

I stayed here and continued for another week. I talked to, specifically, Richard Falk and Tom Ricks, and came up with this scheme of an international commission. I said, "If there is an international commission of inquiry going to Iran, investigating the Iranian charges against the United States, the American interference in Iran, such a commission could facilitate the release of the hostages and still give Iran something in return." So, I went to Iran with this idea - rather developed and written down. Even I had made some suggestions about the composition of the commission.

By this time, Qotbzadeh had become Foreign Minister. So, I went to Iran and talked to Bani Sadr, Bazargan, Qotbzadeh, and Yazdi. Yazdi and Bani Sadr were still in the Revolutionary Council. It's interesting that during this period, when they were dismissed from their position from the premiership, they were not dismissed from the government. So, they continued to be influential in the Revolutionary Council. Up to this stage, the Revolutionary Council, as a whole, was very much opposed to the continuation of the hostage crisis, including Beheshti and including Rafsanjani, who told me during the same period that the Hostage Crisis must end soon. And another person who was vehemently against the Hostage Crisis, the hostage-taking and continuation of the crisis, was Ayatollah Montazeri. When I went to Iran, I learned that actually Salamatiyan knew him through his father in Esfahan.

We went to see Ayatollah Montazeri. I also saw him at the

Foreign Ministry. After explaining to him -- The reason I say that is because the day that I -- Well, let me retract because it's an interesting story.

I suggested this proposal. The Revolutionary Council discussed it. They unanimously decided that it's a good idea. Qotbzadeh said, "Yes. I will appoint you to go to New York as our representative, as the Iranian Delegate to take part in the formation of this commission, members of this commission, the agenda of the commission, and what is expected of them both formally and informally." All of these elements were really in the proposal I had submitted.

Q: You were present at the Revolutionary Council?

Farhang: No, I was not in the Revolutionary Council. My contact was through the Foreign Ministry - all informal, and Bani Sadr's Inqilab-e Islami office, Bazargan at his house. Bazargan's daughter and son-in-law lived upstairs in my sister's building. They were renting an apartment from my sister and brother-and-law. So, I also knew them even long before the revolution began in an informal way.

No, I had nothing to do with the Revolutionary Council. But they discussed it and three different sources -- Bani Sadr, Bazargan, and Qotbzadeh -- told me that support for the proposal in the Revolutionary Council was unanimous and we should do this, we should proceed as quickly as possible.

So, I thought about it. Then, I told Qotbzadeh, "You

know and I know that the Revolutionary Council and all of you people are all irrelevant if Khomeini does not support the idea. I will accept this responsibility if I can go to Qom and present the idea to Imam, see how he responds. If he gives me his word, if he is fundamentally in favor of the idea, it would be a wonderful challenge for me, an experience to go there and engage in it." I was very interested in doing it.

And he said, "Fine."

So, one day, a couple days later -- it was early December -- we took the helicopter from the Foreign Ministry. There, Mo'infar, who was Minister of Oil, and Montazeri, who was, by this time, heir apparent, the successor to Khomeini. He was being groomed. He was a very simple man. I never thought for a moment that he would play a significant role in Iran. I never thought for a moment from the first time I met him.

So, one person, I had some time, I talked to him and I explained to him how the hostage-taking was defacing the Iranian Revolution and discrediting our humanity. I gave him a very humanistic kind of argument against the continuation of this crisis, as well as what incredible economic damage this was doing to Iran and to Iranians all over the board.

He listened and then said, "Do you know about Hatam-e Ta'i?" Later, he also said exactly the same story to Salamatiyan. He said, "Do you know about Hatam-e Ta'i's brother?"

I said, "No."

He said "Hatam-e Ta'i wanted to be generous, give Kharji.

The more he helped people, the more everyone talked of his brother.

[end of side one, tape five]

Hatam continued to be generous, and he was extremely angry and disappointed that the credit was going to his brother. One day, he got very upset and he decided to put an end to his generosity, and he urinated in the Zamzam Well. Once he did that, the world started to talk about him and not about his brother anymore. "Now, the Imam has urinated in Zamzam Well." Hostage-taking is exactly like pissing in Zamzam Well. And that's exactly what Hamam has done. He knew it was bad, but he says, "The whole world is talking about us."

Q: This is what Montazeri said.

Farhang: This is what Montazeri said.

Q: Who was the brother?

