They are doctors who also teach, not teachers who also play doctor. And the result was that if you knew a university professor of medicine, you knew also a very important practicing physician, and perhaps a politician as well.

Q: What about writers, artists?

Arndt: Well, you know, such artists as there were, Lois or I knew them all. I mean, I didn't really-- I didn't think of them as an important part of my work-- I left that really to Lois, because all things considered she could do more. But they were friends. God knows they would invite us to their parties and all that, but I was less interested in their personal development as artists than in the context in which thwy worked. I was more interested in finding markets for their work, for one thing. Ways to get them independent of the system, yet relating to it. The sculptor, Parviz Tenavoli, was only one of many, many people. There was a writer named Ebrahim Golestan, who was a very interesting man, a filmmaker and so forth. He and I sat down and tried to translate one of his long stories, which I never finished; I still have the notes for it in my files.

And it was just sooner or later natural that-- if they spoke French or English-- I would meet them. If they didn't speak French or English, we may have met them, probably met them in most cases, but I couldn't particularly pursue. Jalal al-e Ahmad was the one I probably knew best. In fact, he died while I was there. I was the only foreigner at his funeral at the mosque.

There was a painter named-- Hannibal Al-Khas, who was very close to Jalal. And he

did a painting on a forty foot long canvas, on a single piece of canvas, which we showed in the workshop at the Iran-America Society. We had a special memorial service there for Jalal al-e Ahmad, which was interesting, considering the oppositional position he took and was perceived to occupy.

How did all this work? Well, for example, when we picked Tahereh Saffarjadeh to go to the Iowa workshop, that meant going around and asking all the writers in town, who is the right person to go on this grant to the U.S.? Some of the writers were journalists, some taught in universities-- like (?), who later wrote about being tortured, a French-trained intellectual who bathed in platitudes usually attributed to Sartre or Camus.

So basically I was interested in getting those writers broadened out, broader experiences, meeting other writers, but I didn't sit with them and worry about the anguish of their art much. To some extent Lois did that, but mostly we were simply friends. I mean, if I wanted to walk in and talk to any of those people, I knew how to do it. If I didn't know the person, I could call up someone like Bill Royce and say I want to meet So-and-So, and Bill would say, okay, we'll get that organized. You see, it was a society in which access was possible and potential: the elite was small enough that you could really be in touch with virtually all of them. Now, it is obvious that none of these people was particularly cozy with the regime.

Q: You said you knew Jalal al-e Ahmad. Do you know much about his influence and his cultural criticisms of Westernization?

Arndt: Oh, my goodness, yes. I have a letter from him that probably ought to be published-- it needles the hell out of us. In fact, it was the first thing he ever wrote me. And it was a rather nasty letter, so I spent the rest of the time there sort of teasing him about that nasty letter, and that was the base for our friendship. The letter was all about Westernization. "Westoxication" as they called it.

But there was another man, a much more serious scholar named Shadman, who had written a book. But he had also brought up this whole idea of Westoxication, in a much deeper way. But the intellectuals-- for example, the intellectuals grouped around the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research-- they were all really passionately involved in this question of what is really the meaning of Westernization, modernization. "What are the hooks in that idea? We're not so sure we want to Westernize if it means becoming like you." And we were saying to them, "Sure, you're damn right, please do not imitate us. But you ought to be able to pick some of the things that we've done well, and more important, to avoid some of the horrible mistakes we've made." And we were trying to project that side of America that was relevant to them.

One key person we were close to was Hossein Nasr, who's now here as university professor at GW [George Washington University]. Then I thought he was an ambivalent man. He was preaching Shia Islam's superiority to Sunni Islam and to the west's "Christianity," to everything else. An enormous, towering intellectual, but with an agenda, a political-religious agenda that was bizarre, I thought at the time. But he and I were constantly in little bits and ends of dialogues that have never finished, to this day.

Lois was a far better listener than I was. I talk too much, as these notes reveal. I was dealing with cocktail parties or dinners and there'd be twenty people to talk to. So you have a little three-minute conversation with this one and that one, and since I was usually able to remember what we talked about last time, I could usually pick up where we left off. But Lois had much longer and thorough talks with Nasr, especially the year after I left, and I remember her letters about him. I think that she'd gotten closer to him than I had ever been able to. The quality of my life was inherently superficial, because I knew too many people and had too many complicated things to do with many of them. It is the danger of cultural diplomacy. But I was in touch, or could have been in touch with everyone.

Q: Now in the late sixties and early seventies there was a lecture hall at Hussein-yi-Irshad in Tehran? Which was a place where leading scholars and religious figures lectured on topics of the day. Did you know much about this lecture hall at the time that you were stationed in Tehran?

