So I went into the Desk and saw my pal, who was the number three on the desk, we just talked. I said, by the way, what about the news I get that so-and-so? They said, where'd you get that? I said, "I talked to our mutual friend this morning and he said that that news had come in during two days ago."

He said, "Well, I haven't heard it and that really concerns me."

So he called in his other younger associate, the number two, and they agreed that they'd not heard anything of the kind, and they were both very annoyed. So three or four days later I saw them and I said, "Did you ever find out anything about that?" He said, "Yes. We found out just what we suspected, and it was a good chance to confront him with it. Their boss, the Desk Officer, the number one, has been squirreling information, keeping information away from them."

[anyone who needs to know can find out who it was . . .] RTA

Q: What was the substance of this report?

Arndt: I don't even remember. I truly don't remember. It just just a detail, but it was something that he was not sharing with his own team. And by the way, the two people in question were, I think, as I recall, either Mike Michaud and John Rouse or Tim Childs and John Rouse. I don't remember, it was two of those three.

Q: Michaud was at the desk for a while, I think.

Arndt: And there was no reason in the world not to trust those people.

So, now we've got to break.

Q: Okay. Thank you very much.

[END OF SESSION #1]

VA

Interviewee: Richard Arndt

Interviewer: Bill Burr

May 22, 1988

Session #2

Washington, D.C.

Q: The second part of the interview with Richard Arndt took place in Washington, D.C. on May 27, 1988.

Now at the end of our last meeting you said that the way the C.I.A. report on internal opposition was handled made you aware that there was some problem with the screening of negative information coming out of the Embassy. Were there any other examples of this problem that came to your attention while you were in Tehran or was that the main example that comes to mind?

Arndt: I wouldn't say that <u>that</u> made me aware of it. I was aware of it when I got there. The younger people in the Political Section felt that their stuff was being massaged before it left the office. Martin Herz was a classic editor. He edited everybody's prose. And they felt that he was systematically watering down some of this. And I think the he probably was, in my interpretation. I knew Martin a little bit and my sense was that he was editing it, in part, so that it would be balanced enough to get out of the embassy. I think there was all along the line a set of checks and balances, perfectly natural human judgments, that were tending to water things down a little bit, or as they would have said, I think put things in a broader perspective. Now let's be fair: I think every embassy in the world, US or otherwise, reflects on potential readers of

all messages before they write them. Tehran was not unique.

Q: Okay. Now this whole question came up in the context of the discussion of Armin Meyer as Ambassador. Now how much interest did he have in your activities and efforts as Cultural Affairs Officer? How much support did he give you when it was needed? You mentioned the Ramazani case as one example of support, I guess.

Arndt: Yes. That was a rather dramatic episode on which he helped. I would say Armin would do almost anything I asked him to, but I didn't have to use him very often. I didn't think it was particularly-- I didn't need his specific help, really. But if I needed something and I asked him-- I remember, for example, we had an enormous reception at the residence that he graced, in honor of the Fifth Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology, which was full of super-star art-historians and archaeologists and so forth. He did a wonderful reception and he did it with full heart. So that he was very supportive and if he wasn't, then Nick Thatcher or Doug Heck was. I never had any problems. If you wanted him to go to the Iran-American Society for an event, he would be there but it was a presence to used sparingly.

Q: How much interest did he have in your activities as such? Did he have much understanding of what you were trying to do in cultural affairs?

Arndt: Well, I frankly think he had a lot of understanding, after all he used to work for USIA. But, you know, that didn't mean that I went to see him every day. He was

reading my stuff, whatever stuff there was. You see, I was insulated from having to meet with him. I was not involved in the country team meetings. My boss the PAO was. And insofar as my PAO was happy about me, I think that Armin was getting good information.

But Armin had a bias beforehand. Armin felt, himself, that he had made some contribution to my being there, and we were friends from Beirut days. So that I never had any sense that I had to reach for to try to persuade Armin of anything. I mean, I had the sense he was already on my side. How much he knew in depth about what I was doing is a different question. It's impossible for me to tell, except that he always seemed to understand. After all, what he knew about my work was mainly filtered through the PAOS.

Q: Now you also mentioned-- this is another issue-- that some Americans who were assigned to Iran had attitudes of "anger, resentment and disdain." I suppose the attitude of anger and resentment came from the fact that they felt they weren't being assigned to a prestigious country? Was that the case?

