at almost the same time. So the poor Kurds were pushed up against the border by the Iraqis and they fled by the tens of thousands into Iran. They were put into camps, tent camps, which I visited a few times. I felt that we at least had some moral responsibility for the situation and that we ought to be willing to take some of these refugees to the States.

I proposed this and Jack Miklos was, I think, clearly against the idea. And I kept arguing my point and then finally he said, "Well, let's take it to the Ambassador." And we went to Helms and discussed it briefly and he said, "Well, all they can do is say no. We can propose it. If they say no, that's the end of it. If they accept it, then fine."

So the proposal went in and it was accepted, and I worked with the Consular Section and with a UN official sent out for the purpose, and we coordinated the whole effort with the Iranians and eventually about four hundred and fifty Kurdish refugees left the country and came to the United States.

Q: How did Helms run the Embassy, as compared to, say, Holmes or Meyer?

Bolster: I think he ran it more like Holmes did, in the sense that he wanted information to percolate up from the bottom. He wanted people to do analytical pieces. He wanted all that to go on, and he would read things, and if he had problems he would

suggest changes. But he was really quite democratic in that. He wanted people to have their own say. He didn't dictate how certain issues were going to be handled. So I would say it was a very good Embassy. I mean, he clearly had priorities on what he wanted covered, but as long as everybody was covering all the bases, he felt that they should develop the material from the bottom. Of course he did send his own cables on audiences with the Shah and things like that, which had become-- that was standard with Holmes too, because, after all, the only person who can report on it is the man who was there.

But I think he was an excellent Ambassador. I really do. He certainly was not resting on his laurels, in the sense of, you know, a person of his accomplishments could have just sort of coasted along and enjoyed a comfortable life in the nice Embassy residence there and just done sort of a lick and a polish. But he worked hard. He did have a policy of leaving fairly early in the evening, which I thought was great. He was so efficient, he had his work all carefully spread out during the day, and I forget when it was he left, but usually, I think, by five-thirty or something-- or maybe six-- he'd be out of his office.

He just insisted that people bring things to him early in the day. He wasn't one to keep everybody late, you know, while he worked on this or that detail or whatever. I think he was very fair with the staff.

I do feel that there was one area where he was a little

deficient and that is the area of contacts, because, as I mentioned earlier, I felt that the same kind of contacts that were carried on in my earlier time could have been reinstituted when I was there. I did reinstitute some, but I felt very uneasy about it, and when I proposed that we re-establish some contact with clerical people, like Qotsi, the attitude was, well, let's think about that, and it was never done.

Q: This was Helms' response, that he would consider it, but--

Bolster: Yes. But within that limitation, I still felt that he was extremely open to ideas and did not have at all a closed mind on what was going to be reported to Washington. He was willing to let everybody have their say. So I was very impressed with his activities as Ambassador.

[END OF TAPE]

VA

Interviewee: Archie M. Bolster Session #3

Interviewer: William Burr Arlington

May 3, 1988 Virginia

Q: The third part of the interview with Archie M. Bolster took place in Arlington, Virginia on May 3, 1988.

Mr. Bolster, I have a few follow-up questions from our last interview meeting. When you were in the Embassy in the 1960s, how closely did you follow the Iranian popular press?

Bolster: Well, I generally tried to look at headlines in the papers every day, and we had also translations prepared of press articles of particular interest by our political national employees. So we got a flavor of the press. It took time to read whole articles in Farsi, so, as I say, I generally would scan the headlines and read a few articles and read some of the articles in a humorous political, satirical magazine called TOFIQ, which often had both cartoons and little humorous stories about various things, usually with some kind of a sarcastic or ironic point to them.

Q: Now I've read that as the Vietnam War escalated in the mid-sixties that the press ran very sharp criticism of American policy in Vietnam. Now how much did you know about that at the

time?