Arndt: Wel,, first we watched it being built. It was a very ugly building. In the spring of 1971, I did a long set of conversations with an Iranian psychiatrist named Sahab Zamani. And he was an Iranian-trained person interested in mental health. Not very many of those. Never studied abroad. But he had been sent before I came-- in fact, the year I came I guess he was just back-- on an Eisenhower grant. He spent the better part of the year in the United States poking around. He was an uncomfortable man. His English wasn't very good and he didn't speak any French, but I used to see him all

the time and I found he was a little bit different from most of my friends. So we developed a very peculiar format of long lunches and dialogues, in which we would just talk about everything-- probably the most consequent set of conversations I ever had there.

And he was the first one that pointed out the complexities of the religious problem here. He was one, for example, who reminded me of the ambivalence of Nasr's role. Nasr, who was trying to be an authority in the religious community in Iran, had not studied at Qom. He had studied at Harvard. And the mullahs, of course, didn't accept anybody who hadn't studied at Qom. And so he kept saying, "You know Nasr is a brilliant man, but he's not reaching these people, they're not interested in him, they don't give him any authority."

In the course of these conversations he first mentioned the Hussein-yi-Irshad. I had seen it being built over there on Eisenhower Avenue, I think, the big boulevard going north. But there was this ugly building which had been put up and it looked like a great big barn really, an enormous brick barn. And he said, "You know, we've really got to go there-- let's go together one night." He said, "It is phenomenal. You won't believe it. There are people up there and they get up there and they talk. And the audience is incredible. They sit on the edges of their chairs. It's people who are intellectuals, who are students, who are taxi drivers. It's everybody. It's all mixed up. Something's really going on over there. Let's go."

Well, I never got organized to go, it was my last spring. And the person speaking, of course, was principally Ali Shariati.

Q: Did he tell you about him?

Arndt: You know, the name doesn't really strike a bell, in all honesty, in that context. But he told me about what was happening there, and he did say there was one particular fellow who stood out among the other ones. My deepest regret is not to have followed up that invitation because, you see, Shariati was a French intellectual and I could have talked to him. He and I could have related very well. But it was the end of my time. It was the spring of '71, I was getting ready to go, it looked like a lot of work, initiating a new thing, just when I had to think about tearing loose. Those things you have to go and sit there for two, three, four hours, not understanding really what was going on. It's hard, and I just ran out of energy.

Q: That was closed not much later, I think, that center.

Arndt: It was shut down, but after I was gone. But I was there when it was born and very much alive and it's my biggest regret, that I didn't pick that up and that I didn't meet Shariati and that I didn't say, let's go off and walk in the mountains together.

Q: It's kind of hard to respond to this question, but what kind of attitudes towards the Shah did you pick up from your
discussions with administrators, intellectuals, writers? What did you encounter during your--

Arndt: You mean Iranian attitudes in the intellectual class?

Q: Yes.

Arndt: Well, that's a hard question. If I had done a statistical survey and asked the right questions, I could give you numbers, but I'd have to say it was a very mixed picture. First of all, there was a class difference. I mean, after all, his father had been a stable boy for the Cossacks. He came from nowhere. He was not a member of the upper class. And indeed he was pretending to be, and that bothered them no end. So there was a class distinction, and remember that the "intellectuals" in Iran tended to come from the ruling class. We'll rule that off. That's just snobbery. Forget about that.

There were then really two kinds of intellectuals, as I saw it. There were the kind epitomized by a man named Mohammad Baheri, who was the Deputy Minister of Court most of the time I was there, and with whom we used to go mountain climbing, walking in the hills north of Tehran on Friday mornings. He had had a vague experience with France, but he was really a hundred per cent Iran-oriented, and he was typical of the very slowly modernizing sector in a society which, after all, was in the-- whatever century you want, the twelfth or the fourteenth or the sixteenth, who cares, the seventeenth, whatever, but way back. He was an example of that modernizer who felt that Iran had to move very carefully forward, on its Islamic base, towards something else. There were even European and American-trained people who fell into that category. The Dean, for example, of the School of Public

Administration of all things felt that we mustn't go too fast, that was the big danger. And those people tended to say, the Shah's weaknesses are irrelevant in the face of his strengths. Whatever it is, he's our man. We've got to support him.

They supported him relatively uncritically, but were perfectly capable in an unguarded moment of saying, this is impossible, or this is very difficult, it is his fault. They supported him, publicly they would never criticize him. Privately, under the right circumstances, some of them could be led to say, to admit that they were not entirely sure about his capacity to pull it off.

