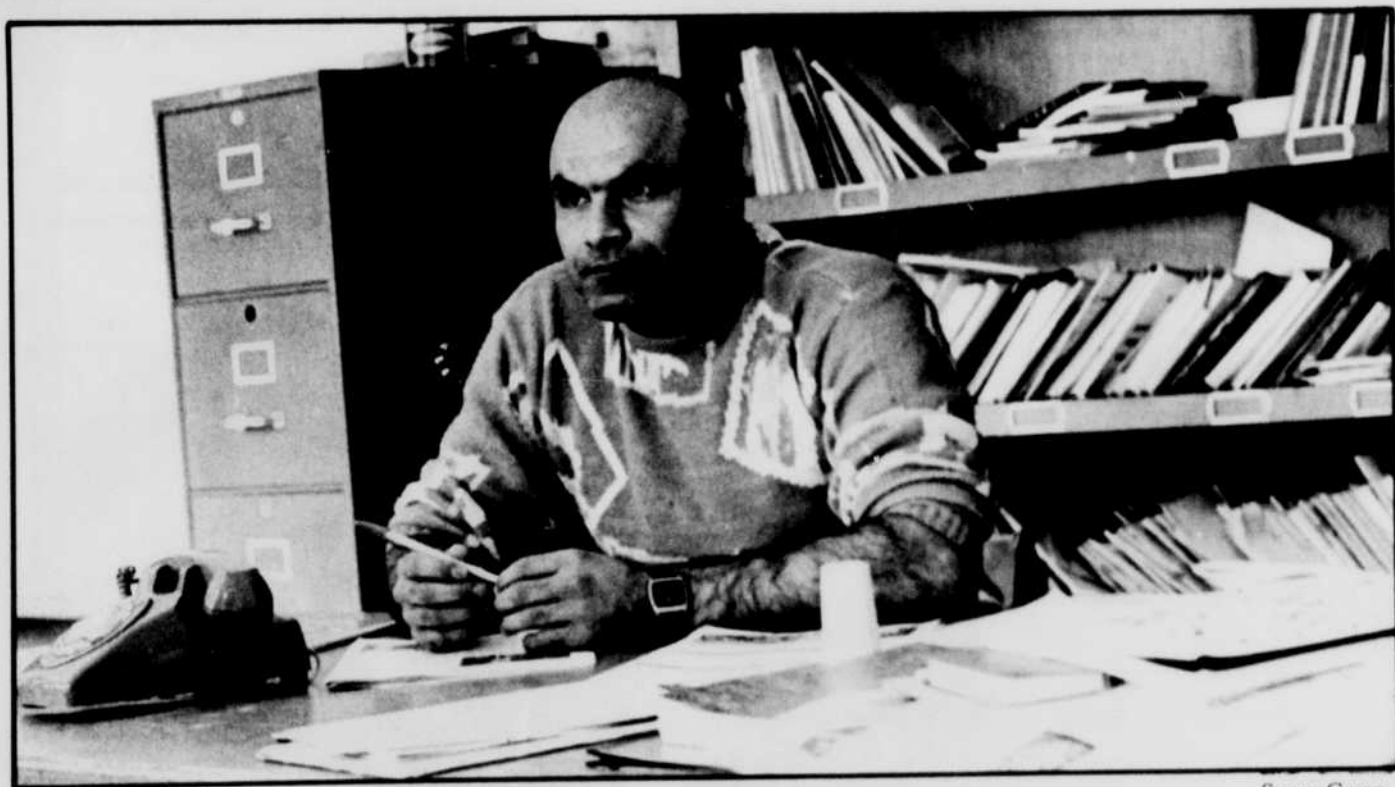




Susan Green

Iranian student Hossein Balou: caught in the crossfire?

The people won't like this, but Khomeini's government doesn't want to lose their power, so if the United States pushes them too much, they will go over to the Soviets. And the (Iranian) people are really afraid of this; they would rather have a good relationship with the United States and not with the Soviet Union. This is my opinion and my understanding.

Q: How did Khomeini get to power?

A: I think he deceived the people. I supported Khomeini ten years ago when he was in Iraq with Saudo Hossain. He was Hossain's guest for 16 to 17 years. We didn't know when Khomeini said he would come back and save all the Iranian poor and bring freedom that he was lying.

Q: The hostage crisis: where were you at the time?

A: I was in Iran. We (students) had a very strong disagreement about taking the hostages while Khomeini supporters said we should take them. They won and we students lost. The supporters said we had to give the United States a 'good lesson.'

Q: What is this "lesson" that America was supposed to learn?

A: Khomeini blamed the problems in Iran on the United States because the U.S. supported the Shah. So all the bad things we had we got from the U.S..

Q: Do you predict Iran will declare war on the U.S.?

A: Yes. I think the U.S. shouldn't be involved in this (Persian Gulf) situation. It's just increasing tension in the Gulf.

Q: Will there be a formal declaration of war, or will there be some form of retaliation?

A: I think they'll retaliate. Khomeini is not a forgiveable man. He might take hostages in Lebanon, or retaliate in the Persian Gulf.

Q: If Iran goes to war with the U.S., what consequences will you face as an Iranian student in the U.S.? Do you think you will be the focus of some hostility?

A: If this happened, I wouldn't blame Americans. That would be

natural. I don't know what I would do, I just know that this would be awful for all students.

Q: Is it true that Iranian religious leaders preach that if one dies in the "Holy War" with Iraq, that they will go to heaven?

A: Khomeini and his people preach every single day on t.v. and the radio that they should "go to the war and fight for God." He tells the people that they will be remembered as a martyr.

The people don't like to go to war. They go to war because they want to have a little more opportunity.

Q: Finally, what do you think will bring peace to Iran?

A: I don't know really--that is a tough question. I just pray and hope that the situation gets better. The government needs to change; somebody with a little compassion who has a better policy for my country. And which way to approach this I don't know. However, I think anyone's policy would be better than Khomeini's. ©