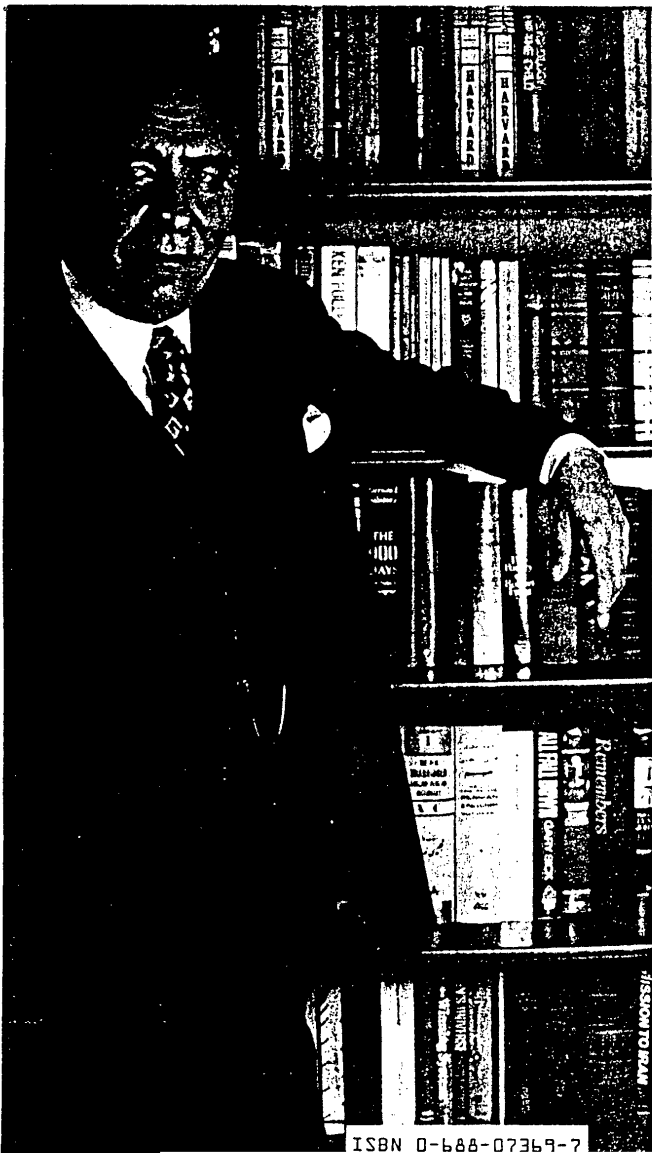


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Rafizadeh

WITNESS

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*From the Shah to
the Secret Arms Deal
An Insider's Account
of U.S. Involvement
in Iran*

Mansur Rafizadeh
Former Chief of SAVAK



Morrow

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*From the Shah to
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The Reagan administration is shaken by the Iranian arms scandal, Americans are held hostage in Beirut and Tehran, the president's "private" government is under investigation by the judicial system. Where did it all begin, and what is the truth behind the official lies?

This vivid account is by a man uniquely qualified to tell the inside story of Iranian and United States involvement from both sides. A former chief of SAVAK (the shah's secret police) and a covert agent for the CIA, Rafizadeh begins his story with his childhood in Kerman where he gives a remarkable picture of Iranian life. He tells of his education as a liberal with his mentor, Dr. Mozafar Baghai, and why he joined with the shah, whom he then saw as Iran's best hope for democratic rule. His disillusionment with the monarchy and the shah's demonic excesses, which he describes in new and shocking detail, led Rafizadeh to become a double agent for the CIA. Rafizadeh, stationed in America, began the secret activity that would help the United States withdraw its support from Iran's tyrannical and decadent monarch.

Why Rafizadeh left the CIA is part of his account of the secret arms deal,
(continued on back flap)

(continued from front cover)

ig facts. "What did President Reagan know and when did he know it?" is answered by the author as he recounts the unfolding of the arms deal from its inception in 1981. A pattern of deception and deliberate evasion of congressional law becomes clear as the president's men pursue their private diplomacy. Rafizadeh fits all the pieces together when he shows what happened in Iran as well as the United States—disturbing revelations about the day the hostages didn't come home, Reagan's personal, message-bearing gifts to Khomeini, the intense rivalry between the NSC and the CIA and its disastrous effect, the role of the arms dealers, Khomeini's contempt for the United States as he continued to accept arms and take hostages. *Witness*, an insider's story, takes the lid off the secret and tells the unbelievable, shocking truth.

Mansur Rafizadeh was born and educated in Kerman, Iran. He graduated from the Tehran University Law School, where he risked his life by playing a leading role in antidictatorship student demonstrations. His parents, fearing for his safety, sent him to the United States in 1957 to study at Harvard University and New York University. The eldest of six children, he, his three brothers and two sisters, and his mother all live in the United States.

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CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Death Threat

In March 1986, after the CIA had received some intelligence about this book, a senior officer, whom I had not seen since severing my ties with the Agency in 1983, set up a meeting in New York City.

Justifiably, I was very apprehensive about this meeting. My intuitive juices started flowing, and I realized that I had to protect myself. I considered my options and called the FBI beforehand. I told them that a senior CIA official was coming to see me regarding a book I was writing about my political experiences, and that I would let them know when and where the meeting would be taking place.

I met with the CIA officer on Wednesday morning, March 26, 1986, in a nondescript hotel suite. He was seated behind a large desk, and we began talking about the "old times" when I was associated with his office, but the conversation's direction quickly changed. He was anxious to tell me about the developments at the CIA and how "Old Bill" Casey had gotten rid of the "assholes" and had changed the operation tremendously.

Finally, he got to the real purpose of our meeting. His office was very concerned about my book, and, because he was an old friend, he had volunteered to serve as a go-between to prevent me from making some serious mistakes.

Ultimately, we began to talk about the contents of my manuscript. He listened calmly as I told him about the early biographical chapters, but when I got to my experiences with the CIA, he became very angry

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and defensive. He accused me of being hostile toward his office and of placing the CIA's "new reputation" in jeopardy. He implored me not to include material he felt would be damaging. "The office made mistakes in the past," he admitted, "but the office Old Bill operates today is different. By publishing this information you would give the office an even more terrible reputation—not only here but abroad." Above all, he explained that it was out of the question for his office to allow the book to be published. He had a better way to handle it. He suggested that I come to Washington, where we could review the manuscript in a civilized way and take out those parts that the Agency was not comfortable with. Then they would assign a writer to me, who would help me to replace the stricken sections with some more acceptable material.

The CIA was demanding *carte blanche* to rewrite my book—to rewrite history!

I emphasized that I wasn't interested in harming the CIA, but merely in informing the American people of the truth, in clarifying a very important part of history that I had witnessed. I would never willingly compromise agents or their current intelligence-gathering methods. And as for the CIA's "new reputation," I said, William Casey could not be held accountable for things his predecessors had done.

Failing to overcome my resistance, the official tried a different tactic. "Give us the manuscript and we'll give your cost plus whatever you think three years of your own time is worth. No receipts necessary. Just give us the total."

I knew that I could walk out of that room with a promise of a tax-free \$1 million or more. I turned him down flat. The CIA man banged on the desk. "Asshole!" he yelled.

Finally, he calmed down after a visible effort to get himself under control. "Give me the manuscript, Mansur," he cajoled.

Again I refused. "I wrote this because of my beliefs, not because I am hostile toward your office," I said.

He demanded to know who had the manuscript and if any of them were known to be anti-CIA. He wanted to collect all of the copies before "this thing gets out of hand."

I didn't reveal any names but made sure that he knew there were several copies around.

The rest of the evening was spent rehashing old topics, but he never stopped urging me to bring him the manuscript. When he finally decided to call it a night, his parting words were "Bring it tomorrow!" I was emotionally drained. It was after midnight.

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When I saw him the next day, first he mocked me. "You always used to come with a briefcase. Now you have no job and no briefcase." Then he got right to the point. "Where is the manuscript?" I told him that when I'd said no the previous night I'd meant it. Then he said, "Mansur, I have to have it! I promised the office I would bring it back with me."

He began to threaten me. "If you think that you'll ever get to publish this book, you're mistaken. You know Old Bill. He's a tough man. He doesn't tolerate this kind of bullshit. In the nineteen sixties the CIA went down because of the Vietnam War, because of activists, and a lot of assholes: people at *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, Frank Church, and that kind of garbage. We're still trying to build up the image of the Agency, and we've been successful, but we still have a problem with the young people. They don't want to work for the CIA because of the prevailing negative attitude. The belief that we're incompetent, or we're killers. This book certainly wouldn't help. So old Casey's not going to take it."

His blue eyes glaring, he pulled out all the stops and put it to me. "The Bureau [FBI] will get rid of you. Picture this. You are being interviewed or giving a lecture somewhere. A man in the crowd shoots you. Who could figure out who shot you? One of the shah's people? One of Khomeini's people? After all, you were SAVAK!"

I was angry and scared. I had been a professional in this business long enough to know that one didn't drop the boss's name in a death threat casually. Obviously, he had been mandated by headquarters to use whatever means necessary, even murder or its threat, to silence me.

I tried to act calmly even though my insides were shaking. "I've enjoyed my life," I said. "I've worked with famous people, traveled—it's been interesting. If the FBI is going to do it, I can't stop them."

He quickly interjected, "They will, you know!" He warned me, "You wouldn't have one friend left in the American government. They'll be the ones to carry out the order. Mozafar [my brother] will find you in a pool of blood."

He was depressing me as much as he was scaring me. How naïve I had been to think that if the likes of him knew what was going on in Iran, they would stop the shah. I felt desolate. I had put my faith in the wrong people for twenty-five years. I broke down and cried. He seemed pleased, probably thinking that I was finally going to surrender.

Gently, he said, "Bring in the manuscript. Let's negotiate. Don't

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allow yourself to be manipulated by people who just want to make money for themselves."

Again I repeated, "It's the principle. The American people have a right to know what went wrong in Iran. How do you know this book is so damaging?"

"Because I know you and how much you know," he quietly responded, "and how critical you always were. That's enough." Then, matter-of-factly, he said, "You still have time to think about it, but a few things just might happen to you before this book ever gets published." In a very businesslike way, he recited the possibilities:

"One, William Casey's office will get in touch with you and ask you to come and speak with him.

"Two, we will get in touch with the vice-president's office. Since he is your friend and might have influence on you, he may call to discuss this with you.

"Three, I will go to them [Casey] and tell them how much time and money you have spent, and I'll get back to you.

