was a very divisive force. They lived in little bidonvilles, these little shacks-- bidonville is what the French call ia shanty town-- these little shacks by the thousands in south Tehran. On the outskirts of Tehran you'd see block after block of these makeshift huts that people built with pieces of tin, anything they could find that would shield them from the weather. They made these little houses and they just lived there. Some of them had part-time income from selling lottery tickets or whatever little make-work project they could find, but basically they were just urban squatters who had little or no employment.

They were very fertile ground for Khomeini to plow, which he did consistently during this time by sending in cassette tapes, which could be played in some of the mosques on Friday or played in groups where people could congregate around in someone's house and listen to the tape. It was really a potent force, and these are the people who really were not touched by the White Revolution, you see, because the White Revolution, as I made the point in that airgram there, it really benefited the rural areas first. So many of the programs were keyed to the rural areas. I mean, even the Health Corps was to take health to the villages, but how about the poor guy in south Tehran who couldn't afford a doctor. I mean, he was caught in the middle. He didn't get government help, but he had no money with which to pay a doctor either, so he just had to go to a pharmacy and try to afford something in the way of medicine that he needed.

So the urban lower class was really forgotten in this whole thing. Except for the subsidized food, nothing was done for them, and they were intensely dissatisfied.

Q: One more question about this issue of contacts with the oppositional figures. You said you and other political officers had some contacts with opposition figures, but you also said that there were some constraints, that you were discouraged from pursuing contacts with some of the religious figures when you brought it up at the Embassy meeting. Were there any other examples of efforts to discourage such contacts by you? Discourage you or other political officers?

Bolster: No. No, there weren't. I felt quite free to develop additional contacts, whether they were opposition or not, and I did, but looking back on it, I would have to be self-critical and say I didn't do enough. But again, as I mentioned, the decline in resources meant that we all had to do so much more and cover so much more territory that you just-- you ran out of time, unless you really wanted to totally end your own amusements and doing things with your family. You know, if you just-- I guess if you just spent full-time working, you could have done more.

Anyway, it's a difficult thing to say. To some extent there was a feeling of self-censorship, but I think that's overdone in Jim Bill's book. I don't think that there was that much actual limitation even perceived or imposed on us as to who we could

talk with. It's just that you didn't have enough time. You wanted to develop contacts, you met other people, but you just didn't have the time to follow up with them and really go on from one to the next, which you should in that society. I mean, that's how you meet people. You go from one to the other. You never meet people cold. You never meet them in an institution. You've got to meet them through a friend, a friend of a friend of a friend, and you go all through this chain. It takes a lot of time. You drink a lot of tea and take a lot of wasted trips to go see people, who then turn out to be totally worthless and so on, but then they may lead you to somebody else who may be quite valuable. But it just takes an awful lot of time.

Q: Now besides the question of self-censorship, he suggests that there are times when reports or cables that include information which was very critical of the regime were sometimes suppressed or not sent to Washington and accumulated in some censored cable file or something like that. Are there examples of that that come to mind from your stay in Tehran in the seventies? Of cables that were actually suppressed?

Bolster: Not really in the seventies. I did argue on a number of occasions on specific things. But, you know, a lot of times there were nuances about what adjective to use here or what word to use there, as to whether it's too strong or not strong enough. But I don't recall any real donnybrooks over what we felt versus

what was allowed out of the Embassy. I did mention in that one report on the Rastakhiz that it was easier to get it out because Miklos was away. I would often have to argue some of my points with Jack to get them through him and to the Ambassador. The Ambassador was generally more willing to send things in, as long as they were grounded in facts and so on. He was more willing to put that on the record and send it in than Miklos was.

So that's another reason why I feel that Helms really did quite a good job there.

Q: During the sixties and the seventies there were two influential social and political critics, Iranian critics, of the society, Jalal Alee Ahmad and Ali Shariati?

Bolster: Yes.

Q: How much do you know about these writers? I guess Shariati sort of wore a synthesis of Islamic and Western thought. He used that as a way to criticize the Shah's regime?

Bolster: Yes.

Q: I guess Alee Ahmad wrote a criticism of the influence of Western culture on Iranian society. Wrote a book called GHARBZADEGI? Which I guess is translated WEST STRUCKNESS or WEST TOXICATION?

