Q: Now I think it was James Bill who mentioned an episode where some American avant-garde poets gave a presentation under the auspices of the Iran-America Society?

Arndt: He certainly does. Let me tell you about that. I'd become aware very early that in Iran poetry was a medium that touched Iranians, made them weep more than any artistic form. It was obviously the principal art form in their lives. And I had a long conflict of what to do about it, because for the most part the Iranian poets knew no English, and obviously the American poets knew no Persian, for sure. And getting the two together was a terrific problem. Indeed, translating poetry is almost impossible in any language, but more so that particular set of languages. If not impossible, we at least were not ready to do it then. So we had an episode that was really quite, I thought, deplorable. The USIA had come up with an idea-- we had been talking about doing poetry in our planning documents for a long time. And USIA came up with an idea to send out a very, very minor American poet who happened to work for the U.S. Information Agency. And when I saw what they were sending us, I decided that we weren't going to do it, just minimize it. But one of my younger colleagues decided that we should do it anyway, and get his ego all mixed up in it; so I let it happen. I probably shouldn't have, but I was too busy with other things.

And what happened was that this very minor poet was completely over-sold as the cutting edge of this great American poetry movement, and above all, the first to visit Iran. In my view, he was really terrible. In fact, I think he was "spaced out" most of the time he was there. But the worst part was the

translation. When it came to the translation, the translation arranged by my colleague was not only inadequate but had been done by a person who didn't even know Persian very well, because he came from Azerbaijan and spoke Turki as his first language; he was my colleague's principal assistant and he had had very little education. And the result was a meeting, a fairly prestigious meeting, of the International Pen Club group, headed by the father of the Minister of Higher Education, a scholar named Zain al'abedin Rahnema, who then was the president of the International Pen Club. He was a

distinguished older intellectual, a man in his seventies who had written a major work on Mohamed Called The Messenger.

That session for me it was an enormous embarrassment. Now Jim Bill takes that episode in his book and signals it as an act of enormous courage on the part of my younger colleague. In fact, it was really an act of stupidity. We should have had the courage to say to the USIA, this is not enough of a poet for our needs, and unless we have the poems at least a year in advance, so that we can get a decent translation done, or even some approximate translation done, there is really no point in doing this at all. We should have said that. Instead I let it happen; indeep, having let it go, I was probably guilty of offering insufficient guidance. But it was, as far as I was concerned, enormously

embarrassing.

Jim Bill's point I suppose is that at least we stood up and said we're interested in poetry. Well, I suppose, but I think there were lots of good ways to let Iranians know that. Some of us used to go to poetry sessions, where they would read poetry among

themselves. Certainly a lot of our Fulbrights went to these things all the time, and I certainly heard their reports on them. I found them extraordinary events. But literally, no matter how well you knew Persian, you couldn't understand the process. They were all reciting poetry and it was clear that they all knew the poetry, because you could hear people in the audience mumbling along with the poetry. And the responses to the whip-cracking lines or whatever it was always the same and the response was always general in the room. They were always-- the whole audience would be triggered at exactly the same moment in response. So they obviously knew what they were hearing. It was a highly practiced kind of a ritual, but it was totally closed to anyone like me. So in a tradition like that, what was the point of bringing a super-minor poet and having him translated by a Turkish driver?

It was a nice try, but we blew it as far as I was concerned. As for acts of ocurage, we'll leave judgments like that to Jim Bill.

Q: Now at the last meeting, I think, you mentioned that the Ford Foundation was fairly active in Iran. What were its main activities that you were aware of?

Arndt: They had been very active and then they were out. The Ford Foundation after the Mussediq-- well, maybe before, in fact-- had played an enormous role in the fifties really. And what their main thrust was was the Plan Organization. They worked at the Plan Organization, they worked in the area of public administration. They took a lot of people to the United States and trained them at different universities.

Q: This was the Harvard project?

Arndt: Sort of the Harvard project, but actually-- it was basically economic administrators. That's who they were. And it was big. I mean, it was very big. There was a whole Ford team out there, and they produced people like-- who later became the head of the Central Bank and so forth. I mean, it was a real tremendous investment.

By the time-- see, I got there in '66 and my sense is they phased out by '63.

Q: Oh, okay.

Arndt: Now Ford had an office in Beirut that was a regional office, and they also had an office in Cairo, but the office that covered us was in Beirut. In 1967-- must have been '67-- when I was on home leave for some reason or other, I stopped in New York, and as luck would have it, a man named Harvey Hall, whom I'd known in Beirut years before, was there and he got quite excited about what I was saying about Iran and he took me to a man named Don Kingsley and Don was quite turned on by some of the things. And then Don Kingsley became the head of the Beirut office, and from then on there began a dialogue between us and Ford, which meant that every six months or so someone from the Beirut office, usually Don Kingsley, would come over. Once he brought Wayne Fredericks, who was one of the vice-presidents of Ford at the time, and so forth.