"Four, I won't see you again but the legal department will come to see you."

Then his voice turned menacing. "Where do you want the flowers sent?"

(The CIA officer who was threatening me was ironically the very same one who had warned me three and a half years earlier that I was on Khomeini's hit list.)

That night I informed an FBI official I had known for years what had transpired. He was shocked and furious that FBI personnel were being characterized as front men to kill for the CIA. He insisted that I make a log of what had been said to me while it was still fresh in my mind.

I couldn't sleep a wink that night. I was living a nightmare. I kept imagining how the CIA would carry out its threats against me. Would a mugger attack me? a car malfunction? a gas tank explode? maybe a drug overdose?

However, my greatest fear was the suppression of my manuscript. I wanted to make sure it got published no matter what happened to me.

I met with my lawyer Melvin Gittleman. I told him about my meetings with the CIA and its attempts to persuade me, bribe me, its threats to kill me. The CIA's behavior shocked and angered him. He had expected an attempt to censor the work but not a threat on my life. He encouraged me to fight back, saying, "Don't worry about the manuscript. I'm making some more copies and I won't even tell you who has

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them. That will be your best protection. Nobody knows where the copies are."

Next, I called Dr. Baghai, my mentor, who fortunately was visiting in the United States at the time, and invited him to my home. I desperately wanted to talk to him. He had already read and corrected the manuscript, and I needed his wisdom and guidance.

"My choices are clear," I explained to him. "I either take a huge amount of money and let them censor my book to their heart's content, or I run the risk of assassination at the hands of the CIA." Dr. Baghai remained calm. "Resist the intimidation. Publish the book," he said. He took my silence as a sign of fear. It was completely out of character for him to advocate a course that might lead to violence. When I was a youthful activist, he always counseled firm but peaceful resistance. "Courting an assassination is not a policy I would usually recommend," he continued. "But there are times when you have to pay for the truth, even if it's with your life. It's time to take the risk, son. You owe it to Americans and to Iranians, especially the younger generations. You have an obligation to tell and they have the right to know."

With a lump in my throat, I responded, "Yes, sir."

The CIA escalated its harassment. It had the Justice Department contact my attorneys, threaten to alter my immigration status, and subpoena me if I didn't cooperate fully. The Agency continued to demand that I turn over my manuscript for censorship, and give it the names of everyone who had read or worked on the manuscript.

After several tense meetings between the Justice Department attorneys, my attorneys, and myself, nothing was resolved. At our last meeting, held on September 8, 1986, at my lawyer's office in New Jersey, I was extremely indignant at the behavior of the Justice Department and couldn't contain my feelings. "You, as the representatives of the very Justice Department who threw President Nixon out of office because he broke the law, should enforce and respect the law! It was one of the greatest things that ever happened in this country. With that one incident, Americans proved that no man is above the law." I told them that the people look to the Justice Department to ensure that there will be a democracy in the future, but if the department tried to prevent the public from knowing the truth now, twenty years from now we would not have the kind of democracy that America stands for. "I believe if the law is not respected by the highest authority, a revolution or chaos will come to this land and destroy everything the American people treasure!"

I also stated that the public had the right to know the kind of genius

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we have in the White House, and again I told them that what I was planning to publish would not hurt the national security of this country.

On September 15, 1986, the Justice Department sent a letter to my lawyers demanding that I turn over my manuscript. The letter also included the following:

For his [Mansur Rafizadeh's] part, we ask that you and your client provide us with assurance that no copies of the original manuscript remain in the hands of third parties at the time of submission and agree not to distribute any version of the manuscript different from that finally approved.

I tried to analyze my options and realized that I was faced with an agonizing dilemma. The Justice Department wanted to silence me and wouldn't hesitate to take whatever steps it deemed necessary to prevent the publication of my book, though, I hoped, short of murder.

Was I willing to take the consequences? After all, I knew that President Reagan was selling arms to Iran and negotiating for hostages, that Robert C. MacFarlane, representing President Reagan, had made a historical trip to Iran in May 1986, carrying a special message, and that there had been a misappropriation of funds from these arms sales. Didn't I want the public to know the truth? Adding to my frustration was the fear that my phone might be tapped and therefore create problems for whomever I called. I was forced to make all of my phone calls from outside of my home.

When I met with my attorneys Melvin Gittleman and Raymond Durr they got right to the point. "Are you going to give them the manuscript, Mansur?" I replied with an emphatic "No!" Pleased, they then said, "Now we know where you stand." Most curious, I asked, "Are you going to defend me?" Without a moment's hesitation, they answered, "Yes! The first thing we will do is consult with the Civil Liberties Union and find out the best way to defend your constitutional rights." I embraced them tearfully and thanked them. This was the other side of American justice.

Three years of work on my manuscript, added to the CIA's and the Justice Department's prolonged harassment, made me so physically and emotionally drained that I became hospitalized with a severely perforated ulcer.

During my convalescence in October, in a final act of desperation, I even attempted to call ABC-TV correspondent Ted Koppel. When informed he was out of town and asked to leave my name, I told his office that I would call again.

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A few days later, a source called from Tehran and reported that Ayatollah A. H. Montazeri's faction was preparing a newsletter that would make public facts about the "secret" American arms-hostage negotiations.

The first week of November the arms scandal splashed across the front pages of newspapers around the world. I was vindicated. The Justice Department hasn't communicated with me since.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

When the Hostages Didn't Come Home

By the time Jimmy Carter became president, the shortsightedness and mistakes of other administrations had allowed the shah to arouse the furious animosity of the Iranian people against both himself and the United States. Carter correctly perceived the need to champion the cause of human rights and political reform in Iran, but unfortunately the shah and his predecessors had antagonized the citizenry beyond reconciliation.

In a world drowning in cynicism, President Carter was a man of principle who courageously tried to reconcile his personal beliefs and diplomacy. He stood firm and refused to sacrifice his values in the name of political expediency. As a result, he subsequently lost the presidency in the next election.

In line with his strong and unwavering position on human rights, President Carter pressured the shah into releasing vast numbers of political prisoners. Once freed, these very same people caused the shah's downfall.

President Carter's deeply ingrained sense of morality foreclosed any possibility of trading the ailing shah for the American hostages, and therefore he desperately sought alternative solutions. The ultimate one, the military attempt to rescue the hostages, was doomed from the start because, in addition to all of the problems inherent in an operation of such complexity, President Carter was handicapped by several inherited factors.

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One of the most damaging was the rigid Republican loyalty of the CIA officers in charge of the Iran desk. These men wanted war. General Oveissi and I had had several meetings with these CIA officers during that period, and I was astounded by their callous remarks. One agent said to me, "What do fifty-two American lives mean? Every Thanksgiving, hundreds of Americans die on the highways. What's the big deal, Mansur?"

I came upon further proof of the strong anti-Carter sentiment in the CIA when I learned that it was allowing misinformation about the hostages to get to Carter, such as: they were being forced to play Russian roulette, were kept bound in handcuffs on the floor, and were often beaten up severely and left bleeding. The Agency wanted President Carter to believe the hostages were brutally treated, when in fact the Iranian captors took great care to keep their prisoners in as good health as possible.

The CIA gave President Carter these false reports because it hoped to get him to abandon his nonviolent stance and go after Khomeini with guns blasting. But I discovered the most damning example of this anti-Carter sentiment when I surreptitiously discovered that Khomeini had planned to release the hostages the moment President Reagan was elected.

Khomeini was completely ignorant of American political procedures. He believed that immediately after his victory, President Reagan would have a dossier prepared on President Carter and subsequently have him arrested. After all, this was customary procedure in many Middle Eastern countries. Khomeini's lack of knowledge about Western culture and history was a constant problem for his aides. For the longest time, Khomeini even believed that the word "Carter" was a synonym for head of state, and, much to the embarrassment of his countrymen, would publicly refer to the Carter of England, the Carter of France, etc.

Because his aides had made a point of telling Khomeini about President Carter's nonviolent protests—his use of a candlelight vigil, symbolic yellow ribbons, and church services to demonstrate his approach to free the hostages, Khomeini had absolutely no fear of this nonaggressive leader.

Conversely, Khomeini's aides painted a very different picture of Ronald Reagan, telling him that Reagan was a warmonger and the second that he took office he would bomb Tehran.

Fearing this new American leader, Khomeini wanted to free the hostages immediately after the November 4 election. In fact, George

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Bush had been director of the CIA during the Nixon administration and still had friends in the Agency. When the Republican party nominated the Reagan-Bush ticket, it was supported by the CIA. Upon their election on November 4, 1980, the CIA's Iran desk considered the president-elect and vice-president-elect as their chief executives, and Jimmy Carter as a lame duck. Therefore, some CIA agents, one of them Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, were briefed by Agency officers to persuade Khomeini not to release his prisoners until Ronald Reagan was sworn in. The CIA, consistently hostile to Carter, told Khomeini not to bother giving Carter the credit when he would no longer have any power. Thus, the CIA, who had tried to manipulate President Carter into aggressive behavior by using false reports about "brutal hostage treatment," now sentenced the American hostages to seventy-six more days of imprisonment.

On January 20, 1981, the hostages boarded a waiting jet at Tehran Airport. As they sat trembling in their seats, still unsure of their next destination and their ultimate fate, a guard stood outside the aircraft with a radio pressed to his ear and a walkie-talkie clutched in his hand. Only after the very moment that Ronald Reagan was sworn in as president did the guard signal the pilot. As Reagan delivered his inaugural address, they were airborne to freedom.

During the period of indecision and chaos that followed the return of the hostages immediately after President Reagan's inauguration in 1981, Reagan and the director of the CIA, William Casey, secretly ordered the Agency to give money and other support to Khomeini's strongest opposition groups. The CIA sought out the leaders, and soon had liaisons with Shahpur Bakhtiar, based in France, General Gholam Ali Oveissi, based in the United States, Dr. Ali Amini, based in France, Admiral A. Madani, based in Germany, General F. Jam, based in England and the shah's son, Reza Pahlavi, based in Morocco.

The CIA was able to convince these groups to accept their cooperation and trust by focusing on the purity of their motives: America had experienced deep humiliation at the hands of the Khomeini regime, the American pro-human-rights position was well known, and Iran's emergence as a terrorist training ground was making the headlines.

Hence, the CIA officers in charge made it very clear that they would not participate in this anti-Khomeini operation without the president's first issuing an executive order. In September 1981 such an executive order was issued with a one-year limitation. This precaution was taken so that if the CIA could not promote the overthrow of

Khomeini within this period, it would have to go back to the president for another such order. Privately, we informants were all told by the CIA that if during this time no one group proved dominant, the United States would have no choice but to make peace with Khomeini. The CIA recognized a major problem with these groups: They were so diverse philosophically that they were too busy fighting each other to be really productive.

