

could get to gauge the accuracy of intelligence. And I don't blame them at all for that.

The difference between a directorate of operations collector of intelligence from a given person and the analyst who writes the paper based on that intelligence, and the scholar who talks with people, because they are willing to talk with him-- they all have problems. They all have problems. And the scholar not the least of them.

A coup takes place in some obscure part of the world. It happened in Kabul at one point. Into Kabul from all over the world-- Paris, Beirut, New Delhi, wherever they happen to become the world press. And they fly into the country, they don't speak the local language, they're damn tired. They've just stopped something in mid-stream, a marriage, a birth, something. They've got dysentery or diarrhea or headaches or malaria or whatever it may be. They're there three days and they go home and write a book. And out from The New York Times comes a five-column article on the coup in Kabul. And it might be reality and it might be junk.

There's a little story that Nkhrumah tells. Nkhrumah was the ruler of Ghana and of course he was claimed to have had a mistress and claimed at one point to have gotten her a golden bed. And there was an attempted coup and the generals were arrested and hung or shot or something. The press flew in like bees around honey. And the apocryphal story is that one of the American reporters-- being an American reporter, was very

persistent and aggressive and one might say obnoxious. Finally Nkhrumah turned to him and said, "How long have you been here?" Well, he happened to have been there three weeks, much longer than the others, by some circumstance, and he rather proudly said, "Well, President Nkhrumah, I've been here three weeks." And Nkhrumah said, "Oh, thank God, too long to write a book." So scholars have problems and they can be just as bamboozled as anybody that walks the street. You mean, you know what the problem is of what is the truth with a capital "T." It is difficult.

Q: Now when you were in the operational side of things at Langley, how would you describe your duties?

Daw: You support operations. You interface with other government agencies. You interface with the analysts. You are the person who speaks for that desk or that branch on matters that pertain to the operational side, or to some degree the intelligence side.

Q: Of course you monitor the reports from the field that are coming off?

Daw: You monitor the whole stream of traffic. Operational, intelligence, administrative, personnel, the whole thing.

Q: When you are at Langley at this stage in the early seventies, how useful was the information you were getting back from Tehran about opposition, internal politics?

Daw: Well, as I say, I think we were weak, I think the Agency was weak in that, and I think it reflected the amount of resources they committed, the quality of people they sent.

Q: Now one point that's been made-- I think Bill makes this in his book-- is that during this period in '79 the CIA and I guess NSA had monitoring sites in northern Iran that were used to monitor Soviet missile tests. They were considered a very important strategic asset. And the point is made, I think, that there was reluctance to-- that the ambassadors, among others, were reluctant to encourage contacts with the opposition, because they were fearful that the Shah would get angry and thereby perhaps cut off these monitoring stations.

Daw: I'm sure that was of concern, yes. Why not?

Q: How legitimate do you think it was as a concern?

Daw: I don't think it was legitimate, but I expressed that earlier when I said that any ambassador who accepts a limitation on embassy contacts I think is a fool. Because once you do it, that's it.

Now, try Moscow. They go at it a different way. You can see anybody you want, if you don't mind seeing them hang by the feet three days later. So there are a lot of ways to go about it, but I think any ambassador or any government who even starts down that path has made a critical and in some ways a revocable mistake, because having made that mistake, what ambassador is going to say, I made a mistake? Okay?

Would the Shah close down the monitoring sites? I don't think so.

Q: He found them useful himself from what I understand.

Daw: Christ Almighty, we play poker, don't we? All right. Are you going to raise? Are you going to fold? Are you going to call? We should play better poker. We should play a lot better poker. We should run some risks, but we're not a risk-taking country. We're not a risk-taker in our policy. We're not a risk-taker in our personnel. We're not a risk-taker in our decisions. Look at Congressional legislation. Look at gun control. We don't take risks. We are, I think, in many dimensions a status quo power. Everything that perturbates what we think is a comfortable situation is a problem for us. It's a problem for Congress, a problem for the executive branch. It is a mind set.

Q: Well, sometimes risks are taken just to maintain the status quo. I mean, for example Vietnam could be considered to be a risk. It was a great risk at the time.

Daw: Well, let's not go into that. That's another six days.

Q: Yes, that's another question.

Daw: But let me go back to your question on the sites and the policy and all. There are a lot of things to say about Vietnam, but I don't think that you can say legitimately that the people who framed the policy in Vietnam were mountebanks, charlatans, murderers and fools, who sought out pregnant women to shoot. Disagreements, yes. But again, for every effect there's a good and sufficient cause. There are reasons why people do things, and whether they're right or not will be judged only in retrospect. But they do things for what they think are good reasons. They may be noble or ignoble, wise or foolish. But the fact remains that governments don't come up with big policies like Vietnam or protection of the collection sites without having thought about it. It isn't just an irrational off the top of the head decision. It is true that the Soviet Union, maybe even today, is the only country that can destroy the United States, and it is not irrelevant that we spend a lot of time and

attention on that subject. And one of the ways they could do it was with missiles, and one of the ways we could keep in touch with what they're doing were the collection sites.