Arndt: Oh, no. No, I don't think Iran was lacking in prestige, nor was the assignment lacking in prestige. No, I think it was more basic: people tended not to like Iran and Iranians. For example, my predecessor had come out of Japan. He adored Japan. Now the Japanese and the Iranians couldn't be more different. So he never really liked the Iranians. He simply didn't like them. Even Lois, who loved it, had an occasional weak moment when she yearned for the straightforward Scandinavian style. There were

in-built factors in the culture of that embassy, as there are everywhere. If you read the Post Report, for example, the booklet you read in Washington that warns you what to expect. I spent a lot of time-- well, not a lot of time, but I tried for years to change the post report, because it was very negative. I remember various details: it talked about the climate conditions in the houses. I can remember the line "the dust filters in everywhere. There's no way you can avoid it," and so forth and so on. Well, they were talking about certain kinds of houses that Americans lived out in the boondocks that were, in fact, surrounded by desert. But I didn't have any problem with dust in my house. It was a reasonable thing. The climate was beautiful. There were many, many wonderful things about the country. But the key line in the Post Report that absolutely-- I just tried in every way I could to get out-- was this, "Iranians never invite anyone into their homes." Now my problem was I had so many invitations from Iranian homes, I couldn't begin to meet half of them. There was just no question in the world that that was patently false. So that this kind of attitude was built in, it seems to me, to people before they came, because the Post Report was designed to cover everyone, from Marine Guards to AID techniques.

It is also true that we had a lot of people with technical skills there. You take, for example, a communicator, whose job it is to know codes, and repair machines. He doesn't want to be in Iran. He doesn't want to even be outside the United States, where he can't get a hamburger and catsup. So he resents being abroad. Well, that was magnified in a country where there weren't a lot of "things to do," movies, night-clubs, golf-courses etc. There <u>weren't</u> so many things to do, in fact. But for people who wanted to give Iran a chance, there were a million things to do. An extraordinary

place.

But there were in-built attitudes and these attitudes mattered. Remember when there was a large military presence there, people there more or less against their will. There were a lot of technicians of one kind or another, people against their will. There were people, the kind of people in embassies that have to be there, service staff that you must have, who didn't think the life was as amusing as it would have been, say, in Beirut or in Rome or wherever. You get that general kind of resentment, which seemed to me to be a little bit heightened in Iran, because there were so many factors that were built into the presence, that made it difficult to get out of that little American Ghetto box that you were in. I tried, in fact, in many ways to try to work with the American community, to try to get more positive attitudes. I would go up to the American school every once in a while and talk with the kids. I would talk about Iranian music or whatever it was, to try to give people a sense that this was a country where people had their own lives and minds and a right to their own opinions, you see.

Q: Now you also mentioned the question of there was sort of a feeling of disdain and you alluded to this problem to some extent. Did this attitude refer to an ethnocentric or to a racialistic bias among some of the Americans?

Arndt: Americans are ethnocentric. We're stuck with it. We're getting better at it, but it's a slow trek. And these people were darker-skinned and they didn't speak English very well, all of them, and there is always a kind of a natural disdain for people who do not live the same way we do. It's perfectly normal. You find it among many

Americans, in every country in the world. And, as I say, we're doing very well on that question. We're teaching more languages in this country. We're beginning to change those attitudes. But in the sixties, when I was there, it was still pretty much an attitude that had its ugly American sides to it. Racial? I doubt it; it was more developmental.

Q: Did these attitudes ever have any impact on the way diplomacy was conducted in the sixties in Iran?

Arndt: I think that the pros in the embassy knew how to deal with that. You know, people who had been in other Middle Eastern countries. Armin, for example, had been all over the Middle East, and while I would never say that Armin loved the Middle East, he certainly understood how it was and didn't think it was going to change too soon, and he accepted it. So most of us I think had that kind of professional attitude toward it.

Now there were some things that were deeper attitudes, that were harder for Americans to understand. For example, so many of the Americans worked on the assumption that the Iranians were always lying, that the Iranians were incapable of telling the truth. I worried about that for a long time, because it was obvious that the notion of truth that the Iranian culture had produced was a little bit more flexible than what we in the Anglo-Saxon world would narrowly define as the truth. And there were many reasons for that, historical reasons, which had caused this doctrine, whatever it was called-- what's it called, taquieh, where they're allowed to dissemble, to hide the truth when it affects-- when it is a question of religious persecution. Well, was one of

many attitudes built into Iran that even good Iranians wanted to change. But to go from there to say that the Iranians were always lying, therefore were never reliable and so forth and so on, was foolish. And there was a little bit of that, I would say, built into American attitudes.