In 1982 word leaked out to the Iranians that the president, the CIA, and other American officials were divided as to whether post-Khomeini Iran should become a republic or return to a monarchy. The various opposing factions were delighted, as now each believed that it had someone in the CIA supporting its own particular cause.

The CIA continued to foster this impression by assigning an officer to each group, someone who would give the illusion that he was sympathetic only to it. He would meet with the group's leader and gain his trust by promising to bolster his position if he could show proof of his faction's strength in Iran. "Washington is under the impression that Khomeini's opposition is made up of all chiefs and no Indians," he might say. "If you want to strengthen your leadership position, you must provide us with as many specifics as possible about your network in Iran. You must give us the names of your people."

All the leaders of these opposition groups fell for this ploy—hook, line, and sinker. During the next few months, they desperately vied with each other to provide as much information about their support people in Iran as they could.

Shortly after they had all dutifully handed over the information, their CIA contacts startled them by disclosing that a single Iranian official had been listed as a primary supporter by no fewer than five different opposition groups. Each CIA contact then asked, "How can you prove that he is yours? You must give us more precise information." Desperate to prove the man theirs alone, they eagerly offered all the minute details of the man's *modus operandi*.

Throughout this period, George Cave, the CIA liaison, operating under a pseudonym, carried the liaison officers' promises one step further by assuring each group that it was the American government's favorite, destined to wear the mantle of Iran's leadership.

General Oveissi, like the rest of the opposition leaders, was a victim of this deception. At a meeting in Hamburg with a CIA liaison officer, the general, and me, we discussed various civil servants, religious leaders, and businessmen in Iran who were supporting General Oveissi. Then the CIA agent matter-of-factly produced a chart depicting the

entire Iranian Army structure, including names and ranks. He casually told General Oveissi, "Tell me which ones are yours. I'll take this to Washington and discredit all the other opposition and prove once and for all that you should be the leader. This," he continued cheerfully, "will prove that you are the strongest. If you want to be shah—we'll make you shah!"

General Oveissi slammed the chart closed and said, "No more! I don't trust you people!"

The CIA officer became angry. He appealed to me. "We try to help and look what he says! I want to make him the shah and he doesn't trust us!"

I tried to calm Oveissi down and quickly ushered him into an adjacent room. "If you have more information," I pleaded with him, "give it to them! They are telling the truth. They only want to help restore human rights to Iran. They are tired of having the American government humiliated and are tired of having a terrorist government in power. The American government wants only to help."

Eyes blazing, General Oveissi pounded on the table and said, "You are naïve. I will be wrong in God's eyes." His rage escalating, he added, "I did it but I'm going to stop it now. They are devious liars!"

I smiled. "You are a cynic," I told him.

"I don't care what you call me," he responded. "All I know is that God wouldn't forgive me if something happened to these men."

We returned to the other room and I apologized to the CIA officer for General Oveissi's behavior.

The officer commented calmly, "I understand. He's frustrated. Let's put this chart together. I'll take it to Washington and then we will be able to provide him with all our support."

During the entire flight to Paris from Hamburg, Oveissi tried to convince me that I was wrong, but I held fast to my belief that the administration and the CIA were too ethical ever to cooperate with Khomeini's government.

After a few weeks I learned that the CIA had extracted similar intelligence from all of the opposition groups with the same promises of support. But still unwilling to believe that the CIA would be so deceptive, I continued to justify its behavior.

Four months later I was summoned to Oveissi's apartment in Paris. As we walked to a nearby park on Avenue Foch, I asked him what was so urgent. Turning to him, I was stunned to see this tough soldier with tears streaming down his cheeks.

He looked at me and said, "I just received intelligence from Iran

that Khomeini got the whole list of officers that I gave to the CIA. They'll all be killed."

I was shattered. It was inconceivable to me that the CIA would do such a thing.

"They only wanted to trick us from the beginning," he continued. "Reagan's administration only wanted to get on Khomeini's good side. This is what they really wanted—to gain his trust. We were duped."

I still couldn't accept this. "Your intelligence must be wrong!" I insisted. "It can't be true!"

After hashing these events over and over, the general despairing and I disbelieving, we decided to confront the CIA liaison officer. He denied providing the list to Khomeini or having any complicity in the matter. Instead, he tried to shift the blame to General Oveissi.

"It's you who have given interviews to reporters from *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*," he accused. "You know they are loaded with Communists! Maybe you leaked the information."

"I never gave them any names!" Oveissi responded angrily.

The CIA officer attacked again. "It is you who have been meeting with members of the House and the Senate. I warned you to be careful. They all come from the same breed of asshole. You must have dropped the information."

Superficially it appeared that the United States was funding the opposition groups operating in exile in order to develop and maintain networks in Iran to overthrow Khomeini's regime. When Khomeini became aware of the CIA's role in this matter, he was extremely angry. Attempting to smooth his ruffled feathers and prove the United States' good intentions, the CIA passed the word through intermediaries that they were not really helping the opposition but merely using them as intelligence resources to strengthen the Khomeini government. In order to show its sincerity and hoping that this would prove its true motives, the CIA compiled a detailed list of intelligence information and attached an anonymous letter explaining its intentions. The CIA then placed the information in a large manila envelope and left it in front of the Tehran home of Dr. Mohammad Beheshti, one of Khomeini's top aides.

In a few days Oveissi discovered conclusively through his sources in Iran that the American government had indeed supplied the list of Iranians to Khomeini. Horrified by his role in betraying their identities, Oveissi futilely attempted to warn as many people as possible in the hope that some might still be able to escape.

Unfortunately, only some survived. In all, over one thousand names

had been provided by the leaders of the opposition groups. Some of these people were killed, some were imprisoned, and others placed under house arrest.

Over the next few months the media gave saturation coverage of these poor victims' trials and executions. I was numbed by the knowledge that I was partly responsible for their deaths. Throughout the trials I met periodically with General Oveissi. Humbly, I apologized to him for having been so completely stupid. I had been blinded by wishful thinking. At one of these meetings, Oveissi said to me, "I forgive you, but I don't know if God is going to forgive either of us." Crying, General Oveissi raised his hands toward the sky and implored God—"You will take care of President Reagan and William Casey! I had good faith when I gave names to them!"

Still troubled by what he regarded as the CIA's betrayal, General Oveissi met once again with the agents. At this meeting, the CIA continued to deny any responsibility, and this time tried to shift the blame to the State Department.

Before leaving, the CIA officer in charge asked Oveissi, "Is there anything I can do for you?"

After a long, thoughtful pause, Oveissi stared at him and said, "Can you free me?"

Puzzled, the CIA man asked, "What do you mean?"

General Oveissi begged, "Free me! Free me! Send me to Khomeini so he can kill me—then I won't have these nightmares every night!"

The agent stared at him coldly and responded, "General, you're too emotional."

Why did the Reagan administration allow itself to be involved in such unethical behavior? Because it believed that its actions were justified. It felt it was the most expeditious way to reach its long-range objective—stop the spread of communism. The Reagan administration was interested in maintaining a fundamentalist government in Iran at any cost, even if it meant supporting a cruel dictator, disregarding people's basic human rights, returning Iran to a seventh-century mentality, or taking hostages. It fit in with its ultimate goals—to keep fundamentalism in power and put a "Green Belt" (referring to the color green, which appears in most flags of Muslim countries) around the southern border of the Soviet Union, thus preventing the Soviet Union from ever controlling the warm waters of the Indian Ocean.

The Reagan administration truly believed that Muslim fundamentalism was its most effective weapon against communism in the area, and wouldn't take the risk of allowing a moderate or liberal to come to power in Iran. Unfortunately, this was not the only disastrous exam-

ple of the administration's desperate and misguided pursuit of Khomeini's "good side."

In 1982 a high-ranking KGB officer, who had worked in Tehran as a Soviet diplomat but who was actually in charge of the KGB's Iran desk, defected to the West. After being extensively interrogated by both British and American intelligence, he provided a wealth of accurate information about the Tudeh party's (the Iranian Communist party) officers, members, long-range plans, and other connections.

Although the British were also in possession of this information, they didn't choose to use it.

But in 1984 the CIA felt it expedient to hand over the names of the Iranian Communists to Khomeini's regime. Khomeini had them all immediately arrested. Hundreds were brutally killed and hundreds are still in jail.

I tried to sort out my own feelings and put these events into some kind of perspective.

For 444 days, Khomeini had kept the American diplomats hostage. Then fifty-two volumes of top-secret documents found in the American embassy were published, and America was debased further when copies of the documents were sold on Iranian street corners for ten cents a copy.

As I've indicated, a few months before the shah's hasty departure from Iran, I and other concerned Iranians repeatedly urged the CIA to remove the embassy's documents from Iran. Iran was a country in which the shah felt even his father's bones were not safe, and we knew just how vulnerable classified documents would be when Khomeini took over. The CIA refused to heed our warnings. Now secret United States information was available to the Soviet Union or anyone else who wanted it.

It was uncanny. Iran had consistently humiliated the U.S. government by burning American presidents in effigy and openly praying for America's downfall. Every public gathering (including the deliberations of Parliament) was punctuated with rousing shouts of "Down with America!"

When Khomeini received the news that the United States had supplied his aides with information about opposition forces in Iran, he laughed and said, "So that's the United States' position on human rights."

How could the American government constantly talk about championing human rights while so flagrantly ignoring them in its own actions? Was its position always a sham?

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

First Arms Shipment to Iran

During the shah's reign, the great preponderance of Iranian arms had been bought from the United States. The shah needed the United States in order to maintain his sophisticated, costly equipment. Obviously this offered the United States an almost foolproof method of controlling the shah's army. When Khomeini toppled the shah's regime, he inherited therefore not only an outstanding military arsenal but also a built-in dependency on American industry.

As the Iranian war with Iraq escalated, the United States was confident that Iran could not sustain the hostilities for longer than two years without refurbishing its major weapons. This was America's trump card—Iran would collapse without American replacement parts. The United States seized this opportunity to influence the outcome of the Iran-Iraq conflict and make inroads with Khomeini's government.

In the spring of 1982, General Oveissi received intelligence from sources close to Khomeini that in 1981 the United States government had offered arms to Khomeini's regime. The Reagan administration via the CIA had made several overtures in hopes of developing a relationship. Khomeini, however, had turned them down, saying that he didn't need to get any arms from the United States "Satan." Privately, he said, "The Americans would sell their mother for one dollar. We can get arms from all over. Why should we deal with them?"