Now the other kind of intellectuals were bright, young, bushytailed returnees from overseas, another category. The fact that they were back was already a commitment. So they were committed, but they were rather overtly critical, around me. "Overtly" not exactly-- discreetly but very freely critical. And much of the context of my conversation with people like that was about what was wrong. But it was in a constructive vein. What's wrong? How can we solve this problem, how do we solve that problem? Once you take the developmental stance, you see, you take the critical stance, almost by definition. These people were all in that developmental framework-- this isn't working, there are reasons why it isn't working, how can we make it work? How can we get around it? How can we change the system?-- and ultimately, the system was the Shah.

An example, a young modernizer who lives here now in town-- Gholam Reza Afkhami, who wrote a book about "Thanatos," the death wish in Iranian society, responded to a challenge the year after I left. The Shah said, you and your friends are always giving me a lot of crap about free elections. All right. You are hereby

appointed Deputy Minister of the interior, with your friend Amin Alimard here, and the two of you are going to run the next election. And you go ahead and make it free. Go ahead. It's up to you. Do anything you want. You've got full power.

And that election, the election of '72 or 73-- I wasn't there, was very interesting. He'll tell you if you ask him. Afkhami, an extraordinary man. And with him was a man named Amin Alimard, who's down in Richmond now. Ran probably the "freest" election ever been run in the history of Iran. Too little, too late, perhaps, but that was how the intellectuals were challenging things.

So you had that kind of intellectual criticism, which the Shah sometimes handled very well. In that particular case, he said, "Put up or shut up. You've got the power, I give you the power, do it."

But they all knew that the Shah had the power of life and death, that is economic and social and political death, over them. There is one man that I'm thinking of now, who was very much favored by the Shah and the Shah wanted him very much to stay. And he decided he wanted to go work for UNESCO. And he felt he had to ask permission of the Shah. And he went to the Shah and said, "I'm going to go to Paris to take this UNESCO job, with your permission." And the Shah said, "Oh, we can't spare you. Please stay." And then-- (and he told me this story, which is interesting in itself. Now the fact that the Shah said that thing is one thing, but the fact that he then told me the story-- this is a French-trained intellectual who knew no English, had never had an American friend in his life, was accused by some of being a member of Savak, was a very powerful figure in the social sciences.) He said this to me, "You know what he said to try to lure me to stay? He said, 'What would you like? Would you like a

house on the Caspian? Would you like a Mercedes?'" Tried to buy him off with creature comforts. Now his scorn for that was so patent. He said, "The man doesn't understand why I have to get out of this country once in a while, why it's valuable for Iran that I should be in Paris." And of ocurse he had scorn for the kind of blandishments the Shah chose. So that was a constant pattern.

So you got that kind of ambivalence-- "We support the Shah, but, God, I wish he were a better man." And there it boiled down very often to a question of pacing, timing. There were the impatient ones who said he's not going fast enough, if you really make it simple. And the other ones who said he's going too fast, he's got to slow down. Or he's right, he's chosen the right pace. Not too fast.

Now, they were very aware-- while they were wary of his strength, they were very aware of his weaknesses. First, they knew that he was very much in the hands of his advisers. He had to be. You can't know everything. Can't be everywhere. So he had to listen to his advisers. Second, they knew that he was under the pall of his father, who'd been a giant. The Shah was a small man, physically and in other important ways. Third, they knew that he was intellectually-- his growth had been stunted. Remember that he went to a Swiss secondary school, but then he stopped-- as Lois used to say, "He didn't have the advantage of a democratic education." His intellectual growth was stopped. Surely he hadn't read a book. How could the Shah read a book, for God's saks? There's no time. If he had read a book, he hadn't read five books in twenty years. Because there just wasn't time for that. And so they felt that he was simply inadequate for the job he insisted on filling himself. Fourth, they felt he did not know how to delgate and to let others make the kind of mistakes that lead to learning. But

they knew that he meant well and that he was a lot better than Uncle [Abdul] Nasser or Karim Qasem or people like that. They were by and large aware they were damn lucky to have him and they were willing to put up with the ifs, ands, and buts.

Q: Did you encounter anybody who was opposed to the Shah who wanted a constitutional type system?

Arndt: Sure.

Q: Who wanted to overthrow the Shah?

Arndt: Overthrow? Overthrow is a different question. I never encountered anybody that said he wanted to overthrow the Shah. Never. That doesn't mean they weren't there. They just didn't come up and tell me. And I can see why.

But I can tell you that the constant burden of the reformers, those who wanted a different system, was to revise the Constitution and go back to relying on a Constitutional form of government, all with the Shah's understanding and cooperation.

Now remember that, by the time I got there, the Majlis was a hollow instrument. Elections were rigged. The Majlis was rigged. Therefore it was a useless thing. The question of whether it could have been changed over time was what was discussed. Can we get a better Majlis? If we get a better Majlis, can we revise the Constitution? Can the Shah be

persuaded to let loose a little of that power? Can the Shah be persuaded to delegate

power to the next level down or even partly to the Majlis? Can all that be done? So the question of the political development of Iran was very much on everybody's minds. But it was in a constructive vein as far as I saw it. As far as I saw it, I stress.