And then there's always the question of corruption. Americans are really shattered by corruption. They can't handle it. They just are appalled by it. So a society that works in different ways and that is moving slowly towards standards which we would identify with is not always clear to them. For example, take hiring. Americans were shocked by the fact that there were still people hired because they had family connections. Americans can't understand easily that, in a country in which only one per cent of the population is educated, it stands to reason that those people are going to be related to each other in one way or another, that indeed the only way-- the first proof of merit in a society like that is the recommendation of a person who speaks to the honor of that person's family and so forth. That's the way the system worked and the exceptions were rare enough to be known. Now whether that could be changed over time, would change-- that is a different question. Almost certainly it could. In fact, that's what we thought we were doing, changing it, but in order to change it, you had to respect and to understand the way it was, in order to understand what had to be done to change it, and to understand how long it would take.

Americans were shocked by that kind of thing. They were shocked by the driving customs. Americans all over the world are absolutely appalled by the way other people drive. Not that we drive that well any more-- we used to drive better than we do. But Americans are very puritanical about their driving, as they are about their plumbing.

And when people are constantly aware in the streets that there are people out there that they deem madmen, insane-- and that these are the same people that they're dealing with, the notion of respect isn't always built into what they're doing.

Now these are what I know it's my business to know cultural patterns. But it's not in my power to change American attitudes, any more than Iranian attitudes. And some of those attitudes go very, very deep. I remember a staff meeting. In fact, it was in Ceylon, not Iran, but it's a typical kind of thing. The Ambassador asked, for some reason-- there was some message requiring us to answer that-- whether anyone knew of any act of embassy heroism that had taken place in the last couple of years. Real heroism that could be rewarded, because there was some new prize that they were looking out for heroic behavior. And the first man to answer was our Economic Counselor, who said in a very wry and funny way, "Well, I drive to work every day." And that, of course, provoked a great laugh in the room but the root of that laughter is disdain.

The fact is, that attitude is based on the notion that everybody drives badly but him. And it goes deep. So I can't give you any example of anything that proves this, except that there were basic attitudes of less than respect, that were very hard to overcome for many Americans and no less hard for the French and the British, who however had more practice over the years of the colonial system.

Q: That's interesting. Now in his book James Bill suggests that for the most part embassy officials tended to be rather isolated from Iranian society, did not have regular social contacts with Iranians and so forth, and this relative isolation tended to get in

the way of understanding the country. You're sort of speaking to that to some extent, I think. From your observations at the time, how isolated were embassy officials in the late sixties?

Arndt: All right. Now what I just said I must dissociate from what Jim Bill says. Jim is, I think-- and I've only glanced at his new look and that chapter in which he talks about the Embassy in Iran. I think it's an inadequate chapter. He a man who, to my great amazement, didn't always understand what he was seeing. There were levels of non-understanding among the Americans. There is the level at which you might find one of the communicators who doesn't understand why you can't get a Big Mac when you want one, or a Coke. There's that. So we won't worry about that. That's always present.

At the top levels there were two different levels of mis-understanding, I would think. Jim is not wrong about this, but he goes too far. He takes a little truth and goes much too far with it and I think he's very uncharitable with regard to the difficulty of the situation.

Now, the big thing that Jim points to is that our embassy address lists, invitation lists, tended to feature the same people. Well, every embassy address list in the world does, it's a technical problem. You have a big Rolodex and you try to put people on and you try to renew them, but you want to have a nice party and the Ambassador ends up saying, let's make sure that So-and-So is there, and you do tend to get the same kind of people. I have never been in an embassy where it did not happen. You tend first to make friends, then you invite your friends.

And then the other problem is language. I mean, you had an embassy in which the Ambassador, the Ambassador's wife, of course, the DCM, the DCM's wife, where almost no one knows the language. In the Political Section, there were always one or two people who had some Persian, And even when they had pretty good Persian, they didn't have THAT good Persian. The best American speeches of the Persian we have spent all their lives on it. In an embassy, you have people in Iran for three years, then they go off to Greece. So you had a set of language reasons.

I had access to something else, that few in that embassy had, because I had my French connections. And one of the ways in which I was useful at that Embassy was that I reached a whole enormous range of people who couldn't normally be on the embassy guest list because they could not speak English well enough. That's all there is to it. There's no point in inviting someone you can't speak with. So there was that whole question. And then there were the Iranians who didn't speak any French or any English or anything else. There were those who spoke only Persian. There is where Jim thinks that we really fell down. Now I've been a crusader for more language in the Foreign Service, may more than anyone else. More than Jim Bill has ever been. I think I've done effective work in trying to convince people that they need more language and to try to help them get it. But that is a complicated rap, and when Jim says that he as a scholar had all kinds of contacts because of his Persian, that's one thing. When somebody like Bill Royce says that he had all kinds of contacts--but Bill Royce never rubs it in-- that's another thing. Bill understands that some people can do some things and others can do other things. Bill Royce had incredible contacts. Far more than Jim Bill will ever have and far deeper because his Persian is twenty times

better than Jim's.