Farhang: Nothing. There was no brother. He was trying to explain the nature of the act of the second brother - maybe even in the beginning, I would say, it was Khomeini himself that initiated it, which is really in a sense, at least from his standpoint, that the first time when the hostage-taking took place in Iran, it was Khomeini who intervened and put an end to

it through Yazdi. William Sullivan has written about it in his book.

Anyway, the important point was the second. I laughed. I said, "Would it be possible for you to support this idea when we go to Qom?"

He said, "Yes, I'll do my best."

So, we went to Qom. The first person who was going to say something to Khomeini -- Khomeini was sitting here. It really was a seating arrangement with respect to Montazeri, and his position was also interesting. The wall was here. Khomeini was sitting here. He was not leaning against the wall. Montazeri was sitting on his right-hand side, further back, leaning against the wall, and a number of people, several people -- The ones I remember very distinctly was Mo'infar, Qotbzadeh, myself, Naser Makarem Shirazi for some reason was also in the room, Ahmad Khomeini, and a couple other mollas - younger people. Khomeini's grandson. What was his name? Anyway, the younger one. They were all sitting here. The person who talked was Mo'infar, which was another fascinating, revealing encounter. Mo'infar said, "You know, since the hostage crisis began, our oil export has really suffered and we cannot export enough oil because of the boycott. Our total volume of export has actually come under two million barrels a day, which is a real reduction. But in order to present a strong position to the rest of the world, in our announcements, in our publicity, we say that the oil export is two and a half million." Khomeini listened to that

story, and here is the Minister of Oil informing the chief about the reality and the political propaganda aspect of the claim.

Khomeini listened and said, "Put the word 'approximately' before two and a half million so you wouldn't have any religious difficulty with your pronouncements." He said, "Yek kalemeh-e 'taqriban' jelohe do va nim million bogzarid ke as nazar shar'i eshkali nabashad." I'm quoting him verbatim. Which was kind of interesting.

Then, it was my turn. He wouldn't listen. I had met him several times -- four times, actually -- in Paris, so this was the first time that I was meeting him in Iran. I know that he had no patience to listen to long presentations or discussions. I had practiced and memorized literally every word I was uttering before him. I saw I had about five minutes at the most, and I want to say everything possible about this incident. I presented my argument to him that hostage-taking is devastating us economically and damaging the revolution morally, causing a great deal of hardship for Iranians abroad. We have already proven our case, and continuation of this thing could only be destructive from the standpoint of national interest and the Iranian society. Everybody is familiar with those arguments.

His response initially was, oh, he confirmed what Montazeri had said in that anecdote, in a sense. Another point that I made, in fact I showed him some examples, as a result of this, our revolution is getting a great deal of negative publicity and commentary, the labeling of really derogatory and immoral nature, and we should put an end to this. He said, "Once the hostages

are released, they will not write anything about us anymore." Instinctively, he was, in a sense, almost a post-modern politician saying that publicity, being in the limelight is important regardless of what they say about us. This is the kind of position that the political packaging firms in Washington and New York take. The important thing is to be in the news. Basically, that was his --

Nevertheless, in continuation, even in the conversation, he got kind of irritated and said, "Oh, inke harfe Amrika'iha ast," i.e., the argument that the security of the country would be endangered as a result of the weakening of our armed forces, which was a real concern for the people was the American position. I specifically mentioned Iraq, that here there is a threat to our territorial integrity and the continuation of the weakening of Iranian defense forces.

He got very angry and said, "Oh, inke harfe Amrica'ha ast." That's something the Americans would say. You people have lived abroad." He took one look at me and he knew that he was not talking to an Islamic type. You open your mouth, and even in my hair. I had very long [hair]. Even though I had a beard, he didn't know that my beard was from the anti-war movement of the 1960s. [chuckles] He was extremely sharp when it came to recognizing and understanding people. This was not the kind of argument that we submit to and all that but, nevertheless, the discussion went on for about half an hour, which was very unusual for Khomeini.

Q: Were other people participating?

Farhang: Other people participating. As we were discussing this, Khomeini said, "Yes, if the International Commission comes and condemns the American interference in Iran, then we would accept the recommendation and Majles would respond to them."

I said, "Their recommendation would be inevitably to release the hostages. There is no question about that. Even if they gave us a condemnation of American foreign policy that would be completely pleasing to us, still that suggestion is there."

He said, "Fine."