You know, there's a lot more to say than that, but there is that to say.

Q: From what I've read-- I think from what I've been told as well-- this information would be shared with the Shah routinely anyway, so he would have had less reason to close it down.

Daw: I don't know. Could be. I'm not sure how much information on Soviet missile technology the Shah really was interested in. Anyway, I think you play hard ball when you have to play hard ball and I think you run risks. The world's a risky place. It's even a risky place in the Mission Street and down in south central Los Angeles. It's risky on Highway 101 at five o'clock.

But we do have a problem with consensus and we do have a problem of the implications of serious actions that we take. Again, for all the criticism one might level on any policy-- invasion of Grenada, trying to get Noriega out, what to do about Nicaragua, how to treat Gorbachev's perestroika, what to do about the Shah, how much value to place on the collection sites, how much resources to commit to coverage of internal opposition in Iran, how much money to spend on training Iranian linguists or area specialists-- this is all of a piece and you make decisions.

I don't have a Ferrari. I'd love to have a Ferrari, but, you know, part of that money's going to educate the kids. These are tradeoffs and we make them all the time.

So whether it's wise or not-- I go back to it. I think you take the risks. I think you gamble. And I think you say, okay, it's worth it, and, of course, you gauge the likelihood. But most ambassadors are very, very conservative. "Not on my watch," is not unusual. I've served with only two ambassadors I thought had real guts in terms of policy issues and willingness to commit themselves to a change of course or to an unpopular policy. And I thought those ambassadors were absolutely superb.

Q: Who were they?

Daw: Henry Byroade was certainly one.

Q: In Afghanistan?

Daw: In Afghanistan. A man of great courage and would buck the trends, based on what he is, which is the President's representative in a country. There should be no one who understands that country better than he does, who is more keenly interested in it, who has as his primary objective the pursuit of American interests.

Q: The other person was-- ?

Daw: A fellow who was in Khartoum when I was there. One of the old school. A very fine person. Fine person, I mean who had the courage of his convictions and would pursue them, even at the risk of saying-- remember that report I gave you-- "wrong, I made a mistake. This is what's happening and this is what we should do." And Washington comes back and says, oh no, we don't need that. Stop making all those waves. The boat is rocking, that's enough. Most ambassadors will say, "Yes, sir." That probably isn't fair, but it's something along that line.

Q: Now in your branch of CIA, was there an Iran section as such?

Daw: Of course.

Q: Were you the chief person or was there another person who was your superior?

Daw: I ran the branch for a while.

Q: Okay. Can you say how many people worked in that branch?

Daw: No. Not enough.

Q: Not enough? Okay. Now some months after you left Iran, President Nixon traveled to Tehran on his way back from the Moscow summit. And at the meeting the Shah requested CIA help on



organizing a Kurdish insurgency against the government of Iraq. Now I've read that the officers at the station in Tehran and elsewhere in CIA were rather unhappy or critical with this assignment. What were your thoughts about this question?

Daw: Well, I'd just as soon not express them.

Q: Okay. Now how much working knowledge did the CIA have about the Kurds as a nationality in Iran and in the region?

Daw: Well, the Kurds had been a major player in the affairs in that part of the world for a good many years. Barzani and family and allies were one part of it, and Telegani and some of the others were playing other role, that is, came from other places. Part of it was traditional. The Kurds have never been known to get along terribly well with each other and they were a power to be reckoned with. They live in an area which is relatively inaccessible. If someone is opposed to them or wants to overthrow them or put them down or make allies of them, it's kind of hard to get there. They were a power and they were quite well-known. Barzani, of course, had lived in Russia for a long time. Some of his lieutenants had. I think there was a good understanding of the Kurds and their nationalistic intentions, though there were many Kurds and many different intentions. Power plays going on all the time.

But that's-- well, I think if you go back to the time of the establishment of the Mogul Empire and its successors, or to the time when Cyrus married the daughter of the King of the Medes, they've been there a long time. And not much has changed. Fascinating. I mean, Plus la change, plus la meme chose. The world is as it is. The persistence of patterns.

