

pro-Soviet. And this article fundamentally said that this doesn't fit into this thing. I tried to provide background information.

We discussed that and, at the end, I don't remember if I'd seen the name. I'm sure I would recognize it. The Undersecretary of Defense, in charge of Middle East Affairs, after a two and a half hour meeting, which was a seminar on Iran - Human rights, Mosaddeq, the movement, Islam, Shari'ati, and all these things. A very generalized kind of thing. They asked questions and I'm providing some general kind of -- At the end, a fascinating thing was that this meeting is not official. Once he learned that I'm going to Paris, he said, "Oh, are you going to visit Ayatollah Khomeini?"

I said, "I hope so. I'm very interested," and all that.

He said, "Well, I want you to know that this is not formal. It has absolutely nothing to do with the Defense Department position. You're here as an expert, and we're interested in your ideas as a professor." So, he wanted to disassociate himself with any kind of official contact. This is late December. The situation is pretty much over. Still, these people were -- Right after the meeting, he said, "Now, I'm going to a meeting of the National Security Council on Iran. But I want you to know we have absolutely no message." [chuckles]

What I learned, in a practical kind of sense was the confusion - not only in an organization or political sense, but also analytic confusion of the American establishment. Later on, when we read Gary Sick and the rest of them, all confirm that

early experience. Not only they have invited me but, initially, they thought I'm just an analyst and just a teacher.

Later on, when I told them that I'm going there and I know these people and all that -- In Paris, they thought that the whole idea that somebody has written an article and the Defense Department finds it a refreshing way of looking at it, this guy might have something interesting to tell us, which was their intention. There, for me, I didn't want the contact to be illegitimate. For them, they thought, maybe they're asking him to come to give a message to us, they have a message for us. [chuckles] No message and all that. All I learned in that meeting -- when I went to Paris, I explained to Khomeini -- was they were just obsessed with fear of communism. Fundamentally thinking, the brightest one and the most intelligent one, who had read some of the newspaper analysis of what was going on in Iran, the apparent ascendancy of religious or nationalist liberal factions in this movement is temporary and it is only a matter of time before the extremists will take over. This was the belief. And this belief was rooted in the Cold War framework. It had no evidence. But they assumed that it's the only thing that can happen. I tried to tell them that this is not necessarily the case. It's not inconceivable. But that has nothing to do with any analysis of the capacities of various forces and so forth.

When I went to Paris, I talked to Khomeini, which was very interesting. We went to his back room. He had his 'araqchin, and he asked me, "What was their concern?"

Q: This is the first time you saw Khomeini?

Farhang: The absolute first time I saw him. He said, "What was their concern?" I explained to him not only their concern; I tried to put the concern they had in their whole orientation toward the world and Cold War and the division of the world and so forth. And his response, I don't think he really paid that much attention to my effort to provide a context for this attitude. All he said at the end was, "They have nothing to worry about communism in Iran. And they don't even have anything to worry about with this revolutionary movement developing a more cooperative attitude toward the Soviet Union. At least these people believe in God." "'Agallan inha be Khoda 'itigad darand." By inha, he meant the West. By this time, he kind of generalized it, but the West in general - the United States in particular. But that's all he said. End of the conversation.

I was, of course, immensely impressed and touched by his simplicity, his lack of arrogance. [chuckles] It's just nativity, simplicity, lack of arrogance, absence of any claim to power at this particular moment.

Q: Was anyone else present?

Farhang: Yazdi. The three of us.

Q: Just the three of you?

Farhang: Just the three of us. That was the first. Later one, I was there for about twenty days. I met him again, and even once interviewed him more formally for another piece I was doing, again for Inquiry Magazine. When I came back, they did it as a cover story. Anyway that's a different story.

But I generally think he believed it, that he wasn't projecting a deceptive image, in my opinion - that I'm not interested in power, that personalities like Bazargan and so forth were the men he had in mind who would rule the country, who would be the back bone of the executive branch and the decision-making. The individuals he was imagining to run the country were the ones who were all dismissed by the end of the first year.