At this moment, Montazeri interfered and said, "But that would take too long." Here, Khomeini was sitting here. He took his right hand out of his aba and said, "Shoma be kar khodetan beresid." (You attend to your own affairs) [chuckles] i.e., "Shut up." At that moment, I realized that this guy really doesn't have any respect for him. Montazeri didn't say another word for the rest of the time. Mo'infar and Makarem Shirazi were very supportive. Obviously, Qotbzadeh was supportive, but then he had his own agenda. He also was running for the presidency and all that, and he wanted to score a big victory and be an international figure. Of course, the resolution of the hostage crisis would have helped him with his agenda, because opposition to the release of the hostages had other contenders. He could never compete with them.

The clear, unmistakable impression Khomeini gave us was that



if such a commission produces a report that satisfies us, we will release the hostages. With that solid understanding, I left Qom and came to New York.

Q: How did you feel talking to him?

Farhang: At that time, I had so much admiration for him still. It was the beginning of the waning of the admiration. A love affair doesn't end abruptly if it's genuine. My respect and love for Khomeini was very genuine and deeply felt - not because I identified with him as a leader or as a culture or political figure, but as a grandfather figure who wanted to re-establish our nativity. This was the beginning of it but, initially, I never saw him as a political leader. It was just unimaginable for me -- and, if you ask me, even for Khomeini himself -- that he would be the head of State appointing the Police Chief and the Military Chief and all that. I don't think he had that agenda. He always saw himself in the beginning as a source of moral influence on the political order, and not the chief of State as the top executive officer of the political order. This is December, 1979 - a month and a half into the hostage-taking. So, the love and respect was weakening.

For example, that particular day was a very important day for me because that response he gave to Mo'infar about the oil, for some reason, I didn't expect him to say that. Or I didn't expect Montazeri to describe Khomeini's motives and

behavior with respect to hostage-taking as he did. Or I didn't expect him to behave toward Montazeri the way he did. He was very different in Paris - not that he was acting out. In Paris, he had no army; he had no police chief. He was a genuine, real, religious figure. He was a man without substantive power. His power was completely on the moral level and ideological level where people simply admired him. By this time, he had become the de facto Head of State. All conflicts in Iranian society went to him.

The reason he was transformed into that position is also a very important subject of investigation about which virtually nothing has been written. Khomeini went to Qom, and he appointed Bazargan, and gave Bazargan complete freedom to choose his cabinet members. When Bazargan complained about performance of Qotbzadeh in radio and television, Khomeini told him, "You are the Prime Minister, fire him!"

Here on this governmental side, as well as the political side, conflicts were reaching an ever-expanding and intense level. Every time a conflict had to be resolved in order for government to function, they went to Khomeini. So, they involved him. The failure of the secular or liberal forces, and the utter failure of the leftist forces to understand this, the utter failure of the liberal forces to see the importance and the crucial nature of this whole thing to get involved, they continued to moan and groan and bitch about everything, as is the primary attribute of Iranian liberalism - just moan and groan with a purposeless kind of pomposity about everything.

In the context of this, and then decisions have to be made -- whether it's about the position, about the policy, about whether or not an institution has to be established and all that -- they go to him and he resolves the conflict. They drew him in. The more they drew him in, the more rapidly they transformed him. When I say "they," I don't mean sitting and making systematic decisions - just the dynamics of the situation and the political incompetence and immaturity of us all.

Q: The same thing that happened to the Shah, you mean?

Farhang: Sure. Except this one I'm speaking of it as a witness. Gradually, the revolutionary forces collectively made a heavy contribution to Ayatollah Khomeini becoming a megalomaniac. Even a seventy-five-year-old man had the potential to go through the transformation. Of course, there was a fertile ground. But I would say that all people who get involved in politics, particularly politics of the Third World, have that potential to one degree or another. The whole idea of looking for purity for the right and perfect man, that's a kind of absurdity that is not really a political orientation.

Q: But he had written that this was the kind of government he wanted.

Farhang: When we go and read and all that, it's a kind of

religious structure. He never saw himself being -- This is the way the government ought to. But that's the way the left wrote about government. That's the way the Shah wrote about government and the liberals wrote about government to the extent that they did. They thought other people should do it, and their job is just to reap the fruits or be more critics on the margins. But people who wrote about government in Iran, they all wrote in such harsh, absolutist, one-dimensional fashion - the way we talked about government before I became a student of politics and studied books and became a teacher. There were correct decisions and right decisions that the government had to make. The notion that there is no such thing as Truth with capital "T" in government and all that was an alien notion. Perhaps Khomeini's vocabulary and symbolism is somewhat strange or unacceptable to the leftist liberals and secularists in general, but I don't think in substance and in content. He wrote about government in a different way that other political groups or personalities did.