Now there were a couple of episodes which suggested a new kind of opposition was gathering. There was an episode at a place called Siakal in the Caspian area in the Fall of 1970 where some young people were up in the north, up there on the Caspian in the woods, were literally setting up armed resistance, you know, bombs and stuff. And the police went in and cleaned them out. It was a mess. But that was the first time that I had the sense that something was different. Explosives began coming in in that last year. Probably from East Germany, we were told. But, you know, there were groups-- groupuscules-- which were interested in violence. There was no question about it. After all, there was a kidnapping attempt on Douglas MacArthur. There were serious risks, and vicious repression, over-reaction, at Arya Mehr University. And the Islamic puritanism was beginning to show, e.g. in student cafeterias during Ramadon. And in harassment of women with short sleeves or skirts. There were bombs. As I said, three bombs in the last year and a half that I was there, at the IAS. There were a lot of things that last year that I was there, you see. I've always said that my five years in Iran were four years of tremendous buoyant optimism and one year of disillusionment. And Lois's last two years (1970-72) were even more so-- she had to clean up the bombs.

So that you really-- you get the sense that in the face of 1970 we'd passed a peak of some kind. So the intellectuals' attitudes towards him were very ambivalent. They wanted him to be better. They wished he was better. And as he was, they had a great

deal of difficulty tolerating the consequences of the kind of one-man rule that he was responsible for.

Q: While you were in Iran, did you do any reporting on this kind of trends of thought, trends of thinking that went to the embassy or back to the State Department?

Arndt: I've always believed that a Cultural Officer should not report per se. We're not trained for diplomatic reporting and we shouldn't be asked to do it. So I've always struck a bargain with the Political Section, that I would be willing to talk to any of them or all of them
periodically. So I never wrote anything. If you read my planning documents, my reporting documents, it was shot through with comments on the system. You'd have to look to find them. My writing was shot through with awareness of where there were weaknesses, and the ability of our systems and our programs to try to build strength in these areas. But I did no political reporting.

However, every Friday-- I think it was at three o'clock-- one of the younger people from the Political Section would come over and we'd have a one-hour bull session then. This was instituted by the younger people themselves-- it was, by the way, the only Embassy which ever paid me that honor. And that, so far as I was concerned, was enough reporting for me.

Q: With the election of Nixon in '68, there were new
policymakers at the State Department and USIA. Now how much of a change in

cultural diplomacy goals or programs was there under the regime of William Rogers and Frank Shakespeare?

Arndt: You know, a program gets wound up and committed years in advance, and things are rolling and things are successful, and most of them are not cutting-edge things anyway. They're part of a broader context. And I would have to say that the change to Shakespeare at our level didn't mean a damn thing. Not a thing. But the thing that changed was the ambassador, from Armin Meyer to Douglas MacArthur, and that I've talked about.

Shakespeare came out once, and he had a long lunch with four of us and we had a big fight at the table. I mean, a polite fight, because I'd said something about the Greek Colonels as not being maybe the best answer for Greece.

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

Arndt: And Shakespeare was alleged to be shocked by that and he said, in that case but how do you feel about the Shah? And I said, I think that the Shah is the best leader that Iran can have at this present time, but it would be a terrible mistake to think that he's either perfect or God; he has lots of weaknesses.

And Shakespeare said, well, for example? What do you mean by that? And I told him the following story, that had been told to me by one of my CIA contacts there. About an American businessman who had gone out to contract business there. He was dealing with a young bushytailed reformist Minister. When the contract was signed,

there was a sort of reception at which he was to be congratulated, celebrating the signing of this contract. And the young Minister came up and was talking to him, and the businessman reached into his pocket and drew out a small envelope, and he said, by the way, I wanted you to have this. And the Minister looked very shocked and he said, what is this? And he looked inside and there was a lot of money. And he said, do you realize I could cancel the contract on the basis of this alone? And the businessman said, please calm down, just a minute. Look, I don't give away money. It's not my business to give away money. I try to earn money. He said, I didn't give you this money because I felt like it. I gave you this money because I was told to give you this money. And I was told to give you this money, to be exact, by General What's-His-Name, and you know who tells General What's-His-Name what to do.

And Shakespeare looked absolutely stunned, and he said, "What do you mean? What does that story mean to you?" And I said, I think it's probably true that the Shah has consistently managed to get evidence that he can hold over the heads of every political element in this country. So that if he needs to, he can call in his chips. He can fire the man, accuse him of corruption, anything you like. He has consistently tried therefore to corrupt his own political class.