And they would just sort of use us as their-- by the way, they did a lot in agriculture too, because they were helping with the Green Revolution. Or was that Rockefeller? But anyway, they were working together on that.

So the only project that we really got off the ground was a program in legal education. Ford was one of the major foundation sponsors of a little satellite foundation called the ILC, the International Legal Center, in New York, and their vice-president was a Swiss-Italian named Peter Konz. And Peter, who I think is in Vienna now, used to come to Iran regularly and we would introduce him to a whole bunch of people. There were really three or four things that we were worried about. One was the modernization of traditional legal systems in a broad sense. Second was legal research. For example, the decisions of the Supreme Court of Iran were not published, and that made it very hard to do research, and one of the pressures we were putting on and suggesting was that they bring this out in the open. In any case it resulted in Ford's helping us find a series of legal scholars who came out of the Fulbright program. The most important was a man named Gordon Baldwin, who was at the University of Wisconsin law school and was later deputy legal adviser in the Department of State. And Gordon did a remarkable job in teaching international law, constitutional law.

At that time there was a movement to develop what they called houses of justice. The idea was to decentralize the legal practice and to get legal units-- decision-making adjudication units-- at the village level, going back to the old Islamic tradition of the faqih, of the judge. And the idea was to have every village wise man-- and they had these-- to establish legal procedures in these wise men councils all over the place. And

Gordon Baldwin got very interested in that. And there was a deputy minister of court who had been in Justice, whose name was Baheri, who is living in the Washington area now, who was interested in that. And particularly the year after I left, Baheri and Konz and Lois and the Fulbright lecturer in law and a bunch of other people at the law school at Tehran University were working together.

All that was kind of Ford-inspired. Ford never put any money into it in a sense, but they paid the cost of Konz's coming out and they helped us recruit the right people in the U. S. and provided continuity and so forth and so on.

That's the only thing that Ford actually literally did with us, other than talk. Indeed, there was a time when they tried to hire me away from Tehran and I went over to Beirut and talked with them, but it didn't work out. To my way of thinking, I was better off where I was, so I stayed there.

Q: Now in 1967, as you mentioned in the last interview, I think, or the first interview, the AID closed up its mission in Iran, and some of the mission programs you talked about were
transferred to your office, along with the people who ran the programs. Now what were those programs or those activities that came under your jurisdiction?

Arndt: Well, as you know, an AID mission consists of many mansions. The only mansion that had anything to do with me was that which was called the human resource development side. The last head of that, Marvin something or other, had had a young deputy named Dick Dash, and we met and that's how that idea transpired. At the time

my agency, USIA, didn't much care about it. We had space in the building and the PAO didn't see any objection to it. Brought over two employees, probably one of the finest human beings I've ever run into, a man named Kazem Paksima, who is now living in Long Island, and a very high-class secretary named Susie, who worked with him.

Now there were really three programs they brought, and you'll see immediately why AID wanted to continue them. The first was the AUB program. The AID mission paid annually for about thirty or more scholarships for Iranian kids to go to the American University of Beirut. AID was using AUB as a regional university for an area that stretched from I think Bangladesh, or at least Afghanistan, all the way over to Nigeria. Now they were making it into a regional university by simply paying full costs scholarships. Not full cost to the student, but full cost to the university. It was a disguised way of subsidy in one sense, but in another sense it was a way of influencing the university to play a regional role. And we would screen-- this group would go through a screening process and get dossiers together on a bunch of candidates and submit them and so forth every year. So that was a big and consuming ongoing kind of a program. And there was a regional-- there was an AID man in Beirut that would come over periodically and so forth. We would do all this, but Pakseban handled that pretty much on his own.

The second program was another ingenious AID program. Afghanistan was years behind-- centuries behind Iran in

developmental terms, and the idea was that the culture shock of an Afghani studying something in Iran was considerably less than going all the way to the United States, particularly in middle level jobs. This could be telephone technicians, it could be-- you

know, whatever, shop foremen kinds of things. So they brought a lot of Afghanis down from Afghanistan to study in Iran for a period of two or three months. They had very little to do with us, whereas the AUB program had a great deal to do with us. And the third thing was that there were a lot of funny little programs lying around in AID, which were done on a worldwide basis. For example-- I can only give you one example that sticks in my mind. There was a program involving teachers in teachers' colleges, colleges of higher education. No, colleges of teacher education. In collaboration with the American Association of Colleges, AACTE. And they came up with a free grant for a one-year-- a grant for someone to go to the States and study teacher education.

Well, we sent a fantastic guy. He turned out to be the wrong guy for what their purposes were. He's a man who is now teaching in the United States. His name is Akhman Ashraf. And that was the instrument by which we got Akhman Ashraf to the United States. He was highly recommended as a future teacher college administrator. Well, it turns out he wasn't, but we had no way of knowing that at the time.