There's an article not long ago in some magazine-- a friend sent me the clipping-- about the wars in the Middle East being the actual first round of the Third World War. And I wrote him back a couple of pages, saying if your thesis is correct, if you agree with this article, then your Third World War began about 6000 B.C., because it's been going on all that long. Same players, same places, same ineluctible circumstances and relationships. That may change over a time. I mean, if we all get television sets and paved roads or something. But as long as you have mountains and tribes and rivalries and an urge to power, I don't see that you're going to change the pattern.

So the Kurds are part of it. And the Assyrians and the Chaldeans and the Sumerians and the Babylonians and the Medes and the Persians and all the rest. So my view about the Kurds is, yes, they're a very interesting group. They have a very interesting territorial situation of interest to Turkey, Iraq, Iran, the Soviet Union, and I think within limits, what lies in a human's heart, they were reasonably well understood.

Q: Now during the early 1950s, I guess late '40s, the CIA in Tehran had a fairly substantial network of contacts with Iranian nationals, bazaari, the government, the clergy and elsewhere. To what extent did that kind of a network of contacts and agents and sub-agents continue on into the sixties and early seventies?

Daw: Well, sure it continued in kind, but surely also it was diminished very markedly in number. American interests were very different in the sixties and seventies than they were in the forties and fifties. The Second World War, the Soviet seizure of Azerbaijan, the whole question of what our relationship with the Soviets would be, '48 the Stuttgart speech by Byrnes, the Cold War-- you know, all these things were happening.

Iran was a very unstable country, and when the oil crisis arose, the so-called oil crisis, and the Mussadiq nationalization of the oil companies, all kinds of other interests came into play. The Seven Sisters dominated American policy in the Middle East to a great extent, because the Americans had very little else of interest to them in the forties and the early fifties. We didn't know much about the Middle East. Israel was a major concern and we knew a good deal about Israel, but we didn't know much about other things. We had Germans and Frenchmen and Czechs and Poles and Russian exiles in the United States and they constituted lobbies and wrote books and talked to Congress. The Cold War generated-- the focus of the Cold War was Europe, not the Middle East. And our attitude toward the Middle East and the

Third World was very much the anti-colonial attitude that flowed after the Second World War in Indonesia and Indochina and the breakup of the Mandates.

We didn't know a lot about Iran. We became very concerned about it, intensified by the nationalization of the oil fields. We began, in part, because of the Tehran Conference during the war, to try to become interested, we made a major effort to understand Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, India, Iraq, et cetera. But we were just at the beginning stages of that really. We saw a threat. We saw a significant problem-- geopolitical, financial, economic-- and committed a great many resources, people, time, money into trying to achieve stability in Iran, and in anything like a historical perspective, that was accomplished. Somewhat forgotten in most commentaries on the U.S. policy in Iran. Yes, that objective was accomplished. It was accomplished from the time of Mussadiq's removal from office until 1979. That's in round numbers a quarter of a century. Not bad, everything considered. In the seven thousand year life in the Middle East, nothing.

But one really does have to look at what was happening in the world in the early fifties, in the Berlin airlift and the crisis in Greece. The whole question of whether there would be a Communist presence in the Adriatic. A lot of things were happening then. The Indo-Pak situation was absolutely exploding. The world's a complex place. There were a lot of things that American policymakers were concerned with. One of them was Iran.

That had to be fixed, it was fixed, and it lasted twenty-five years. It's lasted a lot longer than the mullahs have lasted. Okay? And maybe the mullahs' antipathy toward the United States will last another-- what would it be?-- sixteen years. I doubt it, but it might.

The world was awash with problems at the time of Mussadiq, problems for the United States. One should go back and look at that, in gauging whether the policy was wise.

Q: You mentioned a minute ago that one issue that's worth looking at is the question of the American presence in Iran during this period, the late sixties into the seventies. We were discussing how Americans behaved or acted in that country. What are your thoughts on that question?

Daw: Well, I don't know the numbers of Americans there. That should be easily available. I've seen estimates, but I don't know. There were several thousand American there, most of them in the contractual context. And most of those related to military contracts, building systems, providing training and so on.

For the most part this very large group of Americans were there to make money, or they were there in the business community, or they were there because they were assigned to the U. S. military. Thousands of them. In villages, in the bazaar, in the better neighborhoods in town. The oil people came along

and kicked the price of housing so high that the government had to subsidize housing for its employees, because they couldn't afford to live there otherwise.

Q: Was this true when you were there in the seventies?

Daw: Yes. I moved there in '68 and took over a house. I'd gone over early to try to find a house, and the embassy said, well, there's one guy leaving, you might want to talk with him, a house that more or less fit my family. And he said, well, I'm sure that he would like to rent to Americans, because they keep the property up well and they pay their bills. But I've got to warn you, the price of the house doubled when I rented it three years ago and my guess is he'll want to double it again this time. Which, in fact, turned out to be the case, and when I left another American family came in and it doubled then. We're talking about doubling in cost every two or three years. So that was a real problem for everybody.