Now, retroactively going back and isolating something and bringing it out and all that is, of course, easy to do. We could do that. I don't think that is really a way of what happens in action and behavior. If that's the way he felt, why didn't he appoint someone like Beheshti to the premiership right after the revolution? Why didn't he take more direct control of significant appointments, whether domestic policy or foreign policy? He did nothing of that nature at all. He genuinely really gave Bazargan leeway.

Let me go even further with respect to showing his behavior,

what we as human beings do in specific situations. It's far more important than abstract ideas we present as thinkers. When the first draft of the Iranian Constitution was written, which was written by liberals, Khomeini was opposed to the establishment of the Constituent Assembly to ratify it. His opposition was that he thought it takes too long and he was somewhat afraid of instability and absence of institutionalization. He wanted to speed things up. On the margin of that Constitution, which is in existence, he said, bela mane'ast in a couple places. One was on the question of women and whether or not a woman could be the president. That was one issue he objected to. He didn't really have much difficulty selling that even to the most liberal members of the left and all that, as you well know. That wasn't an issue for the vast majority of political forces and personalities in Iran.

The principal and, at the time, including myself, the necessary demand for establishment of a Constituent Assembly came from the left and the liberals. Someone like Rafsanjani, I have quoted him in an article. He said to Bani Sadr, "Who do you think would be elected to the Constituent Assembly? Yek mosht akhund-e nafahm." That's exactly what he said. "Yek mosht akhund-e nafahm" - who would change this Constitution to such a degree that you wouldn't be able to recognize it. So, the demand finally forced Khomeini to accept the idea. Then, they had to compromise. Every single day that passed convinced the clerical elements of their power in Iran. Time was very much on their

side in recognizing what a massive, mobilizing capability they had. The idea of Majles-e Khebreghan (Constituent Assembly) was a compromise idea coming from Ayatollah Taleqani, who said, "Well, you people want to establish an Constituent Assembly for two hundred members, and Ayatollah Khomeini says we don't need it right now." He said, "The first Majles should have the mandate to make any kind of revisions in the Constitution that they deem necessary," which was an idea kind of combining the first Majles with the Constituent Assembly.

So, they reached this compromise, and they accepted it. When the campaign began for election to the Constituent Assembly, I hate to admit this, but I think it was a reasonably free election in Iran. Except that when people in Yazd wanted to elect a member to the Constituent Assembly, whom do they elect? They have been mobilized for a year of demonstrations and the unquestioned and unchallenged leader of the demonstration is Yazd was Ayatollah Saduqi. In fact, Ayatollah Saduqi was so popular that even before the revolution, he was a personality. So, Ayatollah Madani in Tabriz, Ayatollah Dastgheib in Shiraz. There was no other leadership. The left and the liberals, and all that, we were all limited to the northern part of our cities, and people like ourselves with very little contact with the general population. If the general population was going to be mobilized at the time and there was competition between religious figures and the liberals or the leftists for the support or loyalty of the people, there wasn't much of a contest. The vast majority of the liberals and leftists could not even communicate. If they

were not mobilized and politics remained in the realm of the middle-class, as the politics of Mosaddeq period -- masses in Mosaddeq had nothing to do -- then, within that limited constituency of the middle class, which is really the normal business of politics in most countries, including the West and all, the liberal leftist could have a very disproportionate impact on the political outcome and political process because of their capabilities as individuals and organizations - not because they had numerical support. But at that particular time, the country was mobilized and elections were being propagated as an important mobilizing and galvanizing method, and they won, they won.

I'm not saying that it was free in the sense of all political forces being able to -- They were present, and it was as free as anything we have ever had in the Third World. These people were genuinely really elected. There was no shenanigan involved. Only in Tehran, some individuals like Bazargan, Taleqani or in Tabriz, somebody like -- What was his name? Anyway, half a dozen liberal seculars were elected. The rest, overwhelming. I'm talking about the processes that gradually transformed a lot of these people. Once they were transformed, the ideas they had -- Of course, they were not opposed to the hard-line fundamentalists.