Bolster: Yes, something like that, right.

Q: How much did you know about those writers at the time you were stationed in Iran? I guess either the sixties or the seventies.

Bolster: Well, one of the contacts that I found most useful along this line was Mrs. Ziai, that I mentioned earlier, the one who ran the Student Center, because she kept abreast of a lot of developments on the scene, including sort of clandestine writers, you know, people whose works were not available generally, but whose books circulated very rapidly underground. They did have quite a tradition of something like they have in Russia, of a self-publishing and self-circulating situation, like they call "samizdat" in Russia. And she would tell us about some of these writers and what they thought and showed how they were very cleverly using analogies from the past or using poetry to get across points. They wouldn't make it a direct confrontation with the government, but they would use historical allegories, which the people clearly interpreted as being anti-government. And she would mention these and indicate how these showed a lot of current trends and we discussed these writers with her and others, and even got some examples of it and she showed us in examples.

So this was part of our over-all mix of understanding the

society. The development I mentioned about the resurgence of religious feeling and fervor on college campuses. A lot of these things we were well aware of through people like Mrs. Ziai. But it's difficult to go back and say, well, oh yes, Mr. Shariati, he warned us about these things at that time. Everyone should have seen that this was going to happen. You know, there were so many people who wrote stories about Iran. Sadeq Hedayat was a famous writer from even earlier times about Iran. And there was-- who was the guy? I forget the name of the man who wrote the book, THE IDENTITY CARD.

Q: I've heard of that, but I'm not sure.

Bolster: Maybe-- no, that wasn't Sadeq Hedayat. That was another writer, I think. I haven't thought about it for a long time, but there was a book came out somewhere in this period, called THE IDENTITY CARD, about a guy who lost his identity card and he had to go around and get a new one. And it was all about the heavy hand of government, that you couldn't do anything unless you had this piece of paper that proved who you were, and, you know, played on that theme that we all know who we are, but the government will deny everything to you unless you have that one little piece of paper.

There were a lot of criticisms of Iranian society and Iranian government during this period. Not just these ones you mentioned, but a whole-- and they circulated so widely, because

people had money now and they had time. Well, not a lot of time, but they gave time to things like that, because it was part of the dohre system. I mean, you'd meet with certain friends and the topics of discussion ranged over these kinds of books and stories people were reading. "And have you read this? And here's a copy." Some of these books that were forbidden by the government were just flowing through the society like wildfire. I mean, people would read them in two or three days and then they'd pass it to a friend, "And have you read so-and-so? Well, let's pass that along."

So there was a tremendous interest in all kinds of writing, and it was hard for the government to keep up with it, because, as I say, a lot of it was so cleverly done. It was allegorical, it was not directly stated, so you couldn't really pick out a word or even a few phrases and say "that's anti-government". But the whole tone of it was so cleverly done that these things just permeated the society in that time.

Q: Now one point that James Bill makes in his book is that for the most part American officials in Iran tended to be rather isolated and that many Embassy people did not have regular contacts with Iranians, and that this relative isolation tended to limit their understanding of the country. Is it possible to generalize about this. I mean, how true was that of Embassy officials in the mid-seventies, during your second stay there? How true is this question of isolation?

Bolster: Well, I think you could best answer that by going from the top down. The Ambassador, of course, had his residence right on the compound. A very lovely building, in which he could entertain, and that was appropriately representational. It was a beautiful residence with a lot of Persian architectural features built into it and so on. But that was strictly on the compound.

Then the DCM's residence was also on the compound, but further back from the street. So those two were totally isolated in that sense. Counselors had, of course, large homes, and typically these-- of course, all Iranian homes have gardens that are walled in from the street, so in a sense they're all exclusive. There are no open lawns or whatever like in the United States. Everybody has a-- even if it's a tiny little yard, it's walled in with a high wall, maybe with glass shards set into the top of it to keep out thieves and whatever. So that's just standard. Even your very low middle-class person, if he has a tiny little yard, will have it walled in.

But anyway your counselors would have big houses and they would probably get to know their neighbors, who also would probably be fairly wealthy people. Then you go down from that, people who had a little less money in the way of housing allowance would go to more modest housing. And at that time I was Number Two in the Political Section. I had a house with a small swimming pool and a small yard.