The Americans basically were not there and were not particularly interested in developing an understanding or a taste, a sense, of Iranian culture or Iran as such. They lived pretty much-- well, to the degree they could, as they would in Keokuk or San Francisco or Chicago. They wanted a bowling alley. They wanted hamburgers and bingo nights at the officers' club, this kind of thing. And tragically, in my view, they missed this tremendous possible exposure to one of the world's great

cultures. Rarely did they learn the language or try to learn the language. They were truly "Ugly Americans" in my view, and the impact of this at a basic level was very negative. We were seen as being cultural barbarians, so to speak, of being a people who were intensely concerned with money, who had almost no interest in Iran as such, or the Iranian people or their patterns, their culture, their poetry, whatever. People who'd go down to see the crown jewels, but they wouldn't go to the ? Museum, which is surely one of the great museums in the world. They rarely traveled outside Tehran. They didn't come to understand the country. Which is all right. You know, you don't have to, but you missed a great bit, and cumulatively this had a negative impact on the Iranian view of the Americans.

There was a case-- again, to provide education for these thousands of American children who were there, they built the American School, with U.S. government money, as they often do in a foreign country. We came late, after the school year had started, so we had to put the kids in the only available school to us, which was the American School. And that summer, after the first year, we attended a PTA meeting, or the equivalent thereof, they had a new headmaster. And an Iranian who'd been educated in the United States was teaching at Tehran University, got up and made a very graceful presentation, saying that the University of Tehran would provide teachers, as many as required, to teach Persian as a language, and/or to teach a course in Iranian cultural history, which I would have been very happy to take.

He then sat there while a series of speakers got up, one of whom was a gentleman from the military, who said, "I didn't bring my kids here to learn Persian and I am not interested in Persian culture. What good will that do my child in getting a job or anything else? The time he will spend learning the cultural history of Iran he should spend learning math or American history or American politics or something."

So a vote was taken and his offer was turned down by a substantial margin. That led me to pull the kids out of that school and put them in another school in town, because I was actually infuriated that the American community would pass up an opportunity like this.

That tended to characterize the American indifference toward Iran and there was a cumulative very negative impact of this, because it wasn't just seen to be, it actually was a matter of viewing the Persians as just so far beneath us that there was no communication. And there wasn't. It was a great tragedy, with significant impacts. And the mullahs spoke of it. The Americans and their motorcycles and their booze and their gals, and their bingos and their luaus and their separate Officers' Club.

Q: In your conversations with them?

Daw: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. And so did everybody else. Now maybe there's nothing we can do about it. Americans are Americans. And they act in crazy ways in San Francisco. But it reflected



kind of an unspoken attitude toward Iran-- well, sorry, it wasn't unspoken, it was spoken-- which both reflected some myopia on our part and had a very negative impact on all levels of relationship, let alone communication, between the American community and the Iranians. It was a very negative fact.

Some of the other things that were happening at the time-- we don't read signals very well. In '63 there were several riots in which American cars were overturned and things happened that were quite negative. Nobody that I talked to seemed to understand what that meant. It was as though it didn't happen. And when I would discuss that issue in the context of opposition--

Q: The '63 events?

Daw: Yes. In the context of that event-- that was about ten years after Mussadiq's overthrow and some eight years-- six, eight years. How an event that significant could be simply done away with, forgotten, I will never understand.

Dick Cottam covered that quite well. And, in part, when that kind of thing happens and you go to someone and you say, "What does this mean? Do you get anything, spitze gefuher (?) from that?" And the answer is, "What events?" It tends to make you think that-- was it Talleyrand said of the Bourbons, "We forget nothing and we learn nothing."?

Events like that have significance. Like the Watts riots, for example. They are significant. They have meaning. They reflect realities. But we didn't pick up on that.

And there were other events like that.

Q: Around the time that you were in Iran?

Daw: Well, some Americans were killed. How about that to start with? That was a political act.

Q: That was after you had left? Am I mistaken about that?

Daw: These things were happening. A Lieutenant-Colonel had been killed.

Q: That's right.

Daw: That, of course, is obvious and people did focus on that. But what did it mean? Well, they gave it different meanings and probably significantly undervalued that. You had to have that kind of mind-set. What is it they say? Seek and you shall find.

If you believe something, you can find all kinds of evidence to support it. If you don't believe it, then everything that's deduced is not relevant or different. People keep saying it's different. Oh, that's different. Sure it's different. We

didn't read that very well. And, in part, because of the ghetto mentality of most of the Americans who were there.