I'm moving away from time and all that. Later on, even in a public statement, he made a reference to this period. Implicitly, he was responding to the criticism of why Bazargan was chosen as the first Prime Minister. His response was, "We didn't know anybody else." What he really meant was that there was this massive movement in Iran that he was not aware of. A new social class had come into the fold that he was not aware of. Once he came to Iran, he realized that Iran had been dramatically transformed while he was gone, and he changed and transformed, and power played a far more important role in his change than religion or ideological purity.

Q: Personally, when you talked to him, how did he sound? There

are versions of him sounding a lot more literate and learned in private than in his public speeches. Did he sound any different when you spoke to him?

Farhang: No. The interview I had with him, definitely, he sounded -- If you spoke to him about his specific kind of interests, his academic kind of interests, of course, he was learned. But when you spoke to him about politics, he was not learned at all. He was an ordinary, common kind of man. It's not that he was faking it and in public he spoke with an intentional way of deceiving others. He was a masterful politician in the sense that he knew his constituents. Khomeini proved to be the politician of destruction, the politician of negation, the politician of denial, which is very different from the politician of affirmation and construction. They're two different talents. Historically, Khomeini was the politician of negation and destruction. In that regard, he was very talented in the sense that he knew his audience. He knew his audience in the sense that he knew how to choose symbolism which could appeal to his audience. He knew the role of language. He came from a tradition that the language of communication was extremely important - language, symbolism, metaphor, simplicity, direct kind of contact with passion, and so forth.

Giving you a specific kind of example of what I'm talking about, later, in December, 1979, moving away from it -- now, we're talking about this business of private and public -- it's a very telling example that I witnessed. I went to see him -- I'll

tell you about it later -- about this UN Commission of Inquiry that I had helped to organize. I knew that no one else really mattered. I had made my acceptance of the position at the UN contingent on his approval of the work of the UN Commission. I said, "I'll go directly to him. If he says yes, I will do it." I went to him, and he said yes. But while I was there something else happened. What happened was an artist came in. There were a dozen people in the room, including Mo'infar. I went with him, actually. An artist came in and brought four different samples of the new flag. This was the period that they were working on -- A number of people expressed -- One person who was Naser Makarem Shirazi, who is a kind of intellectual molla, who is also a critic of these people and has never had any position. He was in the room. Mo'infar was there. I was there. There were half a dozen people who expressed a view. We all liked one out of four, which we thought was more aesthetically pleasing. Khomeini put his finger on one, and I don't even remember the specific thing. But that's not important. He said, "'avam inra mipasandand, Khavass," with the gesture of hand he shaved others, "in yeki ra mikhahand." Which means that he thought about it. These terms were Khavass and 'avam, that the language and metaphors and symbolism of communication differ. He knew his audience without any question.

Q: The first time that you saw him, when Yazdi was there, what was the attitude and relationship of Yazdi with Khomeini? How

did he treat him?

Farhang: Khomeini was, in a sense, very representative of the way religious people treated religious intellectuals with incredible dignity and deference. They took pride in the fact that mohandesin-e daneshgah are religious. I'll never forget. It's a flashback. As a high school student, we used to go to Masjed-e Hedayat Friday nights, wait there for Anjoman-e Islami Mohandesin, consisting of Bazargan, Sahabi Mo'infar, Yazdi. All these people came. We had organized -- The image I remember, the moment they walked into this place, the mollas, all these people, they'd all stand up and show glow and incredible respect and not only appreciation, but joy. It only came from the way that under Reza Shah and the years later, religion was so degraded and deprecated, particularly by the intelligentsia and intellectuals and so forth. Suddenly, the intelligentsia was taking religion seriously. All these people. Bazargan was absolutely flabbergasted when many of these people changed. The drawings of this, the specific examples, are really incredible to remember from the pre-revolutionary period.

So, the image of the molla these people had was an image of a great deal of respect and dignified treatment of these people. It exemplified Khomeini's treatment of Yazdi, Bani Sadr, Bazargan, and the rest. Here's this university professor who has left his life here to help. Later, they completely changed, and it was a different story in the position of power, but much dignity and respect - not only toward Yazdi. When I

went there, he didn't know me. He put me in the same category - extremely respectful.

Q: At this point, had you read his writings? Did you know Velayat-e Faqih and some of these others?