What is operating at that level is more complex. And it has not only to do with language. It has to do with access. An official of the U.S. government is a symbol and there's no way around it, and what a Fulbright can do, what a scholar can do, an embassy official cannot necessarily do. There is no doubt that the Shah didn't want us to invite the opposition into the embassy. Do you think he would have encouraged that? He would have been nuts to do that. Furthermore there were armies of Iranians who would not dream of going to the embassy, even if invited. Most of our contacts with the real opposition, so far as I know, were in the hands of scholars like Bill Royce, or they were clandestine. I hasten to add that I don't know that for sure. My assumption is that we had the clandestine contatcts. But we on the west side certainly didn't have them-- we didn't invite them to tea at the embassy. There was no way in the world we could do that.

Now, if you wanted to say that such-and-such a person in the Political Section went out and systematically tried to meet the opposition, there were those who did it. They did it through people like Jim Bill and Bill Royce. They tried to go out and tag along with them. Many of our officers used to ride on the migrations with the Bakhtiari tribes every year or so. We would send-- people like Mike Michaud and Arnie Raphel and Tom Greene and others would go out and do that, and that was all to the good. (By the way, by the time we got into it, it was rather a set piece. I'm sure the Bakhtiaris said, here come the crazy Americans again, and then handled it perfectly well.) But there were levels of access that you had. There was no way in the world that we could systematically, as a mission, have access to the kind of people. Jim Bill says

we should have known, let him try when he's the Ambassador. Well, there would have been ways, but they involved a radical reformulation of our personnel policy. We had to get much better speakers of Persian than we had, we had to give them some kind of freedom of time, so that they could learn, then be free to go out and explore things, then leave them in place for ten years. They could go to events where they would learn and meet people. And they could follow their nose if they weren't tied to their desk eight hours a day pounding out the paper, they might learn something. It was a busy embassy. All embassies are busy embassies.

So the largest contribution that I felt we could make was to bring the American scholars into contact with the embassy community, and we spent a lot of time trying to find ways in which the American scholars there, Jim Bill included, could naturally relate to embassy people without being in artificial situations. Nice, easy social situations of one kind or another. And I thought a Cultural Attaché could do that, because it was part of the enhancement of the internal culture of the embassy itself. So I did everything I could to try to bring these people together. Even that wasn't enough, because there were some elements of society that would not-- simply would not even talk to our scholars. Notably the ulama, notably the clergy. They were not really terribly interested in having anything to do with Americans.

So for Jim to say we should have had more contacts, of course he's right, we should always have more contacts, everywhere. We should have millions of contacts. We should know everything about everybody. But we're talking about human beings, with predictable limitations, who have eight or ten or twelve or twenty hours a day to give to their work and that's about the size of it.

And when you accept human limitations, I'd say that in our era, we didn't do all that badly. Perhaps we made two mistakes basically. First, and I don't know whether we could have controlled it, we allowed the Iranians to put certain human areas off limits. There wasn't any question that in one way or the other the Iranians controlled who we met, up to a certain point. I know for a fact that when I once tried to have a small seminar with people in my house, with a political scientist, no one came. Not an accident. And when we did have seminar-discussions in our houses or at the IAS, most of which were very successful, we would sooner or later hear about it somehow or other, indicating that one of the people there had talked to the police. In fact, once a Foreign Ministry person that I worked with on the Fulbright Commission came to me-- didn't come to me, we were meeting somewhere-- and I said, you know, we really should do such-and-such a thing, I don't remember what it was. And he said, well, he said, you know, are you sure that's what Americans should be doing here? And I said, yes, I really think it is. He said, "Well, all right," he said, "You can do it, because we know you. We know you and we know your intentions are good. So yes, don't worry about doing that. Go ahead and do it." He was giving me the official approval, and he was only pipsqueak in the Foreign Ministry. He was not an important man at all. But he was speaking for-- there had obviously been a decision at one point that I was a good guy and that I could be trusted to go a little bit further than the others. That indicated to me that there were boundaries. There were boundaries within which we moved.

Now another weapon they had for limiting us that was important, and that was this. If an Iranian at one of these seminars we had, for example, said something that

was deemed to be disloyal and it reached the secret police-- and it probably would, under normal circumstances-- he was called up on it. He would hear about it. In other words, the restraints on our meeting Iranians were not only restraints put on us. They were restraints put on the Iranians. All of this is perfectly understandable in that society at that time. That we were not more ingenious in pushing beyond those restraints is a shame, but it's a forgivable shame, I would say, and I think it ill behooves Jim to be as critical as he is and as harsh as he is when he didn't help much. I mean, he certainly never took me to meet anyone. Maybe he took someone, but it wasn't enough to make a difference. There was a great deal the scholars could have done, and as a matter of fact, if you contrast the usefulness of Bill Royce with that of Jim Bill, you will get a perfect case in point. They're the best of friends, but Bill Royce was very genuinely useful in trying to help us reach much further out, where Jim Bill died.