Shakespeare absolutely dropped his fork. He couldn't believe it. He said, "That man couldn't even conceive of doing a thing like that," and so forth, and went off in a Boy Scout peroration. And all I could do was just turn my hands up and say, well, that's the way it is, even in evolving oriental despotisms.

Shakespeare was probably no friend of mine after that, I must say; but, I mean, the notion that the Shah rode a white horse and wore sparkling silver armor and was a god

to his people and all the rest-- it was absolute baloney, and dangerous for us to believe. And I was trying to explain to Shakespeare that if we dealt on that basis with the Shah, we were making a horrible mistake.

Yet in terms of how that affected my program, my behavior, my career, absolutely not at all.

Q: How much of a change did you see in the Nixon administration's general approach towards Iran at this time, even though it didn't have any impact on your work? What did you see in the way of changes in policy, continuity or discontinuity in the policy approach towards the Shah?

Arndt: The basic posture of being, as it were, supporters of the Shah did not change. The question that changed was very simple, to boil it down to one phrase. Meyer did not give the Shah everything he wanted and MacArthur seemed to. MacArthur seemed to be uncritical in his approach to the Shah, where Meyer had been very cautiously critical. And if the Shah asked for F-4s, Meyer would say, well, I'm not sure you can absorb F-4s at this time. And that was the way the game was played. But by the time of Mac Arthur, the strategy called for the Shah to take over responsibility for policing the Gulf. So if he asked for more weapons, how could we say no? Besides, by then, we had a balance-of-payments problem and we needed the sales.

Now again I wasn't sitting in on these conversations. I don't know how that game was played up there. But my impression was that Meyer was eaning against the Shah's wilder tendencies, while MacArthur--under pressure from Nixon and Kissinger--was less

concerned with that. His policy was to support the Shah. The Shah was our man, period. As he used to say, across the whole Middle East-- he would gesture on the map-- is an island of stability because of Iran. This whole arc-- that was his phrase-- is holding together because of this one man. Therefore we must not in any way criticize him. The Shah was better than people thought. The Shah could take criticism, if it were done in terms that he understood. The Shah could understand things, he wasn't dumb. He was only under-educated. He'd never had the benefit of living in a democracy other than the bizarre Swiss version. He wasn't a fool by any means. He was a smart fellow. By the way, General Twitchell-- who knows more than I do about this-- gives MacArthur much higher marks on resisting Iranian arms purchases.

Q: Did you have much contact with MacArthur during your-- as you did your job as cultural affairs officer?

Arndt: Very little. I mean, he would invite me to the residence once in a while, and then of course I was on duty. The two or three parties I went to had the same people-- where Meyer had been more varied in his guest lists. He was very much guilty of the invite-the-same-people syndrome. And I really usually resented having to spend my time at one of those parties, because it was a waste of time. So I had very little to do with him.

The DCM at that time was a man named Douglas Heck, and Doug was a very careful and very sensible man, a very cautious man. He's not a very dynamic man, but he was a very good man, all things considered. And he had leaned on me and Lois for

his early contact lists, and we had helped him break out of that old circle, so that he was able to make some small difference. But it was a long period with MacArthur. I don't remember-- two years, I guess, for me. And I just didn't see him that often and in fact I preferred it that way.

Q: In his new book James Bill suggests that there were occasions when the Cultural Affairs Section and the Information Sections at USIA worked at cross-purposes, and one instance being a 1970 magazine article on Princess Ashraf as a quote/unquote patroness of human rights. Apparently the article alienated a group of young intellectuals that you were trying to court and develop at that time. Do you recall this episode?

Arndt: It's funny, the episode doesn't stick in my mind at all. The only thing I can imagine, it was in a magazine we used to put out every month, which was kind of a picture
magazine, articles. And I sat on the committee that decided what went into that magazine, but by and large the magazine was so boring that I didn't pay a lot of attention to it. I had always assumed nobody worth anything read it, and, you know, I used to go to the meetings and there were foolish articles about how well the United States is doing in this and that, and every once in a while we had an article, for example, on Goodrich Rubber or whatever it was, so some local investment or AID follow-up, and so on. So I didn't find it very interesting and I didn't really bother with it; it may have slipped through, but I don't remember the upset at all. It's entirely

plausible, I can only say that I don't remember anyone telling me about it.