We have kind of deviated from it. I came to New York. This is the other dimension of this whole political process. I came to New York. I started working on this commission, contacted

with [Kurt] Waldheim regularly, who was one of the least exciting human beings I have ever met in my life - very bureaucratic, uncreative, intellectually dumb and bankrupt. I go to him and I say, "Yes, I am the representative of Iran. Yes, I am the Ambassador and all that. But right now, Iran is not a country where an Ambassador is representing. There is no government in Iran in the sense of representing the interests of [the people]. There are people in nominal positions of authority, and there are people who have the real power. Some people are desperately interested in solving this crisis; others don't want to solve it. They are both very important and powerful. I represent those elements who desperately want to solve this - kind of working with them with complicity."

He responds to me as if this is another diplomatic strategy. I also tell him that I'm not a diplomat; I've been an academician all my life and all that. This is the first time that, like many other people in Iran, we are thrown into a situation. I soon realized that the man is just an uninteresting, dumb wall.

I went to the Algerian Ambassador whom I knew through Richard Falk, Mohammad Bejaoui, and asked him to take an active part, and he understood me. I said, "Algeria is the country that is highly respected in Iran. If you are the Chairman of this Commission, it would be very beneficial to the people in Iran who want to solve this problem." He understood it, and he was very active in it.

Another member of the Commission was Syria. This was the other thing that I was trying to explain to Waldheim, that



members of this Commission symbolically are very important. On January 7, 1980, Waldheim presented the idea to the Security Council. I came to New York on December 17th. We had done some preliminary work on this. At that stage, the United States opposed the idea of the Commission. The reason they opposed the idea was because [Edward] Kennedy was portraying [James E.] Carter in the New Hampshire Primary campaign as soft on the Ayatollah. The White House people were completely absorbed with Kennedy's challenge to Carter's renomination. The polls were indicating that he was many points ahead. Carter, during that period, took a very kind of decisive, anti-compromise position because his campaign team had thought that this is the best way to eliminate -- The resolution of the hostage-taking itself became subservient to the campaign.

This was the time that I called McHenry through Ambassador Qaysar, who was the Bangladesh Ambassador. I talked to him. He came to New York. I talked to him and I said, "I wish the Americans accept this right away because in Iran every single day is pregnant with new events. We don't know if we wait two months." Still, I'm not certain that Khomeini would have accepted it, but the chances are that if -- this history is a very big if -- but I would say if the Americans had accepted the Commission in early January, the first meeting of the Security Council when Waldheim requested it, and if the Commission had been sent to Iran immediately, I think the chances would have been much better to resolve it. Even the second time Khomeini

went through, it was a very excruciating kind of experience. So, they rejected it. I never saw Khomeini after that, but he said, "I told you so. The Americans are not going to submit to our request and the Commission and all that." He interpreted differently, completely oblivious to why. For me, being a creature of both cultures, I knew that politics was really at the core of the American --

I talked to McHenry on the phone and I explained to him, again in the same way, more or less, I explained to Waldheim, that this is not a situation that you're dealing with a negotiator from the other side, that you're dealing with a well-established government. The nominal government in Iran is more desperate to solve this problem because the hostage crisis in Iran was really degrading and demoralizing the secular liberal forces. The left was absolutely demolished as a result of it, and the liberals were passive and inactive and all that.

He responded again like a diplomat. He said, "I will take the issue to Washington and discuss it with them and in the Security Council."

Q: [unclear]

Farhang: But the second time around, after the New Hampshire Primary was over, then this time the United States presented the proposal to the Security Council, and Khomeini's response this time was very lukewarm. But the Commission members were already formed. We were waiting, and I was absolutely certain that once

the primary is over, the Commission is going to be formed. Waldheim was pretty much aware of that. He told me the same thing.

So, the Commission went to Iran in early March. They were supposed to be there originally for five days. Khomeini made them wait in Iran for seventeen days, and finally said no.

[end of side two, tape five]

Farhang: The Commission went to Iran in March. They were supposed to be there only for five days. The agreement, as it was, in early January, supposedly the agreement remained the same except that it didn't materialize because of American opposition to the formation of the Commission. They were supposed to release the report and also get the commitment that the hostages would be released. Khomeini refused to answer them after five days. He said the next day -- which was very uncharacteristic. So, for seventeen days, these people waited in Iran. Finally, Khomeini said no. By this time, the Iranian political scene was very sharply and intensely divided between those who wanted to release the hostages and those who didn't. Khomeini finally took the side of the hardliners.