So we had these tiny little programs that were occasionally paid for by AID and that we were in a position to administer. By the way, when the new PAO came in, [Jay] Gildner, in whatever it was, 1968, he immediately went on the warpath about this. He said, it has no business being in the USIA. And I tried to resist-- and I don't even remember what happened, except that I kept them as long as we could. I think what happened, in fact, is that I kept it until I left, and when I left Pakseban had already decided that he wanted to join his family business. And Pakseban then-- he was in the shipping and trucking business, and when he went to the family business, the business increased by a magnitude of about ten. When the revolution came, they owned

something like twelve ships, an enormous fleet of trucks, and were really in charge of moving things in and out of Iran more than almost anybody else. They had cargo planes and all the rest. Quite a remarkable man. Quite a remarkable man.

Q: I read that some American embassies, embassies in developing countries, have what are called leadership grant programs? Was there one for Iran?

Arndt: That's a misnomer. They're not called leadership. That's often a mistake. It's misinformation that floats around. The USIA has always had a program to bring short-term specialists, short-term people, to the United States for periods to be fixed, which I will tell you about. When it was first founded, it was called Leaders and Specialists. This was founded in the forties and it's gone on and had many, many changes. In fact there was a big review of it done in 1981 that I chaired, which is in the files somewhere, that you could read if you wanted to.

Anyway, in the fifties the pattern developed that you had three kinds of grants. You had a leader grant. In the fifties now we're talking about, forties and fifties. This, by the way, grew out of the German re-education program. And in the early fifties the pattern was, a leader was three months, three whole months in the United States. A specialist was six months, because he had to learn something. And the reason I remember those two figures is that the Eisenhower program, which was founded at the end of the Eisenhower administration, which was a private program, decided that there was a gap to be filled and they brought leader types for nine months. They were filling in that gap afterwards.

Now what happened was that as societies developed-- certainly in Europe and also in the Third World-- people could less and less afford to be away that long. So by the time I got to Tehran we were actually bargaining with them to stay for a full month. And it was hard. The kinds of people that we wanted to send couldn't always get away for a full month. And we were therefore moving away from the concept of a leader of today to leaders of tomorrow. We were trying to get younger people who could stay longer. And we still had longer grants for some things, but basically the minimum was a month, and the average may have stretched out to maybe two months. Not the average, but the maximum may have stretched out to two months.

Now those leader grants and specialist grants are a standard USIA tool. We now call it the International Visitor Program, and it's gotten even shorter. We get down now to visits of ten days or less.

I could go on and tell you what we did with that program in Iran, if you'd like.

Q: Okay. Yes.

Arndt: Okay? When I got there, the political counselor was a very brilliant man named Martin Herz. He told me in so many words-- he said, you know, normally the leader program is something that the political section is very interested in. He said, as far as we are concerned, we have scraped the bottom of the barrel for years. There are no leaders at our level that are interested in going or who we can get. He said, as far as I'm concerned, this is your program and you find ingenious ways to use it and we will do it. Occasionally, he said, I may want to send somebody and the arrangement

between us will be that you will take that nomination very seriously. And I said, of course. Well, the first thing we came up with, an outgrowth of an AID project-- and I must have talked about this-- was the District Governor's project, the Bakshdars.

Q: You talked about that last time.

Arndt: The principle was that we would take people in their twenties really, the threshhold years, and expose them to how things were done in local government in the United States. At a level early enough for it to be imprinted on their minds and to make a difference in their careers. It would be fascinating to go back and do a survey of those men today. Or maybe ten years from now, when things have calmed down.

But in any case there were two or three principles involved: one was going younger; two was trying to catch people who were at the cutting edge of the "modernization process," whatever that meant; and three was the involvement of Iran, in selection and funding. We no longer merely sent our choices. We went to the Iranians and said, if you are interested in this project, we can work it out together; if you can pay for half of it, then we can talk turkey. The reason I did that in the first place was purely crass. We didn't have much money and it was a big country, and my feeling was that if we could get joint financing, we could double the size of the program. Which is exactly what happened. By the time I left we had eighty per cent, ninety per cent of the IVP jointly financed. And instead of sending twenty people a year, we were sending forty or more. But the second principle was that when Iran was involved we got much better people. We were the darlings of Washington. We got extra U.S. money because we

were doing such a good job. And I think used our resources extremely well. For example, we sent a group of Tehran University administrators to try to to break down the resistance to the younger people coming back, so they would more understand how to incorporate these people and use them well.

Q: I think you mentioned that.

Arndt: University administration was one of our themes. The law was another. Local government was another theme, couched in terms of this American notion that you can trust people who are governed to participate in government, if you give them the motivation to do so. A key concept, you will admit, for a country like Iran.

Q: Those were the main things, local government and universities?