Farhang: No. Only the 'elamiyyehs. The only thing that I have read by him, and didn't take it really seriously and didn't feel threatened by it, was Kashf al-Asrar. Still, that is probably far more telling with respect to his orientation than anything else. I shouldn't say I hadn't read the book but, by this time, enough of the stuff had been translated into English that the general lines of argument -- There was nothing new in it then; there is nothing new in it today. I think it's an exaggeration of saying that, as if ideas determine what happened in Iran, as if we knew the ideas and, therefore, we could have changed or influenced the course of development. Or the whole business of thinking that ideas determined what they did. I don't believe that.

Q: In the sense that you're saying that, at that point, Khomeini was not thinking of taking over power and so forth.

Farhang: Right.

Q: It seems as if he had intended all that?



Farhang: Not at all, even in Velayat-e Faqih and all that. Later on, I studied him with extreme care. There is absolutely no indication. He even in Velayat-e Faqih, when he defines Islamic government and all that, what is he attributing to this government? Very generalized terms. Protection of the boundaries, collection of taxes. He says they have absolutely no strategy. Let's say, in my specific area of foreign policy interest. I gave a talk the other day. Fundamentally, my talk the other day, I could say at the time, was that there was no such thing as Islamic foreign policy. There is as much validity in Islamic foreign policy as there is in Islamic physics or Islamic chemistry. You read all this stuff. With the exception of this anti-imperialism or anti-westernism that you could find in every opposition pamphlet, what is in it?

Q: In Velayat-e Faqih in the sense that he is the person who determined, in the final analysis. He is the one who makes the final decisions.

Farhang: But he's making a completely theological and theoretical kind of argument. It's not a blueprint. It's not a strategy. It's not a political program. He makes absolutely no reference to the executive branch of government. Just to substantiate the point, the best way we could substantiate the fact that he had not thought about any of that, was just to look at his behavior during the first year of the revolution. When

the first draft of the Constitution was submitted to him, which was written by secular people, and it was a very, very liberal Constitution, the references to Islam and all are very symbolic, just about the same as the references to Islam in the first Constitution. Khomeini said put it to referendum. He was opposed to the establishment of Majles-e Mo'asessan. At the time, they were referred to as that. People who pushed for that Majles were the secular forces. Men like Bazargan and the National Front people were far more interested in establishing it because they wanted to do it properly and in a legitimate way. If you read that Constitution -- When they insisted to Khomeini that in order to gain legitimacy we need to do that he said --

[end of side two, tape three]

When they insisted that, for reasons in the proper conduct, we should have Majles-e Mo'asessan, he said, "The first elected Majlis can amend the Constitution and can respond to your concerns," he was very much interested in speeding up the process, institutionalizing it as quickly as possible. He really felt the regime and ingilab was threatened. So, when the idea of Majles-e Khobregan was suggested by Ayatollah Taleqani as a compromise between no Majles-e M'asessan at all and a Majles consisting of two hundred members -- But here, when we talk about politics, all the people who were advocating holding elections and selection of members of this, if you went to them, they had absolutely no plans for the elections. They had not

thought about: Do they really have a constituency? Do they have a representative in Yazd, in Esfahan, in Shiraz, in Varamin, who would be elected? Are they going to rig the election? Are they going to compete? When Majles-e Khobregan elections were conducted, in my opinion, it was the first time that Khomeini and the religious leaders in Iran saw the tangible base of their power. Because, overwhelmingly, they were elected. No question about it. They were elected. When Ayatollah Saduqi was elected in Yazd, it was legitimate. By general criteria, he was elected. Ayatollah Madani or Ayatollah this and that were all men who had led demonstrations during the 1978-1979 period, so they had gained a great deal of legitimacy. So, when the time came for election, who were the candidates to compete with them? I would say, in many, many places in Tehran, to some extent, there were a number of people elected who were different or someone from Azarbayjan - personalities who had come to be popular.

So, there are many, many examples. It's an easy way. It's a surrender of analysis. It's a surrender of analysis and surrender of thinking to say that there was a blueprint and there was a hidden agenda, because it makes everything so easy.

[chuckles]

Q: During this period, you stayed for twenty days. You saw him again a number of times?

Farhang: I saw him several times and I actually worked. During

this period, I did translation contact with foreign correspondents and so forth. So, I became kind of a member of the team.

Q: You worked mostly with Yazdi?