Undaunted by this rebuff, the Americans made another offer through the CIA again, but this time it carried a stern warning. "If you

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

The Brotherhood of Assassins: From Hasan ibn al-Sabah to Khomeini

In the eleventh century, Persia's secret sect of assassins gave the world a new word for political murder—assassination.

Perhaps some readers are unaware of the origin of the word "assassin" and may think that it derives from French or Latin. It does not. It is of Persian derivation.

Hashashin, or addicts of the drug hashish (hemp), a secret order of religious fanatics, originated in the Isma'ili branch of the Shiite sect. Founded in Iran by Hasan ibn al-Sabah, a Persian Fatamid missionary (died in 1124), the movement was dedicated to propaganda with little regard for spiritual values. Hasan ibn al-Sabah, known to the Crusaders as Shaykh al-Jabal, the "old man of the mountains," was chief of operations. He was aided by two groups of subordinates, the grand priors, and below them, contingents of desperadoes ready to do or die in blind obedience to the command of their chief.

From Alamut, a mountain stronghold in Kazvin in Iran, Hasan presided over a network of terrorists, directing activities and pursuing a policy of secret assassination against the order's enemies. There are many legends about Hasan, one of the most mysterious figures in Persian history. Two stories that best describe his power and charisma involve his conquest of Alamut Castle in A.D. 1090.

The shah, angered by Hasan's bloody rampages, sent one of his most trusted and important envoys to demand that he cease and desist at once or else deal with his wrath. Hasan, who had an enormous

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network of spies throughout the land, was forewarned and prepared for the envoy's arrival. Hasan, along with his chief of protocol, greeted the shah's envoy with great pomp, but before offering him the customary refreshments suggested that he show him the view from the castle's tower.

Hasan immediately led the envoy to Alamut tower, and no sooner were they on top than Hasan summoned one of his followers and asked him, "How much faith do you have in me?" The man immediately responded, "Your will is my command!" Hasan then told the man to plunge his dagger into his own heart. The envoy was stunned as he watched the man obey without any hesitation and in a flash fall dead at their feet. Without missing a beat, Hasan summoned another man and asked him, "How much do you believe in me?" The man quickly replied, "With all of my soul!" Hasan then signaled him to leap off the parapet. An instant later the man lay dead at the bottom of the tower.

Very calmly Hasan led the trembling envoy to his room. Even though he was still shaking, the envoy couldn't help noticing how plain and unadorned this powerful leader's room was in contrast to the shah's magnificent surroundings. Once they were seated, Hasan spoke in deep, forceful tones, "This is my answer to the message that you were sent to deliver to me. Tell your shah," he continued, "that I have seventy thousand more of the same kind of loyal followers that you saw today!"

One morning shortly thereafter when Sanjar Shah woke up, he was horrified to discover a sword pierced through his pillows and jammed into the floor. A note placed next to the sword read "Your Majesty—if I didn't respect you, the sword would have been pushed into your heart. The same person who is capable of pushing a sword into the hard floor, can easily push it through your soft flesh." It was signed "Hasan." Henceforth, even the king of Persia accepted his vulnerability and lived in fear of Hasan.

The Crusaders returned to Europe bringing with them tales of Hasan's vicious exploits. His men were charged with being responsible for the deaths of many statesmen, including some in Egypt and Syria.

The point for today's history is that Hasan was able to maintain absolute control over his minions because he was a charismatic religious leader who had convinced his followers that all of his enemies were God's enemies and therefore deserved to die. After giving them hashish and delivering powerful rhetoric, he used their blind obedience to rid himself of all his political foes.

From the eleventh through the twentieth centuries, many other Persian religious leaders and kings were able to manipulate their follow-

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ers, but I can't help noticing that Persian history has unfortunately begun to repeat itself in an extremely curious way.

In 1963 Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi sent a secret message through General Hassan Pakravan, then chief of SAVAK, to Ayatollah Khomeini, who was living in Qom, the leading Shiite religious center. The note read "If you don't stop criticizing and agitating against my government, I am going to wear my father's boots [meaning "I am going to resort to my father's repressive methods"]."

Khomeini, a brilliant dramatic orator, didn't answer immediately, but waited until after he had gone to the mosque later that day. There he repeated the shah's message and then, in his most scathing manner, replied, "My answer to him is—your father's boots are too big for you!"

The next day, on June 5, 1963, Tehran was shaken by huge riots in which hundreds of people were killed. The shah reacted by having Khomeini jailed and then exiled to Turkey. Over the next years, Khomeini would be forced into a lengthy exile that would take him from Turkey to Iraq and from Iraq to Paris. He refused to return to Iran until the shah had left the country. He made his triumphant return to Tehran in 1979.

There are many similarities between Khomeini and Hasan. Like his prototype, Khomeini lives modestly in a humble room, where, in a country famous for luxurious carpets, he sleeps on a shabby rug and eats peasant food; like his famous forebear, he hides behind the banner of religion, labels all of his opponents God's enemies, and uses his believers to destroy them; like Hasan, Khomeini is a crafty and charismatic orator capable of swaying vast crowds.

While Hasan fortified his believers before battle with hashish, Khomeini uses just a gimmick. He issues them special "keys to heaven"—key-shaped plastic medallions that have been blessed by him and inscribed with Allah's name. Whoever martyrs himself for Khomeini while wearing his "key" is guaranteed entrance to heaven and welcomed into Allah's arms. Iran's mullahs, Shiite Muslim clerics, extol martyrdom, promising direct entry into paradise to all the fallen. Khomeini's believers, wearing their keys around their necks, fearlessly attempt the most suicidal missions. Children without proper weapons are routinely sent off to war against Iraq wearing the keys and shirts proclaiming GOD IS GREAT as their only protection.

Khomeini has a perfect sense of theater and uses it shrewdly. Before speaking to a large crowd, he will often stand silently with an outstretched hand for a few minutes. Then he will suddenly reach out and touch one of his disciples, who in turn will touch the person next to him,

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who in turn will touch the next one, and the chain is continued until everyone present has been touched. The entire mob becomes charged with excitement as if an electric current had surged through it. The people really feel as if they had been touched by Khomeini himself, and, therefore, touched by God.

When drama alone isn't enough to manipulate his followers, Khomeini stoops to outright trickery and deception.

Many thousands of boys went to war and died wearing Khomeini's keys. As a result, the government's casualty stipend that went to their families was creating a drain on the national treasury. In order to meliorate this economic problem, a clergyman, with great fanfare, announced that he had had a dream about the young martyrs. He vividly described how happy the kids were in heaven, but how embarrassed they were that their families had been paid for their ecstasy. Many parents were so moved by the mullah's subterfuge that they returned the money to the government.

Another example of Khomeini's trickery, how he plays on people's superstitions, was his resort to the "angel of the battlefield." After an especially horrible battle, in which thousands of boys were left dead or maimed and awaiting medical attention, a helicopter secretly landed a well-trained actor wearing flowing white robes and a turban ingeniously wired with lights and batteries to create a halo effect around his head. Thus illuminated, he crossed the field of battle and, in resonant tones, exhorted the wounded to continue their privileged mission. "My children," he declared, "we sent you Khomeini to bring you to Islam. You are God's servants and will go to heaven. All who die here will go to heaven, and roses and tulips will spring up from this earth."

In sophisticated Western countries like the United States and France, there are often stories about religious paintings that cry real tears, and of statues with stigmata, so it is easy to understand why weary, uneducated Iranian boys are so willing to accept religious myths.

Khomeini always gave the appearance of rewarding his loyal followers. He often held special gatherings for young men who had returned crippled from war, and he proudly spoke to them: "Some of our brothers are lucky—they are already in heaven. Some like you are luckier, you have seen the 'angel of God,' and brought the message back. I was moved when I heard it, but I send a special message to the women of Iran. Sisters, you will be blessed if you marry these men."

Subsequently, many of these unfortunate wretches, some of whom could not perform their husbandly duty, acquired several wives to care

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for them, and therefore didn't need to live in state-funded rehabilitation centers.

In these and similar ways, Khomeini created an arsenal of human weapons and used them against anyone who opposed him. He even disposed of enemies by sending men into mosques with TNT strapped to their bodies—in effect, walking bombs.

Above all, Khomeini constantly rallied his people to destroy God's worst enemy, America—at any cost. Over the years he targeted many enemies, but his favorite target was always the United States. The United States was synonymous with evil, and in his tirades he liked to demonstrate just how evil, by pointing out the many instances of God's wrath against the United States and, in contrast, how God had always supported him.

Had not God after all chased the evil shah out of the palace in spite of American support? During the aborted rescue mission, had He not made the red sand rise up from the desert and destroy the American helicopters? And hadn't the evil Jimmy Carter lost his election? Khomeini constantly reinforced the notion that his wishes were identical with God's, and therefore he, representing goodness, had to triumph over evil America at any cost.

Because of Khomeini's determination to shatter America's image and knowing that Beirut was filled with Shiite extremists financed by him, I realized that the American embassy in Beirut was an obvious terrorist target and tried to warn the CIA. The agents dismissed the idea. "Don't be silly," they said. "We have barricades, platoons of guards, radio control. It's impossible to penetrate. You give Khomeini too much credit." They refused to believe me. We continued to argue back and forth. I was adamant. "You don't understand," I said. "They don't care about their lives. They don't mind dying. They'll do it." Finally, in desperation, I told them another cautionary tale. They were relieved that I was going to amuse them. At least they could eat and drink.

"A man came out of his house one day dressed for hunting, carrying his gun, wearing a cartridge belt with extra ammunition, carrying food and water. He was well equipped. His neighbor came out and asked, 'Where are you going?'"

'Lion hunting.'

'Oh? How much ammunition do you have?'

'Fifty or sixty rounds.'

'What will you do when you see a lion?'

'Shoot it.'

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'What if two come at you from the same direction?'
'Kill them both.'
'What if you are then attacked by two coming from the left and two from the right at the same time?'
'I'll climb a tree.'
'What if there is a lion guarding the base of the tree?'
'I'll shoot it, and then climb the tree.'
'What if more come and climb atop the body to reach you?'
'I'll shoot them, too.'
'And if you run out of ammunition?'
'I'll use my bayonet to kill them.'
'And if it bends?'
'What! Why are you giving me such a hard time? Whose side are you on—the lion's or mine?'

They laughed, but they did not see how the story applied to them.