The Commission returned from Iran empty handed, and I immediately submitted my resignation. I don't know if I was officially introduced to the UN or not, but I have never received anything. But, nevertheless, I submitted my resignation in writing and returned --

Q: To whom?

Farhang: To the Foreign Ministry. Qotbzadeh continued to be there. I said, "This is absurd." During this entire period, I never went inside the UN building as a delegate to the General Assembly or any committee, as a delegate of Iran. I used to go to the parking lot, take the elevator, go to [Kurt] Waldheim's office, and go down to the garage downstairs and get out, simply

because I thought representing a country that is taking hostages is kind of absurd and degrading.

We had absolutely nothing to do except this thing and also massive requests for interviews and commentaries and so forth. Once in a while, I accepted an invitation and always presented a case, trying to remain more or less credible to the pro-Khomeini people who were watching and, at the same time, trying to present a kind of civil view of Iran and the hostage crisis, hoping --

Q: Were you reporting to Iran regularly?

Farhang: Absolutely. There was no recording. On the phone, talking to -- Here, supposedly, I was very much interactive. After Bani Sadr in February, actually, while I was -- And that was another reason that made my stay here kind of interesting. I went to Geneva as the head of the Iranian delegation to the Human Rights Commission, which was very interesting. I really enjoyed that. I was very active on behalf of the Palestinians. The Argentineans, at the time, were there. That's where, actually, I met Soheyla. That was a very learning, interesting experience for me, the Human Rights Commission.

Q: When was this?

Farhang: It was February, 1980.

Q: Did you have any problem with the hostage situation as the Iranians' representative?

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Farhang: Of course. The hostage situation was the real challenge. Fortunately, it wasn't presented; it wasn't discussed. But, informally, it was present. Except that everybody could understand -- we were there for about three weeks -- through formal statements, presentations, and informal contact and communication, that the hostage-taking in Iran was not something that all political forces supported. Some members of this delegation were there. For example, a French lawyer. I continued to be active in trying to pursue the Algerian mission. I was in contact. This was the situation. On the one hand, you cannot take a position against those who are holding the hostages in a decisive way because, if you do that, you would be at risk. It's the kind of compromise that when you're in that position you have to make if you want to be there. If you want to make a decisive, categorical, ethical decision to disassociate yourself, that's obviously an option. But I had decided to be involved and make the necessary compromises for that period of time in the expectation of being successful.

It didn't work out. It didn't pan out. And I resigned. My entire diplomatic career was five months. [chuckles] I resigned in April and returned to Iran a month later.

Q: How did you feel during this period? What was the mood?

Farhang: I was still hopeful. But ever single day was chipping away from the hope. When you begin an experience with a great deal of hope and optimism, the reality is disillusioning. It's a process. It was a process of disillusionment. When I returned to Iran, even during the five months, the situation was so drastically changed that I actually started writing political commentary. I was writing in Bani Sadr's newspaper very critical material once or twice a week, criticizing all kinds of issues. That's how we became targeted as the enemy. When Bani Sadr was ousted, they were after us.

It's a different story, going to what happened in Iran during the period. Individuals were transformed. Institutions were transformed. Leaders were transformed. My view of politics is not that people go into a situation with a well-defined and clear position and view of what they want to do. I think we all go into these situations knowing you otherwise, with a great deal of malleability, vulnerability, flexibility. Even if we don't have it, we will inevitably be faced with decisions or choices that involve these attributes. Now, if we are not the type, we could easily disassociate ourselves and become a sideliners. But if we decide to remain in that context --

From Khomeini down to the Revolutionary Guard, I would say they had the same ambivalence. Giving you an example when I talk about the Guard, it doesn't really have anything to do with my

experiences, but it symbolizes something interesting. One hostage, Charles Quinn, who was released earlier because of his illness, several months before the rest, wrote a book called Inside and Out. In that book, there is one interesting sentence, which really made read of the book worth the time. He was talking to a guard in the middle of the night, to the person who was guarding him, the Revolutionary Guard, and he knows some English. This guard asked Charles Quinn, "When you're free and go to the States, can you get me an acceptance from an American university [chuckles] so that I can go there and study engineering?" I don't know if this Revolutionary Guard of this incredible contradiction in his head, about the university, but I think it symbolizes -- As many American officials said, the same people used to be very critical of the United States and all that, but when they see the Counselor privately they want to get a visa. [chuckles]

Q: Now, when you went back, you say you saw changes. What kind of changes were there?