Q: Now in terms of the way Americans behaved on the streets, things you talked about earlier, were there efforts made by the embassy to try to--

Daw: Nominal.

Q: --get Americans to behave differently?

Daw: Nominal. You know, it's a bit like-- I don't know how to say it. It's silly. That was a huge community in Iran, a huge community. You couldn't tell an American anything. In some ways you couldn't tell the American military, the advisory group, anything. They were run from the Pentagon, a separate track. Had their own validity, their own directions.

Q: This raises a question in my mind. One issue that concerned the State Department during the seventies was the extent to which Armish-MAAG would not provide intelligence information on the various personnel in the Iranian military. Armish-MAAG was very reluctant to provide such information. Were there efforts made in the station to encourage them to provide information as well?

Daw: There were some efforts made, but the policy of Armish-MAAG was that they would not do that because that would jeopardize their relationships with their military counterparts.

Q: And that's pretty much where the issue was left?

Daw: Well, that's where it began. No change was made in that policy. I was in another country at one point when a very critical event was about to take place, and an American who was there could have provided extremely important information to the U. S. government of geopolitical significance. And I went to see him and I had talked to his boss and said, with your approval I'll ask him the following, because he could really provide us a tremendous amount of help. He said, "Well, all right, but he's on his own. He can say yes or no." I said, "I understand that."

So I went to him and explained what was happening and his role in this, the possibility that he could make a cardinal contribution. And he stood up, quite unhappy, and he said, "Mr. Daw, I came here to help these people, not to spy on them." Which is kind of a classic American attitude toward the world. And I said, "Fine. Then I take it what you're saying is no?" He said, "Not only no, but hell, no." Fair enough. That is an American attitude toward intelligence, toward information, which is fairly congenital. It's the idea that Big Brother is quite a menacing figure.

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

Daw: Government as evil; intelligence as particularly evil. And I think Armish-MAAG kind of looked at it in a sense that we will jeopardize our position here if it becomes known that our officers are sharing information with the embassy or CIA or anybody else.

I thought that was too bad, because the military establishment in any country is a fairly critical target for intelligence coverage. What is happening in the military, as in Libya, for example.

But that's the way it is and, you know, that isn't the end of things. It just makes it more difficult. If you're going from here to San Jose and 101 and 280 are out, you can get there by Oakland, but it takes a little longer and it's a little more difficult.

But that is basically an American position abroad, as opposed to the British. My God, if a British citizen sees a strange tree frog on a palm tree in Khartoum, the next time he gets near a British embassy, he'll go in and tell somebody. But that's the legacy of empire.

We have such an ambivalent attitude towards intelligence, either information or let alone covert action.

Q: What about the business community in Iran? How cooperative were they with the station?

Daw: We had almost nothing to do with it. I personally, I had some friends in the business community, but they were not of people of intelligence interest to me. They again didn't know very much about Iran, other than their very narrow perspective, whatever job they had or connections they had. And what they knew was not of terribly great interest to us, because we needed information in much greater depth. We knew what their contracts were, because, you know, they were importing and exporting goods and personnel and so on. And sometimes they had access to things of interest to us and sometimes we'd say, by the way, you went off to Kherman, are they working the coal fields?

But that's an embassy function and that's not intelligence collection. And some would say, sure, they're working the coal mines, but I didn't really notice. Or, yeah, I've got an engineer out there right now surveying possible coal fields, or whatever. But again that's an embassy function. That's pretty benign. It's not you go out to the coal field and I want to know how thick the seam is and where it surfaces and how they're digging and how much coal's coming out, where it's going, what the price is, et cetera. Because what's public knowledge or in the public domain is really for somebody else to collect. If you're going to use limited resources to collect intelligence, you called that which is not in the public domain.

Q: I'm not sure you can address this or not, but did they provide cover for CIA officers?

Daw: No. Goodness sakes. Not that I know of. If they did, I would say no, they didn't, and if they didn't, I would say no, they didn't. I mean, the answer has to be the same no matter what happened. But there was really no need for that, was there, at the time? As opposed to the time of the hostages. You should go talk to Ross Perot. The Eagle Has Landed wasn't it? The book about the rescue of the personnel?

Q: I haven't read it.

Daw: Interesting man. I've never met him. I would like to do that some time. I'd like to sit down at a long dinner and talk with Ross about Iran, because there was a man of great appetite and energy. Whether one agrees with his politics is a whole other subject.

Q: How long did you continue working on Iran as such at Langley?

Daw: A few months.

Q: After you came back in '71, it was only a matter of months that you were working on Iran?

Daw: Yes.

Q: Okay. Then just went on to other things from there?

Daw: Yes.