Then, on April 18, 1983, a dozen men, wired with explosives and mesmerized by their fanaticism, shot their way through the embassy's checkpoints, stormed the compound buildings, and blew up both the buildings and themselves.

On October 23, 1983, as if one horrible lesson in Beirut was not enough, the CIA tragically learned that it had underestimated the enemy again. The barracks near Beirut's airport that had become home to several hundred U.S. Marines, Ronald Reagan's token of earnestness to the status quo in war-torn Lebanon, and which the CIA had believed to be even more secure than the embassy, was blown up and 253 Americans were killed and 75 were wounded. The terrorists had used an almost identical *modus operandi*: Young guerrillas in a truck loaded with explosives penetrated the checkpoints and, smiling triumphantly, hit the target.

I was baffled by American behavior even though I understood they wanted to keep religious fundamentalists ("Green Belts") in power against communism. "How could [you] give arms to this maniac, Khomeini?" I asked. "When you arm Khomeini," I told the CIA, "you are not just arming Iran against Iraq or American citizens, you are arming him against humanity."

From 1982 to 1986, the United States' behavior toward Iran became extremely schizoid. The Reagan administration was supplying Iraq with anti-Khomeini intelligence and demanding that the FBI arrest anyone in the United States discovered selling arms to Iran. Simultaneously, the government was covertly arming Khomeini's regime. In

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addition, it was supplying these arms knowing that Khomeini was developing sophisticated terrorist training camps throughout Iran.

In this instance, as in others I know of, the CIA always blamed incompetence on other countries but never did it admit to its own. Whenever the Agency's competence was questioned, or when it was confronted with defeat, it hid behind an elaborate smokescreen by saying it couldn't give further information because of national security.

The CIA's past was filled with anomalies. Had the CIA foreseen that the shah would fall? It did not: In 1978 the CIA's Department of Analysis predicted that the shah would stay in power another twenty years. The CIA was so consistently ineffective that it could not protect William Buckley, its own station chief in Beirut, who was kidnapped on March 16, 1984, by Shiite extremists and later murdered.

William Buckley was subjected to unbelievable torture and untold agony for many months. He was forced to tell everything he knew about the CIA, its structure and operation. One of the instruments of torture they used was an electric samovar. The samovar was bound by a belt across the small of his back. When he refused to talk, they heated the samovar and when he began to talk, they would remove it. There was no way Buckley could keep from speaking. His photograph, which was periodically distributed at various intervals during his captivity, is the portrait of a man in hell.

One of his tormentors reported to Khomeini that after a prolonged session with the samovar, Buckley was thrown into a dark, dank basement where he was left whimpering in pain to die alone like an animal. It took two and a half days.

Buckley was a direct victim of CIA misjudgment and incompetence. This raises important security questions. As chief of station, Buckley was in charge of other CIA agents, who worked under him as case officers, code experts, and otherwise. But far more significant was the fact that he knew the names of all the Lebanese agents and spies, and he knew the identities of his colleagues throughout the Middle East. In addition to knowing their identities, he was also privy to their policies, needs, and goals, and to the CIA's chief objectives in the Middle East.

When a man in Buckley's position is kidnapped, tortured, and then dies, one can only imagine how much information may have fallen into enemy hands. If the press had been responsible for leaking even a small part of what this man undoubtedly was forced to tell, it would have been pilloried for a breach of security of such enormous proportions

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that anyone connected with the disclosure would have gone to jail. This episode was especially humiliating for the CIA because, after all the major inroads the agents had claimed to have made into the Khomeini regime with arms sales, they were unable to secure Buckley's release.

In September 1981, eight months after the American hostages were freed in Tehran, William J. Casey, the director of the CIA, met with President Reagan and proposed selling arms to Iran. The reasons Casey gave were that this would enable the United States to gather intelligence inside of Iran, to initiate contact with the Iranian Army, and to discover Iran's military deficiencies.

It was at the same meeting that Casey also proposed the plan that would later bring General Oveissi and me such personal grief. Casey would fund the opposition groups in exile and determine their capabilities. He would request the names of their network members in Iran and offer this information to Khomeini in order to instigate a relationship. President Reagan agreed and signed an executive order in September 1981. Thereafter, the arms were taken from Israel's stockpile, sent to Iran, and later replaced by the United States.

But in spite of this, Reagan failed to make any inroads with fundamentalist Iran. By 1984 there were new hostages in Beirut.

In 1985, when Reagan was savoring his election to a second term and enjoying the height of his popularity, he turned again to his friends in the CIA. President Reagan, with his White House cronies Meese, Bush, Casey, and McFarlane, decided to take a more direct approach. They bypassed the House and the Senate and, trusting the CIA, offered Khomeini a more straightforward deal—arms for hostages. Reagan's stance, however, for the benefit of the American public was quite different from his secret position.

In his January 20, 1981, inauguration speech, he stated:

Let terrorists beware that when the rules of international behavior are violated, our policies will be one of swift and effective retribution. We hear it said we live in an era of limit to our powers. Well, let it be understood, there are limits to our patience.

Throughout the 1981 to 1986 negotiations with Khomeini, and from 1985 to 1986 during the arms-hostage negotiations, the White House never sought Middle Eastern advice from America's vast pool of scholars and political strategists, nor did it go to the State Department. Secretary of State George P. Shultz was kept unaware of Reagan's secret negotiations, but his department was dragged unwittingly

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into the scheme because the CIA never represented itself to Iran as such. Instead, the agents masqueraded as officers of the State Department throughout their dealings with the Iranians.

In December 1986, at the public congressional hearings, Shultz disclosed that the United States ambassador to Lebanon, John Kelly, had bypassed the secretary of state to conduct negotiations for the release of American hostages in Beirut. Ambassador Kelly had reported only to the White House through a CIA channel—namely, George Cave, his CIA contact, who reported to Chief of Staff Donald Regan.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

Unholy Deals

On December 12, 1983, members of the Iranian Hezbollah (Party of God), Khomeini's only official political party in Iran, followed a familiar pattern. They piled one-quarter ton of explosives into a truck and crashed into the United States embassy compound in Kuwait. Shortly thereafter, five other bombs also exploded at United States, French, and Kuwaiti targets around the city. In all, six people were killed and sixty-three were wounded. Seventeen Shiites were arrested and put in Kuwaiti prisons.

Khomeini was frustrated by his inability to obtain their release, but instead of retaliating directly against the Kuwaitis, who were Muslim, he decided to take seventeen hostages from the international community. The initial plan was to use these hostages to obtain the freedom of the seventeen Shiite terrorists, but that was never accomplished.

Since 1984 Khomeini has never allowed the number of his hostages kept in Beirut to fall below seventeen. A careful examination of how many hostages have been taken would show that although sometimes there have been more than seventeen at one time, there have never been less than seventeen. Periodically, the Khomeini government would barter one or more of the hostages for arms, but it would always make sure additional people were immediately taken as replacements. It is no coincidence that in June 1985, when a TWA plane was hijacked to Beirut, the hijackers made sure that they held their captives for exactly seventeen days. After seventeen days, the terrorists released their hos-

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tages; they never meant to keep them longer. By releasing them exactly after seventeen days, they were sending a hopeful message to the Shiite terrorists' inner circles in Iran and Lebanon, and especially to the seventeen prisoners in Kuwait, that they were not forgotten.

The most shocking thing about this whole episode is that the CIA, the head of an entire intelligence community of some 100,000 individuals, and with a billion-dollar budget, failed to discover this correlation. It is the CIA's function to gather reliable intelligence and offer it as an aid to America's policymakers. If the CIA had been diligent and discovered Khomeini's true motives for taking hostages after March 1984, perhaps President Reagan might have chosen to take a different direction in his negotiations.

In 1985, because new American hostages had been taken in Beirut, President Reagan again turned to his trusted friends in the CIA. William Casey continued to present the CIA's case to the president's closest White House aides. They were the only ones privy to the proposed Iranian strategy. These included Chief of Staff Donald Regan, Vice-President George Bush, Attorney General Edwin Meese III, and the head of the National Security Council, Robert C. McFarlane. The bulk of the cadre was made up of retired men such as former CIA officer George Cave and retired Air Force Major General Richard V. Secord.

The reason ex-officials were in the cadre was that in the event of disclosure, the administration would be able to say that these men were not currently in the employ of the United States government. In this manner, the White House would be able to conduct foreign policy privately. With no official standing, this team answered to no one but President Reagan, Donald Regan, and William Casey.

Donald Regan personally briefed President Reagan regularly and brought the other members of the cadre to see him frequently. This was very unusual because the group was composed of members of the lower echelons of government, and Regan, therefore, was bypassing their superiors by arranging direct access to the president. This unorthodox procedure enabled the cadre to tell the Iranians, "We have direct contact with the president."

In essence, the Reagan/Bush/Regan/Casey cadre had carte blanche to use government services and operational money without restraint. These men were entrusted with setting up secret negotiations with Iran in order to provide that country with arms in its war with Iraq. This way it was hoped to establish a dialogue and position of trust with Iran, and thereby to negotiate release of the hostages in Beirut.

From January 1985 through the summer, the president's cadre

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sought intermediary links to Khomeini's command, among them several known arms dealers who claimed to be well connected to the Khomeini government. Up to this time the CIA had very few, if any, useful contacts with members of Khomeini's regime.

In July 1985 McFarlane discussed with President Reagan the sale of weapons to Iran through arms dealers in exchange for the release of American hostages. The president's cadre was faced with a dilemma. Each of these dealers had sold arms to Iran in the past. Each claimed to have connections with the most powerful people in the regime.

In 1980 Manucher Ghorbanifar, an Iranian arms dealer, had approached the CIA claiming that he could buy the fifty-two hostages' freedom. The CIA contacted me to establish his credibility. I knew Ghorbanifar and believed him to be bad news. In Persian Ghorbanifar means "glorious sacrifice," and I firmly advised them, "As his name implies, Ghorbanifar would sacrifice anything for money. Stay away from him!"

In 1985, in spite of earlier warnings from other sources as well as from me, Ghorbanifar was selected. He and his group promised the cadre that they would be put in touch with authorities in Khomeini's regime.

Who were these authorities? They were high government officials and businessmen, Ghorbanifar assured the cadre.

At a meeting in the summer of 1985 with the president's cadre, Ghorbanifar's group arrogantly pointed out that since 1980 the United States' efforts to negotiate with Iran, directly and indirectly, through Middle Eastern and European countries as well as through Japanese and Chinese channels, had proved futile. The CIA officers were indignant and interpreted these remarks as an assault on their competence.