Farhang: On one level, positions were being opened up - professional bureaucratic positions. I know a good number of people who were involved in the anti-Shah movement abroad, and then they moved into various bureaucracies with idealistic or professional interests of taking a position. So, the individuals were faced with submitting to religious authority and becoming a professional, bureaucratic appointee of a reasonably high level,



from the Minister on down. A good number of these people, perhaps the vast majority of them, made those compromises. Because what was very clear from the very beginning, when the religious people were not opposed, Khomeini and Beheshti and Rafsanjani and the rest were not at all interested in expelling the liberal, non-religious forces from the crowd at all. They were interested in making them submit unconditionally and without hesitation to their superior authority. They used to say that, "We will control the majari umur, and you will be the mojri." It was a very clear choice. What you did at home and the way you lived your life didn't particularly concern them. So, it was interesting to watch a lot of people being faced with that decision and making the choice.

I would say here, giving you a good example, there are right now two individuals in New York, Kamal Kharrazi and Sadeq Tehrani. They have the rank of Ambassadors. They were both very close to Bazargan and Yazdi. At some point early in the game, they found themselves in the position of were they following Bazargan, continuing the dissent, or becoming part of the regime. The vast majority of the people who were with Bazargan, particularly in the younger level, they deserted Bazargan. Still, they constitute a very significant, perhaps the majority, of the professional bureaucratic positions of the regime up to the present time.

Disintegration of the left was another development that was kind of shocking. This dogmatism that we are talking about from

the government was far more intense and vicious among the left because there was more idealism among the left in a philosophical sense. And they had no responsibility. There was no relationship between the way they lived their lives and the security and so forth, and the ideas they were propagating. In fact, they were more susceptible to dogmatism and uncompromising kinds of positions. In a sense, this infatuation with international movements and international ideas, whether it was Maoism, or Castroism, or Stalinism and all that, they were crumbling before your eyes. And, again, these characters I knew personally, many of them friends the same age or a few years younger that had been active abroad. So many of them really lost their lives - hundreds of these people. I can sit and really think about the names of the people that I knew as a student, and later on they found themselves before the firing squads.

Another very important and revealing and disappointing thing I learned during this period -- the intensity and the passion was gone and some reflectiveness had taken its place, and a more sober view of what was happening -- was the emptiness of liberalism. These individuals who were our heroes because of their association with Mossadeq, they turned out to be extremely incompetent and empty, and really disconnected from the base the Iranian society - to me, at least. I identified with those people in my political life and interest more than any other group. My idealization of big names who had inherited the mantle of Mossadeq was as unrealistic, as naive, as disconnected from the realities of Iran and the idealism of the left with respect

to Maoism when it comes to leadership and all that, or the idealism of the liberal religionists about Khomeini and all that. That was another thing - a stark kind of confrontation with realities. There were daily occurrences. This reflection was at least as a teacher, I would say it was a tremendous learning experience, now that I survived.

Q: Did you see Bazargan during that period?

Farhang: Yes. I saw Bazargan quite regularly. Morally, he remained unshaken. For these people, they were always suspicious of mollas in general. But this was the first time that this suspicion was very real and it had been actualized. And I would say for men like Bazargan, this recognition, the suffering of humiliation in the hands of the clerical elements, was extremely painful on an existential, personal level, and somewhat shocking on a political level. Again, I go back to my personal experience.

After the 1953 coup -- I was a high school student -- we used to go, on Friday nights, to Masjed-e Kedayat because Talegani used to speak there. He was the pishnamaz or Friday prayer leader of the mosque. At that time, Bazargan was teaching in the University. They had the Anjoman-e Mohandesin-e Islami - Islamic Engineers Association. They used to come to this, to the Friday night gatherings at the mosques to take part in the prayer. We never went for the prayer but, after that, Talegani

speaks and it's really a nostalgic gathering of pro-Mossadeq forces in the mosque. Many of them had never been to a mosque before.