The other mistake that I think we made was that we declared religion off-limits. There are many things we could have done, but I have to say we could only have done them culturally. If we had been allowed to, encouraged to, if we had persuaded the Iranians to let us deal with the clergy, I think we could have been bringing selected clergy to the United States for study at U.S. universities and so forth and so on. But it had to be started way back. It couldn't just begin suddenly in 1966, suddenly come into existence. It had to be something that we'd started to build on way back in time. It was very hard to get started, unless the Ambassador went into the Shah and said something pointed, like we think your clergy is going to be a problem and we want to help you educate them. He might have been able to persuade the Shah. None of us had the wit to see at that time that there was a crying need there. And in general, the

foreign service in the Near East had always tried to distance itself from the missionaries-- hence, by peculiar logic, religion was off- limits.

Q: Now by saying that the religious people were off limits, was there a tacit understanding that they would not be talked to? What was that?

Arndt: Well, let me put it in two ways. First of all, they didn't want to talk to us, for sure. It was very hard to get at them. If I'd gone systematically to all of my friends and said, I am dying to meet a mullah I can talk to, can you find me one, somebody would probably have found me one. But I never did it. It was hard to do. There were many things we were doing and we were all busy. None of us was wasting any time, I assure you. Well, least not too much. But that's it. I could have done it, but I didn't give it a high enough priority. I feel I was a bit remiss in that.

The other element is this. When I got into the Foreign Service in 1961, I started in Beirut. There was an unwritten law that religion as a subject was a no-no. We didn't touch religion. Now you can see some reasons why that was so. But the major reason, as I took it, was that we were following on the heels of a hundred year American missionary presence and we didn't want to be identified in any way with the missionaries, partly because the missionaries were there to convert, and we didn't want to offend Islam in any way. So we wanted to keep our distance from the missionaries. And that even included to some extent, the American University of Beirut.

When I got to Sri Lanka, for example, we had a very serious problem with the Buddhist clergy there. That was the time when the Buddhist clergy were burning

themselves in public squares in Vietnam. State had at that time concocted the idea of a Buddhist Affairs Attache, an American scholar, who lived in Hong Kong/and who traveled around that whole area to maintain contact with the Buddhist clergy. My boss in Sri Lanka set up a very personalized campaign to build contact, to get into contact with the Buddhist clergy. He was laughed at throughout the American and the Western community. His picture appeared on the front page of the paper once-- the Westernized Ceylonese also laughed at him, by the way-- with his palms pressed together in front of his face, sitting squat-legged with his shoes off, amidst a bunch of Buddhist monks. Well, he was never allowed to forget that. And, in fact, ultimately he was pulled out of Sri Lanka and sent to another post. There was another important reason, but I have no doubt that his work with the Buddhist clergy was part of it, and the reason I have no doubt is that the man who succeeded him absolutely refused to have anything to do with them -- I assume he'd gotten the message in Washington.

So in other words religion was a no-no in the Foreign Service and in USIA programming. It was something we didn't touch. And the notion that religion had political implications was somehow or other left aside. Either people denied it, denied the importance of the clergy in Iran-- that was systematic, by the way, traditional. Everybody said, the clergy's of no importance here, "The clergy is hopelessly corrupt." And the reason was that we were convinced that the clergy had been heavily bought off by money, by the tactics of the then-Prime Minister Hoveyda. It is said-- it is said that when Hoveyda changed to Amuzegar, when Amuzegar became the Prime Minister, he cut off those payments, and one of the theories is that that is what triggered the violent clerical reaction. But in any case we were systematically told, don't bother with

clergy, it's not important, told by Americans and Iranians.

So was it systematic? Not exactly. But it was-- somehow or other it was in the air you breathed. It was not deemed important.

Q: Okay, that's very interesting. Now last meeting you said that you and Lois Roth worked out an exceptional framework for the U. S. cultural and educational presence in Iran, and that this framework shaped the annual country plans and reports that you prepared for the Washington. Could you discuss some of the main ideas or themes in this conceptual framework that you developed?

Arndt: As best I can remember them now. I wish you could find those documents. And as I said, if you find one, please give me a copy.

The key word was modernization. That's what we were worried about. We were trying to help Iran move from the twelfth century, or wherever it was, into the modern era. And the tool that we had in our hands, as far as Lois and I were concerned, was education.