The dealers then offered to demonstrate their credibility. They would provide the most powerful and influential members of the revolutionary government, as opposed to the ineffectual underlings the CIA had dealt with previously, to meet with the cadre in several European capitals.

The CIA representatives said sarcastically, "Then do it!"

Subsequently, in London and other European capitals, several dozen Iranian officials and businessmen were lavishly entertained at the arms dealers' expense.

How did the death merchants effect these informal negotiations? At the outset, they contacted influential friends in Tehran, many of them mullahs in Khomeini's theocratic regime, and suggested that they plead illness or other personal reasons for going to Europe. This all-expenses-

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paid holiday to Europe was a welcome respite from the austerities of the Khomeini era. Thereafter, some mullahs dressed in flowing robes were observed departing Tehran aboard an intercontinental jet, and, later still, arriving in Europe dressed in well-tailored suits, bereft of any hint of their fundamentalist religious vocation.

There they were pampered by the arms dealers, at first spending a few nights with high-priced prostitutes and enjoying themselves. After all, there was nothing wrong with buying non-Muslim women with non-Muslim money. One of the clergymen even asked if the girl he was with had a brother. Instantly, a boy was presented for his pleasure.

Meanwhile, the mullahs and other Khomeini allies had been coached by their friends, the arms dealers, on how to behave. They were to indicate to the cadre's representatives that they had overriding influence with the Khomeini regime. They were to make promises of cooperation with the Reagan administration and also make it "crystal clear" that they were doing this out of friendship with Ghorbanifar and would work only through him.

For several months these negotiations and indulgences went on, solely to effect a connection between Washington and Tehran. Bit by bit, the door seemed to open. But this apparent success became the source of endless bickering among the various cadre members. The CIA representative, George Cave, took credit for the CIA, the NSC representative, Robert McFarlane, took credit for the White House, and on top of it all, the military hero of the piece, a young marine lieutenant colonel, Oliver L. North, an NSC member, took credit for himself. Even Ghorbanifar took credit. But where was the proof of their success? Finally, who was going to bell the cat and travel to Tehran?

Notwithstanding advice from all members of the cadre that no one should go to Tehran alone, for fear of being taken hostage, Colonel North volunteered to travel solo to Tehran. In December 1985 he flew there with Ghorbanifar and was received with great hospitality by his new friends, his companions at the arms dealers' European parties. For several days he was introduced to important people in the Khomeini government. Indeed, so earnest were his friends' efforts to make him happy and comfortable that specially prepared Western-style foods were served to him in his personal suite at the former Tehran Hilton.

And on his safe return—everyone being relieved that he had not been taken hostage on his unauthorized mission—Colonel North reported directly to the president.

The president, Chief of Staff Donald Regan, and William Casey

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received North at the White House, where the colonel had an office. They were delighted with North's account of his progress. Nothing loath to accept the plaudits due him, Colonel North pointed out that up to this time the administration had negotiated with the Khomeini regime only through third countries, and with unsatisfactory results, yet this mission, the first direct one with Tehran since 1980, had been a signal success.

Colonel North was smug about his success and frequently bragged to his new Iranian friends and other cadre members about how highly President Reagan regarded him. It was reported to me that North went so far as to tell the Iranian contacts, who knew the CIA did not like him and feared its interference, not to worry because he could go see the president anytime he wanted. To my knowledge North met privately with President Reagan at least nineteen times. North's arrogant attitude left him open to CIA jealousy and hostility.

Several additional solo trips were made by Colonel North and Ghorbanifar. Acting on North's intelligence, without further consultation, the president and all the members of his cadre decided to deal directly with the Khomeini regime through Ghorbanifar and eliminate third-country intermediaries.

Although numerous shipments, including 508 TOW antitank missiles, had been shipped from Israel's stockpile to Tehran, only one hostage, the Reverend Benjamin Weir, was released on September 14, 1985. The Iranians always contended that the shipments were incorrect, incomplete, or composed of inferior materials. Complying with their requirements, the United States tried to rectify the problems by correcting the inaccuracies.

On December 4, 1985, Robert C. McFarlane resigned from his post as head of the National Security Council, and was succeeded by Vice-Admiral John M. Poindexter.

McFarlane immediately became the president's secret representative in the arms deals, now ensuring, since McFarlane was no longer an official of the Reagan administration, the privatization of this mission.

On December 8, in his new role, McFarlane traveled to London with Colonel North and delivered the last order to the intermediaries brokering weapons sales to Iran. He announced to David Kimche, the director general of Israel's Foreign Ministry, Manucher Ghorbanifar, and Yaacov Nimrodi, an Israeli arms dealer, that "by presidential decree, the weapons shipments are finished." With this untrue statement, McFarlane eliminated Israel and Ghorbanifar from the arms

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deals, thereby clearing the way for private negotiations between the White House and Khomeini's regime.

Later in December, Amiram Nir, an Israeli government counterterrorist expert, went to Washington and said, "The Iranians had sweetened the terms. Just one more shipment and they would release the five hostages in Lebanon and open ties to moderates in Tehran."

By January 1986 the National Security Council was composed mostly of military men. The CIA was constantly looking for flaws in their operations and had never trusted Ghorbanifar. When the entire cadre, along with Ghorbanifar, came to Washington in January to discuss and evaluate the Iranian situation, a senior CIA officer insisted that Ghorbanifar take a polygraph test. Ghorbanifar submitted to the test but failed. The CIA reported, "He lied about everything but his name."

Anxious to make North look bad and get rid of Ghorbanifar once and for all, the CIA informed Casey that Ghorbanifar had failed the polygraph test. Casey told the president of the test results and its possible ramifications. He warned the president that "Ghorbanifar's information could be a deception to impress us." According to intelligence regulations, anyone who fails this test can no longer be considered suitable to serve in the intelligence community. At the same time, North had promised Ghorbanifar that he would go to the president and bail him out. The end result was that the president told Casey to waive the results. This further infuriated the CIA.

On January 7, 1986, President Reagan met in the Oval Office with Bush, Shultz, Weinberger, Casey, Regan, Meese, and Poindexter. Shultz and Weinberger argued strongly against selling arms to Iran, but Casey and Poindexter argued in favor of resuming the program with direct arms shipments. The president decided to keep the channels open.

On January 17, 1986, at the urging of Vice-President George Bush, Casey, and Poindexter, President Reagan signed a secret intelligence "Finding" that authorized the United States to sell arms directly to Iran. This document was designed to legitimize retroactively previous arms shipments. The president's executive order for an intelligence Finding only authorized the CIA to engage in that particular covert action. Therefore, any National Security Council involvement was illegal. However, the NSC not only played a major role in the Iran initiative, it also usurped the CIA's power. In reality, the cadre, headed by Donald Regan, was running this operation and keeping Shultz and Weinberger in the dark.

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Later in January in London, the president's men informed their Iranian contacts of the president's decision to sell arms directly to Iran. These direct shipments, although having been approved by executive order, were still to be made in the utmost secrecy because Congress had not been informed. The cadre representatives briefed Ghorbanifar and his associates about the executive order, and demanded their assurances that this information would be known only to them. Their reason: Communists were all over—in the Senate, in the House, in the press. The group insisted that if word got out, the whole deal would be damaged. And they added a warning to the Iranian contacts—if they leaked the information they would kill them.

When Khomeini was told the story of "Communists all over . . ." he said mockingly, "So that's how a real democracy works!" He then instructed his government: "Get the arms, we will defeat Iraq and then we'll chase the Americans out of the Middle East with their own weapons." He also instructed his aides to release hostages in return for the arms. "But," he added, "take two new hostages for every one released."

In the first direct shipment of weapons on February 16, 1986, to Iran, the Pentagon transferred one thousand TOW antitank missiles, more than the United States' entire yearly production. The CIA flew them to Tel Aviv, and the Israelis flew them to Tehran.

In Tehran meanwhile, cadre representatives, in return for promises of friendlier relations, agreed to furnish Khomeini additional sophisticated American arms to use in Iran's long war with Iraq. This was done at a time when the United States was providing satellite spy intelligence to Iraq concerning the military movements of Iran.

By 1986 the Americans had worn a path to Prime Minister Mir Hossein Mousavi's door and were now involved in direct negotiations with the Iranian government. They believed that they were making inroads by telling Prime Minister Mousavi that America was prepared to recognize the Islamic Republic of Iran, and that the United States was not going to interfere with Iran's internal affairs. The White House cadre representatives kept trying to reassure the prime minister that all President Reagan was interested in was aiding the Iranian government in its war with Iraq and protecting it from communism.

A secondary purpose of these contacts, later much publicized, was to establish better communications between Washington and moderate elements in Tehran, the better to facilitate friendly relations between the two countries in the event of Khomeini's demise or downfall. But in fact, not one of the factions contacted was moderate.

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In addition to negotiations with the office of the prime minister, Robert McFarlane, Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North, and George Cave with Ghorbanifar, helped develop a contingency plan. Ghorbanifar was responsible for initiating contact with Ayatollah H. A. Montazeri's faction. Montazeri, a supposed moderate, is Khomeini's second-in-command and heir apparent, by the will of the Supreme Jurist, Khomeini, who has been mandated to rule not only Iran and Muslims but the whole world.

In several meetings inside and outside Iran, the administration emissaries assured Montazeri's aides that they would approve of his succession because of his popularity and powerful position, and they wanted to be friends. They promised that the United States would recognize his government and continue to support it directly with money and arms. They explained that the United States had no choice but to do so, as at that point Iran would be bankrupt and still mired in an endless war with Iraq.

The individual members of the cadre emphasized that America was most concerned about Iran's precarious borders. At one point, they even went so far as to feed the Iranians deliberate misinformation about Soviet intelligence, saying that the Soviets had imminent plans to invade Iran. Above all, they approved of Montazeri as Iran's best defense against Communist subversion.

When all of the cajoling and friendly overtures ended, the administration representatives got down to their real motives, and said, "This is what our president wants. We have proven our sincerity. You have received the arms. Now prove your sincerity—free the remaining hostages!"

In return, Montazeri's aides, with some members of the cadre as well as Ghorbanifar, expressed friendship toward America and its president. They also appealed to President Reagan for emergency assistance for the nation's leading theological school in Qom, which they described as a vital bastion against internal communism. This assistance was paid over on the spot by Ghorbanifar.

At this level, the cadre assumed that Prime Minister Mousavi, always loyal to Khomeini, was keeping him informed about what was transpiring between the two nations. But the members of the cadre miscalculated their relationship with Montazeri when they told him to keep *their* contact with him secret.