Q: Okay. But you maintained your contacts with Iranians?

Daw: Oh, of course. Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Had a lot of Iranian friends in Washington.

[TELEPHONE INTERRUPTION]

Q: You were saying?

Daw: There's a very large expatriate Iranian community. At the time thousands of Iranian students came here and I knew many of their parents, and when I went back, looked up many of the students just to touch in and say hello and call me if you need anything. And there were others in and out of the embassy and in and out of various Iranian missions that I knew, personal friends. So, yes, I stayed in touch with them. There's a very large Iranian community here in the Bay area, many of them kind of expatriates, members of the Shah's government, and many of them tied in with the mujahidin. I presume many of them tied in with the mullahs. A great cross-section. There are thousands of Iranians in this area doing various things. And I know a number of them. Some I consider friends, some I consider just acquaintances. They're a very skillful people. They're good business people. They're generally acute, intellectually acute,



savvy. A very interesting cultural persistence again. They were successful in Iran and they'd be successful here. They tend to be the people who are successful, that is, the adventurous, the curious, with enough confidence to come to a strange country. Pack it up and-- some had to, but others chose to.

Q: But after-- you did no further work on Iran during the rest of your years with CIA?

Daw: Well, I did some work on it now and again.

Q: Again, it was back in the operations branch?

Daw: Yes. I stayed with the operations branch until I retired in '86.

Q: Did you do any work on Iran during the Carter years?

Daw: Yes.

Q: Anything you could talk about now? In terms of how the CIA covered the deepening of the opposition in '77-'78 and the outbreak of the revolution?

Daw: No, I was really out of touch with it by then. After the coup, of course, or after the overthrow of the Shah, there was a

lot of work to do, a lot of people to meet, and contacts to refurbish. It was hard to get intelligence and we needed it very badly. Very concerned about the hostages. So I knew a lot of Iranians and to a certain degree tried to contribute to that.

Q: A resolution of the hostage crisis?

Daw: Yes. That was a tragedy, wasn't it? It had many dimensions.

[TAPE PAUSE]

Q: You were saying?

Daw: The hostage crisis and how it developed, and the inability of Washington even to listen to-- by that time the embassy, which was very concerned about the implications of our accepting the Shah and several other things that went with that, as I think, quote unquote, everybody knows, the embassy warned the U.S. government, here's a problem, and here is one likely outcome, and, of course, very few predictions come true, but that one certainly did.

But again it goes back to ignoring the events of '63. You really have to understand-- at a certain level you have to understand what's happening and the dynamics of it, in order for information about that to make any sense. So that knowing there

were so many cows in Schleswig-Holstein in a certain year is meaningful only in the sense that the rest of Europe was starving. But you have to know that or else the number of cows doesn't mean anything. And you have to believe that the embassy understood what was happening and why, whatever other problems Sullivan had. We were carrying water on both shoulders or all six shoulders, as a matter of fact, trying to figure out how to relate to this new government.

But we didn't make it. We just didn't make it. We didn't add up one and one and get two. We got one point three or ABC or something else. The world does look very different from Washington than it does from a given country, and the ground truth is always difficult to lay up against the theory. I guess that's one of the problems I have with journalists, one of the problems I have with scholars, some of them. The other side of the coin is that both have the ability to discern things which you-- the forest as opposed to the trees. Ideally you marry both perspectives, but that doesn't often happen, and it certainly didn't happen in the case of Iran.

But certainly the Yom Kippur war is an example of inertia, intellectual, mental inertia. Neither the Israelis nor the Americans saw it coming. And in some senses one might say the Shah didn't see the revolution coming, and if he didn't, why the hell should anybody else. The fact of the matter is, if you added up one plus one after the fact, if you presently had access to every report written in Iran from 1960 to 1979, you would say,

of course, it couldn't lead anywhere but to revolution. Or you might say, nope, I don't see it, the TVs don't show that. It would have been an impressive political leader indeed to have been able to sell the U. S. government on the proposition the Shah was going to be overthrown in 1979, regardless of the information available.

Q: Were you working on Iran during the course of '78 and '79? Not? Okay. I was wondering how you read it at that time?

Daw: Some years before, after I came back from Kabul, I was on the Afghan desk, and one of the analysts came over and we had lunch together. He said, "You know, we have this-- kind of a funny message here. Did you see it?" And I said, "No." It was a cable from the ambassador. He'd had a long talk with King Zahir Shah.

Q: King who?

Daw: King Zahir Shah. He was the King of Afghanistan at the time. And the ambassador had been bending a great deal of effort to bringing about this interview, and he'd been there a couple or three years and never had gotten it. He finally got one and Zahir Shah was just as nice to him as you can imagine. He was a very charming man, was graceful and complimentary of the work the ambassador had done, the American mission, and on and on and

on and on. And I read it with absolute perplexed response. I couldn't understand what was going on.