Arndt: We had a few other little things that we were concerned about. We were concerned about libraries, because they had no way of organizing knowledge. They had no way of doing research. They had no way of finding information. So we got involved in building librarianship. On the one hand, a library school at Tehran University. The new library at the University in Tehran. And then finally what was called Irandoc, the Iran Documentation Center, which was started by a Fulbright lecturer, whom they then invited to stay on for two or three years more on their money. So that we really had a whole library project going.

We were interested in manpower planning with the Minister of Labor, the Central Bank, and the Plan Organization.

Q: What did that involve? What kind of programs did that involve?

Arndt: Well, it involved mainly a certain amount of consciousness-raising. Bringing Americans out to help them think through some of their problems, and that in turn generated trips to the United States by, for example, the Minister of Labor, Abdul Majid Majidi, who went and then followed up on all the people he'd met through us in Tehran. The idea was to make the Ministry of Labor a center for thinking about manpower needs in the future, as a link to the Plan Organization, as a link to the universities. A whole link between education and development was at stake there, essentially getting them to see that training was only enough at an early level, that education of a more fundamental and generalist nature was central to the second and third stages of their growth.

Q: What kind of Americans came? Were they labor economists or businessmen or a mixture?

Arndt: Economists and labor economists for the most part. Economists almost exclusively. The businessmen had their own networks and they oculdn't really help very much, if only because their motives were always suspect. There were plenty of businessmen around, the place was crawling with businessmen. But we had economists,

and above all we Eli Ginzburg, who's now retired and living in New York, from Columbia. Eli was a key member because he came back several times. And there was a man named Seymour Wolfbein, who had been in the Department of Labor for a long time, and who was at that time Dean of the School of Business at Temple, in Philadelphia.

Then we would have passers-through. We had Milton Friedman through in once. We had a man named Stanislas Wellisz, a Columbia developmental economist, who had worked in Calcutta for a long time; he came on our program. We were talking development economics and human resource development all the time. Not subjects I knew or know anything about, but I learned how to listen and to try to ferret out what they had in mind.

Q: Now you mentioned the libraries a few minutes ago. What kind of work did you do with the USIS library program in Iran?

Arndt: The USIS library was on the ground floor of the building in which we worked. When I got there, it was in charge of a nice Southern lady named Betty Wynn. And Betty did a good job. She had helped foster the growth of a small group of librarians, who grouped themselves together as the Iranian Library Association, for solidarity and professionalism. But our library was, I would say, a humdrum USIS library. It didn't have any particular character to it, no focus, and it was visually dull.

Now the libraries in USIS are the victims of an enormous tug-of-war, the visible tools of an enormous policy question. To wit, are we there to help the country develop and

to participate in that development and to bring American help to bear, (which we then called "nation building"-- a lousy name, but that's what we called it.) Or are we there to push U. S. foreign policy? And the libraries are on a seesaw, so that some years they're up, some years they're down, and as you can imagine, that leaves you with a great deal of chaos and little character.

Our library was in the middle. It was nothing great. I don't think we even had fifteen thousand volumes in it; in those days, by USIS standards, it was not a small library, but not a very big one either. And it was pretty much of a hodge-podge.

Then a quite remarkable librarian came in, around 1969 I would guess. Karen Stephen, a Dutch American. And she had a lot of vision. The first thing she did was completely revise the place architecturally , so that it looked like a modern active library, less like an old Carnegie library in Kansas.

I would say that the USIS library-- in my time, for which I had responsibility-- was not very much. It was used a lot. It was used by predictable groups of people. But it did not serve a specific function, only generalized support to our overall program presence. And to my way of thinking, in Iran at that time, it was not our biggest problem: it reached only those who could read English, in a society which by and large-- even if it knew English-- was inclined not to read.

We did a lot with books by giving them to people, a way of shaming them into reading them (at least in some cases.) These donations were very carefully targeted. You would talk to someone about such-and-such a book and he would say, my God, I'm dying to read it, that's exactly the book I need. And we would get it on his desk a month later, with a little follow-up note saying-"let's have lunch and talk about this."

We were sort of trying to compel people to dig deeper, at the upper levels. The upper levels were too busy to read and the culture didn't exactly foster it. The lower levels, the student levels, if they were studying English, or certain fields like public administration, they came to read, otherwise they didn't.

