

Early on, Ahern had admitted who he was. He knew that alone probably meant he would eventually be killed, but he saw it as a first step down a long road. He would give in little by little, buying himself time. His identity and role were the most obvious bits of information they already had. That much was clear from the documents they kept bringing him from the State Department files, week after week, and, eventually, some of the restored ones that he and Daugherty had shredded. It was pointless to keep denying the obvious.

The students held a press conference to announce their outing of the embassy's CIA officers. They displayed Ahern's false Belgian passport and showed off the copy of Laingen's cable identifying Daugherty and Kalp by name. In the United States, these documents were displayed on TV along with the allegations without much comment. Network reporters noted that Ahern had been an Eagle Scout as a boy, and that he had attended Notre Dame University before joining the foreign service. Daugherty was shown in his marine uniform. The reports neither denied nor acknowledged that the men were spies and did not explain that it was standard practice for agency officers to work at American embassies under cover of the foreign service.

Despite a national obsession with the story, there was at this point little or no reporting in the United States, on TV or in print, about the revelations in the "spy den" documents. While they contained nothing like the conspiracy theories the students imagined, they were revealing. They confirmed the agency's presence in Iran, which was hardly surprising, and in many cases unveiled what it had been doing, or trying to do. One of the most significant revelations was the agency's relationship with Simon Farzami, a Jewish journalist known in the agency files as SDTRAMP. Farzami had been raised in Lebanon and Switzerland and first came to Iran after World War Two with his brother, David, to visit their stepfather's brother, Ebrahim Hakimi, who later became prime minister of Iran. Both brothers had been hired by PARS, the Iranian news agency, and over the years Farzami had worked for a variety of foreign newspapers and agencies, including the Associated Press and London's *Daily Telegraph*. David died young, but Simon had a long career in Tehran, becoming editor of the French-language newspaper *Journal de Teheran*. He was an avuncular, sophisticated, portly man who had excellent contacts in local power circles,

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having once served in the Ministry of Information, and played both sides during the Cold War. His connection with the CIA was long-standing, but at times he had been a kind of double agent, undertaking two trips to Israel at the behest of the Soviets to "gather information on Israeli policies," and to "establish contacts" with Israeli journalists and academics. He was paid 120,000 rials (about \$1,700) for those trips, money that, according to one of the reassembled documents, he had been "allowed to keep" by the CIA—suggesting that the agency owned a certain priority of allegiance. Ahern had met with Farzami several times in his four months, a new station chief on unfamiliar terrain reaching out to a long-standing source for general guidance. It seemed to Ahern that the older gentleman enjoyed their orientation sessions. Farzami was not happy with his country's drift toward Islamic theocracy, and he appeared to be eager to offer whatever help he could. He deciphered for Ahern the byzantine Shiite subculture that had been thrust so unexpectedly into power, and he met with Barry Rosen, the embassy's press attaché, to discuss setting up an international newspaper in Switzerland that would present, according to one of the documents, "a true image" of Iran's revolution to the West.

Nevertheless, these relatively benign ties with the agency were enough to spell doom for Farzami unless he had fled. Ahern tried to buy him more time, telling Sheikh-ol-islam that he couldn't remember SDTRAMP's last name, only his first. He said he couldn't remember the name of the newspaper where he worked. He was helped in this sort of stalling by Sheikh-ol-islam's obsession with uncovering a plot to assassinate or unseat Khomeini. This is what the students were determined to find and were convinced existed. So the minor revelations in the documents were sometimes overlooked. In Farzami's case, however, it was not. Here was a person who had collaborated with the devil. He was arrested, charged with deliberately "mistranslating" government documents and with spying for the CIA. He would be executed by firing squad on December 16, 1980.

There were others. Under further questioning Ahern confirmed the identity of SDROTTER/4, a tribal leader from southwest Iran named Khosrow Qashqai, who had been encouraged and funded by the agency in his efforts to rouse local resistance to the emerging mullah-led regime; Rear Admiral Ahmad Mandani, a former governor of Khuzestan and more recently a losing candidate for president in the January elections; and

Amir Entezam, a diplomat who was involved with the effort to establish a Swiss-based Iranian newspaper. Qashqai would be captured in the summer of 1980 and publicly hanged in 1982. Mandani fled Iran and eventually settled in the United States. Entezam was arrested and jailed for life. The documents would reveal, and Ahern would confirm, earlier efforts made by the CIA to recruit Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, the current finance minister, who had been helpful to the agency in the past. Ahern's interrogation assumed a pattern. Instead of pushing him to tell them everything he knew, they would present him with documents and information that in most cases he would eventually confirm. He tried to confine himself to acknowledging only information they already had found on their own.