And the analyst said, "Well, what do you think that is? Why do you think Zahir Shah did that?" And I thought a while and I said, "Well, I think probably the Afghans made a deal with the Soviets, which we'll hear about shortly." Which, in fact, yes, it turned out to be that. It wasn't all that hard to read. But the point was that this marvelous, warm, almost gushy message had come in and set everybody in Washington, and certainly the ambassador, in a state of euphoria. Breakthrough. Marvelous.

So when the deal was announced, all he did was come back to where we were before.

Well, this is a problem we all have. We do hear what we want to hear and we read it the way we want to read, because it fits comfort levels and proclivities, and it takes a particular type of honesty to-- a level of acceptable skepticism. I don't mean cynicism, I mean skepticism. It was Pinafore that said, "Things are seldom what they seem, skim milk masquerades as cream," and if you don't understand that in the Middle East, I don't think you understand anything.

Why the Middle East? Why not here? We just elected a mayor that many people feel is quite a different man from the one they elected. Goldwater was condemned for wanting to bomb Vietnam back to the Stone Age and Johnson upped the military ante. Jimmy Carter is going to be a friend of the people and change the

government in good. Things don't work out that way.

What kind of a President will George Bush be? Historian. What kind of a President will Mike Dukakis be? Who knows? Who knows?

Anyway, if the Shah didn't see it coming-- maybe he did. But our propensity for deluding ourselves in favor of more comfortable analyses is legendary all over the world. The other side of it is that we tend to get very strident when we identify a real problem. We tend to be unable to see it through, whatever the policy may be and whatever country may be involved. How you get Congress to support with money, always scarce, resources, always scarce, the support to and sustaining of an American presence or the fulfillment of an American policy over time is a very difficult question. A very difficult question. If you're not going to send in pro-consuls the way the British did, what are you going to do? And how are you going to keep political attention focused on a country like Iran, again, remembering what the world's like, when there are many other things that require your attention? We don't seem able to do that.

Q: Now over the years people have written and argued that in the years after the CIA helped set up SAVAK in the late fifties, that agents at one time or the other provided instruction, directly or indirectly, in interrogation methods, or possibly even in torture. Can you shed any light on that question?

Daw: The answer is that the Agency did not. Occam's razor, okay? What in the name of heaven-- who in the United States, let alone someone who presumably has enough intelligence to be hired by the Agency, who in the United States could teach the Persians anything about torture? That is ludicrous. That is absolutely absurd. And it reflects much more on a person who would assert that than on any level of reality. Where would an American learn how to torture people? In New York City? In Washington? But where is the school for torture that would lead this man to know enough about torture that he could go to a foreign country and teach somebody how to torture people. That is-- Whoof! That is so far out that, of course, as I say, I think it reflects on the person who would make such an assertion.

One thing about the Agency that perhaps is overlooked on occasion. The Agency is not made up from a select group of people who are born and bred by some genetic formula and grown up in the Texas desert and trained in the obscure mountains of Colorado to produce persons who are different from other Americans. They go to liberal arts colleges. They are linguists. They are travelers. They have appetites and curiosity and children and interests and so on, albeit different from many.

I don't know how many Agency people you've met in your life, but by and large they're a pretty decent group of people. At least I have always found them to be. In my last year and a half in commercial America, I wouldn't trade one station for the

people I work with now. By any stretch of the imagination, in terms of acuity, interest, capabilities, intelligence, ethics. One forgets that people join the Agency for reasonably selfless motives. You certainly don't make money. Your kids are on intravenous feeding. My son was three weeks old when he was on intravenous feeding. We lived in a house full of scorpions. You have more diseases than people have listed. You spend a good deal of time being sick and so does your family. You don't live terribly well and it gets very tough and the hours are long and the pay is lousy, and people do it, therefore, not because they are some kind of Neanderthal politicians. As a matter of fact, most of the people that I was with in the Agency I would guess are to the left of center in the American political spectrum. They are political activists certainly or they wouldn't be in the directorate of operations. They'd be writing books or mowing lawns. It's a very interesting group of people and a far cry from anyone who would think of torturing people or learning how to torture people or teaching someone else to torture people. I think that is just a canard and obviously so.

Q: I think the charges, from my recollection, were made by a man named Jesse Leaf.

Daw: Who?



Q: Jesse Leaf, who left the Agency in '73. There was a New York Times article where he was interviewed. He talked about this whole issue. But does his name ring a bell?