Ashraf represented, of course, a very ambivalent question. She's worth a very long novel. One of her key people was a man named Manuchehr Ganji, another was Afkhami's wife Mahnaz, an amazing woman who was one of our few experts on American literature. Ganji was, among other things, Dean of the law faculty, later Minister of Education. He had a lot of important jobs. He's now in Paris on one of the opposition teams. And Ganji was a person who had come back from the University of Kentucky. He was a new returnee in 1966 when I arrived and he was in charge of the new Center for International Affairs at the University of Tehran. And so I was in contact with Ganji. I thought he had strange aspects to him which I did not fully understand, and Lois did not trust him. There were rumors he was a contact for SAVAK. Hard man to read. Anyway, he was an important person enough so I kept in touch with him. But he was a disciple, he was an amanuensis of Princess Ashraf. Mahnaz, later the first minister of women's affairs in Iran, and she accompanied Ashraf on her delegations to the UN.

So you couldn't really say Ashraf was not a part of the picture. On the other hand, there were all these stories about her, which we all knew. Thinking about it now, I would not have been very happy about an article on Ashraf, but it may have slipped through. I just don't remember.

But when you say at cross-purposes, when Bill says that, it's entirely possible that it could be perceived that way. The Information Section was very independent of me, and I of them. I didn't bother with them. They were working at a level of triviality, for the most part, with the press controled as it was-- and our press attache's were not

interesting people. They worked with daily press releases and stuff like that. They were working with the ephemeral and the immediate, and for the most part they were shoveling out stuff that came out of the wireless file every day. And it was all right. It didn't do any harm, but it didn't make any difference either. I thought it was irrelevant as far as I was concerned and I was annoyed that, oh, ninety per cent of the human resources in USIS and a hefty piece of the finances went into that effort and I was concerned about it. But it wasn't my shop and the way I made my peace with it was to let it go its own way.

Now I was the one on the other hand that was doing things that might have been considered very offensive by that shop, but nobody ever bothered me about it. We published a magazine called Renew-- Renew, the idea of which was returnees, the returnees from the United States, the Returnee Newsletter. And that magazine was really very interesting, a very interesting cutting edge, and they printed it carefully and religiously. They put it out, they printed it beautifully, they did everything we said. Never asked any questions about the content. Just simply were delighted to be part of this. So I never had any trouble with them. But it's possible that sometimes we may have seemed to outsiders to speak at cross-purposes.

The basic cross-purpose of USIS is embodied, of course, in those differences. On the one hand there's the short-term immediate news kind of thing. On the other hand there's the long-time intellectual context sort of thing. So in many ways we are always dealing at cross-purposes in structural terms in USIS. But in terms of the output, I don't think we were that far off the mark. If I expressed irritation more than once to people, within the bounds of loyalty-- Jim may have been one of them-- it was that the

information effort was so dominant in the operation in terms of the resource allocation. We could have taken that money and spent it in important ways. But it was going down into some of these silly things, most of which served to make the people in Washington feel that they were relevant in some way; fix up the big USIA egos. But Jim Bill doesn't understand all that.

Q: While you were stationed in Iran, how much did the country change? In what ways did Iran change while you were living there?

Arndt: Well, I was there a long time.

Q: You said your first four years were pretty pleasant, the last year was relatively unpleasant. What was going on in Iran that reflected that kind of perception?

Arndt: For the first four, let's forget about the economic changes, the building, the growth, the formation of new universities, the rise of technologist talent in the political system, the reinsertion of American-trained retournees, the progress-- all of that stuff. I mean, things were really bubbling. I couldn't begin to tell you all the things that were going on. But when I made that statement I was referring to three things. One was increased information flow. Two was a slow growth in downward delegation. And three was the toleration of a certain amount of carefully posed dissent. On all three counts, in my judgment, the period from '66 to '70 was a period of great opening and movement forward. There was just much more toleration, discussion, openness than

had been before in that country, at least in recent history.

Now I have to say that any American wandering into it could would have said, what's all this openness you talk about? It doesn't look open to me. Well, it was contextual. It was much more open than it was before.

I might even list a fourth thing. There is evidence that I'm right in this, but I had the impression, even at a certain time during the period I was there, that the use of torture by SAVAK was terminated. This was later confirmed by a high level Iranian when I was in Paris, who told me that there was a two-year or three year period in which they simply stopped torturing, as a matter of policy decision, under the leadership of Pakravan. And then, when Nassiri came back in, it was back to the old game. He also told me there was a close relation between torture and corruption-- people will pay up to avoid certain things.

There was, for example, a visit from Amnesty International at that time, a woman named Betty Ashton. She went into the prisons, the political prisons and so forth, and she attended one of the military tribunals, and was really quite surprised to find what she had found. She was, by the way, guided by two Iranians-- one was Ganji, in his role as Human Rights expert; and the other was Mansour Fracyon, who now works I believe for VOA.