And I got to know my neighbors. I knew two or three

families right in-- I knew the bazaar family right across the street. I knew their sons. I went down to the bazaar for tours for them to their store and so on, and my son went with the boys to have Persian soup at a place one time. And, you know, we would take occasional walks or talk with them. And there was a government official down the street I got to know and we'd exchange visits and, you know, talk occasionally about political developments or civil service type questions, how the Iranian government functioned and so on.

But, of course, again it made a difference, if you spoke Farsi you could interact with your neighbors. If you didn't, you just got to know those who spoke some English, or maybe even got to know those who spoke little English. But it was all sort of superficial. You know, meeting for tea or something and smiling and talking about children. It was very limited, some of the social interchange. Particularly with the wives, because Iranian women generally had no social concerns at all that would overlap with a Westerner. And if they spoke any English at all, you could get through a few question about how many children do you have and where do you live, and then the conversation just sort of died. So it was very hard to maintain it.

Clearly there was a distinction. Bill makes a big point about the commissary at the edge of the Embassy compound, and it's true. I always sort of cringed at the thought of that as I went there, because you'd walk out with all these bags of groceries and put them in your car, and there were Iranians

around watching, just a few bystanders, and you always felt that these were the Iranians watching the rich Americans buy their food and go off home. A lot of things did, as he says, percolate out of the commissary through various black market arrangements and so on, which the American military did their best to ferret out, and they sent some people back home when they caught them and so on, but there were still incidents of that. Sometimes even porters and so on would manage to lose a case of whiskey or whatever when the stuff was being moved into the back of the compound there.

But again you can overdo that, because Tehran was a very rich city in those days. I felt sometimes that we Americans were living in a lower standard of living than most of the Iranians that we were in touch with, because, gosh, you know, the amount of money that was in that city at that time was just incredible. I mentioned the Klondike mentality. People were buying BMWs and they had two or three cars and they were making trips all over the place. Those who'd been to Europe so many times that they got tired of it would then start going off to Brazil or India--you know, some new destination, so they could brag to their friends that for No-Ruz this year, I went to Brazil. I didn't just go to France or all those places you've all been, but I went to Brazil. You know, that kind of thing. There was an awful lot of conspicuous consumption.

So it isn't fair really to say that we lived like kings and all Iranians lived like peasants. That's certainly not true.

Tehran is a very rich city as you go north. Now admittedly there were very few Americans who lived-- and Jim Bill is right about that-- very few lived south of Takht-i-jamshid Avenue. There were some occasional people who revolted against the general norm and particularly sought out places further toward the south of the city, but relatively few.

But in that area where the Embassy is and north of it, you know, there were just tens of thousands of very, very rich Iranians living very comfortable lives and Americans, who were just really given a chance to keep up a similar standard of living by the fact that we could buy these things at the commissary and so on. Prices were high on the local market, if you bought imported goods or particular foods. Americans, I think, generally took to Iranian food, and you went to places and you did have Iranian style meals. So it was not totally different in that respect either.

Certainly there was a tremendous difference between the way Americans and Iranians in the northern part of the city lived from those in the south. That's the real difference. But not between Americans and Iranians and other foreigners. In fact, other diplomatic missions were far more profligate in the use of money than we were. And I know, because I compared notes with them. I've compared notes with British and Swedish and Dutch and other diplomatic missions and, gosh, we would pay no more than X amount for a certain size house, and some of them would pay ten, fifteen, twenty per cent more than that. It was a sort of a

bidding war to get the kind of places that you needed, because the city, as it saw this tremendous influx of money, was way behind on building houses and office buildings and so on, so that there was a bidding up of prices on everything, including real estate. And so there was a lot of competition among the various missions and among the companies that were there. It got so that companies were so tired of not being able to find rooms in the hotels-- the hotels had occupancy rates of something like ninety-eight per cent or something, because of all these foreigners streaming in for business contacts and so on-- that some of them took to renting apartments, which they just kept, and then when they had their people come in on a trip, they put them in that apartment, so they wouldn't have to worry about trying to get a hotel room.

Q: I have another question about Americans in Iran. To what extent, if ever, did ethnocentric attitudes crop up among American diplomats or officials who were stationed in the country?