So it was in the middle of being useful. It was neither/nor. It did serve as a demonstration of how a small library was run and how it served people's needs. There might have been ways to do it, but what was happening was with Irandoc building up over here, the Tehran University Library School building up over there, a growing network of children's libraries growing up all over the country, the spreading translations of Franklin publications, all of this with American input in one way or another, in the sense that we were friends with all these people. Some of them had had Fulbrights working with them. So in a way our little USIS library was less relevant, and I spent only a little time on it-- probably too little. It's impossible to make a library over in a day, or a week or a year. You know, you've really got to spend money and time. You can add another three hundred books in a year, let's say. Well, that doesn't change a library. So either you throw it all out, e.g. by cutting down to two thousand volumes and make a high impact foreign policy support unit, or you do something different. Well, we were trying to keep it as big as we could and as rich as we could, but we couldn't even afford the collected works of the major American writers-- Melville, Poe, etc. I'd have to say it fell between two or three stools. If it had been more relevant, I think I might have been more attuned to it. It may sound immodest, but I think I had a good feel for what was important in that country, and the library wasn't major. Three other projects involving books are worth mentioning: our

text-book service, the IAS discussion groups, and direct-order buying. On textbooks, we had a USIA service which provided us with large quantities of publishers' overstocks--mainly textbooks. So we set aside a room, lined it with shelves, and filled it with literally thousands of books. And when an Iran educator was interested, we would literally let him browse in the book room and take what he wanted. We also answered sensible mail requests. I would estimate we distributed a thousand books a year or so.

At the IAS, Lois cooked up an idea: panel discussion of single books. We'd order five copies of a topical or controversial book, find three of the right people, and invite a large list to the panel discussion. Very successful. Most of these were done in 1971-72 after I left, but I remember specifically we did The Greening of America and Ivan Illich's Deschooling Society, among others. One of the panelists, I forget which book, was named Minister of Health shortly after his appearance.

By "direct-ordr buying," I refer to something that was very unusual, perhaps even illegal. Lois and I were constantly asked by X or Y to help them get books for their research, or their courses. There was no reasonable way to buy American books in Iran. So Lois and I would quietly order the book, pay for it with our personal checks, and take the equivalent in Iranian rials. We got so we could get most books into Iran, through the APO, in three weeks or even less. I suppose between us we distributed a hundred or more books each year. I am sure there are questions about the principle of that, but we did what we had to.

Q: Now at our first meeting you mentioned that USIA's Deputy Director, Tom Sorenson, in the early '60s, used the carrot and stick metaphor to explain the goal that

the libraries had overseas. What kind of relevance did that kind of thinking have in Iran? The use of the library in Iran and the planning of the library generally?

Arndt: I'll remind you that Tom Sorenson was not deputy director, he was the director of what we called IOP, the Office of Policy and Plans. He was the highest ranking professional/career employee of the agency at that time-- but he left USIA in 1968 or 1969. He'd been catapulted into that job because of his brother's position in the White House. Tom later wrote a book called The Word War, which you might want to look at, which really outlines his position. He's an ultimate foreign policy support guy. He says that USIA is there to support U. S. foreign policy in the short-term narrow sense and not in the long-run or developmental sense. He rightly saw that libraries were chaotic, but his solution was to make them into-- would have been, I think, the logic of his position was to make them into foreign policy tools. That Sorensonian thinking later on developed into the idea of a very small, targeted, implementally oriented library as a foreign policy support unit geared to four or five "program themes." That came later.

But at that time the only way he could figure out how to justify a library was to say that the library was nothing but a-- like a fly trap, to which you lured people with books and then somehow or other you hit them with a message.

It was a crude thing-- Tom had a way of being crude. And at the particular time that he said that-- it was in 1962 in Beirut-- he was on his way to a cultural officer's conference in Bangkok, where his principal mission, as he saw it, was to destroy the impact of Dr. Philip Coombs, Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural

Affairs and who had come down from the Ford Foundation loaded with the latest developmental thinking. Coombs was himself an educator and a manpower economist, who later headed the Institute for International Education planning in Paris, part of UNESCO. And he was really a man who was concerned about education, growth, development in these countries, as he should have been, as he rightly was. And the question then was how did our "message"-- how did the Fulbright program, how did things like that relate to that developmental effort, because that's all Iran was interested in. Let's not kid ourselves. They didn't give a damn about U. S. foreign policy except insofar as it affected them-- and most people don't, by the way. They couldn't have cared less about what we were doing, even in Vietnam for that matter. But they cared about their own development, being a self-centered nation, as all nations are, including the U.S. So that Tom, whose mission was to destroy Coombs, had developed this rather hard-hitting, vulgar language even then, and that's where I think that carrot/stick metaphor came from. A friend who was at that conference told me that Sorenson was ruthless and merciless. He absolutely
destroyed Coombs in any way he could. Coombs was not a man to be destroyed, by the way; but the context was such that Sorenson had the power of life and death over all the people in the audience. They had to support his view more or less, or at least stay quiet.

So that was part of the endless controversy that has raged about USIA and its cultural function. Later on a man named James Moceri wrote a report, which came out in September 1971, but which had been worked on for two years before, which probably was the best thing ever said about USIA's libraries; it raised all these

questions of what do you want? What exactly do we want? But it's never been solved, because the agency cannot come to terms with the question. First of all, in USIA's narrow framework of definitions, they shouldn't be called libraries. But if they're called libraries, then they should be libraries. But if they're not going to be libraries, then they should be called something else. USIA has never had the intellectual rigor, or the freedom perhaps, to solve in any consistent way.