Farhang: With Yazdi. After that, I went home. I went to Tehran. Believe it or not, Khalkhali was on the plane and 'Abdollah Riyazi was on the plane. [chuckles]

Q: This was in 19--

Farhang: We arrived in Tehran on January 16, 1979.

Q: The day the Shah left?

Farhang: The day the Shah left. The Shah had left. I think we arrived at 10:30 in the morning, and he left at one in the afternoon, or the other way around. It was two hours of --

Q: So, when you went to Tehran, you went from Paris. You had a mission?

Farhang: No, no.

Q: You just went to see what --

Farhang: During this period, also, Ramsey Clark and Richard Falk were both in Paris. Then, in Tehran, I joined them. The human rights network in Iran was now open, so there were lots of correspondents and people interested in covering it. No, there was nothing formal or anything. It was more personal.

Q: Going back now and looking at the situation, doesn't it seem sort of a little bit absurd that Ramsey Clark or Richard Falk would be that involved in the politics of Iran?

Farhang: Absolutely not. That is the beauty of it. I think it's parochial thinking on the part of countries like us and the backward elite of more Islamic societies, I would say, than others. I think the idea of transcending your national politics and becoming interested in something larger than your national boundaries has a long history in the western tradition. It's very unfortunate that we don't have it. It's very unfortunate that, even when we take a position, the view of the foreigner, the nation state system of identifying with one particular nation itself is only a couple hundred years old. I think it's totally absurd to think that the limit of human imagination is to identify with the sovereign nation state system.

Someone like Richard Falk, coming from a very solid tradition of studying philosophy at Harvard and studying law at Yale, and being a very creative and interesting intellectual, he is a very transcendental kind of character.

Now, we could explain these personalities, if you wish, in terms of eccentricity or idiosyncrasy. There is no shortage of such characters in the history of the Western world in the past several hundred years. Even in the American Revolution, someone like Tom Paine -- After the Revolution was over here, he went all the way to Paris. He decided to join the French Revolutionaries. Or someone like Che Guevara. Many. These people have the commitment. In the American tradition, in the Jeffersonian tradition, there is really a genuine commitment to the idea of human rights.

Q: Where are they now?

Farhang: Oh, in fact, they're very active, except that, today, these people become -- if we talk about their politics -- prominent or useful when they are criticizing their own government. When they take a position, they usually are critics of their own government. When they take a position which is identical with the position of the State Department or the White House, they don't get any -- If Richard Falk, as he has done many times, gives a lecture or writes an article about human rights violations in Iran, what's the news? But if they do it about human rights violations in El Salvador, they immediately get attention because they are taking a position which is critical of -- Dick Falk, when I came back, he was the first one to organize an activity. But who would pay attention? No matter what, it's in the nature of it.

Foucauld was very interested in Iran. He was very taken by Khomeini. There were prominent French and British intellectuals who came. In fact, if we want to go to that tradition, Great Britain is even better than the United States. In Great Britain, there is a transcendental intellectual tradition that has identified with the anti-colonial movements in the Third World - small but, nevertheless, very fascinating and interesting, particularly with respect to South Africa and so forth.

We see it in their art. Why should the Beatles be interested in raising money for hungry people in Ethiopia? Why? I would say it comes from the same . Their interest was not at all limited. Dick Falk is an author of many, many books -- half a dozen books -- on human rights from the perspective of legal thinking. He's taught in various universities in Europe and in the United States and so forth.

It was the activities of the Iranian opposition elements who went to these people during the war in Vietnam. It was the same thing in France. If you go back, for example, to the Algerian Movement, there were lots of people like Satre. It was the same American involvement in Iran. For them, it was extremely intense. They thought -- again, you might disagree with them -- that it was the first successful CIA operation. And there are people in this country who believe the government should not engage in overthrowing --

Q: Other governments.

Farhang: Just as you and I do not really believe that the Islamic Republic should engage in overthrowing the government of Bahrain and all that. If we had an open political environment, we are going to identify with the Bahrainis, who don't want Iranians to interfere in their government.

No, I have immense respect for these people and consider them transnational citizens. I introduced Dick Falk at a human rights seminar on Iran two years ago as a citizen of the world.

Q: During the time that you were in Paris, do you remember any particular personalities who came to see Khomeini? Did you have any involvement?