Bolster: Oh, I think it happened quite frequently. People that I met generally were very careful about what they said around Iranians, but when they would get together in just small groups of Westerners, inevitably there were some pejorative comments about various aspects of Iranian society. I mean, it just seems to be endemic most any place you go, but I think most people were

quite proper about that in any context where Iranians would overhear.

Now I'm talking about people that I met in Tehran, both business, government, Ford Foundation, whatever. That does not hold true for the people I mentioned in Bell Helicopter and some of the other--

Q: The corporate people?

Bolster: In the outlying areas, where they tended to bring in a large number of people. A lot of them just-- they would openly talk about the Farsis. The Farsis are doing this and so. You know, just not even understanding the proper words to use for that country. I mean, Farsi is the language and a Farsi could be a person from Fars province. But to call all the people of the country Farsis was totally wrong.

Some of our American military fell into some of these patterns too and I think they also tended to get around the bar and make critical comments about all the things that they--

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

Bolster: About the military, that there are always people who will tend to be very critical of wherever they are, you know, and who find some sort of solace, I guess, in complaining about

everything and finding other people who share their unhappiness.

But there were a lot of Americans who were extremely interested in Iran too. There was a course given at Tehran University on Iranian cultural history and so on, and many, many Americans attended that. A lot of people went on trips in Iran. A lot of people went to various cultural events that were sponsored by, say, the Iran-American Society. There were trips organized to various historical sites. Thousands of people went to Persepolis and Isfahan and really tried to learn a lot about the country.

So I think it's wrong to see a pattern of ethnocentric behavior among everyone. There are always going to be groups who take that attitude, but there were also a lot of people very fascinated with Iranian society and what made the country the way it was. I was always impressed when I ran across people who had made many trips and read books about the country.

So it's a mixed picture. Also by that time, you know, even the stereotype of the rich Westerner having servants in his house, that was breaking down entirely, because the Iranians felt that they no longer wanted to be servants. Only the very wealthy people could afford a cook by the time we came back to Iran in the seventies. Before we had had a man and a woman in our house. The man did the cooking and the woman did the washing and cleaning. By the time we came back, we could only afford a maid who came in occasionally to clean, and we had a succession of those. Many of them really just not willing to work. You know,

they would just go into whatever room you were and make a lot of groaning and moaning as they cleaned, to show how much effort they were putting out, but really were just doing a sloppy job. It was really very hard to find any kind of service person.

In fact, some of the Iranians and Westerners were importing Pakistanis and others to run their households. So I think it was unusual for Americans to have servants in Iran when I came back. A lot of Americans did their own cooking, and maybe they just had someone come in and do some of the cleaning or washing. But basically a lot of American wives followed a schedule that was not unlike what they do here. You know, cooking and cleaning, caring for the family, taking children to athletic events and plays and ballet lessons or whatever. I mean, there were all kinds of things like that going on.

So you can't really equate it with India, you know, where you might have routinely five or six servants doing everything in the house. It wasn't that way in Iran when we came back. It was very unusual to find families with even one full-time servant.

Q: Now in his book, James Bill has a very interesting analysis of the figures from the role of American corporate law and finance industry and high level politics, who constituted the bedrock of support--the bedrock of U.S. support for the Shah, and the shorthand term for this is Pahlavism. From your own experience in the Embassy, in this period of the seventies--or even earlier--how much of a sense did you get of who the

influential private individuals and institutions were, who sought or who favored a close relationship politically and economically with the Shah?

Bolster: Well, I think the way he's phrased it is quite correct. We would see frequent visitors from among that group of people that he cites in the book. These were people who came frequently to the country. The Iranian government was extremely active in bringing people to the country for tours. They routinely brought groups of Americans in and gave them tours around Iran. Of course they had-- during this period they had periodic festivals, a Fine Arts Festival in Shiraz that they organized. Aspen Institute seminars. They did a lot of activity of this type. And they brought not only American, but other foreign visitors in for these affairs. There were a lot of papers prepared and theme conferences held. Iran was a very popular destination for various organizations to have a conference. You know, an archaeology conference or a sociology group or historians meeting or whatever. They really catered to this kind of activity and they brought a lot of people in.

So they were very active on the P.R. side, and certainly they calculated that most of the people they brought in this way would go back to their home countries as firm supporters of Pahlavism, if we use that term.