Still, in my years in Tehran, no one ever bugged us about the library, and it went its way, useful as a symbol and a model, and useful for those who used it, but not terribly important at the center of things.

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

Q: In terms of the library at Tehran-- in terms of the book selection at the library at Tehran, was there much evidence that foreign policy goals were paramount when books were chosen?

Arndt: We got a monthly list of recommended program books, and we put check marks in the margin. I certainly picked the books I wanted, but I was aware that it was wise every once in a while to throw in a foreign policy book, even if it seemed irrelevant. So I did. And I think the librarian did too. And I think we chose basically out of the list, which was already pre-selected, you understand, the books that seemed to us to be the most useful, and we threw in a few sops to the agency line. The U. S. foreign policy line in Iran was as interesting to them as if we told them that we were interested in the relations between Niger and Chad. It didn't make any sense to them. They

couldn't have cared less. All they cared is, were we on their side? Would we support them if the Russians moved in on them? That's about the end of it. By the way, when Nixon was elected, we got a flurry of free books outsid eour normal allocation by so-called "conservative" authors-- in case anyone was prowling around reading the shelves.

Q: Now in our first meeting you discussed the activities of the Iran-American Society and its student center in Iran, and you have mentioned the Society in passing from time to time since then. What was the relationship between USIA and the Society? What was the organizational relationship between the two entities?

Arndt: Well, again I have to hesitate to answer that, because the relationship changed over time, and it changed as the organization grew-- not legally, but de facto.

Let me start by just giving you a history of the IAS. Maybe that will give you the idea. When we started off, the Iran-American Society was an idea, then a room. This was in the early fifties. A room somewhere, where a club of friends came to meet. Then sometime in the period 1961-63 the Society convinced the Iranian government to give them a large piece of land. Not in the north part of the city, but in the part of the city which was on the frontier leading north. An enormously desirable piece of land, which was becoming more desirable by the year.

It was a large piece of land and a building was put up on that site in 1965 or maybe 1964. Designed by American architects in Rome named Brown and Dalthus. It was a very beautiful building. When I got there in '66, the Iran-American Society

consisted of three separate installations. There was that building, which had a theater in it, actually two theaters-- indoor and out, an art gallery, a small library, a restaurant, and offices and support space. There was a second installation, which was a large converted apartment house building, downtown, right near the University, which taught English to a lot of students every day. Four or five thousand. And across the street from the University, for reasons best known to history, there was a thing called the IAS student center. We ran the only student center for the whole University of Tehran. It was run by an extraordinary interesting woman from Meshed, named Mokhadareh Ziai, one of those who stayed after the Revolution and made her peace with the new forces in Iran, and is still there, so far as I know. Mokhadareh Zia. And she ran a very special student center; on the surface it had very little to do with the United States, except that it was part of the IAS and that there were always Americans in it-- and no other nationalities except Iranian. So the empire had three architectural parts.

Now, when Lois Roth went up there, when Jay Gildner was the PAO, it was decided to build an enormous addition to the building, to house the USIA library, and the English teaching classes. We would consolidate, in other words, two of the three things in one place. The new building was finished some time after Lois left. She didn't see it opened. She was there for the ground breaking and for the building of ninety per cent of it, but it was not a program facility until after she left. And then came others and I'm really not privy to the story after that.

How did the IAS relate to the USIS? Very simply. The director was a USIS officer. The deputy director was a USIS officer. Up until 1967 there was an additional

program director, who was a USIS officer. The director of courses at the English teaching center and the deputy director of courses were also USIS contract employees. I'm talking now about people on full salary, with perks and all the rest. So it was a heavy

investment. We had five full-time people living there in Tehran running that center, four in my time and Lois'.

We can assume that in those days that meant a total investment of at least a quarter of a million dollars, let's say. Now the idea was that you made money on English teaching. We sold our English teaching. We charged for it. We carefully calibrated our costs, then set our fees just low enough to compete with the British Council. In fact, we charged less than anybody in town. It wasn't always the best game in town in terms of quality, but it was plenty good enough. In a way, because our approach was oral-aural rather than through the written word, it was probably more relevant to their real needs. We thought it was a good enough game already, and we consistently tried to make it better. After all, two salaries of professional English language teaching people make a good beginning. And we were designing our own materials and printing our own text books, which we printed and sold, (and by the way made money on those as well.) There was a lot of revenue being generated by English teaching, and that revenue paid for programs in the main Iran-American Society. In other words, the whole Iran-American Society had a budget in Lois Roth's time somewhere in the range of three quarters of a million dollars or more. And if you count the five salaries, which were reduced to four by then, and various year-end and special-project grants and Washington-provided program fare, you're talking about

another-- close to a million dollars somehow or other was moving around in the IAS. The staff numbered well over a hundred people. And the result of the whole thing was an operation which essentially paid for itself, except for those USIS salaries.

