

## **Interview with Mr. Ardeshir Zahedi**

**Ex Iranian Foreign Minister and the last Iranian  
Ambassador to the United States**

# **Most problems in the world to day are caused by religious extremism**

Recently a group of Iranians in the Rah-E-Zendegi tour of Europe had a meeting with Mr. Ardeshir Zahedi in Montrouex Switzerland. There was much discussion about the world situation and Iran's position in world politics in particular. The editorial board of Rah-E-Zendegi also interviewed Mr. Zahedi separately. The following is based on a summary of what took place.

The first question concerned the Tehran conference of the Non-Aligned Nations.

Mr. Zahedi reminded us that the United Nations was established after the Second World War with 40 members and today it has grown to include over 190 members. Because of the clash of the two super powers, United States and the Soviet Union, the Non-Aligned Nations

Organization was born with efforts of Nehru and Tito who were joined later by Nasser. The organization has expanded to 120 members and 17 observer Nations. After a few years, the organization fell into irrelevance. But the negative attitude of the western powers gave it a new life and importance. That is why in spite of the great opposition of the United States and Israel the conference took place in Tehran and the Secretary General of the United Nations also attended together with 40 other heads of state. The importance of the meeting was enhanced by the presence of the President of Egypt even though Iran and Egypt have no diplomatic relations. The President of Egypt did condemn the situation in Syria, but was of one mind with Iran on the question of

Palestine. Iran and Egypt have always followed the same policy as regards to Palestine and the composition of the Security Council.

There was a time when the United States enjoyed great popularity in the third world and in particular in Muslim and Arab countries. President

Eisenhower and then Secretary of State Foster Dulles openly and strongly opposed and condemned the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of Egypt because of the Suez Canal dispute. This led to the British Premier Anthony Eden leaving the political stage for good.

Mr. Zahedi said that regarding Syria, he is of the belief that solution in Syria is political and military and both sides must engage in serious and sincere negotiation. The negotiations should be in good faith. In this regard he would refer to what the former Secretary General of the United Nation and the Noble Peace Prize winner Kofi Anan has said that today, tomorrow or a year from now the conflict in Syria must be resolved diplomatically, otherwise hundreds of thousands of innocent people will lose their lives.

He continued that he had always felt that we must eliminate religious extremism and resolve all differences through sincere negotiations. Sadly, some international

humanitarian organizations have reported that at least half of the dead or injured in the conflict these days are non-Syrians. This does not help the situation.

The United States could have played a positive role in resolving conflicts in the region but has not. One year after the US President made a commitment that the following year the representative of the state of Palestine would participate in the world forum; he had threatened to veto if the question came up. And now Mr Netanyahu must be told that enough is enough.

Mr. Zahedi has been personally involved in negotiations and the peaceful release of over 165 mostly Jewish hostages. The story of this episode is told in *The Forgotten Hostages* by Paul Green, published in Washington, DC.

Regarding the role of the United Nations in international diplomacy, Mr. Zahedi felt that the unhappiness of the majority of member countries with the power monopoly of the five permanent members of the Security Council is another issue that should be taken seriously. Iran has always held the view that the representatives of Asia, Africa and Latin America should share the power with the five permanent members of the Security Council.

Mr. Zahedi was asked about Iran's conflict with the west over



**Her Imperial Highness Princess Shahnaz and H.E. the Ambassador receive the felicitations of Mrs. Dean Rusk, wife of the Secretary of State, at a reception in Washington on the occasion of the Shahanshah's birthday, October 26, 1961**

its nuclear program.

He started by saying that Iran is surrounded by 6 of the 9 countries which possess nuclear weapons; Israel to the west, Russia to the north, China to the north east, India and Pakistan to the west, and finally the US Fifth Fleet to the south. In such a situation Iran possessing nuclear weapons would strengthen the chances of lasting peace. If Pakistan that in the opinion of the western leaders is most unreliable has the bomb, why not Iran with its glorious history and civilization. Professor Kenneth Waltz in an article in the Foreign Affairs discusses this question at length under the title "Why Iran Should Get The Bomb".

However, Iran has always declared that it only needs the nuclear power for peaceful purposes. even the present leadership in Iran has declared that the use or even the production of nuclear weapons is against the teachings of their religion.

Mr. Zahedi stated that he had personally signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty on behalf of Iran in 1967. The Treaty gave all the signatories the right to the peaceful use of nuclear power. No one or power can take this right away from Iran. There has not been any evidence to show that Iran has or intends to have the bomb. One should base ones view on facts and not the likes or dislikes of the regime in Tehran, because the interest of

the Iranian people is at stake.

"I highly recommend the study of the works and writings of the Oxford University Professor, Dr Farhang Jahanpour that will shed light on much of the complicated situation."

As regards to the past conflict, Mr. Zahedi said that the 8 year Iran-Iraq war was extremely costly in terms of human life and material for both nations. The invasion of Iraq cost the United States dearly and proved the United State's reason for the invasion false. And now the Islamic Republic has greater influence in Iraq than the United States has. In the mean time United States has sold billions of dollars worth of weapons to the countries in the region. Saudi Arabia with a population of less than 15 million, according to Newsweek, has situation whereas 40 % of its population lives on an income of less than 1,000.00 dollars per annul and yet is the biggest arms purchaser from the United States. Qatar too is in the armaments business of purchasing and sending fighter jets to Libya at the same time. Anderson Cooper's book The Oil Kings is very revealing and shed lights on this puzzle.

Discussion turned to Iran and its future. Mr. Zahedi feels that any country can be free and liberated if its people are willing to sacrifice themselves for their country and not expect that their country should be sacrificed for their sake. The Iranian people

loved the Shah and His Majesty deeply loved his country and people. "If his Majesty tolerated me it was because I was true to him and our land". The Shah should not have left the country. If we had been true and sincere, we would not have lost our homeland and thus there would not have been a cause to rescue it now. If people think of the interest of the society at large, nothing can threaten their freedom and interests.

Mr. Zahedi continued that "Iran could have been saved up to even 9 month before disaster struck. The right steps were not taken, our western friends, in particular France and the United Kingdom, were not straight and honest with us and then the situation of every man for himself prevailed. We had a highly educated youth, experienced middle class, a sound economy, and a great future if things had not fallen to pieces. We were all at fault for what happened. I include myself in this. We can not blame Carter and others for our own shortcomings.

Iran's future is in the hands of Iran's youth who are far more educated and skilled than our generations were."

He ended by saying "I have said so many times and will repeat it again, that it is most unfortunate that some foolish or shortsighted people, based on personal or political considerations, commits acts that causes great damage to humanity at large.