Montazeri, Khomeini's heir apparent, was not going to risk his standing and play with fire. Knowing that the Israelis were helping the United States in efforts to release the hostages, he said to an aide,

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"When a cake is baked by America and decorated by Israel—I'm certainly not going to eat it!" Montazeri did not hesitate to report all of his dealings with the president's secret group to Khomeini.

During this same period, the CIA members of the cadre, led by George Cave, privately wanted to oust Ghorbanifar and overshadow North. They told their fellow members that they should not take any chances by supporting only Montazeri, but pursue another powerful Iranian leader as well—Speaker of the House A. H. Rafsanjani. Even though there was some dissension among them over the issue, George Cave went ahead with this plan. The CIA immediately began to negotiate with Rafsanjani's aides, and through them, made what they believed to be great headway with none other than Rafsanjani's son, Mehdi.

The CIA assured Rafsanjani that the United States government regarded him as the best possible successor to Khomeini. They also advised him that they would seek to develop Rafsanjani as a hero to the Iranian people in their struggle with Iraq. They would do so by providing American arms to win the war against Iraq. Rafsanjani's son was invited to Washington, where he was promised that the United States would send Iran an additional five hundred TOW missiles.

The idea was for the Americans to capitalize on their knowledge that Rafsanjani wanted to usurp Montazeri's position. They assured Rafsanjani that they would do everything in their power to get rid of Montazeri.

Rafsanjani shrewdly mistrusted the CIA cadre's intentions and dutifully reported all of their meetings to Khomeini. Khomeini, always the master puppeteer, didn't tell Rafsanjani that Montazeri had also been in touch with the Americans and, conversely, he didn't inform Montazeri that Rafsanjani had also had meetings with the Americans. When my source told me this, I knew Khomeini was playing a Persian game.

In April 1986 the president's secret emissaries, with Ghorbanifar's help, began what they believed to be successful negotiations directly with the Iranian government. On May 15, 1986, President Reagan approved a mission to Iran, sending his representative, Robert McFarlane, to get four hostages released and bring William Buckley's body home. But the Iranians did not go along with the release of all four hostages at once. They proposed that when the United States sent them the sophisticated arms they had requested, they would then release two hostages. If these arms were satisfactory, they would renegotiate for the remaining two hostages and Buckley's body.

McFarlane and Ghorbanifar agreed. Before heading for Tehran,

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McFarlane had asked Ghorbanifar to guarantee that two of the hostages be released shortly after they landed. He felt this would give the Iranians ample time to check the arms that McFarlane's airplane carried. Meanwhile, CIA representative George Cave, who spoke a little Persian, made a secret call to Prime Minister Mousavi from the United States. In a coded conversation in Persian, Cave told him, "I am calling from the bank and the president sends his regards. We will be happy if you send us one promissory note right away." George Cave had deliberately undermined McFarlane and Ghorbanifar's deal calling for two hostages. At this point Ghorbanifar's relations with Mousavi began to deteriorate.

The prime minister called Ghorbanifar in a rage. "Now I want you to tell me," he screamed, "what are you trying to pull? The Americans want one hostage released and you want two. Aren't you tired of suckering up to them?"

On July 8, 1986, President Reagan said:

There can be no place on earth left where it is safe for these monsters to rest, or train, or practice their cruel and deadly skills. We must act together or unilaterally if necessary to insure that terrorists have no sanctuary anywhere.

On May 23, 1986, only forty-six days before this statement was made, McFarlane, North, and other members of the presidential cadre boarded a plane loaded with spare parts for Hawk anti-aircraft-missile batteries, and took off for Tehran—the world's primary sanctuary for international terrorism. This was destined to become a history-making journey.

In addition to a cargo of sophisticated weapons, they brought with them special presents from President Reagan destined for Khomeini—a cake, a verse, a verbal message, an autographed Bible, and two Colt pistols. The cake was not only decorated with a chocolate key, an exact replica of the key-shaped medallions that Khomeini's men wear into battle, but it was also meant to represent the American government's desire to open up the door for direct negotiation with Iran. The verbal message from President Reagan stated that he swore on the enclosed Bible that he should be trusted, that the United States now understood how genuine the revolution was, and how eagerly we sought the Iranian people's friendship.

The verses from the Koran were from Sura Jumu'a LXII:

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Verse 6.

Say: "O ye that
Stand on Judaism!
If ye think that ye
Are friends to God,
To the exclusion of
[Other] men, then express
Your desire for Death,
If ye are truthful!"

Verse 7.

But never will they
Express their desire
[For Death], because of
The [deeds] their hands
Have sent on before them!
And God knows well
Those that do wrong!

The Iranian officials who received this odd assortment of gifts sent on behalf of the president of the United States were taken aback by what they could only interpret as his insensitivity or stupidity.

The autographed Bible was considered most offensive by the Muslims, who viewed the defacing of a holy book (be it the Old Testament, the New Testament, or the Torah, etc.) as sacrilegious. And because Persian literature had always portrayed Jesus as a prophet who advocated "the turning of the other cheek" and nonviolence, they were baffled by the contradiction of a Christian president sending both a Bible and Colt pistols. But they felt the most ludicrous aspect of these gifts was the selection of verses from the Koran that admonished the Jews for calling themselves chosen to the exclusion of other men. How could the White House send this quotation as a message to Khomeini and simultaneously honor U.S. friendship with Israel? The end result of the cadre's "gift bearing" was that Iranian officials now believed that President Reagan was either a fool or trying to fool them.

Instead of using their own identities and nationalities, the president's men traveled with Irish passports created by the Forging Office

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of the CIA. For instance, the forged passport of Robert C. McFarlane showed he had been traveling under the name of Sean Devlin. If these men were truly attempting to open the door for direct Iranian-American negotiations, why did they fear using their own passports? It seems as if almost all of their behavior was unique. It is possibly the first time in American history that representatives of the president of the United States have gone on a mission using illegal passports without the knowledge of the State Department or Congress.

Upon their arrival in Tehran, McFarlane, North, Cave, and the rest went to their suites on the fifteenth floor of the former Tehran Hilton. McFarlane began to listen to his radio for news of the freed hostages. Since there was no announcement, he believed that the Iranians might have needed more time to check the weapons. He kept listening, but no news of their release was reported.

"What am I supposed to tell President Reagan?" McFarlane queried. "Two hostages were supposed to be released the minute we landed."

Ghorbanifar's men replied, "Don't get so excited. Wait a little longer. Don't get your blood pressure up. They need time to check the arms!"

McFarlane said loudly, "I have explicit instructions from the president that if the four hostages and William Buckley's body are not released, we are to leave immediately."

(The Khomeini government had taken advantage of the extremely elaborate surveillance equipment that the shah installed throughout the fifteenth floor of the hotel. Every room was bugged.)

After realizing their mission had failed and believing the suite was bugged, the Americans went out on the balcony—which, unbeknownst to them, was also bugged—and commiserated with one another. McFarlane, very upset, was still listening to the radio in the futile hope that the other hostages would be released. North was weeping. Cave was philosophical. He said, "I don't need this. I have money in the stock market."

After the Americans had cooled their heels in Tehran for four and a half days, McFarlane was furious. He stated that they had delivered the arms, brought the cake and other symbols of America's good intentions; they had been promised the release of at least two hostages upon delivery of the arms. So, since the hostages hadn't been freed, they were leaving immediately.

The president's emissaries took off on an empty plane. They couldn't very well demand the return of their arms delivery because the

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Iranians had already unloaded the plane; but they did leave behind a hefty telephone tab at the hotel amounting to \$4,800. When the Iranian government was informed of this, they said, "Don't worry. They'll be back."

The primary reason they had made this trip was to ensure the hostages' release before the November 1986 election. McFarlane didn't realize that the hostages' fate was controlled only by Khomeini, who would never permit the number of people taken to fall below seventeen.

In addition to continuing the courtship of the Khomeini-Montazeri groups from May 1986 to October 1986, the president's men intensified their concentration on wooing Rafsanjani through his son, Mehdi. They briefed Mehdi's and Rafsanjani's aides about attempts made by an Iranian-Soviet network to prevent Rafsanjani from gaining leadership. They told them about the United States' plans to do everything possible to squelch the Soviets' efforts and make Rafsanjani Khomeini's successor. In return for its support, America wanted only the hostages' freedom.

In their desire to keep the channels open for additional arms shipments, the Iranians released the Reverend Lawrence Martin Jenco, a Roman Catholic priest, on July 26, 1986. He had been held captive for more than eighteen months.

Between July 1986 and October 1986, Cave and McFarlane continued to negotiate with Rafsanjani for the rest of the hostages' freedom. In return, the Americans assured Rafsanjani that a final shipment of five hundred TOW antitank missiles would be sent to the government of Iran. They also reiterated their pleas that all of the hostages be released before the November 1986 election. "It means a lot to the president," they said.

A shipment of arms was sent on October 29, the last to go via Israel; and immediately after that, another hostage, David Jacobsen, was released. However, the American government, in a futile hope that it would be able to announce the freedom of all the hostages, delayed making Jacobsen's release public for five days until November 2. When word leaked out that he had been freed earlier, the White House said it had held back the news for "security reasons."

In the summer of 1986, George Cave and his CIA colleagues decided to terminate Ghorbanifar's services and negotiate future arms contracts directly with the Iranian government. In this way they could get even with Ghorbanifar, who had slighted them and tarnished the CIA's image. In spite of vehement opposition from Colonel North and from Ghorbanifar himself, who had been principally responsible

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for the negotiations with Ayatollah Montazeri, the CIA representatives informed A. H. Rafsanjani, speaker of the house, that Ghorbanifar was out.

By this time, of course, the CIA men had placed themselves in opposition to North, whom they had regarded all along as a self-serving soldier of fortune. In particular, they resented North's direct access to President Reagan, who in fact eventually pronounced Lieutenant Colonel North "our national hero."

Washington, deep down, wanted to help Montazeri. The CIA representatives of the cadre were not specifically opposed to Montazeri, but they were opposed to Colonel North, Montazeri's man. And as the consensus in Washington formed around Montazeri, the CIA members decided to torpedo the negotiations rather than see North get the credit. In order to do so, they counseled dismissing Ghorbanifar with whom North had worked so closely and apparently successfully, charging that Ghorbanifar had been a double agent.