What I remember very distinctly was that, for the clerical element, mollas, associating with men like Bazargan and Sahabi was an incredible source of prestige, self-importance. They were treated, from that period, from 1953 to the eve of Khomeini's return to Iran, these people were treated with immense respect and admiration because it was through these people that a lot of clerical elements made a connection with the middle-class and gained respect. So gradually, men like Bazargan and Sahabi, and even the younger ones like Yazdi and Chamran, Sabbaghian, Mo'infar, and so forth - all in the same crowd, part of the same association -- They had come to expect the clerical elements to treat them with respect and deference. They were just accustomed to it for all these years. That picture suddenly changed. It went through a very drastic kind of change, that they would be dismissed and disrespected, and even threatened with arrest and so forth. They are still probably in shock. Immediately, when it began, liberal religionists had a very tough time to adapt, to adjust, to this change of attitude on the part of the clerics. I remember talking to Bazargan. Maybe he was in the hospital. I went to visit him and all that. It was one point he made. "We never thought that these people would treat us with such disgust and nastiness, and dismiss us so easily." He said, "I could never have anticipated and imagined that."

Q: And then what did you decide to do?

Farhang: I remained politically active, writing, going to still the universities. Mizan was being published. I wrote some articles for it, and also for Engelab-e Islami.

When I returned to Iran, the first thing I did was I wrote a long letter, about twelve or thirteen pages, about the hostage crisis. I issued it as an open letter to members of Parliament. And I explained my view of the hostage-taking, fundamentally how it is damaging Iran. Not only that -- That was one part of the letter. And how the hostage-taking is changing and transforming American politics in the interest of right-wing Republican militarists. These were the two points of the letter.

Well, later, I learned that I was far more -- It was an intuitive observation. But, today, I have absolutely no doubt that the [Ronald] Reagan/[George] Bush campaign team had a connivance with Ayatollah Khomeini and the west not to resolve the hostage-taking until the November, 1980 election. But that is not anything that I could even imagine in my wildest dreams at the time.

Q: You mean, there actually was contact?

Farhang: Oh, absolutely. There was absolutely. It's not the kind of thing that -- There's a massive amount of writing and investigation even in the Congress, journalism, academics --

It's not the kind of case that one could prove, at least not yet. I'll tell you later that someone is actually working on it. Someone with credibility has been involved in investigating it for two and a half years and will issue a book on the subject, but not at the time, not at the time.

So, I wrote this letter. I took the letter to Keyhan.

Yazdi was still in charge of Keyhan. See, these people were not out yet. Yazdi and Shariyar Rowhani were running Keyhan. Mahmud Do'a'i and Shams Al-e Ahmad were in Ettela'at. I knew Shams from the time I was fourteen and fifteen years old. At the age of fourteen and fifteen, I was part of the student movement under Mossadeq. I was a member of Niruy-e Sevvom. And Shams was our Sokhangu-e howzeh. [chuckles] They had structured the party along the line of what they knew about the Tudeh Party. Later on, I worked with Jalal on his translation of Andre Gide's Return From the USSR. I was in charge of getting Al-e Ahmad's writing and taking it to the printer which, at the time, I cherished the experience because I used to go to Jalal's house and just see him. So, I knew the family and I knew Shams.

With this letter, I went to Yazdi. Yazdi read it and sat on it for two weeks. He was kind of interested in working with me and all that, and he didn't want to say no, and he didn't dare to publish it. He was already under attack. From there, I took it to Ettela'at. I talked to Shams and I talked to Do'a'i. They sat on it. Do'a'i was even opposed to the idea. With Shams, they sat on it and they finally said no. So, I went to Bani Sadr. He wasn't even the editor, it was anarchy. There were two

editors. One of them was very interested; one of them was not. The day that the other editor was in, he was out of town. [chuckles] Jalal Musavi was the liberal editor. He knew some of the students who studied in France and all that. He published it. And then, I actually, with the help of Engelab-e Islami and Jalal, I reproduced it and made two hundred copies and mailed it to members of the Iranian Parliament. It was just an act that I thought I should report this experience. But it was only then that the Tehran Times translated part of it and published just as news.

After that, I continued along the same lines, but becoming increasing critical. Engelab-e Islami was the platform. It was an anarchy there, which is an entirely different story. Bani Sadr is the only Muslim anarchist I have ever known. It depends on who was in charge. When you read Engelab-e Islami of the period, you find all kinds of stuff. You find the kind of material in it that hizbollahis could write. You also find Asghar Seyyed-Javadi. You also find people who are very liberal and leftists. It's a conglomeration of various views. So, I wrote. And I also wrote for Mizan some articles. The University faculty were still active. They had organizations, small groups. I spoke to these on foreign policy issues and others. So, there was a degree of activism going on in our homes. Asghar Syyed-Javadi was kind of also active.

And then, the war broke out. When the war broke out, Bani Sadr decided to use the war as a way of consolidating power,