In time, Ahern rationalized his capitulation in another way. By helping them understand exactly what the "spy den" documents said, it might dispel some of their wilder fantasies about American spying in Iran. The contacts with Farzami and the others had been exploratory at best, and though there was no doubt that the United States was supporting Qashqai's efforts to oppose the new regime, and had hopes of doing more in the future, they did not reveal the plot the students were looking for.

Ahern's interrogations gradually ended. There would be days between sessions, then weeks. Finally, Ahern figured they were done with him, and his captivity became a struggle to fill time.

He was kept alone at all times. During the long months of interrogations he used every minute preparing for the next session, working out ways to delay, confuse, or avoid giving his captors information, but once the questioning stopped he was on his own with the four walls. He coped by finding activities that would bring him some lasting personal benefit, so that if he were ever released he could say that he had not wasted his time. He knew how to play the piano and was a lover of classical music, and when he asked his guards if he could have some of the sheet music he had kept in his apartment they shocked him by handing it over within days. He spent hours memorizing Schumann's *Carnaval* and piano works by Chopin, playing the music in his mind. He was given access to the library Richard Queen had set up in the chancery, and he chose mostly classics, plays by William Shakespeare, novels by Charles Dickens. He read Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* twice in French, and then, discovering two books of German grammar in the library, he set about teaching himself German, his wife's first

**11 Invasion and Opportunity** *Charlie Beckwith decided . . . everyone around them understood*, Burruss, Fitch, Beckwith, DF. *Two other things happened . . . the president's ear*, news reports, Jordan, C, Associated Press chronology, Brzezinski, P&P, Salinger's *America Hold Hostage* (AHH). *In the second week . . . dangerous business in Iran*, news reports, Jordan, C.

### Part Three Waiting

**1 They Started It, We Ended It** *After his questioners . . . eyes fell shut*, Ahern. Some background information about Simon **Farzami** came from <http://home.online.no/~hhakimi/album/abolhassan/abh.htm>, National Security Archives, news reports. *Ahern's colleague Bill Daugherty . . . ended the interview*, Daugherty, Schaefer, National Security Archive, TV news tapes from the Carter Center Library, Ahern, newspaper reports.

**2 We Know What Route That Bus Takes** *CIA officers . . . "That's it,"* Limbert, Precht. *Lieutenant Colonel Dave Roeder . . . should he take it?* Roeder.

**3 Happy New Year** *After more than . . . several times*, Kirtley, Lopez (Wells interview and my interview), Gallegos, Sickmann, Royer, Persinger, Cooke, Golacinski, Roeder, Sharer, Koob, Scott (interview and PG), Queen (interview and IO), Belk, Hall. *Queen's condition . . . whatever it was*, Queen (interview and IO), Hall.

**4 That's Illegal** *On January 25 . . . might finally be breaking Carter's way*, Jordan, C, Sick's *All Fall Down* (AFD), Associated Press chronology. *There was now . . . he was in on it*, Kupke, news reports, Lopez, Sickmann, Persinger, Graves.

**5 A Marvelous Coup** *Bill Belk's combative . . . his next meal*, Belk, Hohman, Ebrekar, TT. *Next door, Limbert . . . "marvelous coup!"* Limbert, Belk.

**6 A New and Mutually Beneficial Relationship** *With a secret process . . . "lawless dictators,"* news reports, videotapes from the Carter Center Library, Burruss, Fitch, Beckwith, DF, Kyle, GT, Schaefer. *The students were feeling . . . even kind*, Subic, Hermening, Lauterbach.

**7 SAVAK! SAVAK!** *Inside Iran . . . future of Iran*, Hashemi, Asgharzadeh. *Their frustration . . . wanted to do*, Limbert, Hall, Queen (interview and IO), Scott (interviews and PG), German, Ode, Kupke, Rosen (interview and DH), *444 Days to Freedom*, Belk, Sharer, Englemann, Lopez, Keough, Cooke, Golacinski, Persinger, Roeder, Royer, Kennedy. After being assured repeatedly by Mohammad Hashemi and other former hostage takers that their captives had been treated gently and with respect at all times, I asked him about the mock execution. He said it never happened, that such stories were "lies." "I have been interviewing former hostages