And in other ways, there was progress. The famous Wolf Ladejinski, who had been the great agricultural reformer of Taiwan and places like that, came through and really was very surprised when he saw that agricultural reform in Iran was, with all its problems, was actually working. There was a lot of hope that everything was going to work. And from '66 to '70 there was this period of optimism, where we all kind of felt

somehow they would make it, sooner or later. We knew the weaknesses, but went along with Khodadad's idea that one day there would be more of "us" (i.e. modernizers) than of "them" (i.e. twelfth-century traditionalists.)

And then in '70-'71 the Shah seemed to lose his nerve. He cracked down hard, and there were many signs that year, and when I left I was really very discouraged, very gloomy. Lois's letters to me the following year only confirmed this.

Q: What were some of the signs that you perceived?

Arndt: The Siakal business up on the Caspian that I mentioned before. The big one to me was the bust of the Aryamehr University student disturbances, where the police were unbelievably violent, violent beyond any real need. Something had gone wrong, because that kind of violence was counter-productive.

There were elements of what you might call Islamic puritanism. Jim Bill's wife-- I told Jim Bill once, he had completely forgotten. Jim Bill's wife wearing a a sleeveless blouse, was roughed up by a bunch of youngsters on Pahlavi Boulevard and treated like a whore because she was improperly dressed. That year, a Pan Islam group of students at Arya Mehr roughed up student who were eating lunch during Ramadan at the student cafeteria, for example. And there were a bunch of tiny bits of evidence. There were some transfers in the university world that indicated they were less ready to be open or to be bold in what they were doing. I was hearing tales of gloom from many of my young university U.S.-returned faculty. I remember Jim at an FSI conference, once read off a list of eleven things that happened in '70-'71, and we

walked out afterwards for coffee, and I remember saying to him, Jim, those were wonderful things, but there are six others that you could have listed. And I listed them, and the last one I told him was how his own wife was roughed up. "Oh, my God, I forgot that!" So there were a lot of little evidences that year that something was wrong, that this kind of opening that we'd watched, the Glasnost of its time, was being turned off.

Q: Were you there when the Rockefellers had the investment seminar and there were protests against that? I mean, the Ayatollah who protested was later allegedly tortured and killed, the Ayatollah Sai'di. I think Bill talks about this, but I think it's mentioned in other accounts.

Arndt: Well, now my confusion is manifest. I read that section in Jim's book very lightly and I resolved to go back and look at it again, because I don't remember. But I do remember that visit by the team of big wheels that he talked about. It was run by James Linen of Time-Life and he brought out all these big fat cats. I remember sitting at dinner with the CEO of Boise-Cascade Alcoa-- I had a cousin who worked for that company. And the idea was to get a lot of fat cats to invest in Iran.

Now, I feel a bit naive in saying this, but I was not aware-- I am not aware today of any follow-up to that. And I'm not saying it wasn't there, but it seems very strange that I would not have been aware of that. If anyone mentioned it to me, it was not serious enough for me to remember. Selective memory? Maybe. But maybe Bill has exaggerated too.

Q: Did these changes in the atmosphere have much-- you mentioned the bombing of the IAS at one point. But beyond that kind of an episode, did these changes in the atmosphere have much impact on your work in Iran?

Arndt: On my work, zero. Mind you, I'd always been properly cautious in what was essentially a closed society. I mean, I was dealing with Iran in somewhat the same way I would have dealt with the Soviet Union. Very carefully. I mean, the assumption of phones being tapped was always there. It doesn't mean they were tapped, but you had to assume that maybe they were tapped. And so forth. So you were cautious about what you did on the phone and cautious about what you said, and so forth. And certainly I didn't want to get anybody into trouble, so I was very cautious about information that I had. So I was cautious when I came to Iran and I continued to be cautious.

Certainly the situation affected my morale in the last year, but I would say that that was not-- it didn't show up in the program in any particular way because we went on with business as usual. In any case, the bomb that I was most aware of was in the Spring of '71, at the IAS. The next year, there were other bombs, six or so, all took place the year later. The attempted kidnapping of Douglas MacArthur (Fall of '70?) was one that bothered the hell out of me. Not because it had happened, but because our own bosses tried to lie to us about it. All this meant my morale was down-- but I didn't let that affect the program-- which was aimed at the long run. It didn't touch our program at all and I would guarantee it didn't touch Lois' IAS program at all, except in

one regard, and that's the famous play, which I may have told you about.

Q: I'm not sure. No. No.

Arndt: Have you got tape long enough?

Q: Yes.

Arndt: Lois was very eager to have Persian theater in the IAS. We'd had, up to the time she came there, an American and English expatriate theater, which was very successful, and we'd involved occasional Iranian elements. But she was interested in getting indigenous Iranian groups to use it. That means not only together with us, to put on theater in English, but also to put on plays in Persian. And she was approached by a Persian theater group who wanted to put on a play, which I think was called "The School Principal," which may have been taken from Jalal al-e Ahmad's book, I don't know. I never saw it, by the way.