Bolster: Well, I was aware of these articles in general terms and I was aware of the popular feeling about the Vietnam War from my frequent discussions with Iranian students. I used to give some English lessons at the Iran-American Society. Not necessarily formal lessons, but just go there and sit down with some students, or go in a room and just mingle with the students and talk to them, because they wanted to practice their English. And from those discussions, I heard a lot of criticism about the Vietnam War. People feeling that we were oppressing the people of Vietnam and taking our own interests as paramount and controlling the country for our own desires. You know, I tried to explain that in my view we did not have any territorial goals, you know, aggrandizement goals in Vietnam, and that we were there to help support the South Vietnamese government against invasion from the north. I gave them all these points, but I could tell in the discussions that it was not easy to convince them of that.

And then, of course, they all sort of drew parallels to other countries, saying, well now if you do that in Vietnam, would you go into any other country if they were attacked from the outside? They obviously were, although not saying it, they were thinking of the potential for something like that in Iran and wondering if we would come in and send troops and everything like that in case there was some kind of an invasion of Iran. That was a sort of

background, you could tell in the way they were questioning.

Q: Did you yourself see some of the critical articles that the press carried during this period? And translate them?

Bolster: Well, I'm sure I did, but I can't say that I recall any particular ones. You know, it was just a general awareness, both from press and from contacts with people, that there was a lot of questioning about the war. And I gave the policy line when I talked to people, and I must say, looking back on it, I believed it myself at that time. But subsequent to my return to the States back in the late sixties, I began to have doubts myself, and some of the press stories I read about various aspects of the war that I found very unsettling.

Q: Now apparently the Shah himself gave public support to American policy in Vietnam, to Johnson's policy. But if the press-- I guess it was a fairly controlled press at the time and yet was writing critical articles. Did that discrepancy create any discussion, lead to any discussion in the Embassy? The press writing critical articles, whereas the Shah was supporting the war?

Bolster: Well, not very much, because the support that the Iranians gave was pretty minimal actually. They sent medical teams to Vietnam to help support our side. And they also, I

believe, provided some other kind of support. I think they sent some planes at one time.

Q: In '72, yes.

Bolster: But, you know, compared with some of our other allies, who had troops there and took casualties and so on, the Iranians really put very little into it. There was a campaign that was run out of Washington for a while, called More Flags in Vietnam, and the policy was to get as many friendly countries to support our effort as possible. And every time one country sent some group in to help, then that was one more flag in Vietnam. So it was very important that the Iranians--and they sensed that. I'm sure the Shah was well aware that it was important to appear to support us heavily in Vietnam, even though it was just a question of having enough people there to fly the flag.

And we had constant problems with this medical mission. It was just awful. I mean, they were sending messages back and forth to their families, and they were unhappy being out there, and they were constantly changing. I'm really not sure that they ever accomplished a great deal of good, because they were really totally out of their element, you know, going out to Vietnam and trying to support this U.S.-led allied effort. They really were basically there because the Shah said, we're going to support this, and they went through the motions, but I don't think we really got all that much benefit from their being there. And

certainly the Embassy and the officers who worked on that project were just constantly running back and forth with messages to and from the Iranian group.

Q: Who were some of the people who worked on this at the Embassy, do you remember?

Bolster: I really don't remember any more now. But we had problems with Iranian morale out there, that people would send messages back in Latin text, but with Farsi words. And so as we would receive these, of course we could read-- those who spoke Farsi could read what was being said, and they were basically just people who were totally out of their element there and unhappy and wanted to get back. And they were constantly changing people, because people didn't want to stay there that long. It was quite an operational problem.

Q: Sounds like it. Another issue in the late sixties was that in 1967 the U.S.--and maybe the Shah jointly--declared Iran to be a developed nation and Iran was treated as a developed nation. There was no more AID Mission. The AID Mission was phased out. Grant aid was phased out as well.

Bolster: Right.

Q: Can you explain the reasoning that led to that decision?

Bolster: Well, I think basically it was the feeling that we had given aid to Iran ever since Point Four back in 1948-49, and this was in the sixties and that at some point you had to feel that the country had been given enough aid. If the aid was being successful, then the country must have progressed to a certain point where it wouldn't need constant aid.