Daw: I'm sorry, that name doesn't ring a bell. Agee, of course, has been saying this for years, but that's a different kettle of fish. He gets his pay from the Cubans and the Soviets. Whatever led him to his move, that's a different subject. But I think that's really pretty sad.

Q: James Bill in his book suggests that, in fact, it may have well been Mossad who provided some technical assistance along those lines.

Daw: Well-- you know, far be it from me-- I have absolutely no thoughts on the subject. I would only say again, who in hell outside Iran could come back and teach the Persians anything about torture. I mean, they've been doing it for six thousand years. It's like saying that CIA went in and taught them how to weave an Isfahani rug. Or we went in there and taught them how to use opium. Or we went in and taught them how to set up a prostitution ring. Or we went in and told them how to sell rugs.

I think it's ludicrous on the face of it. You wouldn't go to Mexico City and teach a Mexican how to fry beans. I don't think. Anyway, it makes me angry, as you might imagine.

Q: Are there any concluding comments that you'd like to make?

Daw: Yes, a couple I really would like to make. The Iranians are-- in my relatively limited experience, that's eighteen years in various parts of the Middle East and South Asia, so that's something, but that certainly doesn't make me an expert-- the Iranians are a very guileful and intelligent people. They are skillful in human relations. They are skillful at politics in all of its forms. They are in many ways a very admirable people. They are very conscious of their cultural heritage and kids are still named Saraf and Hurush and Cyrus and Xerxes and so on. They are very conscious and very proud of their traditions, and they should be. They have much to be proud of. There have been revivals of religious fundamentalism in Iran, as elsewhere in the Middle East, repeatedly over time. Nothing new under the sun. Not that, because everything's new. Every time like this is new and different.

But after the mullahs have gone, Iran will tend to go back to where it was, as the Chinese, for example, are going back to patterns they followed before Mao, which may be a bad omen for the Russians, given the nature of their cultural history. As we constantly revert to our own, whatever variations may occur. They're intelligent people, they're thoughtful people, they're artistic people, they're creative people. They manage to throw up some very interesting political leaders, era by era by era, all rooted in Persepolis and Takhtajamshid and Rumi and Sadi and

Jami and the poetic and religious and cultural traditions that are theirs, very much theirs. No Iranian I know, who is not in Iran, wishes he were anywhere but in Iran. And when it's possible to go back, as in the Lebanon, for example, I think most of the Iranians who can, everything considered, will go back.

There is still a lot of traffic back and forth between, for example, the U.S. and Iran. People going back to see families. People who are in some jeopardy, but because a mother is ill or a father is buried or a cousin is in trouble are allowed to come and spend time and leave.

Q: And there are students who come?

Daw: And the students are still here in a great mass. So I think if we can only get away from our quick fix view of the world and of history and of politics toward Iran, and assuming that it doesn't degenerate into another Lebanon-- yes, left to its own devices, which it won't be, of course, it will settle down. It will settle down, meaning it will return to a similar form of old patterns.

They're a very impressive people. They are unusual in the Middle East. They are very creative and presumably they will find ways to recreate a life which is different from the one they have now. A very obvious indication of their creativity is the fact that the mullahs have been running that country and running it reasonably well, given the war and all, now for nine years.

Not doing a bad job. These are smart people. I think of the two Marines who went off to deal with them, Oliver North and his boss. That's tough. That's a very tough assignment. If they were gulled to this theory or that, they weren't the first and they won't be the last. The mullahs gull each other. If Montezari thinks he's going to run the country-- I don't know what he thinks, but if he thinks he's going to run the country, he's just not paying attention. He's not going to run the country.

They are a very skillful group at manipulating each other. They have deep abiding ties, one to another, and deep abiding ties to their own culture, and this will continue long after the mullahs have gone back into their mosques.

I wish the Americans understood how long history is and what its ingredients are.

[TELEPHONE INTERRUPTION]

Daw: We're dealing with a culture which is one of the ancient cultures, and Shia Islam and Zoroastrianism are not separate. That's one of the things that makes them different. And they know it. And I wish we knew that. I wish we understood them at that level, because a lot of things would not be so mysterious and surprising. There wouldn't be nearly so many surprises. But that's true of the Middle East. That is, alas, probably true of our relationship with Mexico. But maybe in the next

twenty or thirty years we will learn that the outside world has a huge impact on us and that our level of understanding has to be very significantly increased. By historians, by oral histories, by travel, by reading, by languages. We've got a lot to learn. And I think some of these problems are manifest, some of these flaws in our own approach are manifested in our policy toward Iran the last thirty years.

So much for that.

Q: Thanks very much for your time.

Daw: And opinion.

Q: Thanks very much.

END OF INTERVIEW