Now we used the word education in a very broad set of ways. First of all, we could directly educate. We could send What's-His-Name to the United States, or even tot eh AVB thanks to AID, to learn a skill or a subject or whatever. We could bring What's-His-Name from the United States to teach in University X or University Y. We could bring What's-His-Name from the United States for one week to work with experts in the Ministry of Labor or in the Central Bank or wherever. We could bring in the kinds of people who could help them understand what their choices were and give them some

good advice, consultants, if you like. So we were educating in the narrow sense of sending people to "school" and bringing school people to Iran. That was one way of doing it.

Now the second element of education was what we would call in this country adult education or continuing education. There, for example, we felt that our English teaching effort was part of that. We felt that it was necessary for Iran, if it were to live in the modern world, to have the capacity to handle English at all levels of society. And so we had this massive English teaching program --- 5,000 Iranians per day in Tehran, and more in the provinces.

We put on programs at the Iran-America Society, and elsewhere, seminars, whatever. And the keynote was education. If it didn't convey an idea that seemed important, then we would not do it. For example, I remember a series that we ran before Lois got there on minorities in the United States, and I remember sitting around formulating the notion of how blacks were treated, how Italo-Americans were treated, and so forth and so on, in terms of relelance I was making the point that it's pointless to do a program on minorities, unless in some way or other you make it fit with the kind of pluralistic society that the Iranians had, that you had to encourage them some way or other to see that unless they incorporated their tribal minorities, their Armenians, their Zoroastrians, their Jews, whatever else there were, their foreigners for that matter-- unless they incorporated them usefully into that society, they were wasting a human resources. Lectures, films exhibits, book, the library -- everything was learning, and thekey was its applicalbility, its relevance.

So that most of it had to do with this broadened sense of education. We tried not

to do anything merely for our own amusement. If we put on a play, it was partly-- the play was put on in a way to show them that they too could put on plays. And we made the theater and the theater workshop and all the rest available for them to put on their own plays. If we put on a show of paintings, we would put on a show of paintings that either helped them understand how to put on their own shows of paintings, or we would put on a show of paintings on a theme that seemed to us to be something they could do.

For example, we were sent, from Washington, a show of sculpture, except it was small sculpture, table top sculpture. And in order to show them how that was relevant to their lives, we sent a photographer around town, who set this small sculpture in front of a public building and took a photograph through the sculpture, so that the sculpture looked about twenty times larger. And then we had that projector on the wall by a slide show. The idea was to show them how public sculpture enhances the beauty of a city. They had, by the way, a public sculptor, the author of that one right there on the table, in fact, who was working on public monuments at the time, and the whole idea of public monuments was coming up.

So we tried to do nothing that didn't have what we called a "tie-in." If it didn't have some relevance to what was going on in Iran, we didn't do it, we didn't bother with it. It had to have an American tie-in in some way or other and it had to have a developmental tie-in to the situation in Iran.

For example, we had done shows of Iranian art at the Iran-American Society since the early fifties. And the reason, we did that were very simple. First of all, to show them that Americans appreciated their country and their art and their beauty, but also

to show them that they had artistic treasure that they were throwing away. For example, we had a tremendous show, a very important show, of what they called "coffee house paintings", which are akin to the things that American itinerant artists did in the nineteenth century. They would go around the country, like Edward Hicks of The Peaceable Kingdom. He would do it for anybody who paid him. But we were showing them how their own art, the kind they never looked at, was beautiful. We did this tremendous show of coffee house painting. As a matter of fact, on the world market that show enhanced the value of the coffee-house paintings enormously. It also made Iranians prouder of their own heritage.

So that was the kind of thing that we were doing. I could go on and give you other examples, but I think, to be tidy, that's the best way I can put it.

Q: Now you said earlier that when you arrived in Iran, Larry Hall, the PAO Officer, his first request to you was for you to work on the universities, to do education related work, especially in higher education. Now how would you characterize the state of Iran's higher education system around the time that you arrived in Iran?

Arndt: By the way, that ties in with your preceding question, because the developmental side of education was taking place in the universities. When I got there, there were four or five universities. The kingpin, what was called the Mother University by its Chancellor then, was the University of Tehran, which had been founded in the twenties by the French and was a massive place, an enormous place, with a long complicated political history. There had been an assassination attempt on

the Shah there and it was a very complicated and involved place.