Farhang: No, I didn't. Various personalities. One specific personality I remember -- There were many. But someone like General Jam, I was there with him. Someone like Mohammad Shahkar. He was not particularly. But a range of people. In politics, it is a matter of perception. When we want to understand politics, the retroactive view of perception is limited. We have to be able to put him in the specific context and the way he was perceived by various individuals, from religious people to Michel Foucauld, [chuckles] who really saw something profound and dramatic in this individual - not so much in what he had to say, but what he symbolized. He was a symbol. Khomeini was the beneficiary of a very significant and dramatic



movement in the Western world with respect to glorification of nativity. The Third World Movement, the Indian Movement, the Black Movement, the Chicano Movement in the United States have created an aura that, to some extent, it has accomplished its objectives within the context of American sociopolitical order. But even when we go back to the poetry of the period, to the novels of the period, to political analysis of the period, to the journalism of the period, we see this glorification. Khomeini came to symbolize that, which was very transcendental of his own specific kind of objectives. If you saw him in his simplicity and all that, it reinforced the romanticism.

Q: By the time that you were on the plane going to Iran, you had, in fact, left your life here?

Farhang: No, no. It was between semesters. We had one month off. My term started -- I was a little late getting back to my school. I was in Iran. I'll tell you the first. I went to Iran without any plans. The second day I was there, I was invited to give a lecture at Masjed-e Amirabad. It's huge. The pishnamaz or the Chief mollah of the mosque was Ayatollah Ardebili, who later became the Chief Justice. People who were managing this were largely Bazargan-type, Nehzat-e Azadi the people of the university. So, they said, "Come here and give a lecture." Someone had heard me before he was in the United States. So, I went there and there were two thousand people. [chuckles] There

was a microphone next to the podium. I remember I joked with him before going in. I said, "You don't expect me to stand up on the manbar."

He said, "No, no. Just stand here."

One thing was I went there and I didn't even know. It never dawned before, saying that you have to begin your presentation with bismallah. I didn't know any of that and I had never done it. The important thing was that I gave a talk that was the only way we could give a talk. I mean, people like me had a fundamental limitation with respect to communicating with the people. So, I talked as if I'm invited to a group of university students, simply because I didn't know anything else. At the end, I talked for about thirty-five minutes, forty minutes and, at the end, all these people probably didn't know -- Fundamentally, what I talked about was political culture - that, now that we have a revolution, our real challenge is to develop tolerant democratic-type -- Using the word "democracy," the tolerant democratic tendencies and getting away from absolutism and all that. This was the theme of my presentation.

After that, I was sitting there at the corner of the mosque with about a dozen kids without a single exception because we stayed there for two hours. Some left, some National Front, some liberal Muslims, maybe fifteen or twenty. For two more hours, at this corner, we chatted like a classroom situation. The rest had no idea what I was talking about, I would say. So, it was a mixture. That was my first public lecture. Later on, I got involved in lots of university-based groups.

It was ironic that when I left Iran, I left early in the morning and Khomeini came. [chuckles] I arrived in Iran a couple hours before the Shah left, and I left Iran a couple hours before Khomeini.

I went back to California. I came to Washington to spend a week there, and went back to my teaching, to the second term. But when I went there, I submitted my resignation.

Q: You had already arranged to go work in Iran?

Farhang: No. It wasn't really a resignation. I was up for sabbatical. The sabbatical was for one term. So, I took another term off for a whole year. The idea was to go home - what you want to do and all that. In the back of my mind, I assumed that once I go to Iran, I shouldn't have any trouble getting a teaching position. After very informally mentioning it to some people at the University, it was my strong impression. So, I took a year leave with an informal understanding that I don't really intend to return to teach here anymore. Except that when I went to Iran -- This is also the period that we are extremely active in the States, trying to present a positive, progressive image of the revolutionary regime, largely in defense of the Bazargan against the left. During this period in the United States, we are faced with vicious leftist opposition to Bazargan. The student groups invited me from all over the United States to confront the left, who are describing Bazargan as the lackey of

American imperialism - some nonsensical-type of rhetoric.