Q: In terms of your own observations at the Embassy, do the

names of any people stand prominently in your mind, people who were influential in terms of affecting American policy?

Bolster: Well, it's hard to single out individuals. Of course [David] Lilienthal from early days in development and resources. He was a well-known figure there. He mentions the Rockefellers and-- I mean, there are so many names in there, it's hard to cite them all from memory. But [John J.] McCloy. All these people were occasional visitors and certainly were known to be among the group that were cultivated by the Pahlavi regime.

I mentioned earlier that Mr. Macy was over there.

Q: Is this Carl Macy?

Bolster: No.

Q: I guess I'm thinking of somebody else.

Bolster: What was his first name? Anyway, he had been the chairman of the Civil Service Commission and he was under a contract with the Iranian government to help develop their Civil Service, and, you know, increased professionalism and training.

So a lot of people like that came in under contract to the government and they became, in a sense, people who were publicizing the accomplishments of the Iranian government, because they were figures known in their fields and they were

working for the Iranian government.

Q: Now another issue that he raises-- other scholars have raised this issue as well, I think-- is the question of bureaucratic rivalry between the various official American organizations in Iran. Between the Embassy and the CIA, between the Embassy and the MAAG, between the Embassy and the USIA organization and so forth. And he suggests that these rivalries between the various official organizations tended to hinder the ability of American officials to do their jobs well. And that also the Iranians sometimes exploited these bureaucratic rivalries for their own purposes. Let's look at this issue a little bit closely, I guess. How would you characterize the relationship between the Embassy and the Armish-MAAG, the military mission? Was there rivalry involved?

Bolster: I wouldn't put it so much in terms of rivalry as I would put it in terms of different objectives. You take an Iranian military person. He would have no contact whatsoever with the Embassy, but he would have a great deal of contact with an American military adviser, who was attached to his particular unit or his service.

So there was a reluctance to get in touch with the Embassy, because it was known to be forbidden territory. In fact, it was to the point where we could not invite Iranian military people to any Embassy function without going through a special procedure of

sending the invitations to the Iranian Supreme Commander's staff, and they would then decide who among that list would be allowed to come. And not every Iranian military officer-- and I'm talking about officers now; of course we'd never go below that, but even officers of fairly high rank were not all able to attend American functions. They would generally pick and choose among those themselves and say, "Well, you can have this many people. We'll send the invitations." The rest they just destroyed.

The Iranian military was very sensitive about contacts with the Embassy, but they had constant contact with the American advisers. So then obviously the next step is that American Embassy people are talking to American military advisers, saying, "You know, we need to know more about the Iranian military. Please tell us about some of the people you're working with. Where they were trained, what they're like, what political ambitions they have, what political awareness-- you know, just all kinds-- sort of a profile of an Iranian military officer." And our advisers would say, "We can't do that, because we're not here to spy on these people, we're here to work with them."

Q: They wouldn't share information at all?

Bolster: They wouldn't share information at all. And we constantly argued this out. We'd have meetings, country team meetings, other meetings where we'd say, look, the Iranian military is an important force in this government. No matter

what you think of it, it's a power base for the Shah. We need to know what the military is like, because if the Shah suddenly dies tomorrow, probably some group of military officers would take over and run the country. And if history is any guide from other countries, it's not going to be a General who's going to take over. It's probably some Lieutenant-Colonel or Major who-- or maybe he has a General as a front, but it's probably going to be some lower-ranking officer who's going to be calling the shots behind the scenes. Or maybe a group of them. And we really need to know something about these guys. We're not going to do anything with it other than just look at it and analyze it, but we need to know. And they just consistently refused to do that. They said, "Our job is not to spy on these people and tell you about them. Our job is to work with them in a military context, give them advice, help them train their troops, help them utilize the equipment that they're getting, and that's it."

And we just were never able to really get that point across. Occasionally you would get somebody who would write a perceptive report. You know, I've been here a year and a half and my main contact has been Mr. So-and-So, or Major So-and-So, and he is-- and they'd tell about the guy. Sometimes this would be done within the military establishment and we wouldn't even get a copy of it. Other times we did get copies of it. If they were feeling cooperative at that particular period, they might share some of these with us, but it was a very hit or miss thing. We just could not get across the point that this was a unified