In the south, the University of Shiraz had been chosen as the target for a "center of excellence" by U.S. A.I.D. and with Penn we had helped them set up the Pahlavi University. There was a reason for Shiraz. A very dynamic man in Shiraz had earned a lot of money and had decided to build a hospital in Shiraz-- which was a long way south, way out on the edge of the desert. The man's name was Nemazee, and he built what is known as the Nemazee Hospital. He wanted an American hospital, but the man had a real vision. He didn't want just an American building. He wanted an American hospital, American doctors, American nurses, American equipment, American everything, with American criteria. And he built this strange hospital, a very bizarre idea, but which then over time began to evolve into an Iranian institution, as many Iranian-trained but U.S. experienced doctors came back. It was a lure to get some of these very high quality Iranian medical talents back from the United States to work in that hospital. And that then fed sooner or later into the medical school down there, and ultimately into the entire Iranian medical system. That was the way it began. So A.I.D. decided that they wanted to build a real university, a model university on the American style, and they created the university that was called the Pahlavi University. When I got there, it was still very much supported by A.I.D., and there was a team of Penn people down there. There were American teachers, a library full of books, and all kinds of things. It was done in conjunction with the University of Pennsylvania. That of course is a whole story in itself. In the five years I was there, the Iranians were ftorn: one school wanted a "center of excellence," but the general tendency was to integrate the Pahlavi University into the whole Iranian system, to eliminate its more

egregious foreighn and thus irritant factors, having to do with its American-ness; the idea was to reabsorb it into the Iranian system. And in the eyes of some that was a total disaster; in the eyes of others, it was a necessary move. I'm on the latter side, and I believe the whole project from the beginning should have been handled with more sensitivity. But there was no doubt there were tradeoffs, great losses, a lowering in quality, because it was done too quickly and without a deep understanding of the problem of quality in universities. Of course, there were other universities when I got there. In Shiraz, in Isfahan, in Meshed, in Tabriz. There was a university in Tehran and there was a so-called private thing called the National University, it wasn't national at all, it was a private university in Tehran, started some years before by some American educated people. There was an interesting Agricultural College in Karaj, near Tehran, which also had AID assistance at one time, and there were other little spots; and there was a budding technical university down in the oil country in Abadan, the Abadan Institute of Technology, which was strong at its level and growing.

Well, that was the situation I found. The quality of the universities was pretty bad. It was uniformly low, but out of it emerged first-class people; and there's not much more that I can say briefly about that. I could go on for hours about that situation.

In 1968 there was a big to-do in the Iranian government. You recall that the Shah's strategy was to create what he called the White Revolution, and the White Revolution had many columns to it, or pillars--land reforms, etc.--and these pillars were augmented by one in 1968, when they created the "University Revolution," Enquelab-e-Danesligah. The idea was to "revolutionize" the universities. Well, what that meant was: 1) the foundation of a lot of new universities, lots and lots of them; 2) a tremendous rise in

budget; and 3) the attempt to motivate many more overseas Iranians to return; and 4) the creation of a separate ministry for universities. The Ministry for Higher Education, Science and Research, it was called, Vezerat Olum for short

And that was a heady moment, there was no doubt. It was a privilege to be there, a very exciting time. But the problem was immediately obvious: you don't just "create" universities, any more than you can invent George Mason and turn it into a great university in ten years, or even in twenty years. You don't simply start a university and have it open its doors tomorrow and give high quality education.

So you had tremendous problems of staffing and building and housing and administration and God knows what else. Endless problems. It was all done in a very good cause. There wasn't any doubt that it was done for the right reasons, and the new budgets were impressive. In all this, our office worked very closely with the Ministry of Higher Education. We were basically trying to use the very small funds we had in useful and relevant ways.

One of the things we tried to do was to get people to the United States to see how American universities were governed and administered. We sent a group of university administrators from the University of Tehran around the United States in the fall of 1967. Took them all over the place, and tried to show them how we ran our universities. In fact, I was their escort officer and interpreter. And that experience taught me how difficult a job we had.

It was a real tough thing. These were older people. They really didn't know any better than what they had seen, and they knew better than I what they were up against. Some of them had been to France, and one to the U.K. As you know,

universities on the Continent are not very well "administered" either, at least in U.S. terms. So it was really an uphill struggle. It taught me, I think, how difficult a job we'd cut out for ourselves. But on the other hand, with enough time you can do almost anything in education, if you have enough time--and we all believed there was lots of time to do things slowly, to absorb the mistakes and to learn.

Another area of education in which we tried to help them was libraries. We felt, and I still feel, that the heart of a university is the library; their libraries were notoriously poor. Without books you can't have a university. The Pahlavi University had a magnificent library, provided by A.I.D., and it was quite remarkable, but only a kind of start-up affair. It needed years of nurture and growth. But then Pahlavi University was teaching in English, and so all the books could be in English. In fact, there weren't any other books, or very few, that were appropriate for university education. In the absence of Persian books, the only route was to teach in English. We were trying to get certain books translated into Persian--I can't tell you how long it took. For each one, it would take years and years, because the language-- it isn't easy to just sit down and dash it off. You have to <u>invent</u> the language you use when you translate complex thought or science from English into Persian, because we're talking about a language equivalent to those of the sixteenth or seventeenth century Europe. No more than that. Most of the universities were still centered on the theological school at their core, much as the early European universities had been.