Now the real relationship question is in the program. What kind of control did USIS have over it? That, of course, depended on the director. The director when I got there couldn't have cared less what USIA Washington wanted at the IAS-- or USIS Tehran wanted, for that matter. Occasionally he would do something they insisted on, but for the most part he just did his own thing, feeling his way as to what worked. If we had a moon rock come to Tehran, we put on an exhibit of the moon rock. If we had space films, we put on space films. But if you had films about Vietnam, he would quietly forget to use them. Now after him came a very creative but wild man, who made the center into a much more of a functioning, creative, artistic cultural center for the fine and performing arts. He was even less interested in programming what USIA gave him. But he broke up some old habits and got some creative staff in there. Well, he was followed by Lois Roth, who consolidated that creativity and built this other dimension of relevance in intellectual terms.

Q: Who was before Roth?

Arndt: A man named Dian Anderson, who's living in New York now, retired. A very gifted guy. An actor, nowadays.

Lois's game was to do a lot of things. I could really get you a piece of paper and read them to you. But as I remember her main points, they were, first of all: to pay for this new building. That was important. She had to find the money to pay off a large

loan. Second, to make the building legal. For years it had functioned in a vaguely extra-territorial way. The employees were not registered with the Social Security System, and so forth. She tried to legalize all that. E.g., taxes had never been paid on certain things, so she went into the taxes and went literally into the back taxes and got an enormous bill from the tax collector, and then negotiated a compromise settlement on the back taxes. And I remember a critical conversation with the Mayor of Tehran, in which he told her-- they'd applied for exemption from this gigantic back tax, because it would have been crippling. It was an enormous amount. A million dollars or something like that-- and at a dinner she sat next to the Mayor. And he leaned over and said to her, "Miss Roth, I'm sorry to tell you the decision has gone against you. You're going to have to pay all those taxes. But don't worry: when you've paid them, I'll make a grant to you from the City of Tehran for the same amount." That's the way things were done in Iran in those days. But it suited Lois' purpose, because she wanted to make everything legal. Now the third thing, she wanted to make it an indigenous Iranian institution at the center of the intellectual and artistic life of Iran, which she sure as hell did. And fourth, I think she wanted to keep her masters in USIS and in USIA happy, by using the materials they gave her in ways that were more creative than they could have imagined; she forced USIA materials to fit into the context that she was trying to establish.

So she developed a lot of skills at taking the package-- never on Vietnam, by the way-- and using them ingeniously well. Incidently, nobody was even trying to push Vietnam, by the time Lois was there. But on foreign policy questions-- well, we would have ways of putting the right Iranians on the platform with Americans, shifting the

focus a bit, and so forth. So the messages got delivered-- but by indirection rather than head-on. All things considered, I would say that in the two years that Lois Roth was there-- three years, whatever it was-- she controlled that program about ninety-nine and a half per cent. The problem is, in the last year it's perfectly obvious (from her correspondence with me) that there was a lot of tension. There was resentment often in the USIS office because she was in many ways more visible, more powerful than the PAO. In fact in some ways she was more visible than the Ambassador. She knew everybody in Iran and there was obviously the resentment on the part of the mediocre ones about that sort of thing.

There was also the persistent strain of criticism from Americans that the Iran-American Society was a fun house, a pleasure palace with no relevance to the USIA/USIS program, as it was defined in Washington. Which as I've explained to you really had very little relevance to Iran, a great deal less relevance than what Lois was doing because she was always shaping that in local terms anyway. Lois believed that good programming had to be "fun" if it was to attract people.

But in the spring of 1971 or maybe the fall of 1972 a USIA inspection took place. An inspection of USIS Tehran. What happens is that periodically a group of USIA officers are pulled together to go and live in a post for a month or so, and then they write a long report about it. And in that report, the Iran-American Society came out as the best thing that happened in the post. They were saying, "This post is incredible only because of the Iran-American Society." By then it was the biggest, most successful bi-national center in the world. In fact, Lois Roth's big problem that last year I was there was that everybody would come from Germany, from Thailand, from everywhere to visit

the IAS. She had to spend a lot of time showing them around and telling how it worked.