Furthermore, this was in the era of the so-called take-off doctrine, where it was felt that countries needed support in certain periods, but as they, like the plane running down the runway, got up air-speed, they could take off and fly on their own. So that you had to at some point sort of declare victory and go on.

And so it was a policy that was very much by mutual agreement. For one thing, the Shah I think had always resented these discussions that we used to have every year with him about how much military aid he could afford, because since we were still paying aid, we therefore had a sort of a mirror right to sit down with his people and say, now, do you really need that many divisions or do you really need that many planes and whatever? And he felt, I think, that once the aid ended that he would be more free to do what he thought was necessary. Also our aid had dwindled down by then to a relatively low level, and I think it fit both Iranian and American policy goals to stop the aid.

Q: Now a few minutes ago you mentioned the Iran-American Society. Was that sort of a semi-official organization? Did it have an official connection to the U.S. government or with the Embassy?

Bolster: As a bi-national center it was operated under the same procedures we have in many countries, where you have a board of directors that's made up of host country nationals and Americans together, and they mutually decide on the types of programs that will be undertaken and how the center is to be managed. And I think the Iran-American Society in general was an extremely successful operation. We had not only the big main center, which had a large new building by this time, with a very nice auditorium and lots of smaller rooms for cultural affairs, but you could have film showings and you could have major plays, because there was, you know, really a major stage and so on. There was an outdoor theater as well. You could show movies outdoors or have outdoor theatrical productions. It was a very active place and it used to pack in people. I remember some period when they showed movies from the Chaplin period and from the Laurel & Hardy period and so on. And those were just--you know, they were really sought after. I mean, tickets were free, but you had to--as I recall, you had to apply for them in advance. And we used to have packed houses for those things.

So there was a lot of interest in the things that they put on. Of course, I think it's fair to say that there were probably

more American productions shown to Iranians than there were Iranian productions shown to Americans. I mean, the basic focus was to give a picture of American society, a large picture of American society in all respects. Political, social, theatrical, cultural, et cetera, et cetera. But there were occasional Iranian produced affairs, to give the Americans an idea of some Iranian thoughts and ideas, but that was a much less pervasive theme.

Then there was a student center, which was operated by a small group of Iranians and Americans and located right near the Tehran University. And that was extremely active. It was really basically a house, a standard Iranian type house of that area, with, I think, four floors. There were constant streams of people going in and out of the place. It was kind of a lounge and discussion center and whatever that the students could go to, which they really needed, because they didn't have anything particularly like that. I mean, you don't have that many student facilities, like we're used to at American universities. They don't quite think in the same terms. So this student center provided a really welcome spot for people to go and just have discussions with each other and just sit around or whatever.

And I went to a number of affairs there and talked to Iranians. We had a very active director of it, Mrs. Ziai [Mokhadarash], who did a fine job and made it really a popular place with the Iranian students. That is mentioned in James Bill's book. He does make the point that there weren't a great

number of Americans who attended the student center. And he's right. But there were people who went there. Not only me, but there were other people who went on a regular basis to take part in some of these informal gatherings. So I think they were very useful activities.

Q: Were Americans on the board of the Iran-American Society? Were they official Americans or private? Like people from the Embassy, were they on the board? Do you recall anything about the structure?

Bolster: Well, I can't really recall now just who--I think that they were both official Americans and some other Americans resident there, but I really can't recall in detail.

Q: Now at the end of our last meeting you were talking about Richard Helms as Ambassador. Now to what extent did he, like some of the other ambassadors you mentioned, tend to serve as a conduit for the Shah's requests or did he follow the patterns set by Meyer and MacArthur? Or did he operate on different lines?