So--universities, libraries, the new Faculty of Education at Tehran University, the Tehran School of Social Work, English teaching at the universities, basic science--it was a long and uphill study, a struggle. I wasn't surprised. The term that I saw for that

effort twenty years, at the minimum. Now I don't have to tell you that the U.S. government doesn't think in twenty-year spans very often. But somehow we were getting away with it. We were suggesting that people be patient, that they do their best, that they try to do just do what they could, settle for partial successes, bear with the difficulties and try to prevail. And part of this effort was trying to attract more Iranians back. And it did, in fact. Lots of Iranians began to come back, because there were jobs in the universities and they were fairly well paid, in salary at least. As the head of the Central Bank at that time-- someone you will interview in due time, Khodadad Farmanfarmayan-- said, he said, the problem is a problem of critical mass. He said, when there are more of "us"-- meaning the Western trained-- than there are of "them," meaning those who had only an Iranian education, then the problems will begin to disappear. But for the moment, he pointed out, "we" were spending all of our time trying to convince people that "we" know something and that "our" way of doing it is an acceptable way, and maybe even a better way .

Q: Now at the last meeting you also mentioned your growing interest in manpower economics, as sort of a link between cultural affairs and educational development. Did you relate this issue to your work on the educational system?

Arndt: All the time. I'd figured that out in Sri Lanka. It was a small country and I realized that educational investments had a great deal to do with economic development, and a great deal more. And the climate of Iran in the nineteen-sixties was so developmental you could cut it with a knife. That was all that we talked about.

That's all that they were concerned about. We talked the language of development not because it was U.S.I.A.'s job to develop Iran but because it was the Americans' job to help Iran move toward-- a moral debt, a debt of history, a debt of partnership. We had had A.I.D., but A.I.D. was phasing out. We had had all kinds of uncoordinated private efforts, but it was in the United States' interest to help Iran develop a more stable economy and presumably-- because we all believed it would follow in some magic way-- a political structure. We made the mistake, as I think I said before, of thinking that the politics would automatically follow the economy. We were wrong about that, and I think that's been one of the failed concepts of U. S. policy in general, where we went wrong. But nonetheless we were making terrific joint efforts in economic development and the Iranians themselves were making terrific efforts, and it was all around you. Our contribution, in the Cultural Office, was intellectual growth. We were in a tremendously exciting context.

Now I think some of us in the orbit of the Cultural and outside scholars like Jim Bill to some extent, Bill Royce more-- saw that political development was not quite happening as naturally as we had imagined. So we began to press them. We began to press them on the margins. We said, why not have a Fulbright Professor in Political Science in the U.S.? Why not send people off to study political science? Why not bring them back? And so forth and so on. We sent Hamid Emayet to the U.S. and several others. We programmed Leonard Brinder, Lucian Pye, many others in Iran. We got a lot of US social scientists into Iran for research-- Bill, Garthwaite, Fischer, Lois Beck, Sidney Mintz, Bob Beeman, someone in the bazar of Tehran (?), and more. Americans had always been deeply involved in antiquarian research-- archaelogy and

pre-history. But the contemporary social sciences were trickier. We tried to help people like Majid Tehranian to reenter the society and a Columbia PhD, Keyvan Tahari, was put in charge of research at the Ministry of Higher Ed. afkhami and Qoreishi were teaching at the National University, and Bahman Amini, and Parvi Saney was doing law from a socio-political viewpoint.

END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE ONE; BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO, TAPE ONE:

Still, the essential thrust of the developmental effort in Iran was compartmentalized--economic development only. So we tied in wherever we could. If we found a need of any kind, we would go over and talk to the people and say, well, what are your educational needs? How can we help you? And by the way, there was plenty of Iranian money. So we would say, can we help you set up a program in the United States to train your people? If we can do that, can you pay for it? And we were trying to get that kind of thing going more and more often. There was constant interchange, often jointly funded, of that variety.

One of the things that we talked about was an idea of Columbia University and Jay Hurewitz. Columbia came up with the idea that an Iranian studying politics or Iranian studies in the U.S. should not do the dissertation in New York, but he should do it back in Iran. The idea was that the university would agree to prospectus and an outline, the research outline; then the person would come back to Iran and to some extent, through my office, we would provide-- not supervision, I couldn't exactly supervise, but communications help in staying close to the university. I would help get