In June, after the school was over, we "kooched", went to Iran. But then, the University never really opened. In August, they called me one day out of the blue without any real inclination because I was still hoping that the University will open after one term. I wasn't particularly interested in teaching immediately after this revolution. Doing some research and writing would be very valuable. Then, he called me one day and said, "We are going to Cuba to take part in the first non-allied Heads of State Conference. Bazargan is not going. I'm going to represent Iran. Are you interested in accompanying me?"

And I said, "Sure. It's great to go there."

Anyway, we took it from there. But that was also very interesting with respect to meeting the Iraqis and contacting Khomeini about the 1975 Accords -- That's a long story. I don't think we have -- It's 12:30. It's an interesting historical period.

End of Interview #2

Farhang: Let me retract just for a moment to explain my contact with Yazdi. I had spent some time with him in Paris in late December and early January, 1979. We remained in contact. I went to Iran. On January 16th, I returned to the States, on the end of the same day the Khomeini actually arrived in Iran. I left earlier. I went back to California, and my term started.

About two or three months later, when Yazdi became Foreign Minister after resignation of Sanjabi, he had given me a couple of missions. One was a conflict developed in the Iranian Embassy in Canada between the newcomers - largely students who were active in Islamic Student Association, liberal Bazargan-type of students, who ran into conflict with the regular Foreign Ministry officials. He called me and said, "Here is this conflict. Can you go there and try to reconcile it and settle it?" I encouraged the idea of settling the conflict between the newcomers and the professional diplomats.

I responded to him on the phone. I'm in Sacramento, California, and he's in Tehran. "If you really want this approach to be effective, it would be helpful to have a respected diplomat accompany me - if we go together as a team to Canada."

He welcomed the idea. He thought it's a very good one. Regardless of what I try to do, I will be associated with the dissidents, with the newcomers, regardless of my own background and orientation. That perception is very important. So, he welcomed the idea and asked a respected Iranian diplomat, who was, at the time, Iranian Consulate in Chicago, Mansur Shahneh. He called him up and made arrangements that the two of us go to

Canada.

So, we went to Ontario, attempted to settle, and we failed. We failed. It's very ironic because the professional diplomats who had gone on strike -- just listen to the orientation -- they were on strike, and these three or four students, who had no experience in handling the affairs of the embassy or the consulate, were somehow managing the business. It was the poor management and their inability to respond to the requests of Iranians there to satisfy their needs and so forth, that the old-timers, the professionals, thought they had the upper hand. I explained to them that that's not really the issue, and the important thing to me and to you should not be whether or not this conflict is settled. The important thing is that it's after the revolution and the Iranian Foreign Ministry is interested in reconciliation. This idea is very unpopular in Iran. It's your responsibility, and it should really be your obligation, to welcome this idea and respond to it positively. They categorically rejected it. What they wanted was a complete dismissal of the newcomers. So, the first mission was a failure. [chuckles]

I returned to California and wrote a long letter to Yazdi, explaining that here was the situation and we failed because one side refused to negotiate. The Muslim Student Association, in general, these members who were involved in the embassy, were really open. One of them today is Chairman of the Central Bank in Iran today. At that time, he was a graduate student at New

School for Social Research. He was studying economics. I've forgotten his name, but he is the Chairman of the Central Bank. I'll remember it. He was very open and much more of a Bazargan-type of Muslim than the fundamentalist-type. Anyway, that mission failed.

In mid-April, Yazdi called me again and said, "Are you interested in a post in Washington?"

And I said, "Like what?"

He said, "Like being the ambassador to Washington?"

I said, "I shouldn't be, and I really don't want to be, because I'm an American citizen. I have dual nationality. I have both Iranian and American passports. I don't think that's really appropriate for me to give up, to surrender, my U.S. citizenship here and become the ambassador."

At the same time, in all genuine fairness, after being away from Iran for so many years, my deep desire was to return. It was more personal and existential than political. I had already secured a year sabbatical to go to Iran. I could also extend it for another year to see what developed. I said, "No," for both personal and political reasons. He accepted my -- He also had dual nationality, himself. By that time, he had probably surrendered or relinquished his American citizenship.

So, in June, I went to Iran. This was my background in working with the Foreign Ministry and Yazdi after he became the Foreign Minister. So, when I went to Iran in June, I had very informal contact with him. I saw him a couple of times. I went to the University, looking for possibilities of a teaching

it, so I followed the paperwork procedure and completed it here. But the act was done in Cuba by obtaining a diplomatic visa and a diplomatic passport.