Bolster: Well, I think he was somewhat more independent in the sense that he would be able to talk to the Shah as a person of similar interests and experience and prestige and did not feel he had to be just a conduit for the Shah's demands and wishes. They had actually been in school together in Switzerland as young men

in the Academy, the Swiss School at Le Rosey. So they really got on quite well on a personal basis and I think they each respected each other for their accomplishments. And so I think they had a somewhat more even and equal relationship. That doesn't mean that Helms didn't pass on to Washington all of the things that the Shah was concerned about. I remember many times he would go on at length with Washington about the Shah's unhappiness about the price of spare parts and American training and so on, because he felt we had to get this across to Washington, to show that there was unhappiness and that maybe something should be done about these complaints.

But I think he had a good give-and-take relationship with the Shah and he was the kind of person who would give our views to the Shah, as well as taking the Shah's messages to the States.

Q: Who were some of the other influentials at the Embassy during this period, the mid-seventies? Some of the other key officials, I guess, in political and economic affairs?

Bolster: You're speaking now in the sixties or in the seventies?

Q: In the mid-seventies, when you were in your second--

Bolster: Mid-seventies. Well, obviously you'd have to just go down the various sections and the people who headed each section were obviously influential in talking to the Shah's government

people. I mean, talking to ministers and deputy ministers and so on. But, you know, I don't think I can comment on individuals who had influence, in terms of who had more or less, whatever. But [Jack] Miklos obviously had a lot of influence, because he was the Deputy Chief of Mission and he had been Country Director for Iran and also had served in Iran before. So he had a lot of friends and contacts that he had made before, with whom he continued to have close relations.

Q; What was your appraisal of him as DCM? Of Miklos?

Bolster: Well, I think I would subscribe to some of the criticisms made of him in Jim Bill's book, because he tended to deal almost exclusively with the establishment, people that he either had known before or now knew as the top people in the government. And I don't think he ever made an effort to break out of that group of people. He was quite satisfied to deal with all the people in the panoply of power at the top there and felt that if there was anything else to be gained from other people that, you know, somewhere in the Embassy there'd be somebody in touch with him, so that he would just stay with these top people. You know, when he entertained, it was generally with a certain high level circle of friends and acquaintances and contacts that he knew from his work.

So I think that there was a need for more branching out, and yet at this time we had fewer political officers, in the

seventies, than we had had when I was there in the mid-sixties. Another factor that Jim Bill points out in his book. So it was sort of topsy-turvy. In other words, our interests were gaining in importance in Iran. The number of people that we had in the country even-- I mean, the number of Americans in the country was growing at enormous rates, and yet the number of people in our Political Sections, who were actually keeping up with all kinds of political developments that would affect our status in the country, were being cut way back. So it didn't really make any sense.

And we spent a lot of time doing analyses of what the impact of growing numbers of Americans would be in Iran, and, you know, a lot of us were aware that--particularly when you had people who came into Iran just because they were under contract to do certain jobs and who had basically no interest in fitting into the country or really knowing about Iranian customs and history or anything. The more people we had like that, the more potential there was for problems. And there were problems, and we kept trying to get the companies to realize that they had to be more careful, but they were just pellmell in operation to get over there with as many people as possible and make as much money as possible.

Bell Helicopter stands out as probably the worst example, because they recruited a lot of people who had been in Vietnam and had either not been employed in the States or had had maybe occasional jobs in the States, and then suddenly they saw another

chance to go out and make lots of money teaching a new nationality of people how to fly helicopters. They'd been doing this in Vietnam. Now they suddenly were brought into Iran to train Iranians to fly helicopters. And many of those people just had no idea what the country was like. They didn't care. They didn't care to know about the way people behaved or what was proper behavior. They just did whatever they thought was, you know, proper in their view, and there were all kinds of stories, like girls in shorts and halter tops riding motorcycles into town, into Isfahan, to buy things at stores. Just really total flagrant inappropriate behavior for the situation that they were in. And they saw no reason to do anything other than that. They felt they were brought in there to do the job of training people to fly helicopters and they were going to do that and their life-style was of no concern to anybody.

Q: Did you receive any complaints from the government or was there more concern among the citizens in the country, Iranian citizens?