In order for a play to be put on, it had to be passed by the censor. The censor passed the play, permission was given, and the play was put on. It was to run for eleven performances. The story was a loosely disguised story about authority. The school principal was the Shah, loosely speaking, and there was a lot of unrest underneath and people bitching about his behavior and all the rest. And it was a loose allegory, a loose political allegory, which didn't offend the censors, so it had to be acceptable-- in the original text.

But there was one scene in the play in which something happens and everybody yells and screams all at once. And they were all yelling, and it was all written in the text what they were supposed to yell.

Well, the story goes that as the SRO performances went forward-- when they got into about the seventh or eighth performance, the shouting at this climactic point of the play began to include things that weren't in the script. And finally the SAVAK closed the play. The accusation was that someone had yelled "Death to the Shah" during that scene. So they closed the play.

I have to say probably from their point of view it was the proper thing to do. And from the other side of the thing, I would have to say that the Iranian theater group was very irresponsible and certainly kicked the Iran-American Society in the teeth, for no good reason. It was more important that that play-- and other plays-- run as it was than that some hothead should amuse himself by shouting some inflammatory words in a crowd scene.

The only thing that happened-- Lois was called by the PAO, her boss, and was read a lecture about how this mustn't happen again. However, she always said that the boss in question let her know by various signs that he was doing what he'd been ordered to do and that he was in full support of her. She responded in a deathless phrase. She'd been reading Gideon's Trumpet at that particular time. You remember the book about the guy who worked his way out of prison by his own para-legal efforts? And she said, "Look, I understand that you have to give me this talk, but I do want you to understand that the day that the Iran-American Society plays a role as Hoveyda's trumpet, we are lost. On that day, we might as well close the IAS." In other words, she

was saying: we cannot flack for the Pahlavi regime. In so many words. Which is the antithesis of Jim Bill's thesis, but he doesn't remember to mention that.

So that said, obviously that had to be in the back of her mind-- and mine-- as we went through our work. Obviously she was not going to trust as completely another theater company, with a play that was that close to the margin.

Q: When did you leave Iran?

Arndt: I think it was July 13th, 1971. I spent the following year at Princeton and was in very active touch with Iran through the letters of Lois, and through the fact that I was hanging around the Middle East Department at Princeton. People like Morro Berger went out to Iran with my briefing and met Lois and so forth. So there was a lot of contact to and fro between me and Iran that year. I was, in fact, in touch with Iranian scholars, Iranian visitors, Iranian delegations to the UN, Iran's ambassador to the UN-- you know, all of it. And all in a university context. So it was very appropriate for me to stay in touch.

When I got to Washington the following year, I was put into the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, where I had really no input at all on Iran. During that year at Princeton, I was brought down to Washington to "debrief" before the Board of Foreign Scholarships about developments in Iran, which was interesting. Walt Rostow was on the board at the time. And I did my number when called upon, but basically I didn't have much to do with it. I was thinking about writing a book on Iran that year, but the more I tried to do it, the more I realized that

the language of social science would not carry it, the historian couldn't really do it, partly because there were too many things I knew that I couldn't attribute to sources, and finally because, basically, it was just too close. And I wasn't ready yet to think about the novel as a form of expression.

When I got to Washington, Lois came back that year; and we were very shortly married thereafter, so our house became a kind of a center for visiting Iranians. And in '74 we were transferred to Rome, where it was equally close. We saw Iranians all the time. And the same was true in Paris when we got there in 1978, only it was a little sadder then, because by 1978 the revolution was on and what we were handling was really visa cases for people who came through, trying to help them get out and get to the U.S.

We've never been far from Iran. As you see, I'm surrounded by it here in this living room. We've constantly been in touch with Iranians. In fact, I just came back from Paris and I ran into the whole bunch in Paris and we had a wonderful evening together and so forth.

So it was enormously-- five years, after all, of my life. It was a central experience in my life and the Iranians knew that there and now; they constantly are with us. Formally I've never really done anything about Iran. I was away from the U.S. during the Revolution and the hostage-taking. If I'd been here, I probably would have been on the task force. Many of my friends were. People like Robert Bemis and Marilyn MacAfee, and Bill Royce in the distance, R.K. Ramazani Jim Bill, Joe Malone, and so many others.

But basically my inputs were accidental, casual and second-hand--underutilized,

perhaps (except for some mild reporting to our Political Section in Paris regarding my contacts with emigre Iranians.)

Q: Have you any concluding observations you'd like to make on U.S.-Iran relations and your experience?

Arndt: I think I've said it all too many times.

Q: Okay, fine. Thanks very much.

Arndt: Okay. My pleasure.

[END OF SESSION #3]