First, I went to Washington and, from there, to the UN. We waited until October. Yazdi came. He wrote the speech that he delivered and translated. We went to the booth and read the speech in English, and he delivered it in Persian. It was very informal. This whole experience was informal. But I remember very distinctly that, already, conflicts had developed both in the embassy in Washington and in the Mission in New York between the old-timers and the newcomers - particularly with respect to the issue of women and hejab. So, when Yazdi was in Washington, I asked him, I said, "This is really a sensitive issue, and it's extremely important that your government is not associated with this imposition. We should have a meeting and give instruction, explanation, that we respect the freedom of choice. It should come from you." And he welcomed the idea.

So, we had a big meeting in the residence on 5th Avenue. He invited -- It was his own idea. He said, "Let's invite everybody from Washington - anybody." So, all the people from Washington and the mission congregated here. Yazdi talked about the need for cooperation and reconciliation. There was no intention on the part of the Bazargan government to expel the people from their positions because they worked with the old regime. He went on explaining how important cooperation is. One person who accompanied us from Tehran to Cuba was Mehdi Ehsasi. In fact, I got to know him very quickly. We became good friends.



So, in that sense, he was doing his best to create a sense of trust and cooperation.

One specific thing he said was this matter of hejab. He said this and we objected to the Pahlavi regime. We obviously think that in any formal organization in government or in business, there should be some minimal observance of customs and values of the society and so forth, but that does not mean hejab at all. There should be no pressure on women who work in the mission or from people who were answering the telephone of the diplomats. And there were a number of people who were still working in those places. I knew virtually all of them, the women. They were very disturbed and concerned.

Immediately, his suggested created a friction within the new staff of the mission and the embassy, because they consisted of two types: the real fanatic, fundamentalist type, who observed these rituals in the household and, for them, hejab, and strict observance of these rules constituted an essence of the new regime; and those who were liberal, religious types. The best illustration would be the Bazargan-type of religious people and the fundamentalists.

I remember one person who I met, Mohammad Lavasani, who had a very high position in Washington. He was connected with some religious figures in Qom that he was shocked that Yazdi said hejab was not required. It was the beginning of watching how deep the differences were within the technocratic, professional, and bureaucratic types who were joining the new regime.

From there, I returned to California. I was on sabbatical officially. That was the good thing - being on sabbatical, being paid without having to work. There was a great deal of freedom and leeway.

So, Yazdi returned to Iran. I stayed here. I had some personal matters, my children were in California. I visited with them and came back and was planning to Iran when the hostage-taking took place. When the hostages were taken, the Embassy was initially seized, I was in Washington when the Shah was first admitted to the United States and the demonstrations began. The issue kind of dominated our thinking, our interactions, our plans, and so forth, to the hostage-taking. The hostage-taking was a real embarrassment for the liberal types who had supported the revolution, particularly those of us who were involved in human rights activities - people like Ramsey Clark and Richard Falk, who were extremely helpful to us in propagating our views about human rights violations under the Shah.

So, I began some activity, both as a kind of public, political, academic type who tried to undermine the importance of this, and wishing, hoping that it will last a few days - that the embarrassment would not last very long. At the same time, the longer it went on, the first couple of weeks, an effort to find a solution to the problem came about. Yazdi fell, and Yazdi was replaced by Bani Sadr. I knew Bani Sadr quite well. When I talked to him, I was convinced he was also very interested in solving the hostage crisis. He decided to come to New York when he became Foreign Minister. Bani Sadr was interested in solving

the hostage crisis but, at the same time, he was trying to use the situation -- whether he was conscious of it or not is really beside the point -- to expand his role and to present himself to the international community as the principal spokesman of the Iranian revolution and so forth. For him, coming to the UN, to the Security Council, defending the Iranian position - not the hostage crisis, but trying to explain why such action took place in Iran and connect it to American foreign policies towards Iran since 1953. In a sense, for him, the image was Mossadeq and Mossadeq's appearance before the Security Council. That image, that romantic view of the past, which was extremely important for Mossadeq intellectuals, very much motivated and encouraged with Bani Sadr to undertake this mission. He sent two people to New York: Ahmad Salamatiyan and Sa'id Sanjabi. So they joined us. The three of us --

Q: Were you at the UN?