Bolster: Almost nothing in the way of complaints from the government, because the orders were that the Shah wanted certain things done, and if you want to suddenly teach a lot of people to fly helicopters, you just set up the arrangements and off you go. So he was more concerned about the end result and I don't think he worried particularly about the side effects. I think he

thought that any onus would fall on the U.S., on the United States, and not on him. But, of course, that was a miscalculation, because gradually the resentment of the Western presence in Iran became a factor in the increasing animosity toward him and the royal family.

Q: Now you said there were fewer political officers in this period. Was this a budgetary decision, a budgetary problem, that led to this, or was it a political decision or a policy decision that accounted for fewer people following internal political affairs?

Bolster: I think it became a budgetary decision just by default, and I think one reason is that you had this so often misconstrued book, THE UGLY AMERICAN, by Burdick and Lederer, which had shown that the ugly Americans--meaning people who were just everyday citizens without any--not being glamorous diplomats and so on, but just shirtsleeve people out there doing a job--they were good people, contrary to what people now think of when they talk about the ugly American. In that book the ugly Americans were the good guys, the ones who went out and worked in the provinces and met people and tried to learn about the country and learn their language and so on. The people in the capital, in the diplomatic corps and so on, were perceived as the bad guys, the ones who didn't really know the country well.

Anyway, the book was a very hard-hitting criticism of the

U.S. government for not having enough concern about language and customs and the history of the people in the country where you're serving.

So as a result of that, a lot of money was put in in the fifties and sixties, into language training and area training, and I think that once that perception sort of subsided, and everyone thought, well, you know, now we've done all this training and we've got a whole lot of people out there who are well trained, then it sort of gradually dissipated and there was not the same concern or the same amount of money available, and they just didn't train as many people. I think that's about as simple as it was.

We continued to designate positions for language officers, continued to give training, but I think it just lost the impetus that it had early on.

Q: How many on the Embassy staff actually spoke Farsi? Among the political officers or economic officers that you--

Bolster: And this is now in the seventies? Mid-seventies?

Q: Yes.

Bolster: Oh, I think probably you could say about ten. And these were generally in the political area. Very few people--in fact, I don't--yes, I guess there were one or two in Economic

Affairs who spoke Farsi, but mainly in the political area.

Q: Now what kind of work did you do as a political officer in the mid-seventies?

Bolster: Well, because there were fewer people in Political Affairs than had been true in my earlier period, I did a lot more things. I wasn't so narrowly focused. And, in general, I covered the entire internal political scene. Although even there I can't make a firm boundary, because I did some reporting also about international affairs, such as, you know, Iran's relations with India and Pakistan and the Indian Ocean area and some of these affairs as well. So I had to cover both, I would say, but probably with more of an emphasis on the internal, because the political counselor did some of the international activities. That was Hawthorne Mills, and Henry Precht was totally full time on political military affairs. And then [Stanley] Escadero was on internal affairs, and then [John] Stempel came and he also was doing some of both, some international and some internal. So that was really about the status of the State Department people. And then there were other people, agency people, who had Farsi knowledge as well and who covered again both internal and external affairs.

Q: Oh, the CIA people?

Bolster: Yes.

Q: Now among the documents that were captured at the U.S. Embassy in 1979 and later published in the of the Captured Documents was a report called "Decision Making in Iran", dated July 22, 1976.

Bolster: Right.

Q: Apparently you wrote this? This study?

Bolster: Yes.

Q: Was it done on request or on your own initiative?

Bolster: Well, it basically grew out of a discussion with Charles Naas, who was the Country Director at the time. He came out on an orientation and familiarization trip and I accompanied him, basically in southern Iran. Isfahan, Shiraz, Bandar Abbas, Khomrramshar, Abadan, and so on. And in the course of that we discussed the reporting that was being sent in from the field. We generally had a sort of a list of topics that we would report on and we would send that list into Washington and say we proposed to do reports on the following subjects, and then they would come back and say, of the subjects we prefer that you do one, three, five and seven or whatever. I mean, they would tell