehran's Mullahs*, accuses the State Department of making concessions to Iran.²⁶

The *Miami Herald* reviewed the contradictions in U.S. policy on Iran in its opinion column:

Clinton has called Iran "the world's leading sponsor of state-sponsored terrorism" and urged allied nations to "recognize the true nature of Iranian intentions." Yet, from another side of the policy mouth, the assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, Robert Pelletreau, told Congress in March that the Iranian regime should be treated as a "permanent feature" of the region... And why is it that the Department of State has shunned all contacts with the Iranian opposition coalition - the People's Mujahedeen or the National Council of Resistance (NCR) - the group most vociferously denounced by Iran's fundamentalist regime? In dealing with a dictatorship, after all, isn't it simple prudence to engage the critics? Iranian mullahs, on the other hand, view American policy toward the NCR as a clear victory. Senior Iranian officials allegedly suggested to U.S. counterparts that American doors slammed in the face of Iranian opposition groups would open doors in Tehran. Angered by the administration's boycott of the NCR, over 100 members of Congress recently wrote to Secretary of State Warren Christopher urging such a dialogue. Their missive has fallen on deaf ears. Could the White House be protecting the Iranian regime from its internal foes...?²⁷

National Public Radio devoted one of its most popular programs to the issue, noting:

The Clinton administration has called the government of Iran, an international outlaw and the most dangerous state-sponsor of terrorism. Despite this dim view of the Iranian leadership, the State Department refuses to meet with an Iranian resistance group that's determined to overthrow the current regime in Tehran. The People's Mojahedin, as the group is popularly known, believes the State Department is trying to quietly appease the regime in Tehran by refusing to meet with the opposition.²⁸

In a lengthy article entitled "Clinton, Christopher and Rafsanjani: Irangate Déjà Vu?," *The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs* reviewed the history of relations between the State Department and the Mojahedin, as well as the policy of appeasing Iran, writing in part:

A very strange thing happened nine years ago at a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing. At the end of his prepared testimony on July 24, 1985, then Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Richard Murphy read into the record an unrelated statement about the Mojahedin Khalq - the People's Mojahedin. The unsolicited statement strongly criticized the most prominent group in opposition to the Islamic revolutionary government of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as "militantly Islamic, anti-democratic, anti-American" and supportive of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and of the use of "terrorism and violence as standard instruments of their policies."

It was jarring both because it had no relationship to information normally sought by members of the congressional committee and because, with the possible exception of the reference to Afghanistan, it could more accurately have been applied to the Iranian government than to its Mojahedin opponents ... It was not until the Irangate scandal hit the headlines, and nationally televised congressional hearings began to unravel the tangled skein of the Reagan administration's controversial overture to Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani's "moderates" within the Khomeini government, that the truth emerged about the Murphy statement, and subsequent attempts to discredit the members of Congress who had endorsed the Mojahedin.

The statement, according to the Tower Commission Report, was part of the price demanded by Iranian mullahs for participation in what quickly degenerated into Israeli-brokered arms-for-hostages transactions. Murphy, according to Irangate independent counsel Lawrence Walsh's 1993 report, was one of the nine U.S. government players in the Irangate scandal. In fact, when it seemed to have served its purpose, Murphy briefly backed down from his earlier statement. He told a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on April 21, 1987, "I will very freely admit that there were gaps in our knowledge about the organization ... We meet, have met with the Mojahedin Organization here in Washington. They are a player in Iran ... We are not boycotting them."

However, in that same month, Rafsanjani, then the speaker of the Majlis, Iran's parliament, said in a statement reported by United Press that if the U.S. government were to restrain the activities of the anti-Khomeini People's Mojahedin, the Iranian government would end its support of terrorist groups in Lebanon. Whether by coincidence or not, very soon thereafter, the State Department informed the Mojahedin that it was no longer welcome to meet and talk with Department of State officials. The *de facto* State Department boycott in contacts with the Mojahedin has been in effect ever since.

On Sept. 8, suspicion that the Clinton administration was about to

take its own first step down the Irangate path led 12 senators and 98 House members to write Secretary of State Warren Christopher recommending that, since Congress desires "an accurate picture of the People's Mojahedin," he "ensure that representatives of the Mojahedin or National Council of Resistance are consulted directly by those who prepare the report."