Farhang: No, I was nothing - absolutely no position. It was all a very informal, volunteer kind of thing. It was after Yazdi. Even my direct contact and all that was terminated. But all this time, it was in the nature of the situation that sometimes people in the know, in a position of authority, could appoint people or bring other people to nominal positions of prominence without having any responsibility or any kind of legal definition or official definition of their duties. No, absolutely not. Up to

this point, there was no -- But, in a sense, I had a diplomatic passport that signified something. But I don't know [chuckles] what it meant at the time.

So, the three of us worked together with Waldheim. He set a date, and Bani Sadr was coming to New York. We were waiting for him. We had developed a strategy of what to say before the Security Council. My whole position, and the three of us completely agreed, that he should say nothing to be interpreted as a defense of the hostage-taking - that we should use this occasion as a face-saving device to end the hostage crisis and gain some symbolic victory from this confrontation with the United States. We were acting and thinking like political animals, but in a very amateurish kind of way simply because we had no experience in this type of -- not knowing that all we were doing here could go down the drain by the simple decision of someone else.

In Iran, a good number of people -- I'm returning here because, at the time, I did not know this. But later, I learned that the idea that Bani Sadr is going to New York, representing Iran in the Security Council and reacting Mossadeq's performance during the oil crisis in the early 1950s, was unacceptable to Bani Sadr's competitors in Iran. So, a good number of them went to Khomeini and asked him and urged him to discourage and, in fact, stop Bani Sadr. Bani Sadr was not aware of this. He was the Foreign Minister only for about ten days or two weeks.

So, we were waiting and hopeful in New York. In the evening of the day -- I do not remember -- the evening before Bani Sadr

was going to leave Iran, he goes to Qom to say goodbye to Khomeini. But, by this time, Khomeini had already been persuaded that the trip should be canceled. Khomeini told Bani Sadr, "Don't go."

Bani Sadr, who is a kind of stubborn character said, "We absolutely have to go. This hostage crisis has to end. This is an opportunity for us to gain some symbolic benefit from this confrontation. We should do it."

Khomeini said, categorically, "No. Even if you go without my permission --" He gets angry and says, "If you go without my permission, I will fire you, dastur khal'at ra sader mikonam." When you get off the plane in New York, you are no longer Foreign Minister.

Bani Sadr said, "Then, I resign now." That's exactly what he did. He returned to his post from Qom. So, he resigned.

We were really very disappointed and shocked that all this work we had done for a week was completely dismissed by Khomeini's decision to reject it.

Q: Were you seeing the American authorities there?

Farhang: No. You see, they were very lukewarm about the Security Council. On the one hand, they wanted to accept it if it would lead to the release of the hostages. On the other hand, it was politically disadvantageous for the [James E.] Carter Administration. Remember that Carter was getting ready to gain

the Democratic -- to be renominated, and he was challenged by [Edward] Kennedy. Teddy Kennedy was already campaigning against him in New England and New Hampshire, and he was using the Hostage Crisis as a way of discrediting Carter as indecisive and vacillating. Carter had become very sensitive to this issue. So, they were not sure if they wanted to do this.

An American ambassador was McHenry at the time. He was not particularly decisive or a man of initiative of his own. I'll tell you why because I had a conversation with him on the phone later that he really was incapable of understanding what I was talking about.

Anyway, we failed. Sanjabi and Salamatiyan went back, and I talked to a couple other people and continued my effort to find a way. Remember that Bani Sadr's effort was very much related to his ambition to become President. The campaign had already started in Iran. Every issue was an instrument of this competition. So, people who went to Khomeini to persuade him to call off this meeting and refuse to participate in the Security Council meeting did not really believe in -- what should I say? -- the correctness or the feasibility of this action. They simply wanted to discredit Bani Sadr. They did not want Bani Sadr to get credit from this trip. That was really the primary motive of these people. I don't want to talk about it - a range of people. Some of them could say something quite different in front of Bani Sadr, but the competition was very stiff. So, he resigned and continued his campaign. Salamatiyan and Sanjabi returned to Iran.