[Interruption; tape off]

This took up a lot of her time, but the real problem emerged in her last year, 1971-72, as I read the documents. The program that she and I had worked on for four years, which was conceptually related, inter-related, and was in many ways sort of an organic thing, having to do with the interface between Iranian society and American society at that time, and husbanding certain elements that were useful in the United States for the proper movement of Iran, the direct forward movement in socio-economic and political terms, all fell apart. The cultural attache who succeeded me was on his last post, was tired and didn't much care. He had a remarkable incapacity for remembering anybody's name. By then he'd fallen into a very peculiar habit of smiling and mouthing cliches, so that no one could ever remember his name either. It was really very, very sad. And for Lois, who had worked in Cultural Office, to see that office fall apart, was also sad. What that really meant was that the intellectual core of the program, which had really come out of the cultural office, was gone-- and with it the defense of the IAS program against the natural push-pulls of the Embassy, USIS and USIA.

And so that takes us back now to the fundamental question. How did the Iran-American Society director relate to the USIS operation? Each person did it differently because the structure was unclear. There had been a very powerful Cultural Attache just before me, one tour before me, who had insisted that the Iran-American Society director was one of his deputies. In fact, he had insisted that the Iran-America

Society's car and driver were his, not the Iran-America Society's.

By the time I got there, the following director had achieved more or less equal status with the Cultural Attache and we were all colleagues and brothers. And it stayed that way until Lois went up there. Now Lois Roth went up there after being my deputy, then turned to running that office. Now on administrative terms I wanted her not only to be co-equal with me, but totally autonomous up there. And that's the way we ran it. But she was still intellectually very much part of our vision and our Cultural office program; and recognized it, accepted it, and wanted it. But in administrative terms she was the boss of the IAS--one of the first things she did was to fire the accountant, bring on a pensioned oil-company accountant that one of her friends found for her, and learn accounting procedure herself so that she would know what was going on. There was no question, she had total autonomy, and Jay Gildner backed her up that way. Now when a new PAO then came in Spring 1971, the year I left, he didn't understand. Not at all. He sent her memos through the Cultural Attache and expected her to communicate with him through the Cultural Attache. Well, if my successor had been up to it, that might have been one thing, but since he was slightly out to lunch, it didn't work that way. And the result was that she finally had to sit down with him and say, "Look, this is not the way it's been, this is not the way it ought to be, and it's not the way it's going to work." And to his credit, the man in charge immediately saw that that was true and revised that arrangement and began treating her like the autonomous person she was.

I assure you that when she left, even the Ambassador did not have the visibility that she had. She didn't have the access to the upper levels, but she could address half

the members of the Cabinet by their first names, if she wanted to. The Queen more than once saw her, called her aside at events; once she invited her to the Palace and said to her, "You must understand that in my position I can't come to the Iran-America Society, but never think I don't know what's going on there and what you're trying to do." In fact, the Queen-- after Lois Roth left, the Queen asked the International Executive Service Corps-- (you know what that is? It's for retired people to come back, to come to situations like that, retired businessmen, for example.) The Queen asked the IESC to get Lois to come back to help build and run a cultural center in Tehran that would embody the same kinds of things that she'd proved could be done in the Iran-America Society. And the interesting thing was that that request was delivered to the Public Affairs Officer and never forwarded to anybody. He just put it in a drawer, and she found out about it from somebody else and went into a dudgeon. Not that she would have taken it, but she at least wanted the right to-- the honor of being asked and the right to refuse in her way. She thought that decency demanded that the message be transmitted.

Which, by the way, reminds me to tell you one thing that I have not seen in Jim Bill's book yet. I haven't finished it, but I don't think he gives any recognition so far-- from what I've seen, and we're into the late sixties-- of the role the Queen was playing. The Queen was not a Pahlavi, after all. She only married one. And she was an enormous tempering force in all of that. In many ways the Queen showed a way out of the Pahlavi's dilemma, if it had been allowed to work out that way. She was and is an extraordinary person who played an enormous role when she was allowed to. In all the space she was allowed to occupy, she really did a job.

Q: You mentioned that you had some contact with Iranian writers, artists, intellectuals. Who were some of the major contacts that you developed in the intellectual and artistic community of Tehran? Or Iran generally?

Arndt: My own contacts in Iran began with the university world. There wasn't a university chancellor, rector, president, very few deans that I didn't know. You see, the symbol of our presence at that time was that the American-trained Iranians were coming back and were being integrated into the society. And we were part of that process, so I knew them up and down. I happen to have an unusual memory for people's names, faces, trivial data about them and so forth, that is probably my principal stock in trade. I'm not terribly proud of it, but it's very useful in getting along with large numbers of people. So I don't think there was a university in that country where I couldn't really walk in more or less unannounced and say Hi to the chancellor if I wanted to, even though I would never have done anything like that.

Now the second group of people that I knew pretty well were those involved in developmental thinking. Plan Organization people, Central Bank people, ministries of development like labor, social affairs, and so forth. These were areas that I knew a great deal about.

Another area I paid a lot of attention to was medicine, of all things, medical education. Like legal education, as I said before. So you see most of this focuses on the universities, and then from there outward. Remember that the Iranian universities, like the French universities, in the professional schools have few full-time faculty.