When the 110 members of Congress called upon the State Department Sept. 9 for a "thorough assessment of the situation in Iran and its major players," they said they did so to "enable us to adopt a comprehensive and suitable policy toward Iran." It seems obvious that the best way to comply is to listen carefully to what is being said by Iranians - all Iranians. Those who claim otherwise open themselves to the suspicion that they have a hidden agenda, just as did the participants in Irangate, the worst foreign policy scandal in American history, only nine years ago." ²⁹

Scores of other articles appeared in the press criticizing the State Department's obstinate policy on the Iranian Resistance and questioned the credibility of a report prepared without direct dialogue with representatives of the Mojahedin and National Council of Resistance. The headlines read: "U.S. Can't Isolate Iran and Let Oil Companies Do Business There,"³⁰ "U.S. Should Work For A New Iran,"³¹ "U.S. Should Support Democracy in Iran."³²

Some of the articles described the State Department's stony-faced boycott of the Resistance as part and parcel of its policy of appeasing Iran's mullahs. Martin Schram described the congressional call and the support expressed by *The New York Times* as "major triumphs." In his article in *The Washington Times*, Mr. Schram wrote:

Once again, a U.S. administration has conned itself into chasing an evanescent wisp of moderates believed to be floating among Tehran's rulers. To reach these moderates, the Clinton administration is tight-roping a diplomatic prayer of a line - it stretches between talking tough for Western consumption and not offending Tehran's terrorist-sponsoring regime by meeting with the Mujahideen.

It's enough to make one wonder if, when the Department finishes its report on Iran's Mujahideen, it will be gift-wrapped and hand-delivered to Tehran, along with an autographed Bible and a cake in the shape of a key.³³

A number of experts in regional affairs concurred. In one political briefing, a Middle East expert from the Center for Strategic and International Studies and a former White House consultant, Joyce Starr, waved aside the excuses put forward for not engaging in dialogue with the Iranian Resistance, saying: "None of us believe it."

Dr. Starr examined U.S. policy on Iran, pointing to the contradiction:

If we are afraid to hear from, just to talk to, to discuss with a group of people whose worst crime is to fight against the current Iranian regime - what does this say about the continuity of our policy?... The question for me as an American, the question for me as a journalist and a writer is, what is happening behind closed doors in the State Department and the White House. And don't think that if the State Department takes a particular position, that it's taking it out there, without the consultation of the White House. Our President, Mr. Clinton, has stated before B'nai B'rith just about a month ago, called the Iranian regime "the world's leading sponsor of state-sponsored terrorism." That's interesting. Is it possible that our leadership is making public claims that are completely belied and undercut by what they are doing behind closed doors and in terms of the implementation of their policy? That's the way it looks to me. So I don't think you... will find your answer here today. I think the answer is in the corridors of power. What's in it for them to block these people? If you can answer that, then I think you will help widen this debate, rather than stand here and defend and defend and defend a record... We can always find another aspect of the record to condemn - of anybody's record.³⁴

Dr. Starr expressed her dismay at the State Department's disregard for the congressional view in this way:

As an American citizen, I am extremely ashamed. I am ashamed that a hundred members of Congress would have to literally beg the Department of State, which works for us and not for some people in another country, to talk to a group who is sitting here in the United States. We're not talking about, not one is asking our government for money. Nobody's asking our government for arms... When a hundred members of Congress have to write a letter begging the State Department to do that and they're not answered, they're not given an answer, that means that the system of democracy is not working in this country.³⁵

In the briefing, another Iran expert, Dr. Khalid Duran, analyzed the regime's terrorism and pointed to Tehran's threat to regional stability, also stressing the necessity of establishing dialogue with the NCR.³⁶

Europeans Weigh In

Many European politicians and parliamentarians joined the U.S. Congress in criticizing the State Department's position. They described the Department's policy on the Mojahedin as favoring the

regime in Tehran, and questioned American appeals to Europe to take a stronger stance against Tehran and tighten restrictions on trade with the mullahs. They also expressed doubts over the real intent and direction of American policy on Iran. The European dignitaries all concurred on the necessity of a dialogue with the Mojahedin, as a prerequisite to objectivity and fairness in preparing the report.

In Britain, a bipartisan coalition of 63 MPs sent a letter to President Clinton to express their concern about U.S. policy on the Tehran regime and the Iranian Resistance. The British parliamentarians wrote,

The refusal of the United States' Department of State to talk with the opposition in the past several months is sending out misleading signals. The Iranian regime, which your government previously described as "an international outlaw," is already using the State Department's positions for public relations advantage against its main opposition. We believe that this regime deserves to be met with decisiveness and the most unequivocal approach... We, like our colleagues in the U.S. House and Senate, believe any practical and effective measure should be accompanied by an exchange of views with the Iranian Resistance and its representatives. It is our own experience that meeting with them has always been a constructive move.³⁷