In the fall of 1986, everyone was happy. Montazeri and Rafsanjani each had a piece of the arms deal, the arms dealers continued to do a brisk business, the other members of the presidential cadre, as well as the Iranians involved, were all receiving money under the table, and the president's men were stashing funds in numerous secret accounts in Switzerland, Ireland, and other countries. Money was the lubricant that kept it all in motion and there was plenty of it.

In August 1986, while I was trying to extricate myself from CIA and Justice Department harassment, a source reported to me that the rumor mills in Iranian government circles were buzzing and churning out story after story about the arms dealings. So many different astronomical numbers were being bandied about—thousands of millions of dollars—that they had become meaningless—this Swiss bank account, that Swiss bank, secret missions!

My curiosity aroused, I asked, "What are these rumors?"

He answered, "This White House secret mission to Iran has turned into an octopus. Rumor is, the arms dealers have been grossly overcharging the Iranian government and the dealers are claiming that the United States government is marking up the arms to begin with." He elaborated. "Those fools in the White House are funneling these profits to the contras in Central America and the Republican campaign fund."

I said to him, "At least the money didn't wind up in their pockets." "Who knows?" my source said. "Of all the money that the Saudi government and the other heads of states have contributed for the contras—most of it—millions, has disappeared." He continued. "The

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arms that were earmarked for Afghanistan are being sent to the contras. The funds for Afghanistan and the money from the Iran arms sales are commingled. Who on earth can separate these funds? To top it off, your president, who has launched such a massive antidrug campaign with his wife, Nancy, leading off all the fanfare, doesn't know that the planes that delivered the arms carried loads of drugs back from Central America."

"You must be joking!" I said. "How are they shipping drugs on United States Air Force planes?"

He derided me. "You have been there too long! You have begun to think like one of them. Am I speaking Greek? I didn't say the air force. The drug runners have their own airline. It is called Southern Air Transport and is based in Miami. It used to be entirely owned by the CIA, but now it is also owned by General Secord, Albert Hakim, and others. Both of these men are part of the president's mission." Exasperated, he said, "If the president's men ever tell the truth, about how much wrong has been done and how often the law has been broken, the doorman will shudder."

After I hung up, I tried to digest what he had just reported. I was again being accused of being naive, not devious enough, and too Westernized. I thought about all of the allegations against the Reagan government. The cadre members had flagrantly overcharged Iran, sent money to the contras when Congress had voted against it, put money in secret bank accounts, and engaged in South American drug smuggling. If such extensive corruption and illegal activities were indeed being committed by President Reagan's "private government," then these crimes would hang like an albatross around President Reagan's neck.

The accusations that my source reported to me in August 1986 were confirmed in November and December 1986 by various United States authorities, including the Justice Department. The money is in the Swiss bank accounts of the president's men—Secord, North, and others whose names are still unknown. The arms-dealing cadre claim some of the money went to the contras. When Southern Air, owned by General Secord, Albert Hakim, and the CIA, delivered arms to the contras in Nicaragua, my source said that the empty planes stopped in Panama and loaded up on drugs before heading to the United States. Despite my incredulity at my source's information, he was justified again when *The New York Times*, on January 20 and 30, 1987, featured articles on the contras in which it found that "American flight crews covertly ferrying arms to the rebels returned to the United States by way of

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Panama, a major drug transshipment center, to pick up cocaine and marijuana." *The New York Times* quoted a drug-enforcement official as saying, "It was not one of the big smuggling rings anyway." It was like saying, "She's a little bit pregnant."

The American people have been faced with layers of lies. As of this writing in February 1987, the Justice Department is investigating the money that went to the Republican campaign fund. During all of their illegal acts, the president's men traveled on forged passports. Though President Reagan ordered a swift investigation of the scandal, his most trusted colleagues have taken the Fifth Amendment.

When it was disclosed that President Reagan had sent a Bible to Khomeini, the White House denied it. Later on, the White House stated if the Bible was sent, the president was unaware of it. On January 28, 1987, when Tehran showed the press the handwritten verse and signature of the president on the Bible, dated October 3, 1986, the White House said it was not the president's idea but Colonel North's to send the Bible.

In February 1987, as reported by *The New York Times*, McFarlane said that he didn't know Ghorbanifar's background, and if he had known what he knows now, he would never have suggested the United States get involved with him. McFarlane apparently had forgotten a great deal, including the fact that in January 1986 Ghorbanifar went under the polygraph and failed. The president waived the results, even though the CIA was against it.

This all reminds me of a Persian story:

A thief was caught in a garden with a big sack of pumpkins. The owner saw him and asked what he was doing in his garden. The thief said, "You won't believe it but a strong wind came and blew me here. I'm not lying." The owner said, "Granted. But who picked all the pumpkins?" The thief said because the wind was so strong and was going to carry him off to some other place, he had to hold on to the pumpkins and they came off. "I'm not lying," he said. The owner again said, "Granted. But can you tell me how the pumpkins got into your sack?" The thief cried, "I have the very same question! How *did* the pumpkins get into my sack?"

What happened to the money? This is a question that the whole world is asking, and perhaps that is why Secord, North, and Poindexter are taking the Fifth Amendment.

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In the summer of 1986, Reagan's emissaries were congratulating themselves that their mission had been an unalloyed success—Iran was theirs. The proof was the return of some of the hostages taken in Lebanon. In a mood to celebrate, they got together for a party in Western Europe, and euphorically laid down their plans for future adventures. With Iran now in America's pocket, they would move farther east—to Afghanistan to solve that country's problems, too, and with the leftover, laundered proceeds of their Middle East operations, finally they would heat up America's secret war in Central America.

But the CIA, angered and disgusted by Ghorbanifar from the very beginning of their relationship, decided to depict the Ghorbanifar group as crooks, incompetents or both. In the fall of 1986, the CIA members of the cadre moved independently to sell to the Iranian government, through Rafsanjani, arms for up to 60 percent less than previous weapons sold by Ghorbanifar and other dealers.

The damage was done. Back in Tehran, the government accused all the arms dealers, especially Ghorbanifar, of gross overcharging. The arms dealers had lied to the government and it wanted its money back.

Ghorbanifar's colleagues were furious at having been betrayed by their American collaborators. Among themselves, the dealers spoke of revenge and said, "Hadn't we freed some of the hostages before their damn election? Opened the door for negotiations? Made them money and even pimped for them? We are the ones who actually put the American hand in the Iranian hand, and this is the end result! How right Colonel North was. He always said the CIA would screw us in the end. Let's give it to them!"

Ghorbanifar's group retaliated by blowing the cover of President Reagan's cadre. First, they contacted Montazeri's aides and told them that the Americans had been in touch with Rafsanjani all along, and were against him and Khomeini. They advised Montazeri's aides to move quickly and go public. The aides issued a press release, describing in detail negotiations between the Americans and Rafsanjani—announcing to the world that the United States was exchanging arms for American hostages. This was picked up by the Beirut weekly magazine *Al Shira'a*, and ultimately by all the news services.

It was a bombshell! In an instant, Colonel North's personal triumph exploded into an international disaster whose reverberations were felt around the world. Colonel North emerged as a controversial and mysterious figure. He was at once summarily fired and praised as a hero by President Reagan.

Khomeini, ever the sly fox, seized the moment to reiterate his old warning. "How many times have I said, 'Don't get involved with the

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"Great Satan"—the evil United States?" Khomeini's government demanded immediate retribution. Montazeri's aides were disgusted by America's behavior, Rafsanjani arrested close to five hundred of Montazeri's followers and put them in jail, and Rafsanjani's son, Mehdi, was forced to flee the country. The arms dealers demanded payment in full for their services.

The Reagan administration, hounded by the press, was forced to confront an incipient crisis.

When the United States began flirting with Ayatollah Khomeini, it had hostages only in Lebanon and none in Iran. In February 1987 three have been released, one has died; there are new hostages in Iran and more in Lebanon than at the beginning of the White House-Khomeini romance.

Reagan's administration claimed that it sought a dialogue with moderates in the Khomeini government, but unfortunately there are few moderate voices in the Khomeini regime. Even so, if there was a possibility of establishing contact with moderates, the cadre was too inept and amateurish to discover who they were, or to deal successfully with them. As soon as Khomeini took control, he methodically eliminated all the moderate political and religious voices and subjected Iran to the most barbaric aspects of Islamic judicial practices. The only people the cadre was ever in contact with were Khomeini's prime minister, Mousavi, Rafsanjani, his speaker of the House, and Montazeri, his second-in-command. Certainly none of them represents a moderate point of view.

These "moderates" were disciples of a man who, after several sophisticated arms shipments reached Iran for which the CIA demanded William Buckley's return, asked his aides, "Did you receive the whole order?" When an aide answered, "No, just a part of it," Khomeini replied, laughing, "Well, send them a portion of William Buckley—one arm and one leg."

Above all, Vice-President Bush was officially informed while in Israel in the summer of 1986 that arms were sent to Iran for the radical groups, not the moderates, if there were any. If the vice-president informed the president of the nonexistence of moderates what logical reason did the president have to continue the arms? If Bush did not inform the president, what logical reason did Bush have? But the naked truth is that the president, the vice-president, and their men were aware that they were sending arms to the disciples of Khomeini.

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In early November 1986 a source reported that Khomeini was very angry about the picture the world press was being given of his regime, and felt that the remarks made by the American government about Iran were insulting and degrading. Khomeini's aides threatened the president's men that they would go public and reveal the incriminating details of America's clandestine dealings unless Ronald Reagan made the following statements to the American people:

1. There was never an exchange between Iran and the United States government of arms for hostages.
2. The Iranian revolution was a genuine one.
3. The Iranian government is not a part of world terrorist activity.

As I listened in amazement, my source went on to say that White House intermediaries had replied to these threats by assuring the Iranians that they would pass the message along to the president.

I was astounded. I couldn't believe that the White House would even listen to this obvious blackmail, just to mollify Khomeini's newly wounded sensibilities. Khomeini was like a wise serpent—he struck at just the right time.

On November 13, 1986, President Reagan addressed the nation in a live broadcast from the Oval Office. His talk included the following statements:

I know you've been reading, seeing and hearing a lot of stories the past several days attributed to Danish sailors, unnamed observers at Italian ports. . . . Well, now you're going to hear the facts from a White House source, and you know my name. . . .

For 18 months now we have had underway a secret diplomatic initiative with Iran. . . .

The United States has not made concessions to those who hold our people captive in Lebanon. And we will not. The United States has not swapped boatloads or planeloads of American weapons for the return of American hostages. And we will not. . . .

During the course of our secret discussions, I authorized the transfer of small amounts of defensive weapons and spare parts for defensive systems to Iran. . . .