Lord Avebury, Chairman of the British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, wrote to President Clinton to convey his findings on the regime's terrorism and other acts that Tehran falsely attributes to the Mojahedin. Lord Avebury stated in his letter that the Parliamentary Group which he heads had investigated recent murders in Iran which "we believe were committed by agents of the mullahs' regime." He added, "There are some people in the State Department who are not impartial in this matter, because they are the same officials who agreed to brand the Mojahedin as terrorists in 1986" during the Irangate scandal.³⁸

Lord Ennals, a former Foreign Office minister also wrote to President Clinton. Citing the "increasingly crude breaches of human rights by the Iranian government" he said, "I find it difficult to understand how your government failed to discuss these issues with the Iranian Mojahedin and the National Council of Resistance before reaching conclusions."³⁹

Lennart Friden, a conservative Swedish member of parliament

also wrote to President Clinton and expressed amazement that the report was being prepared without contacts with the Resistance's representatives, saying:

The good old Roman legal principle "Audiator et altera pars" is always recommendable to follow in political work. As the Mojahedin movement is an organization with a major role in the Iranian question, it is even more important to meet with them. That should also be profitable for the relations with the U.S. in a future Iranian government.⁴⁰

Pax Christi, an international Catholic peace movement, expressed concern at the consequences of the State Department's report. The organization wrote to the U.S. ambassador in Germany:

In a letter from U.S. congressmen to Warren Christopher on September 9, 1994, regarding a report that is to be prepared on the People's Mojahedin it is requested that a direct dialogue be established with the National Council of Resistance. We have enough reason to be concerned that your administration, like our federal government and other democratic governments are leaning toward accepting the fundamentalist regime in Tehran for economic and strategic reasons and ignoring the Mojahedin and the National Council of Resistance. We are a Catholic church organization that has been watching and supporting the activities of the Iranian Resistance to end the suppression of the Iranian people. In contrast to other national resistance movements, the Mojahedin have engaged in totally legitimate political activities here in Germany to disseminate news. The information published by the Mojahedin and the National Council of Resistance is according to the estimate of many human rights organizations such as Amnesty International authoritative. We have not seen until now any violent act on the part of this organization. In truth, the facts are contrary to this.⁴¹

Iranians React

The Iranian-American community also criticized the State Department's behavior and its refusal to meet with representatives of the Iranian Resistance. The Washington Office of the National Council of Resistance received copies of several thousand letters by Iranians to the President, Secretary of State and members of Congress. Many had written to the Department to request meetings, but their requests were refused or left unanswered. Several Iranians subsequently wrote to the Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee to express dismay at the biased behavior of officials at

the State Department.

Regrettably, only in the final days, when the report had actually been completed, did the State Department agree to meet with a few of the hundreds of Iranians who had requested meetings. Reportedly, in one such meeting, the head of the Department's Iran Desk shrugged off his and the Department's responsibility in the affair, stating that they were only implementing presidential policy.⁴²

The San Diego chapter of the Society of Iranian Scholars and Professionals criticized the State Department position in an article in the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, writing:

The regime in Tehran faces an organized, nationwide resistance called the National Council of Resistance, which strives for democracy, human rights and a pluralistic rule . . . Politically, Congress has set the stage for a new approach by asking the President to prepare a report by October on the Iranian Resistance. Dialogue between the resistance and the Clinton administration is part and parcel of an impartial and exhaustive report.⁴³

Many other Iranian organizations and associations in the U.S. published statements, held meetings and expressed their opinion in other ways as well, calling for a dialogue with the Mojahedin and the National Council of Resistance. The Association of Iranian Scholars and Professionals in the United States published a report called "A Question of Fairness." The report enumerates the concerns of Iranians residing in the U.S.:

We are concerned that the mullahs' regime be given no opportunity to further suppress Iran's democratic opposition movement. We are concerned about better future relations between the United States and Iran, and we do not want a misrepresentation of Iran's democratic opposition to jeopardize that future. If the report on the Mojahedin is to be helpful, it must be fair, devoid of pre-judgments, and include consultation with their representatives.

The text offers five reasons to support the initiatives by the House and Senate:

- An accurate representation of the facts is possible only by means of a fair, comprehensive study of the issues.
- Anything less than fairness violates democratic principles.
- Prejudgments or reluctance to meet with "the widest range of people possible" (which obviously includes the subjects of the report) violates the congressional guidelines to the Bill.

- Anything less than a fair treatment of the report's primary subject seriously jeopardizes the report's credibility.
- Anything less than a fair and comprehensive report will be misused by Iran's terrorist rulers to justify their suppression of the opposition.⁴⁴

Representative offices of the National Council of Resistance in Britain, Germany, France and other European countries also received copies of several thousand letters written by Iranians to the U.S. President and U.S. embassies, expressing their dissatisfaction at the State Department's biased position and declaring their support for the Mojahedin.